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

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Marybeth Shinn and Hirokazu Yoshikawa (Eds.), *Towards Positive Youth Development: Transforming Schools and Community Programs*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. \$49.95 hardcover.

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 settings 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 describes its purpose and layout. The remaining eighteen chapters 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 exemplars (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 interact 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 community-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 concludes the book with two chapters which cover all setting levels. Chapter 18 addresses strategies for improving the validity 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 contributing 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 strategies for creating setting-level changes. For example, participatory approaches to change, including stakeholders in assessment 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 illuminates key strategies to consider when undertaking change.

One weakness of the book is the shortage of well-documented, evidence-based change models. Though the book is robust with proposed theory and methodology, much of the research 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 organizational development and change.

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