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Section F

The Emergence of the Positive Youth Development (PYD)
Perspective

The Emergence of the PYD Perspective

- Replacing the deficit view of adolescence, the PYD perspective offers a new, strength-based vision for—and vocabulary about—youth
- By virtue of the enormous capacity for systematic change (plasticity) during adolescence, the PYD perspective sees all adolescents as having strengths and speaks of greater well-being and thriving as possible for all youth
- The “five Cs”—competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection—have been hypothesized as a way of conceptualizing PYD (and of integrating all the separate indicators of it, such as academic achievement or self esteem)

Foundations of the PYD Perspective

- Derived from a developmental science approach to description, explanation, and optimization that is informed by developmental systems models
- Derived from evolutionary biological (e.g., Gould, Lewontin) and comparative psychological (e.g., Schneirla, Tobach, Gottlieb, Greenberg, Suomi) theory and data about plasticity and adaptive developmental regulations (mutually beneficial individual \leftrightarrow context relations)
- Derived from formal (reviews of evaluation research; by Blum and by Roth and Brooks-Gunn) and informal (practitioner report) assessments of the efficacy of youth development programs

Key Principles of the PYD Perspective

- Because of the potential to change, all youths have strengths
- All contexts have strengths as well
 - These strengths are resources that may be used to promote positive youth development
- These resources are termed “developmental assets”
 - They are the “social nutrients” needed for healthy development

Key Principles of the PYD Perspective

- These assets are found in families, schools, faith institutions, youth serving organizations, and the community more generally
- If the strengths of youth are combined with ecological developmental assets, then positive, healthy development may occur
- We may be optimistic that it is in our power to promote positive development among all youth

Using the PYD Perspective to Study Adolescent Development

- The 4-H study of positive youth development

Design of the 4-H Study

- The 4-H study is a longitudinal investigation
- Beginning in the 5th grade, we are following some youth through 12th grade (and we hope for at least one year past high school)
- To adjust for attrition, to maintain power, and to hone in on the nature of 4-H participation we have added new students in 6th, 7th, 8th grades, etc.

Design of the 4-H Study

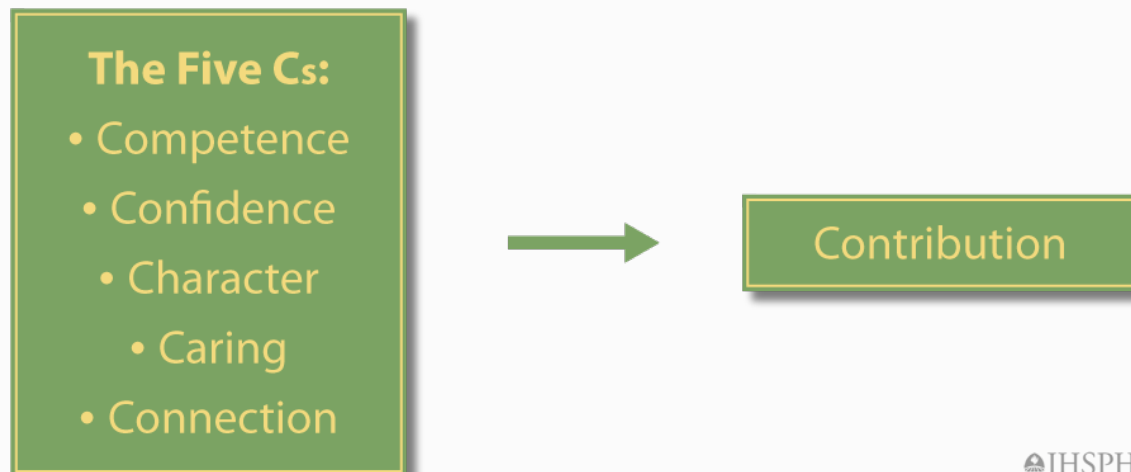
- We are longitudinally studying these new students as well
- To date, we have sampled more than 4,000 youth and more than 2,000 parents from 25 states

4-H Study

- Both the initial findings of the 4-H study and the more recent findings, have changed research and practice in youth development

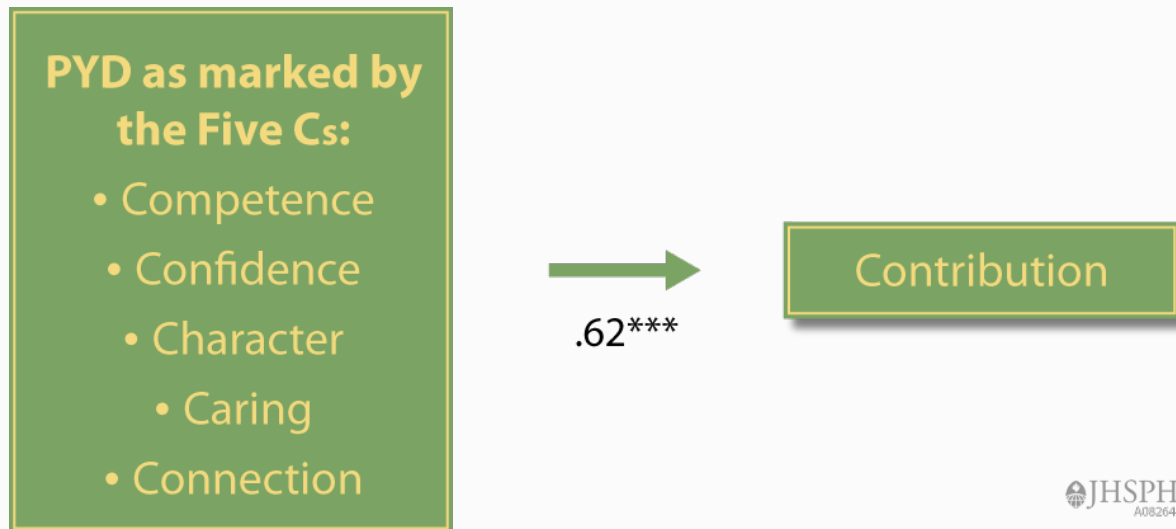
Five Initial Discoveries of the 4-H Study

1. We can now talk about the strengths of young people by using a scientifically-validated set of positive terms:
 - PYD is constituted by “five Cs,” and PYD is linked to youth contribution



PYD Is Constituted by “Five Cs”

- PYD is constituted by “five Cs” and PYD continues to be linked to youth contribution in grade 8



Five Initial Discoveries of the 4-H Study

2. We know now what must be done to promote PYD and contribution
 - Across adolescence, positive youth development occurs when the strengths of young people are aligned with the ecological resources for healthy development present in their communities
 - Youth strengths + ecological resources = “developmental assets”

Five Initial Discoveries of the 4-H Study

3. The strengths of young people—their internal developmental assets—can be measured by three (3) characteristics:
 - Selection of goals
 - Optimization (developing strategies and means for reaching one's goals)
 - Compensation (in the face of failure or blocked goals)

Five Initial Discoveries of the 4-H Study

4. There are four ecological assets present in the families, schools, and communities of youth:
 - Individuals
 - Institutions
 - Collective action
 - Access
 - In each setting **INDIVIDUALS** are always the most important asset!

Five Initial Discoveries of the 4-H Study

5. Youth development (YD) programs constitute key ecological assets promoting PYD
 - YD programs are effective in promoting PYD because they are marked by the presence of the “big three,” that is . . .
 1. Sustained, positive adult-youth relations
 2. Skill building activities
 3. Youth participation and leadership

Summary of Key Initial Discoveries of the 4-H Study

