

EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE 'YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL' ON OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Background and Outline

Interest in Positive Youth Development (PYD) in England and the United Kingdom has grown in recent years. A number of evidence reviews (Dennison 2004, Harden et al. 2006) looking at programmes to prevent teenage pregnancy have identified PYD models as promising. From 2004 till 2007, the Young Peoples Development Project, funded by the Department for Health, piloted youth work interventions based on PYD theory at 27 sites across England. Aiming High for Young People, the 2007 Ten Year Youth Strategy for Positive Activities draws upon youth development in setting out its theoretical foundations. However, there has not been a systematic exploration of the key features of PYD for an English audience. This paper starts the exploration.

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Executive Summary

We all want the best for young people. *Aiming High for Young People: A Ten-year Strategy for Positive Activities* sets out government's vision for what that best is and how to get there. The academic literature is rife with ideas about young people and the most effective methods for ensuring their overall well-being. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a set of ideas about who young people are, what young people need to thrive and how their needs can most effectively be met.

Chapter one of this paper explores what the term 'Positive Youth Development' means. PYD, unlike deficit-oriented approaches to understanding adolescence, focuses on the protective and resiliency factors *all* young people need to lead a healthy life. Youth are situated within a life course framework that draws heavily upon theories of human development. PYD programmes are thus planned and structured to align with the age and developmental needs of their adolescent populations. This involves identifying and promoting developmental benchmarks, including social, emotional and moral competencies, a sense of identity and self-efficacy, and opportunities for pro-social involvement.

PYD programmes have a distinct theory of change. They believe that for young people to meet developmental benchmarks, they need to be immersed in supportive settings and be engaged in healthy relationships. Generic youth programmes, on the other hand, often concentrate on activities and behaviours. As a result, PYD programs tend to operate across multiple socialization domains, from families to schools to communities. Ensuring these domains are safe and provide opportunities for meaningful relationship building is crucial to the success of a positive youth development approach.

Many programmes adopt features of PYD without putting into practice the full PYD model. In evaluating the effect of PYD programmes, we need to differentiate between the PYD model and its features. At the end of chapter one, we propose a conceptual framework that operationalizes the PYD model and its constituent parts. This framework connects the goals of PYD with the methods it uses, and couches this relationship within a particular philosophical tradition and a set of socialization domains.

Chapter two takes a closer look at what qualifies as a PYD program. We highlight six rigorously evaluated PYD programmes and describe their outcomes. Programmes vary according to their primary focus: two of the programmes address sexual and reproductive health, two look at academic achievement and retention, and two are designed to impact a wide range of youth behaviours. While all the highlighted programmes successfully met their aims, not all the programmes measured the outcomes we would expect a PYD model to produce, such as emotional, social, and moral competencies and incidences of positive, pro-social behaviour.

Chapter three examines whether PYD programmes are effective. Do young people who participate in PYD programmes fare better than young people in other types of programmes or young people without access to such programmes at all? The existing evidence base does not conclusively answer this question. What the current evidence base does tell us is that few rigorously evaluated, successful youth-serving programmes qualify as positive youth development programmes. Positive youth development programmes are characterised by their breadth (both in terms of program goals and in terms of program domains) and attentiveness

to the programme environment. Those programmes that do embrace a positive youth development framework report both an increase in positive developmental outcomes, particularly skill-based competencies, and a decrease in incidences of risk behaviour. PYD programmes that achieve their intended outcomes tend to be long-term and with a strong emphasis on supportive adult relationships, mentoring, and bonding.

Chapter four applies the PYD literature to England's current youth policy landscape. *Aiming High for Young People: A Ten-year Strategy for Positive Activities* moves quite definitively towards a PYD approach, naming structure, safety, inclusiveness, creativity, holism, user engagement, continuity, and accessibility as central to the effective delivery of positive activities. What keeps the ten-year youth strategy from being firmly rooted within a PYD framework is its persistent focus on *activities* rather than on domains or settings, and its relative silence on relationships. The ten-year youth strategy also doesn't interweave developmental constructs into its delivery strategies. The adolescent development literature is presented as a rationale for intervening during adolescence, but does not seem to form the basis for service design.

Were *Aiming High for Young People: A Ten-year Strategy for Positive Activities* to adopt a youth development approach:

- 1) The vision—that young people are healthy, happy, and safe—would stay the same.
- 2) The outcome measures, as expressed by the newly signed Public Service Agreement, would not only talk about minimizing negative behaviour, but also about enhancing competencies, skills, and pro-social behaviour. Participation in positive activities is not an adequate proxy for the acquisition of core competencies.
- 3) The strategy would look beyond youth activities and youth spaces and work to cultivate supportive relationships and opportunities within wider community spaces, including schools, families, businesses, and governmental arenas.

Despite using positive, developmental language to introduce the ten-year youth strategy, the plan itself is more congruent with a problem-solving approach. One of the reasons why problem-solving approaches and deficient-oriented indicators dominate is that greater consensus exists on what to measure. It is far easier to agree on what young people should not do than it is to agree on what young people should do to succeed. While few people would disagree with a broad, headline goal of thriving young people, at a concrete, statistical level, thriving means different things to different communities. An explicit conversation about what we want from our young people and how families, schools, and communities can help young people get there is necessary in building the foundations for PYD.

The experience of the positive youth development movement in the United States demonstrates that adopting a PYD approach is a long term process that requires more than just a shift in language. It affects programme design, delivery and evaluation in fundamental ways, many of which are at odds with short-term policy cycles and a 'quick-fix' culture. If we are to embed PYD into policy, we have to re-conceptualize the role of all the youth policy players. Governments, service providers, and parents cannot expect to put an end to all adolescent 'problem' behaviour. Instead, they must look to enhancing young people's core competencies and resiliency factors. The key is to manage and prevent 'negative' risk-taking behaviour, while increasing positive risk-taking and fulfilment of youth potential.

SECTION 1: KEY FEATURES OF THE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Introduction

- 1.1 We all want our young people to thrive. We are concerned when we hear statistics about the numbers of young people involved in negative, risk-taking behaviour because of the obstacles such behaviour poses to young people's health and well-being. Yet our responses to risk behaviour and our strategies for achieving thriving youth vary. Deficit-oriented approaches aim to reduce incidences of risk behaviour. Prevention approaches work to keep young people from taking part in risk behaviour. Asset-oriented approaches emphasise young peoples' engagement in positive, pro-social behaviour.
- 1.2 For those who subscribe to an asset-oriented approach, positive youth development is the goal. Positive youth development requires more than the absence of negative behaviours: it is the acquisition of all the knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences required to successfully transition from adolescence to adulthood. This outcome measure is the focal point of the positive youth development movement: a vocal group of practitioners, funders, and policymakers who advocate for investment in programmes and settings that support young people's growth and well-being. Positive youth development programmes are those which operationalise the principles of the youth development movement and promote a healthy, happy adolescent trajectory¹. This paper will use the term '*positive* youth development (PYD)' to talk about programmes and the phrase 'youth development' to describe young people's natural progression through the life course and the frameworks and concepts of the youth development community that draw on an analysis of this.
- 1.3 Positive youth development programmes are broad in scope. They are designed to not only address risk behaviour, but also enhance young people's skills and competencies. The question is, do they work as intended? This document attempts to answer this question by synthesizing the evidence base. It does so by reviewing the four existing, peer-reviewed meta-analyses on PYD programmes, looking at evaluation data from effective PYD programmes, and contextualising their results within the larger youth-serving programme space.
- 1.4 Drawing the boundaries between the PYD programme space and the larger youth-serving programme space requires some colouring outside the lines. Increasingly, PYD is gaining a political undertone and being adopted as an explicit policy framework. New Zealand's *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (2002) specifies that all policy which affects young people use a strengths-based approach, recognize young people's connections to their family and peers, and engage young people in policy development. The strategy defines positive youth development so broadly that no neat constructs emerge for evaluating PYD programme success. Similarly, while the UK's recent *Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities* incorporates a clearer adolescent development

¹ There is a degree of contestation over the extent to which youth development stands as opposed to deficit and risk-reduction models of youth policy (Damon, 2004) or is 'complementary' to such approaches (Benson and Saito, 2004). Pitman et al. (2000) phrase their calls for youth development as 'going beyond' an approach to youth that focuses on problem-behaviour, but it is not clear to what extent they would accept risk-reduction policies as foundations to be built upon – or whether their 'paradigm shift' *replaces* risk-reduction oriented policy.

discourse than has been present before (Aiming High for Young People, HM Treasury, 2007), it doesn't provide a clear sense of the defining line between a developmental and non-developmental approach to youth programming.

- 1.5 The pages that follow attempt to draw the defining line and then use that line to make recommendations for both UK youth policy and youth work practice. Because this line will be based on the available academic literature, it is limited by the extent of that literature. The literature has a focus on evaluated programmes. In other words, what is presented here doesn't necessarily reflect the full PYD landscape, just the formally assessed PYD landscape.

Describing positive youth development

- 1.6 There are no shortages of definitions for positive youth development. Table 1.1 included at the end of this section, summarizes the multitude of definitions scattered throughout the literature. The definitions use different language to describe a common set of features. These features are highlighted below.
- 1.7 ***PYD programmes are universal.*** PYD programmes are universally applicable: at their core, they promote *all* young people's healthy progression through adolescence and into adulthood. Rather than focus on what keeps some young people from meeting their developmental milestones, PYD programmes focus on what all young people need—both from themselves and from others—in order to reach their full potential. All young people, regardless of their background, need to grow up in safe environments, have strong, supportive relationships, and be able to access opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills. Pragmatism, rather than philosophy, often prevents PYD programmes from being targeted at *all* young people. Indeed, because youth-serving programmes typically operate in resource constrained environments (Pitman et. al 2000), many PYD programmes work with young people who lack access to the critical developmental inputs. In this sense, PYD programmes frequently adopt what the British government terms a 'progressive-universalist' approach to young people (HM Treasury, 2007).
- 1.8 ***PYD programmes are strengths-based.*** PYD programmes are firmly steeped within an asset-oriented framework, meaning young people are conceptualised as resources to be cultivated, not problems to be solved. Young people are more than tomorrow's leaders: they are seen as active, contributing members of society today and in the future. The CAS-Carrera programme mantra, "Seeing youth at promise not at risk" captures the essence of an asset-focused approach. PYD programmes seek to challenge the contemporary youth rhetoric by correcting public misperceptions of youth and consistently bringing to light what young people do well (Pittman et. al 2000).
- 1.9 ***PYD programmes are structured.*** 'Developmentally appropriate structure' is commonly referenced in the youth development literature (Roth and Brooks-Gunn 1998, Catalano et al. 2004). Structure does not mean a set of institutional arrangements for the provision of youth services, nor does it mean 'structured-activities'. Benson and Saito (in PPV, 2000) explain that the youth development field "incorporates a range of programmes from those that are highly structured, often in the form of curriculum with step-by-step guide-lines, to those that may have a looser structure but incorporate a

clear focus on one or more youth development activities (.e.g. service learning).” Instead, structure refers to the design of the programme as a whole, and the extent to which it is informed by an understanding of adolescents’ developmental trajectory. As Roth and Brooks-Gun (1998) explain “Youth development programs are developmentally appropriate programs designed to prepare adolescents for productive adulthood by providing opportunities and supports to help them gain the competencies and knowledge needed to meet the increasing challenges they will face as they mature.” Youth development activities need not have a prescriptive, internal structure, but they should be part of a coherent programmatic framework. Durlak and Weissberg (2007) encapsulate this understanding of structure when they tell us that after-school programs should be ‘SAFE’, that is: “sequenced, active, focused and explicit.”

- 1.10 For a programme to possess a developmentally appropriate structure, it must take into account young peoples’ increasing knowledge base and skill set, and challenge young people to broaden their experiences and aspirations. In other words, PYD programmes must understand the dynamic process of adolescent development and align their expectations, activities, and program space accordingly
- 1.11 ***PYD programmes link process to outcomes.*** Positive youth development programmes are about ‘means’ as much as ‘ends.’ Relationships, opportunities, and supports are consistently named as critical elements of PYD programmes. PYD programmes operate under the premise that with good relationships, broad opportunities, and sufficient support, young people will thrive. *Toward a blueprint for youth: Making positive youth development a national priority*—a short literature review of PYD programmes produced by the US government—concludes that strong youth-adult relationships, diverse opportunities for knowledge and skill-building, youth engagement in programmatic decision-making, and community involvement are pre-requisites for PYD.
- 1.12 The National Research Council (US), in its well-regarded study of community supports to promote youth development, came up with a similar list of ingredients. Quality relationships are consistently conceptualised as the ‘transmission mechanism’ for effective youth development. Youth development happens *through* meaningful, reciprocal relationships with parents, friends, peers, and adult mentors.
- 1.13 Roth, in her 2004 review of positive youth development programmes, collapses all of these ‘process features’ under the heading, ‘program activities.’ Engaging young people in productive activities is not about diverting young people from potential problem situations and risk behaviours, bur rather about providing opportunities for young people to be actively engaged in their own development and in the development of their communities. From a PYD perspective, unless young people are exposed to these positive inputs over time—regardless of their avoidance of negative risk behaviours—they will not be fully prepared for adulthood. As Damon (2004) puts it, “Positive youth development programs aim at understanding, educating and engaging children in productive activities rather than correcting, curing or treating them for maladaptive tendencies.”

- 1.14 **PYD programmes link environment to outcomes.** *Where young people access the necessary relationships, supports, and opportunities matters within a PYD framework. The environment must be safe, both physically and emotionally, and be developmentally appropriate in order for young people to take advantage of all the PYD programme components (National Research Council (US), 2002).*
- 1.15 PYD programmes differ from generic youth-serving programmes in how much emphasis they place on multiple contexts and environments. Because young people spend time in a number of settings—from family to school to community—PYD programmes often embrace system-wide change. Small and Memmo’s definition includes the imperative, “Communities need to mobilize and build capacity to support youth development.” Catalano et al. (2004) refer to settings as “socialisation domains” and suggest that PYD programmes will often (though not always) span multiple domains.
- 1.16 **Definitional Differences.** Despite significant overlap between the many PYD definitions, there are divergences. Youth participation is named in some definitions (Small and Memmo 2004, *Towards a Blueprint of Youth 2001, Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa 2002*), while absent from others (Catalano 2004, National Research Council 2002, (US), Roth 2004). Evidence-based practice is a foundational principle for the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*, but a non-articulated aspect of most other definitions. Similarly, only one definition explicitly mentions healthy lifestyles as a key PYD element (*Towards a Blueprint for Youth*).

Source	PYD Definition
Towards a Blueprint for Youth (US)	Key elements of positive youth development are: providing youth with safe and supportive environments ▪ fostering relationships between young people and caring adults who can mentor and guide them ▪ providing youth with opportunities to pursue their interests and focus on their strengths ▪ supporting the development of youths’ knowledge and skills in a variety of ways, including study, tutoring, sports, the arts, vocational education, and service-learning ▪ engaging youth as active partners and leaders who can help move communities forward ▪ providing opportunities for youth to show that they care about others and about society ▪ promoting healthy lifestyles and teaching positive patterns of social interaction ▪ providing a safety net in times of need
Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (NZ)	A youth development approach has six principles: youth development is shaped by the big picture ▪ youth development is about young people being connected ▪ youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach ▪ youth development happens through quality relationships ▪ youth development is triggered when young people fully participate ▪ youth development needs good information
National Research Council (US)	Young people develop positive personal and social assets in settings that have the following features: physical and psychological safety and security ▪ structure that is developmentally appropriate with clear expectations for behaviour as well as increasing opportunities to make decisions to participate in governance and rule-making, and to take on leadership as one matures and gains more expertise ▪ emotional and moral support ▪ opportunities for adolescents to experience supportive adult relationships ▪ opportunities to learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviours ▪ opportunities feel a sense of belonging and being valued ▪ opportunities for skill building and mastery ▪ opportunities to develop confidence in one’s ability to master one’s ability (a sense of self-efficacy) ▪ opportunities to make a contribution to one’s community

	and to develop a sense of mattering ▪ strong links between families, schools, and broader community resources.
Roth (US)	Youth development programmes share the following three characteristics: (1) <i>program goals</i> promote positive development even when seeking to prevent problem behaviour; (2) <i>program atmosphere</i> conveys the adults' belief in youth as resources to be developed rather than as problems to be managed; (3) <i>program activities</i> provides formal and informal opportunities for youth to nurture their interests and talents, practice new skills, and gain a sense of personal or group recognition.
Small and Memmo (US)	Positive youth development programs are based on the following premises: helping youth achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent problems ▪ youth need to experience a set of supports and opportunities to succeed ▪ communities need to mobilise and build capacity to support positive youth development ▪ youth should not be viewed as problems to be fixed but partners to be cultivated and developed.

Uncovering what really matters

1.17 Whilst definitions give us a sense of what counts as positive youth development, they do not provide us with an in-built comparative perspective. Indeed, if we are to have an operational definition of PYD that does not become over-inclusive, we first need to know what make PYD programmes different from other youth programmes. Four dimensions of difference emerge:

- **The 'Why' of youth development** – the scientific and philosophical framing of a programme
- **The 'What' of youth development** – the developmental focus of programme components
- **The 'Where' of youth development** – the different domains in which developmental activities take place
- **The 'How' of youth development** – the specific operational features integral to positive youth development programmes

1.18 The 'Why' matters – framing programmes

Listing the common features of PYD programmes fails to capture the full essence of PYD. PYD programmes are framed within a specific philosophical and scientific paradigm.

1.19 The philosophical frame comes predominantly from the US based youth development movement and the project to create a 'public idea' of youth development to influence policy making (Pitman et al., 2000). It is perhaps best encapsulated by the phrase, "Problem free is not fully prepared" (ibid.). It is not enough to ensure young people do not engage in negative, risk-behaviours. We want our youth to thrive and flourish both in their adolescent and adult lives. However, policy is commonly designed to reduce incidences of risk behaviour. Pitman et al. challenge this disjoint, writing, "We should be as articulate about the attitudes, skills, behaviors and values we want young people to have as we are about those we hope they avoid." Programmes which are simply oriented towards the elimination or prevention of 'problem behaviors' are not PYD programmes.

1.20 Damon (2004) draws on the youth resiliency literature, concluding that all youth—not just those who live within challenging circumstances—require positive 'virtues' to grow into compassionate, fully functional adults. Damon says, "The child who learns to drive a car, or to care for an elderly neighbor, or to go on a first date, must acquire a number

of personal virtues to accomplish these things successfully, but this learning is not usually done under duress or out of a desperate survival struggle. To the contrary, most children eagerly seek such opportunities to learn and test themselves.”

- 1.21 Positive youth development programmes, as the name implies, are firmly grounded within a developmental science perspective. Reports including *Building Strength* (McLaren, 2002) and *Community Programmes to Promote Youth Development* (National Research Council, (US), 2002) use adolescent development as a lens with which to understand young people’s decision-making and engagement in risk behaviour.
- 1.22 When we look at adolescents through a developmental lens it is hard not to marvel at the breadth and depth of change they experience. Adolescence officially begins with a biological jump-start: changes in the young person’s neurological and endocrine systems lead to a growth spurt and to sexual maturity (Kipke, 1999). A growing body of evidence has documented changes in adolescent brain connectivity. The centres of the brain responsible for emotions and reasoning become better connected as adolescence unfolds (Giedd, 2004). This is accompanied by an increase in cognitive capability. As adolescents encounter new contexts and situations, their knowledge base grows, as does their ability to process, apply, and reason with that new information.
- 1.23 Adolescents must also begin to reconcile how the world sees them with how they see themselves. Their sense of self is shaped by their own history and emergent abilities, beliefs, and motivations. Young people’s increased proficiency in abstract thinking, coupled with their evolving sense of self, sparks greater self-reflection and changes the ways they look for and perceive meaning (Rew, 2005). Meaning is derived from the social contexts in which young people grow and learn. Adolescents, after all, do not grow up in isolation of their surroundings. As adolescents recalibrate their relationships with family, peers, and their communities, they begin to assume new societal roles and interact with new institutional settings. Each of these settings communicates a set of norms about how to think and behave.
- 1.24 The Search Institute has identified 20 critical features of settings which promote healthy, caring, and responsible young people. These ‘external assets’ are grouped into four categories including support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. The 20 external assets are complemented by a set of 20 internal assets describing what young people need from themselves in order to thrive. Internal asset categories include commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Research using the combined 40 developmental assets reveals that the more assets a young person has, the more likely he/she is to achieve positive developmental outcomes (Lerner and Benson, 2002).
- 1.25 This research tells us that to intervene effectively, we must understand how the parts of the adolescent -whether their behaviours, their sense of self, or their cognitive capacity-affect the whole adolescent. It also tells us that young people at the start of adolescence and young people at the end of adolescence have significantly different abilities and frames of reference. In other words, there is no one-size-fits-all youth programme. Adolescents are a heterogeneous population who are constantly changing. Programmes

respond best to the dynamism of adolescence by providing a consistent framework that can expand or contract as needed.

1.26 Understanding the dynamism of adolescence also means recognizing the interactional nature of development: young people affect and are affected by their environments. For example, young people’s self confidence is influenced by the type of feedback they receive, while their attitude affects the way in which adults may provide that feedback. Programmes which do not draw upon this developmental, life-course platform are not wholly PYD programmes.

1.27 **The ‘What’ matters – programme components/targets**

Informed by a comprehensive philosophical and theoretical understanding of youth, researchers have sought to identify, operationalise, and evaluate just *what it is* that puts young people on the path to success. Benson and Saito (2004) explain that, “A risk-reduction or deficit-reduction paradigm... accents naming and reducing obstacles to positive human development (e.g., poverty, family violence, victimization, abuse, neglect, negative peer or adult influence). Youth development as an approach moves in the direction of naming and promoting core positive developmental processes, opportunities and experiences.”

Box 1.1

America’s Promise Model

- **Caring adults:** ongoing relationships with adults—parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches—offer youth support, care, and guidance.
- **Safe places:** safe places with structured activities provide a space for youth to learn and grow
- **A healthy start and future:** adequate nutrition, exercise, and health care pave the way for healthy bodies, healthy minds, and smart habits for adulthood
- **Effective education:** marketable skills through effective education help youth navigate the transition from school to work effectively
- **Opportunities to help others:** opportunities to give back to the community through service enhance self-esteem and boost confidence

1.28 According to the America’s Promise-Alliance for Youth model (2006), young people need five elements in their lives in order to thrive: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start and future, effective education, and opportunities to help others. These are described in greater depth in Box 1.1.

1.29 There are evident parallels between the America’s Promise model and England’s Every Child Matters (HM Treasury, 2003), with the notable addition in the America’s Promise model of ‘relationships with caring adults’ as a key element of thriving. That said, the America’s Promise model looks primarily at ‘inputs’ rather than expected outcomes. Young people can have opportunities to help others, but it is only when that opportunity helps them to develop transferable competencies and skills that the experience fully contributes to their growth and development.

Box 1.2

Lerner’s 5Cs

- **Competence:** intellectual ability and social and behavioural skills
- **Connection:** positive bonds with people and institutions
- **Character:** integrity and moral centeredness
- **Confidence:** positive self-regard, a sense of self-efficacy, and courage
- **Caring/compassion:** humane values, empathy, and a sense of social justice

- 1.30 Exactly what the preconditions for positive youth development are, and how best to express them, is contested. Richard Lerner offers us 'Five C's'. For Lerner,² "Young people will thrive if they develop competence, connection, character, confidence, and caring/compassion over the course of childhood and adolescence." These are expanded in box 1.2.
- 1.31 Pitman et. al (2000) propose their own 5C list which includes Lerner's first four, but then adds 'contributions' to underscore the fact that youth engagement in community is a critical component of the developmental process.
- 1.32 The variation between lists (which is more than mere semantics) underlines how hard it is to universally name what makes a successful young person. While many aspects of thriving are easily agreed upon, some of the features of a thriving young person within society and community are subject to political and normative disagreements. There is a risk that collapsed lists like the 5Cs, whilst appealing at a headline level, mask ambiguities which are uncovered when developing operational understandings of the conditions for youth development³.

Box 1.3

**Catalano et al.
Constructs of Positive Youth
Development**

- promotes bonding
- fosters resilience
- promotes social competence
- promotes emotional competence
- promotes cognitive competence
- promotes behavioral competence
- promotes moral competence
- fosters self-determination
- fosters spirituality
- fosters self efficacy
- fosters clear and positive identity
- fosters a belief in the future
- provides recognition for positive behaviors
- provides opportunities for pro-social involvement
- fosters pro-social norms

1.33 The US based National Research Council's (NRC) 2002 text *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* sets out 28 "personal and social assets that facilitate positive youth development" grouped into categories of: (1) physical development; (2) intellectual development; (3) psychological and emotional development; and (4) social development. The assets include (among others): good health habits; school success; good coping skills; optimism coupled with realism; and commitment to civic engagement. The NRC conclude that:

- "Individuals do not necessarily need the entire range of assets to thrive; in fact, various combinations of assets across domains reflect equally positive adolescent development."
- "Having more assets is better than having few. Although strong assets in one category can offset weak assets in another category, life is easier to manage

if one has assets in all four domains."

² (2001) Toward a blueprint for youth: Making positive youth development a national priority. US Department of Health and Human Services.

³ The cultural specificity of answers to the 'what' question (i.e. are some of the factors that are crucial to youth development within one culture and context, irrelevant in another?) has not, to our knowledge, been investigated in the literature on youth development.

In contrast with the 4C or 5C models, the NRC model specifies how the features of youth development are to be implemented.

- 1.34 Catalano et al. (2004) strike the middle ground between Lerner's over-simplified 5Cs and the lengthy NRC list. Their 15 constructs (box 1.3) come from a comprehensive literature review and consultation with developmental researchers. By disaggregating different forms of competency, and, for example, keeping efficacy and belief in the future as two distinct constructs, they provide a stronger, more robust platform for identifying and evaluating positive youth development programmes. Catalano et al. spend time in their article unpacking and evidencing each of these constructs, including such contestable terms as bonding, moral competence and spirituality. We find the Catalano et al. list of constructs most amenable to thorough study.
- 1.35 Youth-serving programmes which are unable to articulate how they enhance developmental assets cannot be called PYD programmes. While Catalano's list of assets is more concise than other similar compilations, it remains both inclusive and accommodating. Most youth serving programmes (whether PYD or not) will be able to describe the ways in which their interventions *could* lead to development of the above constructs. Therefore, the 'What' of youth development must be taken along with the 'Why'. To be a PYD programme, it must *intentionally* address at least one of the constructs described.
- 1.36 **The 'where' matters – different 'domains' of programme activity**
Many of the PYD programmes reviewed in the literature have a strong school-based component. However, PYD programmes predominantly seek to work across multiple settings or 'socialization domains' as Catalano et al. put it.
- 1.37 The New Zealand oriented *Youth Development Literature Review: Building Strength* (McLaren, 2002) looks across family, peer groups, school, workplace and neighbourhoods to examine the influence of different environments on healthy youth development. The review finds that "Overall, it is the total number of strengths and weaknesses across all four environments that make the biggest difference to how young people turn out" and that "The importance of environments to young people's well-being definitely changes depending on the weakness or strength of other environments, so that strong environments (for example, good neighbourhoods) become even more important in the presence of weak environments (for example, family difficulties)".
- 1.38 In working across different environments, PYD programmes can increase young people's access to the support and opportunities they need, in the settings in which they live. Lerner and others talk about 'connections' as a positive asset that, when coupled with others, increase young people's likelihood for positive outcomes.
- 1.39 Whilst some take youth development as necessarily multi-environment and link it to community development (Small and Memmo, 2004; Benson and Saito, 2000), a programme need not work in more than one domain to qualify as a PYD programme. For example, a youth-centre based programme that intentionally addresses a range of youth development constructs would not be discounted from being a positive youth development programme even if it does not enter into other environments.

- 1.40 **The 'how' matters – specific operational features.** We have already discussed the importance and meaning of 'developmentally appropriate structure'. It is a core feature of PYD, as are safe settings and relationship building. In other words PYD programmes are not just about adolescent-relevant content, but about the way in which that content is expressed in an environment. For example, intentional thought should go into the way in which space is organised and the types of teaching methods that are used.
- 1.41 Costello et al. (2000) measure an organisation's commitment to youth development by how well they promote adolescent autonomy and youth voice. Whilst there is little explicit emphasis in the literature on the need for young people to be involved in the design and delivery of PYD programmes, youth driven decision-making is an essential component of the adolescent development process, not to mention a key right under Article 12 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Small and Memmo (2004) suggest treating young people as 'partners' is a key premise of youth development
- 1.42 Youth participation is a more explicit part of the UK policy discourse than in the US (Every Child Matters, 2003; Youth Matters, 2005) Costello notes that, "There are interesting parallels between the hesitancy to involve youth in organisations and the hesitancy in the United States to engage in discussion or to adopt the language of the International [sic] Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by most of the world's nations". Even though participation is not firmly embedded within the American youth development literature, it is certainly implied in statements like, 'Youth development views young people as resources to be developed rather than as problems to be solved.' In the New Zealand context where the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* has been ratified, there is a far stronger focus on participation. The fifth principle of the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (Table 1.1, above) "Acknowledges the importance of providing opportunities for young people to increase their control of what happens to them and around them, through advice, participation and engagement"(McGachie and Smith, 2003).
- 1.43 Further investigation is needed to better understand the role youth participation can play in UK PYD programmes.
- 1.44 There is greater clarity and consensus about the importance of programme duration to the PYD model. Whilst some programmes identified in Roth and Brooks-Gunn's (2003) review of 48 evaluated programmes were as short as 12 weeks, optimal programmes ran throughout a full school year and cultivated an empowering, pro-social atmosphere. The literature does not systematically look at programme intensity. Programmes range from occasional interventions, to, at the upper end, an average of 16 hours per-month in CAS-Carrera programme (Manlove et. al, 2004) and 750 hours over 4 years in the Quantum Opportunities Program. (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Burt et al., 2005). We take it then as a key feature of positive youth development programmes that they are 'long-term,' although no floor-level of duration can easily be specified.
- 1.45 Short-duration or one-off interventions cannot qualify as positive youth development programmes. Programmes must provide time for positive relationships to form and

developmental milestones to unfold.

Bringing the elements together

1.46 The diagram below brings together the key features of PYD extracted from the literature. As should be clear, PYD programmes cannot be adequately captured by a one-dimensional tick list. Some of the decidedly qualitative features are hard to assess within quantitatively-oriented evaluation studies.

1.47

WHY – The Philosophical Outlook/Theoretical Basis		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescence is a time of significant dynamic and interrelated biological and psychological changes which must be understood holistically • Young people are active agents in their development • Problem-free young people are not fully prepared young people • Youth 'at promise, not at risk' • Progressive universalism 		
WHAT		WHERE
Constructs of positive youth development addressed		Socialisation domains
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotes bonding • fosters resilience • promotes social competence • promotes emotional competence • promotes cognitive competence • promotes behavioural competence • promotes moral competence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fosters self-determination • fosters spirituality • fosters self efficacy • fosters clear and positive identity • fosters a belief in the future • provides recognition for positive behaviours • provides opportunities for pro-social involvement • fosters pro-social norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Peers • School • Work • Neighbourhood/Community
HOW – Hallmarks of the programme approach		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally appropriate structure • Safe settings • Participatory processes • Relationship-building • Long-term duration 		

1.48 This map tells us that in order for a programme to be labeled as PYD, it must:.

- Be framed using concepts outlined under 'WHY'
- Include the features outlined under 'HOW' in its programme design (although these need not all be fully developed or perfectly implemented)
- Addresses its efforts towards:

1) One construct of youth development (WHAT) over multiple socialisation domains (WHERE).

or

2) Multiple constructs of youth development (WHAT) over a single socialisation domain (WHERE)

or

3) Multiple constructs of youth development (WHAT) over multiple socialisation domains (WHERE)

1.49 This is not to say that a PYD programme that puts its resources into one construct will not positively influence other constructs, but notes that programmes may validly narrow their scope of work. However, because the PYD model emphasises holism and the interactional nature of developmental inputs it is likely that even single-construct programmes will touch on complementary constructs.

1.50 PYD programmes do not have to address every developmental issue, but they do have to approach their chosen issue in a distinct way: they have to contextualize their work in one or more socialisation domains (Where), they have to embrace some core philosophical tenets (Why), and they have to design their program with certain features in mind (How).

1.51 For example:

- An after school homework club that is focused solely on increasing educational attainment and which only operates within the school domain would not constitute a PYD programme.
- Volunteering programmes that work across socialization domains (e.g. youth centre settings and community settings), but are not framed in terms of supporting young people's development, or that lack a developmentally appropriate structure are not PYD programmes.
- Youth club provision that does not integrate skill building or that doesn't offer opportunities for long-term relationship-building with trusted adults would not qualify as a PYD programme.
- Organisations such as the scouts and guides are frequently cited within the US and Australian literature as examples of PYD programmes. These programmes often work across a range of socialization domains, engage young people over time, address a number of youth development constructs, and promote all around youth health and well-being. The curricula of these programmes often include an implicit developmental sequencing with increasing challenges and opportunities for autonomy presented to young people. When the developmental logic of the scouting and guiding programmes is made explicit and if it coheres with a scientific youth development framework, then these programmes qualify as examples of PYD.
- England's Positive Activities for Young People scheme (PAYP), as described in the final evaluation report, approximates a number of features of a PYD programme-- particularly through the use of 'key workers' to provide positive developmental opportunities for young people. "Key Workers were not directly tasked with reducing crime, or increasing the take-up of qualifications, but were solely tasked with supporting and helping young people to develop." In a full PYD programme, this adult support would be underpinned by an understanding of adolescent development and

oriented towards evidenced constructs that contribute to desired outcomes. A positive youth development design for PAYP might also work across multiple socialization domains and in the process engage young people in a range of positive relationships with other adults and community members.

- 1.51 In the next section we will look at programmes that both qualify as PYD and are rigorously evaluated. The goal is to understand how PYD programmes contribute to young people's overall health and well-being.

SECTION 2: USES OF THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Introduction

- 2.1 Young people grow up in families and communities, not in programmes (Roth, 2003). Yet programmes and services are the primary mechanism through which government and the third-sector can influence outcomes among young people, their families, and their communities. Positive Youth Development, as outlined in Chapter 1, captures both a broad set of ideas about what young people, their families, and their communities need to thrive *and* a set of operational features for youth-serving programmes and services. This divide—between youth development as a statement of intent and youth development as a statement of practice—is strongly reflected in the evaluation literature.
- 2.2 The best evaluation literature sits within the sexual health and pregnancy prevention space (e.g. Kirby, 2001, Burt et al, 2005), even though youth development approaches have also been applied to a comprehensive set of developmental outcomes including educational engagement and attainment; positive school transitions; physical health and wellbeing; drug and substance use avoidance; anti-social behavior reduction; bullying reduction; criminal behavior reduction; employment rates and financial independence.
- 2.3 Despite the focus within youth development on supporting young people's positive assets and markers of thriving, the majority of peer-reviewed evaluations only measure risk factors and rates of problem-behaviours. Such evaluations do not reflect the true intent of a PYD approach.

Proven PYD Programmes: Sexual and Reproductive Health

- 2.4 The **CAS-Carrera programme** (Philliber et al., 2002) aims to delay sexual initiation and reduce unsafe sexual activity amongst disadvantaged groups of young people. The programme provided educational support (homework help, exam preparation, college entrance assistance), employment and financial literacy support (a component called job club), family life and sex education, opportunities for self-expression through arts activities, and promoted uptake of a lifelong individual sport. The programme also offered its own mental health and medical care services, including an annual comprehensive medical exam and support and monitoring from programme staff for young people attending external medical appointments. Not only did the programme resource a broad suite of youth activities, it also invested in programme atmosphere. Staff were trained to treat the youth participants as their own children, to see the young people as pure potential, and to have long-term, continuous contact with youth.
- 2.5 To evaluate programme effectiveness, researchers adopted a quasi-experimental methodology. Young people, aged 13-15 from disadvantaged backgrounds, were randomly assigned to participate in a generic youth programme or in the CAS-Carrera programme. 242 young people served in the intervention group, and another 242 in the control group—representing nearly 80% of the original participants. Young people were followed for three years after their year-long participation in either the control or intervention programme. While there were no significant differences in the demographics of the control and intervention groups, females who took part in the

CAS-Carrera programme had significantly lower rates of sexual initiation and significantly higher rates of contraception use. This result did not hold true for boys. Both male and female programme participants did, however, report greater access to health care services. The non-sexual impacts of the programme have not been extensively investigated.

- 2.6 The **Teen Outreach Programme** (Allen et al., 1994), like the CAS-Carrera programme, targets sexual behavior and pregnancy reduction. The nine-month programme includes a school-based educational component, structured group discussions, role playing, and supervised community service activities. Unlike CAS-Carrera, the Teen Outreach Programme recruited young people already engaged in sexual risk behaviours, including some young people who were teenage parents.
- 2.7 Researchers' adopted a quasi-experimental design for the evaluation. Nearly 1500 high school students were randomly assigned to an intervention or comparison group at 30 school sites across the US. The sample was majority female (67%) with about half Caucasian and one-third black. Outcome measures included pregnancy rates, risk of school suspension, and risk of academic course failure. Young people who took part in the Teen Outreach Programme had a significantly reduced risk of pregnancy, school suspensions, and course failure. A second-wave evaluation study confirmed these earlier results, even amongst those at highest risk for teen pregnancy and school dropout. Indeed, high-risk young people involved in the Teen Outreach Programme were at 53% the risk of pregnancy of those in the comparison group. Formative evaluation data identified autonomy-promoting activities (for example, independent volunteer work) as critical to student success.
- 2.8 The **Seattle Social Development Project** (Hawkins et al., 2001) works to prevent teen pregnancy and decrease young peoples' sexual risk. As a multi-year intervention targeted at young people aged 7 through 13, the programme relies heavily on developmentally sequenced activities, including parenting classes, school curricula, and classroom management techniques. Teachers are trained in interactive and cooperative learning approaches.
- 2.9 A quasi-experimental research design was used to assess programme effectiveness. Primary school children were randomly assigned to intervention classrooms in eight schools throughout Seattle, Washington. A late intervention group included young people who participated in the programme in its last two years. 643 students, across these three groups, took part in the evaluation. Intervention effectiveness was assessed when young people turned 18 and again at age 21. Not only were sexual risk behaviour measures collected, but so too were self-reported violent and nonviolent crime statistics, substance use levels, bonding to school, school achievement levels, and school dropout rates. Young people who took part in the full intervention initiated sexual intercourse by age 18 less frequently than those in the comparison group (72% versus 83%). Fewer intervention youth reported having had multiple sexual partners at age 18. And at age 21, black young people who were in the programme reported using condoms at significantly higher rates than black young people who did not take part in the programme. The Seattle Social Development Project also had a positive impact on academic engagement and achievement.

Proven PYD Programmes: Academic Achievement

- 2.10 The **Quantum Opportunities Programme** promotes academic engagement and achievement through 250 hours/year of education activities, development activities, and service activities. The programme features year-round case-management, mentoring, computer-assisted instruction, work experience, volunteering, and financial incentives. Relationship-building is a critical aspect of programme design: participants are named 'associates' and are ideally paired with program coordinators for the entire four years of their secondary school experience.
- 2.11 The programme evaluation (Hahn, Leavitt, Aaron 1994) was based on a quasi-experimental design. At 25 demonstration sites across the US, 50 adolescents were randomly chosen from a list of families in receipt of public assistance. Half of the young people took part in Quantum Opportunities, while the other half served as the control group. No significant differences emerged between the control and intervention groups until the second year of the programme. At the end of the second year, program participants had significantly higher test scores in five of eleven academic and functional areas. A follow-up evaluation study, conducted five years later, showed that programme participants were significantly more likely to graduate from high school and be engaged in postsecondary school, and less likely to be teen parents.

Proven PYD Programmes: Comprehensive Outcomes

- 2.12 The **Big Brothers, Big Sisters** program (Tierney, Grossman and Resche, 1995) is an intensive, long-term mentoring programme running at 500 sites across the United States. The programme matches children and young people with rigorously screened adult mentors. Mentors commit to spending 3-5 hours a week with the child or young person for at least one year. Big Brothers, Big Sisters programme staff mediate the relationship between the mentor and the young person by working with the young person and his/her parents to craft an individualised development plan.
- 2.13 To study the effects of the programme, evaluators randomly assigned nearly 1200 young people to a control or treatment group. 84% of young people remained in the study for its full 18-month duration. Young people ranged between the ages of 10 to 16; 60% were male; and nearly half were an ethnic minority. Participation in Big Brothers, Big Sisters resulted in a range of positive outcomes: participants were less likely to initiate illegal drug use or alcohol use, were less likely to skip school, and had slightly higher grade-point averages. The programme had a greater impact on female participants' school performance than males, while having a greater impact on male participants' drug use than females.
- 2.14 **The Beacons** are a series of school-based youth and community centres in New York City informed by a strong youth development approach. The centres are open after school, evenings and weekends, and provide for more than 75,000 children, young people and their families. Pitman et al. (2000) hold up the Beacons as an example of effective youth development practice, pushing beyond basic service provision to more holistic, wrap-around services. Beacons aim to give youth opportunities to (1) participate in stimulating and engaging activities, (2) develop caring and trusting

relationships, (3) be challenged to grow by high expectations, (4) connect with and contribute to their communities, and (5) benefit from a continuity of adult support.

- 2.15 The Beacon evaluation was completed in two waves (Warren et al., 2002). Wave one examined how well the 40 Beacon sites adopted the core youth developmental framework and theory of change. Wave two looked more intensely at six Beacon centres to see how programme participation affected youth and their parents. The six sites were selected using a stratified random sample. Youth surveys and interviews were collected at one point in time. The results indicate that the PYD programme quality matters. Young people who took part in programmes with higher youth-development quality were more likely to feel better about themselves, believe that youth of all race and ethnicities were valued at the Beacon, and report gaining leadership skills. These youth were also less likely to report that they had skipped classes, hit others, stolen money, or been in a fight. Interestingly, programme quality was not correlated with school quality or neighborhood safety, suggesting that Beacon centres can cultivate a youth development environment even when that isn't the prevailing context.

Promising PYD Programme Contexts

- 2.16 Across the health, justice, and welfare sectors, PYD features prominently yet is often not formally evaluated. Despite the absence of rigorous, peer-reviewed evaluations, preliminary evidence suggests PYD in these contexts is promising and warrants future exploration.
- 2.17 *Multiple risk behaviours.* The **Young Peoples Development Project (YPDP)** in England has piloted an approach based on PYD programmes from the United States. YPDP pilot projects at 27 sites have targeted young people aged 13 to 15 at risk of school exclusion, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy. The YPDP programmes work at a high intensity: young people are engaged in the programme 6-10 hours per week for the length of a school year.
- 2.18 The final evaluation of the three-year programme, using a prospective matched comparison design, is due in October 2007. The second interim report by the evaluation team (Wiggins et al., 2006) found no statistically significant differences between the intervention and control groups on deficit measures, with the exception of a higher truancy rate amongst those in YPDP programmes. This may be explained by a larger number of school-linked projects in the control group leading to a stronger education focus in the control group. The National Youth Agency, coordinating the pilot projects, has noted indications that the self esteem of young people taking part in YPDP is being purposefully raised as part of the programme and that informal assessment indicates a clear and sustained improvement in the quality of practice.
- 2.19 *National service.* Australian interest in PYD programmes has roots in community-based cadet-style programmes. These include the Green-Corp programme, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Australian Service Cadets Scheme (MCEETYA *National Youth Development Strategy*, 2000). These programmes are favoured for their impact on skills acquisition, leadership development, team work skills, self-reliance and community service. These programmes tend to operate outside the school setting and include structured activities, trips and experiences for young people.

- 2.20 *Youth participation.* In the Australian and New Zealand contexts, youth development approaches have also been used to develop participation initiatives and to support the empowerment of young people in decision making. (McGachie and Smith, 2003)
- 2.21 *Violence prevention.* The National Violence Prevention Resource Centre (2001) in the United States has explored Youth Development as a Violence Intervention Model
- 2.22 *Youth justice.* Whilst the use of youth development approaches in Australia is primarily focused on promoting universal access to cadet-style opportunities for young people, some areas are looking to target youth development based cadet schemes in youth justice contexts. Butts, Mayer and Ruth (2005) suggest that the youth justice sector in the United States has a lot to gain from adopting a youth development approach across youth justice interventions.

Conclusions

- 2.23 PYD programmes are not limited to one sector. Youth development informs a wide range of programmes across school and community settings. Programmes may run during school, after school, or distinct from the school environment.
- 2.24 PYD has a strong bias towards primary and secondary prevention interventions. Whilst many programmes are either universal, or targeted at deprived populations or populations at risk of encountering problems, youth development models can influence the design of long-term treatment and intervention programmes.
- 2.25 In the following section we will look across individual PYD programmes and extrapolate emerging trends from the evaluation literature. The goal is to synthesise existing research findings and to determine whether it is possible to make claims about where PYD works best, and what outcomes we can expect to see.

SECTION 3: EVIDENCE ON THE IMPACT OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

- 3.1 PYD programmes—because of their heavy emphasis on human resources—have an upfront cost. The CAS-Carrera programme costs \$4000 dollars per young person per year. The Quantum Opportunity Programme comes with a price tag of \$10,600 per student over the course of four years. Big Brothers, Big Sisters, while relying on a volunteer adult workforce, still carries a cost of \$1000 per young person.
- 3.2 Policymakers, organisational leaders, and funders rightly want to know if investing in PYD programmes will pay dividends. Do young people who participate in PYD programmes fare better than young people in other types of programmes or young people without access to such programmes at all? The existing evidence base does not conclusively answer this question. The broad theory of youth development has not been consistently translated into practice. Researchers are often in the position of having to ex post-facto declare a project a 'youth development programme' and infer its philosophical underpinnings.
- 3.3 Over the past ten years, researchers have at least been able to gain a clearer picture of the entire programmatic landscape. A series of narrative summaries have identified effective youth programmes and begun to examine what effective youth programmes have in common, including the degree to which they have embraced the positive youth development framework. Diagram 3.1 at the end of this section illustrates the focus and overlap of three key studies considered in this chapter.

Key Findings

- 3.4 Roth and Brooks-Gunn's 1998 synthesis of PYD programme evaluations identified 15 effective youth programmes out of a body of 60 outcome-based evaluations. Effective programmes met their objectives and were targeted at young people not yet exhibiting problem behaviours. Roth and Brooks-Gunn categorized effective programmes according to how closely they adopted key tenets of the positive youth development framework. Category one programmes were those designed to enhance young people's positive behaviours, core competencies and assets by increasing young people's access to challenging opportunities and support. Category two programmes were those designed to decrease the incidence of a negative behaviour by either increasing young people's core competencies or providing new opportunities and support. Category three programmes were the least consistent with a positive youth development model in that they emphasized risk avoidance and risk reduction.
- 3.5 When Roth and Brooks-Gunn examined programme performance among the three categories, no consistent pattern of results emerged. Programmes in all three categories reported changes in youth participants' attitudes and/or behaviours. Category one programmes were more likely to report changes in participants' skill-sets. Category two programmes were more successful at altering knowledge and attitudes than actual risk behaviour. Category three programmes had mixed results and showed variable influence over student attitudes, beliefs, and skill-sets.

- 3.6 In 2002, the US National Research Council generated their own list of effective youth programmes. Experts reviewed 7 meta-analyses of prevention and promotion programmes for youth and compared outcomes across a wide range of subject domains (mental health, violence prevention, teenage pregnancy, and positive youth development).
- 3.7 Service-learning and mentoring were critical aspects of all effective programmes, regardless of their subject domain. Effective mental health and violence prevention programmes adopted many of the features of positive youth development programmes, including a focus on building core competencies, opportunities to practise new skills, and access to strong adult social support. Teenage pregnancy programmes had far more mixed results. Programmes with a service-learning focus resulted in short-term, but not long-term gains, while vocational and employment programmes were successful in some instances but not others. Because few studies used comparable outcome measures, it was too difficult to ascertain why some programmes succeeded while others failed.
- 3.8 The National Research Council's review made use of Catalano, et. al's synthesis of positive youth development programmes. Catalano and colleagues analysed 25 positive youth development programmes out of a subset of 161 generic youth programmes. The 25 selected programmes addressed one or more of 15 positive youth development constructs (See Section 1), targeted young people between the ages of 6 and 20 including those considered at risk for poor outcomes, operated in at least one socialization domain (family, community, school), and incorporated adequate study design and outcome measures. PYD programmes were grouped according to the number of socialization domains within which they operated.
- 3.9 PYD programmes operating in a single-domain resulted in significant changes to young people's positive or problem behaviours. These programmes had the greatest impact on knowledge and attitudes, particularly in the tobacco and drug prevention space. Two-domain PYD programmes also resulted in significant changes in youth's positive or problem behaviours. Positive behavioural measures included improved communication with parents, increased social acceptance, and improved cognitive competence; while negative behavioural measures included alcohol use, tobacco use, and aggressive behaviour. Three-domain PYD programmes had a significant impact on both positive and negative attitudes and behaviours. Programme participants experienced outcomes such as higher levels of social skills learning, greater self-efficacy, higher levels of community service, and greater cognitive competence.
- 3.10 All the PYD programmes, regardless of the number of domains they addressed, took on a minimum of five constructs, including competence, self-efficacy, and pro-social norms. These programmes embraced opportunities for pro-social involvement and bonding, and consistently recognized young people for positive behaviour. 19 of the 25 programmes reported positive changes in young people's behaviours, while 24 out of 25 programmes showed evidence of ameliorating negative risk behaviours.
- 3.11 Roth and Brooks-Gunn's most recent appraisal of positive youth development programmes (2003) employs a more stringent standard than the prior narrative analyses. For a programme to qualify as positive youth development, it must (1) aim to increase

young people's competence, confidence, connections, character, and caring (Lerner's 5 C's: See box 1.2); (2) promote a positive programme atmosphere by investing in relationships, youth empowerment, opportunities for recognition, and long-term services; and (3) offer activities that are challenging, facilitate skill-building, and broaden young people's horizons.

- 3.12 48 well-evaluated and successful youth-serving programmes formed the basis of the review. All of the 48 programmes were oriented around at least one of the five-C positive youth development goals, with the majority focused on enhancing young people's social and cognitive skills, or enhancing young people's character. Nearly all of the 48 programmes cultivated a PYD atmosphere, with the majority conveying expectations for positive behaviour and providing opportunities for recognition. However, less than half of the programmes invested in supportive adult relationships and even fewer explicitly nurtured youth empowerment. Programmes relied heavily on skill-building activities, rather than on informal, real-world, or horizon-broadening activities. Only 2 of the 48 programmes adopted all of the programmatic attributes outlined by Roth and Brooks-Gunn.
- 3.13 Roth and Brooks-Gunn's review not only differentiates positive youth development programmes from other successful youth-serving programmes, but also looks at what programme attributes the most successful youth-serving programmes share. 17 of the 48 programmes achieved all of their original goals, but utilized a wide variety of means. When Roth and Brooks-Gunn expanded their criteria of 'most successful' programmes to the 21 that altered at least three of the five youth development outcomes, they found that these more comprehensive programmes were better at enhancing participants' competency and confidence. They seemed to do so by creating a supportive and empowering environment.

What the research says

- 3.14 Despite using different methodologies and inclusion criterion, the collated evidence tells a common story. Few rigorously evaluated, successful youth-serving programmes qualify as positive youth development programmes. Positive youth development programmes are characterised by their breadth (both in terms of programme goals and in terms of programme domains) and attentiveness to the programme environment. Those programmes that do embrace a positive youth development framework report both an increase in positive developmental outcomes, particularly skill-based competencies, and a decrease in incidences of risk behaviour.
- 3.15 Without standardized outcome measures, the evidence is inconclusive as to whether PYD programmes yield better results than standard youth-serving programmes. What we do know is PYD programmes are not producing worse outcomes for their program participants, and that programs that achieve their intended outcomes tend to be long-term and with a strong emphasis on supportive adult relationships, mentoring, and bonding.

What the research does not say

- 3.16 The paucity of systematic, comparative PYD studies means that we do not yet know which programmatic attributes contribute to which developmental outcomes. Nor do we

know the link between programmatic attributes, developmental outcomes, and subject population. Perhaps 'at-risk' young people respond better to certain types of programmes than the general population of young people. None of the existing literature reviews looked at the relationship between *who* the programmes targeted, *how* the programmes were designed and implemented, and *what* results were achieved. The research is also noticeably silent on short-term versus long-term affects. The lack of longitudinal data has hampered our ability to test PYD's most critical indicator: a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood.

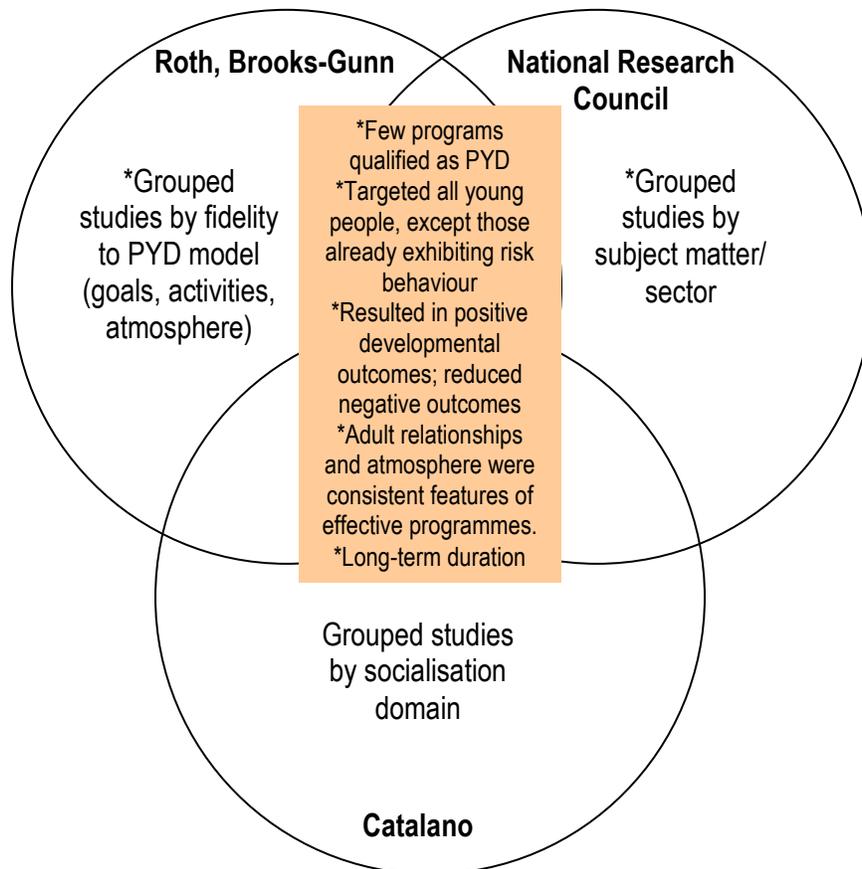


Diagram 3.1 showing focus on each meta-analysis considered.

SECTION 4: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

A PYD Vision of the Future

- 4.1 Explicitly adopting a positive youth development framework changes the contours of the policy and programmatic landscape. Youth development, unlike traditional public health or preventative frameworks, emphasises optimal functioning rather than risk reduction. As sections two and three showed, though, the evidence base does not yet reflect the asset-oriented ideals of the youth development movement. Outcome measurement remains largely deficit-laden. Despite these limitations, the research does reveal that positive youth development (PYD) programmes have an impact. We know PYD programmes are successful at enhancing young people's social and emotional competencies *and* at reducing incidences of risk behaviour. We would like to know how PYD programmes influence young people in the round. This gap between what PYD aims to accomplish and what we know it does means that in an era of evidence-based policymaking it can be hard for governments and service providers to invest in a new way of doing business.
- 4.2 There are some signs, though, that positive youth development is becoming embedded in policy. *Aiming High for Young People*, the UK government's ten-year strategy for positive activities, released in July 2007, articulates the government's vision for young people in entirely affirmative terms. "Young people should be valued members of society, whose achievements and contributions are welcomed and celebrated. This means society viewing young people positively, not seeing them as a problem to be solved (p.8)." While statements like these echo the language of the PYD movement, the fact that the strategy concentrates on 'positive activities' speaks to its incomplete adoption.
- 4.3 For all its omissions, the PYD literature clearly demonstrates that positive relationships with peers and adults are a critical element of healthy development. It is not mere participation in an activity that seems to promote the acquisition of skills and competencies, but the supportive, long-term connections young people establish with adult mentors and peers across a range of settings. Catalano, et. al's work (2004) tells us that PYD programmes which operate in multiple socialisation domains report positive youth outcomes, not just reductions in negative risk-behaviour. We are reminded again that both relationships and settings matter.
- 4.4 This is where the distinction between positive youth development programmes and the youth development movement becomes useful. Positive youth development programmes strive for individual-level change at the same time the movement strives for systems-wide change. If we are to increase young people's access to supportive mentors and role models, we must not only modify the way youth services and programmes are designed and implemented, but we must also cultivate a society that values strong youth-adult relationships. The question of course is how.

Systems-Level Change

- 4.5 PYD driven policy abides by a different investment logic than policy driven purely by problem containment and reduction. England's response to anti-social behaviour is an illustrative example. The RESPECT action plan (2006) aimed to enhance positive

behaviours by tackling poor behaviours and targeting persistent offenders. Although the action plan called for more diversionary activities and support services for young people and 'problem-families,' it was the justice and law enforcement sectors that primarily owned and operated the policy. Cracking down on immediate problems, rather than looking at the wider context in which those problems occurred, took centre stage. The anti-social behaviour label became a convenient mechanism for confirming adults' worst fears about adolescents: hooligans who disrupt the safety and security of communities.

- 4.6 Rather than label and exclude those engaged in negative behaviour, a PYD approach would seek to better integrate those at-risk into their families, schools, and communities. And instead of identifying and calling out negative behaviour, a PYD approach would start by recognising positive, pro-social behaviour. Focusing on what young people *should* be doing has implications for resource allocation and delivery. There is a need to increase the capacity of the youth workforce to help better engage young people in their families, schools, and communities. And there is a need to create an environment where young people feel valued, respected, and encouraged to take positive risks. This starts by shifting away from punitive rhetoric. Young people are on a developmental trajectory: they are continuously learning, growing, and sometimes making mistakes. Over-emphasising negative risk behaviour can keep young people from seeking out the challenging, horizon-expanding opportunities that are so crucial for positive adolescent development. Indeed, when we look at behaviour in isolation of young people's developmental process, we miss out on the bigger picture and thus on the ability to spark sustainable change.
- 4.7 The major differences between a PYD approach to public policy and a problem-solving approach to public policy are outlined in the chart below.

	PYD Approach	Problem-Solving Approach
Policy Goals	To ensure young people have access to the opportunities and supports they need to make a successful transition to adulthood.	To reduce or eliminate problem behaviours.
Policy Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce development • Programme standards • Organisational standards • Performance incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibitive legislation • Enforcement • Treatment
Policy Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground-Up; Community-driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-Down; Expert-driven
Budget Allocation	Integrated service contracts and blended funding	Single sector, categorical funding

Success Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of young people engaged and succeeding in school, work, community service • Number of young people engaged in healthy, 'future-seeking' behaviours • Number of young people who feel connected to an adult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of young people not engaged in risk-behaviour
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Community-Level Change

- 4.8 While positive youth development can be promoted and encouraged at a policy level, ultimately it's left to families, schools, communities, and the youth sector to deliver thriving young people. Third-sector organisations that help build local capacity have a particularly important role to play. They can signal adoption of a PYD approach by investing in people over and above pre-packaged curricula, toolkits, and static resource materials.
- 4.9 Human capital is the most critical resource for 'doing' PYD well. Parents, teachers, youth workers, and community members must be well equipped to reach out to and build long-lasting relationships with young people. To be well equipped, these stakeholders need to understand young people's developmental process and their developmental needs at different stages, particularly as they transition between schools and peer groups. Indeed, the biological, social, emotional, spiritual, and behavioural changes that converge in adolescence require a set of tools and techniques distinct from those used with children or adults. The expectations families, schools, and communities have of their adolescents should align with this growth trajectory.
- 4.10 Rooting youth worker training in adolescent development requires looking at youth workers as professionals with an expertise in an age group/demographic, rather than as hourly workers who run playgroups and activities. It also means working to build a stable workforce. High turnover prevents effective relationship-building. Finally, it means redefining good work. Third-sector organisations and foundations which fund youth work can promote a performance framework that rewards engagement, not just attendance. Young people showing up at an event or a programme is not enough. Unless young people are active participants and feel well connected to the setting they are in, a PYD approach will have failed.
- 4.11 Fully translating PYD into practice demands a comprehensive, rather than categorical, approach to service provision. Instead of developing programmes to respond to a series of problem behaviours—tobacco, drugs, bullying, teenage pregnancy, etc.—a PYD approach targets the underlying protective factors, such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. This doesn't mean that PYD programmes do not address risk behaviours and have content specific to the issues affecting youth, but that they recognise that young people need a common platform of skills to disengage from risk and thrive.
- 4.12 A PYD approach to service provision can thus be contrasted from a problem-solving or risk-reduction approach to service provision in the following ways:

	PYD Approach	Risk-Reduction Approach
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looks across risk behaviours to address common risk and protective factors Emphasises the application of skills and competencies within 'real-world' environments Relationship-driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses risk behaviours one at a time Emphasises the acquisition of issue-specific knowledge (for example, the # of people who die from tobacco related illnesses each year) and refusal skills Activity-driven
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on who delivers programmes and services Invests in workforce development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses on what the programmes and services deliver Invests in curriculum development
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality-focused: measures young people's engagement and active participation, and the intensity of relationships formed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantity-focused: measures the number of young people in attendance and the hours of curriculum instruction

4.13 *Aiming High for Young People: A Ten-year Strategy for Positive Activities* (HM Treasury 2007) moves quite definitively towards a PYD approach, naming structure, safety, inclusiveness, creativity, holism, user engagement, continuity, and accessibility as central to the effective delivery of positive activities. What keeps the ten-year youth strategy from being firmly rooted within a PYD framework is its persistent focus on *activities* rather than on domains or settings, and its relative silence on the concept of relationship. The ten-year youth strategy also doesn't interweave developmental constructs into its delivery strategies. The adolescent development literature is presented as a rationale for intervening during adolescence, but does not seem to form the basis for service design.

Research and Evaluation Level Change

4.14 Ultimately what distinguishes a youth development approach from other approaches is a steadfast focus on positive outcomes for young people. Risk reduction is a good thing insofar as it puts young people on the path to optimal health and well-being. But unless we are able to measure positive youth outcomes, positive youth development practice will likely look quite similar to preventative, risk-reduction practices. That is because the way in which we measure programme success influences service providers' behaviour. When service providers are on the line for achieving a reduction in adolescent smoking rates, they understandably will be heavily focused on behavioural change. When service providers are on the line for improving young people's sense of self-efficacy and positive identity, their focus will likely shift towards relationship building.

4.15 Unfortunately, service providers frequently lack the tools they need to measure the things they are trying to change. Foundations and third-sector organisations, working alongside researchers and academics, can change that by investing in indicator development. For example, Klein and colleagues (2006) designed a brief, standardised

instrument (READY tool) to measure multiple youth development constructs. They found that four youth development outcomes—social skills, constructive use of leisure time, decision-making skills, and caring adult relationships—factored into reliable statistical constructs for adolescents over the age of 13. More of this work is needed. As Moore writes in her 2004 article *Indicators of Child Well-Being: the Promise of Youth Development*, “There is a lot of work to do to develop positive indicators, particularly a system of indicators that is conceptually coherent and psychometrically rigorous.”

- 4.16 One of the reasons why deficient-oriented indicators dominate is that greater consensus exists on what to measure. It is far easier to agree on what young people should not do than it is to agree on what young people should do to succeed. While few people would disagree with a broad, headline goal of thriving young people, at a concrete, statistical level, thriving means different things to different communities. Perhaps this is the most useful output of adopting a PYD approach in the medium term: an explicit conversation about what we want from our young people and how families, schools, and communities can help young people get there.
- 4.17 Key to any explicit conversation is up-to-date evidence. Funding bodies must not only prioritise indicator development, but also resource rigorous, quasi-experimental evaluations. As much as we need real-time evaluation data to help evidence our policy and programmatic directions, we also need to look ahead and identify future drivers of youth health and well-being. In other words, we need qualitative data to complement more traditional quantitative data. We can do this by engaging youth as researchers and anthropologists to help illuminate the contexts in which they grow up. The virtual world is quickly becoming a dominant context for some young people, yet PYD programmes continue to address the traditional socialisation domains of family, school, and community. PYD programmes also remain culturally generic. We need young people and their families to make sure PYD programmes reflect and enhance their backgrounds and identities. Indeed, qualitative data designed and collected by young people and their families might just provide us with fresh insights about how to make sure all of our young people reach their maximum potential.

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