REVIEW

Positive youth development: current perspectives

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Abstract: This review outlines the current perspectives on positive youth development (PYD). Besides presenting the diverse theoretical roots contributing to PYD approaches, this review also introduces several PYD perspectives, including Benson's 40 developmental assets, Lerner's 5Cs and 6Cs conceptions, Catalano's 15 PYD constructs, social-emotional learning (SEL) and the "being" perspective (character and spirituality). A comparison of the different PYD models in terms of theoretical orientation, the role of community, spirituality, character/morality, thriving, "being" versus "doing" and origin is also presented. The review suggests three future research directions, including the development of spirituality and character approaches to PYD, differentiating the role of "being" versus "doing" in PYD and construction of PYD models as well as conducting related research in non-Western contexts.
Keywords: PYD, adolescents, strength-based perspective, review

Introduction

Recently, many youth workers have used the positive youth development (PYD) approach to design programs for adolescents (10–18 years) and emerging adults (18–29 years).[1,2] Its vision is to replace the long-held beliefs of the inevitable "storm and stress" in adolescence proposed by Stanley Hall by an emphasis on youth potentials and developmental plasticity.[3–5] Although some reviews on the PYD perspective exist,[6] this article covers the theoretical roots that have not been reviewed (eg, humanistic and character perspectives), summarizes five models of PYD, including Benson's 40 developmental assets, Lerner's 5Cs/6Cs model, Catalano's 15 PYD constructs, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the "being" perspective (character and spirituality), and compares them on a number of dimensions. Finally, three future research directions are proposed.

Theoretical roots of PYD
Deficit views on adolescence

Hall's Adolescence has been widely regarded as the beginning of adolescent research.[7] His notion of "storm and stress" has established the basis of adolescent psychology, although a number of significant differences exist between Hall's perspective and those of psychologists nowadays.[8] Sigmund Freud was another early contributor to the development of adolescent psychology, where he argued that adolescent and adult development was shaped by early psychosexual development. As Freudian views were criticized to be negative about human development,[9] neo-Freudians attempted to deemphasize sexuality and give a stronger emphasis on the effect of social environment.[10] For example, Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory highlights the importance of social relationships at each stage of personality

development.[11] Karen Horney's work also challenged Freud's theory by using a cultural perspective when explaining the difference between male and female personalities.[12] Both Freudians and some neo-Freudians have mainly adopted deficit views which regard adolescents as problems to be managed or "deficits" to be corrected. The deficit models focusing on pathology neglect human strengths that can protect youth against mental illness, and may unintentionally cause more problems by labeling youth as problematic and incapable.[10]

Perspectives focusing on human strengths

To challenge the limitations of deficit models of adolescence, researchers argued for developmental plasticity and diversity in adolescent development.[9] In contrast to psychoanalysis and behaviorism, humanistic perspective rejects the medical model of psychopathology and embraces a positive perspective about human nature.[13] For example, Carl Rogers argued that psychopathology was not about mental illness but human needs for esteem and self-actualization.[14] In a similar vein, existential psychology also focuses on human possibilities within facticity and highlights the importance of transcendence and life meaning in life uncertainties.[15]

The emphasis on human potentials in humanistic and existential psychology contributed to the development of positive psychology, which turned into a new domain of psychology in the 1990s. According to the work of Seligman, "good life" means using one's signature strengths to produce authentic happiness and abundant gratification.[16] Seligman regarded individuals as active agents who could promote their lives, and pursue happiness and fulfillment through their own decisions.[13] Adolescents are seen as individuals with preferences, choices and possibilities of becoming masterful, autonomous and efficacious.[17,18] The increased emphasis on individual capability, diversity and agency provides a theoretical basis of the perspective that all adolescents possess strengths and potentials that can be discovered, nurtured and utilized for PYD.[19] As positive psychology highlights people's strengths, the new focus of adolescent research is to understand and foster the strengths of young people. This strength-based approach regards developmental resources and adolescent potentials as protective factors, which is different from the traditional deficit perspective emphasizing developmental risks and negative predictors.

Ecological perspective

Another trend emerging in the late 1980s was the growing utilization of the ecological perspective on human development.[9] The ecological perspective focuses on developmental systems of human development and stresses the "fusion" of nature and nurture. For example, Bronfenbrenner highlighted the importance of developmental contexts where there are different systems in the environment, in which each system nested within the next.[20,21] The multiple contexts in which adolescents live include school, peer group, social networks, neighborhoods and communities. Bronfenbrenner synthesized the research regarding the interpersonal contexts of human development and trans-contextual environmental factors beyond the family setting.[21,22] Echoing Bronfenbrenner's appeal, researchers adopted the ecological perspective to understand adolescent development in a life course. For example, Jacquelynne Eccles examined the appropriateness of school environments to adolescents' developmental needs.[23] Her work pointed out that maladaptation of adolescents could be associated with poorly designed environments in different contexts.[23,24] In addition, based on the ecological perspective, Lerner and his colleagues proposed that "relative plasticity" in youth development is shaped by "developmental regulations", which are formed by mutually influential interaction between individual and multi-level contexts. Adolescents who have mutually beneficial or positive interaction with their multi-level contexts would engage in the process of positive development.

PYD models and approaches

While the term "PYD" has been used in different ways and contexts,[6,25,26] there are some similarities among different models. These include emphases on: a) the strengths of young people; b) developmental plasticity; c) internal developmental assets (such as psychosocial competence) and external developmental assets (such as community influence).[6,25,26] In this review, several models and approaches of PYD are discussed, including Benson's 40 developmental assets, Lerner's 5Cs and 6Cs models, Catalano's 15 PYD constructs, Social Emotional Learning and the "being" perspective based on spirituality and character.

Benson's 40 developmental assets

The developmental assets framework is derived from an ecological perspective with a focus on the alignment between individual needs and external requirements, opportunities and supports for youth to achieve adequate development and effective functioning. Individual strengths and environmental resources were defined by Benson as "developmental assets".[27] By synthesizing the research findings in a number of fields, scholars from the Search Institute

proposed a framework of 40 developmental assets, which pertains to developmental process, experiences, social relationships, contexts and interaction patterns that have been found beneficial to positive development among youths.[27] Specifically, the 40 developmental assets consist of 20 internal assets and 20 external assets.[27]

Internal assets refer to the positive traits of an individual such as one's skills and competencies, which can be divided into four categories:

1. "Commitment to learning": young people's appreciation of the importance of continuous learning and their belief in own capabilities, including "achievement motivation", "school engagement", "homework", "bonding to school" and "reading for pleasure".
2. "Positive values": strong guiding principles which help youths make healthy life decisions, including "caring", "equality and social justice", "integrity", "honesty", "responsibility" and "restraint" (eg, sexually inactive or stay away from psychoactive substances).
3. "Social competencies": skills that young people need for establishing effective interpersonal relationships and adapting to novel or challenging situations, including "planning and decision-making", "interpersonal competence", "cultural competence", "resistance skills" and "peaceful conflict resolution".
4. "Positive identity": a sense of control and purpose as well as recognition of own strengths and potentials, including "personal power", "self-esteem", "sense of purpose" and "positive view of personal future".

External assets represent the positive features of developmental ecologies where young people receive in interacting with multiple socialization systems (eg, family, school and neighborhood). They include:

1. "Support": emotional support, care and acceptance from persons surrounding young people. This domain includes six external assets: "family support", "positive family communication", "other adult relationship", "caring neighborhood", "caring school climate" and "parent involvement in schooling".
2. "Empowerment": young people feel that they are valuable and can make a contribution to others and community, including "community values youth", "youth as resources", "service to others" and "safety".
3. "Boundaries and expectations": clear regulations for youth conduct and consistent consequences for violating rules, and encouragement for them to try their best. These assets include "family boundaries", "school boundaries", "neighborhood boundaries", "adult role models", "positive peer influence" and "high expectations".
4. "Constructive use of time": young people have opportunities to enjoy themselves and develop new skills outside of school. Four assets are proposed, including "creative activities", "youth programs", "religious community" and "time at home".

The Search Institute developed instruments to measure each of the 40 individual assets (ie, "Attitudes and Behaviors: Profiles of Student Life", A&B) and the eight related categories (ie, "Developmental Assets Profile", DAP). In the past three decades, the Search Institute has surveyed at least 3 million Grade 4 to Grade 12 students in more than 2000 communities. Findings consistently showed that higher levels of assets were closely linked with lower levels of multiple risk behaviors and higher levels of thriving regardless of the gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographic residence of the youths.[28] Besides the cross-sectional associations, the number of assets that students experienced in their earlier lives also exerted positive impacts on their future developments.[29] To conclude, scholars have shown that "adolescents with more personal and social assets … have a greater chance of both current well-being and future success".[30]

As Benson et al stated, asset-building has been a major PYD strategy adopted in organizing and planning youth programs by multiple national systems, such as the Y-USA, Y-Canada, Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Salvation Army.[28] There is empirical support for the effectiveness of the assets-building strategy. For example, supported by the US Department of Education, the "Building Assets Reducing Risk" (BARR) program promoted assets development among Grade 9 students and had achieved great success in terms of decreasing students' failure rates, enhancing students' academic performance, narrowing opportunity gaps and improving students' experiences and teachers' satisfaction.[31] Another example is the "Asset-Getting to Outcomes" (AGTO) program led by the Search Institute. By incorporating the asset-building framework into the original GTO (a 10-step youth program implementation model), the AGTO effectively built the capacity of community coalitions to implement different youth programs and systematically achieve prevention goals.[32]

Lerner's 5cs and 6cs models of PYD

Grounded in the ecological perspective, Lerner and his colleagues proposed 5Cs as five important indicators of PYD, which stood for competence, confidence, connection, character and caring/compassion.[33] Competence includes cognitive, social, academic and vocational competences. Cognitive competence denotes cognitive abilities such as problem-solving, logical thinking and decision-making. Social competence points to interpersonal abilities such as the ability of conflict resolution. Academic competence is reflected by school grades, school attendance and test scores. Vocational competence is indicated by work habits and the ability to explore different career choices. The second C (confidence) refers to the individual's view of his/her global positive value and capacities. The third C (connection) denotes an individual's positive relationships with other people and organizations such as the exchanges between the individual and the social environment. The fourth C (character) represents morality, integrity, internal value standards for right behaviors and respect for social and cultural regulations. The fifth C (caring/compassion) refers to the capacity of sympathizing and empathizing for others. Furthermore, Lerner and his colleagues showed that these five Cs would help shape the sixth C, contribution, when these 5Cs exist in a young person.[33] Based on the longitudinal 4-H study, a set of related measures for 5Cs of PYD was developed. These measures include the full-length measures of 5Cs for early adolescence and middle to late adolescence respectively with acceptable psychometric properties.[34,35] The measures were also found to be positively related to youth contribution and negatively related to problem behaviors.[33,36] Furthermore, Geldhof and his colleagues trimmed these full measures to generate four short measures, including the two 34-item short scales (PYD-SF) and the two 17-item very short scales (PYD-VSF), for both early adolescents and middle to late adolescents.[37] Studies also showed that these measures had good psychometric properties.[38]

Although the 5Cs model of PYD had been extensively discussed in the literature, this model was rarely adopted as objectives and measured outcomes of the existing PYD intervention programs.[39] The most commonly measured outcomes of PYD programs included the changes in community contribution and reduction in problem behaviors.[26] The majority of programs focused on single or few indicators of 5Cs, such as promoting competences in different domains, facilitating bonding and developing confidence.[40,41] Only a few programs adopted the comprehensive 5Cs model as outcome measures.[42] Although these programs were found to be effective in promoting the development of 5Cs, most of them did not consciously adopt 5Cs as their program goals nor using the related measures in evaluation. Only the Try Volunteering program was defined as a quality PYD intervention.[39]

Catalano's 15 PYD constructs

Catalano and his colleagues proposed an operational definition of PYD based on literature review and consultation with leading researchers, planning colleagues and evaluation staff of PYD programs.[43] This definition introduces 15 developmental constructs as indicators of PYD, including

> bonding, resilience, social competence, emotional competence, cognitive competence, behavioral competence, moral competence, self-determination, spirituality, self-efficacy, clear and positive identity, belief in the future, recognition for positive behavior, opportunities for prosocial involvement and fostering prosocial norms.

Bonding represents a child's emotional attachment and relationships with peer groups, family, community and/or culture. Resilience refers to one's ability to adapt to life changes and stressful events healthily and flexibly. Social competence represents a set of interpersonal skills to facilitate adolescents to achieve their social and interpersonal goals. Emotional competence means the ability to recognize own and others' emotions and respond to these emotions. Cognitive competence denotes cognitive skills including problem-solving, decision-making, logistical thinking and self-awareness. Behavioral competence represents effective behaviors such as effective communications and action-taking. Moral competence is the ability to assess and determine the ethical and moral aspects of a situation. Self-determination refers to self-thinking and the consistency between action taking and thinking. Spirituality means relating to, concerning or owning the nature of spirit, soul or God. Self-efficacy represents the ability to achieve one's goals through one's effort. Clear and positive identity denotes an integrated and coherent sense of self. Beliefs in the future are an internalization of optimism about possible results. Recognition for positive behavior refers to others' positive responses to desired behaviors of youth. Opportunities for prosocial involvement are the presence of events to encourage youth to perform prosocial actions. Fostering prosocial norms

means helping young people to develop healthy beliefs and expectations for action.

Regarding the intervention programs, most of the current PYD programs targeted on only one or a few of the constructs proposed by Catalano and his colleagues.[43] In a comprehensive review, Catalano and his colleagues identified 77 PYD programs with scientific study design, outcome measures and evaluation effects.[43] Most of these programs focused on one or a few of the 15 aforementioned constructs with different lengths and approaches (eg, skill-training and mentoring). Besides, only 25 programs were identified as effective programs to promote positive youth development.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is regarded as a positive development model by Tolan and colleagues.[26] SEL refers to the process that enables people to learn the "ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life".[44(p2)] SEL framework represents an application of theories on social information-processing, social cognition, emotion processing and emotional intelligence and it has been used as an intervention approach to enhance young people's positive characteristics, establish supportive contexts and promote constructive interactions between the child and the contexts. Emerged primarily as education-focused, SEL articulates a set of skills that are essential to promote social functioning among individual students and adequate school functioning such as school learning and adaptation. For example, as one of the major SEL frameworks, Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) conceptualized these skills into five domains that integrate interrelated cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies:[45]

1. "Self-awareness": the ability to identify one's own thoughts, emotions, beliefs as well as related strengths and limitations in an unbiased manner. This domain includes "identifying emotions", "accurate self-perception", "recognizing strengths", "self-confidence" and "self-efficacy".
2. "Self-management": the capacity to regulate one's own thoughts, emotions and behaviors in different situations as well as motivate oneself toward personal goals effectively. Skills related to self-management are comprised of "impulse control", "stress management", "self-discipline", "self-motivation", "goal setting" and "organizational skills".
3. "Social awareness": the ability to understand and respect others with different backgrounds and show empathy toward them. Social awareness skills consist of "perspective-taking", "empathy", "appreciating diversity" and "respect for others".
4. "Relationship skills": the competence to build and maintain healthy and constructive relationships with others. This component includes "communication", "social engagement", "relationship building" and "teamwork".
5. "Responsible decision-making": able to make good personal choices about how to behave and interact with others that are in line with moral standards, safety principles and social norms. Responsible decision-making includes "identifying problems", "analyzing situations", "solving problems", "evaluating", "reflecting" and "taking ethical responsibility".

Although SEL focuses primarily on psychosocial competence, this framework is currently regarded as a general model of positive youth development that is applicable across contexts and developmental stages.[26] Theoretically, SEL is consistent with Benson's developmental assets, Lerner's notion of competence and Catalano's concept of psychosocial competence. Empirically, research showed that socially and emotionally competent children and adolescents are less likely to show problem behavior and more likely to have positive developmental outcomes such as academic success.[46,47] Besides, vulnerable children such as those suffering from behavioral dysregulation or poverty will benefit from developing core social-emotional competencies.[46,48] In addition, longitudinal studies showed that higher levels of social-emotional competencies in childhood are predictive of developmental outcomes in multiple domains over time.[49,50]

SEL interventions focus on nurturing social and emotional skills among youths by directly cultivating their competencies or indirectly improving their learning environments that foster the development of social-emotional competencies. The nurtured competencies that are commonly indicated by social and emotional skills (eg, identifying emotions, self-control and coping strategies), self-perception (eg, self-worth and self-concept), attitudes toward others (eg, prosocial beliefs) and attitudes related to school context (eg, perception of teachers, school boding and belonging) promote social relationships, academic and behavioral outcomes and productive performance.[51]

Meta-analytic research has consistently shown that school-based SEL interventions result in noticeable positive and

long-lasting effects on a variety of developmental outcomes including academic performance, positive social behaviors and mental health.[52] Furthermore, the overall impacts of SEL interventions on students' development were consistently positive, regardless of students' ethnicity, gender, age and school locations (ie, urban, suburban or rural). These positive impacts were found to be more significant for students from low-income families.[52,53] Besides, meta-analytic findings have shown that interventions following principles of SAFE (ie, Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit) or utilizing active (eg, role-play) rather than passive methods (eg, lecture) exerted a greater beneficial influence on student development.[53,54] In addition, SEL programs are also beneficial to teachers, with those who successfully implemented SEL interventions reported to have more positive teaching experiences, higher levels of efficacy in teaching and job satisfaction, greater personal accomplishment and lower level of stress.[55,56]

"Being" approach: character and spirituality

In contrast to the sheer focus on psychosocial competence in the SEL framework, there are views focusing on the importance of "being" of young people leading to optimal development, such as character and spirituality (eg, life meaning). However, instead of simply treating character and spirituality as components of PYD, one may also address PYD through the character and spirituality lens.

Influenced by positive psychology, cultivating character among children and adolescents has gained increasing attention in PYD. Character can be regarded as a developmental asset (Benson's model), one of the 5Cs (Lerner's model) and a PYD construct (Catalano's PYD construct). To operationalize character, Peterson and Seligman proposed a "Value in Action" (VIA) model with 24 character strengths categorized into six dimensions, including "wisdom and knowledge", "courage", "humanity", "justice", "temperance" and "transcendence".[57,58] Scientific research showed that character strengths were not only strong buffers against a variety of adolescent psychosocial problems such as internalizing and externalizing problems, depression and suicidality,[59–61] but also positively associated with life satisfaction, well-being, happiness and academic achievements.[62–64] According to Battistich, character emphasizes the commitment to contribute to one's community.[65] Finally, the character perspective focuses more on the "being" of adolescents which is strongly upheld in Asian cultures. For example, Shek, Yu and Fu attempted to integrate the character perspective with PYD and relate it to Confucian values.[66]

Spirituality is seen as an important component of PYD according to Benson and Catalano.[43,67,68] According to Lerner, Alberts, Anderson and Dowling, spirituality is defined as views of life which are related to the transcendence of oneself and "goes beyond provincialism or materialism to express the authentic concerns about others".[69(p60)] Shek proposed that spirituality includes a search for meaning and purpose of life, a search for and reaction to limitation of life (eg, death) and a quest for sacredness or infinity.[70] Spirituality is also "an inherent aspect of human nature that unfolds during adolescence as the individual searches for transcendence, meaning, and purpose in life".[71(p755)] Some scholars argued that spirituality is an important contextual asset or resource that helps to promote the positive development of adolescents.[72] Others regarded it as an important "human capacity" or construct of PYD.[43] Spirituality contributes significantly to the character formation of youth as it is closely related to moral aspects of character development of adolescents. In the VIA model, transcendence is also proposed as one of the six core dimensions of character strengths. Unfortunately, theoretical and empirical work on PYD in terms of spirituality has not been adequately conducted.[73]

Theoretically, character and spirituality are closely related to the concept of thriving (ie, ideal personhood). During the process of thriving, the adolescent develops an integrated moral and civic identity that contributes to the society which involves a sense of transcendence of self and self-interests in the horizontal plane (contribution to the society) and vertical plane (connection to infinity and eternity).[74] Therefore, thriving as a process firstly helps to foster the development of spirituality and then uses spirituality as the emotional fuel to lead youth to develop to ideal adulthood.[74] Empirically, Lerner and colleagues found that spirituality influenced youth thriving through religiosity.[69] Scientific research also showed that spirituality was a strong buffer against the development of adolescent mental health problems.[75,76]

Observations and future research directions

As suggested by Larson, PYD can be taken as a loosely defined field grounded in different theories and models.[77] At the same time, there are several converging substantive themes within the PYD approaches, including the promotion of adolescent

positive development, building competencies, enhancing plasticity and increasing the opportunities for growth.[3,26] Besides, researchers have argued that both personal and ecological assets are associated with PYD. Although different measures of PYD have been used to evaluate the effectiveness of PYD programs,[78,79] there are overlaps amongst different PYD approaches, such as the emphasis on psychosocial competence. However, despite the overlaps amongst different strains of PYD models, there exist differences across the models under review. In Table 1, we outline the comparison between different PYD approaches in terms of theoretical orientation, the role of community, spirituality, character/morality, thriving, "being" versus "doing" and origin.

Theoretically, while the notions of 40 developmental assets, 5Cs/6Cs models and 15 PYD constructs share the ecological principles, SEL is under the framework of social information-processing theory,[26] and character/spirituality is primarily grounded in the humanistic, existential and strength perspectives. Those approaches with an ecological emphasis often emphasize the importance of community in promoting PYD, while SEL and character/ spirituality do not place a strong emphasis on this element. In addition, the approaches integrating themes such as spirituality, character, morality and thriving continuum often place great emphasis on cultivating an individual's inner quality ("being") rather than solely promoting their psychosocial skills ("doing"). Different from other PYD approaches, SEL mainly focuses on social skills training and does not view the positive functioning a continuum toward thriving.[26] Finally, all of these approaches were originally developed and implemented in Western contexts.

The comparison shown in Table 1 reveals the incomplete integration of different themes and domains in the PYD field.[6] As Lerner and colleagues argued, the lack of integration between the processes, philosophies and programs of PYD will cause uncertainty when understanding how to promote PYD.[80] Besides, PYD programs adopting different models aim to achieve different PYD outcomes, which cause difficulty in comparisons across studies. To address these challenges, an integration of discipline knowledge and emphases on local experience and cultural contexts are needed. Cantor and colleagues suggested that a holistic understanding of youth should be established by integrating the knowledge of biology, neuroscience, psychology and the social sciences.[81] They further developed Bronfenbrenner's theory by emphasizing the mutually influential relationships between the individual and the

Table I A comparison among PYD models and approaches

Dimensions	Different approaches or versions of PYD				
	40 developmental assets	5Cs/6Cs models	15 PYD constructs	SEL	Character/spirituality
Theoretical orientation	Ecological perspective (lifespan developmental perspective); strength perspective	Ecological perspective (community emphasized)	Ecological perspective (prevention science: risk and protective factors)	Social information-processing	Humanistic, existential and strength perspectives
Emphasis on the role of community in youth development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not much	Not much
Spirituality	Yes	Not much	Yes	No	Yes
Character/morality	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Thriving continuum	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Being versus Doing	Both	Both	Both	Doing > Being	Being > Doing
Origin	Western	Western	Western	Western	Western

Abbreviations: PYD, positive youth development; SEL, social-emotional learning.

environment.[82] With the growing emphasis on spirituality, there is a need to further develop PYD models through the character and spirituality lens, especially when these concepts are commonly regarded as unscientific. Besides, further work to elucidate the role of "doing" and "being" in thriving would be important since it would have practical implications on the program level. These two research directions are exciting possibilities for researchers in the field of PYD.

Regarding the cultural context of PYD programs, many evaluation studies only included youths in specific geographical and cultural contexts.[6] Some recent research, such as the "Special Section of Child Development on Positive Youth Development in Diverse and Global Contexts" and the "Handbook of Adolescent Development Research and Its Impact on Global Policy"[83,84] have discussed the PYD issues in global contexts including both developed and underdeveloped countries. As the number of Chinese adolescents is huge, greater attention should be paid to PYD research and programs in Chinese adolescents. Theoretically, Shek, Yu and Fu attempted to integrate the character strengths with PYD and Confucian virtues.[66] To foster positive development of adolescents in Hong Kong, scholars from five local universities developed a multi-year PYD program entitled Project P.A.T.H.S.[85] This project is a high quality and comprehensive program based on the 15 PYD constructs and adopted multiple evaluation approaches and validated measures to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. Multiple evaluation studies suggested that Project P.A.T.H.S. is an evidence-based program which can effectively promote the holistic development among adolescents.[85–90] This project was identified by the WHO (INSPIRE) as an effective program for the promotion of life skills in young people where INSPIRE is

> an evidence-based resource for everyone committed to preventing and responding to violence against children and adolescents … It represents a select group of strategies based on the best available evidence.[91,(p8)]

Besides, based on "a rigorous analysis of existing evidence of PYD in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)",[92] (p1) YouthPower Learning identified the Project P.A.T.H.S. as an effective PYD program.[92(p29)] To benefit young people in China, Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. project was implemented in mainland China, with the development of curriculum materials and implementation of evaluation studies. Systematic evaluation showed that the project promoted the holistic development of adolescents.[93]

For PYD assessment, Shek, Siu and Lee developed a comprehensive scale entitled Chinese Positive Youth Development Scale (CPYDS) based on the 15 constructs to measure the positive development of Chinese youths.[94] CPYDS comprised 15 subscales (90 items) corresponding to the 15 constructs of PYD. Several validation studies have suggested that CPYDS is a robust measure.[94,95] CPYDS and its subscales were also found to be positively associated with positive indicators and negatively associated with different adolescent problem behaviors.[96,97] The factorial validity of the CPYDS was also supported by Shek and Ma.[95] In an attempt to

> provide implementers of youth programming a variety of references, resources, and tools on how to use a positive youth development (PYD) approach for evaluating youth-focused programming[95,(p11)]

a group of international renowned researchers identified the CPYDS developed in this project to be a valid and reliable measure of PYD based on a rigorous review of the scientific literature.[98(pp76–78)] In short, the development of Project P.A.T.H.S. and the related PYD assessment tool constitute a modest effort to contribute to the scientific literature on PYD.

In conclusion, this paper reviews the theoretical roots of the PYD approach and several PYD models. Although common themes can be identified in different PYD models, the models differ in their theoretical orientation and focus on the community, spirituality, character, thriving and "doing" versus "being". The review points to three future directions, including further work on investigating PYD from the "being" approach (character and spirituality), clarifying the relative contribution of "doing" versus "being" to thriving and investigating PYD models and issues in non-Western contexts.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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