Positive Youth Justice

Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development

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The development of the report began with a series of papers by students from the School of Social Service Administration which addressed various components of positive youth development and how they might be applied in designing interventions for young offenders. Their summaries of positive youth development helped the authors to organize the approach taken in this report. The Chicago students included: Tashia Ayala, Kenneth Davis, Ellen Donohue, Lydia Kittleson, Ah Young Lee, Camille Leung, Mary Marks, William Schlachter, Louisa Shannon, Rebecca Steinmetz, Olivia Toro, John Tower, and Sarah Tsai.

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The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) is pleased to offer examples of programs and organizations that apply youth development principles to their work, yet the inclusion of particular examples in this report should not be construed as an endorsement of any listed person, organization or approach, nor does it imply that every component of every program included here is fully consistent with positive youth development.

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Foreword

Some ideas have a ripple effect. They start in a small circle of influence and grow in impact affecting larger circles of society as they grow. The idea of "positive youth development" or "PYD" is such an idea.

Initially, PYD was promoted as a way for youth service providers, youth leaders, afterschool programs and educators to become focused on maximizing and helping youth to develop their natural talents, assets and skills in decision-making, cooperation, reciprocity and giving to others, and setting high expectations for themselves and their peers. PYD innovations gave rise to teens providing charitable, community service, the evolution of service learning, and opened doors for youth to serve on government advisory bodies and commissions, and nonprofit boards. This has all been productive—especially in terms of facilitating a healthy respect and greater collaboration between youth and adults and allowing youths' thoughts, experiences and "voices" to be taken seriously and incorporated into the design and delivery of policies and programs.

Yet, in the arenas of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, PYD approaches and innovations are more limited in scope and impact, or missing altogether. Clearly, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention is an arena where PYD could have its most profound positive value and impact. If building on the assets of young people is developmentally appropriate in one arena, it is likely to be so in another. Fortunately, there are leading examples of PYD approaches that engage and build on the myriad intellectual, social, creative, physical and spiritual strengths, and pro-social qualities of at-risk and court involved youth.

For juvenile justice system professionals, practitioners, advocates and clients, this report reshapes and enhances the concept of PYD – recasting and extending its definition to "positive youth justice." The words alone say a lot. For the nation's State Advisory Groups and other Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) members and allies, this concept is both inspiring and has practical application. Positive youth justice emphasizes a strength-based, developmentally-sound approach that builds on community-connections, positive peer culture and family engagement. For youth placed away from family in residential care, detention or corrections, positive youth justice offers new directions to help us create (with and for youth) a wider range of constructive pathways to reconnect with school, family and community life, and redefine their own futures.

There are abundant good reasons to help youth (both in and outside of the court) to access and develop their pro-social strengths and attributes to increase their abilities to contribute to healthy, safe family and community life. The approaches described in this report are also supported by the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA). Section 223 (a)(K) addressing State Plans under Title II of the JJDPA, for instance, urges state advisory groups and state agencies to provide direction and support for: "programs for positive youth development that assist delinquent and other at-risk youth in obtaining: (1) a sense of safety and structure; (2) a sense of belonging and membership; (3) a sense of self-worth and social contribution; (4) a sense of independence and control over one's life; and (5) a sense of closeness in interpersonal relationships."

We are grateful to bring attention with this report to the leadership and work of Jeffrey A. Butts, Gordon Bazemore and Aundra Saa Meroe. Together, we seek to cast a bright light on the value of positive youth justice in juvenile justice and delinquency prevention settings including probation, restorative justice, court services, alternatives to detention, counseling and treatment, detention and corrections, and re-entry.

In our experience as professionals working directly with court-involved youth, and as parents raising teenagers, we have found real promise in PYD approaches as we have seen our adolescents develop newfound confidence, skills and insights. It is exciting to envision that such approaches—as advanced by Jeff, Gordon, Aundra and their colleagues—could take root and, with your help, rapidly grow in a range of justice contexts across states and localities, nationwide.

-- Nancy Gannon Hornberger, Executive Director, Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Washington, DC
-- Vincent N. Schiraldi, Commissioner of Probation, New York City, former Director, Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, Washington, DC

April 2010

Executive Summary

The concepts and principles of positive youth development (PYD) offer valuable guidance for the design of interventions for youthful offenders. Unfortunately, few programs draw on PYD principles, often for very good reasons. We believe that can change.

The most common approaches to PYD presume that young people possess conventional attitudes and a ready willingness to cooperate with pro-social peers and adults. These are not qualities that one finds in abundance among youth involved with the juvenile court and the larger juvenile justice system. Almost by definition, court-involved youth have a greater inclination than do other youth to violate rules, disregard convention and defy authority.

A positive youth development framework for these youth would have to be different from a framework designed for more conventional or normative youth. Some features of PYD models may be relevant for young offenders, but which ones? Which aspects of PYD are likely to be effective with youth who have already engaged in anti-social or illegal behavior? Is there a way to adapt the general principles of PYD for use in a justice environment?

The premise of this report is that PYD could, and should be adapted for justice-involved youth. In fact, PYD might be well suited as a principal theory of habilitation and rehabilitation for young offenders. Other treatments and approaches will continue to be necessary as a supplemental response to particular subsets of youth in the justice system. Youth who commit violent acts, for example, will always prompt a strong response from law enforcement and corrections. Yet, punishment and deterrence are not effective strategies for helping youth to succeed at school and work. Young people with drug dependencies need high-quality substance abuse treatments, although drug treatment programs cannot prepare them to meet every type of challenge they are likely to face in life. Youth with mental health problems need specialized interventions, but such programs are clearly not sufficient by themselves as a means of ensuring a successful transition to adulthood.

All justice-involved youth, even those who require some of these specialized treatments, need basic supports and opportunities if they are to avoid future criminality and learn to lead positive, productive adult lives. Where should justice authorities turn to design such interventions?

We suggest that PYD could be an effective framework for designing general interventions for young offenders. A positive youth development framework would encourage youth justice systems to focus on protective factors as well as risk factors, strengths as well as problems, and broader efforts to facilitate successful transitions to adulthood for justice-involved youth. In this report, we propose such a framework for youth justice interventions. That framework is Positive Youth Justice.

The Positive Youth Justice Model (Model) includes 12 key components depicted as a 2 by 6 matrix. Each cell in the matrix represents the interaction of two key assets needed by all youth: (1) learning/doing, and (2) attaching/belonging. Each asset should be developed within the context of six separate life domains (work, education, relationships, community, health, and creativity). Our goals in this report are to introduce and explain the Positive Youth Justice Model by:

- Briefly reviewing the research literature about adolescent development and youth justice interventions;
- Identifying key theoretical and empirical findings that are supportive of a positive youth development framework;
- Exploring how youth justice practitioners use positive youth development concepts to build interventions for young offenders;
- Examining the array of concepts related to positive youth development and reducing them to a smaller, more workable set of key components that could be applied in justice settings; and
- Considering how the Positive Youth Justice Model could be used to design interventions and create outcome measures for youth justice agencies.

Introduction

A group of young, primarily African American women in a semi-secure juvenile residential facility in Pompano Beach, Florida propose, plan, and implement a service project that assists grandparents raising their grandchildren in high-crime neighborhoods. Over six-months, they help with shopping and other chores, including child sitting, lawn mowing, and house cleaning. The young women conclude the project by creating oral histories of the grandparents, holding a social event, and developing a plan—as suggested by one of the grandmothers—to clean up and restore a historically black cemetery in the area.

In the Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) Community Intensive Supervision (CISP) program, a day treatment alternative to incarceration located in the city's largely African American Hill District, a group of youth work with adults from the community to plan, plant, and maintain a community garden. The CISP staff now routinely receives calls for assistance from churches and other local groups impressed with the garden who wish to launch other projects in collaboration with young people. One project involves youth in a voter registration effort.

In Bend, Oregon, young offenders on probation and adult mentors work together to build a domestic violence respite center; cut and deliver firewood for elderly residents; restore trout streams; and, if age 16 or older, assist with summer fire fighting on public land.

Youth incarcerated in the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility learn about the needs of a local hospital nursery. They make bumper pads, quilts, blankets, and pillows and visit regularly with infants in the nursery. The same youth create anti-gang videos, grow vegetables for delivery to a homeless shelter, and become regular companions to elderly nursing home residents.

In a residential program in Palm Beach County, Florida, incarcerated offenders work with park rangers from the Bureau of Land Management on environmental restoration projects in a wildlife preserve in the Loxahatchee National Forest. A group of young offenders works as part of the video team that documents the program. The effort raises community awareness of their accomplishments and of the program's "balanced and restorative justice" approach. The team completes the video project for use as a training film by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

What do these scenarios have in common? They describe juvenile justice program settings where young people and adults work together in ways that are consistent with the principles of PYD. Youth and adults establish positive, pro-social relationships and then cooperate to provide opportunities and supports for other people, including other justice-involved youth. By actively participating in these efforts, young people learn that while they may have made mistakes in the past, they are also capable of learning new skills they can use to better themselves, their families, and their communities. The programs and projects described here allow young offenders to practice and demonstrate competency, caring, and a willingness to improve community life, which is essential to their personal development and rehabilitation.

photo courtesy Eric Sutton/ Outward Bound

What is Positive Youth Development?

Positive youth development is a comprehensive way of thinking about the development of adolescents and the factors that facilitate their successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. The basic concepts emerged from several decades of research and practice innovation, and reflect profound changes in how we think about adolescents and their development. Until the late 20th Century, adolescence was generally seen as a period of turmoil. Anyone wishing to facilitate healthy adolescent development focused on the management of risk factors. Parents, teachers, and youth service professionals tried to identify and fix the problems affecting youth: school failure and dropout, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, and crime. This deficit-based approach to adolescence focused on what can go wrong in a young person's development. The individual treatment philosophy of the original juvenile court movement often embodied this approach.

The deficit view of adolescence dominated policy, practice, and research throughout most of the 20th century. In recent decades, experts on adolescent development began to challenge the deficit-based perspective. Studies underscored the reality that most children and youth manage to thrive and develop, even in the presence of multiple risk factors. Rutter (1993) and others began to use the term "resilience" to describe the set of qualities that supports healthy development in the face of adversity. Social programs investigated methods of building on this resilience and incorporating those methods in their work with adolescents (Catalano et al., 2004). Youth advocates began to see adolescence as a process dominated not by adversity and risk, but by positive opportunities for youth to learn, serve, and benefit from their interactions with pro-social adults and communities (Benson & Pittman, 2001).

This new strength-based, resilience-oriented perspective on adolescence is known as positive youth development, a term in use since at least the early 1970s (Polk & Kobrin, 1972). The basic premise of PYD is that even the most disadvantaged young person can develop positively when connected to the right mix of opportunities, supports, positive roles, and relationships. Having a wide range of pro-social experiences during adolescence allows a young person to practice and demonstrate competency and to embrace his or her responsibilities and value to the larger community. The central purpose of PYD is action. Communities are encouraged to break down barriers to opportunity, and provide positive roles and relationships for all youth, including the most disadvantaged and disconnected. While the term "adolescent development" describes a topic of scientific investigation in which researchers generate knowledge about the processes of individual growth and maturation, PYD represents the various methods, techniques, grounded theories, and practices used to apply scientific knowledge about adolescent development in agency and community settings (e.g., Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2000).

The concepts underlying PYD enjoy broad support in the scientific community. In recent years, the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine released a number of important works related to PYD, including "Community Programs to Promote Youth Development" (2002) and "A Study of Interactions: Emerging Issues in the Science of Adolescence Workshop Summary" (2006). Researchers from a variety of disciplines have endorsed the value

of PYD principles and practices, their heritage in theories of adolescent development, their connections to community well-being, and their implications for public policy and social institutions. Practice guidelines for implementing effective youth development approaches are promoted by an array of organizations, including the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth, the Forum for Youth Investment, the National Network for Youth, the Community Network for Youth Development, the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, the National Youth Development Information Center, and the Search Institute. The Search Institute, in particular, has enjoyed broad exposure with its "40 Developmental Assets" framework, which identifies twenty internal and twenty external assets for positive youth development.

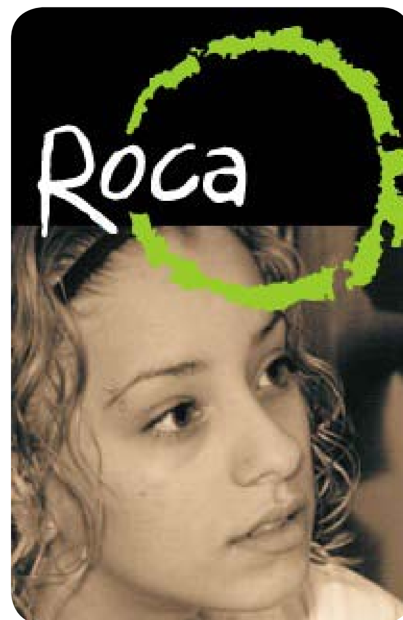
Despite the proliferation of models, PYD is not yet the dominant intervention framework in the youth justice system. Before PYD can become a practical approach for delivering services and supports in a youth justice context, researchers and practitioners need to refine the PYD model for a justice environment. First, they need to reduce the multitude of PYD concepts to a workable set of core elements. Having too many goals and principles is akin to having none. Next, youth justice professionals need to construct a framework that joins the operational realities of youth justice with the broad array of ideas linked with PYD. Practitioners need a PYD framework that is clearly rooted in the theoretical and empirical literature about adolescent development, but customized for a youth justice environment. We hope that this report will contribute to such an effort.

Building Connections

Relationship building is central to engaging youth in positive roles and productive social activities. Youth development interventions are unlikely to be effective without a strong focus on social development. A Boston area initiative called Roca, Incorporated, addresses the needs of low-income and/or immigrant youth who are at risk for involvement in criminal justice, gangs, youth pregnancy, or school attrition.

The program focuses on relationships between young people and their families. Roca uses a High-Risk Youth Intervention Model that employs sustained relationships to support young people in believing that education, employment, and civic responsibility are valid pursuits in the struggle to resist cycles of impoverishment and community violence.

The Roca motto is "Truth, Trust & Transformation." All three rely on strong relationship ties. Young people are engaged in dialogue about their own challenges and those faced by their communities. Over time, trust is established between young people. Intensive mentoring leads to a new way of life supported by new competencies and skills, academic development, and eventual employment.



Evaluation studies demonstrate that ninety-six percent of program graduates maintain pro-social relationships with adults, ninety-eight percent avoid recidivism, and eighty-four percent continue their education or are employed.

www.rocainc.org

Theory into Practice

Despite broad support for PYD, direct application of the concept is often limited to low-risk adolescents or to comprehensive community development efforts that focus on all youth equally. It is not yet common for PYD theories and practices to inform the design and delivery of interventions for justice-involved youth.

There are several reasons for this. First, some practitioners and policymakers believe that young offenders are not like "normal" youth, that they are not amenable to "development," and need to be controlled instead. Certainly, among the total population of juvenile offenders, some youths are sufficiently violent and so antisocial that even the most optimistic advocate may see little hope for rehabilitation. Fortunately, this description applies to very few (Butts, Mayer, & Ruth, 2005). The vast majority of young offenders would likely respond to PYD just as well as other youths. If youth development principles provide a clear pathway to pro-social futures for low-risk youth, it should be possible to apply the same principles, albeit in more creative and intensive ways, to facilitate the social development of youthful offenders (Bazemore & Terry, 1997).

A second challenge in using PYD for youth justice interventions is related to concerns about resources. Focusing interventions on the type of positive outcomes suggested by PYD requires the efforts of family members, volunteers, neighborhood groups, local businesses, and community organizations. Developing and sustaining these resources is difficult and time consuming. Neighborhood-based approaches, however, are vital to the success of the youth development model. Professionals alone cannot provide sufficient support for youths, nor can they ensure their access to new roles and positive opportunities. Communities that try a shortcut and buy solutions from local service providers may end up with more bureaucracy and professionalized, reimbursement-oriented services rather than genuine community-based resources and opportunities for youth. Community engagement and a neighborhood focus are necessary features of the PYD model, but incorporating these features in a youth justice context introduces complexity and increases the amount of effort required to build effective interventions.

The third and most challenging obstacle is the uncharted pathway from theory to practice. A PYD framework for youth justice cannot be fashioned by merely combining existing treatment resources in a new way. Youth justice agencies traditionally focus their treatment efforts on the problems and deficits that affect justice-involved youth, including drug use, mental health problems, violence, and anger. Positive youth development on the other hand, focuses on protective factors and building new social assets for youth. It is a general model for crime prevention and reduction that calls for a broad range of services, supports, and opportunities. In a PYD model, development is the goal. Other treatments may be needed, but they are used on a prescriptive basis rather than on a programmatic basis.

Currently, there are no ready-to-use, off-the-shelf models for implementing the PYD approach in youth justice. To design such a model, practitioners and community leaders must answer some important questions. What are the most appropriate targets for PYD-compatible interventions? Which of the many goals and principles suggested by the PYD approach are truly essential? How many of the resources demanded by the PYD model already exist, and how many of them need to be invented? What aspects of the current youth justice system are and are not, acceptable from a PYD perspective? What exactly should we be doing differently? In short, what is the "theory of change" suggested by the PYD framework?

A valid and reasonable strategy for embedding PYD in juvenile justice must be grounded in sound theory. A theoretical framework answers the most practical intervention question: what needs to happen to move this youth away from delinquent behavior and toward pro-social behavior? Two broad bodies of research-based theory have directly informed youth development policy and practice: social learning theory (e.g., Bandura, 1977) and social control theory (Hirschi, 1968). Social learning theory helps us to understand how youth come to view delinquency and crime as desirable, and how we may redirect youth away from delinquent behavior. Social control theory suggests that the bonds young people develop to conventional institutions, groups, and individuals are the key to avoiding crime and delinquency. Both theories have informed decades of empirical research, as well as new practice models.

Social Learning Theory

According to social learning theory, delinquency is the outcome of an experiential process in which youth learn to value their participation in crime and other risky behaviors. Social learning theory can be viewed through a strictly behavioral lens or it can include an independent role for interactions and relationships. A behavioral perspective on learning theory would suggest that youth learn to engage in criminal acts through a process of rewards and punishment (Akers, 1998). An interaction perspective would suggest that delinquency is learned through exchanges with peers and other close contacts. It is through relationships that youth learn to define crime as neither wrong nor deviant, and to justify their participation in illegal behavior (Elliot, 1993).

Changing the Frame

ASSUMPTIONS	PRIMARY LENS: Youth as Victim	Youth as Villain	Youth as Resource
Origins of Most Delinquent Behavior	Symptom of underlying disturbance	Anti-social impulses, lack of restraint due to permissiveness and the absence of punishment	Normative response to adolescent needs for status, belonging, power & excitement, lack of empathy
How Delinquent Youth Compare with Other Adolescents	Fundamentally different in psychological and emotional makeup	Fundamentally different motivations and impulses toward deviant behavior	Largely similar to other adolescents but with fewer social assets
Delinquent Youth Capacity for Behavior Change	Incapable of conventional behavior without therapeutic interventions	Incapable of conventional behavior without strict discipline and the threat of punishment	Inherently capable of conventional behavior with sufficient access to supports and pro-social opportunities
Principal Intervention Strategy	Individual or family-based therapeutic treatment	Deterrence and retributive punishment	Skill development, attachment and engagement
Role of Treatment	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Risks of Treatment	Could fail to address underlying cause(s)	Could delay or impede deterrence	Could introduce stigma or harm—i.e., iatrogenic effects

Intervention practices associated with the behavioral aspects of social learning theory would seek to reduce the positive incentives for crime and to create new incentives for pro-social behavior. According to the behavioral approach, youth must unlearn delinquent behavior and adapt new patterns of positive behavior that bring different kinds of rewards, experiences, and connections. Interactional learning models would pay more attention to limiting a youth's exposure to delinquent peers. An interaction approach would emphasize group learning and ensure that youth are exposed to pro-social ways of meeting their needs rather than those associated with illegal behavior (Sutherland & Cressy, 1974). For both interactionists and behaviorists, "learning by doing" is the pathway into delinquency, and it can be the pathway out.

Social Control (Attachment) Theory

Social control theory suggests that the strength and durability of an individual's bonds or commitments to conventional society inhibit social deviance (Hirshi, 1969; Simpson, 1976). The need for belonging and attachment to others is "a fundamental human motivation" influencing many behavioral, emotional, and cognitive processes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Numerous studies highlight the association between attachments and positive youth outcomes. Early sociologists argued that the various forms of social deviance, including criminal behavior, emerge when the connections between individuals and the larger society are weak (Durkheim, 1947).

In one of the foundational applications of social control theory to the field of crime and delinquency, Hirschi (1969) argued that the most important question is not "why do they do it?" (i.e., why do criminals commit crime), but rather "why do the rest of us not do it?" Social control theory offers an explanation—social bonds. When an individual's bonds to society are strong, they prevent or limit crime and other deviant behavior. When bonds are weak, they increase the probability of deviance. Weak or broken bonds do not "cause" delinquency, but rather allow it to happen (Whitehead & Lab, 2009, p. 89). Hirschi proposed four elements that help to shape the social bonds between individuals and their society:

- Attachments—expressed concern about what others think, or "sensitivity to the opinion of others"(Hirschi, 1969, p. 22) that would lead individuals to avoid crime and negative behavior in order to avoid disappointing a respected individual or group (e.g., teachers or parents);
- Commitments— "investment of time, energy and oneself" in a particular form of conventional activity and awareness that deviant behavior would place such investment at risk (Whitehead & Lab, 2009, p. 89);
- Involvements—sufficient time and energy spent on conventional activities such that less time remains for delinquent behavior; and
- Beliefs—the extent to which an individual "has been socialized into and accepts the common belief system" (Whitehead & Lab, 2009, p. 89), assuming there is "a common value system" within the society or group" (Hirschi, 1969).

Although theoreticians continue to debate the relative strength or salience of the particular elements of social bonds (e.g., involvements), the basic tenets of social control theory are strongly predictive and have been supported by rigorous research for decades (e.g., Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981). The strength of an individual's social bonds decreases the propensity for criminal or deviant behavior. In other words, youth are less attracted to criminal behavior when they are involved with others, learning useful skills, being rewarded for using those skills, enjoying strong relationships and forming attachments, and earning the respect of their communities. As these social bonds become internal, they build social control, which deters individuals from committing unlawful acts.

Theorizing a New Practice Paradigm

How should one begin to build a theoretically oriented framework for youth justice interventions using the concepts of PYD? Practitioners have realized for some time that PYD is a compelling approach for working with youth (Lofquist, 1983; Pittman & Fleming, 1991), but the justice field has made very little progress in identifying what parts of PYD are necessary in designing interventions for youthful offenders.

The ideas behind PYD are very broad. Without a specific framework for designing and operating PYD-inspired interventions, the seemingly endless array of concepts and principles could become overwhelming. Of all the possible components of PYD, which ones are critical in a justice context? Interventions often prepare youth for employment, but is work more important than school? Could opportunities for creative expression be just as important? How essential are health outcomes or relationship skills? Would it be wrong to reduce the focus on these elements in favor of work and education alone? Furthermore, how should justice systems maintain the quality of PYD interventions?

Practitioners attempting to incorporate PYD concepts into justice interventions have to make many choices as they design and implement programs. Research literature and strengths-based thinking, not just the biases or self-interest of program managers and service providers, should form the basis for their decisions. How should communities identify the extent to which their existing approaches should be modified? Some current practices in youth justice may fit the mold of youth development, but others may need to be adapted or ended entirely. Traditional juvenile justice practice is still largely based on remedial assumptions and a deficit orientation rather than a positive,

Valuing Community

The Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, began as a graffiti-removal initiative with a mural-painting component designed to engage adjudicated graffiti writers in learning more positive and productive ways to express their creativity. Since its inception, over 3,000 murals have been created and many are seen by thousands of tourists.

photo by Robyn Buseman/Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

While Mural Arts' focus has grown substantially over the years, one fundamental objective still applies: to use mural-making and art education as a means of combating and preventing crime.

Through its Restorative Justice programming, Mural Arts offers a constructive, creative outlet for Philadelphia's chronically truant/delinquent youth with a profound need for positive role models, structured activities, and opportunities to develop job skills.

The program works with adjudicated youth at several sites around Philadelphia, including the local detention center, a correctional center for young adults, a residential program for boys, and a local affiliate of the nationally known VisionQuest program. It also provides programming for adjudicated youth in supervised independent-living homes around the city.

www.muralarts.org

strength-based orientation (Lofquist, 1983; Bazemore, Nissen, & Dooley, 2000; Saleebey, 2002). How will we know when we have the right mix of resources for youth?

Implementing a PYD strategy for the youth justice system also requires significant changes in how staff and communities work with youth. PYD practice cannot be more of the same, or merely a variation on juvenile justice services. Positive youth development is not a program, or set of programs, but rather a fundamentally distinctive way of viewing and responding to all youth, including those involved in delinquency. It requires changes to institutional conditions that work against youth development. But what constitutes core practice and which elements of PYD are critical in all cases? Reform efforts will not be successful if juvenile justice officials can simply express support for a PYD "perspective" while continuing to conduct business as usual.

How should practitioners, policymakers, and researchers focus their attempts to embed positive youth development principles into youth justice policies and programs? We need to begin by articulating a theory of the PYD approach and how it should be incorporated into youth justice, and then engage in an honest assessment of current practices to see if they still fit. As Thomas Kuhn (1962) suggests, important changes at the level of a paradigm shift involve deep, systemic questioning of the current ways in which problems are solved. For a new paradigm to emerge, practitioners must be willing to reject the old paradigm, but they must also understand the new paradigm and embrace the need for fundamental change.

It remains to be seen whether PYD will ever rise to the level of a new paradigm for youth justice, but there is clear discontent with the old paradigm. In the past two decades, policymakers, administrators, and line staff in youth justice agencies have expressed growing doubts about the century-old individual treatment model, but they are often just as critical of the punitive model that is offered as an alternative to the treatment model (Butts & Mears, 2001). As some observers have suggested (Bazemore & Terry, 1997), practitioners, policymakers, and citizens are beginning to ask fundamental questions about the rationale for interventions that are based solely on either the punishment model or the individual treatment model:

- If delinquent behavior stems from a lack of integration and habilitation, why do correctional strategies focus on isolation of offenders?
- If the goal is to make offenders more responsible and accountable, why do we place them in positions (e.g., in most treatment programs) where others assume responsibility for their activities and behaviors?
- If many sources of delinquency are to be found in communities, families, and schools, why do probation strategies often target only the individual offender?
- If youth justice professionals are experts in delinquent behavior, why are youth justice agencies so often viewed by policymakers as an all-purpose "dumping ground" for troubled youth rather than a resource for resolving problems in schools and communities?

The old paradigm of juvenile justice views youthful offenders through one of two lenses, either victim or villain. A new PYD paradigm would view youth as potential resources for their families and communities. Following Kuhn (1962) and Zehr (1990), we propose that real changes in the youth justice system will begin when community leaders, policymakers, and practitioners learn to view youth through a new lens in which the primary goals of intervention are to assist and support adolescents caught up in negative behavior.

Core Assets and Practice Domains

The positive youth development approach supports youth in making successful transitions from adolescence to early adulthood by encouraging young people to develop useful skills and competencies, and to build stronger connections with pro-social peers, families, and communities (Butts, Mayer, & Ruth, 2005). Young people engaged with trustworthy adults and peers in the pursuit of meaningful activities and the acquisition of new skills are more likely to build the developmental assets needed for a positive adulthood. These assets include physical and psychological safety; age-appropriate and meaningful relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; self-efficacy; opportunities for skill building and collective recognition; and the integration of family, school, and community resources (Gardner, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008).

There are many areas in which practitioners can forge stronger connections between the science of adolescent development, the theory and practice of youth development, and the operational realities of programs for young people involved with the justice system. By necessity, any framework for implementing the positive youth development approach in the justice system will require many components.

Two Core Assets

Learning/Doing

- Developing new skills and competencies
- Actively using new skills
- Taking on new roles and responsibilities
- Developing self-efficacy and personal confidence

Attaching/Belonging

- Becoming an active member of pro-social group(s)
- Developing and enjoying the sense of belonging
- Placing a high value on service to others and being part of a larger community

Core Youth Assets

We next consider the basic building blocks of the Positive Youth Justice Model (Model). First, we propose dividing the wide array of youth development concepts into two core assets: (1) Learning/Doing, and (2) Attaching/Belonging. We then describe six practice domains in which youth justice systems could work with youth to develop these core assets.

Learning/Doing

Positive youth development is about learning, practicing and demonstrating the competence and trustworthiness to take on meaningful new roles and to provide added value to one's family and community. Youth development models often include extensive lists of skills, assets, and competencies that youth need for successful transitions to adulthood (e.g., see the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets). In this quest for comprehensiveness, such models often leave practitioners without clear guidance for how to focus their efforts. Polk and Kobrin (1972) offered one simple and useful definition of competency: "the capacity to do something well that others value" . This definition identifies a critical aspect of the personal, human capital, of young people on the borderline of becoming adults. Whatever skills youth develop, they must have something of value to offer to their communities. It is a difficult transformation for the justice system (and families) to move from seeing youth as "liabilities" to seeing them as "assets." Such profound transformations require concrete changes in youth skills and youth roles (Maloney et al., 2001).

The PYD emphasis on competency development is not new to youth justice professionals. Adults working in youth justice settings are acutely aware that young offenders need to demonstrate that they can become positive assets for their neighbors, employers, teachers, and others to make up for the harmful things they may have done in the past. Yet, it can be difficult to establish clear pathways for youth seeking to develop new skills and to move toward a productive and pro-social adulthood. In prior historical eras, youth became part of the workforce at a relatively early age, often working with their own families and extended families. Well into the 20th century, in fact, youth often worked on family farms and businesses where experiential learning was inevitable. Youth had more natural opportunities for apprenticeships that allowed them to learn by doing, to practice and to demonstrate competency, to enter a trade or guild, and in the process of working, to form connections with adults outside their own families. Although youth jobs were often less than ideal, and some included elements of exploitation, most youth had opportunities to connect with the adult world of work and to develop potentially marketable skills. In contrast, today's youth have far fewer opportunities to learn and take on new roles, and far fewer chances to demonstrate the "capacity to do something well that others value." There are fewer opportunities for apprenticeships, and many work environments accessible to youth are those in which one's supervisor may be another adolescent with barely more than a year of job experience (e.g., fast food restaurants). Most jobs available to teens today do not offer the positive, developmentally appropriate opportunities needed by young people.

In a PYD framework, one of the principal goals of intervention for youth involved in the justice system would be to introduce them to new roles and to provide them with concrete experience in performing those roles. Creating new roles for youth includes creating new pathways to higher education and to work. It is a key indicator of the extent to which a youth-serving agency is actually "doing" positive youth development. In a PYD context, the practitioner's most important job is to place youth in situations where they take on new roles that promote positive connections with pro-social adults, continuous learning, and actual engagement in tasks related to community leadership and adult responsibilities (Bazemore, 1991).

The theory behind PYD's emphasis on promoting active new roles for youth has been called the "helper principle" (Pearl & Reissman, 1966; Saleebey, 2002). Youth essentially "do good (i.e., help others) in order to be good" (Toch, 2000; Maruna, 2001; Bazemore & Stinchcomb, 2004). Or, as one practitioner summarized this simple behavioral principle to the authors, "it is easier to act your way into better thinking, than to think your way into better acting." While the treatment field in both juvenile and adult corrections is increasingly enamored with cognitive treatments and their focus on "thinking errors" as a cause of delinquency, youth development is a theory of action. Actual experience in pro-social roles and relationships transforms both thinking and behavior (Trice & Roman, 1970; Maruna, 2001; Uggen, 2000).

Attaching/Belonging

Social support and one's connection with others are key components of human development. Thus, the second core asset in the Model is "Attaching/Belonging." Attachments, and the sense of belonging they bring, are probably the most significant part of the positive youth development framework. Virtually all PYD models highlight the importance of belonging and attachment in some way. For example, the "5 Cs Model" emphasizes character, competence, confidence, and caring/compassion, but also "connections" with peers, family, and community (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). The Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets" model underscores the significance of social belonging for promoting

positive youth outcomes. Several of the model's "external assets"—such as family support, positive family communication, adult relationships, adult role models, and positive peer influences—are particularly relevant (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Services and supports to ensure positive social ties are a traditional feature of programs for youthful offenders and those at risk of becoming offenders. One review of youth programs in the United States reported the clear benefits of youth interventions that provide opportunities for pro-social involvement and allow youths to "actively participate, make a positive contribution, and experience positive social exchanges" (Catalano et al., 2004). Depending on how they are implemented, a number of youth justice programs can be consistent with the positive youth development framework insofar as they attempt to shift the focus of intervention away from a deficit-based emphasis on control, and toward a strength-based emphasis on attachment.

Many promising youth programs promote stronger attachments between young people and their family members. They do so in several ways: (1) direct relational interventions, (2) parent support and training, and (3) the involvement of parents in the design and implementation of youth interventions. In a complete youth development model, parent support and family engagement are not stand-alone treatment objectives. They are linked to broader efforts to support youth in school- and/or community-based settings, ideally working with youth, parents, and other adults to promote positive youth/adult connections and new opportunities for youth to serve others. Positive youth development programs that focus on attaching youth to their families and schools have produced important improvements in school achievement and peer relations, and decreases in delinquent behavior (Catalano et al., 2004). Unfortunately, few such programs are designed specifically for court-involved youth.

Research supports the commonly held belief that young people benefit from having at least one close, enduring relationship with a caring adult. Youth reporting a positive connection with at least one supportive adult engage in fewer risky behaviors, including substance abuse and delinquency (Aspy et al., 2004; Oman et al., 2004). Evaluations show that youth who participate in relationships with adult mentors, for example, report improvements in self-efficacy and social competence as well as measurable reductions in problem behavior. Meta-analytic results support the general effectiveness of mentoring across a range of program types and youth populations (DuBois et al., 2002). Youth who report better relationships with mentors, as indicated by the frequency and consistency of contact, are generally more likely to show positive outcomes across a range of dimensions. Researchers warn, however, that youth-mentor relationships that are short-lived and characterized by conflict and disappointment may actually have harmful consequences for youth (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). In addition, mentoring relationships that focus only on recreational activities may fail to provide youth with positive new roles and thus not be compatible with a true PYD approach.

A large number of other programs that could be consistent with the positive youth development framework focus on pro-social integration of youth with their neighborhoods, schools, and communities. In contrast to family-focused interventions, community attachment strategies seek broader youth involvement and often lead to efforts to promote civic engagement. Community bonding activities are often just one component of these broader programs. They typically begin by increasing youth involvement in school, civic improvement projects, or church-related activity. The integration of youth into multiple social environments is a key component of the PYD framework.

Practice Domains

Developing new skills, taking on new roles, and building stronger pro-social attachments with others are related activities that build upon each other. A youth's experience in exercising new community roles should lead to stronger connections with pro-social peers and adults. Civic engagement and community service activities should provide new opportunities for competency building. Positive work experiences can lead to even more connections and positive relationships for youth. Obviously, there are an unlimited number of ways that a PYD approach to youth justice could take shape. To focus these efforts and to create feasible methods for monitoring youth outcomes, we propose a few key areas or domains of practice in which to concentrate. There are six key practice domains in the Positive Youth Justice Model: (1) work; (2) education; (3) relationships; (4) community; (5) health; and (6) creativity.

Work

Work experience and employment readiness have been key components in many strategies for delinquency prevention and crime reduction. In a PYD context, however, work experience is never used to punish youth or merely to compensate victims and society for crime-related losses. The primary function of work-related efforts is to improve youths' attitudes toward their communities and to enhance their skills and their potential for paid employment, while also reducing recidivism. Work and community service are not inherently retributive, especially when youth have a choice about their own activities. Research suggests that service and work-related strategies can be less intrusive and more effective than standard juvenile justice interventions (Butts & Snyder, 1992; Bazemore & Maloney, 1994; Uggen, 2000; Maruna, 2001; Schneider, 1990). Researchers find that work experience for teens is most beneficial when youth share in decisions about the best strategies for accomplishing a particular work task and when the work itself is something in which they find enjoyment, or at least meaning (Youth as Resources, 1997; Bazemore, 1991). Meaningful work encourages young people to consider their future goals while they develop useful skills. For many youth, a positive work experience facilitates a sense of pride, belonging, and efficacy (Wilson & Musick, 1999).

When work programs are part of a well-designed youth development strategy, they involve activities and skills that are future oriented and that help each youth to build upon his or her strengths and

Six Practice Domains

Work
- Job experience
- Apprenticeships
- Job preparedness
- Income and independence

Education
- Literacy
- Credentials
- Learning skills
- Career planning

Relationships
- Communication skills
- Conflict resolution
- Family systems
- Intimacy and support

Community
- Civic engagement
- Community leadership
- Service
- Responsibility

Health
- Physical activity
- Diet and nutrition
- Behavioral health
- Lifestyle and sexuality

Creativity
- Personal expression
- Visual arts
- Performing arts
- Language arts

interests (Bazemore & Terry, 1996; Bazemore, 1991). Work programs are actually more likely to meet the criteria for positive youth development than many other effective interventions, especially when they place youth in new roles where they can learn and demonstrate new skills, and develop positive relationships with pro-social adults. There are many reasons to believe that skills training and work experience may decrease a youth's chances of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system. Among other things, work promotes responsibility, reduces idleness, engages participants in productive activities, and provides an opportunity to develop friendships and relationships with other responsible adults. These ideas, whether articulated or not, have a profound influence on public policy for at-risk youth, as indicated by President Obama's vocal support during his 2008 campaign for work-related youth programs, including AmeriCorps, YouthBuild, and various models for "service-learning."

The emphasis on work, however, needs to be measured. Studies of adolescent employment have found that the effect of work on delinquency is complex. For example, very intense work schedules may contribute to higher rates of underage drinking among some high school students (McMorris & Uggen, 2000; Johnson, 2004). One study suggested that long work hours may lead to substance and alcohol abuse because working students do not have the time to engage in positive, structured activities that require regular commitments (such as team sports), and they are less likely to be diligent about protective health behaviors (e.g., sleep, nutrition, and exercise) (Safron, Schulenberg, & Bachman, 2001). Moreover, paid work generates economic resources that can provide youth with access to some activities that

Engaging with Work

Beneficial work experience, one of the key domains in the Positive Youth Justice model, has been used effectively by the Work Appreciation for Youth (WAY) program at Children's Village in New York. The program provides at-risk youth leaving residential programs with life skills to prepare them for successful transition into the community and for adulthood. The primary goal of WAY is to get young people to think of themselves as "people who work." The program recognizes the skills that young people need to become self-sufficient adults as: "a decent education, the attitudes and ethics needed for successful employment, and a belief in oneself and the possibility of controlling one's own future" (Baker, Olson, & Mincer, 2000).

The WAY program begins working with youth while they are still in short-term residential placement at Children's Village, and then provides post-residential support and guidance for 3 to 5 years with the goal of attaining high school completion and successful workforce entry. The program

starts with a sequence of four stages of work experiences; participants begin with unpaid chores on campus, progress to paid chores, followed by learn-to-work jobs, and finally employment in the community. A longitudinal study by the Child Welfare League of America found strong outcomes in graduation and employment rates among WAY participants. They gained employment experience and savings, achieved educational success, and were prepared for self-sufficiency. The research indicated potential effects in reducing criminality among its participants (Baker, Olson, & Mincer, 2000). In 1997, WAY received the National Youth Employment Coalition's PEPNet Award for being one of the most "promising and effective youth employment programs in the nation."

www.childrensvillage.org/

increase the risk of dangerous behavior (i.e., drugs, alcohol, automobiles). The evidence seems to suggest that extensive paid employment may not be appropriate for younger adolescents.

Programs serving young people can focus on work-related skills using strategies other than paid employment (Michael & Tuma, 1984). Programs often include apprenticeships, internships, and community service. When work-related youth programs are limited to paid employment, they naturally exclude youth under age 16, thereby neglecting much of the critical age group for crime prevention programs. Workforce development programs are also closely coordinated with educational efforts. Effective attachment to education and skill development programs is a critical component of any effort to prepare youth for participation in the labor force.

Previous research and program experience with work-related interventions for youthful offenders suggest a number of operating guidelines. Studies indicate that work experiences may be of greatest benefit for youth when certain conditions are considered during program design, including:

- The employment and volunteering experiences provided for youth must draw on, and develop youth strengths and skills and not simply be a way to occupy time;
- Youth must be directly and meaningfully involved in selecting what type of work they do;
- Work experiences for youth should involve them with relatively small, close-knit work groups to facilitate their acquisition of pro-social norms and behavior;
- Work experiences for adolescents must be carefully structured and age appropriate for the participants, especially younger adolescents (ages 12 to 15); and
- Time spent on work (or work readiness activities) for youth must be monitored so as not to interfere with other important youth activities (i.e., school, family time, physical activity, and community engagement).

Researchers and practitioners agree on the importance of combining work readiness with actual work experience and skill development. There is a broad consensus that work-related programs for youth should be age specific, with supports and opportunities for younger youth (e.g., under age 16) being focused on social skills, service, and job readiness, while programs for older youth should focus on work experience. Practitioners in work-related programs have suggested a number of "best practices" (e.g., Leslie, 2007). In particular, programs should operate within an explicit youth development orientation, they should maintain a program environment that promotes respect, caring, and mutual support, and they should incorporate a shared focus on attendance, clear pathways for careers and college, and active collaborations with other youth agencies and community organizations. Programs should also ensure the presence of a consistent and dedicated staff. Dedicated program staff and lasting relationships between youth and staff are essential for developing feelings of "belongingness," which many disconnected youth lack.

Good programs focus on building small, supportive communities within the program setting. They integrate social bonding in every part of the program and ideally involve youth and pro-social adults working together in apprentice relationships. Finally, effective programs deliver real work experience, including practical and specific training that provides youth with skills that are consistent with the local labor market. Good programs do not require that youth have prior work experience in order to participate. The most effective programs integrate skill development, academic learning, and job experience with intensive social supports and long-term follow-up.

Education

Young people navigate the transition from adolescence to adulthood largely by learning new skills. Obviously, much of this occurs in school. Through school and school-related activities, young people learn how to develop the intellectual, socio-cultural, and interpersonal skills and competencies that they will need in adulthood. The structure of traditional schooling is not always compatible with the objectives of youth development. School procedures reflect the culture of schooling. They emphasize standardized curricula, testing, the public measurement of performance, and student hierarchies based on achievement and conformity. For adolescents, the traditional school culture may conflict with their developmental needs for autonomy, peer group solidarity, and identity formation (Watts & Caldwell, 2008). A PYD approach to education would ensure that all youth are provided with opportunities for learning and applying new skills, whether or not this can happen in a conventional classroom. The primary goal of education is the development of skills, not the transmission and enforcement of classroom demeanor.

Integrating positive youth development (PYD) frameworks with school-based interventions, however, makes practical sense, given that children and youth spend much of their day-to-day lives in schools. Even for justice-involved youth, educational institutions are a dominant presence in their daily lives. Schools also have the infrastructure and resources to target many different facets of youth development. They provide opportunities for educational attainment, cognitive development,

Building Work Skills

The benefits of work may be enhanced by combining intensive technical apprenticeship with community service. YouthBuild is a national nonprofit organization that assists disadvantaged youth 16 to 24 years of age. Participants build affordable housing for low-income families while earning a GED (high school equivalency diploma) or traditional diploma, and developing effective work skills. Each of the more than 200 YouthBuild affiliate programs across the United States is linked to the national YouthBuild USA, which supports local programs by providing technical assistance, training and professional development, and communications support. YouthBuild's comprehensive approach includes alternative school, community service, job training, leadership development and civic engagement, counseling, and peer support groups.

The YouthBuild approach has been found effective both in protecting public safety and in developing youth. Cohen and Piquero (2008) analyzed data on nearly 400 youthful offenders who participated in YouthBuild. Post-program recidivism among YouthBuild participants was lower, and educational achievement higher, than the average outcome expected for similarly situated youth. Their analysis showed that each dollar spent on the YouthBuild Offender Project produced an estimated social return on investment ranging from $11 to $43. With the cost of service provision for each youth in the program estimated at $12,500, the total value of the return on investment was equivalent to a payout of $134,000 to $536,000 per young person.

www.youthbuild.org

photo courtesy YouthBuild

social-emotional learning, and the expansion of students' self-sufficiency and sense of responsibility. In ideal circumstances, schools also provide youth with a safe and healthy environment. If structured properly, schools could be strong partners in PYD strategies for youthful offenders.

Some traditional characteristics of the educational system make it difficult to incorporate PYD efforts in standard school settings. Schools often try to support academic performance by mandating that students meet particular grade point standards to participate in extracurricular and after-school activities. Poor academic performance is treated as an isolated, individual problem, even when it may be associated with a broader spectrum of forces within each student's family, school, and community, and when poor school attendance may be symptomatic of student disaffection with schooling. Most schools focus on enforcing attendance rather than investigating why students are drawn to absenteeism. School disciplinary enforcement practices segregate punished students from the general population and often aggravate the stigma associated with poor academic performance. Truancy enforcement criminalizes the most at-risk youth among the student population. Teachers, administrators, and peers learn to view at-risk students as delinquent. The increased surveillance and mistrust that accompany this classification can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Schur, 1971; Polk & Kobrin, 1972). Zero tolerance policies were developed to address the problem of drugs and guns in school, but were soon expanded beyond their original scope, and now often apply to minor infractions as well (Advancement Project, 2004).

School failure is one of the main precursors to delinquent behavior. Smerdon (2002) found that students who feel little or no connection to school are naturally drawn to youth with similar feelings. Lacking a school-based identity, such students fulfill their mutual need for peer association by joining together to defy rules and expectations at school. Cassidy and Bates (2005) observed that students react negatively when they perceive schools to be less than caring and positive. When schools are unable to deliver the care and attention needed by students, absenteeism is likely to increase (Bryk & Thum, 1989). By integrating PYD theory into their organization and structure, schools could demonstrate a shift in focus from deficit-centered interventions to youth engagement, attachment, and belonging. A strong sense of school membership could motivate students to feel a deeper commitment to the goals and purposes of school, to school structures and behavioral norms, and to academic work and personal development in general.

Providing students with a more comprehensive safety net—teachers and counselors trained to engage young people according to a positive youth development perspective—could also go a long way toward helping troubled students to access school resources and to develop their own capacities with confidence and feelings of safety. Gomez and Ang (2005) observed that supporting students with accessible and enthusiastic teachers and administrators helps to establish school cultures that support inclusive learning environments and that motivate students to engage in school and to excel academically and socially. Instead of relying on a system of punishments and sanctions, schools could reinforce pro-social behavior by providing constant and constructive feedback to students, and working to engage them actively in shaping the policies and structures of school.

The acquisition of skills, even academic skills, is most effective when seen as a starting point in a wider effort to build other developmental assets. Activities designed to build a youth's self-efficacy are particularly helpful for disadvantaged and marginalized adolescents. Positive perceptions of

personal agency are important dimensions in the construction of self-image. Increased self-efficacy helps to build resilience, coping skills, positive relationships with parents and peers, and a decreased vulnerability to life stress (Scales, Benson, & Leffert, 2000). Out-of-school time is at least as important as in-school time for the development of these skills. Researchers have long been interested in how the use of out-of-school time affects youth development, notably in afterschool programs (Mahoney, Harris, & Eccles, 2006). Leisure time offers just as much opportunity for skill development as school time, but the cumulative effect of consistently unstructured leisure may be diminished initiative, weakened concentration, and undeveloped social skills (Larson, 2000).

Organized activities occurring outside the school day could include school-based extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, and fine arts) and after-school programs that provide adult supervision and offer opportunities for academic assistance, recreation, and/or enrichment learning. Research shows positive correlations between enriching experiences that broaden youths' perspectives and improvement in skills. Participation in structured extracurricular activities is associated with higher academic performance and attainment, reduced rates of dropout, lower rates of substance abuse, delayed sexual activity among girls, better psychological adjustment, and reduced rates of delinquent behavior, including criminal arrest and antisocial behavior (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).

Relationships

Ensuring that youth have direct and lasting experiences with positive social relationships, and that they feel a deeper sense of belonging with their peers, families, and communities, is an essential component of the PYD framework. A rich body of literature in psychological, sociological, and criminological theory underscores the importance of social relationships for youth. Social attachment and belonging is not just a basic human need, but also a primary force in shaping human behavior. Youth programs that use the protective influence of belonging most effectively are those in which youth attachment and engagement occur in multiple contexts.

Unlike earlier eras, few adults today form long-lasting relationships with young people who are not their children unless they are educators or youth work professionals. For youth in high-risk neighborhoods, ongoing pro-social relationships with adults are essential. The value of reliable adult support for youth, even in the most difficult crises, is what former Austin, Texas prosecutor Ronnie Earle described (in a positive way) as a state of being "irrationally crazy" about a young person. Consistent caring and guidance plays a big role in resiliency throughout the ups and downs of adolescence, and is of primary importance in any youth development framework. The unshakeable support of one or more adults has been called the principle of "absolute belonging" (Boyes-Watson, 2008). Establishing such a bond with even the most troubled and delinquent youth requires practitioners to suspend disbelief; to act "as if" any youth can be turned around given enough support and the time to develop new abilities and capacities. The purpose of such relationships must always be partly affective and emotional, but partly pragmatic as well, changing the youth's situation from passive recipient of help to active provider of help.

Mentoring is the most widely used approach for ensuring that all youth experience the benefits of an enduring and supportive relationship with at least one pro-social adult. Mentoring relationships may also occur between peers or between youth and non-parent family members. Mentoring may be community based, or implemented in a school setting, an afterschool program, or a faith-based institution. Mentoring programs are increasingly

popular in the juvenile justice system. Mentors act as friends, confidants, and advisors for youth in need of adult support. Mentoring relationships are also believed to provide youth with critical opportunities for acquiring academic skills, gaining practical knowledge, and developing a sense of personal efficacy through participation in joint activities and role modeling (Darling, Hamilton, & Niego, 1994).

Community

Community participation, or "civic engagement", means different things to different people. In the broadest sense, it amounts to those "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" (Carpini, 2008). As such, it encompasses a wide range of activities, from motivating citizens to become active members of their communities, to all forms of volunteerism, participation in community organizations and religious programs, political activities, and general involvement in government and public policy debates. In the PYD context, community engagement could be defined by the organizations and groups that promote civic activities for at-risk youth—including juvenile offenders—and that place youth in the role of helping to build civil society and social capital (Flanagan & Syversten, 2006).

The added value for youth is the emphasis on finding a role in community and civil society, and using such activities to help them to grow into healthy and responsible adult citizens. Youth in the U.S. have a long history of community involvement and advocacy in political causes and organizations, ranging from participation in the Citizen

Looking Outward

Strenuous physical activity in a natural setting has innate appeal for many youth, especially those from communities without access to nature. For over 45 years, Outward Bound programs, have used physical activities – such as canoeing, backpacking, rock-climbing, sailing, dogsledding, and rafting – to promote resiliency in at-risk youth. Outward Bound trips typically last one month and may be specialized for different populations to include work with families, and follow up assistance for the youth at home or school. Skills promoted by the program include: problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, conflict resolution, communication, and self-awareness. Outward Bound has developed a number of specialized programs focusing on prevention (Intercept & FINS) and on entry level adjudicated youth (STEP).

The STEP program provides alternatives and services necessary to address and eliminate the factors that put a youth at greater risk of becoming a chronic offender. Comprehensive individualized performance planning targets the areas of: social skills development, academic achievement, family reunification, mental health & substance abuse counseling and education. The model incorporates evidence-based

practices including gender-specific strategies. In Florida, participants of STEP have averaged 2.5 year grade gain in reading.

The FINS program is a community-based program for youth and their families that utilizes a follow-up component to ensure transition of skills learned on the wilderness expedition to home and school. The FINS and STEP models have been successfully replicated in communities across the Southeast.

Intercept is a national program for youth who do not yet have an extensive history of delinquency, but who appear to be starting on a path to offending. Intercept received the 2009 Hillary E.C. Millar Award for Innovative Approaches to Adolescent Care from the Society for Adolescent Medicine.

www.outwardbound.org

Conservation Corps, to the civil rights struggle, environmentalism, anti-war movement, and to both sides of the debate over abortion. As Carpini (2008) noted, "Youth are increasingly involved in advocacy for community and social change, [that is no longer] the exclusive province of adult activists, politicians, or policy wonks." Ideally, this activity may begin a commitment that Robert Bellah (1999) has called "habits of the heart" that then becomes a lifelong enterprise.

A small but growing body of empirical research suggests that civic engagement and civic knowledge may have a positive impact on the health and well-being of youth, including crime and other risky behaviors (Uggen & Janicula, 1999). Promoting civic engagement for youth is an increasingly viable strategy for embedding PYD concepts in the youth justice system. Some programs, such as afterschool activities and community outreach, promote civic engagement as a primary prevention effort. Other programs promote civic engagement as a form of intervention for young offenders who would otherwise be more deeply involved in the traditional juvenile justice system. Youth justice programs that realize the value of civic engagement for positive youth development take advantage of opportunities to place delinquent youth in high profile collective efforts to improve their communities (Bazemore & Karp, 2004).

There is growing interest in the theoretical relationship between community participation and the ability of youth, especially troubled youth, to prepare for responsible, helpful, and healthy citizenship. The assumed relationship between civic engagement and youth development can be linked to the social capital perspective (Putnam, 2000; Winter, 2003). Bourdieu describes social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of . . . membership in a group, which provides its members with . . . collectively owned capital" (cited in Winter, 2003; see Putnam, 2000). For youth, who often feel the effects of social exclusion, social capital can be as simple as a positive relationship or affiliation with neighborhood and community associations. Thus, collective as well as personal efficacy can be achieved through volunteerism and political participation. "Civic engagement is a crucial component of the broader construct of social capital, and social capital . . . is a crucial resource for positive social, emotional, and intellectual development, which youth (and adults) can put to use throughout life" (Winter, 2003). As youth progress in age and move into adult roles, they use the social capital developed through civic engagement not only to improve their own outcomes, but the well-being of society as a whole.

Many lawmakers, academics, and adults believe that adolescence is a "stormy" period of development, characterized by resistance to authority, risky behaviors, and conflicts with parents. Adults often believe that youths have little or nothing to offer their communities because they lack the interest and the ability to contribute to social affairs. This view of young people creates a barrier between the adult world and the world of the adolescent, making it more difficult for adolescents to gain full membership in civil society (Zeldin, 2004). Youth may feel isolated from the "adult world" and the broader community in which they live. Such isolation can have a negative impact upon youths and frustrate their innate need to belong. Their exclusion from social groups results in conflict, stress, and tension.

Crime may be an indicator of poor social capital (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). Higher levels of community participation could create improved social networks, consensus, and a stronger environment of mutual support and trust (Flanagan & Syversten, 2006). Crime may be less likely to occur in such communities because the cultural norms of trust and support are fostered by broad

participation in religious and civic organizations. In simple terms, improving social capital through volunteerism and political activism could alter the social norms surrounding crime and a community's reaction to crime. Civic engagement seems to mitigate those cultural norms that allow violence and crime to take root. Increasing youth participation in community activities could be an important tool in stemming the adverse effects of crime, as well as keeping individual youth more bonded to conventional social norms.

Health – Physical Activity

Any program that works with young people must attend to their health and well-being. Many health-related concerns are already a focus of the youth justice system, notably mental health, behavioral health, and reproductive health. In one particular area, however, youth justice programs could improve their efforts significantly and in so doing advance the quality of positive youth development. This area is physical activity and vigorous exercise. When people think of physical activity or sports today, the first images that come to mind probably include treadmills and elliptical machines, and traditional team sports such as football, basketball, soccer, and baseball. If we imagine physical activity for children and adolescents, we most likely think of Little League, dance classes, and organized school sports such as tennis, golf, and swimming. All of these belong to the category of physical activity and sports, but in discussing the potential of PYD efforts with youthful offenders, we need to include organized games such as tag and ultimate Frisbee as well as nontraditional sports like rock-climbing, ropes courses, canoeing, hiking, table tennis, and yoga.

Researchers comparing physical activity with sedentary behavior among youth find that individuals engaged in some sort of regular physical activity have lower levels of participation in risky behaviors, such as early sexual activity, smoking, alcohol

Moving Toward Health

Concerted physical activity - with specific coaching and mentoring agendas - can have a strong and positive impact on youth at risk of justice involvement or recidivism. Sports or other physical disciplines can systematically nurture character building, teamwork, goal setting, and perseverance. A leading residential program, Rite of Passage, incorporates regular exercise into their youth development model for court-involved adolescents. Operating multiple residential facilities and community-based programs across the United States for the past 25 years, the core tenets of Rite of Passage include the recognition that programs must provide youth with the skills and opportunities for change, interventions must be appropriate to the developmental needs of adolescents, and young people can learn life lessons that are mutually beneficial to self and community. Rite of Passage began as an alternative to youth incarceration and focused upon counseling and athletics as a means for building self-esteem and a personal history of prosocial achievement. More recently, Rite of Passage has implemented evidence-based practices and a restorative justice approach to accompany athletic, academic, and vocational achievement.

www.riteofpassage.com

photos courtesy Rite of Passage

use, and truancy (Nelson & Gordon-Larsen, 2006). Participation in organized sports may provide youth with critical developmental experiences that, if managed properly, can help them to learn positive ways of regulating their emotions. These skills may be transferable to other areas of a youth's life (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003). Eccles and her colleagues (2003) found that participation in extracurricular activities, including sports, resulted in better high school GPAs and higher rates of college attendance and graduation. In particular, participation in sports resulted in an increased sense of commitment to school.

Any vigorous exercise that engages the body and has the potential to assist in individual development, including physical, social, and emotional well-being is considered physical activity. Integrating physical activity into interventions and prevention programs for young offenders is a relatively recent phenomenon, but research has clearly established the desirable effects of physical activity on adolescent health and behavior. Martinek and Hellison (1997) described various paths of influence between physical activity and youth resilience. Some of the ways that youth may benefit from participating in physical activity include:

- self-confidence, sense of belonging, and experience with success;
- response to challenges and better fitness;
- emotional and psychological development through experience with winning and losing, and through interactions with teammates, coaches, and other participants;
- ethical and moral development from learning about rules and the consequences of not following rules;
- learning the value of individuality, as each member of a team has talents and deficits that contribute in different ways to the success of the team;
- learning that individuals make a difference in group efforts, which translates into having control over some parts of their lives;
- stronger feelings of safety;
- stronger feelings of membership and commitment to group and community; and
- experience with enduring relationships with adults who encourage their success.

Youth are drawn naturally to activities that are physically engaging and challenging (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007). There are so many varieties of physical activity that programs have few problems in planning appropriate interventions for individual youths. Programs can also advance their PYD goals by asking youth to select the individual activities that are right for them, which creates stronger feelings of autonomy, ownership, and commitment (Andrews & Andrews, 2003).

The benefits of vigorous activity for youth, of course, do not have to be limited to physical health. Intervention programs for youth can leverage the effects of sports and exercise on social factors as well. For example, group sports may improve a youth's capacity for decision-making (Menestrel & Perkins, 2007). Peer group dynamics are value neutral; they can promote negative behaviors just as well as positive ones (Dishion, (McCord, & Poulin, 1999). Physical activity for delinquent and at-risk youth must be managed appropriately. It is not enough simply to encourage youth to exercise and play games in the hope that this might foster their development. Coaches and other staff should be trained in the goals and strategies of PYD. Physical activity can provide a positive contribution to youth development, but it can also have negative consequences, including violence, aggression, and emotional abuse. Staffing a youth program appropriately and training the staff are critical to a program's success.

If delinquent youth or those at risk of delinquency are able to engage in activities with one another that are developmentally appropriate and that foster positive outcomes like collaboration and problem solving, the cultural context could facilitate pro-social rather than antisocial behaviors. A key goal of using physical activity in a PYD framework is to create a peer group culture in which participants gain friendship and acceptance as part of a safe and organized group, and in which the group's activities promote each youth's capacity for learning and decision-making. The social bonds created among youth during physical activity could also support pro-social behavior. Relationships, commitments, and beliefs encourage us to behave in a law-abiding manner (Hirschi, 1969). If individuals feel connected to a valued group, they are more likely to abide by the norms and values of that group. A young person who has shared a positive experience in sustained physical activity with other youth is more likely to develop strong bonds with his or her teammates and to enjoy the benefits of belonging.

Creativity

The central goals of PYD are for youth to gain competence and character and to form pro-social attachments with others. Participation in the creative arts can be a powerful tool for accomplishing these goals. Several goals of the PYD framework are achievable through arts programming: (1) experience with structured activities, (2) skill development, (3) active participation in decision-making, (4) the formation of pro-social relationships with adults and peers, and (5) engagement in community and civic affairs (Benson & Pittman, 2001). Creative arts can include a wide range of activities, such as music, theater, dance, poetry, fiction and nonfiction writing, and all forms of visual media.

Involvement in creative activities may have short-term and long-term effects on youth outcomes. In the short term, involvement in the arts may increase youths' engagement and cooperation with pro-social adults and peers, and promote their successful participation in school and other structured activities. In the long term, arts programming could affect self-awareness, self-expression, aspirations, and attachment to school, family, and community. The concepts and skills learned from personal expression and the arts affect a wide range of other behaviors and social skills. Youth involved in the creative arts learn to express their feelings and thoughts, to work with others, to make decisions, and to plan for their futures—all skills linked to labor-market success. Some arts programs involve a strong component of community service. Art programs for youth have even ended up as business enterprises in their local neighborhoods, such as Fulton Arts in Atlanta, Georgia (Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999).

Art programs teach students to strive for excellence and to challenge themselves. Programs that promote personal expression through the arts allow youth to experience healthy competition and work hard to achieve success in an endeavor or talent that they create for themselves. They are challenged by the knowledge that an audience will be the ultimate judge of their work, whether through a performance or an exhibit. By anticipating the reactions of an audience, youth learn to shape their efforts for the public, and to place themselves in the position of an outside observer. Active involvement in the arts could serve as an

photo by Robyn Buseman/Philadelphia Mural Arts Project

effective tool for engaging youth in pro-social learning, encouraging them to grow as individuals, and providing them with opportunities for self-expression. Particularly for disadvantaged youth and young people involved with the juvenile justice system, an arts program may be their first opportunity to participate in self-expressive activities, such as music, dance and movement, theater, and creative writing.

Researchers and practitioners are just beginning to explore the role that creative expression may have in preventing and/or reducing risky behavior and promoting positive life outcomes for program participants. Catterall and his colleagues (1999) analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey to test the relationship between involvement in the arts and academic success. The results suggested that students involved in school-based arts programs showed increased creativity and greater social skills, and were less likely to drop out of school. Another study explored youth outcomes associated with participation in an art, sports, and life-skills program, and found strong associations between participation in an arts program and reduced criminal behavior (Strategic Policy and Youth Branch, 2003). Other researchers suggest that arts programs may be more effective when they include collaboration with skilled and qualified artists, onsite caseworkers or probation officers, comprehensive training for all staff, transportation for participants, and a wide range of art-related activities (Clawson & Coolbaugh, 2001).

Arts programming has great promise as an intervention model for promoting the goals and principles of positive youth development. Youth who feel safe, valued, and connected to caring adults are more likely to be positive about life, to be engaged in school, and to be emotionally healthy. An intervention program that concentrates on promoting youth strengths through creative expression should have positive effects on youth and their individual development. Arts programming for youthful offenders would have to offer a range of options, as there is no one model or one strategy that would be effective for all youth. In positive youth development efforts for young offenders, arts programming in general will likely become a key area of practice.

Transforming Practice

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (DYS) developed a Positive Youth Development and Culturally Responsive Practice Initiative to support education and reentry services for system-involved youth as they work to achieve positive academic, career, and life outcomes. System-involved youth often differ from adults in culture, education, and personal histories. These differences may affect the ways in which youth engage – or do not engage – in learning opportunities.

The DYS initiative trains youth workers to be conscious of their personal experiences and beliefs and how they may influence their practice methods. Workers learn to draw upon the concepts of positive youth development in facilitating services, supports, and opportunities for youth. Guided by a research-based conceptual framework, DYS trains teachers and other youth workers to engage in conversations about privilege and the impact of culture on their professional and personal experiences. The Massachusetts initiative began with a focus on educators, but it soon grew to include community reentry staff as well.

www.commcorp.org/dys/

Implementing Positive Youth Justice

The combination of six practice domains and two youth assets represents a manageable framework for organizing the challenging and complicated work of youth justice. In proposing that all PYD-related activities in youth justice be organized using this simple model, we do not wish to diminish the depth and detail of PYD. Our purpose is to guide future efforts to design PYD-compatible interventions without adding to the proliferation of redundant models and frameworks. We believe this model is necessary because no other framework exists for applying the concepts of PYD to prevention and early intervention efforts with justice-involved youth. Clearly, the broad and varied concepts of PYD are not reducible to a few practice principles, but it is essential that agencies and communities have some guidance as they attempt to focus their PYD efforts. Each element in the Positive Youth Justice Model is consistent with existing knowledge about positive youth development, but the elements themselves are stated in very general terms. The Model leaves a lot of room for practice-inspired innovation.

The Positive Youth Justice Model is a means of focusing community efforts on a finite set of activities and

Positive Youth Justice Model

		CORE ASSETS			
		Learning / Doing		Attaching / Belonging	
PRACTICE DOMAINS	Domain-Specific Example*	Activity or Opportunity	Outcome Measures	Activity or Opportunity	Outcome Measures
Work	Job readiness	Resume writing workshop	Resume submitted to potential employer	Job-seeker support group	Frequency or length of group participation
Education	Computer skills	One-on-one skill building in HTML or other language	Youth has an operating web site	Youth-to-youth tutoring program	Number of successful tutoring matches
Relationships	Communication skills	Training in conflict management	Youth completes training program	Youth-adult mentor program	Frequency and duration of mentoring relationship
Community	Youth-led civic improvement campaign	Prepare and present formal testimony	Youth speaks at public hearing	Launch new advocacy organization	Number of meetings attended
Health	Physical Fitness	Weight training	Number of training circuits completed	Team sports	Number of games played
Creativity	Self-expression	Mural art program	At least one mural designed or completed	Group performance, music or theater	Number of performances in which youth participated

*** The interventions listed in the table (job readiness, computer skills, etc.) are merely examples. Ideally, a youth justice system would employ multiple interventions within each of the six practice domains, and each intervention would address both of the two core assets in the Model.**

outcomes for individual youth. By portraying the Model as a grid or matrix, practitioners can use the intersections of domains and assets to design intervention plans and to construct outcome measures. As practitioners and communities work to develop interventions and programs for youth, they can compare their approaches with the Model and consider the extent to which their efforts are consistent with its basic structure. Ideally, all program efforts designed to support young offenders, and all strategies for measuring the outcome of those efforts, will address at least one, but hopefully several of the 12 dimensions represented by the intersection of each youth asset with each practice domain in the model.

The Positive Youth Justice Model does not restrict youth justice interventions to a pre-defined or fixed set of practices. It should help to focus communities on specific goals and activities for youth that are compatible with a PYD framework. Positive youth development is not simply a "perspective" in which any intervention fits just as well as another. Practitioners, policy leaders, and community members must continually review their strategies for youthful offenders and repeatedly ask themselves how well their plans fit the Model.

In planning a strategy for a community-based youth diversion program, for example, it might seem acceptable to build the program around job training and counseling, but the Model asks program planners to think beyond these basic approaches. If job training is to be a primary component, how will it ensure that each youth learns practical skills and has some real experience in using those skills? How will it encourage each youth to take on a new and responsible role? How will it provide a greater sense of belonging for each youth? Sitting in a group discussion about job readiness is clearly insufficient. Learning about job interviews might be helpful, but only if youth get to experience interviewing themselves, and from both sides of the interview table. Developing a written resume could be a useful skill, but how can the program leverage group dynamics among youth as they build job histories and try out the writing and printing process?

The Positive Youth Justice Model also encourages practitioners to rely on the two assets and six domains as they design measurement strategies for evaluation and performance monitoring. In the health domain, for example, the Model reminds practitioners that they need to measure whether youth are gaining the knowledge and experience to live healthy lives, but they also need to track whether youth form stronger attachments as they apply knowledge and gain experience. Thus, measurement strategies must do more than track a youth's participation in vigorous exercise and any improvements in stamina and fitness. Practitioners need to measure a youth's sense of belonging and group attachment as it relates to physical activity. Using subjective measures such as interviews and questionnaires, a practitioner might ask youth to describe their feelings about group membership. Do their feelings grow more positive over time in relation to their participation in fitness activity? Using objective measures such as behavioral observation, do youth collaborate effectively in team sports and does their level of collaboration improve over time?

The Model is a framing device. It is not an instruction manual, but rather a blueprint. It can guide the efforts of youth justice practitioners as they work to maintain an appropriate balance of strategies across the various domains of youth justice. It is equivalent to the well-known food pyramid, which helps to orient us to the proper balance of various food groups in our diets. Just as a balanced diet needs to contain more than starches and meat, an effective approach to youth justice should include more than job training or anger management, more than just drug treatment or community service. The best youth development strategies include a diverse menu of services, opportunities, and supports.

Postscript

The core concepts of the Positive Youth Justice Model are not new and we should not overlook their origins. In their most basic form, some of the ideas we now describe as positive youth development were present in the statements and writings of 19th Century juvenile court advocates, such as Jane Addams. One of the earliest pioneers of the contemporary model, however, was Kenneth Polk, formerly of the University of Oregon and the University of Melbourne. Polk's work provides important insights for any discussion of PYD in the justice system (e.g., Polk & Kobrin, 1972). He assumed that youth development strategies could be applicable to all youth and in all settings. When asked to define and explain youth development to practitioners, Polk often chose to forgo the usual introduction of related theory and research. Rather, he began with a number of "rules" for creating youth development programs.

With apologies for extensive summarizing and paraphrasing, we conclude this report by offering a version of Polk's rules:

Assume that young people are competent. When you start with the assumption that youth are damaged, some of them will likely "catch" the very problem they think they are supposed to have.

When working with young people, make sure they are in mixed groups—youth and adults solving common community problems together, and making sure youth themselves come from a mix of the usual group labels—good/bad, quick/slow, etc.

Jobs and activities for youth must be important, rewarding, and meaningful to create a sense of success, contribution, and belonging.

When youth are involved in meaningful activities that help individuals and communities, find ways to pay them.

Make sure that youth participate in activities and jobs for which they have some unique competence that others can appreciate.

Provide youth with educational credit and make sure teachers are involved in what each youth is doing—while at the same time, expanding the notion of what education is about.

Organize youth in groups to provide advocacy and support.

Be political—all change is political, but don't fight dumb battles. Maximize friends, not enemies; and use the media.

Pick institutional change targets where there is reason to believe an activity can become permanent—where institutional change may be an outcome.

Start small to ensure good management, but plan for broader institutional impact.

Find ways to help young people understand how to survive in bureaucracies—youth should learn to be accountable, to negotiate, and to learn to expect and cope with conflict and frustration.

Avoid coercion and negative labeling—especially with justice involved youth, make sure their participation has no bearing on what happens to them in the justice system.

Evaluate—state program objectives and follow up with published outcomes.

Have fun and always believe in the innate capacities of young people.

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Self-portrait of program participant
courtesy Philadelphia Mural Arts Program

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