Introduction

SECTION ONE

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CHAPTER ONE
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Approaches to Positive Youth Development: A View of the Issues

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The "positive youth development" (PYD) perspective is an orientation to young people that has arisen because of interest among developmental scientists in using developmental systems, or dynamic, models of human behaviour and development for understanding (1) the plasticity of human development and (2) the importance of relations between individuals and their real-world ecological settings as bases of variation in the course of human development (Lerner, 2005). The PYD perspective has arisen as well through the development and, in some cases, the evaluation of interventions designed and delivered within community-based, youth serving programs that have worked to counter what have been seen as steady states across the past five to six decades of substantial incidences of risk behaviours among adolescents.

This book discusses several of the key models of PYD framing the literature of developmental science. In addition, we illustrate the use of the PYD perspective in understanding adolescent development in relation to the multiple contexts of youth development and in promoting PYD through community-based interventions or social policy. In turn, this chapter rationalizes and explains the foci of this book by discussing the origins and the features of the PYD perspective.

Origins of the PYD Perspective

In the late 1990s and early 2000s psychological science has paid increasing attention to the concept of "positive psychology" (e.g., Seligman, 2002). However, the roots and emergence of a positive youth development perspective were not linked to this work. The PYD emerged from the work of comparative psychologists (e.g., Gottlieb, 1997; Schneirla, 1957) and biologists (e.g., Novikoff, 1945a,b; von Bertalanffy, 1933, 1965) who had been studying the plasticity of developmental processes that arose from the "fusion" (Tobach & Greenberg, 1984) of biological and contextual levels

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of organization. The use of these ideas about the import of levels of integration in shaping ontogenetic change began to impact the human developmental sciences in the 1970s (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; Gottlieb, Wahlsten, & Lickliter, 2006; Lerner, 2002, 2006; Overton, 1998, 2006). Examples are the theoretical papers by Overton (1973) and by Lerner (1978) on how the nature–nurture controversy may be resolved by taking an integrative, relational perspective about genetic and contextual influences on human development.

However, as research about the features of adolescent development began to burgeon during the 1970s and 1980s (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004), and as this research continued to point to the potential plasticity of adolescent development that arose because of the mutually influential relations among biological, individual, and contextual levels of organization within the ecology of youth development, developmental scientists who were using adolescence as their ontogenetic laboratory began to explore the use and implications of the ongoing work in comparative psychology and biology for devising a new theoretical frame for the study of adolescence. In turn, developmental scientists interested in other portions of the life span (e.g., adulthood and aging) were drawn to the study of adolescence because of its use as an ontogenetic laboratory (e.g., Lerner, Freund, De Stefanis, & Habermas, 2001). The exploration of adolescence by developmental scientists interested in developmental systems theory resulted in elaboration of the PYD perspective.

Defining features of developmental systems theories

The focus within the contemporary study of human development is on concepts and models associated with developmental systems theories (Cairns & Cairns, 2006; Gottlieb et al., 2006; Lerner, 2002, 2006; Overton, 2006). The roots of these theories may be linked to ideas in developmental science that were presented at least as early as the 1930s and 1940s (e.g., Maier & Schneirla, 1935; Novikoff, 1945a,b; von Bertalanffy, 1933), if not even significantly earlier, for example, in the concepts used by late 19th century and early 20th century founders of the study of child development (see Cairns & Cairns, 2006). There are several defining features of developmental systems theories. These include the following.

1. *A relational metatheory*. Predicated on a postmodern philosophical perspective that transcends Cartesian dualism, developmental systems theories are framed by a relational metatheory for human development. There is, then, a rejection of all splits between components of the ecology of human development (e.g., between nature- and nurture-based variables), and between continuity and discontinuity and between stability and instability. Systemic syntheses or integrations replace dichotomizations or other reductionist partitions of the developmental system.
2. *The integration of levels of organization*. Relational thinking and the rejection of Cartesian splits is associated with the idea that all levels of organization within the ecology of

human development are integrated, or fused. These levels range from the biological and physiological through the cultural and historical.

3. *Developmental regulation across ontogeny involves mutually influential individual ↔ context relations.* As a consequence of the integration of levels, the regulation of development occurs through mutually influential connections among all levels of the developmental system, ranging from genes and cell physiology through individual mental and behavioural functioning to society, culture, the designed and natural ecology, and, ultimately, history. These mutually influential relations may be represented generically as level 1 ↔ level 2 (e.g., family ↔ community) and, in the case of ontogeny, may be represented as individual ↔ context.

4. *Integrated actions, individual ↔ context relations, are the basic unit of analysis within human development.* The character of developmental regulation means that the integration of actions—of the individual on the context and of the multiple levels of the context on the individual (individual ↔ context)—constitutes the fundamental unit of analysis in the study of the basic process of human development.

5. *Temporality and plasticity in human development.* As a consequence of the fusion of the historical level of analysis—and therefore temporality—within the levels of organization comprising the ecology of human development, the developmental system is characterized by the potential for systematic change, by plasticity. Observed trajectories of intraindividual change may vary across time and place as a consequence of such plasticity.

6. *Relative plasticity.* Developmental regulation may both facilitate and constrain opportunities for change. Thus, change in individual ↔ context relations is not limitless, and the magnitude of plasticity (the probability of change in a developmental trajectory occurring in relation to variation in contextual conditions) may vary across the life span and history. Nevertheless, the potential for plasticity at both individual and contextual levels constitutes a fundamental strength of all human's development.

7. *Intraindividual change, interindividual differences in intraindividual change, and the fundamental substantive significance of diversity.* The combinations of variables across the integrated levels of organization within the developmental system that provide the basis of the developmental process will vary at least in part across individuals and groups. This diversity is systematic and lawfully produced by idiographic, group differential, and generic (nomothetic) phenomena. The range of interindividual differences in intraindividual change observed at any point in time is evidence of the plasticity of the developmental system and makes the study of diversity of fundamental substantive significance for the description, explanation, and optimization of human development.

8. *Optimism, the application of developmental science, and the promotion of positive human development.* The potential for and instantiations of plasticity legitimate an optimistic and proactive search for characteristics of individuals and of their ecologies that, together, can be arrayed to promote positive human development across life. Through the application of developmental science in planned attempts (i.e., interventions) to enhance (e.g., through social policies or community-based programs) the character

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of humans' developmental trajectories, the promotion of positive human development may be achieved by aligning the strengths (operationized as the potentials for positive change) of individuals and contexts.

9. *Multidisciplinarity and the need for change-sensitive methodologies.* The integrated levels of organization comprising the developmental system require collaborative analyses by scholars from multiple disciplines. Multidisciplinary knowledge and, ideally, interdisciplinary knowledge are sought. The temporal embeddedness and resulting plasticity of the developmental system require that research designs, methods of observation and measurement, and procedures for data analysis be change sensitive and able to integrate trajectories of change at multiple levels of analysis.

Conclusions

The possibility of adaptive developmental relations between individuals and their contexts and the potential plasticity of human development that is a defining feature of ontogenetic change within the dynamic, developmental system (Baltes, Scales, Hamilton, & Semsa, 2006; Gottlieb et al., 2006; Thelen & Smith, 2006) stand as distinctive features of the developmental systems approach to human development and, as well, provide a rationale for making a set of methodological choices that differ in design, measurement, sampling, and data analytic techniques from selections made by researchers using split or reductionist approaches to developmental science. Moreover, the emphasis on how the individual acts on the context to contribute to the plastic relations with the context that regulate adaptive development (Brandtstädter, 2006) fosters an interest in person-centered (as compared to variable-centered) approaches to the study of human development (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006; Overton, 2006; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006).

Furthermore, given that the array of individual and contextual variables involved in these relations constitute a virtually open set (e.g., there are over 70 trillion potential human genotypes and each of them may be coupled across life with an even larger number of life course trajectories of social experiences; Hirsch, 2004), the diversity of development becomes a prime, substantive focus for developmental science (Lerner, 2004; Spencer, 2006). The diverse person, conceptualized from a strength-based perspective (in that the potential plasticity of ontogenetic change constitutes a fundamental strength of all humans; Spencer, 2006) and approached with the expectation that positive changes can be promoted across all instances of this diversity as a consequence of health-supportive alignments between people and settings (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Semsa, 2006), becomes the necessary subject of developmental science inquiry.

It is in the linkage between the ideas of plasticity and diversity that a basis exists for the extension of developmental systems thinking to the field of adolescence and for the field of adolescence to serve as a "testing ground" for ideas associated with developmental systems theory. This synergy has had at least one key outcome, i.e., the forging of a new, strength-based vision of and vocabulary for the nature of adolescent

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development. In short, the plasticity–diversity linkage within developmental systems theory and method provided the basis for formulation of the PYD perspective.

Features of the PYD Perspective

Beginning in the early 1990s, and burgeoning in the first half decade of the 21st century, a new vision and vocabulary for discussing young people have emerged. These innovations were framed by the developmental systems theories that were engaging the interest of developmental scientists. The focus on plasticity within such theories led in turn to an interest in assessing the potential for change at diverse points across ontogeny, ones spanning from infancy through the 10th and 11th decades of life (Baltes et al., 2006). Moreover, these innovations were propelled by the increasingly more collaborative contributions of researchers focused on the second decade of life (e.g., Benson et al., 2006; Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2004, 2005), practitioners in the field of youth development (e.g., Floyd & McKenna, 2003; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001; Wheeler, 2003), and policy makers concerned with improving the life chances of diverse youth and their families (e.g., Cummings, 2003; Gore, 2003). These interests converged in the formulation of a set of ideas that enabled youth to be viewed as resources to be developed, and not as problems to be managed (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a,b). These ideas may be discussed in regard to two key hypotheses. Each hypothesis is associated with two subsidiary hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Youth-context alignment promotes PYD

Based on the idea that the potential for systematic intraindividual change across life (i.e., for plasticity) represents a fundamental strength of human development, the hypothesis was generated that if the strengths of youth are aligned with resources for healthy growth present in the key contexts of adolescent development—the home, the school, and the community—then enhancements in positive functioning at any one point in time (i.e., well-being; Bornstein, Davidson, Keyes, Moore, & the Center for Child Well-Being, 2003) may occur; in turn, the systematic promotion of positive development will occur across time (i.e., thriving; e.g., Dowling et al., 2004; Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005) can be achieved.

Hypothesis 1A. Contextual alignment involves marshaling development assets

A key subsidiary hypothesis to the notion that aligning individual strengths and contextual resources for healthy development is that there exist, across the key settings of youth development (i.e., families, schools, and communities), at least some supports for the promotion of PYD. Termed "developmental assets" (Benson et al., 2006), these resources constitute the social and ecological "nutrients" for the growth of healthy youth (Benson, 2003).

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Hypothesis 1B. Community-based programs are a vital source of developmental assets

There is broad agreement among researchers and practitioners in the youth development field that the concept of developmental assets is important for understanding what needs to be marshaled in homes, classrooms, and community-based programs to foster PYD. In fact, a key impetus for the interest in the PYD perspective among both researchers and youth program practitioners and, thus a basis for the collaborations that exist among members of these two communities, is the interest that exists in ascertaining the nature of the resources for positive development that are present in youth programs, e.g., in the literally hundreds of thousands of after-school programs delivered either by large, national organizations, such as 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouting, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA, or Girls, Inc., or by local organizations. The focus on youth programs is important not only for practitioners in the field of youth development, however. In addition, the interest in exploring youth development programs as a source of developmental assets for youth derives from theoretical interest in the role of the macrolevel systems effects of the ecology of human development on the course of healthy change in adolescence (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006); interest derives as well from policy makers and advocates, who believe that at this point in the history of the United States community-level efforts are needed to promote positive development among youth (e.g., Cummings, 2003; Gore, 2003; Pittman et al., 2001).

Data suggest that, in fact, developmental assets associated with youth programs, especially those that focus on youth *development* (i.e., programs that adopt the ideas associated with the PYD perspective; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a,b), are linked to PYD. For instance, reviews by Blum (2003), Eccles and Gootman (2002), Larson, Walker, and Pearce (2005), Mahoney, Larson, and Eccles (2005), and Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a,b) endorse the importance of after-school activities for promoting exemplary positive development. These works raise the question of what are in fact the indicators of PYD. Addressing this question involves the second key hypothesis of the PYD perspective.

Hypothesis 2. PYD is composed of five C's

Based on both experiences of practitioners and reviews of the adolescent development literature (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Jelicic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007; Lerner, 2004; Lerner et al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003b), the "five C's"—competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring—were hypothesized as a way of conceptualizing PYD (and of integrating all the separate indicators of it, such as academic achievement or self-esteem). These five C's were linked to the positive outcomes of youth development programs reported by Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003a). In addition, these "C's" are prominent terms used by practitioners, adolescents involved in youth development programs, and the parents of these adolescents in describing the characteristics of a "thriving youth" (King et al., 2005).

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Hypothesis 2A. Contribution is the "sixth C"

A hypothesis subsidiary to the postulation of the "five C's" as a means to operationalize PYD is that when a young person manifests the C's across time (when the youth is thriving), he or she will be on a life trajectory toward an "idealized adulthood" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1998; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006). Theoretically, an ideal adult life is marked by integrated and mutually reinforcing contributions to self (e.g., maintaining one's health and one's ability therefore to remain an active agent in one's own development) and to family, community, and the institutions of civil society (Lerner, 2004). An adult engaging in such integrated contributions—in, for instance, civic engagement and civic contributions—is a person manifesting adaptive developmental regulations (Brandtstädter, 1998, 2006).

Hypothesis 2B. PYD and risk/problem behaviours are inversely related

A second subsidiary hypothesis to the one postulating the five C's is that there should be an inverse relation within and across development between indicators of PYD and behaviours indicative of risk behaviours or internalizing and externalizing problems. Here, the idea—forwarded in particular by Pittman and colleagues (2001) in regard to applications of developmental science to policies and programs—is that the best means to prevent problems associated with adolescent behaviour and development (e.g., depression, aggression, drug use and abuse, or unsafe sexual behaviour) is to promote positive development. This hypothesis remains controversial, however, and recent theory (Schwartz, Pantin, Coatsworth, & Szapocznik, 2007) and longitudinal research (Phelps et al., 2007) suggest greater variation in positive and problematic developmental trajectories than envisioned in this hypothesis.

Conclusions

Replacing the deficit view of adolescence, the PYD perspective sees *all* adolescents as having strengths (by virtue at least of their potential for change). The perspective suggests that increases in well-being and thriving are possible for all youth through aligning the strengths of young people with the developmental assets present in their social and physical ecology. Across the past decade, the growing interest in this perspective (see Lerner, 2005) derives in part from the innovative science associated work in this area and in part from the emergence of this perspective at a point in history when the challenges facing young people are enormous and visible worldwide.

The Social and Cultural Context of the PYD Perspective

Young people are a country's most valuable resource, particularly when it comes to the mastery of new societal challenges. Despite the remarkable plasticity of human

development across the life span, it is well known that it is often not individual change but cohort change that characterizes adaptation of social and personality development to changed societal conditions (e.g., Alwin, 1996; Elder & Shanahan, 2006). In other words, new cohorts of young people constructively adjust to new challenges more easily than those who grew up under the current conditions and became accustomed to it.

Young people, therefore, play a particular role vis-à-vis societal change, and the emphasis on PYD is crucial in this regard. In order to illuminate the point further, a few remarks on the nature of the changes taking place in our societies are helpful. Under the general notion of social change there are actually three distinct phenomena that have nevertheless been happening in conjunction, at least in the Western world. The first is most often addressed as globalization, meaning the increasing interdependence, integration, and interaction between people and businesses in disparate locations, rooted in complex economic and technological changes, particularly concerning the transmission and accessibility of information. Beyond the economic sphere, globalization is characterized by a multitude of political and cultural changes (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999). Second, there is a trend toward individualization and pluralization of the life course. People in the Western world often cannot longer rely on traditional roles concerning interpersonal relationships and expectations concerning sequences of education and work. Instead they are confronted with the need to navigate their own way, guided by their own activities and consequently carrying more personal responsibility (Berger, Steinmüller, & Soppe, 1993). Finally, we are confronted with unprecedented changes in the demographic structure of populations with a dramatic relative increase of those older than 60 and likewise a dramatic decrease in those below 20 years of age.

These changes can be observed and compared on the international level, with all Western countries ranking high on indices of globalization (Dreher, 2006). However, there are also effects on individuals' lives, experienced as new challenges, for instance, in the domains of work or family, which require action and adaptation. These effects are transmitted from the aggregate level of a society to the individual via the working of social institutions, such as changes in governmental regulations of the labor markets or new laws concerning the legal status of intimate partnerships beyond the classic marriage model. Such individual level challenges are quite widespread and prevalent, and they have the greatest effect on those in impoverished contexts and with inadequate coping capabilities. For all people affected, however, the level of insecurity is raised because of the confrontation of new challenges that make the established reaction potential in part obsolete (Blossfeld & Hofmeister, 2005).

Many chapters in this book address such situations in various countries as a backdrop to human development. Mastering the new challenges is often characterized by the need to overcome initial concerns and perceived threats, to form individual goals and intentions after a careful consideration and selection of various options, and then to act and react in appropriate ways. The challenges can refer to basic issues of human development in terms of ends and means (to achieve, for instance, personal

freedom and social inclusion by prosocial behaviours), and they may be part of a larger series of actions that pursue the aim of regulating one's own development. Given the high societal premium on individualization, we all are under the influence of a culturally promoted scheme of personal responsibility in how we deal with our life and what we plan to achieve.

This cultural expectation notwithstanding, the actual possibilities to act on behalf of goals that matter to us and to become active agents of change (Silbereisen et al., 2006) are often constrained by a lack of opportunities and personal capabilities, with the first playing a more restricting role from a societal point of view. Human beings strive for "primary" control by actively engaging in actions to resolve the challenges. However, in case of failure as a consequence of lacking opportunities, "secondary" control, such as leaving the field in order to preserve one's strength or turn to another valued issue, is also required. Heckhausen (this volume) provides details and examples of this process of developmental regulation.

More than before, our times of social change require the self-selection of goals for one's development from a variety of opportunities and a fine-tuning of actions to achieve them. To be capable of pursuing this, one needs a range of competencies for analyzing the demands of situations, to communicate with others involved, to trust in one's own efficacy, to regulate effects so that they exploit opportunities at best, to be driven by optimism, and of course to reach out to others. Without such capabilities the autonomous regulation of one's development would not be possible. More specifically, the absence of such capabilities would not only restrict the development of the mediating processes, but also the longer term outcomes we call positive development, such as a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and empowerment (National Clearing House on Families & Youth, 2006). The development of such capacities allows the young to become valued contributors to the life of communities by believing in their possibility for success rather than subscribing to negative stereotypes held in society, by engaging in productive activities, and by taking up roles as citizens in a democracy.

In sum, there is enormous societal and cultural significance for understanding how to promote positive development among contemporary—and future—cohorts of young people. This book elucidates the key theoretical and empirical issues that must be addressed to move science and society together collaboratively in fostering PYD.

The Plan of This Book

Following an introduction by the Editors, the book is organized into three main sections: The chapters provide an overview of current and potential topics of research on positive youth development and their application in various fields. When inviting authors to contribute to this book, our first priority was to look for excellent international experts as well as having a balance between researchers from North America and Europe and between senior scholars and scientists of

the younger generation. A major motive for the book was to bring scholars and perspectives to the fore that until now were not typically included in the area of positive youth development. Toward this end we did not shy away from the unexpected—the chapter by John Laub is a case in point: what could a seminal study by a most prominent scholar of life span development of criminality offer to our interest in positive development? The answer is the striking evidence that growing up, even under the direst circumstances, and living a life as a criminal do not preclude a total turnaround given certain positive experiences that cut one off from the past. The developmental systems' notions of plasticity and optimism are underscored by Laub's chapter.

Models of positive development in adolescence and young adulthood

The aim of this section is to prepare the ground for an understanding of positive youth development, its antecedents, and consequences. It begins with an overview of the applied perspective of research into positive youth development, particularly addressing developmental assets as prerequisites. Because it can be seen as a prototypic positive outcome, civic engagement and its antecedents in social interaction and other external assets are discussed next. In turn, empathy and sympathy are discussed as possible internal assets promoting prosocial behaviour, which is seen as relevant for civic engagement and other positive behaviours in general. This section closes with a perspective on the self-regulation of human development vis-à-vis societal constraints. This presentation demonstrates how opportunities and insecurities associated with career-related decisions in times of a tough labour market are handled by young people when regulating their own development. The constraints concerning the labour market are meant to exemplify the larger topic of the role of social change in human development. The first and the last contributions in this section address the same general challenge: how to adjust productively and positively to societal demands at a time of the life span that is characterized by its own biopsychosocial developmental tasks.

Benson's chapter in this section summarizes the work done by his group at the Search Institute in Minneapolis in communicating effectively with communities as to whether they and their young population possess or lack the assets for the promotion of positive development. Consistent with a key hypothesis in the PYD perspective, Benson argues that the accumulation of assets, often irrespective of their particular nature, promotes PYD. He suggests that too few accumulated assets result in negative behaviours such as delinquency, whereas a high number of assets fosters positive behaviours such as civic engagement. As both internal and external assets are, in principle, malleable, provided the right means are available, this view of positive development provides direction for social policies and intervention programming. The same way of thinking can be applied to the comparison across larger social units, perhaps even to cross-national comparisons. Nevertheless, the notion of assets is probably more relevant the more proximal assets are to the individual.

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The concept of external developmental assets is reminiscent of similar concepts, such as developmentally instigative environmental attributes (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) or social capital (Coleman, 1988). Individuals who regulate their own development require role models, need social support, and require access to connections among other people, i.e., social capital. Internal assets, however, often represent outcomes rather than antecedents, or may be partially confounded with outcomes. There are many assets specified by Benson, but it is likely that one can reduce them to a smaller number of crucial resources as Theokas et al. (2005) have shown. Apart from these points, Benson's chapter reflects the predominant theoretical thinking represented in this volume in his discussion of understanding the impact of assets of development through the lens of developmental systems theory; he thereby provides a framework for program planners and applied developmentalists alike.

For several reasons, Sherrod's discussion of civic engagement is a good framework for the field of PYD. As Sherrod points out, the common element in various forms of participation in civic activities is prosocial orientation toward others. By engaging in the support and promotion of people and environments in need, young people reach out to others with the aim of pursuing a good cause beyond their own interests. Civic engagement is also particularly important for dealing actively with social change. In a democratic society, this is the only acceptable way of exerting collective agency with the ultimate aim of changing social conditions that may have resulted in a deterioration of conditions for healthy development. For example, an alternative to simply feeling unsatisfied or even incapacitated by a lack of opportunities for work is to find a way to verbalize such discontent and to engage with others in joint action. Such efforts can provide the basis for change for the better, obviously assuming other supportive circumstances are also provided.

Sherrod details the activities in the family and the community he sees as particularly important in the evolution of civic engagement in young people, all of which can be related to the five C's. An increase of such activities in a community may also help to enlarge and enrich existing developmental assets, thus providing a better context for self-regulation.

Eisenberg also discusses the idea of prosocial orientations, and provides insights into this major cognitive and motivational background of positive behaviour, such as civic engagement. The development of such functions stems from the experience of different forms of others' emotions. Empathy is a likely antecedent and sympathy with others evolving from it. Eisenberg shows that early empathy-related responding, rather than responding based on cognitive perspective taking, is of long-term value in predicting prosocial behaviour and for social competence in general. Bearing in mind the prosocial nature of civic engagement, we presume that empathy/sympathy is a central prerequisite and mediator of PYD.

Given this role of empathy/sympathy, it is no surprise that many existing programs aimed at fostering social development entail respective elements for the promotion of empathy/sympathy, be it by child-centered classroom management or active participation in helping others. These are examples of preventive interventions that are also likely to have an impact on other positive outcomes of development, such as

civic engagement. One needs to assess this empirically, though, and thereby bring the fostering of empathy/sympathy to those involved in social policies and programming.

Heckhausen's chapter exemplifies an approach to development that focuses on a person's own actions in context. As mentioned earlier, growing up today requires navigating rapid social change and thus pursuing a moving target, i.e., political and economic transformations or turmoil on the societal level lead to change in social institutions and in the opportunities for development provided by them. Institutions such as school or work establish frames and scaffolds for individuals' strivings to accomplish relevant developmental tasks. The consequences of German unification are a good example. Because of the political transformations from communist rule to a market-capitalist economy, profound changes concerning the opportunities and responsibilities for occupational training emerged in rapid succession. What was previously provided by state-supervised official guidance—to find out about occupations with a worthwhile future prospect, to look for a relevant training opportunity, and to help a young person prepare for the world of work—now became a family's own duty. Of course, it is not that all of these roles arose as a consequence of unification. However, the institution of occupational training had to be changed from being a duty of the state-governed big industry conglomerates in the east of Germany to the voluntary actions of small seedling businesses that took root after unification and which, by tradition, provide the majority of training opportunities in Germany (Hamilton, 1990).

Generally speaking, the fabric of a society, particularly its social institutions, provides age-graded opportunities and constraints for psychosocial development. More specifically, Heckhausen sees social institutions as providing direction, structure, and pacing for individuals' own attempts to regulate their development. Of course across the life span more and more of the goals are self-set, but the ecology nevertheless provides a necessary mould—be it the mother and her behaviour in a young child or the much less proximal system of institutionalized opportunities for a young adult's occupational development. In adolescence, at the latest, individuals' strivings and society's opportunities need to coalesce and interact—this was already the core of the seemingly old-fashioned concept of developmental tasks, but is now conceived of as active regulation by the individual (Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2007).

The core of Heckhausen's contribution is to exemplify the way in which this process of developmental regulation (or control as she prefers to call it) takes place. Assuming that times of pursuing new goals are especially fertile for the study of the regulation process, she uses the search for an apprenticeship as a model case. As individuals show high engagement if the opportunity is there, and disengage in case of failure, they demonstrate the remarkable competence of the young to calibrate their strivings to their personal capabilities and to the contextual opportunities available. The larger context obviously also plays as role in that U.S. school students showed a weaker link between aspirations and success than their German age mates.

Heckhausen's control theory also addresses the plasticity of human development—depending on the person and the context (both of which undergo change) and the course of their transaction across time many trajectories and outcomes are possible.

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The capability to regulate/control one's psychosocial development can be deemed a general prerequisite for any positive adaptation (Brandtstädter, 1998, 2006; Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2007). Part of this capability is to perceive and to react adequately when circumstances actually do not allow control. This possibility is also raised in the next section: "Multiple Contexts of Youth Development."

Multiple contexts of positive youth development

Some readers might be surprised that this section is not organized so as to reflect a comprehensive list of positive outcomes of youth development. On the contrary, some of the chapters even refer to research traditions that focus on maladaptive, antisocial behaviours such as criminality. However, as mentioned at the outset, such areas have been included because of the lessons we may learn for PYD. The common thread in this section is environmental risks and vulnerabilities, such as those rooted in economic impoverishment, social inequalities, negative stereotypes, and discrimination. In other words, we look at the all-too-often dark side of the current social changes in a globalized world and try to identify conditions that nevertheless enable individuals to thrive.

Two contributions in this section have a shared focus on societal circumstances likely to hinder the fullest development of personal capabilities, namely, discrimination against other ethnicities or gender inequalities to the disadvantage of women. The results point to the possibility that a conscious awareness of such obstacles can help protect a person's self-worth against negative effects, which could be an element in programs fostering positive development. The broader theme of large scale social change is addressed in a chapter dealing with the British cohort studies. It concerns the seeming paradox of growing inequality in occupational chances despite extended schooling throughout the population and recommends early interventions at the family level in order to avoid even talented youth among economically disadvantaged segments having to face exclusion. This issue is then addressed by two contributions on the social control and support exerted in close relationships such as the family. Experiences provided by such relationships can help change people's trajectories even after a long time of maladjustment, thereby demonstrating the enormous plasticity of human development if conditions are right. The section closes with a chapter on the antecedents of entrepreneurial interests, skills, and activities, seen as a prototypic manifestation of self-regulated development. Utilizing a unique longitudinal data set, the study also demonstrates the role of the family in developing early interests and skills that ultimately favour particular career goals. All chapters provide interesting clues for elements of intervention programs, particularly for those who, because of various reasons, are excluded or face difficulties in living up to their potentials for positive development.

The opportunities and scaffolds mentioned in the model of developmental regulation are not distributed equally across the young population. Rather, there are vast differences in resource allocation that may result in low academic achievement,

which, in turn, represent a risk for outcomes such as a positive identity or occupational success. The inadequate resolution of such developmental tasks will increase an individual's vulnerability further, and it is clear that particular social groups are more threatened than others by such vicious circles. Here the chapter by Dupree, Spencer, and Fegley provides insights into the protective role of social identity during the self-regulation of development. The authors are interested in particular beliefs that help individuals avoid fruitless attempts to cope with circumstances they feel they cannot change, thus saving resources and shielding their self-esteem from otherwise devastating blows. The case in point is the oppressed minority ideology, meaning the extent to which respondents believe that certain ethnic groups have experienced discrimination and that members of these minority groups should form social and political alliances. Such beliefs and perceived supportiveness of the school predicted higher self-esteem. Academic achievement was no longer relevant once these variables were included, thus pointing to the possibility that achievement status helped foster more adequate and enabling understanding of one's situation. The authors close with the suggestion that particularly low-achieving minority youth could profit from fostering beliefs concerning external causes of their own fate in society and life in general. Likewise, attempts to sensitize youth in jeopardy to find out about potentially supportive resources in their environment might help.

The chapter by Eccles and Alfeld also deals with the consequences for thriving of contextually driven disadvantage and discrimination. The authors take a historical perspective on the potential causes of why talents in young people, particularly females, are not realized. The ultimate interest is in lessons for the promotion of positive development against the odds. The possible causes identified are unquestioned traditions, the lack of internal and external assets to realize one's talent, and marginalization by stereotypes or discrimination concerning women and achievement. The women of the Terman (1926) sample of highly gifted students represent a perfect example of those who did not stay the course due to circumstances. For most of their lives the achievements gained outside the home in no way matched their high talents. However, when the bonds of marriage were loosened by widowhood and once social changes had weakened traditional gender roles, a surprisingly high share among the now elderly women revealed exceptionally creative achievements as writers or artists. Together with many other results reported in this chapter we have a clear message—gaps in positive development may have their roots in dire external conditions even in the most gifted of populations, but plasticity is nevertheless possible given a change in external circumstances and assets.

Schoon also addresses the theme of how people try to cope with difficult circumstances and how, despite severe constraints, they manage to achieve normative goals. She discusses historical change and its role in psychosocial development. Her approach reveals the complex social changes that take place in many postindustrial societies and compares the development of two birth cohorts representative for the United Kingdom, born in 1958 and 1970, respectively. When the participants reached adolescence and young adulthood, profound changes in the outer fabric of growing up and finding a place in society had taken place. Reflecting the need

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for higher qualifications to meet technological advances, the duration of schooling had been expanded. However, inequality in educational opportunity between social strata increased among the later born cohort, with the result that even talented adolescents from disadvantaged economic backgrounds were surpassed in educational and occupational attainments by age mates from privileged settings despite their originally lower ability levels. Those among the less affluent who excelled nevertheless were characterized by having many hobbies, receiving more social support, and having happy school experiences during childhood—all not surprising when looked at in a resiliency framework. However, note that this is not just a sample of convenience, but nationally representative data on two cohorts that reflect all the historic changes in opportunities for positive development characteristic of the United Kingdom. The long-term effects include lower aspirations in issues that are relevant for future social status and income. Compared to their more economically privileged peers, these young people gave too little priority to life domains that provide a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment.

The findings of this research suggest possibilities to change disadvantages. However, as Schoon suggests, given the strong scaffolding effect of inadequate ecological niches, early intervention against inequalities may be decisive. The aim is to intercept these causative chains of events and experiences that otherwise result in social division, prejudice, and exclusion. Her plea is to address the structural causes directly and not to believe in an independent role of individual liabilities. It is clear that a lack of external assets for positive development is often rooted in inequalities from which individuals have no chance to escape. Nevertheless, as all human development is characterized by life-long changes in the interrelations between levels of internal and external organization, interventions on all levels and on both sides of the equation (individual and ecology) are possible with the hope of achieving results even in a situation where the structural constraints seem insurmountable.

According to Schoon, the early family environment is pivotal for adjustment, despite disadvantages, but the role of this type of closed relationship probably goes beyond the early years to involve adulthood as well. This idea is demonstrated in Laub's chapter on the unique reanalysis and follow-up of the Glueck and Glueck (1950) longitudinal study of criminality. Desistance from criminal behaviour is possible even after a life of total deviance in a setting where all the social controls failed and where there was a lack of social capital and positive collective agency experienced during childhood and adolescence. The surprising interruption of such a career can be brought about by a happy marriage that provides social control and structure, gives directions to life, and shows what one could lose. The interesting question in the context of positive development is whether one can identify conditions earlier in life or in current circumstances that would increase the likelihood of such a happy ending. Laub does not rule out the role of random factors. Unfortunately, the Gluecks' data set is very limited in terms of antecedents of positive behaviour.

Informal social control exerted within a family is a prototype of a larger group of close relationships that, according to the chapter by Mooney, Laursen, and Adams, provide social support crucial for positive development. They distinguish

various forms. Perceived social support in a challenging situation influences appraisal and coping by the knowledge of what supports seem available. Experienced social support refers to a particular close relationship and tallies what was received. Social embeddedness concerns the range and variation of support from different sources, whereby higher levels minimize the risks of running out of steam when facing challenges. The actual ways in which such effects are brought about are not yet well understood. We need new insights if we want to exploit the role of close relationships in fostering PYD. Obviously relevant are experiences from participation in the relationship, the characteristics of the partner, and the quality of the relationship. As Laub's criminals, who ultimately ceased criminal behaviour in advanced age, demonstrate, the quality of a relationship is relevant because of the various emotional, instrumental, and affiliative needs it serves and because of the social supports and controls it provides. Laursen and colleagues further indicate how support works by demonstrating empirically that it is often the accumulation, rather than its particular nature across a variety of supports, that is crucial, thereby striking the theme of "more is better" for developmental assets similar to Schoon, and to Benson in particular.

A problem in the support literature is the scarcity of longitudinal studies that can inform us about the prospective role of particular experiences in close relationships for positive outcomes of youth development. In this regard, Schmitt-Rodermund's chapter, on entrepreneurial competencies, interests, and activities, is quite useful. This "positive risk taking" is actually required for success in many occupations, whether or not one runs a business of one's own. Consequently, the complementary term of intrapreneurship competences was coined, referring to systematic planning, interpersonal assertiveness, and orientation toward efficiency. The unique feature of the chapter is the reanalysis of the Terman life-cycle study on gifted children (see Holahan, Sears, & Cronbach, 1995) that covers decades of their development. By carefully recoding information on occupational attainments, she was able to identify those who revealed entrepreneurial competencies and activities later in life and to relate this development to personality features and family support. The predictions were based on a theoretical work not previously tested in this way, one that establishes a link between these antecedents and early competencies and interests presumed to have a long-term effect on career goals and an entrepreneurial career. Schmitt-Rodermund demonstrated an effect despite the long time interval passed, and this effect was even higher when both personality and family support came together. The results may even underestimate the long arm of personality and family because of the economically unstable times when data were gathered during the 1920s and 1930s. The sudden economic decline of that period may have made prior achievements in part worthless.

The chapter is also another example of the view that positive youth development encourages the scrutiny of existing longitudinal data in order to find new possibilities for intervention. In her chapter Schmitt-Rodermund further exploits the fact that first-hand contact with entrepreneurial activities is important for interest development, but that only few youth actually have such opportunities within their

proximal context. In Germany the share of entrepreneurs is even smaller than in other countries, which is why she and her colleagues developed a multimedia intervention program that can provide such experiences. The aim is to enable youth to find out by themselves whether they actually have the interests and skills required to be an entrepreneur. This work provides the basis for more specialized intervention units that promote entrepreneurial skills, particularly among those whose biography kept them remote from the domain of self-employment. The program is successful and has already been implemented in various contexts.

Interventions and social policy

The applied orientation of the chapter by Schmitt-Rodermund leads us to this final section. When referring to practical issues of psychological insights, it is important to distinguish among three interrelated but separate fields (Shonkoff, 2000). The first is applied science: Compared with basic science, the distinctive attribute concerns the nature of the problems tackled. Applied research addresses real-life issues in all their complexities, such as the problem that social trust and political participation among youth in Western countries are reportedly on the decline (Putnam, 2000) or that health and well-being among many immigrant groups is endangered over time and across generations. Typically, an applied investigator will try to translate these issues according to theoretical concepts drawn from basic science, thereby reducing its complexity and making it manageable for empirical research and hypothesis testing. For instance, one might see such problems as resulting from divisions within a society that do not allow people to count on models for development beyond their own constrained neighbourhood, thereby ending up with less than optimal achievements. Results from applied research do not lead directly to social policy or programming, however, although pursuing a model of participatory research may provide a bridge between the cultures of science and intervention. In contrast, those in charge of social policy have to decide about agendas of political action, and scientific insights represent but one among many inputs of knowledge processed by political advisors and policy bodies. Actors in this field are concerned not only with what needs to be achieved, but also whether it can be accomplished in a way that does not favour some unequally. Programming, meant as the practical steps one needs to undertake in order to design and implement interventions, is again very different from both applied sciences and social policy. Here scarce resources need to be allocated in order to produce a sustainable effect with the most efficient means. Scientific insights are of relevance, although with clear limits. After all, many interventions work without a clear indication of what the decisive elements are or to which psychological process any success is due (Ferrer-Wreder, Stattin, Lorente, Tubman, & Adamson, 2004).

However, there is one crucial aspect of applied scientific research that when communicated competently to government agencies, practitioners, and the public is likely to have a real impact—results need to rely on research that because

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of its design is able to show "causal" effects and that also identifies conditions malleable by interventions (Huston, 2005). When using the term causal we do not wish to imply that only experimental research with strict randomization is adequate for purposes of influencing social policy and programming. Rather, there are a variety of designs that allow control over competing interpretations and that enable causal analysis to proceed. Rutter, Pickles, Eaves, and Murray (2001) deal with such issues when discussing the role of context in the development of psychopathology, but we can certainly generalize this for our purposes. The central element of such quasi-experimental designs is utilizing naturally occurring changes in developmental contexts, such as transitions within the educational system, transitions from parents to peers as a reference setting, or the radical change of the macrosystem by sociopolitical transformations or via migration to a new country.

The research reported by Schoon or Laub in this volume probably comes close to what one can achieve in terms of causal interpretations by comparing cohorts and studying change over time. Also of importance are genetically sensitive designs as long as they are compatible with a dynamic contextualized model of human development. Finally, and not surprisingly, Rutter et al. (2001) discuss planned interventions. The combination of research and application in the form of intervention trials is a good example of this strategy. Lacourse et al. (2002), for instance, combined a longitudinal study on parenting influences on the course of adolescents' aggressive behaviour with systematic attempts to change parenting behaviour in a subgroup. As the intervention resulted in such changes of the aggression trajectory as one would have expected on the basis of the longitudinal study, the intervention trial corroborated the causal nature of the longitudinal parenting-aggression association thus far only established by structural modelling. It also demonstrated a practical means of how one can deflect adolescents from a deviant trajectory.

Chapters in the fourth section use an applied research format and come closer to more specific consequences and recommendations for social policy and programming. The section starts with a study on religiosity as a precursor of positive youth development and illuminates the possible chain of mediating and moderating variables, focussing on social capital. Next follows a group of chapters on the particular kind of experiences that result in political competence in times of social change. In order to show that the developmental assets mentioned at the outset are indeed widely targeted in already existing interventions not tailored for the fostering of positive development, a chapter on life-skills interventions is added. This section closes with two chapters that are unique. In one we can observe how the author develops a model in a most imaginative and participatory way of how young people develop capabilities for team work. Collaborating in an occupational setting is seen as a major element in modern work organization and certainly represents a case of positive behaviour. The final chapter reports the design of interventions in early childhood meant to enrich developmental opportunities for the participating mothers and children—the long-term results of which result in higher skills and participation in today's increasingly more knowledge-based society. This program was implemented nationwide in Turkey

and revealed the steps in the scientific endeavour that ultimately influenced social policy. The core prerequisites for insights that have an impact are their explanatory power and the demonstration of the malleability of the conditions tackled.

The PYD perspective became interested in religiosity and spirituality because of its potential role in the development of civic engagement, moral excellence, and a sense of purpose in life. The question is, however, what actually connects religious orientations and positive behaviours. According to King's chapter, the mediating process is the social capital generated by faith-related undertakings in the community. More specifically, shared activities provide contact with social networks, trust develops because of the quality of the relationships, and there is a cognitive enrichment through the goals and beliefs exemplified in the social context. Empirical evidence is provided to show that these social capital variables mediate the association of religiosity and moral action. Moreover, these are conditions that one can optimize and thus inform intervention planners. The results complement nicely the more general topics of social support raised by Laursen and colleagues.

Other chapters in this book point out the new imbalance resulting from globalization. In the language of PYD this idea means that the external assets and, in particular, organizations leading to the accumulation of social capital accruing are distributed unequally across the population. As Flanagan, Syvertsen, and Wray explain in their chapter, the economically deprived segment of adolescents enjoys fewer extracurricular activities, has lower participation rates in community-based organizations, and takes over adult roles earlier without having had a chance to learn how the system of societal institutions works. How could this be changed? Probably in many ways, but following a long tradition rooted in sociology a prominent one is youth activism.

Activist concerns particularly prevalent in the United States are providing a publicly accepted niche for marginalized youth, contesting socioeconomic inequities, and addressing issues of environmental protection and global justice. Being engaged in such topics connects individuals' sense of responsibility toward social issues with collective public action as citizens. This integration is an answer to the state of our society, where globalization with its uncertainties concerning work and identity has undercut the social contract, particularly for those facing the risk of exclusion. Although individuals have the capability to regulate their development even when under stress, collective action is more likely to have an effect not only for the individual, but also on the state of affairs at the aggregate level of the community and society in general.

The aforementioned analysis, however, provides no answer to the question of whether such activities have long-term positive effects on the individual and, if so, how they were brought about. Is it possible that the activists of yesterday end up burned out or is there a steady pattern of engagement across life? Obviously one would need to use prospective longitudinal data for this purpose. In their chapter, Boehnke, Fuss, and Boehnke report prospective data on former young peace movement activists. At issue is whether the past experiences can explain the level of their political involvement in young adulthood. One has to admit that the sample is

highly selective, but nevertheless it addresses the kind of activist groups Flanagan and colleagues discuss. The results reveal that over almost two decades some prediction was indeed possible. This is remarkable. However, it was not the particular activities of the past as such that predicted level of activism, but what the authors call cognitive mobilization, roughly approximated by a summary variable of participants' endorsement of postmaterialistic values and macrosocial worries induced by activist experiences of the past. Obviously much more is involved in the development of political engagement, which fits with the small percentage of variance explained. As the study was originally conceived within a different conceptual framework, insights concerning the processes resulting in the continuity of political engagement were limited.

Such survey-type assessments are generally not compatible with a context of discovery where more qualitative approaches are in order. In this regard, the chapter by Larson is a model case, not only in terms of hermeneutic methodology, but also concerning the target variable of teamwork. The trend towards globalization and the knowledge society has implications for new forms of labour organization, resulting in increased emphasis on interpersonal skills, independent thinking, and working in groups with shared responsibility. The question is how and under what conditions do such competencies, and in particular interests and capabilities for team work, develop in young people? This topic is an example of a complex positive outcome where, as yet, knowledge about the course and antecedents of development is lacking. Larson's view, which he shares with all contributors to this volume, is that individuals' actions in relation to ecological opportunities drive the changes in adaptation. Larson's example of such a context is a particularly aspiring intervention program that aims to help disadvantaged youth develop computer and video skills in small groups. It provides organized encounters supported by trained adult facilitators that engage participants in goal-directed activities vis-à-vis real challenges.

Utilizing a participatory observation scheme, Larson was able to find out via qualitative analyses what youth involved in such a program learn (experiencing reciprocity and exchange in interactions), how they learn it (taking the perspective of others, thereby experiencing trust), and in what sequence—emerging from an egocentric stance they next learn the benefits of reciprocity, gradually establish group norms, and finally how they learn to transfer their knowledge to other contexts. The way chosen for elaborating the probable developmental sequence is exceptional, although the model still requires a more stringent quantitative test.

The role of the adult facilitator is to support the experiences of agency by the young. A balance needs to be established between the activities of the youth and the intermediate structure provided, otherwise the important feeling of ownership by the adolescents would be lacking. Thereby teamwork is not only an aim in itself, but is also a means of achieving age-appropriate thinking skills and emotion regulation. Depending on the composition of the peer group participating, cultural and other competencies will also be supported. Given the active contribution of the youth and the clear advantages of cooperation, we may hope that they experience the joy of developing new competencies by their own actions.

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The setting Larson used is rather complex and requires a lot of specific arrangements. Consequently, one may wonder whether existing programs often implemented in school contexts entail elements related to PYD. Given their popularity, life-skills programs are something to be considered. The main elements are generic skills, enabling one to perceive affective states adequately, to communicate effectively with age mates, and to control undue impulses or to resist peer pressure for conformity. In her chapter, Weichold introduces such a program, one that has been especially tailored through add-on components to substance-use prevention in adolescence. More specifically, she wants to show that the developmental assets documented by Benson are very similar to what is usually addressed in life-skills programs. The result of a conceptual analysis demonstrates an almost perfect overlap with the internal assets, as well as some addressing of the external assets.

One seemingly negative result of her research should concern us. In line with the conceptual literature, Weichold had predicted that the promoted life skills would help explain the preventive effect of the substance-use intervention over the control condition. This was not the case—both substance-related and generic life skills had an effect, but the latter did not mediate the first. This result is probably not too uncommon when interventions are examined carefully. The positive effect was there, but it is difficult to trace the exact antecedents in the multitude of potentially helpful experiences fostered by the program. Although her approach included a detailed script of what was to be achieved by the teacher and students, assessment of the life skills did not reflect the change in thoughts and goals that Larson was able to track.

Many chapters in this book conclude with a plea for interventions that promote particular external assets of development. Consistent with one of the key hypothesis in the PYD perspective, the hope is that individuals' agency in exchange with these opportunities will result in various aspects of positive social and personality development. These provisions are endangered in disadvantaged segments of the population, thereby even undercutting potentials that are actually there. Beyond the growing social and economic causes Schoon and others in this book have in mind, in countries of the developing "majority" world cultural traditions may also represent obstacles for positive development. These countries are characterized by a mismatch between the prevalent practices of socialization and what is actually required in order to promote agency and initiative. Although practices of child rearing may have been functional in the past, at least with regard to urban centers in the economically less developed world, it is safe to assume that the challenges of globalization have resulted in demands similar to those experienced by people in affluent countries. Consequently, the inadequacies of the proximal early family environment in these contexts may have similar consequences for the development of competence as it has in disadvantaged niches in the postindustrial world.

The aforementioned analysis summarizes what lead Kagitcibasi and her collaborators to the design of an enrichment program that combined preschool activities with training of the mother. The hope was not only to better prepare the children for school, but also to sensitize and empower the families for the child's

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developmental needs. The mothers' training turned out to be very important for the sustainability of the preschool's positive effects on achievement and social adjustment. The effects assessed 12 years later were so impressive that an improved version of the program was ultimately implemented in 70 provinces of Turkey. Not much imagination is needed to understand that a lot of communication with political bodies, private philanthropies, and community leaders was required to convince them of the program's relevance in formulating social policies to overcome disadvantage and inequality.

The chapter describes a second follow-up of the original study after 22 years, when the former children had reached 25 to 27 years of age. The consequences of the early enrichment in young adulthood included higher school attainment and higher shares of university studies, higher job status following education, and various proxies for participation in today's knowledge society, such as holding a credit card or having a computer at home. Most importantly it turned out that home-based training of mothers seemingly was able to compensate for the lack of center-based preschool education.

Kagitcibasi's research and its impact on social policies is an excellent example of how an interest in the promotion of positive development (rather than an attempt to fix maladjustment), combined with an understanding of constraints due to economic, social, and cultural change, can lead to innovative approaches that improve external assets in children's proximal environment, thereby helping to develop internal assets in the domain of educational achievements and attainments. As the long-term effects revealed, such an endeavour helped individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds fare much better than otherwise might have been the case. Whether effects of a similar size can be expected in more affluent settings may be an open question, although Schoon, in reference to the United Kingdom, is convinced that early family context is also crucial in such a country. It seems safe to assume, however, that similar results can be expected for groups showing an equivalent mismatch between what is required for success in a society and the culturally driven limits for what is usually provided by the proximal home environment.

Conclusions

This volume does not attempt to provide a systematic treatment of all the many variants of positive youth outcomes. Nevertheless, the chapters in this book provide a rich assessment of positive behaviours. Our aim was to integrate new conceptual and empirical information about PYD, and our approach across the book is to use existing data to enrich the theoretical analysis of positive outcomes of development. In this regard, and illustrative of the importance of archival, longitudinal research, it is impressive to see that in many chapters research started in the 1920s informed us about issues of today. With this theory and research presented in this book, we believe that there are some important, general lessons to be learned.

- Plasticity is a basic characteristic of human development, which consequently needs to be addressed when discussing positive development. Many people live in dreadful circumstances with no seeming means of escape. Nevertheless, change for the better is possible in circumstances that may reside in close relationships—a happy marriage can cut one off from one's past and provide a fresh start in life.

- Human development is a process actively driven by the individual ↔ context relation. As such, goals concerning one's development play a central role, and strategies are important to pursue these goals under various conditions of support or opposition. People need to have the means to pursue actively with all psychological energy what is achievable in principle, but they also require the wherewithal to withdraw from trying to shape their development if the obstacles are too great, thereby conserving motivation and competence for another attempt under better conditions.

- Overall young people are quite good at choosing the right strategies. If the necessary resources are not available because of barriers such as discrimination, collective beliefs and actions may help immunize one against debilitating effects, such as in the case of the oppressed minority ideology.

- A highly important prerequisite for positive development seems to be the early family environment. Here rests the foundation for agency: in childhood under the close support of the mother or other caretakers and later in life by others in less proximal contexts and general societal scaffolds. We may anticipate positive, long-term effects of such empowering programs.

- Societies undergo gradual or abrupt change, and a most important aspect of such change today is globalization with its various manifestations in the economic and social conditions of human development. Across recent cohorts in Western societies, the share of those potentially marginalized has increased, and our particular interest was to see under which circumstances positive development was possible despite the poor odds. Beyond the barriers of societal structures and cultural transitions it is the quality of the proximal environment and in particular the close personal relationships that make a difference. Here preventive intervention is possible and has long-lasting effects—even if only a little can be done to overcome societal constraints—provided it takes place in a community empowered to support such efforts and willing to make them part of their own agenda.

- Changes in institutional, social, and economic contexts not only influence human development, but also make a focus on positive aspects of youth development especially important. The current social and political changes require more than ever the promotion of skills to regulate one's development by forming and pursuing goals that ultimately lead to competence and satisfaction. This effort requires the fostering of environments that are conducive for the development of prosocial attitudes and behaviours toward others. Although important for all, it is especially crucial for those who, despite potential and talent, have to fight against the odds presented by a constraining context.

- For interventions to succeed, one needs the support of receptive and cooperative agents in the political arena. Convincing them that the measures suggested are rooted in solid insights that have passed the test of scientific rigor is a necessary step for an applied

science of PYD. Many research schemes are possible for such an endeavour, but a clear linkage between antecedents and consequences has to be established. The portfolio of interventions relevant for aspects of PYD is actually larger than one might think, primarily because of the fact that many established programs can be integrated by the developmental systems theoretical framework within which the PYD perspective is embedded.

As such, and consistent with a key features of this perspective, the theory and research presented in this book afford optimism about the ability of developmental science to contribute to a world wherein the chances for positive development of all youth are furthered. As a consequence, it is hoped that this book will serve as an initial marker of great progress that lies ahead.

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