ECOP 4-H

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Literature Review: Exploring 4-H Thriving through an Equity Lens

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Introduction

4-H has made a commitment to grow the program through the *Promise to America's Kids Vision.* This vision asserts that "In 2025, 4-H will reflect the population demographics, vulnerable populations, diverse needs and social conditions of the country. This vision has the elements of inclusion, caring adults, serving at minimum 1 in 5 youth, and the volunteers and staff reflect the diversity of the population" (4-H National Headquarters, 2015).

Additionally, ECOP 4-H (2019) has adopted the following opportunity statement:

> 4-H, the nation's largest youth development organization, will embrace the rich diversity of youth, families and communities that comprise our nation. We will grow our organization in ways which leverage that diversity to improve the economic, environmental and social conditions in which people live. At a time when disparities to resources and opportunities are growing for families across the country, the need for 4-H high quality positive youth development has never been greater. Cooperative Extension and 4-H have an opportunity to close the gap in wellbeing and economic mobility as we undertake our bold goal to engage 10 million youth reflecting the diversity of the communities, we serve by 2025. To achieve the growth and impact to which our system is committed, Extension must build and sustain community partnerships to offer 4-H in response to community needs, and re-examine how we hire and support staff, recruit and support volunteers, and fund and sustain programs. Uniting toward an inclusive, diverse and equitable 4-H is the fuel we need to increase access for all youth, families and communities—in every town, every city and every corner of America.

In order to achieve this bold vision and opportunity, it will require national, state, and local 4-H stakeholders to systematically analyze and deliver 4-H through an equity lens. This paper will explore: (1) key terms and definitions related to equity, (2) critical theories and pedagogies that influence equity, (3) and the 4-H thriving model through an equity lens.

Terms and Definitions

There are many terms used when we talk about diversity, inclusion, and equity. It is important to establish a shared understanding of terminology when discussing goals and strategies to foster a more inclusive and equitable 4-H Youth Development program. National 4-H groups that focus on equity (i.e. 4-H Program Leader's Working Group (PLWG) Access, Equity and Belonging Committee (AEBC), CYFAR, NAE4-HYDP, National 4-H Council) have begun to and/or are considering the adoption of the terms used below:

Culture- The shared experiences of people, including their languages, values, customs and worldviews (American Evaluation Association, 2017; Deen, Parker & Huskey, 2015; Fields, 2019).

Culturally Relevant Teaching- Teaching practices that use the cultural knowledge, viewpoints, and social conditions of our participants to make our programs more relevant (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Diversity- Our different identities such as age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual practices, employment status, geographic location and other characteristics (Fields, 2019; Merriam-Webster, 2019).

Equality- When each member of a society or group receives the same resource or treatment regardless of what may be needed to achieve a desired outcome (Calhoun, 2002; Fields, 2019; Fields 2019; Niblett, 2017).

Equity- When a person or group receives the unique resources and opportunities needed to reduce or eliminate the barriers (Calhoun, 2002; Fields, 2019; Niblett. 2017).

Inclusion- Is the movement beyond simply having diversity within a space and toward creating an equitable environment where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed. Inclusion is the act of creating a space where each person is authentically valued, respected and supported (Baltimore Racial Justice Action, 2016; Fields, 2019).

Oppression- The discrimination of one social group for the benefit of another (Baltimore Racial Justice Action, 2016; Fields, 2019; Freire, 1970/2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Social Justice- The act of distributing power, resources, opportunity, societal benefits and protection in a way that is equitable for all members of society (Baltimore Racial Justice Action, 2016; Fields, 2019; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Social Justice Youth Development- A way to foster critical consciousness among young people while encouraging them to act toward achieving a sociopolitical vision (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Ginwright & James, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Diving Deeper into the Related Terms

Diversity is a word that is commonly used in our programs and organizations. Diversity describes our different identities such as age, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual practices, employment status, geographic location and other characteristics. There are many aspects of diversity, although we tend to focus on the physical attributes we may see. It is important to acknowledge that diversity is multi-dimensional (see Figure 1) and we must take time to explore our own identities as well as those around us (Fields, 2019; YMCA of the USA, 2017).
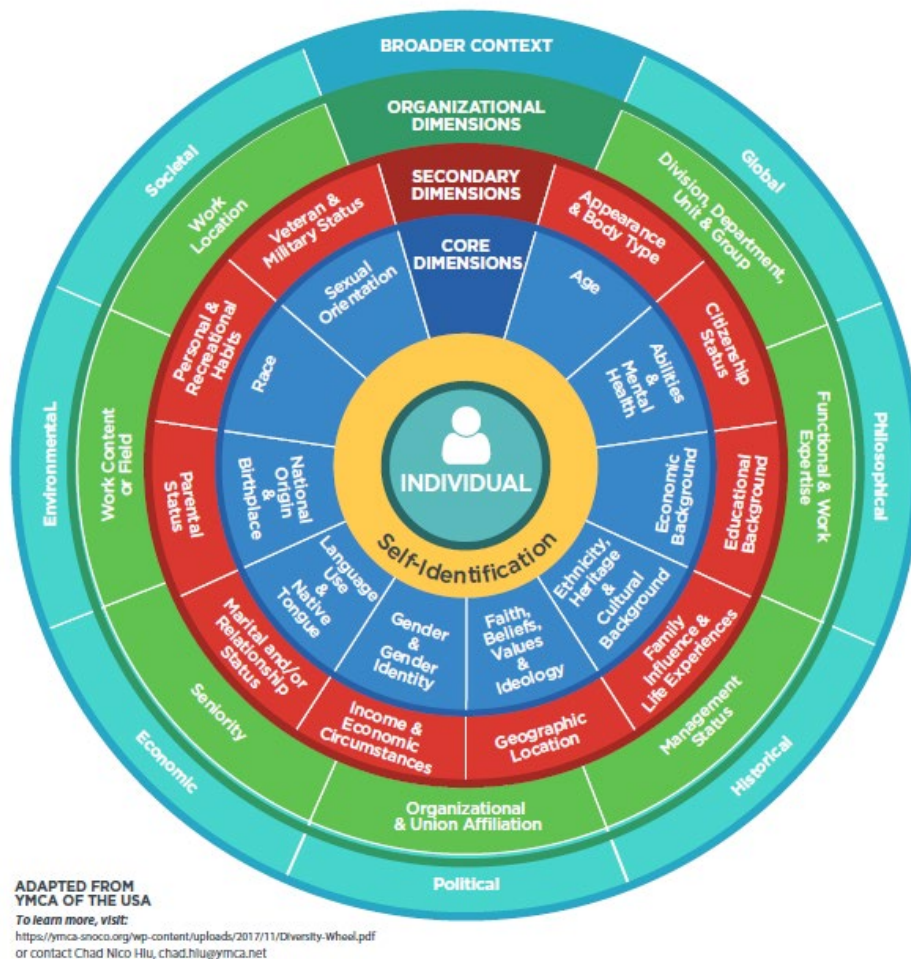
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BROADER CONTEXT

ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSIONS

SECONDARY DIMENSIONS

CORE DIMENSIONS

INDIVIDUAL

Self-Identification

Societal · Work Location · Veteran & Military Status · Personal & Recreational Habits · Race · Sexual Orientation · Age · Appearance & Body Type · Division Department, Unit & Group · Global · Citizenship Status · Abilities & Mental Health · Functional & Work Expertise · Philosophical · Economic Background · Educational Background · Environmental · Work Content or Field · Parental Status · National Origin & Birthplace · Language Use Native Tongue · Gender & Gender Identity · Faith, Beliefs, Values & Ideology · Ethnicity, Heritage & Cultural Background · Family Influence & Life Experiences · Management Status · Historical · Income & Economic Circumstances · Geographic Location · Marital and/or Relationship Status · Seniority · Economic · Organizational & Union Affiliation · Political

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or contact Chad Nico Hiu, chad.hiu@ymca.net

Figure 1. Dimensions of Diversity. (Fields, 2019; YMCA of the USA, 2017)

While diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeably, these terms are quite different. Inclusion moves beyond simply having diversity within a space and toward creating an equitable environment where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed (Baltimore Racial Justice Action, 2016; Fields, 2019). Inclusion is the act of creating a space where each person is authentically valued, respected and supported. It is not enough to merely have diversity within a space. It is important that a program's culture, practices, and policies are such that each person feels like they truly belong and have the opportunity to fully participate and connect with others (Fields, 2019).

Equality and equity are also often mistakenly used interchangeably. However, there are distinct differences between these terms. Equality is when each member of a society or group receives the same resource or treatment regardless of what may be needed to achieve a desired outcome (Fields, 2019; Niblett, 2017). However, because of individual's unique identities in addition to historical and institutional barriers that stem from discrimination, equal does not always work (Fields, 2019). Equity on the other hand, is when a person or group receives the

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unique resources and opportunities needed to reduce or eliminate the barriers that prevent them from achieving the desired outcome (Fields, 2019; Niblett; 2017) (See Figure 2).
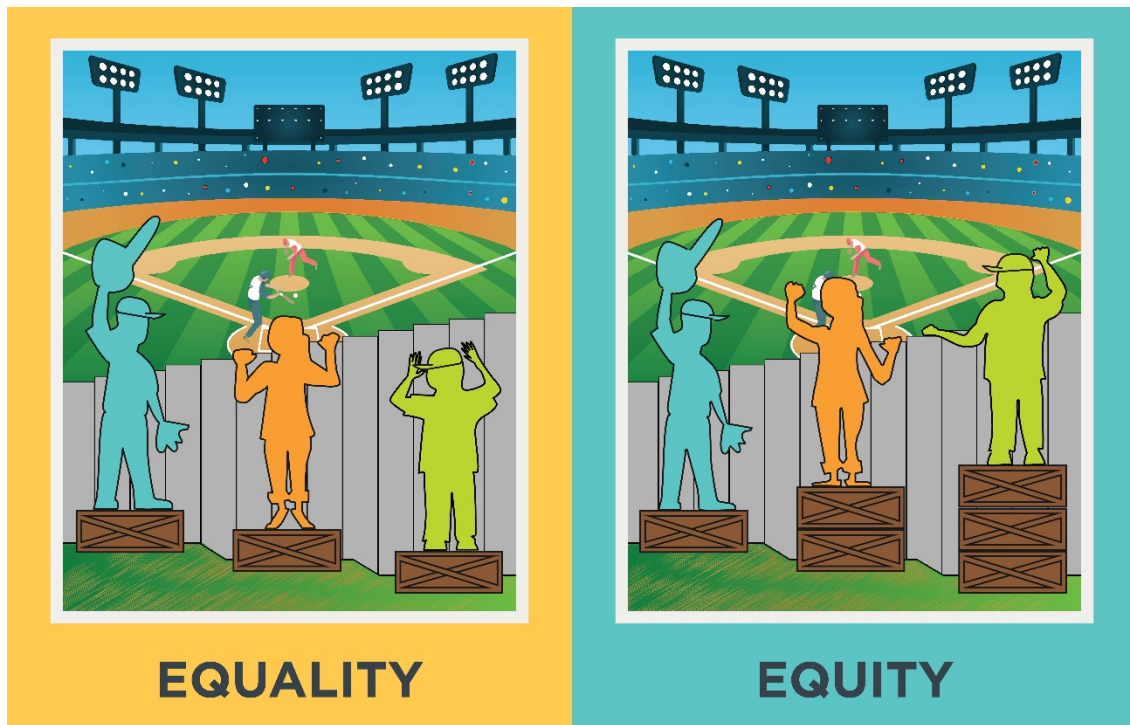

Figure 2. Equality vs. Equity Image. (Interaction Institute for Social Change, 2016; Fields, 2019; Kutner, 2016.)

In the image above (Figure 2), each person is a different height. More importantly, the fence is slanted and therefore presents a different height barrier for each person. On the left side (equality), each person has an equal size box, yet not everyone can view the game. On the right side (equity), the boxes, which you may think of as resources, are equitably distributed so that each person has an opportunity to view the game. In this image, the fence symbolizes systemic forms of oppression and injustice. The various heights of those represented in the image symbolizes the privilege or lack thereof that people have. Historic oppression and systemic barriers that decrease access to opportunities precludes educators from using a one-size fits all approach in their programming and community engagement. Educators have a responsibility to be aware of the disparities that exist both within our programming and in society. This is critical, because educators who aim to develop youth without acknowledgment of and response to a young person's possible societal inequities, are in fact perpetuating injustice (Fields, Moncloa & Smith, 2018).

In order to enact equitable practices, one must understand oppression and privilege. Oppression describes the discrimination of one societal group for the benefit of another (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Fields, 2019). Oppression is established and maintained through institutional systems and power—which is held by dominant cultures in our society. The dominant culture represents the values, practices, language and traditions that are assumed to be the most accepted and influential within a given society (UW Takoma Diversity Research Center, 2015). Members

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of a dominant culture are in positions of power that influence and even solely decide policy, laws, and practices that maintain systems of oppression (Fields, 2019).

In American culture, dominant identities include: White, middle class/wealthy, heterosexual, men, Christian, people with college degrees, people with full physical and mental ability, American citizens, and English speaking people. Intersectionality can also confound the levels of oppression that one experiences. Intersectionality is the notion that identities such as gender identity, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive (Fields, 2019; University of Washington Tacoma Diversity Resource Center, 2015). Individuals could have privilege with one identity and be oppressed through another.

As educators and members of society, we have a responsibility to acknowledge systems within our organizations and communities that oppress marginalized and non-dominant groups. One way we can do this is to begin thinking with a social justice mindset. Social justice describes the act of distributing power, resources, opportunity, societal benefits and protection in a way that is equitable for all members of society (Fields, 2019; Baltimore Racial Justice 2016; Niblett, 2017). Social justice youth development offers a way to foster critical consciousness among young people while encouraging them to act toward achieving a sociopolitical vision (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). A social justice youth development mindset requires one to:

(a) be open to reflect on their own identity and organizational culture;
(b) engage with diverse communities in an inclusive way;
(c) position youth and community members at the center of programs;
(d) celebrate and value the diverse cultures around us; and
(e) acknowledge and most importantly challenge the oppressive barriers that marginalized groups face (Fields, 2017; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; & Niblett, 2017).

In addition to learning about societal inequities, it is equally important for educators to learn of the cultural and social capital diverse youth and adults have (Fields, Moncloa & Smith, 2018; Yosso, 2016). These are often the first steps in developing a cultural awareness of the diverse youth who participate in one's program. Having cultural awareness includes having an understanding of both the strengths and values of a culture, as well as the historical inequities within cultures.

Critical Theories and Pedagogy

Critical theories and pedagogy challenges the traditional hegemonic ways in which society creates, teaches, makes meaning of, and challenges knowledge. Critical pedagogy seeks to utilize education as a form of liberation from oppression. This pedagogy was birthed from many theoretical perspectives including Marxism, Freiran philosophies of liberation, and the Frankfurt school of critical theory (McLaren, 1997/2000). Marxism is a philosophy that analyzes the relationships between socioeconomic classes. Marxist philosophy strongly critiques capitalism and asserts that there are immense inequities between economic classes. While Marxism was not originally rooted in education, it has many connections to the classroom. The classroom is a microcosm of the larger economic and political society as they reproduce the attitudes and dispositions that are required for the continuation of the present system of domination by the privileged class.

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Freierian philosophy focuses on education as a process of conscientization—that is a process through which one develops an awareness and understanding of their oppression (Freire, 1970; Martin, 2008). This student-centered teaching approach fosters an open dialogue where students discuss common issues and make connections to the larger societal norms. Within the Freierian model, the teacher does not simply accept the status quo and deposit meaningless learning into students. Rather, the teacher becomes a conduit between student enlightenment and student praxis—refection and action towards liberation (Freire, 1970/2002).

The Frankfurt school also analyzed the emerging forms of capital and changing forms of domination that accompanied them (Giroux, 1983). These theorists developed a critical theory, which provided both a school of thought and a process of critique to address societal inequities. These three aforementioned philosophies—Marxism, Freirian liberation, and critical theory, have been integrated to form what is known today as *critical pedagogy*. Critical pedagogy was "developed by progressive teachers attempting to eliminate inequalities on the basis of social class" (McLaren, 1997/2010, p. 1).

Critical Experiential Education

Experiential forms of education offers a mechanism for students to learn in context and through hands-on experience. However, not all experiential education is critical or equitable in nature. Dewey's (1938) experiential theory asserts that knowledge is imparted through real-life experiences and is socially constructed. It must be acknowledged however, that Dewey's experiential model was not created to address inequities of race and class within education. Rather, his theory was a critique of traditional forms of schooling.

In traditional forms of schooling, students are often inundated with concepts deemed essential by those outside of their community and culture (Ladson-Billings, 2002). In many cases, students become programmed to memorize information without relating the knowledge to practical or relevant experiences (Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings 2002). Schooling then solely becomes a means to graduation and economic survival as opposed to a meaningful learning experience (Martin, 2008).

Ladson-Billings (2000) shares that within the U.S., those who drive the public education system and define success measures typically represent colonial and Eurocentric epistemologies. Eurocentric epistemological contributions to society can include the westernized construction of race and its correlated hierarchy, and the utilization of standard American English as a measure of intelligence (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003). Ladson-Billings (2002) argues that "the hegemony of the dominant paradigm makes it more than just another way to view the world—it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world (p. 258). This "system of knowing" however, does not represent the myriad of cultures, education debts, and definitions of success that exist within this country (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Spencer, 2008; Williams, 2003).

One way for students to develop their own epistemologies are to "engage in a series of experiential activities that offer counter-hegemonic insights into the dominant ways of knowing that school structures tend to transmit" (Breunig, 2005, p. 112). Research findings indicate that experiential methods of teaching can increase academic and post-secondary interest along with community engagement (Dewey, 1938; Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003).

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As the challenges within communities are unique, there is a need for relevant approaches to experiential forms of education (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003; Rose & Paisley, 2006; Williams, 2003). Rose and Paisley (2006) share "experiential educators should learn to value various social differences within their participant groups" (p. 142). This is critical in that:

> . . . the dominance of White privilege is well-established in experiential education, and simply encouraging more racially diverse participant groups amounts to a benevolent invitation for 'others' to take part in processes and institutions already well under way without them. (Rose & Paisley, 2006, p. 142)

Too often experiential educators "facilitate as though all participants experience the activities uniformly, without appropriate consideration of students' various incoming positionalities" (Rose & Paisley, 2006, p. 144). It is critical that experiential educators integrate concepts of justice and utilize participant-informed curriculum and pedagogy (Breunig, 2005; Rose & Paisley, 2006). Rose and Paisley (2006) emphasize the importance of a mutually educative experience where both the teacher and student experience opportunities for learning and discovery. They expound on this idea by stating "the teacher is part of the experiential educational process, and that teacher brings along her or his own values and experiences, though this lens can be mitigated by empowering students to create their own meanings and their own interpretations of knowledge" (p. 143). Therefore, critical experiential learning is not about learning through *any* experience but rather learning through relevant experiences that can empower a young person to think critically.

Erbstein (2013) shares "young people who have been disengaged from or underserved by school and have limited opportunity to develop skills such as academic literacy, public speaking, writing, project planning, and meeting participation are likely to require significant additional skill-building support" (p. 119). Therefore, experiential activities that are justice-focused, should have intent and desired outcomes that directly confront issues of privilege (Erbstein, 2014; Rose & Paisley, 2006). On an institutional level, organizations that are rooted in an experiential model should:

> . . . change in order to be of better comfort to those who have been historically and systematically oppressed. Such changes might include shifts in organizational philosophy, program activities, locations, staffing decisions, and identification of relevant target outcomes. (Rose & Paisley 2006, p. 148)

Fields (2016) offers a *4-H Critical Experiential Learning Model* (See Figure 3) to consider when engaging youth in social justice youth development. The concepts that guide this model come from literature offered by Freire (1970), Ladson-Billings (2002), Breunig (2005), Dewey (1938), Rose & Pailey (2006), Erbstein (2013), Ginwright & James (2002), and Fields (2016). This *4-H Critical Experiential Learning Model* walks youth through a culturally relevant experience to explore societal injustice, encourage critical reflection, and then progresses to collective action in community. This model empowers youth to critically reflect on their community, country and world, and identify the tools and resources needed to move towards a more just society.
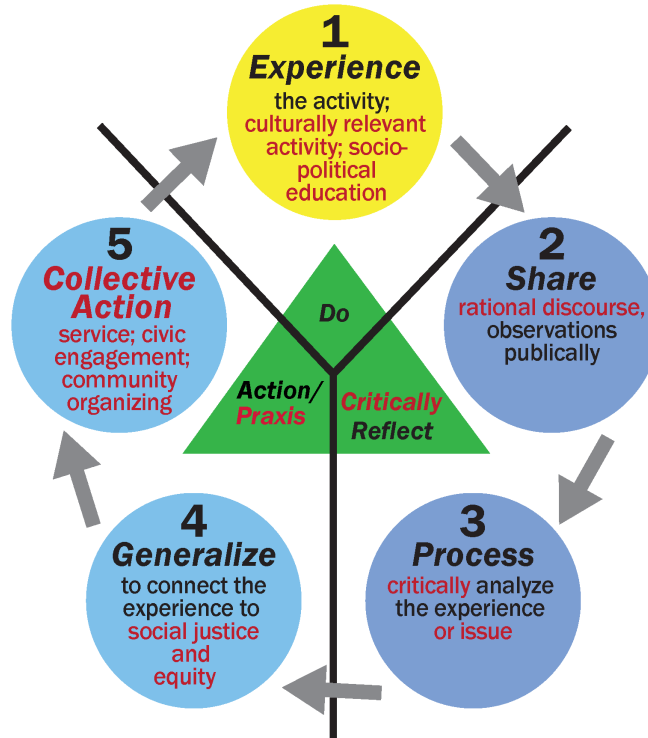
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Figure 3. 4-H Critical Experiential Learning Model (Fields, 2016)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

There are many forms of culturally rooted pedagogical practices that have been developed within the last forty decades. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is one such practice that Gay (2010) defines as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (2010, p. 31). Gay (2010) asserts that culturally responsive teaching is validating and affirming because:

(1) it acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.
(2) it builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.
(3) it uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.
(4) it teaches students to knows and praise their own and one another's cultural heritages.
(5) it incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in school. (p. 29)

Similarly, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), conceptualized by Ladson-Billings, is "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17-18). CRP is "a pedagogy of opposition [that is] committed to collective, not merely individual,

empowerment" (Ladson-Billing, 1995, p. 160). One could describe this 'collective empowerment' as means toward social justice (Fields & Nathaniel, 2015a). Similar to the critical experiential practices, culturally relevant pedagogy uses the student's culture to help them create meaning and understand the world. This pedagogy rests on three criteria: (1) Students must experience academic success, (2) Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and (3) Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). The third criterion supports an environment where youth come to know that social injustice does in fact exist—and they have the power to challenge this injustice.

Fields and Moncloa (2018) have blended the constructs offered by Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) for youth development educators. Fields and Moncloa (2018) have compiled ten strategies for educators as they engage with communities using a culturally relevant approach. Educators should:

(1) engage in intentional self-reflection to understand one's cultural norms, values, beliefs and behaviors.
(2) experience cultures different from their own while engaging in intentional self-reflection on similarities and differences.
(3) develop a non-judgmental appreciation & respect for diverse cultural beliefs and values, beyond objective surface understanding of culture, toward a deeper subjective understanding.
(4) evaluate overgeneralizations and stereotypes and seek clarification when needed.
(5) help youth understand there is more than one way of knowing by using materials that reflect people, language, art, music, stories, and games from various cultural traditions.
(6) be a youth-centered educator, demonstrate that you care, and provide experiences that facilitate engagement and discussion of their own cultural backgrounds and assets.
(7) communicate high expectations for diverse participants.
(8) incorporate multiple assessment tools.
(9) ensure practices, guidelines and policies are created or adapted with diverse populations to be more inclusive.
(10) advocate for systemic organizational change to respond to the needs and interests of diverse populations.

Community driven positive youth development that is culturally relevant can address the presence of social injustice and inequity by providing systematic and sequentially developed opportunities that draw on the cultural formations of the youth (Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003; Erbstein, 2013).

Culturally Relevant Positive Youth Development

The focus of Positive Youth Development (PYD) is to envision young people as resources rather than problems for society (Damon, 2004) and to foster mutually beneficial relations between healthy youth and a nation marked by social justice, democracy and liberty (Lerner, 2005b). PYD aims to understand, educate, and engage children in productive activities as opposed to focusing on the deficits and problems that young people encounter through their development (Benson, 2003; Lerner, 2005a; Damon, 2004). There was a paradigm shift in the

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approach to working with youth in the early 1990's, as researchers began to view adolescents "through the lens of systems theories that look at development throughout the life span as a product of relations between individuals and their world" (Lerner, 2005b, p. 2). Prior to this shift, "if positive youth development was discussed in the literature . . . it was implicitly or explicitly regarded as the absence of negative or undesirable behaviors" (Lerner, 2005a, p. 5). Approaches to youth development were problem-centered as preventative and intervention approaches centered on problems such as learning disabilities, drug abuse, self-esteem deficit and crime (Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2005).

Positive youth development (PYD) models that are not culturally relevant run the risk of maintaining societal forces of privilege and dominance (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Perry, Steele & Hilliard, 2003). Ginwright and Cammorota (2002) expound on this idea by stating:

> . . . current formulations of positive youth development are based on unrealistic, white middle-class conceptions of youth. This view of youth homogenizes their experiences, simplifies their identities, and conceptualizes them through one dominant cultural frame. Consequently, the relevance of culture, race, class, gender, and sexual identity in the positive youth development model are never fully developed. (p. 85)

Williams (2001) affirms that "youth development practitioners may have to increase their knowledge base of different cultures to begin the journey to accomplishing cross-cultural competence so programs may be designed for cultural inclusion of diverse youth and volunteers" (para. 16). Furthermore, youth development practitioners "must have a deep understanding of the impact of limited access and opportunities and inequities on the lives of many cultural groups living in the U.S. today" (National 4-H Learning Priorities Equity, Access, and Opportunity, 2008, p. 1).

Erbstein (2013) states that "effective outreach to marginalized youth [relies] on locally grounded, culturally specific understandings" of the youth (p. 111). Erbstein (2013) expounds on this idea by sharing key components of a culturally relevant PYD which include: (a) engaging adult allies, (b) respect, care, and high expectations, (c) a critical stance toward systems, (d) communication, and (e) shared culture, language, and experience. Erbstein (2013) describes a Sacramento youth development program, entitled REACH— a program that integrates critical experiential projects aimed to engage young people and adults in community change and health development. This program strengthens local networks to take a critical stance toward inequitable systems (Erbstein, 2013). REACH develops skills necessary to enact community change—such as policymaking, community organizing, and community research (Erbstein, 2013). Erbstein (2013) shared that the "most important factor in engaging underrepresented youth [within REACH] was the sustained leadership of [adult allies] with the ability to build authentic relationships . . . " (p. 113). These adults "brought a deep respect and care for the young people they sought to reach, rooted in a belief that the challenges they had faced and perhaps continued to face were not reflective of their capacities" (Erbstein, 2013, p. 113). The adult allies within REACH maintained high standards for their youth participants. Within CRP, Ladson-Billings (2000) also emphasizes the importance of having high standards and the understanding that students learn best when the content is meaningful to them.

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Erbstein (2013) argues that "youth who are most vulnerable to challenging community conditions, limited educational and economic trajectories, and poor health, derive especially strong benefits from engagement in community youth development efforts" (p. 109). However, a colorblind and cultureblind understanding of PYD [and its constructs] can serve as a disadvantage to youth who are most effected by social injustice (Erbstein, 2013; Spencer, 2008). Yet, "many educators still believe that good teaching transcends place, people, time, and context" (Gay, 2010, p. 23). To achieve the intended outcomes of PYD, programmatic efforts must be inclusive of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical experiential practices (Erbstein, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Perry, Steele & Hilliard; 2003).Youth development programs can then serve as a mechanism to combat the social injustices that exist within communities (Fields & Nathaniel, 2015).

Social Justice Youth Development

Damon (2004) acknowledges that while the PYD approach recognizes the existence of adversities, developmental challenges, and economic class, it "resists conceiving of the developmental process mainly as an effort to overcome deficits and risks" (p. 15). Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) share the limits of youth development models that are "bound by an inability to examine the complex social, economic and political forces that bear on the lives of urban youth" (p. 82). Such forces include "issues of identity, racism, sexism, police brutality, and poverty that are supported by unjust economic policies" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 82). The contemporary theory of PYD moves away from the "assumption that children are 'broken' or in danger of becoming broken" and is inclusive of concepts such a developmental assets, moral development, and civic engagement (Lerner, 2005a, p. 5; Benson, 2003). PYD acknowledges the "capacity for young people to change communities while simultaneously developing important life skills" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 84).

Youth development educators have a responsibility toward social justice, otherwise they are maintaining the status quo of privilege (Brown, 2004; Fields, 2017). To foster this move towards social justice in youth development, there is a need for professional development around areas such as diversity, privilege, self-reflection, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Brown, 2004; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Ginwright and James (2002) offer principles, practices, and outcomes of social justice youth development (Ginwright & James, 2002). Fields, Moncloa and Smith (2018) have slightly adapted this social justice youth development framework for 4-H youth development (see Figure 4). These principles and practices should be considered when developing youth development programs as they lead to social justice outcomes that engage youth in empowerment and problem solving.

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Principles	Practices	Outcomes
Analyzes power in social relationships	• Political education & strategizing • Identifying power holders • Reflecting about power in one's own life	• Social problematizing, critical thinking, asking & answering questions related to community & social problems • Development of sociopolitical awareness • Youth sharing power with adults
Makes identity central	• Joining support groups & organizations that support identity development • Reading material where one's identity is central and celebrated • Critiquing stereotypes regarding one's identities	• Development of pride regarding one's identity • Awareness of how sociopolitical forces influence identity • Being a part of something meaningful & productive • The capacity to build solidarity with others who share common struggles/shared interest
Promotes systemic social change	• Working to end social inequality (i.e. racism & sexism) • Refraining from activities/behaviors that are oppressive to others	• Sense of life purpose, empathy for others, optimism about social change • Liberation by ending various forms of social oppression
Encourages collective action	• Involving oneself in collective action and strategies that challenge & change local and national systems and institutions • Community organizing • Rallies and marches • Boycotts and hunger strikes • Electoral strategies	• Capacity to change personal, community, and social conditions • Empowerment and positive orientation toward life circumstances and events • Healing from personal trauma brought on from oppression
Embraces youth culture	• Celebrating youth culture in organizational culture • Personnel who are interculturally competent • Personnel who have an awareness of/share the lived experiences of marginalized youth Recruitment strategies	• Authentic youth engagement • Youth-run/led organizations • Effective recruitment strategies • Effective external intercultural communications • Engagement of marginalized youth

Figure 4. Social Justice Youth Development Framework (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Fields, Moncloa & Smith, 2018)

4-H and its Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

4-H is the youth development program of the Cooperative Extension System of Land-Grant Universities and is the nation's largest youth development organization, empowering six

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million young people throughout the country (National 4-H Council, 2019). Nationally, 4-H has a vision that by 2025, 4-H will reflect the population demographics, vulnerable populations, diverse needs and social conditions of the country (4-H National Headquarters, 2015). This vision includes elements of inclusion, caring adults, volunteers, and staff who reflect the diversity of the population. National 4-H aims to achieve this vision through the strategic directions of:

- The Power of Youth
- Access, Equity and Opportunity
- An Extraordinary Place to Learn
- Exceptional People, Innovate Practices
- Effective Organizational System

The National 4-H Strategic Direction and Goals (see Figure 5) includes several goals related to growing a program that incorporates a culture of diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Strategic Direction	Goals
The Power of Youth	Youth culture is incorporated into program design and delivery.
	Engaging all youth in college and career readiness.
	Share promising practices and extend existing opportunities to more diverse youth.
	4-H youth are work-ready and financially literate and prepared for college, career and life.
Access, Equity and Opportunity	Identify and agree upon national impact data systems and reporting.
	All 4-H programs are culturally relevant.
	Increased socio-economic levels of engagement.
	Develop staff skill sets to reach additional youth.
	Restructure training to fit needs of target audience.
An Extraordinary Place to Learn	Identify and agree upon national impact data systems and reporting.
Exceptional People, Innovate Practices	A trained professional youth development staff reflecting each state's population.
	System develops new strategies about staffing patterns, diversity and training.
	Mobilize a volunteer workforce that reflects society demographics and volunteer needs.
	System provides volunteer opportunities that are appealing and relevant to the volunteer and the program.
	PYD approach embodies inclusivity.
Effective Organizational System	Continue the trust in the 4-H clover.

Figure 5. National 4-H Strategic Direction and Goals

There are several 4-H national and local efforts aimed to engage diverse audiences in meaningful and inclusive ways. Such efforts include but are not limited to: (a) 4-H PLWG AEBC (b) Children Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) programs, (c) Diversity and Urban Taskforces of the National 4-H Professional Association (NAE4-HYDP), (d) National 4-H Council Equity initiatives, and (e) various programs of practice spearheaded by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Tribal, and Hispanic-Serving land grant 4-H programs.

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4-H National Headquarters and subsequently the 4-H Program Leaders Working Group has provided oversight to a committee formed to support national efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion. The AEBC (formerly known as the Vulnerable Populations Taskforce) was created to connect the various national and local equity efforts that support the 4-H System in reaching its National 4-H Grows: A Promise to America's Kids 2025 Vision. The functions of AEBC are to (1) highlight national trends on marginalized audiences, (2) take stock of and share promising practices, (3) articulate the value of equity work to the 4-H mission, (4) contribute to an inclusive organizational culture, and (5) advocate in support of marginalized audiences (Access, Equity and Belonging Committee, 2019). The committee is composed of the following Champion Groups:

- Incarcerated Youth
- Immigrant and Refugee Youth
- LGBTQ + Youth / Community
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Youth Experiencing Homelessness
- Youth in Foster Care
- Youth with Disabilities

- Youth Living in Poverty
- Racial and Ethnic Youth:
  - African American Youth
  - Asian / Pacific Islander Youth-Vacant Chair position
  - LatinX Advisory Committee
  - American Indian/Alaskan Native Youth

Most recently, AEBC has joined with the 4-H Thriving Model taskforce to ensure this nationally adopted model is explored and utilized through an equity lens.

4-H Youth Development and Thriving Outcomes

4-H is the largest youth development organization spanning each state in the country and has been in existence long before PYD was considered an academic field of developmental science. Arnold (2018) shares that "as the PYD approach matured, scholars and practitioners alike worked to develop frameworks to describe, and thus ultimately measure, the necessary ingredients of PYD and the impact it has on youth" (p. 142). A great deal of effort has been made to describe the 4-H program and its frameworks. Such frameworks include the "Targeting Life Skills Model (Hendricks, 1996), The Fourfold Youth Development Model (Barkman, Machtmes, Myers, Horton, & Hutchison, 1999), and the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development (Kress, 2005)" (p. 142). These frameworks "serve primarily as descriptions of the 4-H program, rather than being systematically applied across the national 4-H program to describe, measure, and understand the process of PYD within the 4-H program of PYD within the 4-H program" (Arnold, 2018, p. 142).

In 2012, there was national support and advocacy for a longitudinal study of the outcomes of the 4-H program. The *4-H Study of Positive Youth Development* (2012) was "designed to test the idea that when the strengths of youth are aligned across adolescence with family, school, and community resources, positive youth development will occur" (Lerner, et al., 2012, p. 1). Researchers conducted a quantitative sequential longitudinal study of 7,000 4-H and

non 4-H participants representing 44 states. Researchers assessed "latent and manifest variables that constitute PYD, and the components of the developmental system that combine to enhance the likelihood of PYD, that is, that create conditions for healthy functioning at this point in time . . . and that support the development of exemplary PYD – what we term "thriving" – across the adolescent years" (Lerner, 2005a, p. 11).

Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson (2003) found that 4-H leads to developmental outcomes that are conceptualized by the five "Cs" of youth development: Caring, Character, Connection, Confidence, and Competence. These five Cs lead to an important sixth "C," Contribution, a critical outcome of PYD programs (Lerner, Dowling & Anderson, 2003). Findings also indicated that youth who actively participate in the 4-H program: (a) report better grades, higher levels of academic competence, and an elevated level of engagement at school, (b) are nearly two times more likely to plan to go to college, and (c), are more likely to pursue future courses or a career in science, engineering, or computer technology (Lerner, et. al, 2012). Lerner, et al. (2012) did however assert that "youth programs cannot remain static; they must expand and change so that they address the diverse and changing characteristics, needs, and interests of adolescents and their families" (p. 24).

> Arnold (2018) has shared that,
> Despite the extensive research and dissemination of the 4-H study in top academic journals, and despite the fact that the 5C model is the prominent way of operationalizing PYD in the scholarly literature on youth development, there has been little translation of the results into on-the-ground practice, nor integration of the model into professional development resources and opportunities for 4-H professionals. (p. 143)

Arnold also noted that while the 5C model emphasized the "relational developmental systems (Brandstadter, 1998) and underscores the principal interactions of youth and their contexts as critical for PYD, it does not provide enough information on how these processes take place" (p. 143). Arnold (2018) posits, "the bridge between the 4-H program context and developmental outcomes is youth thriving" (p. 151). Arnold and Gagnon (2020) have proposed a new theoretical model for the 4-H program: *The 4-H Thriving Model* (p. 151) (see Figure 6). This model "identifies an intermediate process – youth thriving – that mediates the connection between program context and developmental outcomes" (Arnold, 2018, p. 151). In other words, this model brings together the adapted frameworks that describe the *inputs* and *processes* of PYD and identifies the expected *outcomes* when high quality PYD occurs. We will explore this model in greater detail in the subsequent sections of this paper.
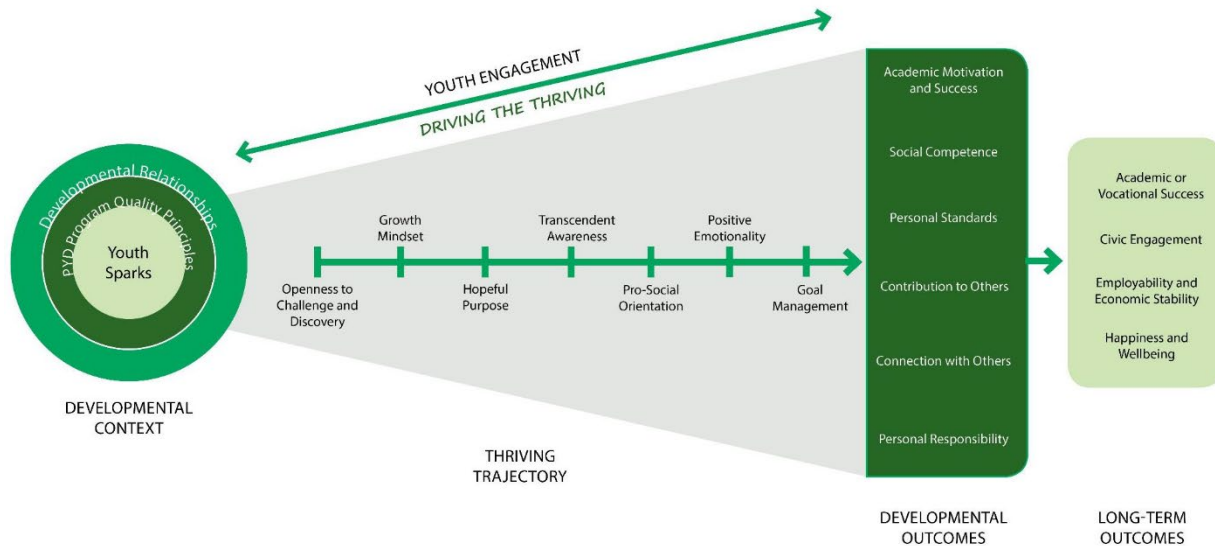
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Figure 6. The 4-H Thriving Model

The 4-H Thriving Model was initially tested through a statewide study of 243 youth ages 14 and 17 (Arnold & Gagnon, 2019). Arnold and Gagnon (2019) share that the goal of the study was "to examine the relationship between developmental contexts and the developmental outcomes of youth development programs, and to determine whether the developmental process of thriving mediates this relationship" (p. 30). Study findings "supported the proposed combination of youth sparks, program quality, and developmental relations as elements of a developmental context that influences youth thriving" (p. 45). The study also supports the necessity to further explore the processes of youth programs that influence developmental outcomes, the nuances of developmental relationships, and the societal context in which thriving occurs. A second wave of data collection involving over 200 additional youth refined this model, including the addition of youth program engagement as a construct moderating the effect of the developmental context on youth thriving (Arnold & Gagnon, 2020).

Nationally, there has been discourse about the limitations of both studies (4-H Study of PYD and 4-H Thriving Model study) in terms of scope and limited diversity of youth engagement, geographic representation, and program delivery methods. In fact Arnold and Gagnon (2019) share:

> While the results of this study are promising and provide, to our knowledge, one of the first examinations of the process of youth development through youth program participation, the model should be viewed as preliminary for several reasons. Most prominently is the limited and homogenous sample of youth who participated in the study….this study should be viewed as a positive pilot investigation. (p. 45)

Additionally, neither studies intended to directly explore or address issues of societal or internal inequities in programming and organizational structures and how such inequities may influence the positive outcomes of 4-H for different audiences. To this end, Arnold has established a PLWG Advancing the 4-H Thriving Model taskforce. This task force has goals to: (1) develop training materials and opportunities for the professional development of 4-H staff and volunteers,

(2) continue research on the 4-H Thriving Model with diverse youth in a variety of settings, and (3) work to establish organizational alignment around the 4-H Thriving Model as the model of positive youth development for 4-H. This taskforce will also be working closely with the AEBC to explore the 4-H Thriving Model through an equity lens.

Exploring the 4-H Thriving Model through an Equity Lens

The 4-H Thriving Model is organized into four subsections, (1) Developmental Context, (2) Thriving Trajectory, (3) Developmental Outcomes, and (4) Long-term Outcomes. The first two sections can be described as the *inputs* and *processes* of PYD and the last two sections can be described as the *outcomes* of high quality and relevant PYD.

Developmental Context

The *Developmental Context* includes youth sparks, PYD program quality principles and developmental relationships. Youth sparks can ignite a young person's passion, gives a young person a sense of direction, and encourages goal setting. Sparks can be both identified and nurtured through high quality PYD experiences. Eccles and Gootman (2002) describe eight critical aspects of quality, including: (1) physical and psychological safety, (2) appropriate structure, (3) supportive relationships, (4) opportunities to belong, (5) positive social norms, (6) support for efficacy and mattering, (7) opportunities for skill building, and (8) integration of family, school and community. As it relates to development relationships, Arnold (2019) shares that a positive, supportive relationship between youth and 4-H staff and volunteers is critical to youth development.

As we explore the thriving model through an equity lens, we must consider the individual and societal context that surrounds youth, volunteers, staff, and communities. Youth sparks for instance, must be nurtured through culturally relevant paradigms (Gay, 2010; Fields & Moncloa, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). PYD programs must place the youth and their interests at the center of programs rather than using a one-size fits all approach that asks youth to adapt to the program.

Developmental relationships are also a critical aspect of youth's thriving. Developmental relationships:

(a) include a secure attachment between the young person and adult, reflected in mutual warmth, respect, and trust;
(b) foster a bidirectional engagement and benefit for both the youth and adult; and
(c) increase in complexity over time as youth develop. (Arnold, 2018)

Youth development professionals and volunteers must be intentional about building relationships with youth and community as this is a means to developing social capital for youth. Chazdon, Allen, Horntvedt, and Scheffert (2013) define social capital as "the web of cooperative

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relationships between members of a community that allows them to act collectively to solve problems together" (p. 1). Fields and Nathaniel (2015a) share that youth who have higher levels social capital—trusting relationships and engagement in their community—are better able to navigate and negotiate through the myriad barriers and challenges that stem from injustice. Fields and Nathaniel (2015a) assert "this ability is due in part to having stronger community connections and reliable, stronger adult allies" which often increases a young person's self-efficacy—the belief that they matter and can influence change (p. 2). It is critical however, that PYD programs engage diverse volunteers and adult allies who continuously develop their cultural competencies and represent the communities of the youth.

The quality aspects of PYD must also be explored through an equity lens (see Table 1). The table below poses some equity considerations for educators and administrators to related to PYD aspects of quality.

8 Critical Aspects of Quality	Equity Considerations
Physical and psychological safety	…consider the socioecological factors that affect marginalized communities.
Appropriate structure	…that is culturally relevant.
Supportive relationships	…with diverse groups of youth & adults that also represent the identities of the youth.
Opportunities to belong	…in a genuine and authentic environment.
Positive social norms	…that do not reinforce a hegemonic understanding of norms or behaviors but are inclusive of the cultures represented in the community.
Support for efficacy and mattering	…and opportunities for critical thinking and action the addresses issues of injustice.
Opportunities for skill building	…through culturally relevant learning.
Integration of family, school and community	…to place the youth, family and community at the center of programs. This also increases opportunities to develop social capital through bonding, bridging and linking networks (Multi-State Research Project NCERA215, 2015).

Table 1. Equity Considerations for 4-H Thriving Quality Aspects

Youth Engagement Driving the Thriving

Arnold (2018) places "intentional emphasis on youth engagement in an attempt to move the PYD discourse away from the idea of linking mere youth participation (showing up) and

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program dosage to successful developmental outcomes" (p. 147). While it may seem logical that youth who participate in 4-H for many years would be impacted differently than those who experience 4-H for a defined amount of time, there is little evidence to support that program participation alone leads to developmental outcomes (Arnold, 2018; Roth, Malone, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). Research (Weiss, Little & Bouffard, 2005) indicates three dimensions of youth engagement that influence the level of PYD outcomes and impacts. These dimensions include:

(a) *Duration*- length of time a youth participates in a program;
(b) *Intensity*- frequency or involvement of a youth with a program; and
(c) *Breadth*- number and scope of opportunities youth participate in as a part of a program.

Youth engagement serves as a moderating effect between the developmental context and youth thriving (Arnold, 2020). This framing of the developmental context and engagement is critical as it moves the conversation away from a singular "premier" method in which 4-H is delivered and towards a conversation about what ingredients should be present in any 4-H experience for thriving to be a probable outcome. Historically, 4-H has placed higher value on opportunities that have been steeped in white, rural, homogenous communities. Thus, rural-based community clubs were often deemed the premier model of 4-H. However, in contemporary times, there has been acknowledgment and increased engagement of diverse youth through various 4-H urban, suburban, and rural experiences. For instance, urban school based clubs or clubs held in tandem with non-profit organizations also have reported similar developmental outcomes to those reported in rural based community clubs (Fields, 2016).

4-H needs to explore how the various delivery modes (i.e. community clubs, school enrichment, afterschool, camping, etc.) can be culturally relevant, nurture youth sparks, and encourage high duration, intensity and breadth. To this end, the PLWG Advancing the Thriving Model taskforce is exploring the model under the primary question 'what works for whom under what conditions?' In this way, the taskforce is looking specifically to see how the 4-H Thriving Model theory holds with diverse youth in diverse settings (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2003).

Thriving Indicators

Arnold (2018) shares that youth thriving is marked by "social interaction with adults and other youth, reflecting the need to belong" and later by "the presence of personal passion, clear goals, and plans for the transition into adulthood" (p. 150). Arnold (2018) describes the thriving indicators as a bridge between program context and outcomes (Benson & Scales, 2009, 2011; Lerner et al, 2003; Lerner et al., 2011; Theokas et al., 2005). The Search Institute (2014) and Arnold (2019) describe the following indicators of a thriving trajectory:

(a) *Openness to Challenge and Discovery*: An intrinsic desire to explore new things and enjoy challenges.
(b) *Growth Mindset*: Emphasis on effort in learning over innate ability.
(c) *Hopeful Purpose*: Having a sense of purpose and on the way to a happy and successful future.
(d) *Transcendent Awareness*: An awareness of a sacred or transcendent force and the role of faith or spirituality in shaping everyday thoughts and actions.

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(e) *Pro-Social Orientation*: Personal values of respect, responsibility, honesty and caring, and helping others.

(f) *Positive Emotionality*: Is positive and optimistic, and able to manage emotions appropriately.

(g) *Goal Management*: Sets goals and shapes effective strategies to achieve them, perseveres and makes adjustment when goals are not attained.

Thriving Indicator	Equity Considerations
Openness to Challenge and Discovery	Exposure to new opportunity and connections can serve as a link to critical perspectives, resources, and connections to institutions that can bring about change.
Growth Mindset	This directly connects to the concept of high expectations—a key ingredient within culturally relevant teaching.
Hopeful Purpose	This concept directly connects to self-efficacy—an integral component of youth's success and confidence to address issues related to injustice.
Transcendent Awareness	It is critical that the idea of transcendent awareness not imply a religious affiliation as this can be exclusive. A sense of empathy grows when one acknowledges that the world is bigger than just themselves. Social justice requires one to feel a sense of responsibility beyond self.
Pro-Social Orientation	This must include diverse cultural values and norms related to respect, responsibility, honesty, caring, and helping others so as to not reinforce hegemonic understandings and expectations.
Positive Emotionality	It is critical to acknowledge the trauma and societal factors that exist within marginalized communities as this can be a determining factor of optimism and emotional responses. PYD professionals must examine the complex social, economic, and political forces that influence youth experiences.
Goal Management	Youth's cultural values must be at the center of establishing desired goals. Strategies to achieve goals should be informed by the youth's socioecological factors. Increasing access to social capital can influence self-efficacy—a critical ingredient in setting and achieving personal and community goals.

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Developmental Outcomes

The 4-H Thriving Model's developmental outcomes align closely with the 5Cs proposed by Lerner (2007), "although the definitions are modified slightly in an effort to narrow and clarify the outcomes for 4-H" (Arnold, 2018, p. 152). The approaches to PYD should be relevant and centered around diverse youth in communities as should the anticipated outcomes of such efforts. Below are some questions to consider when assessing developmental outcomes of PYD work through an equity lens.

Developmental Outcome	Equity questions to consider
Academic Motivation and Success	How do we consider inequitable access to quality education in academic motivating factors? How do we consider inequitable access to quality education in academic success outcomes (i.e. education debt owed to marginalized audiences (Ladson-Billings, 2006)? How do we define success and it does align with the community's cultural values?
Social Competence	How do we intentionally acknowledge diversity, privilege, systems of oppression? Do we support inclusive practices among diverse youth and volunteers?
Personal Standards	How do we place equal value on various cultural norms and values?
Contribution to Others	How do we encourage engagement in service and collective action to address social injustice?
Connection to Others	How do we ensure connection among and between diverse groups of people?
Personal Responsibility	How do we acknowledge societal inequities that affect one's sense of self-efficacy? How do we acknowledge the varied levels responsibilities for youth who are a depended source of income in their family?

Table 2. Equity Considerations for 4-H Thriving Developmental Outcomes

Conclusion

4-H must intentionally and systematically use critical pedagogical approaches that foster equity and thriving outcomes for *all* youth—particularly those who have been marginalized by systems of oppression. Fields and Nathaniel (2015a) posit that if we can better connect youth to their community in meaningful and purposeful ways, we improve our chances of creating the environments where youth feel a sense of efficacy, belonging, and responsibility to their world. The 4-H Thriving Model presents an opportunity for PYD professionals to explore the process and outcomes of PYD through a holistic lens. However, if the model is not explored and applied through an equity lens, it runs of risk of further perpetuating injustices that exist within PYD programs and within society. If 4-H harnesses the opportunity to nurture youth's sparks through

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culturally relevant engagement, and empowers youth to see the world as bigger than themselves—then 4-H stands a chance to keep our promise to America's youth while collectively working towards a more just society.

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