

## Youth that thrive: A review of critical factors and effective programs for 12-25 year olds



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## Purpose



- The purpose of the study was to analyze the critical factors that support youth, ages 12 to 25, through critical life stage transitions and thriving throughout life.
- Adapting the most salient theoretical premises of Developmental Assets™, the Five Cs Model, and Self-Determination Theory, we created a youth thriving model.

## Rationale



- This research is founded on three beliefs:
  - I. youth face significant challenges if they do not have access to the supports, services, and opportunities they need to thrive;
  - II. youth have significant assets upon which to build; and
  - III. a coherent evidence base is required to determine the optimal nature of these supports, services, and opportunities.

## Leadership and Engagement



- youth represent a “reservoir of human energy, talent, and vision” (Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006, p. 89), yet are excluded from leadership positions
- the challenge of developing youth leadership is shared by youth programming-designers, educators, and employers
- engagement is a critical component of participation in leadership roles (Kemp & Kutsyuruba, 2007)

## Thriving



- Thriving, defined as intentional and purposeful optimal youth development across a variety of life domains (Heck, Subramaniam, & Carlos, 2010), can be seen through:
  1. school success,
  2. leadership,
  3. helping others,
  4. maintenance of physical health,
  5. delay of gratification,
  6. valuing diversity, and
  7. overcoming adversity (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000)


## Method



-ERIC, PsycINFO, PubMed, Queen’s Summons, and Google Scholar


-inclusion/exclusion keywords

-major search, 257 black literature, 223 grey literature




### Method

- standards of evidence criteria
- created criteria for the purposes of the search
- inter-rater reliability ( $k=.77$ )




### Method


- contemporary literature was analyzed along with historical frameworks
- identified three critical factors (autonomy, relatedness, competence)




### Developmental/Life Course Frameworks



- Three Theoretical frameworks underpinned by PYD.
- Developmental Assets, Self-Determination Theory, 5 C's.
- the differences across frameworks are more in specificity and nomenclature than any ideological or theoretical disagreement.




### Frameworks




#### Developmental Assets Model

- More assets → well adjusted development, low risk behavior
- 20 Internal vs 20 external assets
- Analyzes dynamic between development vs context
- Strength: theoretical + research base
- Critique: methodological limitations, institutional researcher bias




### Frameworks




#### 5 C's Model

- Competence, confidence, connection, character, compassion.
- Interactive principles → thriving, less risk
- Critique: Validity for athletic programs? Not dynamic?

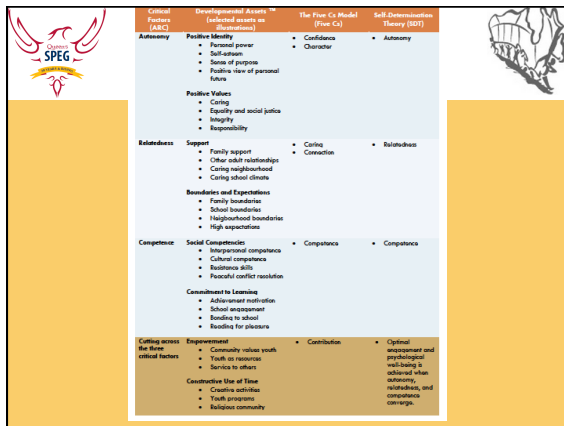


### Frameworks



#### Self-Determination Model

- Macrotheory emphasizing innate psychological needs.
- Suggests individual agency in development.
- Goal attainment requires competence, autonomy, relatedness.
- Critique: Needs theorists are divided.




## Summary of Outcomes

- **Cognitive/Learning:** Motivation and engagement in learning; academic achievement and educational attainment; job commitment and exploration.
- **Behavioural/Social:** Reduced health risk behaviours; lower antisocial and delinquent behaviours; improved leadership; motivation and engagement in physical activity; valuing diversity; secure attachment and autonomous decision-making.
- **Psychological/Emotional:** Reduced distress and depression; higher self-esteem and vitality; higher life satisfaction, hope and motivation; adaptive/active coping.

## Critical Factor: Autonomy

- Input or voice in one's behaviour and program decision-making/ leadership
- Independence and volition
- Complex construct



## Outcomes of Autonomy

Cognitive/Learning outcomes:

- Autonomy-supportive learning environments: improved performance, motivation for learning, and deeper cognitive processing;

Behavioural/Social outcomes:

- Higher volition: reduced deviant behaviours and alcohol use from early to late adolescence

Psychological/Emotional outcomes:


- Decision-making in mid-adolescence predicts depression in late adolescence.


## Transitions & Autonomy

- Several dimensions of autonomy increase from early to mid-adolescence
- Joint decision-making peaks in middle-adolescence
- Unilateral decision-making rises sharply between 15-17 years and late adolescence
- Autonomy may not moderate effects of stress during transitions
- There is a dearth of longitudinal research


## Critical Factor: Relatedness

- Belonging, connection, supportive relationships
- Relationships with others and with contexts
- Indicator of PYD that is equally important at different developmental stages





## Outcomes of Relatedness



**Cognitive/Learning outcomes:**


- Peer attachment, intimacy, and mutuality are important for career exploration and commitment.

**Behavioural/Social outcomes:**


- Peer attachment and belonging with regulating peers predict lower rates of antisocial and problem behaviours;

**Psychological/Emotional outcomes:**


- Family connection and school belonging are associated with lower rates of depression;




## Transitions & Relatedness





- As parental relationships shift, peer relatedness gains importance through early and mid-adolescence;
- No systematic examination of functions of relatedness as adolescents transition to emerging adults;
- From junior high to high school: relatedness serves as a protective factor;
- To work force: peer attachment and intimacy may support youth to career exploration and commitment.




## Critical Factor: Competence



- Attributes, abilities, skills
- Objective and subjective
- Cognitive, Emotional, Social/cultural, Behavioural, Moral

## Outcomes of Competence



**Cognitive/Learning Outcomes:**


- Social competence: resilience and subsequent educational attainment for at-risk youth

**Behavioural/Social Outcomes:**


- Social competence: lower rates of antisocial behaviour, delinquency, and drug use;

**Psychological/Emotional Outcomes:**


- Cognitive and behavioural competence: less distress, greater well-being, and decreases in substance use;



## Transitions & Competence



- To high school: Perceived team competence in sport participation increases girls' self-esteem; low social competence predicts future antisocial behaviour.
- To post-secondary: Hopefulness predicts mastery and subsequent achievement.
- To parenthood: Relational competence is associated with paternal functioning.





## Creating Leaders



- Richest levels of interaction occur when Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness are satisfied
- Adolescents participate in leadership roles when they are optimally fulfilled
- Critical process that links individual, social and systemic levels



## Leadership from Engagement

- Individual and contextual factors predict success over the transition from adolescence and adulthood;
- Individual factors: Competences including cognitive ability and achievement, planfulness, coping skills; Autonomy and self-control;
- Contextual factors: Relational contexts (family, peer, teacher, romantic), adult support.




## Closing Thoughts



- participation in leadership roles is the fullest expression of sustained engagement (Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, & Hughes, 2010)
- the ARC model represents a unifying umbrella of existing theories
- when developmental factors are considered, enriched engagement represents the most authentic path to the development of leadership skills




## Closing Thoughts



**Future Objectives:**

- Conduct studies that pay explicit attention to divergences among minority groups
- Develop longitudinal intervention studies
- Track post-secondary adjustment
- Encourage stakeholder collaboration




## Discussion \* Questions

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Thank you!