PART 1

THE PRACTICE

OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

No amount of skill or care on the part of those engaged in youth development work will eradicate the problems of underserved youth. Racism, drugs, violence, poverty, and lack of resources are root problems that will not disappear quickly. What we can do, however, is demonstrate the value of these young people and empower them by providing choices for better decisions about relations in schooling and “doing the right thing.”

—T. Martinek, in the epilogue to Youth Development and Physical Education

Youth development is both a wonderful and an elusive paradigm. This paradigm is inclusive to the point where virtually no activity is excluded. This can be rewarding and damning at the same time. Part 1 specifically seeks to provide the reader with a map of the territory to help develop a better understanding of the multifaceted aspects of youth development and the tensions inherent in this field of practice. This part of the book will also raise questions that must be actively addressed in order to maximize the potential of youth in American society. Special attention will be placed on marginalized youth because of their unique needs and the challenges practitioners’ face in reaching and engaging them.