

# Positive Peer Culture: Antidote to “Peer Deviance Training”

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*It is unreasonable to expect that a group of youth with behavioral problems will somehow generate prosocial values and group norms by interacting with one another.*

– Scott Henggeler<sup>1</sup>

*The essential question was whether programs of this sort were able to establish positive youth cultures. The research evidence is very encouraging.*

– Martin Gold & D. Wayne Osgood<sup>2</sup>

*Adult-wary youth often gravitate to like-minded peers who reinforce one another’s delinquent thinking, behavior, and values. This article describes how Positive Peer Culture programs operate to reverse this process. PPC is described as an evidence-based practice which is supported by research in ecological science, resilience science, and neuroscience. PPC challenges deficit-based perspectives, embracing the philosophy that even the most challenging young persons have strengths to solve problems and contribute to others. It effectively counters the problem researchers call “peer deviance training” by engaging adults and peers in respectful alliances.*

## Negative Peer Influence

For centuries, scholars have been intrigued with the question: *How can groups wield such power that individuals will sometimes act in ways contrary to their personal beliefs?* In his autobiographical *Confessions*, Saint Augustine (353-430 AD) tells of how he and his boyhood peers would plunge headlong into delinquency and then brag about who was more beastly.<sup>3</sup> This 1600-year-old tale of unruly teens is being retold by behavioral researchers under the story line of “peer deviance training.”<sup>4</sup>

Numerous recent publications are promoting the concept of peer deviance training.<sup>5</sup> Typical studies show that delinquent youth brag to one another about their rule-breaking exploits and reinforce one another’s tales with laughter. This bit of common knowledge is Saint Augustine *deja vu*. But controversy arose as peer deviance training became a rationale for questioning the credibility of any program bringing together troubled youth.<sup>6</sup> For example:

In light of the mutually reinforcing negative effects of deviant peers on one another, school, juvenile justice, and community programs that place troublesome youth together in special classrooms, treatment groups, and community activities may exacerbate rather than ameliorate delinquent behavior.<sup>7</sup>

To further hype the rhetoric, such interventions are called *iatrogenic*, a scientific-sounding medical term describing treatment that harms the patient. As one of our teachers cautioned, pejorative labels provide evidence of weak arguments rather than solid science. Like the often cited but now discredited assertion that “nothing works” in treating delinquents, this iatrogenic tag tars peer group programs with a broad brush.

Urie Bronfenbrenner suggested that the reason youth groups become negative is because adults have disengaged from active interaction with the young.<sup>8</sup> In fact, research shows that youth in group settings

provide nine times more reinforcement to peers than do adult staff.<sup>9</sup> But the real concern is not the amount of peer influence but its valence. Do young people act in ways to help or to hurt one another?

Without adult guidance, groups of youth can descend to *Lord of the Flies* depths. Likewise, youth locked in adversarial contests with adult authority will rally around rebellion and rule breaking. Nevertheless, recent meta-analytic studies fail to show that group treatment per se is harmful. In contrast, there is evidence that programs which contained a group component were actually less likely to be iatrogenic!<sup>10</sup>

## Evidence-Based Practice

In spite of continuing calls for evidence-based practice, there is much confusion about what this actually means. Government officials weigh in with pronouncements of approved “blue ribbon” interventions. Such lists use very narrow definitions of what is good research, but decide who gets a place at the funding table and who goes hungry. Not surprising, these lists may be tainted by politically distorted science, financial profits, and ideology.<sup>11</sup>

Our discussion of peer deviance training and Positive Peer Culture is framed in terms of the American Psychological Association’s standards for evidence-based practice.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, evidence-based practice is grounded in 1) research, 2) practice expertise, and 3) an understanding of the individual.

While peer deviance training is an intriguing research construct, it has limited utility as a principle for evidence-based practice. In fact, these three sequential terms are out of synch with perspectives of ecological science, resilience science, and neuroscience. Specifically:

1. **Peer** points the finger of blame at young people. But it is the breakdown of adult influence that makes children desperate for peer approval.<sup>13</sup> In ecological terms, disruptive behavior is a transaction, a battle between adults and adult-wary youth.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, prosocial behavior is an outcome of positive interactions with caring adults.<sup>15</sup>
2. **Deviance** is a deficit-toned label which masks strengths and resilience. It also stigmatizes delinquent acts which may be normal developmental glitches common to most teen boys.<sup>16</sup> Even among incarcerated delinquents, fully 90% actually prefer

to be positive but they need adult support to break from past patterns.<sup>17</sup> However, youth do not cooperate with adults who see them as deviants.

3. **Training** by definition is a planned program of discipline and instruction. But peer deviance training is likely an emotional brain process not under full logical control. Mirror neurons<sup>18</sup> prime us to copy emotions and behavior of significant others. Adults are responsible for creating positive bonds so youth find it reinforcing to model prosocial thinking and behavior.

To provide a broader perspective on this discussion, we will briefly triangulate the concept of peer deviance training with perspectives from ecological, resilience, and brain research.

If most troubled youth desire to be positive, why do they get reinforcement from laughing about deviant behavior? Taking an ecological perspective, bonding to other delinquents restores a sense of belonging and self-worth in youth who are not connected to caring adults and positive peers. From the vantage point of neuroscience, laughing with friends is extremely rewarding since it is the brain’s primary social bonding mechanism and creates a rush of *oxytocin*.<sup>19</sup> From the lens of resilience, many of these youth have exaggerated needs to project toughness for self-protection.<sup>20</sup> Being positive is seen as weakness, so they feel a need to impress peers with their delinquent prowess:

They fear the potential for violence that they believe their fellows harbor. They cope with this by acting tough themselves and showing a readiness to go along with a delinquent subculture to which, they believe, their peers subscribed more fiercely than they do themselves.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, peer deviance training can be seen as a counterproductive coping mechanism of youth whose most basic needs for connection to positive adults have been disrupted. Using this definition, iatrogenic programs are those which disrupt bonds of respect between youth and adults. A mainstream zero tolerance school is iatrogenic if adults view difficult youth as disposable deviants.<sup>22</sup> Schools plagued by peer bullying are equally iatrogenic. In contrast, many effective alternative schools and residential programs have staff who are gifted at relating to reluctant students and molding positive cultures out of marginalized youth.<sup>23</sup> Rather than preoccupation with peer deviance training,

practitioners need to discover untapped strengths in these youth and transform peer influence into positive ends.

## The Power of Peers

August Aichhorn was an Austrian educator and psychologist who challenged traditional punitive approaches to “wayward youth.” In 1925, he described his attempts to transform negative peer influence in a group of delinquent youth.<sup>24</sup> In an early experiment, Aichhorn placed several particularly difficult boys together in the same group. Quickly banding together, they pumped one another up with wild behavior and delighted in purposely defying rules. Aichhorn instructed his staff not to interfere. Using this permissive approach, it took staff six months to settle this group down, by which time the youth literally destroyed their cottage. This experiment demonstrated that catharsis only fuels negative behavior.

Anna Freud was a colleague of August Aichhorn until World War II when she went to England to work with war orphans. She described in careful detail how children alienated from adults developed strong dependency on peers.<sup>25</sup> A group of Jewish children were rescued from a Nazi concentration camp. When placed in a group setting, these children quickly bonded together to fight all efforts of adults to control them. Yet in spite of their total opposition to authority, they were remarkably kind and supportive to one another, showing great concern and self-sacrifice. Peer attachments can provide powerful substitute belongings to children uprooted from adults.

Fritz Redl was trained by both Aichhorn and Anna Freud in Austria. He carried this philosophy to the United States where he worked with highly troubled youth from Detroit. In spite of their problems, he saw strengths, contending that he should write a book titled “*The Virtues of Delinquents*” but it might be hard to find a publisher. Redl was one of the first to carefully document the process of “group contagion” among “children who hate.” While these kids hated adults, many showed extreme loyalty to peers. Even when the group was absent, its negative power persisted: Redl noted that attempts to individually counsel troubled youth were often sabotaged by the gang under the couch.<sup>26</sup>

Columbia University professor Howard Polksy produced fresh insights on negative peer influence in his classic book, *Cottage Six*. Polsky summarized decades of research on deviant youth subcultures: “delinquents learn delinquent techniques from each other and overcome inhibitions about breaking the law by mutual stimulation and reinforcement.”<sup>27</sup> This of course describes the processes others would call peer deviance training.

But Polsky found most research studies were superficial and fragmentary, leaving investigators with factoids instead of workable theories. Investigators were uncertain just how deviant youth subcultures operated or how they might be altered. To remedy this situation, Polsky became a participant observer in a cottage of troubled youth for a period of eight months. He quickly discovered that what treatment staff claimed was going on in promotional brochures was a far cry from reality. In fact, youth had set up their own hierarchy of power and peer abuse with adults locked out of this delinquent underground. Polsky concluded that the fundamental treatment task was not to treat the individual in isolation but to create a positive youth culture which would have a profound positive influence on youth. He called for new treatment models to transform deviant peer influence into a positive therapeutic force. Positive Peer Culture emerged as a response to this call.

## Tapping Strengths of Youth

In the past decade, wide attention has been given to strength-based approaches to problem youth. This is a reaction to many years where researchers and helping professionals focused narrowly on deviance and pathology. Remarkably, PPC has been strength-based since its inception. From the first edition of *Positive Peer Culture*, this note prefaced the text:

This book is dedicated to the true founders of Positive Peer Culture, those strong and noble young people who comprehend the power of caring.<sup>28</sup>

A focus on strengths of youth was central to the philosophies of early twentieth century pioneers in youth work. Janusz Korczak, Maria Montessori, and Jane Addams all saw potentials where others only found problems. None defined the strength-based perspective more poignantly than Karl Wilker who transformed Berlin’s worst delinquency institution during the Weimar Republic era. Writing in *Der Lindenhof* published in 1921 he proclaimed:

What we want to achieve in our work with young people is to find and strengthen the positive and healthy elements, no matter how deeply they are hidden. We enthusiastically believe in the existence of those elements, even in the seemingly worst of our adolescents.<sup>29</sup>

But by mid-twentieth century, the progressive philosophy in education and youth work had been supplanted by pessimism. Research focused on pathology instead of potentials of youth. Practitioners were so concerned to keep professional “objectivity” and “boundaries” that they became disconnected from those they served. This was a far cry from the belief articulated by Aichhorn that the primary unmet need of troubled youth was love.

The dawn of the 21st century resurrected the earlier spirit of optimism. Leading advocacy for a “positive psychology” was Martin Seligman, then president of the American Psychological Association and noted researcher on optimism.<sup>30</sup> There was now a research base for the strength-based movement, namely resilience science. But this approach to youth is also an issue of personal values. Those who fail to see strengths and potentials in troubled youth will always believe coercion is essential and empowerment is naïve.

The strength-based philosophy holds that all persons have natural abilities to cope with challenges, although these might be masked by self-defeating behaviors. The goal is to find and develop latent potentials. Maturation and new experiences are allies as growth towards positive life goals is innate. These beliefs are grounded in research on positive youth development and neuroscience. To summarize:

1. **Every youth and family has strengths.** John Seita was kicked out of 15 court placements by age 12. A huge case file documented the failure of traditional approaches to reach him. Today he is Dr. John Seita, professor of youth development at Michigan State University. As he puts it, adult-wary kids cope with adults using battle tactics of fight, flight, or fool. Adults must engage these guarded or defiant youth and encourage them to find more effective coping strategies.<sup>31</sup>
2. **Surmounting problems builds strengths.** Resilience research and neuroscience show that young people can overcome trauma and mistreatment and become stronger in the process.

Resilience is not in short supply but is part of the human DNA. We build the strengths of resilience by opportunities for belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.<sup>32</sup>

3. **Youth are the leading experts on youth.** This calls for abandoning deeply ingrained “you’re just a kid” attitudes and enlisting youth as partners in their own healing. Assessments are not credible if they just track surface behavior but ignore the “inside kid.” As Alfred Adler said, if we do not understand the private logic and goals of a youth, our interventions may do more harm than good. Harry Vorrath carried this to the ultimate, calling youth in his PPC programs “my young staff.”

## Positive Peer Culture

Positive Peer Culture calls for mutual respect, youth responsibility, and solution-finding rather than problem-finding.<sup>33</sup> PPC is specifically designed to transform negative group dynamics with troubled youth. First emerging in youth corrections, this peer helping model has been extended to a wide range of educational, treatment, and youth development settings. Based on extensive earlier research on peer influence, Osgood concluded:

The design of the PPC program can be interpreted as an attempt to reverse the deviancy training process so that these delinquent youth reinforce both prosocial behavior and accepting responsibility for one’s actions.<sup>34</sup>

PPC has its roots in Highfields, a residential program for delinquents which operated in the former mansion of Charles Lindbergh in New Jersey. The core of the program was regular group meetings where peers helped one another deal with their problems. That method was then called Guided Group Interaction (GGI).<sup>35</sup> Harry Vorrath was part of the Highfields program, and later created an adaptation which he called Positive Peer Culture to emphasize the desired outcome of this process. Vorrath was highly skeptical of any group approach which used peer confrontation for behavior modification. Instead he sought to direct peer influence into a positive force, enlisting youth to care about and help one another solve problems. Trust was the core of all effective groups as peer concern replaced peer coercion.

Rather than demanding obedience to authority or to the group, PPC demands responsibility, empowering

youth to “discover their greatness.” Caring is made fashionable and any hurting behavior totally unacceptable. Anything that hurts self or others was defined as a problem. This included all acts of disrespect toward self or others, including the failure to help another youth who was experiencing difficulty. Adults also modeled this positive behavior and delegated to the group responsibility for working to resolve problems.

Like the Marine he had been, Vorrath charged into the most inhospitable of settings to recruit youth as peer helpers. PPC came to national prominence in the book *Children in Trouble: A National Scandal*.<sup>36</sup> Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Howard James described how Vorrath was called to a Red Wing, Minnesota, training school which had been rocked by a riot. After PPC was implemented, the once violent training school was transformed into an environment of mutual respect. James portrayed PPC at Red Wing as an oasis in the wasteland of traditional failed programs for delinquents.

Harry Vorrath brought PPC to Starr Commonwealth in Michigan where the book *Positive Peer Culture* was written in 1974. This publication sparked interest in peer empowerment methods. The National Association of Peer Group Agencies (later renamed Strength Based Services International) was formed to provide a forum for professionals to share research and experience in developing PPC programs.<sup>37</sup>

Many organizations ran effective PPC programs for a time but faltered with changes in leadership. Some programs called “Positive Peer Culture” were pale imitations of the real thing. The lack of formal PPC certification and training systems contributed to this instability. However, certain programs, particularly in the non-profit sector, have thrived over a period of many years, contributing to a growing professional literature.<sup>38</sup> In 2006, Reclaiming Youth International launched the Academy for Positive Peer Culture which networks professionals interested in advancing research and practice in PPC.<sup>39</sup>

## Positive School Climates

There has been growing interest in applying PPC principles to school settings. This is particularly important given that high profile problems of school violence are closely related to problems of peer bullying. School shootings sparked many coercive poli-

cies which only served to deepen alienation between students and school staff. As schools recognize that punitive zero tolerance practices are counterproductive, a positive school climate becomes the ultimate shield against school violence. Here are recommendations about school climate from a comprehensive study of violent incidents in schools:

- **MUTUAL RESPECT**  
In a climate of safety, adults and students respect each other.
- **CONNECTION TO AN ADULT**  
Each student has a connection to at least one adult.
- **PROBLEM-SOLVING FOCUS**  
Problems can be resolved without fear, shame, or reprisal.
- **CODE OF OPENNESS**  
Students bring serious concerns to the attention of adults.
- **PEER HELPING**  
Students try to help friends and peers who are in distress.

This is as straightforward a description of principles of Positive Peer Culture as one can find; remarkably it was produced by the U.S. Department of Education in collaboration with the nation’s premier law enforcement agency, the U.S. Secret Service.<sup>40</sup>

To date, the most notable educational applications of PPC have been in alternative school settings where there is greater opportunity to form positive adult and peer bonds and to break free from rigid zero tolerance discipline systems. Günther Opp, from Martin Luther University in Germany, has published a new book describing applications of PPC to special schools for children with emotional and behavioral problems.<sup>41</sup>

Another promising extension of PPC is the EQUIP Program which is also being extended to school settings.<sup>42</sup> Here traditional PPC groups are augmented by specific training of youth in cognitive moral development, anger replacement, and prosocial skills. The primary goal of EQUIP is not just to provide this “treatment add-on” to youth, but to make them more effective peer helpers. Research on this model shows solid gains in youth who generalize beyond the period of intervention.

As South African educators and youth professionals made the transition from punitive to positive approaches, they needed a culturally sensitive model of training in building climates of respect. From that challenge emerged the *Response Ability Pathways* (RAP) training. The training blends concepts from Positive Peer Culture with resilience science and brain science to meet Circle of Courage needs for Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. RAP provides experiential education to adults or mature peer mentors in three natural helping processes: *Connecting* for support, *Clarifying* challenges, and *Restoring* harmony.<sup>43</sup> These natural processes of interpersonal helping are essential to creating respectful alliances which form the foundation of positive peer cultures.

## The Promise of Positive Peer Culture

Lakota psychologist Martin Brokenleg<sup>44</sup> observes that for thousands of years, children were reared in predominantly positive cultures, surrounded by caring elders, extended families of caregivers, and youth who modeled responsibility to younger peers. In this climate of positive connections, values were passed from generation to generation, and rites of passage welcomed children into responsible adulthood.

Modern society spawned a separate youth subculture with alternative values, lore, language, dress, and behaviors. This youth culture is transnational, wielding immense influence worldwide. This is an artifact of the disconnection of adults to children over the past half century in many modern cultures.<sup>45</sup> Elders lost their once powerful influence in socialization. Without extended family, tribe, and community bonds, children suffer from broken belongings. Clinging to other such youth, they become virtual prisoners of peers.

There are only two ways known to counter the inordinate negative influence peers have on one another's thinking, values, and behavior:

- *Reconnect all youth to caring adults.* These respectful alliances encourage youth to develop their potentials and surmount challenging life problems.
- *Create positive peer cultures for all youth.* If existing youth groups are negative, the challenge, said Arnold Goldstein, is to create "prosocial gangs."<sup>46</sup>

Positive bonds to adults and peers are natural nutrients in environments where elders and young live

in mutual respect. PPC is not a contrived program but an authentic culture where all show concern, where no one has the right to hurt, and each is responsible for helping. We propose this is the standard for all effective interventions with challenging youth.

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### NOTE:

This article is based on research for a forthcoming book by the authors titled *Respectful Alliances with Youth*.

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<sup>1</sup> Henggeler, S., Schenwald, S., Borduin, C., Rowland, M., & Cunningham, P. (1998). *Multisystemic treatment of antisocial behavior in children and adolescents*. New York: Guilford. Multisystemic treatment is a community-based wrap-around model with a behavioral philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> The most extensive study of the effects of peer group treatment of troubled youth was conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research through grant support from The National Institute of Mental Health. Ten years of publications related to this study are summarized in Gold, M., & Osgood, D. W. (1992). *Personality and peer influence in juvenile corrections*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine. (1923). *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (translated by T. Matthew). London: Collins.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Snyder, J. (2002). Reinforcement and coercion mechanisms in the development of antisocial behavior: Peer relationships. In J. B. Reid, G. R. Patterson, & J. Snyder (Eds.), *Antisocial behavior in children and adolescents* (pp. 101-122). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

<sup>5</sup> An article in *American Psychologist* launched a spate of publications on what was called peer deviance training: Dishion, T. J., McCord, J., & Poulin, F. (1999). When interventions harm: Peer groups and problem behavior. *American Psychologist* 54(9), 755-764. This was subsequently the theme of a special issue of the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 33(3), June, 2005. A recent book on this theme is: Dodge, K., Dishion, T., & Lansford, J. (Eds.) (2006). *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth: Problems and solutions*. New York: Guilford Publications.

- <sup>6</sup> For a journalistic account of this controversy, see Moore, J., & Boyle, P. (2006). Group youth work: Does it hurt? *Youth Today*, 15(7), 1, 16-17.
- <sup>7</sup> Henggler, S., Schenwald, S., Borduin, C., Rowland, M., & Cunningham, P. (1998). *Multisystemic treatment of antisocial behavior in children and adolescents*. New York: Guilford, (pp. 124-130).
- <sup>8</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. (Ed.). (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- <sup>9</sup> Buehler, R., Patterson, G., & Furness, J. (1966). The reinforcement of behavior in institutional settings. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 4, 157-167.
- <sup>10</sup> Researchers from Vanderbilt and Harvard Universities found that 17 of 18 meta-analytic tests do not support iatrogenic or peer deviance effects. See: Weiss, B., Caron, A., Ball, S., Tapp, J., Johnson, M., & Weisz, J. (2005). Iatrogenic effects of group treatment for antisocial youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(6), 1036-1044.
- <sup>11</sup> A prominent example is federal support for funding of random student drug testing in schools. Officials ignore independent research showing this method is ineffective in favor of "research" produced by those who profit directly from the drug testing industry. Brendtro, L., & Martin, G. (2006). Respect vs. surveillance: Drug testing our students. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 15(2), 75-81.
- <sup>12</sup> APA Presidential Task Force on Evidence-Based Practice. (2006). Evidence-based practice in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 61(4), 271-285.
- <sup>13</sup> Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2004). *Hold on to your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.
- <sup>14</sup> Seita, J., Mitchell, M., & Tobin, C. (1995). *In whose best interest?* Elizabethtown, PA: Continental Press.
- <sup>15</sup> Research on the teaching family model showed strong inverse correlations between self-reported delinquency and the time youth spent talking to group home parents (-.95) as well as observations of how often they approached in close proximity to adults (-.81). See Solnick, J., Braukmann, C., Bedlington, M., Kirigin, K., & Wolf, M. (1981). The relationship between parent-youth interaction and delinquency in group homes. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 9(1), 107-119.
- <sup>16</sup> Gold, M. (1966). Undetected delinquent behavior. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 3, 27-46.
- <sup>17</sup> Gibbs, J., Potter, G., & Goldstein, A. (1995). *The EQUIP program. Teaching youth to think and act responsibly through a peer-helping approach*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- <sup>18</sup> For an introductory discussion of mirror neurons, see Dobbs, D. (2006). A revealing reflection. *Scientific American* 17(2), 22-27.
- <sup>19</sup> Panksepp, J. (1998). *Affective neuroscience: The foundations of human and animal emotions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>20</sup> Anthropologist Walter Miller of Harvard described toughness as a "focal concern" of group oriented delinquents. See: Miller, W. (1958). Lower class culture as a generating milieu of gang delinquency. *Journal of Social Issues*, 14, 5-19. Sociologist Albert Cohen observed that delinquent boys without strong male models learn to see goodness as a female virtue and thus exaggerate their badness as proof of masculinity. Cohen, A. (1955). *Delinquent boys: The subculture of the gang*. New York: Free Press.
- <sup>21</sup> Gold, M., & Osgood, D. W. (1992). *Personality and peer influence in juvenile corrections*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, p. 197.
- <sup>22</sup> Mitchell, M. L. (2003). The million dollar child, *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 12(1), 6-8.
- <sup>23</sup> McCall, H. (2003). When successful alternative students "disengage" from regular school. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 12(2), 113-117. Also see: Gold, M., & Mann, D. (1984). *Expelled to a friendlier place: A study of effective alternative schools*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- <sup>24</sup> Aichhorn wrote a German-language book on reclaiming delinquents in 1925. It was translated into English in 1935 as *Wayward Youth*. (New York: Viking Press).
- <sup>25</sup> Freud, A. (1965). *Normality and pathology in childhood*. London: International University Press.
- <sup>26</sup> Redl was trained by August Aichhorn and Anna Freud in Austria. He emigrated to the United States as World War II erupted and began working with youth in Michigan. See: Redl, F., & Wineman, D. (1957). *The aggressive child*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press. Redl clearly described negative peer group processes. As his colleague William C. Morse would note, it would take specific methods of Positive Peer Culture to reverse this destructive process.
- <sup>27</sup> Polsky, H. (1962). *Cottage six: The social system of delinquent boys in residential treatment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation (p. 21).
- <sup>28</sup> From the front piece of Vorrath, H., & Brendtro, L. (1974). *Positive Peer Culture*. Chicago: Aldine.
- <sup>29</sup> Wilker, K. (1921). *Der Lindenhof*. Heilbronn Neckar: Lichtkampf-Verlag Nanns Altermann. Citation is from an English translation by Stephan Lhotzky published by Augustana College, Sioux Falls, SD, 1993, p. 69.
- <sup>30</sup> Seligman, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14.
- <sup>31</sup> Seita, J., & Brendtro, L. (2005). *Kids who outwit adults*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- <sup>32</sup> Brendtro, L., & Larson, S. (2006). *The resilience revolution*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- <sup>33</sup> Tate, T., & Wasmund, W. (1999). Strength based assessment and intervention. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 8(3), 174-180.
- <sup>34</sup> Osgood, D. W., & Bridell, L. (2006). Peer effects in juvenile justice. In K. Dodge, T. Dishion, & J. Lansford (Eds.), *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth: Problems and solutions* (pp. 141-161). New York: The Guilford Press.
- <sup>35</sup> For a history of early contributors to GGI, see: Keller, Jr., O., & Alper, B. (1970). *Halfway houses: Community-centered correction and treatment*. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath & Co.; Vorrath, H., & Brendtro, L. (1985). *Positive Peer Culture* (2nd ed.). New York: Aldine de Gruyter. (Now published by Transaction)
- <sup>36</sup> James, H. (1971). *Children in trouble: A national scandal*. New York: Pocket Books.
- <sup>37</sup> This group published an annotated bibliography for PPC practitioners and researchers. See Giacobbe, G., Traynelis-Yurek, E., & Laursen, E. (1999). *Strength based strategies for children and youth*. Richmond, VA: G & T Publishing.
- <sup>38</sup> Long time contributors to the literature and practice of peer group treatment include professionals from Woodland Hills in Duluth, Minnesota; UMFS of Richmond, Virginia; and Starr Commonwealth of Michigan and Ohio.
- <sup>39</sup> These meetings are held annually at the June Black Hills Seminars. See [www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com)
- <sup>40</sup> USSS & USDOE. (2002). *Threat assessment in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and to creating safe school climates*. Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service & U.S. Department of Education.
- <sup>41</sup> Opp, G., & Unger, N. (2006). *Kinder stärken kinder: Positive peer culture in der praxis*. Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung. [Children strengthening children: The practice of Positive Peer Culture.]
- <sup>42</sup> Gibbs, J., Potter, G., & Goldstein, A. (1995). *The EQUIP Program: Teaching youth to think and act responsibly through a peer helping approach*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- <sup>43</sup> The RAP model is being disseminated worldwide through a network of certified trainers. Two major RAP training centers in North America are Starr Commonwealth and Reclaiming Youth International. For further information about RAP opportunities worldwide, see the website, [www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com).
- <sup>44</sup> Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (2002). *Reclaiming youth at risk*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- <sup>45</sup> Neufeld, G., & Maté, G. (2005). *Hold on to your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- <sup>46</sup> Goldstein, A., Glick, B., Carthan, W., & Blancero, D. (1994). *The prosocial gang*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.