

THE FORTY DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS:

A LITERATURE REVIEW

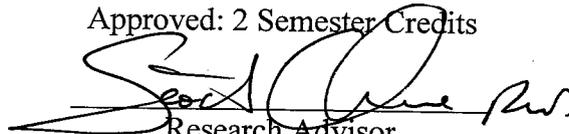
by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree
in

School Psychology

Approved: 2 Semester Credits



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August, 2004

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ABSTRACT

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The Forty Developmental Assets: A Literature Review			
(Title)			
School Psychology	Dr. Scott Orme	August, 2004	32
(Graduate Program)	(Research Advisor)	(Month/Year)	(# of Pages)
American Psychological Association, 5 th edition			
(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)			

One of the most important social issues facing the United States is how to provide individuals with a solid foundation as they grow up. Professionals from around the country have been searching for a solution to ensure that individuals have the resources that they need growing up. The Search Institute has developed a framework of developmental assets that are predictors of positive growth in individuals. This literature review explained the history of the Search Institute, explained in detail the 40 developmental assets, and explored the research regarding the 20 external assets. The literature review also presented the assumptions and limitations of the review and concluded with remarks about recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Today's young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as sexual behavior, violence, or substance abuse than in the past (Dryfoos, 1998). These individuals are more likely to engage in sexual behavior at a younger age. Twenty percent of young people carry a weapon. More than half of young people use alcohol frequently and one fourth of young people use marijuana frequently. Although the rate of substance abuse and sexual behavior has decreased slightly, young people are engaging in these behaviors at a younger age.

One of the most concerning social issues in the United States is how to provide a solid foundation for individuals (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999). Without a solid foundation individuals are more likely to participate in violence, use alcohol and drugs, drop out of school, and engage in sexual acts. Many people are looking for solutions but, the most common response is to identify problems and then try to reduce the behavior through programming. The framework developed by the Search Institute focuses on positive factors that contribute to healthy development.

The forty developmental assets are described as a framework of elements that take on a strength-based approach towards young people. Rather than looking at these individuals as a problem, they are seen as important members of society. The assets allow all individuals in a community to come together around a universal language and utilize corresponding strategies toward a shared goal of having healthy young people (Benson, 1997). The Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota first introduced thirty developmental assets in 1989. After extensive research, 40 developmental assets were introduced in 1996.

The developmental asset framework is known throughout the nation. A study done in the 1996-1997 school year surveyed 213 communities in the United States in twenty-five states (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999). A simple search on the Internet will provide an individual with several schools and private organizations that promote the assets to parents and community members. In Colorado, an article about the Columbine tragedy stated, "The asset framework is showing parents and adults throughout Colorado how to prevent violence and other destructive activities in their youth, and ensure that what happened at Columbine High School never happen again" (Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, 2000, ¶ 7). According to the Search Institute, the more developmental assets a young person has, the less likely they are to engage in risk taking behaviors such as dropping out of school, using drugs or alcohol, and have sexual intercourse (Benson, 1997).

The assets grew out of two types of applied research (Search Institute, n.d.). First, they focus on the protective factors that inhibit high-risk behaviors, which is called "prevention." Second, the assets identify factors that increase a young person's ability to rebound in the face of adversity, which is called "resiliency." All of the assets are ingrained in scientific literature, particularly in child and adolescent development (Benson, 1997).

More than a dozen workshops and focus groups were conducted with over 150 youth, educators, social service providers, policy makers, and parents to help determine the different assets (Benson, 1997). A dialogue was designed particularly to understand the development of urban youth and youth of color. Throughout the dialogue it was mentioned by several participants that they had benefited from a caring neighborhood.

From these dialogues, “neighborhood caring” and “boundaries” became more important assets (Benson, 1997).

The Search Institute wanted to balance both the external and internal assets by having an equal number of both (Benson, 1997). One of the last criteria, and one of the most important, was for the assets to span across race or ethnicity, gender, and income. The assets are also factors that communities can readily promote and do not stress the importance of housing, services, and economy.

The forty developmental assets are broken down into two dimensions: external and internal assets. External assets focus on the positive experiences that young people receive from their community (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999). There are four categories of external assets: Support assets describe a young person’s need to experience care, love, and support from his or her family, as well as others. The empowerment assets describe a young person’s need to contribute to society and feel valued by his or her community in addition to feeling safe and secure. The boundaries and expectations assets explain a young person’s need to know what is expected of him or her and what behaviors are appropriate. Constructive use of time describes a young person’s need to participate in enriching opportunities such as youth programs, congregational involvement, creative activities, and quality time at home.

The internal assets explain the community’s responsibility for nurturing a young person’s internal qualities that guide his or her choices and create a sense of purpose, centeredness, and focus (Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, 1999). Four categories of internal assets are included in the framework: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. The commitment to learning

assets portray the need that young people have to develop a lifelong commitment to learning and education. Positive values assets depict a young person's need to develop strong values that will guide his or her choices. Social competencies assets describe a young person's desire to have skills that equip him or her to build relationships, make positive choices, and succeed in life. Positive identity assets encompass young people's need for a strong sense of purpose, worth, and power.

Statement of the Purpose

For this thesis, a literature review regarding the history of the Search Institute, a description of the forty assets, and an investigation of research supporting the twenty external assets will be completed.

Research Question

Is there empirical support for the 20 external developmental assets, in particular the 20 specific external assets described by the Search Institute?

Definition of Terms

There is one term that should be defined for clarity of understanding.

Young people –Individuals in grades six through eight.

Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the research that is reviewed will be valid and unbiased and that the developmental assets are measurable. A limitation of the research is that there are limited library resources. The researcher may have biases either conscious or unconscious related to the topic. There may also be biases from the authors of the articles used due to the fact that one institute is doing most of the research regarding the framework of the developmental assets as a whole and is attempting to make a profit from that research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will begin by explaining the history of the Search Institute. In addition, the 40 developmental assets framework beginning with the external assets and moving to the internal assets will be explained in detail. This chapter will conclude with research that has been performed by institutions other than the Search Institute to validate the 20 external developmental assets.

History of the Search Institute

Dr. Merton P. Strommen founded the organization in 1958, which was then known as Lutheran Youth Research (Search Institute, 2004). Dr. Strommen first proposed a scientific study of the desires and concerns of Lutheran young people. This first study was done for the American Lutheran Church and, in addition, was Dr. Strommen's dissertation for his doctoral degree. In 1963 the mission of the organization was two-fold: to include research and publications, and to provide service, instruments and training to people in the community. Although Lutheran youth departments funded Dr. Strommen's research, by the mid-1960's the mission broadened to include all religious institutions.

In 1967 the organization's name was changed to Church Youth Research to reflect the full spectrum of religious organizations for which the organization was doing research (Search Institute, 2004). Also in 1967 the organization received a grant from the Wheat Ridge Foundation to fund a development director. The organization gained national credibility and was supported by the U.S. government on projects involving young people and their concerns and interests. In 1969 the organization changed its name again to the Youth Research Center and received seven grants to hire new staff members.

The organization's statement of purpose was written to reflect the full range of work that was now being done. The purpose stated that the organization's goals were to perform research with special reference to the concerns of religious organizations, to test the effectiveness of educational approaches that help young people grow up, and to interpret the needs and potential of young people through home, school, church, and the community.

In 1977 the organization had another name change to the Search Institute (Search Institute, 2004). A study of the beliefs and values of members of Congress also began to take place with funding by the National Endowment for the Humanities in the same year. Between 1983 and 1990 the Search Institute conducted several national studies for the National Catholic Educational Association. These studies led to publications of several reports that influenced teacher training, educational policy, and staff development in Catholic schools.

In 1984 Dr. Strommen retired and in 1985 Peter Benson became president, where he remains today (Search Institute, 2004). In 1989 the Search Institute received a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health and launched the largest study of adoptive families in the United States. At the same time the Search Institute entered a partnership with Lutheran Brotherhood to develop RespecTeen, a nationwide effort to promote development in young people. A survey titled *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* was used to begin studying young people through the RespecTeen program.

In 1990 the Search Institute published *The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th-12th Grade Youth*, which introduced the concept of thirty developmental assets (Search Institute,

2004). The organization began to focus on planning and long-term goals around the concepts of positive development in young people and the creation of health communities for young people. In 1992 the organization began to focus more on adolescent development. Beginning in 1996 the Search Institute launched a national initiative called Healthy Communities – Healthy Youth. The initiative was implemented to assist communities in supporting young people by nurturing competent and responsible young people. In 1996 the Search Institute launched a four-year partnership with the Colorado Trust to create a statewide asset-building movement. The survey titled *The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th-12th Grade Youth* was also revised and expanded to forty assets. The Search Institute continues to research development of young people and provide trainings to individuals around the country.

External Assets

The external assets can be thought of as temporary scaffolding around a young person that supports the young person while he or she is developing an internal system of supports (Williams, 1991). Several people including neighbors, school personnel, family members, religious congregations, and organizations provide external assets to young people (Leffert, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 1997). “External assets are factors that surround young people with the support, boundaries, empowerment, and opportunities that guide them to behave in healthy ways and to make wise choices” (Leffert, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 1997, p. 16). Descriptions of each of the external assets follow.

Support.

The support assets describe a variety of ways that young people experience affirmation, love, and acceptance (Benson, 1997). If at all possible, young people should

experience support, not only from family, but also from adults in a variety of settings. Support should come from schools, extended family, religious organizations, and extra curricular programs (Scales & Leffert, 2004). Support can include physical and verbal approval, calling the young person by his or her name, listening to the young person, or creating a welcoming environment (Benson, 1997).

There are six support assets included in the framework. Three of the assets involve a young person's family. A young person's family must be loving and supportive (Leffert et al., 1997). Young people should have open communication with their parents and feel comfortable stating their opinion. In addition, parents should play an active role in a young person's school life.

The other three assets in the support category involve individuals outside of the nuclear family. Young people need to experience love and support from at least three adults other than parents. A young person should experience a caring neighborhood where he or she is known and respected. Young people must also be engaged in a caring and welcoming school environment that encourages learning (Leffert et al., 1997).

Empowerment Assets

The empowerment assets focus on the perceptions young people have regarding the opportunity to contribute to society in a meaningful way (Benson, 1997). Young people need to grow up feeling like they are being treated with respect, understand their strengths, and feel that they are making a difference in the world. The empowerment assets also focus on the community's perceptions of young people and the opportunities they have to contribute to society (Scales & Leffert, 2004).

The first asset in the empowerment category is that the community values the young person (Scales, Sesma, & Bolstrom, 2004). Young people need to feel appreciated and respected by other members in the community. Young people should be looked at as a resource and should be involved in family and community decisions. Community service is considered another important asset young people need to have. It is also important that a young person feel safe at home, school, and in the community.

Boundaries-and-Expectations Assets

It is important for all adults to send a consistent message to young people about what is considered appropriate behavior and what is expected of them. These expectations should be considered universal across all socializing contents (Scales & Leffert, 2004). In the ideal situation rules and norms of appropriate behavior and consequences that are enforced when boundaries are violated would be consistent across the entire community including family, church, school, and neighborhoods (Benson, 1997).

Within the boundaries-and-expectations asset category there are basically two subgroups to describe the assets (Scales & Leffert, 2004). First there are the assets that describe the boundaries that are set by an individual's family, school, and neighborhood. These boundaries ought to be clear and concise with the young person understanding the expectations. Second, young people should have adult and peer role models who model responsible behavior. The last asset in the boundaries-and-expectations category states that both parents and teachers should encourage young people to do well.

Constructive-Use-of-Time Assets

Young people need a wide variety of before and after school opportunities to stimulate positive growth and add to the development of the other assets (Scales & Leffert, 2004). These assets have become more important as the number of young people without a parent at home before and after school has increased (Benson, 1997). A study done by the Search Institute found that 47% of sixth graders spend at least two hours at home by themselves on a daily basis. By ninth grade, 60% of young people spend at least two hours at home without an adult present (Benson, 1997).

It is important that youth participate in creative activities such as music, drama, or art to shape a lifelong skill and interest (Benson, 1997). A variety of organizations should provide activities for young people, including national organizations, community-based programs, and school-based programs. Finally, it is important for young people to participate in a religious community. Religious communities are important because they are intergenerational and these communities are some of the last that openly express their values. Although it is important for young people to be involved in extra-curricular activities, it is also important to provide time for young people to be at home to rest and relax and do homework.

Internal Assets

Internal assets are internalized commitments, values, and competencies that a young person uses to guide his or her behaviors and choices (Leffert et al., 1997). It is a community's responsibility to nurture a young person's internal assets. These assets guide a young person's decisions and choices and provide a sense of purpose and focus (Benson et al., 1999).

Commitment-to-Learning Assets

“The commitment-to-learning assets reflect how connected young people are to their schools, how motivated they are to achieve, and whether they express their curiosity and work ethic in homework and reading for fun” (Scales & Leffert, 2004, p. 6). The commitment-to-learning assets play a crucial role in a young person’s life for two reasons (Benson, 1997). First, a strong educational background can enhance a young person’s vocational success. Second, if a young person succeeds in school he or she is more likely to be an active member of society when he or she is an adult.

The first two commitment-to-learning assets emphasize the importance of school achievement and taking an active role in learning (Leffert et al., 1997). The third asset under the commitment-to-learning category is doing homework. Young people should work on homework on either a daily basis if they are between the ages of twelve and eighteen or finish homework as it has been assigned for children between the ages of six and eleven (Roehlkepartain, 1999). Having homework as an asset has a dual purpose: First, homework promotes learning and success in school. Second, homework encourages a young person to structure his or her time and create a daily routine (Benson, 1997).

The fourth asset in the commitment-to-learning category is caring for one’s school (Leffert et al., 1997). If a young person has a bond towards his or her school, he or she will have a positive attitude towards learning and institutions of learning. The fifth asset in this category is reading for pleasure. Beginning from an early age, individuals should be read too. As young people get older they should read for pleasure on their own.

Positive-Values Assets

Positive-values assets focus on several widely shared values that guide young people's behaviors (Scales & Leffert, 2004). These assets should direct a young person's priorities and choices. School, family, religious institutions, youth programs, peers, and the media often influence an individual's values either intentionally or unintentionally (Scales et al., 2004). The positive-values assets can be divided into two categories (Benson, 1997). The first two assets are related to pro-social values including caring for others and the world they live in. The last four assets in this category describe a young person's personal character.

Adults must role model caring for others and providing empathy to others (Leffert et al., 1997). Parents must also place a high value on equality and show social justice concern. Integrity is defined as having a sense of moral commitment and being unashamed of doing the right thing. Young people also need to understand the importance of being honest and telling the truth. Responsibility is shown through engaging the young person in age-appropriate household tasks such as cleaning his or her room, setting the table, or doing dishes. The last asset in the positive-values category is restraint: "...the internal beliefs that keep them from engaging in risky or unhealthy behaviors such as early sexual activity and alcohol and other drug use" (Leffert et al., 1997, p. 67).

Social-Competencies Assets

The social-competencies assets describe important personal and interpersonal skills a young person needs (Scales & Leffert, 2004). By developing these assets, young people are better able to use their previous knowledge about social situations to

determine what decisions they will make. These assets lay a foundation for autonomy and competence later in life.

Two of the assets emphasize personal choice making: planning and decision making and resistance skills (Benson, 1997). Planning and decision-making are defined as the ability to solve a problem creatively (Leffert et al., 1997). Resistance skills are described as a young person's ability to resist participating in a behavior that he or she knows is unacceptable or dangerous.

The other three assets in the social-competences category emphasize interpersonal relationships (Benson, 1997). Interpersonal skills are explained as the ability to socialize and interact with others (Leffert et al., 1997). Cultural competence is articulated as understanding and being at ease with people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. This includes valuing ethnic and racial differences with respect to other's values and beliefs. Peaceful conflict resolution is explained as the ability to prevent violent behavior, as well as not engage in risk-taking behaviors (Benson, 1997).

Positive-Identity Assets

The positive-identity assets focus on young person's view of himself or herself (Scales & Leffert, 2004). If a young person does not have a positive sense of who he or she is, the young person may feel powerless. There are four elements of positive identity: personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, and a positive view of the future (Leffert et al., 1997).

Personal power describes a young person's ability to deal with stressful and difficult situations (Leffert et al., 1997). This asset also describes that a young person should feel like he or she has control over the things that happen in his or her life (Scales

& Leffert, 2004). Self-esteem is described as "...the perceptions of one's abilities or strengths in a number of domains, such as physical attractiveness, academic competence, peer relationships, athletics, and behavior" (Leffert et al., 1997, p. 82). Having a sense of purpose is thought of as having a motive for doing something and having a meaning for life (Scales & Leffert, 2004). Having a sense of purpose and having a positive outlook on the future are often times intertwined. When a young person has a sense of purpose, usually he or she also has a positive view of his or her future.

External Asset Research-Support Assets

Communication

Communication within a family is important for three reasons, it provides: openness, assurance, and a positive environment (Vogl-Bauer, 2003). "Effective communication is generally regarded as a central feature of good family functioning" (Jackson, Bijstra, Oostra, & Bosma, 1998, p.305). A study done by Clark and Shields (1997), found that adolescents who have open communication with their parents, were less likely to participate in deviant behavior. A study also found that young adults who had reticence, a behavior in which an individual avoids communicating with others, were more likely to grow up in a home where communication was not encouraged (Kelly, Keaten, Finch, Duarte, Hoffman, & Michels, 2002). Those individuals in the study who perceived their home environment to be a place where conversation was encouraged were less likely to have communication anxiety. In the Netherlands adolescents were given a survey to determine the effects of family communication (Jackson et al, 1998). The results showed that family communication correlated significantly with self-esteem, coping skills, and well-being.

Parent-School Collaboration

Parent involvement in the school includes: communicating with teachers, volunteering, and attending parent meetings. A recent study found that parent involvement greatly influenced the social and academic competencies of kindergarten children (Mcwayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). It was found that direct parental involvement in school-based programs, communication between parents and teachers, and barriers in parental involvement all influenced the children's academic and social performance. Children whose parents discussed the importance of education with them showed evidence of higher levels of social skills. Also, children's academic performance was higher for children who had parents that were involved versus children who had less involved parents. A study focusing on African American youths success in the transition from middle to high school also found that parental support was influential (Newman, Myers, Newman, Lohman, & Smith, 2000).

Family Support

Family support, particularly parental support is influential in several aspects of a young person's life (Barrera & Li, 1996). Family support provides a proper environment for a young person to learn to socialize, in turn providing them with the tools to monitor their own behavior. Also, if young people believe that their parents support them and feel connected to their parents are less likely to have unprotected sex and become pregnant (Kirby, 2002). The National Survey of Children established that there is a positive correlation between parent support and a young person's life satisfaction (Young & Miller, 1995).

Caring Neighborhood

Neighborhood as defined by Robert Park in 1916 is a collection of people and institutions occupying a defined area with a set of environmental, political, and cultural influences (Sampson, 2000). A study done in Iowa found that young people's academic performance was negatively correlated with the neighborhoods that the young people lived in (Shumow, Vandell, & Posner, 1999). These neighborhoods had a high rate of poverty and crime and single parent homes. Interestingly, young people's academic performance was not influenced until the fifth grade suggesting that neighborhood influence may become stronger in middle childhood.

Other Adult Relationships

Reports on adolescent development indicate that young people need at least one caring adult, other than a parent that is in their life (Scales & Gibbons, 1996). But, there is little empirical research and few programs that actually promote the need for young people to have caring adults in their life. One particular study found that young people who have less than two adults they look forward to spending time with are 2.6 times as likely to report attempting suicide than those who had at least two adults they looked forward to spending time with (Price, Dake, & Kucharewski, 2001). In the city of Salinas California a program was started to promote safe schools and health young people (Elizondo, Feske, Edgull, & Walsh, 2003). One particular aspect of the program called Buddies/Amiguitos partnered adults with young adults on a regular basis. The young people who participated in this program showed some level of improvement in school adjustment as a result of their participation.

Caring School Climate

In 1994 an alternative high school was out of control. Students would swear and act out in class (Anonymous, 1999). Eventually the principal was asked to step down and the school personnel began an initiative to increase a sense of community in the school. Students took a special course in how to become a successful member of the school. The school has increased student self-esteem as well as academics by demonstrating to students they are in a caring and structured environment. A study done by Eccles et al. (1997) found that young people perform better in school when they feel connected and supported in the school environment.

External Assets Research -Empowerment Assets

Youth as Resources

A survey done by Midgley and Feldlaufer (1987) found that there is a misperception about how much young people want to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. Young people have a desire to be active participants in classroom decisions that affect them. Teachers perceived, however, that young people did not want to make decisions. Helwig and Kim (1999) conducted several interviews with young people to determine how young people make decisions and what they prefer to have involvement in when decisions are being made. Through the interview process the authors discovered that young people had a greater sense of autonomy when they were allowed to make decisions about issues that affected them.

Service to Others and Community Values Youth

For youth who feel valued and useful, research has shown they have better mental health, more community involvement, and higher levels of moral reasoning (Scales &

Leffert, 2004). Community service is one of the most widely used methods to involve young people in the community and allow them share their talents. Community service provides young people with the opportunity to learn about and address real life issues (Claus & Ogden, 2001). It is recognized as a valuable way to make education and learning more relevant and meaningful for young people. A survey done by Prudential Insurance Company of America found that the number one reason that young people participate in community service is because it made them feel good (Safner, 1998). A study done by Uggen and Janikula (1999) compared the correlation between volunteering and arrest. A longitudinal study was performed and found that there was a three percent gap between young adults who had volunteered and those who had not and there reported arrest. After two years there was an eight percent gap between those who had volunteered and those who had not volunteered. Johnson & Notah (1999) found that young people who participated in service learning had increased self-esteem and responsibility.

Safety

Young people's safety has become an increased concern over the years as the rate of crime has also increased. Ninety-one percent of young people in 1986 indicated that they have taken some form of defensive action as a result of fear of crime (Williams & Singh, 1994). Young people who feel unsafe in their neighborhood have lower global self-worth, school competency, and behavioral conduct (Farver, Ghosh, & Garcia, 2000). Young people are also affected in the school environment when they feel unsafe or victimized. Individual's who feel victimized were more likely to feel depressed, have expressed suicidal thoughts, feel lonely, and have lower self-esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

External Assets Research - Boundaries & expectations

Family boundaries

How parents oversee and regulate young people's behaviors and activities can have a great impact on the young person's actions and decisions. A longitudinal study done by Chilcoat and Anthony in 1996 found that young people who were not monitored by their parents were three times as likely to try marijuana, cocaine, and/or inhalants than those whose parents monitored their activities and whereabouts. A study investigating early childhood antecedents and behavior-problems in correlation with parental monitoring was also investigated (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001). The study found that young people who had high levels of parental monitoring were less likely to display delinquent behavior. Another study found that positive and consistent parental rules were related to higher GPA's in young people and the young person was less likely to report problem behaviors (Eccles, Early, Frasier, Belansky, & McCarthy, 1997).

School Boundaries

Establishing, instructing, and reinforcing school rules is an approach to addressing violent and disruptive behavior in schools (Nelson, Martella, & Galand, 1998). A medium-sized city in the U.S. Pacific Northwest implemented a school wide initiative to decrease disruptive behavior. Part of the initiative included designating, enforcing, and teaching rules for the commons areas of the school. The school also changed student schedules to decrease congestion in the hallways, cafeteria, and at recess. Over the course of four years office disciplinary referrals decreased. Another study focused on the effects parental and classroom regulations have on young people (Brody, Dorsey, Forehand, & Armistead, 2002). The study found that young people who had a structured classroom

environment and less parental regulation evinced more self-regulation, had fewer depressive episodes, and fewer externalizing behaviors versus young people who had low parental and classroom structure.

Neighborhood Boundaries

There are few studies that examine the effects neighborhoods have on young people, especially in respect to boundaries. A study asked residents if they would speak up if young people were skipping school, using graffiti, showing disrespect towards adults, or if a fight broke out (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Research found that neighborhoods where residents were more likely to speak up had less neighborhood violence and the residents felt safer than in neighborhoods where residents did not speak up. Also, young people who live in neighborhoods that provide activities and resources are more likely to feel connected to the neighborhood and are less likely to have a sense of loneliness (Chipuer, 2001).

Adult Role Models

A three year follow-up study of an alcohol prevention program found that young people were unaffected by the comprehensive school curriculum and community intervention program (Stevens & Mott, 1996). A common characteristic that all of these young people had was that they all had family adult role models who encouraged early use and provided access to alcohol. Another study found that young people who had non-parental role models were more likely to have not smoked in the last thirty days compared with young people who did not have non-parental adult role models (Atkins, Oman, Vesely, Aspy, & McLeroy, 2002).

Positive Peer Influence

Young people value peer acceptance and spend an extensive amount of time outside of school with their friends (Coombs, Paulson, & Richardson, 1991). With this information we can understand that young people's peers can be influential. This study found that young people who smoked marijuana were more likely to have friends who smoked marijuana as well. A research project in Hong Kong found that young people whom had positive peer influence and good peer relationships tended to augment altruistic orientation (Ma, 2003).

High Expectations

Most research in regards to expectations has been generated about the effects parent and teacher expectations have on young people. "Parents expectations for their children's achievement exert a strong influence on actual achievement outcomes, although which specific parental beliefs are salient may differ according to parents' racial and ethnic backgrounds" (Scales, Sesma, & Bolstrom, 2004, p. 100). There is also a direct correlation in the classroom between a young person's achievement and the expectations teachers place on the young person (Kuklinski & Weinstein, 2001).

External Assets Research - Constructive Use of Time

Creative Activities and Youth Programs

Many young people have the opportunity to participate in creative activities, after school organizations, and sports throughout their childhood. This participation can have a lasting positive effect on young people. A survey by Capozza (2004) found that of 401 highly successful American women including CEO's, physicians, and lawyers 82% had played sports in middle school, high school, or college. Mahoney (2000) investigated the

relationship between extracurricular activities and the development of antisocial patterns. He found that young people who had participated in at least one extracurricular activity prior to eleventh grade were less likely to drop out of school or have a criminal record. Another study found that young people who participated in clubs were more likely to have high positive well-being (Moore & Gleib, 1995).

Religious Community

“Congregations (churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, etc.) are places where young people may be bound together by a shared perspective and similar values. They also provide young people with the opportunity to be a part of an intergenerational community, which may not be possible in other settings (Scales & Leffert, 2004, p.102-103).” Religious communities can have a positive affect on young adults. A coalition of churches in Florida began an alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention program (Sutherland, Hale, Harris, Stalls, & Foulk, 1997). The program reflected the church’s religious, social, educational, economic, and civic values. Young people reported that they believed they did not need to get high with friends and had less vulnerability to peer pressure after participating in the program. Another study investigated the degree to which an individual’s religious involvement correlates with neighborhood crime (Johnson, Jang, Li, Larson, 2000). The study found there is a reduced effect of neighborhood crime when there are a high number of individuals who are involved with religion.

Time at Home

Young people need time at home for leisure activities and “free” time. One particular study looked at the relationship between free time and adjustment in young

people (McHale, Crouter, & Tucker, 2001). The study found that young people who participate in hobbies at home have better socio-emotional adjustment. Young people who spend time at home also have better grades in school if they are spending time reading at home in their free time.

Conclusion

The Search Institute has been in existence for over 4 decades, developing and improving programs and awareness of the key factors that children need in their lives to be successful and resilient. The developmental assets, as included in the Search Institute's programs are not new, and they are supported by bodies of research outside of their group; however, this is the first attempt to consolidate all of these strands of research into a coherent body. The question that requires investigation is whether this list of assets is exhaustive and which assets may be more pertinent or key to the success of young people.

CHAPTER III: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the most important social issues in the United States is how to provide young people with a solid foundation for life (Benson et al., 1999). It is imperative to provide a strong foundation for individual's as they grow up to ensure a competent work force and concerned citizens in the future. Professionals around the country have been looking for solutions of how to provide a strong foundation as individuals grow up. Most responses from professionals are to identify the problems such as delinquency, violence, and teen pregnancy for why young people do not have a solid foundation. The community may spend several dollars to start a program to address the problems but may not have success in addressing the concerns.

The Search Institute has taken a different approach, rather than looking at the problems the organization describes several factors that are known to be predictive of positive growth (Benson, 1997). After extensive research a framework of the developmental assets were first introduced in 1990 and then expanded in 1996 (Benson, 1997). The assets derive from a considerable amount of research that has been done for each asset. The Search Institute also conducted several focus groups, workshops, and dialogues with educators, parents, social service providers, and policy makers. On theoretical grounds, the Search Institute decided to give equal weight to both external assets (environmental factors) and internal assets (internalized competencies, skills, and commitments). "Special attention was given to those elements of development known or hypothesized to have health-promoting utility across gender, race or ethnicity, and income (Benson, 1997, p. 30)."

Limitations of the Current Investigation

Due to limited resources, this investigation was not an exhaustive list of the research that has been done to support the individual assets from sources other than the Search Institute. There has also been no research done to prove or disprove the framework of the developmental assets. The only research regarding the reliability and validity of the *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, the survey that determines the number of assets a young person has, was done by the Search Institute. Although the research cited in this literature review is not comprehensive it does ensure that research has been completed on the twenty external assets. It also shows that all of these assets can impact young people as they grow up.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas of research that can be explored regarding the 40 developmental assets. If communities invest in positive programs, the Search Institutes believes that young people in these communities are less likely to engage in risk taking behavior. Studies looking at communities that have implemented the Search Institutes program regarding the 40 developmental assets should be completed. Another area of interest is using the framework not only as a preventive measure, as the Search Institute advertises it but also as an intervention. Research also needs to be done investigating practical use of assets, cultural variables, and incremental validity of the assets in prevention and intervention programs.

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