

Development and Evaluation of Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programs (P.A.T.H.S.)

Edited by Daniel T.L. Shek and Rachel C.F. Sun

ISBN: 978-981-4451-53-6

Springer, 2013, 328 pages

Reviewed by Stephanie J. Stockburger, MD, FAAP, Division of Adolescent Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Email: sjstoc2@uky.edu

The preface of the book is derived from the fact that adolescent review different parts of the world. The book seeks to explain evidenced based practice for promoting positive youth development in China. This is especially important because Chinese youth constitute roughly one fifth of the population in the world. This book is a compilation of multiple research papers that were published about the P.A.T.H.S. project. Compiling the individual works makes this a comprehensive and thorough discussion, evaluation, and conclusion about the project. P.A.T.H.S. stands for positive adolescent training through holistic social programs. The project was developed in 2004 and has been funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charity Trust. Program developers found that validated programs for Chinese adolescent positive youth development were almost nonexistent. The Hong Kong Jockey club Charity trust invited academics of 5 universities in Hong Kong the form a research team. Due to the success of the program, the project was extended for another cycle in 2009. There are two tiers of the program. In the tier 1 program, students from secondary one to secondary 3 participated, normally with 20 hours of training in the school year at each grade. Roughly one fifth of adolescents may need help of a deeper nature, so the tier 2 program is designed for at least one fifth of the students who have greater psychosocial needs at each grade. The tier 1 program is a universal program where as the tier 2 program is a selective program. In the tier 1 program, 15 adolescent developmental constructs are covered. These include promotion of bonding, cultivation of resilience, promotion of social competence, promotion of emotional competence, promotion of cognitive competence, promotion of behavioral competence, motion of more competent, cultivation of self-determination, promotion of spirituality, development of self-efficacy, development of a positive identity, promotion of believes in the future, provision of recognition for positive behavior, provision of opportunities for prosocial involvement, and fostering prosocial norms. The typical training for the tier 1 program involved 20 hours of student lessons. The current best available evidence was used to create a program. The project was evaluated using multiple strategies including objective out, evaluation, subjective outcome evaluation, process evaluation, qualitative evaluation, and evaluation based on student weekly diaries. Longitudinal data were collected from the evaluation study which is one of the things that makes the study so unique.

For the study, between 2006 and 2011, a total of 7,846 secondary one students in (equivalent to grade 7) were recruited from 48 schools. Twenty-four of the schools were experimental and 24 were control schools. The schools were stratified with the help of the education Bureau of the Hong Kong government. The students were followed longitudinally across waves with wave 2 being in spring of 2007, each year with new wave with wave 8 being in spring 2011. Participants completed a Chinese Positive Youth Development Scale. On subjective evaluation, when seeking to evaluate if a higher “dose” of the program was beneficial, the study showed that the program was well received by participants in both the

ten-hour and the 20 hour programs. Also on subjective evaluation, a high proportion of program implementers perceived the program positively in terms of program content, their involvement in the implementation process, and program effectiveness. When the program was evaluated by narrative findings based on focus groups with participating students, students perceive the program as “interesting,” “lively,” and “relaxing,” which made them “happy” and “involved” in the class. From the program, this due to concerned problem-solving skills, improvement in assertiveness, and improvement and stress management and emotional regulation. One chapter contains evaluations based on weekly diaries written by the students. Within this chapter, there are multiple quotes from the diaries of the students. Many of the entries state that the project was unexpectedly helpful.

In 2011 in 2012, a program for leadership development was developed for University students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Evaluation based on reported narratives suggest that the use of a credit-bearing subject to promote the holistic development of University students is a promising approach.

This book is a wonderful addition to the literature regarding evidence-based youth development programs. The P.A.T.H.S. program is clearly detailed and defined. Multiple evaluation methods and statistical analysis were used to evaluate the program. Not to mention, this study has a great deal of power due to its large size. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in developing an evidence-based program for promoting positive youth development.