Review of *Towards Positive Youth Development: Transforming Schools and Community Programs.* Marybeth Shinn and Hirokazu Yoshikawa (Eds.). Reviewed by Amy D. Benton.

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Positive Youth Development: Transforming Schools and
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Since the 1990s, youth development has been a popular
focus area for funders, policy makers and researchers across
disciplines who are interested in examining and influencing
life outcomes for children and adolescents. While there has
been substantial research regarding the identification of risk
and protective factors for positive youth development, little
has been written at the macro level. How do particular set-
tings support positive outcomes for youth? The primary goal
of *Toward Positive Youth Development* is to explore how settings
in which we commonly find youth can be changed in order to
create effective interventions for youth.

The book begins with an introductory chapter which de-
scribes its purpose and layout. The remaining eighteen chap-
ters are separated into five sections. The first four sections of
the book examine primary settings and contexts for youth.
Each chapter within these first four sections addresses issues
of theory (such as network theory and the ecological theory
of action), describes chosen methodology, and provides ex-
emplars (including MyTeachingPartner and the Meyerhoff
Scholars Program). The first section (chapters 2-4) focuses
on the classroom. Specifically, these chapters appraise how
changes instituted by the teacher can influence a variety of
issues such as classroom climate, behavior norms, and student
engagement, in order to improve student success. The second
section (chapters 5-9) examines changes that are introduced
school-wide. Policies and climate are considered in relation to
a variety of factors that influence youth outcomes, including
perceptions of safety and teacher expectations of youth.

Community organizations, settings in which youth may in-
teract during non-school hours, represent the focus of the third
section (chapters 10-13). Including these chapters is useful in
providing a more holistic view of youth development settings.
The lens is further widened in the fourth section (chapters 14-
17), where broader social contexts are considered. Chapters in
this section consider how larger systems (local, state, federal)

interact to influence youth outcomes and how system or com-
munity-wide interventions can be implemented. In particular,
the use of data to educate stakeholders and inform change is
discussed in several chapters. Finally, the fifth section con-
cludes the book with two chapters which cover all setting
levels. Chapter 18 addresses strategies for improving the valid-
ity and reliability of setting level measurement while chapter
19 summarizes and examines themes, common to all setting
levels, which illuminate effective intervention strategies.

A primary strength of the book is its format. All contrib-
uting authors not only provide theoretical support for their
setting interventions, but concrete examples which illuminate
the strategies described. Additionally, common themes woven
throughout the book support the goal of offering effective strat-
egies for creating setting-level changes. For example, partici-
patory approaches to change, including stakeholders in assess-
ment and goal setting, are described and promoted in several
chapters. Successful change requires buy-in at multiple levels
and early on in the process. The commonality of issues illumi-
nates key strategies to consider when undertaking change.

One weakness of the book is the shortage of well-docu-
mented, evidence-based change models. Though the book is
robust with proposed theory and methodology, much of the re-
search is recent. However, given the uniqueness of this book's
focus, it is not surprising that many of the studies are still in
early stages. Hopefully, a second edition of this book will be
produced when more of the identified studies have concrete
findings. Nevertheless, *Toward Positive Youth Development* is
a collection of well-written, inspiring scholarly contributions
which build an evidence base for setting-level interventions
to improve youth outcomes. While focused on macro level
change (settings), the book maintains an awareness of micro
level goals (positive youth outcomes). This unique, integrated
focus should be of interest to a wide range of practitioners,
researchers, funders and policy makers—those dedicated to
improving the lives of youth and those interested in organiza-
tional development and change.

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