

## Youth Development Frameworks

### INTRODUCTION

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Youth development theory is an emerging field of research, with a growing emphasis on positive youth development. The term “youth development” can be seen in three different ways: as the natural process through which youth grow into adults; as a set of principles underlying youth programs that encourage thriving among youth; or as a set of practices that foster the development of young people (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). Positive youth development (PYD) has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, but generally refers to a focus on the developmental characteristics which lead to positive outcomes and behaviors among young people. The components of a positive youth development framework are the internal and external factors which help young people to lead successful lives into young adulthood. The PYD concept is partly a reaction to work from the 1980's which focused on problems and deficits among young people. Small and Memmo (2004) describe the PYD approach as being based on several key assumptions:

1. Youth who achieve their full potential are less likely to experience problems.
2. Supports and opportunities are important to success for young people.
3. Communities are critical shapers of youth development, and can improve their capacity to build successful young people.
4. Youth need to be viewed as resources and in a positive light.

During the past two decades, several frameworks of youth development have been proposed and are only beginning to be tested. The purpose of this

monograph is to review and consider the strengths, limitations, and utility of the most commonly used youth development frameworks. The five models described below were selected based on their popularity and extent of use. In the following sections we review the history and development of these frameworks, as well as the extent to which they have been incorporated in youth development research and evaluation. We then discuss their comparative strengths and weaknesses with specific attention to use of the models within the 4-H program.

The frameworks described here include:

- Targeting Life Skills: Patricia Hendricks at Iowa State University developed this model, which focuses on the life skills youth gain through youth development programming.
- Assets: The Search Institute of Minnesota has promoted a framework focusing on assets or strengths, including those that youth have internally as well as external supports such as close relationships with caring adults.
- The Four Essential Elements: For the past several years, national 4-H and the California 4-H Youth Development Program has been promoting a specific youth development framework for 4-H, the Four Essential Elements of Youth Development.
- The Five Cs: Several researchers building on one another's work have developed a framework called the Five Cs of positive youth development (sometimes the Six Cs), which are internal characteristics youth develop that help them to grow into healthy adults.

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*The Targeting Life Skills model is useful as a list identifying the specific skills young people develop within the 4-H program, and providing a set of skills for programs to target.*

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- Community Action Framework for Youth Development: James Connell and Michelle Gambone of Youth Development Strategies, Inc., developed this framework, which focuses on supports and opportunities available to youth within a context such as a youth development program.

#### *Why do we need a framework?*

A framework for youth development helps give direction and purpose to a program. Knowing the important components of healthy development can help guide staff and volunteers toward programming intended to achieve specific positive outcomes. A framework can help provide direction for program evaluation, as well, to identify items on which an evaluation can focus. Finally, a framework which is validated and accurate can identify more clearly what the long term outcomes are that youth development programs are helping to create.

#### *What constitutes an effective framework?*

In this review we examine the five popular frameworks with respect to their effectiveness as a positive youth development framework for research and program evaluation. The effectiveness of a framework may be judged by several criteria. These include:

1) Validity: the quality of the science supporting the framework. This includes evidence in the literature that the positive youth development characteristics described in the framework lead to positive outcomes, both short term and long term, and reduce the risk of negative outcomes.

2) Utility: the extent to which the framework has been used in youth development research and in program evaluation, and the specificity and measurability of the constructs.

Frameworks with validated instruments and surveys available are more useful for program planning and evaluation.

3) Universality: the applicability of a framework to varying populations. Frameworks representing only particular subpopulations are less useful and

effective than those which can be applied to diverse groups of youth.

### **Targeting Life Skills Model**

#### *Development of the framework*

In 1996, Iowa State University published a “wheel” which articulates the 35 life skills that the 4-H program develops, divided according to 4-H’s “Heart, Hands, Head, and Health” (Hendricks, 1996). This Targeting Life Skills model was developed based on a review of literature focusing on youth development, resilience, and program evaluations. The model is intended to provide a foundation for the intentional development of specific skills by program staff (Hendricks, 1998). The model is intended specifically for program planning, and the manual accompanying the model provides step-by-step instructions for its use, including targeting the topic to be covered and accompanying life skills, identifying the age group with which the program will be working and ensuring activities are developmentally appropriate, goal-setting for program impacts, and identifying key concepts for the material, objectives for the life skills, and measurable indicators for evaluation.

Within the model, each of the four components is subdivided into two categories, with life skills identified under each of the categories. For “Heart,” the categories are relating and caring; for “Hands” the categories are giving and working; under “Head” the categories are managing and thinking; and under “Health” are living and being. Specific life skills include a range from traditional 4-H goals such as record keeping and using resources wisely, to more internalized characteristics that relate more closely to internal components of youth development, such as self-esteem, self-discipline, and empathy.

#### *Research using the framework*

The Targeting Life Skills model has been widely used in 4-H program evaluations. The life skills identified in the model have been drawn upon by many researchers to develop a number of other tools for measuring life skills and evaluating

program impact. Table 1 describes findings from the studies which have been published using this model. In

most cases, the researchers used the model as a basis to identify specific skills to evaluate among youth participants.

**Table 1. Research using the Targeting Life Skills model**

Author(s) and date	Summary of the research
Arnold, 2005	Evaluation of the Japanese exchange program by Oregon State University. Students participating in the exchange reported gains in appreciating other cultures; making friends; feeling comfortable in new situations; and being responsible, confident, and resourceful, among other skills.
Arnold, Bourdeau, & Nagele, 2005	A camp evaluation in Oregon used the Targeting Life Skills model to identify life skills campers were gaining in 4-H camp. The authors identified comfort in trying new things, self-confidence, responsibility, cooperation and teamwork as some of the primary life skills the campers developed.
Bailey & Deen, 2002	Development of a web-based instrument for evaluating growth in life skills resulting from participation in 4-H programs. This instrument, the Life Skills Evaluation System, uses 8 of the 35 life skills identified in the Targeting Life Skills model, including decision making, wise use of resources, communication, accepting differences, leadership, marketable skills, healthy lifestyle choices, and responsibility. The authors developed specific indicators of these skills and tested them with 369 participants. They caution that youth below 6th grade may have difficulty completing such an instrument, but that the questionnaire may be useful for youth development staff who work with older youth and are interested in assessing program outcomes.
Brandt & Arnold, 2006	A survey of former 4-H camp counselors in Oregon used the Targeting Life Skills model to identify life skills gained as a camp counselor. Former counselors reported some of the strongest gains in leadership, teamwork, contribution to group effort, responsible citizenship, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills.
Ferrari, Hogue, & Scheer, 2004	Evaluation of the 4-H Cloverbud program in Ohio. The authors used focus groups with parents to evaluate what life skills they felt their young (5 to 8 year old) children were learning from 4-H, and matched parent statements to life skills identified by Hendricks as well as by Barkman & Machtmes (2000). Primary skills parents reported were social skills, learning to learn, self-confidence, self-care and self-direction.
Fitzpatrick et al., 2005	Recent 4-H alumni in Maine were surveyed on life skills gained in the program. The Targeting Life Skills model was referenced as a source for the importance of life skills, although many skills for this specific instrument were also drawn from the Cornell 4-H study (Rodriguez, Hirschl, Mead, & Goggin, 1999). Accepting differences, community service, making healthy choices, and job skills were some of the primary skills alumni reported gaining.

Fox, Schroeder, & Lodl, 2003	Survey of life skills gained in the Nebraska 4-H club program given to club program alumni, using the Targeting Life Skills model to identify skills. The skills alumni most frequently reported gaining included responsibility, production skills, ability to handle competition, and ability to meet new people, all reported by more than half of alumni who responded to the survey.
Garst & Bruce, 2003	Camp evaluation in Virginia. Both youth and their parents completed surveys regarding life skills gained at camp. 4-H camp participants felt they made new friends and developed new skills in an area that they enjoyed. Parents felt their children gained independence and initiative.
Garst et al., 2006	Virginia researchers evaluated life skills related to participation in a State 4-H Congress. The life skills from the model to be evaluated included decision making, critical thinking, communication, sharing, community service, volunteering, leadership, personal safety, and self-responsibility. Students reported the greatest gains in identifying needs in their communities and working to meet those needs; setting goals for the future; having friendships with people different from themselves; communication skills; and wise use of time.
Garton, Miltenberger, & Pruett, 2007	Evaluation of the West Virginia 4-H camp experience for both older and younger campers. Youth reported learning to accept differences, to respect the rights and property of others (citizenship skills), leadership and teamwork, and communication skills (listening).
Hines & Riley, 2005	An evaluation of leadership skills gained among youth ages 12-14 participating in a natural resources workshop in Idaho. The authors used a pre- and post-test model and, finding a decline in skills in the post-test suggesting that the pre-test model results were skewed, subsequently developed a skills-gained questionnaire demonstrating growth in leadership skills among youth leaders in the program.
Loeser et al., 2004	Researchers in Montana and Washington developed a life-skills instrument for evaluating program impact among third to fifth graders. The authors used the pre- and post-test instrument in a camp evaluation and found that life skills practiced in camp showed the greatest increases; for example, wise use of resources such as picking up litter, and communication skills such as apologizing when wrong.
Maass et al., 2006	Alumni of Oklahoma 4-H programs were surveyed on life skill development, including items from the Targeting Life Skills model as well as other life skill models. Alumni were asked to identify life skills developed and the degree to which 4-H and other youth development programs in which they may have participated had facilitated the life skills growth. For 30 of 36 life skills identified, such as public speaking, community service volunteering, and marketable skills, 4-H was rated as significantly higher on influence in the development of these skills than other programs.

Pennington & Edwards, 2006	An evaluation of civic engagement outcomes among former 4-H Key Club members in Oklahoma used the Targeting Life Skills model to identify “giving” skills which participation in the 4-H Key Club might help to develop. Alumni rated 4-H participation as having a major impact on their community service and volunteering, but less of an impact on their citizenship participation.
Smith, Enfield, Meehan, & Klingborg, 2004	The model was used to help identify items to evaluate in the Animal Ambassadors teens-teaching-children science program. Children who participated in the program showed improvements in their scientific thinking processes.

### *Strengths and limitations of the Targeting Life Skills model*

The Targeting Life Skills model is useful as a list identifying the specific skills young people develop within the 4-H program, and providing a set of skills for programs to target and among which researchers can select items for evaluation. The model helps to identify specific, skill-based outcomes of the 4-H program, rather than being a theoretical model of youth development. It is based on historical and current intents of 4-H programming and is not a framework of positive youth development per se. It is not intended to shed light on some of the components of the other models, such as external supports available to youth or criteria helpful for long-term success. An additional limitation of the framework is its catch-all use of the term “life skills.” While many of the set of 35 “life skills” listed within the model are in fact skills, such as keeping records, social skills, or marketable skills, in some cases the “life skills” relate more to choices or internal characteristics rather than the concepts one might typically think of as skills. For example, character, empathy, disease prevention, service learning, and self-esteem are all important tools, characteristics or experiences for young people to have, but appear to be beyond the concept of “life skills” alone.

### **Search Institute Assets Model**

#### *Development of the framework*

During the 1990s, the Search Institute of Minnesota developed a theory of youth development focusing on resiliency. The intent of the new theory was to identify

supports available to young people that would help them thrive, focusing on young people’s successes rather than failures. This concept contrasted with the prevailing model in public health and other fields of a prevention approach with a focus on the risk factors that lead to negative outcomes. The resiliency approach instead directs attention onto the strengths young people have, both internal and external, with a belief that increasing those strengths will foster positive outcomes and allow youth to avoid problem behaviors. Researchers at the Search Institute developed an initial list of 30 assets, later expanded to 40 assets, which they believe are the primary supports youth need to develop into thriving young adults.

Research on the underlying factors in the Assets model supports a developmental systems theory, demonstrating that internal as well as external factors are both important in promoting positive development. In their research on the assets model, Theokas et al. (2005) found primary internal factors emerging including social conscience, risk avoidance, positive identity, interpersonal values, activity participation and personal values. External factors included community connection, parent involvement, school connection, adult mentors, rules and boundaries, connection to family and contextual safety.

The “developmental assets” identified by the Search Institute are listed in Table 2 and divided into two categories: external assets and internal assets. External assets are subdivided into those

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that pertain to support, empowerment, control, and time use. Internal assets are subdivided into assets that pertain to educational commitment, positive values, social competence, and positive identity. The assets are typically measured using a survey developed by Search

Institute, the *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* (Search Institute, 2008), but additional researchers have also developed and validated shorter inventories to measure assets available to youth (e.g., Oman et al., 2002).

**Table 2. The 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents Ages 12-18**

<i>External Assets: Domain</i>	<i>Specific Assets</i>
Support	Family support
	Positive family communication
	Support from other adult relationships
	Caring neighbors
	Caring school climate
Empowerment	Adults in the community value youth
	Youth are considered to be resources in the community
	Youth volunteers community service at least one hour a week
	Youth feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood
Boundaries and expectations	Family boundaries: Clear rules and consequences, and family monitoring
	School boundaries
	Neighbors help to monitor young people's behavior
	Adults are positive role models
	Positive peer influences: best friends model responsible behavior
	High expectations from parents and teachers
Constructive use of time	Creative activities: three or more hours per week in music, theater, or other arts
	Youth programs: three or more hours per week spent in sports, clubs, or other organizations
	Religious community: One or more hours per week at a religious institution
	Time at home: spending no more than two nights a week out with friends



<i>Internal Assets: Domain</i>	<i>Specific Assets</i>
Commitment to learning	Motivated to achieve in school
	School engagement: Actively engaged in learning
	Homework: at least one hour per night on school days
	Caring about the school
	Reading for pleasure at least 3 hours per week
Positive values	Caring and helping other people
	Equality and social justice: youth cares about reducing hunger and poverty
	Integrity: Youth stands up for his/her beliefs
	Honesty
	Accepts personal responsibility
	Restraint: chooses not to partake in sexual activity, alcohol, or drugs
Social competencies	Planning and decision making
	Interpersonal competence: empathy, sensitivity, friendship skills
	Cultural competence and accepting differences
	Resistance skills: resisting negative peer pressure and dangerous situations
	Peaceful conflict resolution
Positive identity	Personal power: youth feels she/he has control over things that happen to her/him
	Self-esteem
	Sense of purpose
	Optimism about one's own future

(Source: Search Institute, 1997, 2007).

### *Research using the framework*

Widespread research has been conducted using the Assets framework, incorporating databases with large samples of adolescents. The majority of literature using this framework cites research conducted to measure short term adolescent outcomes, both positive and negative, in relation to internal and external assets that were identified. Studies using the Assets model are shown in Table 3. In reviewing the literature using this framework, we found very few research studies that have used the model for the purpose of evaluating programs.

There were also very few that looked at how the Assets framework predicts long-term positive or negative outcomes.

Several large scale studies have demonstrated that having greater numbers of assets is associated with positive behaviors and outcomes, and that the association is direct. That is, the greater the number of assets the young person has, the increased likelihood that she also reports positive outcomes. This positive relationship between the number of assets and developmental outcomes has been demonstrated for school achievement and health behaviors

(Scales, 1999; Murphy et al., 2004), as well as leadership, volunteering, physical health, valuing diversity, delaying gratification, and overcoming adversity (Scales et al., 2003).

The cumulative impact of assets has been shown not only for positive outcomes, but for negative outcomes as well. Assets have been demonstrated to be directly and negatively related to substance use (Oman et al., 2004). In addition to their effects on substance use, a large number of asset measures have been significantly negatively correlated with sexual activity (Reininger et al., 2003; Vesely et al., 2004; Evans et al., 2004). In a study of multiple outcomes, assets including school support, personal and peer values regarding risk behaviors, and family structure predicted a number of measures of risk behavior including tobacco use, alcohol use, drug use, and sexual behavior (Reininger et al., 2004). Most of these studies have been cross-sectional rather than looking at the impact of developmental assets over time, but one 3-year longitudinal study found that students whose level of assets stayed stable or increased had higher GPAs than students whose assets decreased (Scales et al., 2006). This study also demonstrated that some aspects were more important than others: connection to community and norms of responsibility predicted better grades, while some other types of assets did not.

The Assets model is promoted for all youth, but relatively little work has examined variations in the power of the model specific to family or ethnic background or demographic context. However, some work suggests that asset

building may be more beneficial in some contexts than others; youth in a more at-risk situation may benefit more from asset building than may youth in a more supportive environment (Oman et al., 2005; Taylor, et al., 2002).

The Assets model differs from some earlier work that focused entirely on risk factors for negative outcomes in that it focuses, instead, on positive supports and examines how these can impact developmental outcomes and behaviors. However, some research has expanded beyond either of these two approaches to demonstrate that both positive supports and risk factors make independent contributions to the likelihood of a particular outcome (Dukes et al., 2000; Price et al., 2001). These findings suggest that a singular approach, whether positive or negative, may not be complete when attempting to promote positive developmental outcomes for youth.

Studies that have used the Assets framework for assessing program impact are relatively scarce. However, a study from Rochester using an assets-based survey tool found that significant asset factors emerging from the survey (such as quality of staff relationships with youth, program effectiveness, social skills including empathy, communication and self control and decision-making) predicted the youth's level of program participation and connectedness to the program (Klein et al., 2006). One study of 4-H participants demonstrated the assets most common among this subset of youth, particularly family support and youths' feeling valued in the community (Perkins & Butterfield, 2003).



**Table 3: Research using the Assets framework**

Author(s) and date	Summary of the research
Dukes & Stein, 2001	This survey of 13,207 students in 6th to 12th grades in the Pikes Peak area of Colorado in 1996 examined assets or protective factors (self-esteem, positive school attitudes, prosocial activities, purpose in life, and prosocial bonds) as well as risk factors (fear of harm, experience with violent victimization, abuse in the home). Outcomes included drug use, weapon possession and delinquency. Authors used structural equations modeling to find latent variables and path analysis to examine relationships among the variables. Results showed that both assets and risk factors were predictive of negative outcomes. These data would suggest that ignoring either side (assets or risk factors) may limit the impact of programming.
Evans et al., 2004	Authors surveyed 4,368 students in a representative sample of South Carolina high schools on demographics, health risk behaviors, and youth assets based on the Search Institute instrument. Some assets, including values regarding risk behavior (including own values and perceptions of friends' values), level of adult support, and empathetic relationships predicted risky sexual behavior.
Jones, Ashurst, & Kurzynske, 2007	This study surveyed county extension agents in Kentucky on their perceptions of the importance of key developmental assets. Adult support and youth leadership were found to be among the most highly ranked assets by agents.
Klein et al., 2006	389 adolescents ages 10-17 in Rochester were given a short survey as part of a community-based asset collaboration. Significant factors emerging from the survey included the quality of staff relationships with youth; program effectiveness (e.g., the program helped me make friends); social skills including empathy, communication, and self-control; and decision making. These factors predicted level of program participation and connectedness to the program.
Murphey, Lamonda, Carney, & Duncan, 2004	The authors added six assets questions to a survey of health behaviors among 30,916 Vermont youth in grades 8-12. Assets included school grades; talking with parents about school; representation in school decision making; participation in youth programs (non-sports); community volunteering; and feeling valued by the community. Number of assets was negatively related to engagement in risk behaviors and positively related to health promoting behaviors. Academic success was the greatest predictive asset but all contributed significant independent effects.

Oman, Vesely & Aspy, 2005	Survey done in 1999-2000 of youth in two Midwestern cities. Assets included nonparental adult role models; peer role models; family communication; use of time (groups/sports); religious attendance; community involvement; aspirations for the future; good health practices; and responsible choices. In adjusted models, nonparental adult role models predicted skipping school, and use of time (groups/sports) predicted never being arrested. Low parental income predicted weapon carrying. Many of the associations between assets and risk behavior were only true for youth living in single-parent households. Results suggest that asset building may be more beneficial for youth in single-parent households than for youth in two-parent households.
Oman et al., 2004	Same sample as article above. Results showed that assets were negatively related to substance use. Youth who had all 9 assets were more than 4 times as likely as the remainder of the sample not to use alcohol and more than 5 times as likely not to use drugs. The collective asset measures were stronger than any one on their own (total greater than the sum of the parts).
Perkins & Butterfield, 1999	Authors surveyed 151 4-H participants in Duval County, Florida using the Search Institute instrument. High levels of family support were reported, and youth feel they are important in the community. Youth feel supported by adults, but don't talk to their 4-H leaders for long periods of time. Implications for 4-H youth development are discussed.
Price, Dake, & Kucharewski, 2001	Suicide rates are increasing among inner-city African American youth. Authors surveyed 336 inner-city African American youth who participated in a sports program in 7 cities in a Midwestern state (56% male). Instrument was developed by Search Institute (PSL-AB). Overall 14.3% had attempted suicide. Not getting along with parents, stealing, hitting or beating someone up, feeling useful and important, depression, drug use and other factors were significantly associated with suicide attempts. While asset measures were significant, negative behaviors such as drug use, stealing, and fighting were better predictors of suicide attempts than were assets.
Reininger et al., 2003	Authors surveyed 4,368 high school students in South Carolina. Perceived support of parents and other adults, accountability to parents, empowerment, school support, peer values, other adult support, empathy, responsibility, planning, and satisfaction with life all came through as significant assets. Assets were significantly negatively correlated with sexual activity.

Reininger et al., 2005	Assets and 26 risk behaviors were assessed; risk behaviors were drawn from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and included tobacco use, alcohol use, drug use, and sexual behavior. Perceived school support, personal and perceived peer values about risk behaviors, age, and number of adults in the home predicted risk behaviors.
Riser, Mesler, Tallon, & Birkhead, 2006	Reviews the effects of a statewide asset development project via community-based partnerships. Lessons learned included the importance of involving diverse sectors of the community; local leadership is important; programming should be accessible to all youth; youth-adult partnerships are more successful than adult-led; specific projects help facilitate and nurture these partnerships; youth participation is critical in policy change; and change takes time.
Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004	Youth development research on Latino youth is limited. Relevant assets need to be better identified for Latino youth in particular.
Scales, Leffert, & Vraa, 2003	Authors surveyed 5,136 students in 6th-12th grades during 1999. The most common indicators of thriving were valuing diversity and delaying gratification. Most common assets were positive view of the future, parents' work and education activities, and exposure to family asset building. Students with higher levels of assets had higher means on each of the thriving measures.
Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000	The authors surveyed 6,000 youth in 6th-12th grade in 6 ethnic groups (1000 youth in each ethnic group, which were made up of a subsample of larger samples) and compared their results on the assets indicators to their place on a scale of thriving; thriving included school success, leadership, helping others/volunteering, physical health, valuing diversity, delaying gratification, overcoming adversity. Youth were classified into 4 categories based on number of assets. There was a direct relationship between number of assets and the thriving index regardless of ethnicity. Assets explained about half of the thriving measure, depending on the ethnic group. The assets measure explained some of the above components better than others. Overcoming adversity was only weakly related to the assets measure, while helping others, health, thriving and school success were all strongly related to assets.
Scales et al., 2006	Authors followed a sample of 7th-9th graders longitudinally for 3 years to examine the relationship of assets to academic achievement over time. Students whose level of assets stayed stable or increased had higher grade point averages than students whose assets decreased. Clusters of specific assets – connection to community in particular, and norms of responsibility - predicted better grades; some other types of assets did not.

Scales, 1999	Analysis of surveys with nearly 100,000 youth in 6th-12th grades finds the number of assets youth have is directly related to their achievement at school, health status, likelihood of substance use, and prevalence of negative behaviors. Girls tend to have more assets than boys, and the number of assets tends to decline with age. Asset building gives everyone a role to play, in forming positive relationships with youth.
Theokas et al., 2005	Authors used the PSL-AB survey, administered in 1999-2000 to over 229,000 youth in grades 6-12, to examine underlying factors in the assets model. Primary internal factors emerging included social conscience; risk avoidance; positive identity; interpersonal values; activity participation; and personal values. External factors included community connection; parent involvement; school connection; adult mentors; rules & boundaries; connection to family; and contextual safety. Levels of individual and ecological assets were directly related to one another. Results provide empirical data to back up developmental systems theory regarding the importance of both internal and external factors to youth development, and that they work together. (For example, youth delaying gratification through saving may be monitored by adult rules and mentoring on financial decision making.)
Vesely et al., 2004	1,253 youth ages 13-19 in two large Midwestern cities were randomly selected to be surveyed on demographics, sexual risk behaviors, and nine developmental assets (non-parental adult role models; peer role models; family communication; participation in groups/sports; religious participation; community involvement; future aspirations; responsible choices; good health practices). Almost all assets were significant predictors of sexual activity (never had intercourse) in unadjusted and adjusted logistic regression. Strongest predictors of not having had sex in adjusted models included religious participation, non-parental adult role models and peer role models. Also significant were family communication, future aspirations, and responsible choices. Peer role models and family communication predicted birth control use, and good health practices predicted age at first intercourse.

### *Strengths and limitations of the Assets framework*

Work on the Assets model has involved thousands of students who have taken surveys developed by the Search Institute as well as other related surveys of assets. In addition, there has been a substantial amount of research correlating the number

of assets present in a young person's life to a number of outcomes, both positive and negative. The importance of resiliency and positive supports as a factor underlying young people's success, which is the concept underlying the Assets framework, has also been examined and validated (e.g., Resnick

et al., 1997), although the validity of resiliency per se does not hinge on the specific 40 assets identified by the Search Institute. In addition, the emphasis in the Assets model is on the context in which young people live their lives, thus broadening the focus beyond the individual. This approach has advantages in terms of practical utility and the ability to improve supports for young people. Consequently, the Assets model lends itself to system-wide youth development, also known as “asset building” at the community level (Lerner & Benson, 2003).

Despite these strengths, the Assets model also has some limitations. The model has been criticized as being overly simplistic in its approach. As Small & Memmo (2004) comment, the Assets framework typically treats each asset as though it were equally valuable to all other assets, and thus in a sense interchangeable, whereas research indicates that some are more important than others and the importance of a particular asset to any given young person may vary according to individual or contextual factors. In other words, the approach would suggest that the absolute number of assets is what matters, rather than whether any particular asset or group of assets is more important than any other. (Perhaps further refining their preliminary model which treated the assets equally, the Search Institute has published some research more recently which identifies particular clusters of assets as having a greater influence over some outcomes compared to other types of assets; e.g., Scales et al., 2006). The list of 40 assets is broadly defined and incorporates a wide range of things, from coping processes to developmental outcomes, diluting its utility (Small & Memmo, 2004). Some research (e.g., Dukes & Stein, 2001) also suggests that both assets and deficits predict behavioral outcomes, and that a focus only on one side or the other is too limited when attempting to direct youth in a positive direction. Other authors have criticized the internal validity of the assets model, suggesting that it is weak, and have complained that its promoters seem more concerned with its commercial promotion (i.e., sales of the instrument) than with

conducting scientific research to validate its use (Price & Dake, 1999).

## The Four Essential Elements

### *Development of the framework*

Belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence, identified in 4-H as the Four Essential Elements of Youth Development, were originally proposed as the “Circle of Courage” in a 1990 book (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990). Brendtro, who is founder of a youth development training organization called Reclaiming Youth International, subsequently with his colleagues published a series of books and articles regarding the Circle of Courage elements, focusing on youth resilience and positive youth development. In 2003, Cathann Kress, who went on to become the national program leader in 4-H, published a short article in a journal published by Reclaiming Youth International, examining the relevance of Circle of Courage elements among 4-H members using data from a study among 4-H youth in New York State (Kress, 2003). Meanwhile, in the early part of this decade, 4-H headquarters sponsored a task force called the National 4-H Impact Assessment Project, consisting of youth development researchers from several states (Peterson et al., 2001). This group identified eight critical elements which are most important to developing positive youth outcomes in youth development programming. These eight elements, which were identified by a 1997 task force and validated by the Impact Assessment Project using a review of research literature as well as a survey of over 2,400 youth ages 5-19 in eight states, included:

- A positive relationship with a caring adult;
- A physically and emotionally safe environment;
- The opportunity to value and practice service for others;
- An opportunity for self-determination;
- An inclusive environment;
- An opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future;
- Engagement in learning;
- Opportunity for mastery.

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*The Four Essential Elements framework draws on Native American wisdom about child rearing to identify characteristics which are critical for youth to develop in order to grow into healthy adults.*

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Following the publication of the National 4-H Impact Assessment Project report, Kress synthesized the eight critical elements into the four Circle of Courage characteristics.

- *Belonging* includes having relationships with caring adults; an inclusive environment; and a safe environment.
  - *Mastery* includes opportunities for mastery and engagement in learning.
  - *Independence* includes opportunities to see oneself as an active participant in the future and the opportunity for self-determination.
  - *Generosity* consists of the opportunity to value and practice service for others.
- In the past several years, National 4-H

Headquarters has promoted the 4 Essential Elements as being the critical components that the 4-H program is developing among young people.

#### *Research using the framework*

A review of research on the Four Essential Elements found that the data validating this specific group of developmental characteristics are quite limited. However, the Essential Elements have been used in a small number of 4-H program evaluations in different states, described in Table 4. These evaluations have found the Essential Elements to be present in the 4-H experience in Colorado, Florida, Utah, and Wisconsin.

**Table 4. Research using the Four Essential Elements framework**

Author(s) and date	Summary of the research
Duncan et al., 2007	The Circle of Courage is included as one of several reviewed methods of using positive approaches to improve adolescent health behaviors within a clinical environment. The authors encourage pediatricians and other medical providers who work with youth to consider strengths checklists among their toolboxes for assessing young people's health. They encourage health care providers to listen for the Circle of Courage characteristics in the statements their patients make, and to reflect those back through the messages they send to their young patients.
Goodwin, Carroll, & Oliver, 2007	In Colorado, the 4-H Impact Study surveyed 5th, 7th, and 9th graders in public schools and asked about their participation in 4-H as well as their own personal strengths and life skills. The authors found that 4-H participants had higher levels of a variety of positive outcomes, including self confidence, positive view of self, decision making, life skills learned, caring about others, and a number of assets.
Hensley et al., 2007	A Florida study of sense of belonging among 4-H participants found that youth who have a greater level of involvement in the program reported higher levels of belonging and inclusiveness.
Lee, Beard, & Straquadine, 2003	A Utah study of 4-H club members examined the 8 critical elements of youth development and found that 97 percent of youth in their survey felt that all 8 elements were present in their 4-H experience.
Taylor-Powell & Calvert, 2006	Wisconsin University Cooperative Extension used the 4 Essential Elements framework to evaluate their state's 4-H Arts and Communication Program. All four elements were found to be present, with mastery and independence being the strongest elements within the program.

#### *Strengths and limitations of the Four Essential Elements framework*

The Four Essential Elements framework has the advantage of being more parsimonious as a developmental and

programmatic framework compared to either the Assets model, with its list of 40 assets, or the Targeting Life Skills model, which has 35 skills on which youth programs can focus. It provides



a relatively simple and straightforward set of the four elements which youth are believed to need in order to grow into adulthood. In addition, these four can be further broken down into eight more specific elements – for example, belonging includes positive relationships with caring adults, an inclusive environment and a safe environment. The model's limitations lie in the relatively little empirical work that has been conducted regarding the validity of the model, in addition to very limited work on evaluation of the Essential Elements specific to the 4-H program. Little research has been done to examine whether these four elements are, in fact, the primary components of a 4-H experience, as well as whether these are the elements most needed by youth in their development, or whether other items may be of equal or greater significance.

## **The Five Cs of Youth Development**

### *Development of the framework*

The Five Cs model of youth development, which seeks to identify the characteristics necessary for youth to thrive, has been developed over a number of years with significant contributions from several researchers. In 1989, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development published a report on preparing healthy youth for the 21st century (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). This report included a list of characteristics which they felt youth needed to become successful adults. These included:

- Intellectually reflective;
- En route to a lifetime of meaningful work;
- A good citizen;
- Caring and ethical; and
- Healthy.

During the 1990s, the International Youth Foundation described the tasks of adolescence as four Cs (Pittman, Irby & Ferber, 2000). These characteristics were laid out by Rick Little, founder of the International Youth Foundation, at a seminar at Michigan State University (Little, 1993), and by Pittman and Irby in a 1996 report (Pittman et al., 2003). These four Cs, developmental

characteristics which successful programs ought to encourage, included competence (literacy, employment skills, ability to contribute); connection (caring human relationships, through mentoring, tutoring, counseling and similar experiences); character (values of responsibility, honesty, equity, etc.); and confidence (self-esteem and hope). Lerner (1995) added to this list by identifying caring communities as an additional fifth C that youth need. The five Cs of competence, confidence, connections, character, and caring were identified in a 2000 article on applied developmental science (Lerner, Fisher & Weinberg, 2000). Also that year, Pittman et al. (2000) identified competence, confidence, character, connections and contributions as the five Cs of youth development, with “contributions” signifying the need for young people to become engaged with their communities and society as a whole. Further theoretical work suggested that the Five Cs affect youth development within a context involving the individual, his/her family and community; development of the Five Cs, within a healthy context, helps to enable the adolescent to thrive and to grow into positive adulthood (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003).

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) further expanded the definitions of the Five Cs to include:

- Competence: success in the social, cognitive, and vocational arenas.
- Confidence: self-esteem, identity, and belief in the future.
- Connections: relationships with others and with schools and other institutions.
- Character: self-control; positive behaviors; respect for rules and standards; morality; spirituality
- Caring and compassion: empathy and identification with others.

The definitions of the Five Cs have continued to evolve. Lerner (2004), among others, has proposed contribution as a sixth C; this builds on Pittman's earlier identification of contribution as one of the key elements of youth development. Lerner defined contribution to mean behaviors that have

a positive impact on self, family, community and society. In addition, the theory of the Five Cs in positive youth development is increasingly being brought into related fields, such as its promotion for use in evaluation of community-based partnerships around adolescent health behaviors (Surko et al., 2006).

#### *Research using the framework*

Studies using the Five Cs framework are shown in Table 5. The primary empirical research utilizing the Five Cs theory is an ongoing national longitudinal study being run by Tufts University, the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, led by Richard and Jacqueline Lerner. This study began with a group of fifth grade students in 2002, including both 4-H participants and non-4-H youth, and has grown to include over

4,000 young people in 26 states (Lerner, Lerner, Phelps et al., 2008a). The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development attempts to measure the Five Cs and to examine the relationship of the prevalence or level of those Cs to outcomes among the youth in the study, in addition to program participation, demographics and other variables. The Five Cs constructs have been validated using structural equations modeling with data from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development (Jelicic et al., 2007). Results from the study have provided support for the importance of the Five Cs within a 4-H sample. In that study, for example, 4-H participants had higher Five Cs scores and a higher level of college expectations than did non-4-H youth (Lerner, Lerner Phelps et al., 2008a).

**Table 5. Research using the Five Cs framework**

Author(s) and date	Summary of the research
Alberts et al., 2006	This study used Wave 2 of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development to examine youth and parent perceptions of what it took for youth to thrive and have meaning in their lives. The significance to young people of youth contribution was reported more frequently by youth themselves than by their parents; parents did not typically identify contribution as an important component of thriving among young people.
Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2007	The Five Cs were positively associated with levels of self-regulation, which were in turn negatively associated with measures of depression, risk behaviors, and delinquency in two waves of the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development. This research demonstrates that the Five Cs play an important role in the development of adaptive self-regulation.
Jelicic et al., 2007	Structural equations modeling was performed to test the validity of the theoretical model of the Five Cs. Results showed the five variables to exist as latent constructs within the 4-H Study data set. The Five Cs predicted contribution as an outcome, as well as depression and negative (risk) behaviors.
Lerner et al., 2005	Using data from the first wave of the survey, the Five Cs measures were correlated with one another and were directly associated with the student's level of contribution, defined by engagement in pro-social activities such as volunteering or mentoring others.
Lerner, Lerner, Phelps et al., 2008b	Higher levels of the Five Cs measures in the fifth grade predicted greater contribution to family and community, lower rates of problem behaviors, and lower levels of depression in the sixth grade.
Paus et al., 2007	Youth who possess higher levels of the Five Cs were demonstrated to have greater resistance to peer influence.

### *Strengths and limitations of the Five Cs framework*

Focused on the internal and external characteristics necessary for healthy adolescent development, the Five Cs framework does not itemize specific elements of youth programming as does the Targeting Life Skills model. The scales that have been developed to measure the Cs are fairly complicated and cumbersome; the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development includes nearly 300 items, although other work has been published that includes a more limited set of measures. Because of the less concrete nature of the elements as well as the complexity of measuring these elements, it may be more difficult to utilize or integrate the Five Cs into youth programming and evaluations compared with some of the other frameworks described here. The practical utility at this point in time of the Five Cs is therefore somewhat more limited than some of the other models. However, the Five Cs model has substantially more empirical evidence in support of it than several of the other models. The constructs within the framework have been validated, and the importance of the Five Cs variables to both short- and long-term outcomes for youth has been tested using longitudinal research on a large national sample of young people.

### **Community Action Framework for Youth Development**

#### *Development of the model*

James Connell and Michelle Gambone developed the Community Action Framework

for Youth Development in 1998 with a goal of providing a measurable construct for use by youth development practitioners and theorists. The framework includes five components that build upon each other in the following logical sequence (See Fig. 1):

1. Build community capacity for change, which includes building stakeholder awareness and competence.
2. Implement community strategies to enhance supports and opportunities for youth.
3. Increase supports and opportunities for youth.
4. Improve youth development outcomes, namely learning to be productive, learning to connect and learning to navigate.
5. Improve long-term outcomes in adulthood, namely economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships, and community involvement.

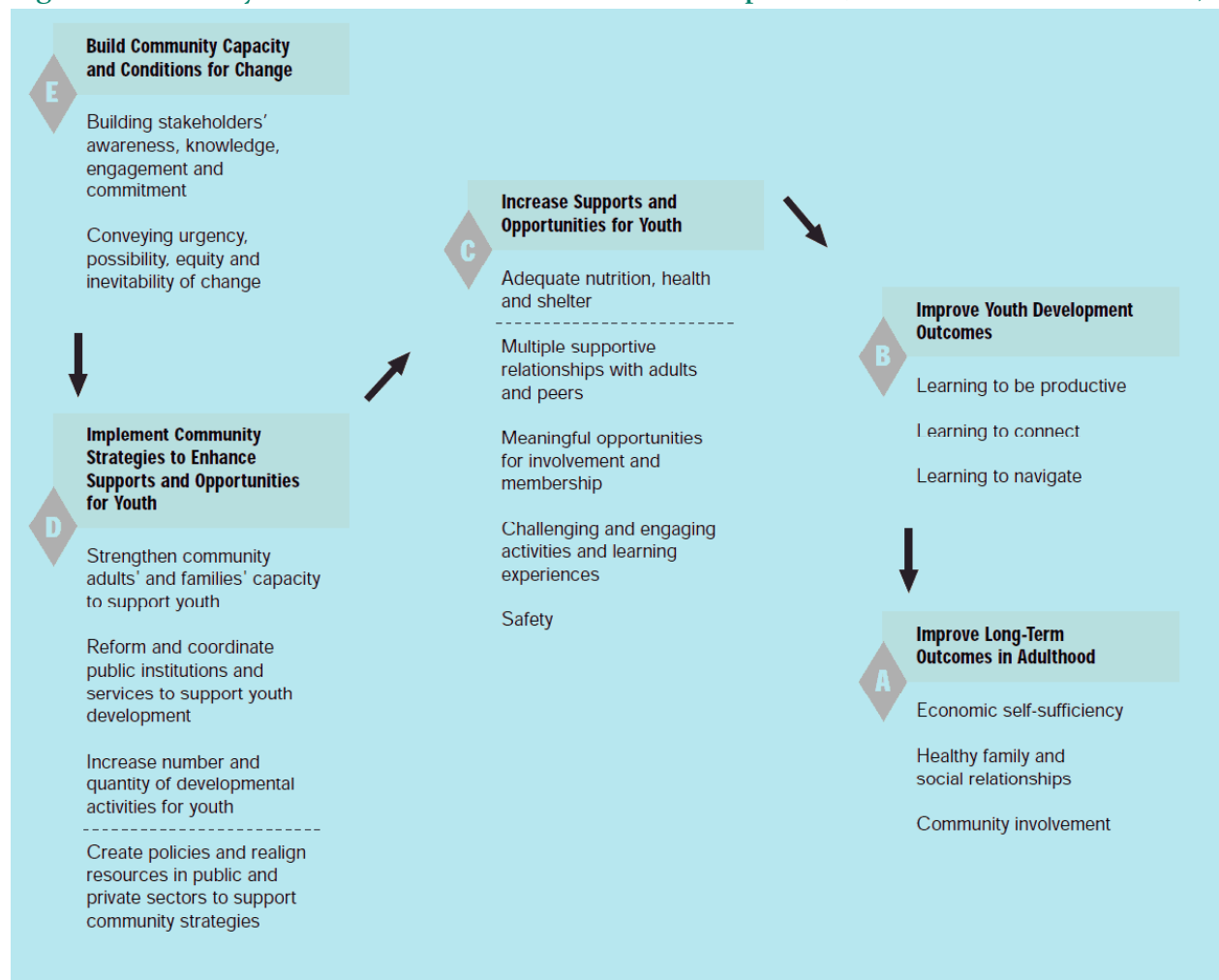
The initial version of the supports and opportunities outlined in the framework included adequate nutrition, health and shelter; multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers; meaningful opportunities for involvement and membership; challenging and engaging activities; learning experiences; and safety. The first, nutrition, health and shelter, is considered a pre-condition to the others. Later, community involvement was included with the four other concepts to make up the five supports and opportunities.

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*Within the Five Cs framework, the constructs have been validated, and the importance of the Five Cs variables to both short- and long-term outcomes for youth has been tested using longitudinal research on a large national sample of young people.*

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**Fig. 1: Community Action Framework for Youth Development (from Connell & Gambone, 2000)**



### *Research using the model*

In a subsequent research study in 2002, Connell, Gambone and associates tested their framework to identify whether, how and to what extent supports and opportunities and the developmental outcomes were linked. Through literature search, archival analysis and longitudinal analysis, they found that supports and opportunities were linked to short-term developmental outcomes and that these outcomes, in turn, were linked to long-term adult outcomes. However, some of the links were less substantiated by the available research, for example, the roles of connections or safety to long term outcomes such as economic self-sufficiency. Thresholds of optimal and insufficient conditions of the supports and opportunities that impact short term developmental outcomes (learn to be productive, connect and navigate) were identified.

While the youth development supports and opportunities have gained popularity, especially for the purpose of program evaluation, there are only a few published research studies that have incorporated this framework. These studies are shown in Table 6. In both cases, the research focused on evaluations of summer camps. The evaluations were used to identify aspects of the camp experience which were either optimal or insufficient for the youth participants. The supports and opportunities framework allowed youth and adult teams to improve their camps by providing feedback on particular areas in which the camps should make improvements. Follow-up evaluations documented a significant increase in optimal outcomes and a decrease in insufficient supports and opportunities in the following year for the camps who implemented changes.

**Table 6. Research using the Community Action Framework for Youth Development**

Author(s) and date	Summary of the research
Bialeshki & Scanlin, 2005	In a national camp evaluation study using the Community Action Framework, eighty camps had 7,672 campers ten years old and up complete a survey at the end of a camp session in 2004. The survey was focused on supportive relationships, safety, youth involvement, and skill building. 69% of campers were in the optimal category on supportive relationships, while 9% were in the insufficient group. 30% were in the optimal category for safety, and 1% was insufficient. For youth involvement, 5% were in the optimal category while 39% were in the insufficient group. 41% of campers fell in the optimum category for skill building while 26% were in the insufficient category.
Bird et al., 2007	In a parallel study using the same framework, California 4-H conducted an evaluation of six 4-H camps, four of which were involved in a two phase process of evaluating and then improving their camps based on the year 1 results. Year 1 results showed that 61% of the youth (teens and campers together) were in the optimal category for supportive relationships while 12% were in the insufficient group, 27% were in the optimal category for safety, while 1% was insufficient, 11% were in the optimal category for youth involvement and 52% were in the insufficient category; 35% were in the optimal category for skill building, while 31% were in the insufficient category. Year 2 results showed significant improvements in the area of youth involvement for the camps that implemented change. In general, the 4-H camp results are comparable to those of the ACA camps. An additional finding was that teen staff who led the camps had significantly more optimal outcomes than the campers.

### *Strengths and limitations of the Community Action Framework*

The Community Action Framework provides constructs that lend themselves to measurement both at the individual level in terms of short term and long term outcomes, as well as at the program level. The framework addresses both positive outcomes of youth development as well as the environmental inputs that facilitate or promote such outcomes. In addition the framework provides a systemic view of youth development including community level change that needs to be mobilized for creating positive youth development. Gambone and associates have developed a survey tool to aid organizations in not only assessing the supports and opportunities that they provide, but in improving these through self-assessment and improvement processes. (For more information about the supports and opportunities survey, visit

<http://www.ydsi.org>.) Through this tool, the focus of the framework has been on improving the conditions for positive youth development programming for young people (safety, supportive relationships, youth involvement, skill building and community awareness) rather than on individual level skills of young people themselves. One of the main limitations of the Community Action Framework is that it is a relatively new conceptual framework and as such there are few studies that have used this particular framework for youth development.

### **Discussion**

The youth development frameworks described here do not encompass the totality of all frameworks of youth development that have been described in the literature, but they cover some of the best-known and most researched frameworks, and those most commonly used within the 4-H program.

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*The Community Action Framework provides constructs that lend themselves to measurement both at the individual level in terms of short term and long term outcomes, as well as at the program level.*

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Some of these frameworks – the Targeting Life Skills model and the Community Action Framework - relate primarily to quality youth development programming, while the Four Essential Elements and the Five Cs models focus primarily on young people's internal developmental needs during the adolescent period rather than on program components. The Assets model straddles the two types, since it focuses both on the theory of the positive assets necessary for youth as well as describing specific components of programs and experiences that foster thriving among young people. In this section we compare and contrast the usefulness and applicability of each of the frameworks based on the criteria mentioned previously: the quality of science supporting the development of the framework; the extent to which the framework has been used in youth development research and program evaluation; the link to positive and negative youth outcomes; applicability of the model for different social and ethnic groups; and measurability and validity of the constructs.

#### *Quality of science in model development*

Research has been published using each of these models. However, empirical research validating the frameworks has been less common than program evaluations that used the frameworks in developing assessment tools. The Targeting Life Skills model, for example, has resulted in many evaluations using a selection of its enumerated life skills to examine whether a program was cultivating those skills, but to our knowledge there is no research validating that particular set of 35 characteristics as the ones most central to the 4-H experience, or whether those skills are the ones youth need to thrive. The same holds true for the Four Essential Elements. The Five Cs model, the Assets model and the Community

Action Framework can be said to have been validated during model development and through using empirical research. Studies of youth development indicators and outcomes have demonstrated the significance of those particular variables to young people and their development.

The variety of frameworks that have been described in the literature indicates that there are several ways of conceptualizing external supports and internal characteristics that youth need to succeed. However, there are commonalities across these several models. The varying models each emphasize different aspects either of young people or of the programs they attend and the contexts of their lives, but there are several elements that are either related or similar across several of the models.

- The models all address the importance of positive and supportive relationships with others, whether peers, family members, teachers, mentors or other adults.
- Most of the frameworks include a focus on having strong personal values, character, as well as empathy and/or caring for others.
- They all emphasize the importance of academic success, skill building or commitment to learning.
- Most include a dimension related to plans and goals for the future.
- Most include some aspect of contribution or civic involvement.
- The frameworks that focus more on the context of youth development, such as community or program context, include elements of personal safety and programs or policies supporting youth development.

A comparison of similar or related characteristics among eight elements of the models described in this monograph is shown in Table 7.



**Table 7. Commonalities across the frameworks**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Framework</i>				
	<b>Targeting Life Skills</b>	<b>Four Essential Elements</b>	<b>Five Cs</b>	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Community Action</b>
Academic achievement and other skill building	Learning to learn; Critical thinking; Problem solving	Mastery	Competence	Commitment to learning	Challenging and engaging activities and learning experiences
Self-esteem or self-confidence	Self-esteem; Resiliency	Independence	Confidence	Self-esteem; Positive identity	
Compassion, empathy, giving	Empathy; Concern for others; Service learning; Accepting differences	Generosity	Caring or compassion	Caring; equality and social justice	Community awareness and involvement
Character, values	Character	Generosity	Character	Positive values	
Purpose in life, plans for the future	Goal setting; Self-motivation	Independence	Contribution	Sense of purpose; Planning and decision making	Learning to be productive; learning to navigate
Leadership or empowerment	Leadership	Independence	Contribution	Youth as resources	Meaningful opportunity for involvement and membership
Positive relationships; support from others	Nurturing relationships; Social skills; Communication; Cooperation	Belonging	Connections	Support; interpersonal competence; boundaries and expectations	Learning to connect; multiple supportive relationships with adults and peers
Supportive context	Personal safety	Belonging	Connections	Boundaries and expectations; Safety; Community values youth	Safety; Policies and public institutions support youth development

#### *Research using the frameworks*

In our review it is clear that there is substantial variation in how frequently the models have been used for research and evaluation. Published works suggest that a substantial number of studies have used the Targeting Life Skills model, the Asset Development model and the Five Cs. There are fewer published works using or relating to the Four Essential Elements framework and the Community Action

Framework, although the latter is a more recently developed model. With regard to the type of research conducted using these models, the Assets Development and Five Cs frameworks have the richest scientific data gathered judging from the large samples used and longitudinal study design. The Targeting Life Skills framework, being more applicable for program evaluation activities has generated research studies that

have a more short term focus and smaller, less representative samples.

#### *Applicability to different social and ethnic groups*

There is very little literature on how or whether ethnic background or other demographic characteristics impact the relationship between the elements outlined in youth development frameworks and positive or negative outcomes. Most of the studies reviewed here do not discuss or report variation by demographics or other factors. There was some research on subgroups using the Assets framework which indicated that youth in gangs benefited more from positive assets than did young people in community-based organizations. This is consistent with studies on the greater positive impact of youth development programs for young people from poorer neighborhoods (Oman et al., 2005). In another study (Subramaniam, 2007) on how community programs were relevant for rural Hispanic youth, the young people mentioned similar youth development constructs as has been covered in several of the frameworks, namely, safe space, supportive relationships, meaningful activity and involvement in community. Understanding which positive youth development components are especially important for different ethnic and social groups to attain positive outcomes and reduce risks is an area for further study. In addition, future research could further elaborate the distinctions among the varying frameworks and the importance of the separate components on which the frameworks focus. Each framework includes certain components and leaves out others.

#### *Measurability of constructs*

Youth development frameworks can be useful for evaluation purposes. The framework can serve as a basis for items which can be evaluated. Each of these frameworks has been used for at least one and often many evaluations within the 4-H program. In some cases, the developer of the framework has personally developed specific tools which others can use in their evaluations. For example, Hendricks

(1998, reprinted 2006) produced a manual for the Targeting Life Skills model which includes multiple sample evaluation forms which can be used in evaluations of youth development programs or projects. Several researchers have used the Targeting Life Skills model in evaluations and in most cases the research has used a subset of the 35 life skills on which to focus. The Search Institute has developed a standard survey for the assets framework which has been used with thousands of young people, the Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors survey, which includes measures of the 40 assets (Search Institute, 2008). In addition, other researchers have developed their own tools to measure developmental assets, using the Search Institute survey as a springboard (e.g., Oman et al., 2004; Reininger et al., 2003). The Five Cs have been measured using the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development tool (Lerner et al., 2008a). Youth Development Strategies Inc, has developed a survey that measures how youth programs provide the supports and opportunities outlined in the the Community Action Framework. The Four Essential Elements have also been used in evaluation; in the case of the Utah evaluation the authors used the previously developed 4-H Youth Survey of the National 4-H Impact Assessment Project (Peterson et al., 2001), while in the case of the Wisconsin evaluation the researchers developed their own survey focusing on the Essential Elements and program participation (Taylor-Powell & Calvert, 2006).

## **Conclusions**

Youth development frameworks are important guides for moving forward a positive youth development research, evaluation and practice agenda. Any of the models discussed here can be useful depending on the context. However, a review of the work that has been done around each of these models demonstrates that while each of the frameworks has its own strengths and limitations, some are clearly better supported by empirical research than others. For internal developmental theory, the Five Cs

approach appears to have some of the best work in validation. The Four Essential Elements has been used extensively within 4-H, but there is very little empirical evidence identifying those particular elements as the most critical ones for youth to develop, or that they are the items most relevant to the 4-H program. The Assets framework is useful when both internal and external characteristics

are being measured. The frameworks of a more pragmatic nature, the Targeting Life Skills model and the Community Action Framework for Youth Development, can both be useful for program planning and evaluation purposes. The selection of any particular framework by researchers and program planners will likely depend on the elements that seem particularly relevant to that program. ■

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