

## 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:
  - youth face significant challenges if they do not have access to the supports, services, and opportunities they need to thrive;
  - youth have significant assets upon which to build; and
  - 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:
  - school success,
  - leadership,
  - helping others,
  - maintenance of physical health,
  - delay of gratification,
  - valuing diversity, and
  - 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.



Critical Factors (ARC)	Developmental Assets™ (Illustrations)	The Five Cs Model (Plan Cs)	Self-Determination Theory (SDT)
<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Positive Identity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal power</li> <li>Self-efficacy</li> <li>Sense of purpose</li> <li>Positive view of personal future</li> </ul> <b>Positive Values</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caring</li> <li>Equality and social justice</li> <li>Blattny</li> <li>Responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence</li> <li>Optimism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autonomy</li> </ul>
<b>Relatedness</b>	<b>Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family support</li> <li>Critical adult relationships</li> <li>Caring neighbourhood</li> <li>Caring school climate</li> </ul> <b>Boundaries and Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family boundaries</li> <li>School boundaries</li> <li>Neighbourhood boundaries</li> <li>High expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment</li> <li>Connection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relatedness</li> </ul>
<b>Competence</b>	<b>Social Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpersonal competencies</li> <li>Cultural competence</li> <li>Resilience skills</li> <li>Peaceful conflict resolution</li> </ul> <b>Commitment to Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adolescent motivation</li> <li>School engagement</li> <li>Reading to school</li> <li>Reading for pleasure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competence</li> </ul>
<b>Caring across the River critical factors</b>	<b>Empowerment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community values youth</li> <li>Youth-led resources</li> <li>Services to others</li> </ul> <b>Constructive Use of Time</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative activities</li> <li>Youth programs</li> <li>Belong community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimal engagement and psychological well-being is achieved when autonomy, relatedness, and competence converge.</li> </ul>




## 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!