Advances in

Youth Development

Research and Evaluation from the University of California Cooperative Extension 2001-2010

Edited by

Aarti Subramaniam
Katherine Heck
Ramona Carlos
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University *of* California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Making a Difference for California

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Youth Development Programming

Research and Evaluation from the University of California Cooperative Extension 2001-2010

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Foreword

In 2000, the University of California 4-H Youth Development Program (4-H YDP) released *Advances in Youth Development Programming: Reviews and Case Studies from the University of California*, a sampling of research and evaluation being conducted by UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) academic advisors and specialists. This work represented new thinking and approaches just as the field of positive youth development (PYD) was emerging. In the last decade the field of PYD has accelerated its evolution, fueled by increased research, empirical studies on youth development, and the release of the National Academy of Science's (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee) *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* in 2003. This led to increased interest in PYD by national level foundations such as Robert Wood Johnson, William T. Grant, Wallace, W.K. Kellogg, Annie E. Casey and others, all supporting the growth and development of PYD and assisting in the creation of a consistent language and framework for the field.

The nation's land grant institutions have been leaders in the development of the field of PYD with over a century of ensuring that the growing knowledge base was translated into effective community-based programs, especially its own 4-H club program, reaching over six million youth nationally. In the past decade the University of California 4-H YDP renewed its commitment to this endeavor and in 2003 released its new dual purpose mission and direction statement of engaging "youth in reaching their fullest potential while advancing the field of youth development." These efforts refocused the work and redefined its niche to innovate responsive programs and conduct relevant applied research for the betterment of California youth and families and the larger field of positive youth development. ANR workgroups provided much guidance to this task as did the nationally defined 4-H mission mandates around science, engineering, and technology, healthy living, and citizenship. The eleven articles in this volume of *Advances in Youth Development (2001-2010)* provide just a glimpse of the research and evaluation conducted by the UC 4-H YDP over the past decade on these topics.

On the horizon, the California 4-H YDP will continue to advance the field of youth development. The recently launched large-scale implementation of thriving, a new construct from which to view youth development research, theory, and practice, will provide cutting-edge guidance for PYD program delivery. Additionally, as part of ANR's Vision 2025 and division-wide initiatives, the California 4-H YDP will broaden its scope to focus on the relevance its work has on policy. This is an evolutionary phase for 4-H and the broader field of PYD, which over the past two decades has found its intellectual niche, defined its framework and parameters, and conducted and compiled evaluation and research to inform best and effective practices. Bridging PYD research and practice with policy seems the next step in the maturation process for the 4-H YDP as it continues along its own developmental pathway. 4-H will continue to identify and exemplify new approaches to youth issues which will lead to greater policy awareness and informed community decision-making. The ultimate goal for the 4-H Youth Development Program will continue to be to enhance the positive youth development of all California youth.

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Introduction

The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) system promotes positive youth development through its commitment to bridge research and practice. To achieve this end, program staff, county-based academics, and campus-based researchers are in constant dialogue. The benefits of this type of interaction have been captured in this volume, featuring work from 11 research and evaluation projects – a mere glimpse of the range and breadth of topics and programs that have been undertaken in the past decade within California 4-H.

Organizational mandates and structures have influenced the outcomes of research and evaluation in the last ten years. For this past decade, UCCE actively promoted workgroups, which involved groups of academics from campus and county collaborating around a specific research area. Several of the research and evaluation papers in this volume are a product of these teams coming together. Additional papers involve collaborative research projects outside of the workgroup framework. The topics represented by this collected volume include health and healthy living, citizenship, leadership, life skills, and science education.

We have organized this volume starting with four papers that contribute to youth development research. Following this, four articles are presented that evaluate various 4-H youth development programs. Finally, the volume ends with three articles on evaluations of program resources for staff and volunteer development.

King & Murray address a critical topic in the first paper, examining the influence of body self-image in the treatment of childhood obesity. Their research highlights psychosocial variables that may influence childhood obesity in African American girls and boys. King and Murray's analysis provides important data for obesity prevention policies in minority populations, a topic that has been gaining increasing attention in recent years.

The paper by Heck & Nathaniel, uses data from a study conducted by the Teen Decision Making subgroup of the Adolescent workgroup. The study provides new insights into the influence of urban, suburban, or rural residence as a factor in teen driving. This paper provides an ecological perspective on risks associated with adolescent driving.

Murdock, Patterson, Lee, and Gatmaitan present work on youth-adult partnerships based on a study conducted by a collaborative research team in the Bay Area. The study contrasts successful practices in organizations that are effective in promoting youth voice with those that are not as effective. Their results provide further support for the idea that organizations need to make a significant commitment to promote youth voice.

Moncloa, Schmitt-McQuitty, Go, Nathaniel, and Truong describe research in the area of afterschool programming, which grew out of work of the Afterschool workgroup. Their research highlights the importance of relationships in potentially bridging afterschool program outcomes and academic outcomes. The importance of a positive youth development environment in a school setting for young people's healthy social and academic development is brought out here, and again has substantial policy implications in a time where there may be limited resources to provide for these supports in public schools.

Two papers in this volume focusing on program evaluation feature outreach youth development programs that are effective in engaging young people from diverse and lower-income communities. Bird and Subramaniam's paper showcases a program called 4-H On the Wild Side that engages elementary students from low-income schools in experiential and environmental science learning through an overnight weekend camp program, led by teens. Consistent positive outcomes indicate that the program has been successful in increasing participants' learning in environmental science as well as being an empowering experience for teenagers. In her paper, Conklin-Ginop highlights a Sonoma County program called 4-H Bloco Drum and Dance, which has also been successful in reaching minority youth. The evaluation shows evidence that an arts-based program can be successful in facilitating positive impacts for young people in a broad range of areas such as healthy living and nutrition, attitudes toward gang involvement, and self-esteem. Both of these

programs may be duplicated in other settings to test whether there are similar positive outcomes.

Mahacek and Worker share their process of developing and evaluating a new 4-H Robotics curriculum. Improving youth science literacy through nonformal science education is an important component of the 4-H program. To provide such education, it is necessary to have engaging curricula that can provide information through experiential learning in an inquiry-based format. Such curricula are important in providing developmentally appropriate, research-based programming for young people that will meet future needs for workforce preparation. The authors discuss the importance of engineering curricula for young people and describe the formative evaluation they undertook in their curriculum development process.

The final paper in this section, by Matthieson, Horowitz, Neelon, Smith, and Kaiser, shares insights gained through an evaluation of a 4-H healthy living curriculum. Their study brings out clearly the challenges in evaluating nutrition curricula, and offers a discussion on selecting appropriate methodologies for different types of nutrition evaluation. Their mixed methods approach is a noteworthy example of the ways in which impacts of nutrition curriculum can be assessed.

In recent years there has been a strong impetus within California UCCE to build the capacity of youth development staff and volunteers through resources that facilitate intentionality in programming. The last three papers in this volume reflect the efforts undertaken to build and test these resources. Junge and Manglallan share their development and evaluation of a science, engineering and technology training program for afterschool program staff. The work presented here reflects a bridge between training programs for non-formal and formal schooling as the curricula are based on national science standards, but still retain experiential and learner-centered qualities that are a key feature of non-formal learning environments.

Schmitt-McQuitty and Smith provide information on the relevance of the experiential learning model within a nonformal learning context, and the importance of training volunteers so that they fully understand and apply this model rather than conventional, lecture-based teaching methods. They also describe the impact of their training in this area on volunteer knowledge and attitudes toward experiential learning.

Young and Sousa describe the work and products of the 4-H Leadership Development workgroup – namely creating resources for 4-H staff and volunteers including a Digest – a type of manual, and training modules designed for a train-the-trainer format. These resources developed in the last three years may be effectively customized for use in other states and add to the dialogue on staff and volunteer impact.

As is evident from this summary of chapters, there is a wide range and diversity reflected in the topics that have been studied and programs that have been developed in the 4-H Youth Development program in California over the past decade. These papers represent only a small slice of the work that has been done in engaging young people in positive youth development programming, and advancing the field of research in positive youth development. However, these articles capture an effort to bring research based knowledge into the field of practice, or influence program policy, for the ultimate purpose of facilitating positive outcomes for young people.

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