A SEARCH INSTITUTE RESEARCH REVIEW

THE ELEMENTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS: A REVIEW OF SELECTED RESEARCH UNDERLYING THE FRAMEWORK

Peter C. Scales,
Eugene C. Roehlkepartain,
Benjamin J. Houltberg

Search INSTITUTE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following people who contributed to the extensive literature review that helped shape this paper over the last several years: Former intern, Rebecca Distefano, and former SI research assistant, Clare Eisenberg. Their efforts are greatly appreciated!

Peter C. Scales, Ph.D., is Senior Fellow, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain is Senior Scholar, and Benjamin J. Houltberg is President & CEO of Minneapolis-based Search Institute, a nonprofit organization with a sixty-plus-year history of collaboration with partners to conduct and apply research worldwide that promotes positive youth development and advances equity.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Scales, P. C., Roehlkepartain, E. C., & Houltberg, B. J. (2022). *The elements of Developmental Relationships: A review of selected research underlying the framework.* Minneapolis: Search Institute. www.searchinstitute.org

INTRODUCTION

The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2009) put it succinctly: Healthy development depends on the quality and reliability of a child's relationships with the important people in their life, both within and outside the family. A key feature of those relationships is the give and take, or as they put, the "serve and return" two-way interaction in which both parties grow. Research increasingly suggests that young people need to be embedded in a web of relationships of varying depth and intensity across the broad ecology of their lives, while still having a small number of perhaps 3-5 "anchor" relationships on whom they can really depend (Roehlkepartain, Pekel, Syvertsen, Sethi, Sullivan, & Scales, 2017; Varga & Zaff, 2017).

Strong, supportive relationships provide an important space for youth to try out roles, feel valued, make contributions, develop confidence, and construct an identity that is integrated across their environment and over time (Nagaoka, Farrington, Ehrlich, & Heath, 2015). Relationships with "very important adults" outside the family (e.g., teachers, coaches, youth ministers, mentors) seem also to have a unique role to play that adds to that played by family and peers (Beam, Chen, & Greenberger, 2002). Such developmentally-influential relationships are strong and enduring, reciprocal, get more complex over time, and feature the balance of power in the relationship gradually shifting over time in favor of the young person (Li & Julian, 2012).

Search Institute created the Developmental Relationships Framework (Table 1) to synthesize and elaborate on the large literature on supportive and positive relationships and their influence on human development. The Framework has several features that make it a valuable resource for youth development practitioners, leaders, and researchers. It has a solid theoretical base, extensively-tested research measures, and accessible tools for improving practice (e.g., Chamberlain, Scales, & Sethi, 2020; Pekel et al., 2018; 2019; Roehlkepartain et al., 2017; Scales et al., 2019; Scales et al., 2020; Sethi & Scales, 2020; Sullivan & Syvertsen, 2018). This research review focuses on the theoretical background for the framework, and on evidence for how developmental relationships seem to work in promoting positive youth development (PYD).

The framework consists of five elements—Express Care, Challenge Growth, Provide Support, Share Power, and Expand Possibilities—which are further articulated in 20 specific actions. Each action could be experienced across a range of relationships in young people's lives; although how they are manifested may be qualitatively different (e.g., expressions of warmth between a parent and child vs. between a teacher and student). Each of these elements and actions is supported by a deep well of theoretical, research, and practice literature across numerous fields and contexts (see Pekel et al., 2018, Roehlkepartain et al., 2017, and Syvertsen, Scales, Chavez, Roehlkepartain, & Roskopf, 2022 for more on this literature). In this review we briefly introduce each element and action with illustrative examples from different types of relationships.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS FRAMEWORK

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people's lives. A blank bullet is intentionally provided within each element to represent additions or revisions that future research might suggest.

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

ELEMENTS	ACTIONS	DEFINITIONS
Express Care Show me that I matter to you.	• Be dependable	Be someone I can trust.
	• Listen	Really pay attention when we are together.
	• Believe in me	Make me feel known and valued.
	• Be warm	Show me you enjoy being with me.
	• Encourage	Praise me for my efforts and achievements.
	•	
Challenge Growth Push me to keep getting better.	• Expect my best	Expect me to live up to my potential.
	• Stretch	Push me to go further.
	• Hold me accountable	Insist I take responsibility for my actions.
	• Reflect on failures	Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.
	•	
Provide Support Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	• Navigate	Guide me through hard situations and systems.
	• Empower	Build my confidence to take charge of my life.
	• Advocate	Stand up for me when I need it.
	• Set boundaries	Put in place limits that keep me on track.
	•	
Share Power Treat me with respect and give me a say.	• Respect me	Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
	• Include me	Involve me in decisions that affect me.
	• Collaborate	Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
	• Let me lead	Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.
	•	
Expand Possibilities Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.	• Inspire	Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.
	• Broaden horizons	Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.
	• Connect	Introduce me to people who can help me grow.
	•	

PRINCIPLES

There are several principles implicit in the Framework that help us understand how the five elements and 20 actions actually work in daily life:

- **Children and youth often experience the five elements in combinations. Statistically, the elements are correlated from the .50s-.80s (Scales et al., 2020).** Experientially, they also are connected (Hartup, 1998; Wentzel, 2005), and youth often describe them as experienced in combinations (Sethi & Scales, 2020). For many young people, for example, care for and about them is expressed by providing support or sharing power with them. An action like "believe in me," (part of express care), may be demonstrated by adults and peers showing confidence in youth by having high expectations for them (part of challenge growth), or by valuing their opinions (part of share power).
- **Young people need different accents among the five elements at different points in their development.** Expanding possibilities, for example, may be especially critical in middle school and early high school, as young people increasingly define what they're interested in and good at, as part of understanding who they are and how they can contribute to the world (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).
- **Differing relationships play differing roles at differing points in development.** The most familiar example of this principle is the full dependence of newborns and infants on their parenting adults, and how the parent-child relationship changes as children grow older and develop connections to adults outside the family, to friends, and later, to romantic partners (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein, 2000).
- **Developmental relationships are about bi-directional, two-way development, not simply the socialization or training of young people.** From birth and the earliest days of infancy, through all the stages of life, including the last phase of life, each person in the relationship affects and is affected by the other, whether they are aware of and attentive to that fact or not. In a positive and healthy relationship, parents and children change each other for the better. In the same way, teachers and youth development workers who nurture truly developmental relationships with their students and program participants learn from and are influenced by those young people, in sometimes profound ways, even as they have an often profound influence on those students (Benson & Scales, 2009; Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Lerner, Alberts, Anderson, & Dowling, 2006).
- **Developmental relationships are dynamic and evolving, reflecting changes and variations in people, timing, and contexts (Rubin & Chung, 2006).** A relationship with a youth leader in a religious congregation may be just as developmental for a given young person as one with a teacher in a public school, but the religious context of one allows and encourages a differing basis of connection and activities than the more secular context of the other. Similarly, the accents among the five elements that are most developmental for a 7-year old boy trying to deal with a squabble among his friends are probably going to be different from what is relationally most helpful for a 16 year old girl trying to decide which colleges to apply to. And a long-term developmental relationship with a teacher or coach may evolve over time from being focused more on challenging growth and expanding possibilities, to providing support and sharing power, to ultimately "only" expressing care as the young person has long since grown up and "left" the intensity and frequency of contact of the early days of that relationship.

The relationship may still be developmental, still promoting growth, but it has a different shape and features now.

- **How the elements are expressed varies across differing kinds of relationships, cultures, and contexts.** An obvious example is that parents have a wider range of appropriate ways to express care, including physical affection, than do teachers or youth development workers. The ways peers can challenge young people to grow, through implicit or explicit invitations to take risks or try something new, are often different than the ways adults do, which may often focus more on working harder and achieving more (Vandell, 2006). What constitutes appropriate ways or levels of providing support or sharing power also may look very different to a wealthy, intact Asian American suburban family than it does to a struggling single-parent white mother in Appalachia.
- **What makes youth programs and settings successful is not so much features of programs as it is the qualities of the relationships in those programs.** Certain features of structure that ensure safety, proper training of the adults, and program experiences that are interesting to young people all are important, of course (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). But what activates all those in the service of positive youth development is how much the five elements characterize the developmental relationships among adults and youth in the program, among youth with other youth, and among the adult staff and volunteers (Li & Julian, 2012). For example, a large meta-analysis of 158 studies showed that students' emotional intelligence strongly predicts grades, regardless of age, in part not just because those students regulate their emotions better, but because they are also better able to build differing kinds of strong relationships at school (MacCann et al., 2020).

How the Multiple Elements Work Together: An Example

In this research review, we will frequently note how the multiple elements of developmental relationships work together to help young people achieve positive outcomes. This observation encourages researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to be wary of trying to isolate the "most important" elements.

As one example, consider how peers influence motivation and learning. Peers influence students' problem-solving skills and academic goals beyond the effects of teacher and parent (Juvonen, Espinoza, & Knifsend, 2012; Ryan, 2001; Wenzel, 2005; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). Multiple social and cognitive processes are at work in this process. For example, Nelson and DeBacker (2008) studied how peer relationships in a middle-school science class affected achievement motivation. They found that three peer factors all contributed uniquely to students reporting adaptive achievement motivation (i.e., a mastery orientation and a desire to learn, which contrast with a performance orientation, which emphasizes comparisons to others): If students believed they were valued and respected by other students; if their best friends had positive attitudes toward learning; and if they felt like they belonged in the classroom. Each level of peer interaction—from dyadic relationships to a broad sense of belonging—contributed independently to students' motivation to learn. If these factors were negative (e.g., resistance to academic norms), it undermined motivation.

Wentzel (2005) delved more deeply into the mechanisms that may be at work in peer influence on academic motivation, theorizing that peers influence student adoption of

academic goals under four conditions. First, the peers clearly communicate expectations and opportunities for pursuing academic goals. Second, they provide instrumental help. Third, the peer context is safe and responsive. And finally, peers provide emotional support. In the same way, Hartup (1998) theorized that other mechanisms may also be at work. First, good friends know each other's needs and capacities, and thus can effectively collaborate, push, and support each other within the zone of proximal development (i.e., stretching just a bit beyond where youth can currently reach). Second, friends can expect more of each other because of their implicit commitment, reciprocity, and mutual trust. Third, problem solving occurs most effectively within a caring, affective context, which provides confidence to take risks. Finally, friends want to spend time together, which sustains these social interactions that affect cognition and learning.

All of these mechanisms reflect the five developmental relationship elements working together to help young people meet basic human needs identified in self-determination theory, namely, the needs for autonomy, belonging, and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000)[1], enabling them to develop social-emotional strengths that lead to positive developmental paths and outcomes.

Developmental Relationships: Frequency Is Not the Same as Significance

Finally, it may be helpful to remember that developmental relationships, although being tremendously powerful, might not always feel or look like that. Rhodes et al. (2006) were describing mentoring relationships, but their words apply to any developmental relationship: Not "every moment in the...relationship need be packed with profundity and personal growth" (p. 697). Developmental relationships, whether among peers, among youth workers and youth, students and teachers, or parents and children, have ups and downs in intensity and relevance over time. Not every one of the 20 actions in Table 1 occurs with great frequency, or necessarily needs to; their importance is because those actions occur when the young person needs them to, in a relationship that matters to them.

For example, the Express Care element, as we will describe later, seems to be made up of actions that can and should be frequently experienced, and relatively easy for adults and peers in a youth's life to do. Challenge Growth is also an element to expect adults, and even peers to do at fairly high frequencies, albeit it can be pointless and even counter-productive to challenge young people without expressing care or providing support along with it.

But Provide Support, Share Power, and Expand Possibilities, as will be apparent in their respective sections in this research review, are more complex. The opportunities adults have to do these things in a specific way are likely to occur more situationally, not even on a regular, much less daily basis. What young people do remember though, is this: Do you as the adult in charge of whatever context you are in together--school, sports, church, after-school--create a space that feels supportive overall, and help me when I need it (which might not be often), a space where I and others are free to express opinions and have voice, where we're exposed to ideas or people or things we didn't know before, or didn't appreciate as deeply before? When viewed that way, those several developmental

1 *Ryan and Deci originally used the term "relatedness," in the sense of having secure and satisfying relationships with others. We have chosen to use "belonging" for more clear and memorable communication with practitioner and lay audiences, as it enables us to refer to the "ABCs" of human motivation. Decades ago, Goodenow (1993) noted the similarity between belonging, defined as feelings of being included, accepted, valued, and encouraged, and relatedness as defined by self-determination theory.*

relationships elements are reflected in an overall feel for the milieu adults and peers create (with the target youth) rather than being necessarily reflected in a specific number of times an action can be observed and counted.

One of us (PS) coaches high school tennis. In that tennis team, the season-ending notes players wrote while this review was being written showed that an overall supportive and safe environment had been created, because just about every girl on the team said so in their note to the coach. But for each of perhaps half the team, there was just a moment or two when they personally needed the coach to be there for them in a specific way. They felt that happened. But the other half of the team also felt they had a supportive environment, yet there was no one moment the coach or student could point to that helped them personally in such a specific way. But they felt supported all the same.

Thus, what young people feel about the likelihood or potential of that adult or peer to be there for them may often be more important than how often they experience one of those 20 specific relational actions in Table 1. The real test of whether a developmental relationship is happening may then be, are you there for me when I need you, or when I don't even know I need you but it turns out, I did? Even being there once can make a day, a sports season, or a school semester. But in frequency, that one time or couple of times would be called "rare," or at best, "sometimes," neither of which captures the power of these relational moments to affect development.

Experiencing all this “often” or “very often” clearly matters for positive youth development, as our research and the other studies cited here show (Scales, Hsieh, & Benson, 2023; Syvertsen et al., 2022). But means tell only part of the story. It serves theory, research, and practice well to remember that the frequency of relational actions alone does not equal personal significance to the young person or adult in the relationship, even if the frequency of developmental relationships is associated with the statistical significance of various PYD outcomes (Scales, Houltberg, Syvertsen, & Pekel, 2022). As one scholar said, among the 30 we interviewed for a study on research and practice needs in social capital and relationships, measuring developmental relationships is useful as a descriptive tool and to stimulate practice changes, “but if you turn it into an accountability tool it becomes unhelpful. Relationships can’t be seen as an average score. The average of relationship quality will be different in different settings” (Boat et al., 2021, p. 2).

As Rhodes et al. (2006) so well described, what differentiates a developmental relationship “from a series of casual contacts is the meaning attributed to those interactions” (p. 697). The developmental relationships actions matter because they create between both the young person and the adult or peer with whom they have a relationship a sense of mutual bonding and concern, where each values the other enough for the other to sense they will “be there” for them if needed. The frequency with which some of these actions occur may thus be less important than the solid and well-founded belief the young person has that this adult or peer (or near-peer: Boat, Miranda, & Syvertsen, 2022) will in fact be there for them when it counts. In that sense, a developmental relationship serves as both a current nutrient for youth today, and perhaps as or even more important, as a promise and a commitment for the future where that young person is going.

This research review focuses on illustrating how selected literature describes the five elements and the 20 actions, and how they work together to promote positive youth development. The review is intended to be reasonably comprehensive and illustrative, but certainly not exhaustive. It cites, but does not go into great detail about the substantive results of Search Institute’s research on developmental relationships. More details and links

The Developmental Relationships Framework grew out of Search Institute's 30 years of theory, research, and practical application of the Developmental Assets approach to positive youth development around the world (see Scales, Hsieh, & Benson, 2023 for more) . First introduced in 1990, the assets framework named 40 external (relationships and opportunities) and internal strengths (values, skills, and self-perceptions) organized into eight broad categories (e.g., Support, Empowerment, Social Competences, Positive Identity) that research had shown were linked to lower levels of risk behaviors, better odds of resilience, and more thriving behaviors in youth (e.g., reviewed in Scales & Leffert, 2004). Dozens of studies with now more than 6 million youth and young adults worldwide consistently showed that the more assets young people experienced, the better off they were on numerous academic, psychological, social-emotional, spiritual, and behavioral outcomes (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Benson, Scales, Roehlekpartain, & Leffert, 2011; Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011; Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Shramko, 2017). The external assets in particular were centered on the positive relationships young people had in their families, schools, communities, and peer groups. The Developmental Relationships Framework zeroed in on and elaborated that core attention given to the quality of young people's relationships, in order to create a more comprehensive theory, measurement, and practice around relational quality.

Starting in 2013, Search Institute created the Developmental Relationships Framework and refined it over a several-year period of literature review, focus groups and interviews, and surveys of parents, teachers, and youth. We built on Li and Julian's (2012) seminal paper defining features of a developmental relationship by conducting an extensive review of multiple literatures, including general discussions of the power of relationships, as well as literature across multiple theories of development and developmental contexts, including positive youth development, attachment and bonding, resilience, motivation and self-determination, parenting and family relationships, student-teacher relationships, peer relationships, mentoring and other nonparent adult relationships, youth programs, and community and social capital.

Key findings from this large body of research were supplemented with insights from 18 focus groups, each about 45 minutes long, with a total of 125 parenting adults, young people ages 10–19, young adults, youth workers, and educators across several states, from differing racial/ethnic groups, different socioeconomic levels, and in rural, suburban, and urban communities. These focus groups examined what actually happens in diverse relationships that positively influence young people's generalized well-being and, more specifically, help them set, pursue, and achieve life goals related to college, careers, and civic and social life.

The evolving framework was then refined through a series of quantitative studies, including a study of 1,085 parenting adults across the United States with children ages 3–13; a study of 633 matched pairs of a parenting adult and an adolescent child in two United States communities, one rural and one semi-urban; a study of student-teacher relationships among 675 students in a middle school in a first-ring suburb of a major metropolitan area in the Midwest; and a study of more than 1,000 youth in a national organization that engages young people in learning about and conserving the natural environment. More details about all these studies and the origins of the Developmental Relationships Framework can be found in Pekel, Roehlkepartain, Syvertsen, Scales, Sullivan, & Sethi (2018), Scales, Hsieh, & Benson (2023), and Syvertsen, Scales, Chavez, Roehlkepartain, & Roskopf, 2022).

to numerous peer-reviewed papers and research reports can be found in the references cited in each section, and on Search Institute's website, at www.searchinstitute.org.

Briefly, however, the topline conclusions of that body of Search Institute research are:

- Developmental relationships matter: Young people with greater reports of experiencing developmental relationships also report better developmental outcomes, across academic, psychological, social-emotional, and behavioral domains, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, displaying results from a study of a large sample of 14,088 diverse (e.g., 18% Hispanic, 37% not white, 43% experiencing some or a lot of financial strain) middle and high school students (Search Institute, 2020):

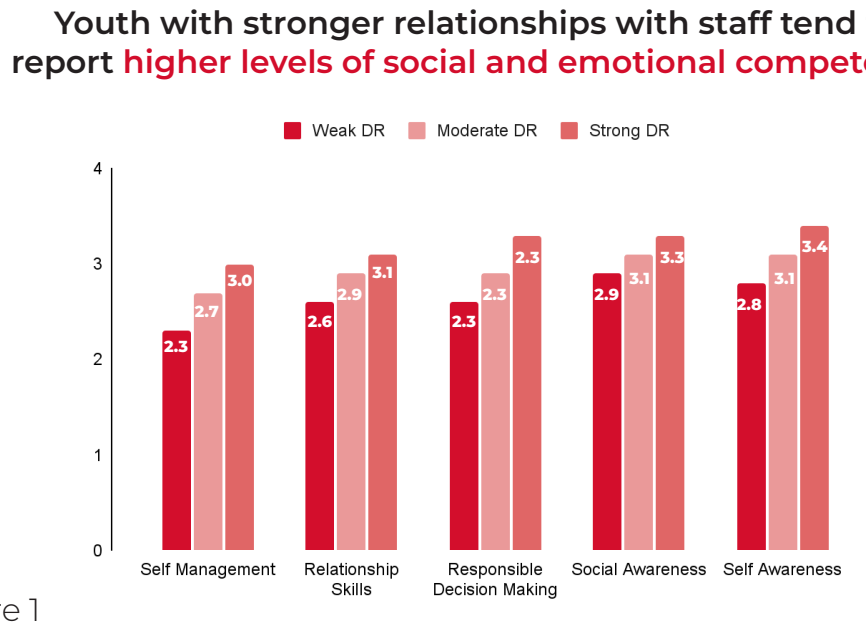

Figure 1

Note. n= 14,088 youth. The bars represent the mean-level of each competency by level of DR. The continuous association between DRs and academic motivation is statistically significant (p<.05). The range is 1-4 with 4 being the strongest.

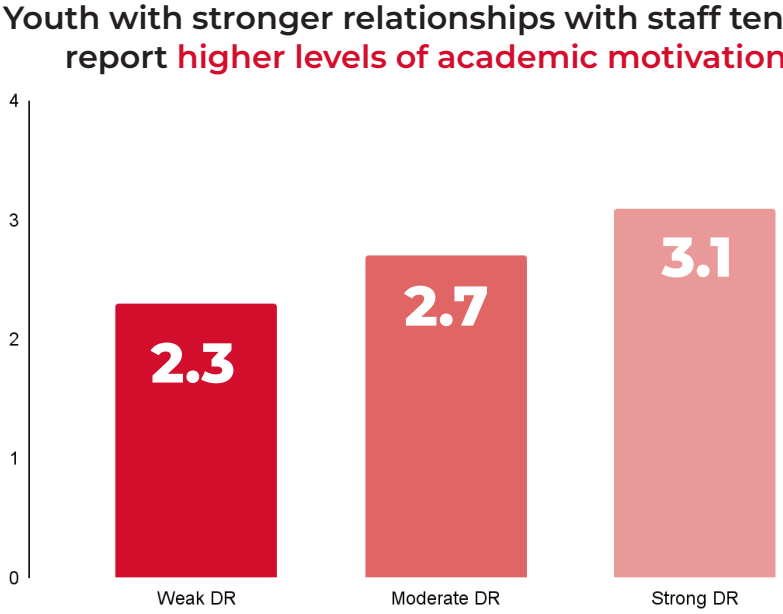

Figure 2

Note. n= 14,088 youth. The bars represent the mean-level of academic motivation by level of DR. The continuous association between DRs and academic motivation is statistically significant (p,.05). the rante is 1-4 with 4 being the strongest.

- That linkage is observed in both cross-sectional (one-time) studies and longitudinal research (following the same youth over time).
- The association of developmental relationships with positive youth development is found for all racial groups of youth studied, Hispanic and non-Hispanic youth, all socioeconomic groups studied, and across sex, age groups, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Only a minority of young people report experiencing sufficiently strong developmental relationships to accrue those positive youth development outcomes. For instance, Figure 3 shows that in one of our largest studies, of a diverse sample of 14,088 middle and high school students, just 46% said they experienced developmental relationships "often" or more in their schools or out-of-school time programs (Search Institute, 2020).

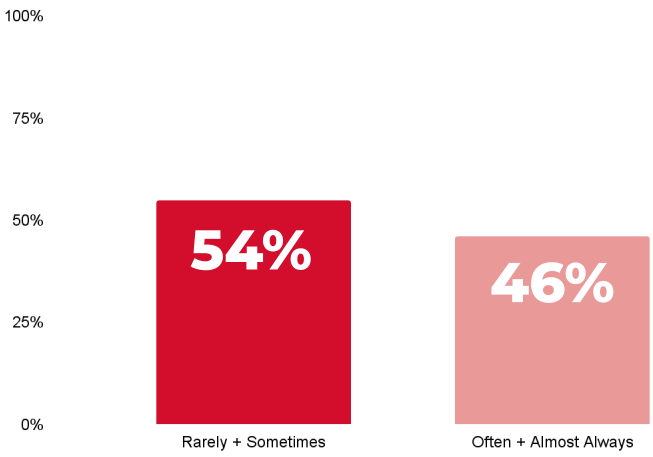

Figure 3

Percent of youth reporting developmental relationships in schools and OST programs.

- Youth in out-of-school-time programs (OST) report stronger developmental relationships than youth in school or student support program settings.
- Young people from lower-income backgrounds and/or who feel financially strained are less likely to report adequate developmental relationships, and, in the school setting, more likely to report relationships with teachers worsening over the school year.
- In the school setting, only a minority of young people say relationships with teachers get better over the school year.

Despite the significant body of research we have already conducted with and on the Developmental Relationships Framework, much research needs to be done, focusing at minimum on several major themes. These include: better understanding the interplay between developmental relationships and enabling factors (from organizational climate to characteristics of young people that attract or inhibit adults forming those relationships with them); strengthening the cultural validity and responsiveness of the Developmental Relationships Framework; better understanding and activating young people themselves as drivers of developmental relationships; and leveraging in practice a deeper knowledge of not just the adult-youth dyad but how single relationships have their effects within a larger web of developmental relationships (these themes are expanded on in Scales, Houltberg, Syvertsen, & Pekel, 2022). Nevertheless, a large body of Search Institute's research, the multiplicity of studies from other scholars noted in this review, and an even larger review of multiple literatures on which the Framework was based (Pekel et al.,

2018; Syvertsen et al., 2022) show both the solid scientific foundations of these concepts and the value of young people experiencing developmental relationships throughout all the settings of their lives. It remains for leaders in all sectors of society to work together to ensure that all young people equitably have those developmental relationships that can so significantly help youth shape and enjoy lives of connection, achievement, and contribution.

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Show me that I matter to you.

What Is Express Care?

Express Care focuses on the emotional bond, mutual enjoyment, self-disclosure, and trust that **express and reinforce how each person matters to the other and is committed to and invested in the other.** Young people often capture this quality by saying, "I know they have my back" (Scales et al., 2019; Sethi & Scales, 2020).

Express care typically begins in relationships with parenting adults (Cummings & Cummings, 2002; Pastorelli et al., 2016; Steinberg, 2001) and extends to many others, including teachers (Wentzel, 2009), peers (Parker et al., 2006), and mentors. Rhodes et al.'s observation (2006, p. 696) about the foundational importance of caring within mentoring relationships seems apt for all relationships: "Without some connection—involving such qualities as trust, empathy, authenticity, mutual respect, sensitivity, and attunement—the dynamics through which mentoring relationships can promote positive developmental outcomes seem unlikely to unfold." Similarly, in one of our studies of developmental relationships in social capital programs for opportunity youth—youth out of work and out of school—we reported that the youth could not benefit from the potential social capital adult mentors could offer unless the adults first had planted and nurtured "seeds of trust" that often involved repeated "testing" by youth and sacrifice on the part of the adults (Syvertsen, Seward, Sullivan, & Scales, 2023).

Express care is operationalized in the framework through these specific actions: be dependable, listen, believe in me, be warm, and encourage me. These actions, like all 20 in the framework, often shift in how they are expressed as young people grow up, and they may also be expressed differently for young people with different personalities and in different cultures, contexts, and relationships. And though the framework currently identifies four specific actions that express care, there certainly are many other specific ways people express and experience care in their relationships.

Why is Expressing Care Important?

Research shows that, across a variety of relationships, young people who feel cared for are better off in numerous ways. For example…

- In school, students who feel cared for show fewer problem behaviors (Obsuth et al., 2016).
- Students who feel a sense of belongingness in school have higher academic achievement (Wallace, Ye, & Chhuon (2012).
- In the family, children who perceive their parents as warm and affectionate are less aggressive, hostile, and dependent, and report higher self-esteem, positive outlook, and being emotionally responsive to others (Khaleque, 2013).
- Non-parental adults (extended family or outside the family) who show warmth to young people help promote academic achievement (Farruggia, Bullen, & Davidson, 2013).

· Among peers, having peers who show care through listening helps young people develop a positive identity and empathetic social skills (Parker & Gottman, 1989).

Despite its importance, nearly half of youth we studied in one of our largest and most diverse samples (14,088 middle and high school students) said they only rarely or sometimes experienced expressions of care in their schools and OST programs (Figure 4).

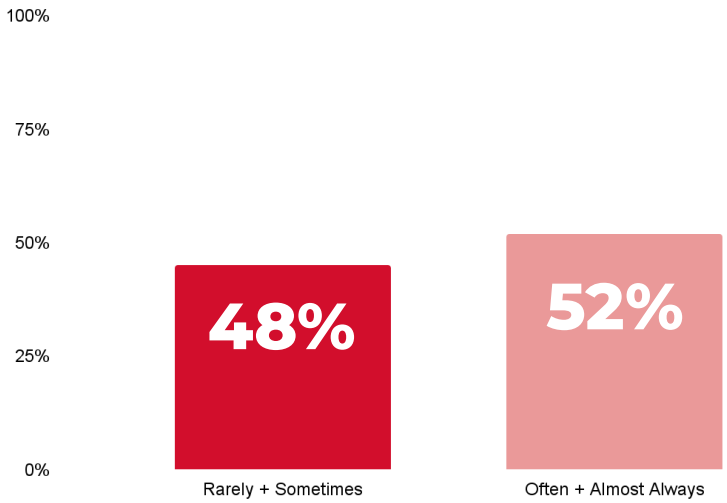

Figure 4

Percent of youth reporting Express Care in schools and OST programs.

How Does It Work?

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) holds that how engaged people are in any context depends on the relationship quality in that setting and how well those relationships meet people's needs for not only connection and belonging, but autonomy and competence (which reflect the "challenge" aspects of developmental relationships; Wallace et al., 2012). Broadly speaking, the four actions within Express Care help promote the "ABCs" of autonomy, belonging, and competence.

Be dependable—Be someone I can trust

Being able to count on another person is at the core of positive relationships. Indeed, in Erik Erikson's influential theory of psychosocial development (1968), the very first "crisis" the infant human being faces is developing a sense of basic trust in their caregivers. Failure to feel that sense of trust leads to a life outlook of insecurity and anxiety. Dependability lies at the heart of trust, which is "one of the most important components—and perhaps the most essential ingredient—for the development and maintenance of happy, well-functioning relationships" (Simpson, 2007, p. 587). Trust or dependability grows out of positive experiences that give young people confidence to take risks because they believe the person will "have my back," or put the young person's interests above their own.

The effects of experiencing people as being trustworthy or dependable has its roots in attachment in early childhood, and trust continues to be important as young people grow up and form new relationships beyond the family with friends, teachers, and others. When young people get older, and they tell their parent something about their friends, how their parent responds may either deepen that trust or undermine it. If the parent breaks their confidence or badgers them for more information, they may be less likely to disclose in the future (Fletcher & Blair, 2018). Similarly, they may open up more to their friends when those

friends help them understand themselves better, keep their confidences, and are also invested in the relationships (Parker et al., 2006).

Listen—Really pay attention when we are together

Psychologist Barbara Varenhorst (2010), who pioneered teaching students to develop listening skills, discussed the need for peers to learn to listen and not just hear words. This is a skill we develop as a way of expressing care for each other. Listening skills include focusing, showing empathy, eliciting feedback, and being interested in what the other person is saying.

Parker and Gottman (1989) found that having friends who know how to listen well becomes an invaluable resource for students' development, particularly developing a positive identity and social skills. Through self-disclosure, openness, intimacy, and trust with friends, young people internalize more stable senses of who they are and how they relate to others. Smith et al., (2016) describe how a key way to develop empathy is to have students share their own experiences and listen to each other's stories. Through listening to, understanding, and identifying with the experiences of others, young people build bridges across differences, and they learn about themselves in the process. Having opportunities to listen and be listened to can be transformative. As a young person said about a program that emphasizes telling your own stories: "This program, there's so much honesty. It's like you learn to be honest with yourself and the people around you, and everyone's listening for once."

Although theirs was a study of workplace leaders, Zenger and Folkman (2016) offered observations about listening skills that transcend age or context. Good listeners, they found, are more like trampolines than sponges. Great listeners are people "you can bounce ideas off of—and rather than absorbing your ideas and energy, they amplify, energize, and clarify your thinking" (no page numbers; para. 8). By comparing differences between people who were seen as really good listeners and those who were average listeners, the researchers found that the really good listeners ask questions, promote two-way dialogue, make the conversation positive and safe, and try to help instead of trying to win.

For younger children in particular, Ginsburg (2007) discussed how play can be an important aspect of listening to and being with young people. For example, when parents join their children in child-directed play, they gain a better understanding of their children's interests and how they see the world. By engaging in play with children, parents are showing their children that they are paying full attention to their children in that moment. This focused attention and viewing the world from a child's perspective can help build caring relationships. Furthermore, play may be a means by which parents can more fully engage with less verbal children because they can express their views and experiences through play without needing to use words, i.e., in this sense, caregivers are "listening" to those children. Although play may be more salient for younger children, the same positive outcomes for adolescents have been amply documented when youth sports programs and their coaches emphasize teaching life skills as much as sport-specific technical and strategic skills (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2006; Scales, 2016; Scales, Redmond, Lichtman, Lichtman, Houltberg, & Syvertsen, 2023).

Believe in me—Make me feel known and valued

Helping youth feel known and valued is related to having high expectations for them (the Challenge Growth element) and to giving children and youth meaningful roles to

play in family, school, and community settings (reflecting the elements of Share Power and Expand Possibilities). Even just how knowing youths' names and a little about their interests helps show caring. Youth self-confidence, sense of efficacy and agency grow principally by adults and peers showing confidence in young people, faith that they can get things done and handle situations, and do what is needed to manage. All that communicates belief in them. As a result, youth then develop a greater sense of community, belonging, and trust (Evans, 2007).

Likewise, the "value me" part of the "believe in me" definition is related to adults seeking youths' opinions and perspectives (as described more fully in the Share Power section). When youth feel safe, valued, and invited to participate in these ways, research has long shown numerous benefits to them and wider society, such as increased self-esteem and self-concept, greater sense of personal control, sense of optimism about the future, greater achievement of self-actualization, reduced delinquency, reduced violence, increased social skills, increased levels of moral reasoning and thinking, greater social and personal responsibility, decreased school failure, more effective parent-child relationships, more complex relationships, reduced substance abuse, and greater participation in community activities (research reviewed in Scales & Leffert, 2004).

But beyond asking for opinions, the effect of expressing care is also simply about youth feeling they are seen, noticed, and that they matter emotionally to that adult or peer. Adults and peers demonstrate this, for example, by calling youth by their names, taking the time to know their interests or sparks or a little bit about their background, asking questions without being too personal or prying about it, and genuinely showing they enjoy the time they spend with the young person (see "Be warm," below). The upshot is that youth then feel respected, a perception that a large study of alternative schools showed was especially important in the school adjustment of youth who had been judged to be at-risk of school failure (Powell & Marshall, 2011). These same themes reflecting "believe in me" are common across youth of varying physical and intellectual abilities, having been found, for example, in how youth with Aspergers or Down syndrome, mild to moderate intellectual disability, or physical conditions such as cerebral palsy describe the concept of well-being from their perspective: Feeling supported, included, and respected, as well as feeling valued and capable (Foley et al., 2012).

Be warm—Show me you enjoy being with me

In relationship studies, warmth generally refers to affection, positive reinforcement, and sensitivity to a young person's needs and wants (MacDonald, 1992). The great majority of the research has been conducted on warmth in the family setting. Studies repeatedly have shown that parental warmth is linked to a host of positive outcomes in children and youth, including self-regulation skills and having more trust in others (Baker & Hoeger, 2012), less aggression and hostility, and better self-esteem, positive outlook, and emotional responsiveness to others (Khalaque, 2013; Zhou et al., 2002), and to aspirations, school engagement, and achievement (Hill & Wang, 2015).

The action of nurturing "warmth" in relationships illustrates the challenge and opportunity of applying this framework across cultures and contexts. Chen & Farruggia (2002) reported on cross-cultural studies focused on parental warmth, and found that, though universally valued, parental warmth varies across cultures. Children in more industrialized cultures tended to perceive parents as less warm than those in more traditional cultures. They theorized that these differences could reflect that children spend more time away from family in industrialized cultures, or they could reflect a greater focus on individualism

and preparing youth to become independent and develop affective ties with people outside the family. As this example illustrates, each action within the framework must be considered within specific contexts, including the unique functions it may play and how it interacts with other aspects of culture, relationships, and society.

Even though levels of "warmth" and how it is expressed may vary, researchers have found widespread similarity of the effects of warmth across cultures. For example, a meta-analysis by Khaleque (2013) found that child perceptions of parental warmth were associated with a number of personality traits that indicate positive psychosocial development across cultures. The mean age of the child participants was 12 years, with a range from 9- to 18-years-old. The participants came from 16 different countries (e.g., India, Finland, Japan, Columbia, USA, etc.). Within the United States, there was a diverse range of races and ethnicities (e.g. African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and European American).

The meta-analysis found that those children who perceived their parents as warm/affectionate were:

- Less likely to be aggressive and hostile
- More likely to report higher self-esteem
- More likely to report positive feelings of self-adequacy ("I can compete successfully for things I want")
- More likely to show emotional responsiveness ("It is easy for me to show my friends I really like them")
- More likely to report a positive worldview.

In some contexts, relationships that may not seem to be particularly "warm" are actually better for young people. For example, Jackson-Newson et al., (2008) examined parenting practices and perceived maternal warmth in both European American and African American adolescents. They found that of those adolescents who reported maternal use of harsh discipline and maternal authority, the European American adolescents were significantly less likely to report maternal warmth compared to the African American adolescents. This result is supported by previous research by Brody and Flor (1998), who found that "no-nonsense parenting" (i.e., strict parenting practices) has been linked to positive outcomes in African American youth. Some researchers suggest that young people may view these parenting practices as caring because it protects them from risk in their environment. Furthermore, due to the difficulties that African American youth may face (e.g., discrimination), these practices may be viewed as positive by adolescents because they come from a positive place, such that African American mothers are preparing the children for the difficulties they face in the future due to possible racial discrimination.

Another variation in warmth is by children's ages. For example, Shanahan, McHale, Crouter, and Osgood (2007) investigated perceptions of parental warmth from middle childhood to late adolescence. They discuss research that suggests parental warmth is relatively stable from for children ages 6-10 years, but that beginning in early adolescence, young people perceive parental warmth as starting to decline. However, perceptions of parental warmth start to increase again in late adolescence. These findings remind us that being warm, like most of the actions in the Developmental Relationships Framework, is not a rigidly stable,

uniform phenomenon, but rather is dynamic and evolving in expression and meaning across ages, stages, relationships, and contexts.

Encourage—Praise me for my efforts and achievements

Groundbreaking studies (Dweck & Master, 2009; Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2011) showed that when praise is specific and focuses on effort, it is most likely to be motivating for students. Researchers assigned some moderately difficult logic problems to groups of fifth-grade students. After working through the problems, children were randomly assigned to receive different types of praise for their efforts. After that, they were given a different set of problems to solve. Those students who were praised with messages reinforcing fixed mindsets ("You must be very smart at these problems") solved 30 percent fewer problems in the second round of testing. Those who received praise that reinforced growth mindsets ("That's a really high score. You must have worked hard at these problems") did better on the follow-up tests, and they asked to do more challenging problems in the future. Finally, a third group received praise that acknowledged a good outcome but did not suggest what had caused that good outcome ("That's a really high score"). These students did no better or worse than on the first test.

Parenting practices like those can also build motivation, but as Shelton, Frick, and Wootton (1996) found in their study of children age 6- to 13-years-old, positive parenting decreases with age. Younger school age children receive more of these positive parenting practices, including encouragement, compared to older children:

- Telling the child when they are doing a good job
- Rewarding children when they behave well
- Complimenting the child
- Praising the child when they behave well
- Hugging and kissing the child
- Telling the child that you appreciate it when they help around the home.

A particular kind of parental encouragement may increase, however. Both mothers and fathers have been found to encourage more effort and achievement as children age from 3 years to 12, and mothers to encourage children to talk about their problems (Roberts, Block, & Block, 1984).

Summary

Overall, the expression of care may be the most foundational of all the developmental relationships elements, without which the other four elements are less likely to have the positive influence that they can. If an adult or peer cannot help a young person feel there is trust between them, that they are listened to and heard, that they are valued, treated warmly, and encouraged when needed, it is doubtful that young person would be fully open to efforts to challenge their growth, provide support, share power with them, or expand their possibilities. Search Institute's qualitative research has also suggested that even when young people experience those other elements, they most often talk about them as evidence that this person truly cares about them (Sethi & Scales, 2020). That is, with all the other elements (and especially Provide Support), it seems to be difficult to separate that element from how it does or does not reinforce the sense a young

person has that they matter to this person, and that they therefore can trust this person to act in their best interests.

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Push me to keep getting better.

What Is Challenge Growth?

Challenge Growth emphasizes the ways that people in relationships hold each other accountable to follow through in pursuing their own goals and commitments while also helping them learn and grow from mistakes or setbacks. As one teacher said in a focus group: "I think that's really impactful for students, when adults show that they don't know everything, they're not perfect. I make mistakes. I have bad days." Specific actions in this element of developmental relationships are also shown in Table 1 in the Introduction. For example, in the context of school, the way teachers communicate educational goals, values, and expectations as well as the way they give feedback and react to successes and failures influence students' own goals, confidence, and expectations (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998).

Similarly, Feeney and Collins (2014) describe this element of relationships as "validating a close other's goals, dreams, and aspirations (both big and small); encouraging a close other to challenge or extend himself/herself to grow as an individual, . . . and providing encouragement to embrace even small opportunities that may be stepping stones to bigger ones" (p. 119). Relational attention to challenging growth and equipping youth to think strategically is a notable feature of high-quality out-of-school-time programs (Larson & Angus, 2011; Salusky et al., 2014) that have been found to be especially motivating for students who are disengaged from school (Afterschool Alliance, 2014; Jones & Deutsch, 2011).

Why Is Challenge Growth Important?

Research consistently shows that aspects of challenging young people to grow are associated with better academic, social-emotional, psychological, and behavior outcomes.

- Young people with a growth mindset believe that it is always possible to increase intelligence with effort. Young people who are challenged to grow in this way are much more likely to exert effort in school and in life outside of school (Dweck & Master, 2009).
- Teacher praise that is specific and focuses on effort boosts motivation in students (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2011).
- Student perceptions of school discipline being "authoritative" (i.e., combining structure and support) are linked to less victimization and bullying school-wide (Gregory et al., 2011).
- Two meta-analyses have shown that parent expectations are the most influential family-level predictor of child achievement in school, rather than parental beliefs or even parental behaviors (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).
- Parental expectations are associated with children having higher grades, standardized

test scores, and persistence in school (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

- Mother's challenge is associated with better self-concept, self-esteem, identity strength, and feelings of autonomy (Dailey, 2010).
- Parental challenge to learn and grow is associated with children staying more focused on long-term goals (Rathunde, 2001), achieving in school (Bowen, Hopson, Rose, Glennie, & Carolina, 2012; Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen, & Colvin, 2011; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010; Zhang, Haddad, Torres, & Chen, 2011), participating in civic roles (Mesurado et al., 2014), achieving in athletics (Bremer, 2012), having better health habits Gable & Lutz, 2012), and avoiding alcohol and tobacco (Nash, McQueen, & Bray, 2005).
- Effective parent scaffolding (providing just enough help to enable the child to persevere on their own) during a challenging problem-solving task predicts 1st graders' cognitive ability (Mulvaney, McCartney, Bub, & Marshall, 2006).
- Among adolescents, parental monitoring, asking adolescents challenging questions, supporting differences of opinions, and promoting autonomy are linked to young people's aspirations for the future (Hill & Wang, 2015), as well as their ego development and psychosocial competence (Dailey, 2008).
- Peer expectations about school achievement are linked to better intrinsic motivation, and interest in and enjoyment of school (Wentzel, Baker, & Russell, (2012).
- Challenge Growth has been shown to be especially important for middle-school students' academic motivation, positive perceptions of school climate and instructional quality, and GPA (Scales et al., 2019).

Young people in one of our largest and most diverse samples (14,088 middle and high school youth) reported that Challenge Growth was their most frequently experienced element of developmental relationships, at 64% (Figure 5).

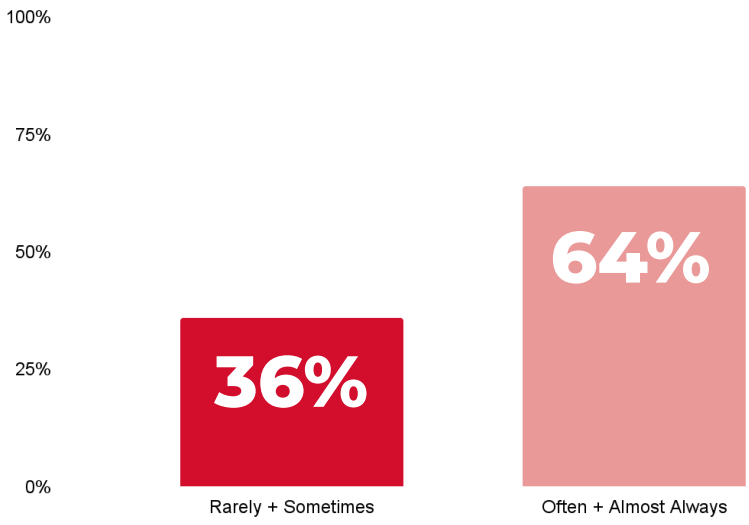

Figure 5

Percent of youth reporting Challenge Growth in schools and OST programs.

How Does It Work?

When adults and peers challenge young people to learn and grow, they provide both support for young people to define their identities and for feeling connected in supportive relationships. Classroom peers' achievement and values about achievement, for example, may help young people strive more in part to define themselves as academically successful and also to feel they belong in the group of achieving peers (Burke & Sass, 2014). Those peer students may also provide practical help, such as working together in study groups, and provide each other with emotional support as they pursue challenging goals (Wentzel, 2005). As part of being accepted and belonging, students may also push themselves to meet their friends' expectations (Wentzel & Wigfield, 1998).

A good deal of research has been conducted showing that there are optimal levels of challenge that facilitate motivation. Children generally show more engagement and interest in tasks that require them to stretch some beyond their current ability, but that do not seem utterly impossible to do (Grolnick, Garland, Jacob, Decourcey, 2002). And although overly difficult tasks can promote high stress and negative perfectionism, tasks that are too easy can reduce motivation and lead to apathy (Stoeber & Rambow, 2007).

One of the key means of helping young people navigate challenge successfully is scaffolding. Scaffolding simply means providing the right amount of help and guidance so that young people are solving the task at the level of responsibility and effort appropriate to make them stretch, with not too little help but also not too much. Whether from parent, teacher, coach, or youth worker, the principle is gradual withdrawing of the temporary support as the young person increasingly can independently deal with the task or solve the problem (Hammond, Miller et al., 2012). There are many possible scaffolding strategies that are helpful for a child's growth and learning that complement a variety of cultural values (Kermani & Brenner, 2000). For example, with European-American children, this may be through support that still allows for their independence, whereas in more interdependent cultures, this may be through support that is characterized by direct instruction (Farver, 1989).This principle is an excellent example of how the developmental relationships elements of Provide Support and Challenge Growth often work together to promote development.

In addition, challenge in the absence of acceptance may work to push young people to achieve, but they may be more motivated by external pressures rather than their own interests, which has negative implications for motivation. In a study by Rathunde (1996), for example, adolescents who experienced high levels of challenge without support did show greater attention to the task, but compared to adolescents with high challenge and high support, they had a lower desire to engage in the task, that is, less motivation. Challenging growth is most successful when it is done in a warm, supportive relationship, and when the young person is allowed some power, whether it is a parent-child or teacher-student, youthworker-youth, coach-student athlete, or peer relationship.

Expect my best—Expect me to live up to my potential

Yamamoto & Holloway (2010) summarized research on the importance of parental expectations on child outcomes and achievement. High parental expectations are associated with better child grades, standardized test scores, and greater persistence in school compared to the performance of students whose parents have low expectations of them. High expectations are also associated with increased school motivation and aspirations to attend college. Parental expectations have also been shown to mediate the

association between family background and child achievement. Importantly, these high parental expectations may also buffer the negative effects of low teacher expectations. Finally, two meta-analyses included in the Yamamoto and Holloway review (Jeynes, 2005; 2007) have shown that parent expectations are, by a considerable amount, the most influential family-level predictor of child achievement in school, rather than parental beliefs or even parental behaviors.

Different family members' acceptance and challenge may have unique contributions to the development of adolescents' self-concept. For example, one study (Dailey, 2010) showed that mother's challenge was positively associated with all three components of self-concept: self-esteem, identity strength, and autonomy. Father's acceptance was positively associated with self-esteem and identity strength, but not autonomy. Finally, challenge moderated the association between self-concept and acceptance in the sibling relationship, such that adolescents with siblings high on acceptance and challenge had greater self-concept. The findings did not deny the importance of acceptance from mothers and challenge from fathers, but did suggest that acceptance from fathers may be particularly important for self-esteem development in adolescents, while mothers providing challenge might be especially useful for supporting identity formation and self-regulation.

Stretch—Push me to go further

As noted above, optimal challenge is at a level a bit beyond what young people can readily achieve, requires them to stretch, and usually requires some scaffolding or support from parents, teachers, and others. How this scaffolding support is delivered might vary across cultural contexts and yet still be effective. For example, Kermani & Brenner (2000) found that during a goal-oriented task (i.e., a task with a clear end goal), Iranian mothers provided more directive scaffolding and were more actively engaged in the task, while European-American mothers were more focused on the interactions with their child and less so on finishing the task. However, both the Iranian-American and the European-American children performed similarly on a subsequent independent goal-directed task.

This suggests that there are many possible scaffolding strategies that are helpful for a child's growth and learning that complement a variety of cultural values. An additional study Farver & Howes, 1993) found that when mothers in the United States encouraged their children's independence in play, the children engaged in more complex forms of play. In contrast, when Mexican mothers directed their children's activities, they engaged in more complex forms of play. This finding, like the findings described above, suggests there are multiple ways in which parents can challenge their children and foster their success on complex tasks.

Hold me accountable—Insist I take responsibility for my actions

Students who are motivated in school are often pushed by someone else to do well. In particular, the interaction between teachers and students is a significant factor. Wentzel and Wigfield (1998) found that teachers can motivate student learning by allowing students the opportunity to participate in decision-making and take responsibility for their own learning, and by showing recognition of each student's progress towards completing tasks. Similarly, another study (Collie et al., 2016) that was informed by self-determination theory examined the extent to which students' interpersonal relationships with teachers, parents, and peers are associated with personal best (PB) goals and academic engagement, as well as the extent to which PB goals are associated with academic

engagement beyond the effects of interpersonal relationships. Results found that young people who took responsibility for setting "personal best" goals had better academic achievement, with setting PB goals with teachers having stronger effects than PB goals set with peers or parents. Like Collie et al., we have found students' developmental relationships with teachers to have greater influence on their academic motivation, than developmental relationships with parents or peers have, especially for high-school students (Sethi & Scales, 2020).

In out-of-school youth programs as well, youth have been found to increase personal responsibility when both peers and adults couple clear expectations with both consequences and support for meeting demands. But setting high expectations and having consequences are most effective when done in a context of other relational and programmatic features, including youth ownership of their tasks and responsibilities and adults providing structure in the form of rules, deadlines, and ways of doing things, i.e., organizational culture norms (Wood, Larsen, & Brown, 2009), as well as support for youth to be able to fulfill expected responsibilities (Salusky et al., 2014).

Instilling a sense of responsibility in youth is often a result of youth being motivated to carry out commitments to those who they admire or respect, and whom they feel treat them with respect and fairness. For example, whether it is restorative justice versus punitive justice policies (Tyler, 2006), or tracking students of color and lower-income students to less-challenging classes at school (Yonezawa & Jones, 2006), or teachers' racial bias in underestimating students' potential (Ferguson, 2003), studies have found that youth are more likely to be engaged, work hard, and behave responsibly when they feel heard, respected, given voice, and have opportunities and support to fulfill their potential (see Scales, Pekel, & Houltberg, 2022 for more on the links between developmental relationships and student motivation and engagement). Similarly, Deutsch and Jones (2008) described how youth had more positive perceptions of adult authority in their Boys and Girls Clubs than in their schools. The researchers concluded this was because the typical Club adult "positions her authority as concern…rather than as authority for the sake of control" (p. 676). They noted, too, that this authoritative discipline may have been more possible in the relationships at the Clubs because of shared cultural frames of reference, given that both the Club adults and youth were African-American, whereas the youths' teachers at school were white. Similarly, Search Institute has also found that students report experiencing both greater levels of developmental relationships and actions meant to support cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion in their out-of-school time programs than in their schools (Search Institute, 2020).

Finally, play can also be an arena where children and youth can learn to take responsibility for themselves. Researchers have described play as an important context for challenge and growth, and play often occurs within the context of relationships with peers and family members. Play in childhood has both biological and evolutionary bases, and children often report being happiest when they are playing (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike, & Sleet, 2012). In their paper on risky play, Brussoni et al. discussed why play that is moderately risky may be beneficial for child development. They concluded that risky play allows children to test and learn their physical limits, develop perceptual-motor skills, and learn which environments might be dangerous and how to adjust their behaviors if they encounter those situations. However, increased societal and parental concerns about child safety have been associated with a decrease in children's outdoor, often risky, free play (Clements, 2004). In addition to free play, play in settings such as organized youth sports can also have a variety of positive effects on young people's development, particularly when parents and coaches challenge

student-athletes to grow in a sport environment where the primary purpose is having fun, learning, and improving than on performance and needing to beat others in order to feel successful (Houltberg et al., 2018; Scales, 2016; 2022; Scales et al., 2023).

Reflect on failures—Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks

Research on students' mindsets about their learning (Dweck & Master, 2009) shows that they do better in school when they have a "growth mindset," or a belief that their intellectual abilities can be improved. These mindsets really matter. When they have fixed mindsets, students (as well as teachers and parents) believe there isn't much people can do to increase their level of intelligence. With growth mindsets, they believe that it is always possible to increase intelligence with effort. As a result, people with growth mindsets are much more likely to exert effort in school and life.

But as Dweck (2015) noted, having the right attitude about mistakes and failure is crucial to having a growth mindset. Being motivated to avoid failure both results from and promotes a fixed mindset, whereas being motivated to constantly be learning requires acceptance of mistakes and setbacks as integral to growth. Thus, it is important to show young people what needs to be improved and how to improve that skill in order to lessen the ego-deflating impact of mistakes and failures and promote a growth mindset. For example, in his book, Teaching Children to Learn, Robert Fisher (2005) described how teachers can best provide challenge for their students. Fisher suggested that in order to optimize challenge and help children persist, feedback throughout a task is important, not simply at the end of a task. During particularly challenging tasks, feedback during the task allows the child to correct errors that may be impossible to fix once the task is done. Also, feedback that helps with making in-process corrections can help motivate students by providing them with a feeling of success as well as providing them with reassurance that tasks are problems to be solved and not judgments on their worthiness. This type of feedback can help students believe in themselves and their capacity to learn and grow during challenges.

Summary

Challenging young people to grow includes setting the expectation that they will try their best, but it goes beyond adults and peers having high expectations for them. It includes also providing the help they need to stretch themselves beyond where they are currently comfortable, helping them be able to think as objectively as possible about what happened when they have fallen short of a goal and how they can do better next time, and in general, accepting personal responsibility for how they behave.

These actions clearly share something in common with actions that reflect the relational elements of Provide Support and Expand Possibilities as well. It is also difficult to imagine attempts to challenge growth in all these ways being enthusiastically received by young people if they don't feel the challenging person really cares for and about them. This is an important consideration in all contexts, but perhaps especially in schools, where our research shows Challenge Growth in the form of high expectations tends to be more commonly experienced than most of the other elements (especially at the high school level, but even then, not equitably across diverse student groups; Scales et al., 2019; Scales, Shramko et al., 2021).

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Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

What is Provide Support?

In this framework, *Provide Support* focuses primarily on instrumental support (more than emotional support, which conceptually is housed more within the element of Express Care), or the practical ways people help each other to get by, overcome obstacles, and work toward goals. For some young people, this support may involve helping them develop plans, budgets, or schedules. For others, it may mean setting limits so they avoid choices that will pull them off track. For still other youth, providing support may mean helping them navigate unfamiliar or resistant systems or institutions, or standing up for them with they encounter biases, barriers, and other challenges that undermine growth, learning, and well-being. (Specific actions involved in providing support are shown in Table 1.) In their qualitative study of youth-initiated mentoring, Spencer and colleagues (2016) found that most youth participants received many forms of instrumental support, from helping with transportation to helping them find employment or access the information they needed to apply to college. Those kinds of support are especially common in the words of historically-marginalized youth, when they speak about people who have made a difference for them (e.g., Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Sethi & Scales, 2020; Syvertsen, Seward, Sullivan, & Scales, 2022).

Across cultures, adolescents consider instrumental support and emotional support (which, again, in the Developmental Relationships Framework fits more squarely under Express Care) as evidence of parental love in the family (McNeely & Barber, 2010). In a classroom, this element could include the kinds of instructional supports a teacher provides, such as encouraging students to solve problems, scaffolding learning activities, and providing constructive feedback (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Studies suggest that young people benefit maximally when they perceive benefiting from different types of support from different people in their lives (Malecki & Demaray, 2003).

Why Is Provide Support Important?

When young people perceive they are supported, they are better off in numerous ways.

- Children who enjoy support from friends are more likely to exhibit prosocial skills, such as cooperation, and the willingness to help others (Hartup, 1996).
- Parents who provide support are more likely to have children who have higher GPA and better school adjustment, higher self-esteem and less depression, lower rates of substance abuse, and less stress (Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010).
- Parents who participate in their children's lives, encourage them academically, and have high expectations for them have children with better school attendance and fewer discipline problems (Chen & Gregory, 2009).
- Across countries studied, parents who support children's literacy development by reading to and with them, playing word games, and singing with them have children

with higher reading comprehension (Arya et al., 2014).

- Teachers who support their students by praising their effort more than their intelligence have students who work harder and longer at tasks, try to understand the task more than simply do well at it, and have better enjoyment doing the task (Muller & Dweck, 1998).
- Teachers who emphasize mastery goals more than performance goals, and who are seen as providing support, have students who ask for more help from friends in understanding classroom content than asking for the right answers without explanation or understanding (Ryan & Shim, 2012).

Provide Support is the second-most frequently experienced element of developmental relationships, after Challenge Growth, according to a large and diverse sample of 14,088 youth (Figure 6).

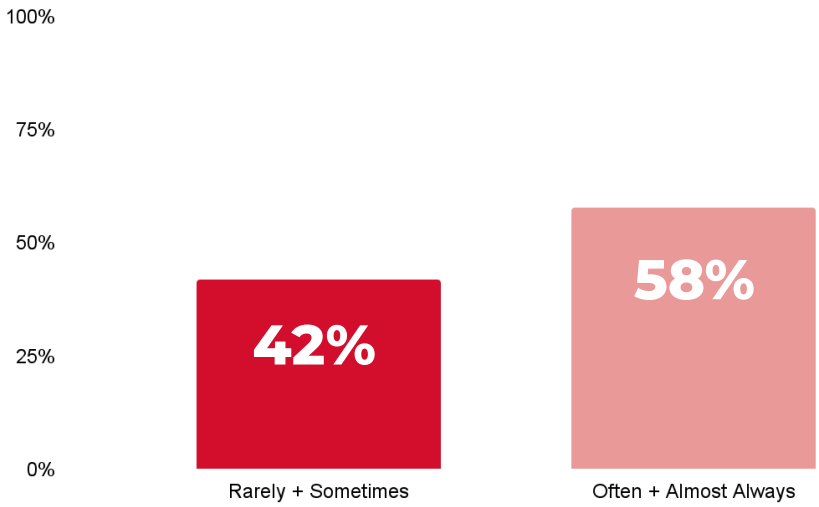

Figure 6

Percent of youth reporting Provide Support in schools and OST programs.

How Does It Work?

Although the Developmental Relationships Framework tries to emphasize instrumental support in the Provide Support element, and emotional support in the Express Care element, instrumental and emotional support are closely connected. For example, teachers who care about their students tend to provide both instrumental and emotional support (Federici & Skaalvik, 2014). From the student's perspective, a teacher who cares about their academic progress is also a teacher who cares about their well-being. Students are then more willing to seek help or learn from a teacher whom they believe to be supportive.

Another example of how providing support does not occur independently of other aspects of relationships is provided by Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007). In their view, research documents four ways that parents are optimally involved with their children: Support for autonomy (such as encouraging child initiative, with parents enabling); being focused on process and effort more so than on end goals and performance; being positive, enjoyable, loving, and supportive in their physical and emotional expression (positive affect); and communicating positive beliefs about the child's potential. One can see the Provide Support element in these aspects of parent involvement with children, but also see

how Express Care, Share Power, and Challenge Growth are reflected as well.

What type of support matters most may also depend on both the context, and the child or youth outcomes desired. For example, teacher warmth and responsiveness matters for students' self-regulation, but teachers' instructional support (such as focused, direct, intentional feedback on performance) seems to predict academic achievement more (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). But Steinberg et al. (1992) found that how parents express encouragement (doing so in a warm and supportive manner) may be as or more important than whether and to what extent they do.

Support also varies by factors such as age and cultural setting. For example, likely due to the child's increases in desire for autonomy as they grow older (in U.S. samples), direct parent support such as visiting the school or helping with homework predicts preadolescent students' academic expectations, but it is parents' indirect support, through their expectations for children's achievement, that matters more for the academic expectations of adolescents (Chen & Gregory, 2009; Jodl et al., 2001). Similarly, how parents support their children through involvement with the school or teacher may vary across cultural backgrounds. Some research has reported, for example, that African American and Hispanic parents may be more likely to believe that the teacher has more authority in a child's schooling than a parent does, and so be reluctant to initiate reaching out to teachers. Such reluctance might also be due to feeling unwelcomed or experiencing racial or ethnic bias (Arnold et al., 2008).

Finally, multiple factors influence whether youth will turn to peers for help or whether peers will intervene when they see another youth being picked on, including their sense of belonging (vs. isolation), their own sense of competence and responsibility, the problem or goal at hand, and other individual and cultural differences. For example, when friends feel safe and comfortable with each other, they are more likely to seek help from each other, whether with schoolwork, family issues, or personal and emotional challenges. On the other hand, "when classrooms emphasize extrinsic motivation, performance goals, and norm-referenced grading, children tend to be reluctant to share their difficulties with classmates" (Newman, 2000, p. 383).

In dealing with serious issues (such as bullying), peers may be seen as the safest source of help (and thus the first choice), though they may be the least effective in resolving the issue. Talking to teachers or parents may be more effective in resolving the issues, but young people also perceive it as the riskiest approach (Dowling & Carey, 2013).

Navigate—Guide me through hard situations and systems

Stanton-Salazar (2011) discusses the importance to their development of youth from low-income, minoritized racial-ethnic, or other historically marginalized backgrounds having access to adults who teach them how "the system" operates, and who can open doors to opportunity through the social capital they provide to youth. Social capital includes guidance in "how the world works" and making connections with others who can help youth as mentors and guiders. These might be successful people from their own backgrounds, often described as "bonding" social capital, but such navigation help from those with more status and power (often called "bridging" or "linking" social capital) who have a commitment to equity of opportunity can be an especially important resource for historically marginalized youth in pursuing their educational and occupational goals (Scales, Boat, & Pekel, 2020). Critically, it is the combination of resources and relationships that comprises social capital that can have those effects. For example, a study of

workforce development programs found that even strong developmental relationships in the program—by themselves—did not predict work readiness. But developmental relationships did predict work readiness through the effect those relationships had of increasing young people's learning opportunities about their future, their skills, and the importance of making mistakes as part of improving (Boat, Syvertsen, & Scales, 2021).

Similarly, many parents of African American children, and other socializing adults in their lives, help African American youth navigate and thrive by educating them on how to be Black in society, such as having "the Talk" with them, particularly their sons, about interactions with the police and avoiding violent encounters (Whitaker & Snell, 2016), in stark recognition that American society has been built for four hundred years on the scaffolding of power and privilege for white people (as vividly documented in a special 2019 New York Times Magazine edition (The 1619 Project, Aug. 18, 2019). It is not only the youth themselves who may benefit from support that helps them navigate systems. Kirshner, Saldivar, and Tracy (2011) described a program for prospective first-generation college students that provided both social-emotional and instrumental support for the young people's families as well as the students themselves, thereby multiplying the positive effects of support across students' family networks.

The discussion of providing social capital, especially when focusing on historically-marginalized communities, also carries a warning. The social or cultural capital narrative can implicitly assume that it is the responsibility of the underrepresented or marginalized group to assimilate to the norms of the dominant group, rather than dismantling the institutional, systemic barriers overall. Adapting to dominant group norms without addressing root institutional causes of marginalization may have positive benefits for individual youth and their families, but is not by itself a sustainable solution to problems that have long-standing structural causes, such as the racism and discrimination that shapes differential access to quality housing, jobs, schools, higher education, and health care, among other areas of inequity (e.g., Erickson et al., 2009; Putnam, 2015).

Empower—Build my confidence to take charge of my life

Teachers are a primary example of adults helping to empower youth, through how they convey their subject matter content, and how they help students understand it. For example, Hattie & Timperley (2007) describe how students need clarity in feedback and the ability to understand what they need to do next to improve. For feedback to be effective, it must be clear on the goals of the task, what progress has been made so far, and what students need to do to next. The way that feedback is delivered matters as well. Those researchers found that feedback is more effective when it is targeted at students at the appropriate level. Often, however, assessments are designed as a snapshot in time and do not provide effective feedback for improvement. Feedback can also be vague about what goals students should be pursuing, asking that students "do more" or "do better." If students are unable to identify on their own how they can do better, the feedback is not very effective.

A teacher with experience in the content matter, for instance, might be viewed as a more credible source of feedback than a peer (Winstone et al., 2016). The power dynamics between the giver and receiver of feedback play a role as well. If a teacher holds most of the power in relationships with students, which is of course a structural reality, the process of students receiving feedback can become a passive act. Students are more likely to use feedback if teachers convey positivity, acceptance, respect, and confidence in students' ability to use that feedback for improvement. In just that action of giving feedback, then,

not only Provide Support, but the elements of Express Care, Challenge Growth, and Share Power are all potentially implicated, in order for feedback to be motivating and effective.

Teachers also empower students when they support students' developing autonomy. For example, teacher autonomy support (defined as a focus on supporting student interests, preferences, and personal goals to guide their learning, plus providing challenges) and structure (clear expectations, order, explicit directions) together have been found to predict observer-rated student engagement, and autonomy support by itself has been shown to predict students' self-reports of their engagement (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010).

Similarly, in the context of discussing mentoring relationships, Larson (2006) pointed out that there is an "intentionality paradox" (p. 682) surrounding provision of support. The supporter must balance providing help with also promoting young people's ownership and agency over what they are doing. As examples he suggested mentoring in the style of authoritative parenting (loving and firm, or what Delpit (2012) has called "warm demanders"), which includes: providing guidance without necessarily giving answers; modeling enthusiasm; communicating confidence that the youth is capable; facilitating reflection to help in learning from mistakes; and connecting youth with other assets including relationships and opportunities.

Service-learning programs are a primary example of successful empowerment strategies for youth. A large meta-analysis of research on such programs (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011) concluded that they had moderately-sized effects (.27-.43) on outcomes such as attitudes about the self, civic engagement, and academic performance. Moreover, key aspects of successful programs included providing support by connecting service experiences to a learning curriculum, giving students the opportunity for voice or expressing their perspectives and opinions, involvement of the community, and helping students reflect on their service experiences.

Advocate—Stand up for me when I need it

An important example of "advocate" is when support is provided to someone who is being bullied. Indeed, Flaspohler et al. (2009) found that peer and teacher support can both lessen the chances of students becoming bullies, and also mitigate the negative effects of being a victim of bullying. In that vein, Thornburg et al. (2012) described how bystanders can become allies to bullying victims, limiting the power bullies have to inflict harm. When deciding to be an ally to someone else, students will process emotions about the incident, evaluate their relationship to the victim, and decide if their actions will be effective in defending the victim. Bystanders process a number of factors in deciding to intervene, such as empathy towards a victim, social evaluation of friendship with the victim, and belief that intervening will be helpful.

Support is particularly important when children and youth face such challenges. For example:

- Teens who experience bullying are more likely to do well in school if they have support from their families and peers.
- Children with special needs particularly benefit from having parental advocates who speak up for their strengths and needs.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are less likely to experience depression and more likely to report higher quality of life when they have high levels of familial or

peer support (Simons, Schrager, Clark, Belzer, & Olson, 2013; Mustanski & Liu, 2013).

Another level of "advocacy" involves standing up for, not only an individual youth, but an entire group. For example, students can advocate for each other in formal organizations such as Gay-Straight Alliances. These have been impactful in creating safe spaces for many LGBTQ students and their allies. However, one study concluded that despite those positive effects for individual students, GSAs by themselves should not necessarily be expected to be successful in enacting structural change that makes the whole school physically and emotionally a safe place (Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2016). Similarly, the rejuvenation of the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in 2020, and the persistent protests that and other racially-motivated killings sparked drew millions of Americans, many of them young Americans, to the streets and ballot boxes in the name of genuine social justice. Awareness of and participation in such collective action has been a critical type of advocacy for changing inequitable social structures.

Another example of larger advocacy that provides support is when students advocate for stricter gun regulations in the aftermath of school shootings, such as the activism of the Parkland, Florida high school students in 2018. Unfortunately, there are the tragedies of mass shootings in schools in which students had advance knowledge of the plans, but did not act. These raise questions about a "code of silence" that can exist in peer culture that undermines efforts to prevent such deadly attacks and how best to promote the "see something, say something" approach to relational advocacy that goes far beyond advocating for an individual, to instead establish group norms that put the group's welfare (the safety of the school community, in this instance) above such codes of silence (Syvertsen, Flanagan, & Stout, 2009).

Set boundaries—Put in place limits that keep me on track

Setting boundaries involves relational actions that are commonplace across societies and contexts, such as parents' (and other adults') duty to protect children from harm, and helping children manage priorities among competing tasks and activities such that the most valued activities within their cultural setting get the most attention. These can range from parents requiring that homework get finished before children get screen time, to ensuring that children wear appropriate safety gear when bicycling or playing sports.

Context matters, too. Although parents cannot solve a problem like living in a high-crime neighborhood unless they are able to move, children in those more dangerous neighborhoods experience less stress if they have support from their parents (Bowen & Chapman, 1996). For example, studies in the U.S. have found that children living in high-crime neighborhoods do better on a variety of developmental outcomes if their parents are more authoritarian in enforcing restrictive more than permissive rules about spending time outside in those high-risk settings. These boundary-setting strategies have been found to be common across parents from differing races and ethnicities in high-risk neighborhoods, being found for both European-American and African-American parents (Pinderhughes et al., 2001), as well as for Latina mothers (Ceballo et al., 2012). However, although this has been a clear finding in U.S. contexts, it might not always generalize to other countries. For example, one study of Spanish adolescents found that, regardless of perceived neighborhood violence levels, it was both authoritative and indulgent or permissive parenting that were related to youth's more positive outcomes (Gracia et al., 2012).

Summary

We have seen how support in the forms of helping youth navigate their worlds, empowering them, advocating for them, and setting boundaries to help them stay both safe and focused are important as aspects of support, beyond caring and encouragement, for promoting positive youth development. These are all forms of providing help, in practical ways, which help young people develop, plan, achieve, and thrive in the different contexts of their lives.

But as much developmental territory as those four actions cover, another aspect of support is crucial for many youth, but is not yet explicit in our Developmental Relationships Framework: Material support. Families certainly hope to provide not simply sufficient but plentiful material support to enable their children to grow as healthily as possible, from food and clothing, to housing and transportation. Included in material support also are things like the money that affords living in good school systems, having varied kinds of books, magazines, and other reading material in the home that stimulates young minds, and being able to pay for children and youth to join in organized sports and pursue the creative arts. But of course not all families can provide basic necessities, much less these other resources and experiences that make life all the richer.

It is not necessary for someone outside the family to be a source of material support, in order for them to nurture a developmentally influential relationship with a young person. But plentiful research from other scholars as well as our own studies repeatedly show that for some young people with not enough connections who can provide the material resources they need, it is precisely that kind of support that is pivotal to enabling young people to discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them—our definition of what a developmental relationship is. As a result, future evolution of the framework and measures of developmental relationships may well give more attention to this part of support, as we continue to refine and add nuance and practical utility to the theory, measurement, and application of developmental relationships.

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Treat me with respect and give me a say.

What Is Share Power?

Sharing power builds on the notion of optimal dyadic interactions in which "the balance of power gradually shifts in favor of the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 60). A parent described this process in a focus group: "As they're getting older, let them understand they do have some control and we do expect them to take that control and make the right decisions with it." In the Developmental Relationships Framework, sharing power starts with mutual respect and inclusion in decision making, and extends to collaboration and opportunities for young people to take action and lead as capabilities and opportunities present themselves. These themes are particularly prominent in the literature on youth participation, leadership, community service, and empowerment (e.g., Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Pittman et al., 2003; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Among practitioners, Share Power often raises questions about its cross-cultural relevance, given different norms regarding age-, sex-, and role-based expectations in differing families and societies. In each case, examining the power dynamics in relationships is essential, though the extent to which power is "shared" varies widely. For example, sharing power can be an economic necessity for families in which adolescents play caregiving roles for younger siblings or elderly grandparents (Lee & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2011), provide help when parents work or are particularly tired (Tsai et al., 2013), and fulfill other essential roles in family maintenance and well-being. In addition, sharing power is an area where cultural differences can be particularly salient, with families in more individualistic societies and cultures expecting greater autonomy (i.e., more power sharing) for children at an earlier time in development than in more collectivist societies and cultures (Chen & Farruggia, 2002).

Why Is Share Power Important?

Research shows numerous developmental benefits to young people when they experience power being shared with them.

- Being able to help make decisions is linked to greater maintenance of self-esteem across the transition from elementary to junior high or middle school (Lord, Eccles, & McCarthy, 1989).
- In school, students experiencing more autonomy have better grades and fewer classroom discipline problems (Ryan et al., 2006).
- When coaches support students' autonomy through encouragement, positive feedback, and helping their athletes pursue intrinsic goals that come from their heart—what we have called "sparks" (Benson & Scales, 2009)—more than external rewards, then those student-athletes have more emotional and physical health and energy, and compete better (Ryan et al., 2009).
- When parents support autonomy in their children, such as by giving them appropriate

degrees of choice and control, this helps to develop children's executive functioning and self-regulation skills (Bernier, Carlson, & Whipple, 2010).

- Sharing power also promotes young people's intrinsic motivation (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006).
- Share Power has been found to be especially important for high school students in predicting greater academic motivation, more positive perceptions of school climate and instructional quality, and higher GPAs (Scales et al., 2019).
- Having a sense of choice and control is linked to prosocial behaviors such as empathy, moral reasoning, and better relationships with others (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2010).
- Families who are open to disagreements and discuss them constructively have children who are better able to resolve conflicts with peers (Laursen & Collins, 1994).

Despite its importance, youth in a large and diverse sample (14,088 middle and high school students) reported Share Power as one of the least-experienced elements of developmental relationships (Figure 7).

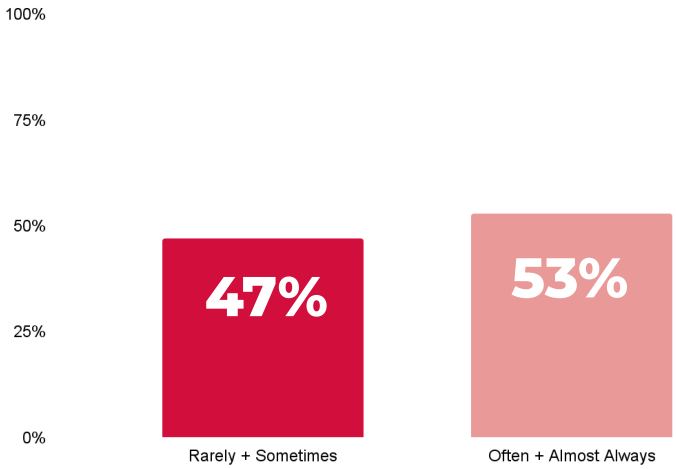

Figure 7

Percent of youth reporting Share Power in schools and OST programs.

How Does It Work?

According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Grolnick, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000)), three basic psychological and social needs underline motivation, social functioning, and overall well-being: Autonomy, belonging, and competence. Autonomy is the most related to the Share Power element of the Developmental Relationships Framework.

Research suggests that developing autonomy is critical for many aspects of positive adaptation in society, including academic success, good social skills, positive self-regard, and having fewer behavior problems (Ryan and Deci, 2010; Grolnick et al., 2002). Quality developmental relationships work to bolster this autonomy in children and adolescents. These relationships are characterized by reciprocity among the interacting adult or peer and the target child or youth, and by allowing children and youth to express their own opinions and be involved in decision-making, at developmentally-appropriate levels.

The key self-determination theory component of autonomy reflects the young person's feeling of having choice and control over their life and decisions. Importantly, autonomy is not synonymous with independence, but rather it is the capacity to behave according to one's beliefs and needs, with recognition of shared social commitments and responsibilities, but not according to others' control.

Knee and Uysal (2011) noted that autonomy-supportive parenting actively supports a child's capacity to be self-initiating and to act of their own volition. This parenting consists of four key components: Creating and maintaining boundaries by providing rational explanations when requesting that the child change their behavior; recognizing and acknowledging the child's feelings, opinions, and perspectives; providing the child with appropriate amounts of choice (too much choice can be overwhelming) and encouraging the child to take initiative when opportunities are well suited for the child's abilities; and minimizing controlling parenting strategies.

A review of two decades of research on student-teacher relationships (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005) suggests that students also do better educationally when teachers both communicate their content knowledge effectively while also giving students freedom and responsibility during group and independent work. But the way the teachers use their influence also matters. When teachers are oppositional, admonishing, or dissatisfied, students are less likely to learn. When they are cooperative and warm, students become more engaged and learn better. This kind of relationship—characterized by both high teacher influence and a cooperative spirit—is also what both students and teachers say they prefer. When teacher-student relationships are characterized by this kind of high influence and cooperation, Wubbels' and Brekelmans' review concluded that students had lower levels of discipline problems, and teachers had lower levels of stress and burnout.

Our research has found, however, that Share Power is one of the least commonly-reported elements of developmental relationships (the other being Expand Possibilities), by both students and teachers (Scales et al., 2019; Scales, Pekel, & Houltberg, 2022), as well as by parents (Pekel et al., 2015). In addition, a qualitative study of the dynamics of challenging student-teacher relationships found that those challenging interactions most often occur around issues of power, with the teachers in that study rarely yielding much when negotiating around power dynamics with their students (Chamberlain, Scales, & Sethi, 2020).

Power has also been a key issue in the literature on young people's peer relationships. On one level, peer relationships can be more egalitarian than parent-child and other adult-youth relationships, with peer relationships being "more likely to be characterized by mutual negotiation, equality and freedom of choice" (Bukowski & Sandberg, 1999, p. 108). For example, children as young as ages 4-6 have been found to be more willing to argue with friends about moral dilemmas, but act as if mothers' moral judgements are non-negotiable (Mammen, Koymen, & Tomasello, 2019). Yet, hierarchies also are a dominant feature of the peer culture, with some groups having more status and power than others (Brown & Larson, 2009). In friendships and romantic relationships, one person can exert greater or lesser power, including intimidation and aggression (Fellmeth et al, 2013). How peers negotiate power in their relationships becomes an important dynamic that can provide templates for how young people address power dynamics in relationships throughout their lives.

In the youth program context as well, practitioners and researchers have long known that positive youth development program experiences become most effective when they

include a foundation of warm, trusting, respectful relationships, within which youth have plentiful opportunities to help make decisions, offer their perspectives and opinions, and contribute their talents, interests, and leadership meaningfully to the activities and mission of the programs (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). All of these reflect aspects of Share Power (often intertwined with the other developmental relationships elements of Expand Possibilities, Challenge Growth, Provide Support, and Express Care).

Whether the context is the family, school, community, or peer relationships, the key dynamic animating the Share Power element is negotiation between the people in the relationship. That negotiation might not be overt or explicit, but it is rarely absent. Parents and their children, siblings, teachers and their students, youth and adults in OST programs, community organizations or neighborhoods, friends and romantic partners, all are in ongoing tweaking and adjustment of who makes the decisions, when, how, and about what. Thus, although we write about them separately below as a matter of convenience, this dynamic makes it more difficult to neatly separate from each other the four Share Power actions of respect me, involve me, collaborate, and let me lead.

Respect Me—Take me seriously and treat me fairly

This action is another example of the fundamental connectedness of the actions across the Developmental Relationships Framework. To be taken "seriously" means, most basically, to not be ignored, to be paid attention to, to be shown by others' actions that they believe you have value. There are strong undercurrents of Express Care and Challenge Growth in this action of "respect me." For example, really listening to someone (Express Care) demonstrates taking them seriously. Expecting the best from them (Challenge Growth) reflects both taking them seriously and treating them fairly. Having high expectations for a young person, for example, shows that regardless of sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, or any other diversity, that youth is expected to behave and achieve at the highest level of their potential, just like everyone else. Sharing power/respect may also include recognizing, respecting, and helping youth and others to work to overcome the external barriers or systemic challenges young people in marginalized communities/identities face in living up to their potential compared to others who are more privileged. As such, this combines the Share Power and Provide Support elements to assist youth in navigating those barriers.

Perhaps one of the most vivid examples of "respect me" is how discipline issues are handled across racial-ethnic groups in schools. Whether different groups of students are treated the same or differently in how school behavior rules are enforced matters for students' perceptions of overall school climate as well as their own sense of connection to the school. For example, students who believe they are treated unfairly have more delinquent behavior in school (Gottfredson et al., 2015) and are less academically engaged (Ripski & Gregory, 2009). Indeed, a large nationally representative study of more than 2,000 school districts showed that large discipline gaps along racial lines are strongly linked with large race-based achievement gaps (Sparks, 2019). The data show that African American students (as well as other students of color/indigenous students) are often penalized for behavior that goes unpunished when done by white students, or that is less seriously punished for white perpetrators (e.g., Annamma et al., 2019; Bottiani, Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2017). Thus, many schools have a structural problem with the "respect me" action that, unless addressed in larger actions to promote broad racial equity, will make it more difficult for individual teachers to build that feeling of being respected across all of

their students.

Include Me—Involve me in decisions that affect me

The evolution of power-shifting in decision making is perhaps best understood within the context of the family. For example, Wray-Lake, Crouter, and McHale (2010) conducted a longitudinal analysis of autonomous decision-making in 9-20 year olds, and found that family decision-making becomes more adolescent-driven with age. Joint decision-making is highest during middle adolescence and lowest in early and late adolescence. Young adolescents have more parent-made decisions, while late adolescents make decisions more autonomously. Overall, autonomous decision-making increases gradually across early adolescence, with a steep increase after age 15 years.

Then too, when children enter the school system, they experience increased freedom from parental control. They spend time with peers and must manage these relationships on their own. Furthermore, middle childhood is characterized by more freedom and responsibilities than the preschool age. This may lead to tensions between this new found autonomy and higher expectations from both parents and teachers (Eccles, 1999). Indeed, a mismatch between adolescents' development of autonomy and desire for a greater role in decision making, and teachers' maintaining or even increasing their exercise of control over the transition to middle school (a stage-environment misfit), has been commonly found for decades and linked to poor school adjustment and performance (Eccles et al., 1993).

Collaborate—Work with me to solve problems and reach goals

The line that separates "include me," "collaborate," and "let me lead" is relatively thin. All reflect cooperative actions of the youth and other person (adult or peer) together dealing with an issue, problem, or challenge. The subtle difference in the three actions may be the relative influence of the youth in that process, ranging from being included but having less influence than the other, to relatively equal influence (collaborate), to the youth exerting the greater influence (lead).

Beveridge and Berg (2007), for example, describe how a common challenge during adolescence is that many changes in the young person (e.g. physical, cognitive, social, and emotional) coincide with mid-life developmental changes of the parent. Therefore, research suggests that it is also important in the parent-adolescent relationship for parents to be able to express their opinions, to have these views respected by their adolescent, and to have a warm relationship. They note that it is through collaboration (defined by Beveridge and Berg as "a way of relating that involves active engagement and emphasis on equal engagement"), that the relationship remains reciprocal and transactional, and encompasses the needs of both the adolescent and the parent. When adolescents showed autonomy through problem-solving and stating their own views and when they supported their parent's own autonomy, adolescents were more likely to have high self-control, self-esteem, attachment security, and positive identity exploration. In that study, parents who exhibited their own independence of thought and assertiveness, and who had interest in and supported their adolescent's opinions, had adolescents with lower internalizing and externalizing problems, and higher self-control and self-esteem. Thus, this feature of collaboration--asserting and affirming the parent's own independence, and not just that of the adolescent--is beneficial for both.

Hartup (1998) noted that students collaborating with each other for learning has the

advantage of tapping the ways students motivate each other through their relationships. Researchers suggest that peers motivate each other academically because good friends know what their friends need. They can often be better at working together and pushing each other than an adult can. Additionally, they can expect more from each other because of their mutual commitment and trust. Their caring, close bonds give them confidence to take risks in experimenting and solving problems. Hesse et al. (2015) also discussed collaboration as a key activity in which peers share power. They defined collaboration as, "the activity of working together towards a common goal," and included components such as communication, cooperation, and responsiveness.

Finally, Roseth, Johnson, and Johnson (2008) describe how students tend to learn and achieve more when they are motivated with cooperative goals that involve a lot of collaboration, as contrasted with goals that encourage competition or individual achievement. The authors found that, in a cooperative classroom, students have a stake in other students' learning, not just their own. This kind of collaborative learning also tends to create more positive student relationships, which also contribute to higher levels of achievement. Similarly, it has long been found that students' desires to be prosocial and socially responsible in the classroom, which naturally implicate collaboration with others, are significant predictors of their motivation, classroom behavior, and achievement (e.g., Wenztel, 1998).

Let Me Lead—Create opportunities for me to take action and lead

There is a large literature showing that students benefit from taking actions to improve their schools and communities. For example, studies consistently find that students who engage in community service and service-learning have better behavior, better self-concepts, more participation in civic affairs, more social skills, and better attitudes towards school and school achievement than students who do not participate (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2007).

There also are extensive data showing that adolescent development is promoted when parents encourage young people to develop and express their own opinions and beliefs, in a context of warmth and firmness (Steinberg, 2001). Eccles et al. (1993), for example, reported positive associations between the extent of adolescents' participation in family decision-making and school motivation, self-esteem, and adjustment during the elementary to middle school (then called junior high school) transition. Grotevant and Cooper (1986) similarly found that adolescents who were allowed to assert themselves and participate in family discussions within a context of mutuality – that is, parents and adolescents acknowledging each other's viewpoints – were most likely to score higher on measures of identity and role-taking skills than parents and adolescents who did not acknowledge one another's views. Associations like those are particularly strong when adolescents are afforded the chance to define and reflect on multiple aspects of a given issue (Olson, Cromwell & Klein, 1975; Smetana, 1988).

Participating in decision making through action, not only deliberation, also appears to benefit adolescent development. Jarrett's (1995) literature review concluded that the assignment of early family responsibilities, when properly managed, encourages mastery, enhances self-esteem, and facilitates family cohesion. Redmond and Dolan (2014) noted that in out-of-school settings, too, youths' ideas need not just to be heard, but sometimes to be acted upon, because "without action, there can be no leadership" (p. 267). In contrast, when parents exert too much psychological control, adolescents' ability to monitor and direct attention and behavior in response to demands (i.e., to self-regulate) shows declines

over time (Rogers, Memmott-Elison, Padilla-Walker, & Byon, 2019).

In the school setting as well, Wallace, Sung, Williams (2014) described how the central goal of sharing power with students is to develop their ability to learn independently and to take responsibility for their own actions, choices, and learning. Researchers have also found that teachers nurture this kind of autonomy at the middle school level when they give students opportunities to move around, work with others, and make choices about their learning. When teachers provide opportunities for students to take more ownership of daily classroom activities, and the support to do so (i.e., help them navigate challenges), those students are more engaged in their classes (Ozer & Douglas, 2012). Hart (2008) also emphasized the importance of informal youth participation and leadership, rather than formal leadership in programs (e.g., being a club president), so that a greater number of youth have opportunities to share power, than just the small number named to official "leadership" positions.

Summary

The evidence shows that sharing power is a crucial way in which parents, teachers and other adults, and peers can promote positive development in young people. But a national survey of parents of children ages 3-13, studies of student-teacher relationships, and a study of a diverse sample of more than 14,000 middle and high school students suggest that share power (along with expand possibilities, and sometimes express care) is one of the least-often experienced aspects of developmental relationships for most young people (Chamberlain et al., 2020; Pekel et al., 2018; Roehlkepartain et al., 2017; Scales et al. 2019; Scales et al. 2020; Search Institute, 2020). This suggests that increasing young people's opportunities to make choices, contribute to decisions, and participate in actions to improve their families, schools, and communities must be a more intentional and explicit goal of families, schools, youth organizations, religious congregations, and other settings, if the developmental benefits of sharing power with young people are to be more fully and equitably realized.

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Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.

What Is Expand Possibilities?

The final element in the Developmental Relationships Framework, *Expand Possibilities*, proposes that close relationships open pathways by inspiring young people to see new possibilities for themselves, exposing them to new ideas, experiences, and places, and introducing them to people who can help them explore and grow. Trusting relationships broaden young people's access to ideas and resources beyond the relationship. For example, "Youth who experience program staff as empathic, authentic, and who feel that these adults view them favorably may be more open to assistance that is offered and perhaps also more likely to seek out or ask for assistance or guidance" (Spencer & Rhodes, 2014, p. 62). This seems to be true even more so for youth who have had problematic relationships with adults.

At a more fundamental level, ideas young people have about who they are and whom they can and want to be are informed by and often created in conversations with people they trust. In this way, a broad base of trusting relationships expands the range of roles young people can envision playing, and the resources they can access to bring this chosen vision to life (Eckersley, Wierenga, & Wyn, 2006; Sullivan, 2011). As one youth said about a mentor: "She's helped enlighten me to realize that I can be absolutely anything that I put my mind to, that I want to do in life."

Although many people play these roles for different young people, Stanton-Salazar (2011) highlighted the role of "institutional agents" (persons with relatively high status within a society or institution) in opening new possibilities for working-class minority youth through sharing their human, cultural, and social capital to which those youth would not otherwise have access. He summarized his conclusions as follows:

"When low-status youth do overcome the odds, it is usually through interventions that embed them in a network of institutional agents connected to services, organizations, and resources oriented toward their empowerment. Interventions absent of rich social capital and resource-generating networks regularly fail" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1097).

Why Is Expand Possibilities Important?

Research shows the considerable benefits to youth when their horizons are broadened.

- According to a review by Feeney and Collins (2015), relationships that help to expand possibilities are essential to individuals' long-term thriving. Encouraging exploration should lead children to focus more on the potential rewards of opportunities than being worried about failing.
- Social capital and social connectedness are related to powerful health effects, educational performance, and individual levels of happiness (Putnam, 2000).
- Sullivan and Larson (2010) found that by connecting youth to high-resource adults youth gain knowledge about specific career paths, academic options, and information

about how civic, business, and other adult worlds work. For example, the adults in their study helped youth obtain references for jobs, navigate the college application process, and access professional circles.

- Natural mentoring relationships are positively related to adolescents' outcomes in education and work, psychological well-being, and physical health, and they are negatively related to problem behavior (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). For example, a national study of 15 year olds showed that youth with natural mentors were more engaged in school and more committed to mastering the material, had more prosocial values such as helping the poor and serving in their communities, and a greater sense of purpose (Schwartz et al., 2013).
- Among youth who do not have fathers present, having adult male role models is related to the economic gains those youth make over time (Timpe & Lunkenheimer, 2015).
- Positive relationships with adults outside their families help young people boost their autonomy, and shape their sense of identity and future possibilities (Roorda et al., 2011).

Expanding young people's possibilities is clearly important for their positive development, but it is the least-reported element of developmental relationships in schools and OST settings, according to the results of our study of a large and diverse sample of middle and high school students (14,088 youth; Figure 8).

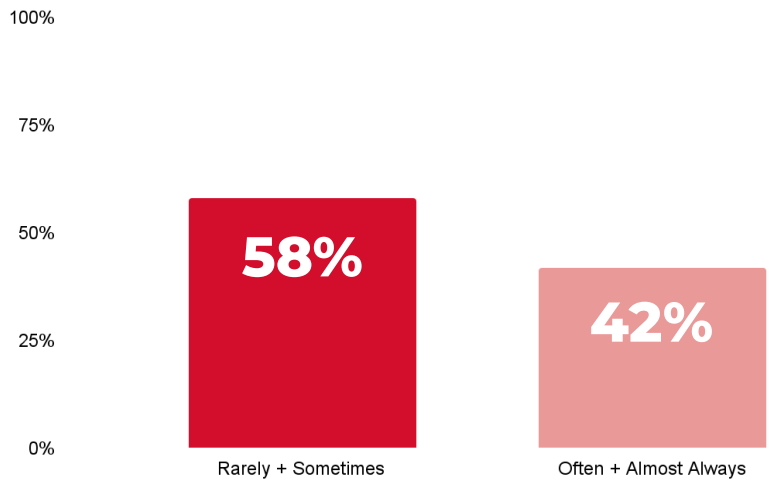

Figure 8

Percent of youth reporting Expand Possibilities in schools and OST programs.

How Does It Work?

Exploration and expansion of possibilities is the most essential psychosocial work of humans in the first two decades or so of life. From the moment of birth, when the neonate first encounters the sensations of light, sound, smell, and touch outside the womb, the developing person is engaged in a 24/7 process of learning and growth, not always conscious or intentional, that builds on their genetically-inherited personality predispositions and continuously shapes their evolving personal and social identity. From a developmental perspective, "expanding possibilities" is as inevitable and necessary a

human growth process as breathing.

From the standpoint of the Developmental Relationships Framework, the key question then is not whether the young person is engaged in the process of expanding their possibilities, because all young people are, with varying degrees of awareness and intentionality in that process. The key question is, how are adults and peers in that young person's life meaningfully helping to promote that process of exploration and expansion?

Feeney and Collins (2015) described how attachment theory understands this process in the family setting. For example, children who develop a secure base of attachment to the parenting adults in their lives treat that relationship as a "safe haven" (Bowlby, 1982) that enables them to roam beyond the boundaries of the parent-child relationship to form relationships with other family members, and increasingly as they age, with peers and adults outside the family. Parents can further promote this exploration process by acting as "relational catalysts" who encourage children to leave their comfort zones, try new experiences, and create new friendships and other connections. In addition, having a secure relational base is associated with having less negative evaluations of "out-group" members, irrespective of the attachment style one had early in life (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). Therefore, feeling secure in foundational relationships inherently promotes more equitable opportunity because it is associated with children being more open to connecting with diverse people.

This same secure-base dynamic operates among peers as well. For example, close friendships offer emotional security, particularly in novel or threatening situations. Just having a friend with them can boost confidence when young people are with unfamiliar people or in unfamiliar places. This security helps to open young people "to explore new environments, try new behaviors, or take the kind of small and large risks often associated with growth" (Parker et al., 2006, p. 441). Indeed, Rubin and colleagues (2011) argued that "perhaps the most important function of friendship is to offer children an extra-familial base of security from which they may explore the effects of their behaviors on themselves, their peers, and their environments" (p. 315). Or, as Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) summarized, "the most extensive difference between friends and acquaintances appears to be in their expressions of amity, manifestations of closeness, and demonstrations of faithfulness with each other" (p. 301).

Inspire—Inspire me to see possibilities for my future

High-quality mentoring relationships consistently have been found to be positive influences on youth, likely because of their overall impact on several elements in the Developmental Relationships Framework, including Expand Possibilities. A large meta-analysis of 73 studies, for example, found pervasive positive academic, psychological, social-emotional, and behavioral effects for both children and adolescents in mentoring relationships, although the typical effects were fairly modest (DuBois et al., 2011). Subsequent meta-analyses have shown that the effects are almost doubled when there are specific, targeted academic, social-emotional, psychological, or behavioral goals that the mentoring relationship is designed to affect (Christensen et al., 2020).

Mentoring relationships seem to have their effects through a process of valuing and respecting youths' interests and priorities, while also helping the youth gain a deeper understanding of how their interests and talents provide possibilities for success and satisfaction. For example, research has shown that "Close and enduring ties are fostered when mentors adopt a flexible, youth-centered style in which the young person's interests

and preferences are emphasized" (Rhodes & Chan, 2008, p. 88). Among the mechanisms for how mentoring creates positive effects may be that it can help young people shape both their current and future identities, including shifting their ideas of what they can become in the future, based on how they are inspired by and internalize a mentor's mindsets, capacities, and roles; this process can occur both in naturally-occurring and more formal mentor relationships (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006).

Thus, inspiring a young person to see a greater variety of options for themselves in the present and future may involve a combination of role modeling, exhortation, and direct guidance, but to be effective, it must start with a focus on the youth's current interests and passions, what we call their "sparks" (Benson & Scales, 2009; Scales, Redmond, & Benson, 2022). In a series of national studies of 15-year-olds, for example, researchers found that an adult typically encouraged them to try something, signed them up for a class, or taught them directly. Then as youth developed their spark, the adults, whether family, mentors, teachers, coaches, or others, encouraged and challenged them to grow, expressed appreciation for their sparks, asked youth to demonstrate or show them the spark, attended concerts or activities, or showed their support in other ways (Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Benson, 2010).

Not coincidentally, most youth who say they have a spark also say there is at least one adult who really "gets" them, i.e., positive relationships and sparks usually go hand in hand (Scales et al., 2010). In addition, youth who have those sparks, relationships, and opportunities to have a voice in their lives (part of Share Power) are more likely to be more relationally or other-oriented in ways like placing a high value on equality in society, or volunteering (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011; Scales, Redmond, & Benson, 2022).

Mentoring in particular may also work by how it affects other relationships beyond the mentoring one. For example, students in grades 4-9 with high-quality mentoring relationships based on affirmation of their interests and expansion of their possibilities have been found to have higher end of the school year self-esteem, positive academic attitudes, prosocial behaviors, and less misconduct, in part through how their mentoring relationships seem to have strengthened their relationships with parents and teachers (Chan et al., 2013). Thus, a positive cascading effect can be seen in how inspiring youth to see and believe in their possibilities for the future affects not only young people's internal social-emotional strengths but the larger supportive relational environment around them.

Broaden horizons—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places

Throughout infancy, toddlerhood, and the preschool years, parenting adults are children's primary windows on the world, with new ideas, experiences, and places being introduced almost continuously at first, as the neonate absorbs and already starts having an impact on their world. With the introduction of preschool and early school experiences, peers and teachers begin to take on more of that role of broadening horizons, with each becoming more important sources of expansion of possibilities as young people grow into adolescence.

School is an especially critical source, because of its organized, repeated, and more formally-sequenced exposure to new concepts, ideas, skills, and cultures, particularly in schools that have an intentional emphasis on diversity. For example, Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that when diversity is celebrated in school curriculum, students are better equipped to engage the world and develop responsible roles in society. Teachers can facilitate this process by engaging in culturally-relevant teaching, in which students' cultures are the

vehicles for learning. When teachers know their students' interests and values, they can incorporate them into lessons to increase the relevance of content and spark interest. All students benefit from this approach by being exposed to different ideas. Researchers have found that culturally-responsive classrooms are equitable in design, where all students are encouraged to discover more about themselves and teach the teacher and other students what they know (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Ladsen-Billings, 1995). Teachers also cultivate a community of learners in their classroom, expanding possibilities for students by providing opportunities for them to share their lives. A large study of students in grades 6-8 found that academic motivation and GPA were higher when students reported experiencing all five elements of the Developmental Relationships Framework, as well as their teachers connecting students' interests or sparks to learning and students feeling culturally affirmed by their teachers (Scales et al., 2021). But the study also found that students from lower-income backgrounds were less likely to report having this kind of relational social capital that included connecting sparks to learning and cultural affirmation.

Frank, Muller, and Mueller (2013) also studied how students learn new information from friends that can expand their worldviews. Typically, friendships begin from common interests and provide an opportunity to identify with someone like-minded. The types of classes a student takes matter as well, according to those researchers. Across differing classes, students meet new people who share interests but may be outside their social circles. Students can then feel bonds with other students in the classes they are taking and are less likely to judge them on visible characteristics, such as race and sex. Thus, students have greater exposure to diverse worldviews and a chance to grow intellectually.

In the modern world, as Spies Shapiro and Margolin (2014) discussed, the internet also can open a powerful world of possibilities for young people to connect and share information with other peers and adults, which can provide new contexts in exploring identity and learning social skills. Online experiences also can be useful in learning about and experiencing other cultures, people, and places. Of course, the positive developmental potential of social media can be marred by pressure for young people to reveal too much about themselves, be compared to others in an unhealthy way, or be exploited by unscrupulous online users. Teachers can mediate many of these negative effects at school by instructing students to think critically about which sites they use for information and how to utilize online etiquette. With the proper boundaries, the internet can then be harnessed as a powerful tool for collaboration, investigation, and dialogue. Even here, however, inequities persist, and were powerfully revealed by the large differences by race and income in access to online learning during the global COVID-19 pandemic that began at the end of 2019. A Brookings study reported that nearly two-thirds of teachers in low-income schools said access to technology was a problem for their students, versus just 21% who said that in high-income schools; only 10% of white students had no access to online instruction, compared with 30% of Hispanic students and 40% of African American students (Allen & West, 2020).

Connect—Introduce me to people who can help me grow

Sullivan and Larson (2010) studied how effective youth programs connect youth to what they called "high-resource" adults. These programs emphasized activities that provided a clear structure for positive youth-adult interactions, including presentations from experts, soliciting donations, collaborative activities, and lobbying institutions. Both youth and adults were placed in defined, meaningful roles, and some activities put youth in a position of equality with adults, although most paralleled the typical hierarchy of adult as leader.

Parents also can help to connect their children to helpful adults by looking for youth organizations that engage in these effective practices.

Stanton-Salazar (2011) discussed connection in the context of how to improve the life possibilities of minoritized youth. He noted how students succeed in part due to the support of a network of relationships in their lives. Teachers and other school staff play a key role in this network by connecting students to resources and opportunities. Many students from low-income families and families of color can benefit greatly from this support, as it widens their knowledge on how to navigate educational environments and pursue future possibilities that they might have imagined but which have been effectively closed to them because of systemic exclusion from opportunities (Scales, Boat, & Pekel, 2020). A close relationship with a teacher, for example, can help shape a student's goals for the future. Positive relationships with teachers and other staff increase the likelihood that students will be attached and committed to their school. As a result, students know where to go if they are struggling or wish to explore additional academic opportunities. Greater access to resources is empowering and can allow students to envision that success is possible with help from adults around them.

Those kinds of youth organizations or teachers providing similar connections may be especially helpful for recent immigrant families. As Perriera, Chapman, and Stein (2006) found, immigrant Hispanic parents face many unique challenges in expanding possibilities for their children. Specifically, after migration many parents have to confront a loss of social support networks, the loss of the status of their former social class, and the loss of familiar social roles. This loss of parental social support networks can be particularly impactful to children's social development, as many parents in the Perriera et al. study reported not feeling safe allowing their children to attend friends' parties, to attend sleepovers, or to go to the movies with their peers.

Summary

From birth, human development over the first two decades of life, and longer in industrialized societies, is centrally about expanding possibilities. As famously put by John Dewey (1938), the purpose of development is more development. The infant's horizons are being broadened in infinite ways that lead by adolescence and young adulthood, if development is positive, to a more clear and stable personal and social identity, competence in skills valued by the young person's cultural setting, ability to form and maintain close relationships, and a more mature exercise of choice and self-determination within the norms and obligations of the given cultural milieu. None of this can be achieved without an ongoing broadening of what young people perceive to be possible for them, and it is difficult to envision how that sense of possibility gets realized outside the realm of enduring relationships with adults and peers who care about the young person.

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CONCLUSION

In this Research Review, we have discussed each of the five elements of the Developmental Relationships Framework, and presented selected research studies showing both the importance of each element, and how they work through the 20 actions named in the Framework. We have seen how important the five relational elements are to numerous indicators of positive youth development, and also seen that less than half of youth report frequently experiencing these kinds of developmental relationships (Search Institute, 2020).

We end with several reminders about the Framework that are critical to using it effectively, whether in theory building, research, or practical settings. First, developmental relationships are more than the sum of the five elements. Second, developmental relationships are fundamental levers of opportunity, engagement, and equity. Third, there are individual differences in which elements are more important, and when. Fourth, the elements and associated relational actions may be more or less valid and potent, depending on the cultural setting.

Relational Holism

For the sake of clarity and communication, the elements of the Developmental Relationships Framework have been presented as a list, intentionally articulating specific, concrete actions that can be described, practiced, observed, and improved. However, this approach also risks the elements and actions being interpreted reductively. As we have seen, however, the greater power of these five elements and 20 actions of the framework may lie in the synergy among them, interacting with other developmental resources and developmental experiences (see Nagaoka et al., 2015), including the young person's own capacities and agency. The five elements are connected to each other. Much as we can discuss mind and body as if they are separate, pretending that they are not inevitably intertwined (e.g., Dum et al., 2019; Kendler, 2005), we can, for the sake of convenience, discuss each of the elements as if it were a separate feature of a developmental relationship. But we see repeatedly how they are correlated. In the research we have cited in this review, in our own qualitative focus groups and interviews about how developmental relationships really work, and in our quantitative research where each of the elements has moderate to high correlations with the others, there is ample evidence of how the elements operate synergistically and holistically.

Opportunity, Engagement, and Equity

In considering what promotes students' engagement at school, Pianta, Hamre, and Allen (2012, p. 367) observed that "Engagement reflects relationally mediated participation in opportunity." The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago Schools Research similarly situated development and opportunity: "the intentional provision of opportunities for young people to experience, interact, and make meaning of their experiences [is] the central vehicle for learning and development" (Nagaoka et al., 2015, p. 1).

Throughout our examination of research on the elements of developmental relationships, we have seen how they can foster young people's deeper engagement in any context, not just school, and how relationships are the principal vehicle for social capital (Boat et al., 2021; Scales, Boat, & Pekel, 2020; Scales et al., 2021), providing young people with resources, opportunities, and possibilities for growth and the means to pursue their goals

and dreams. That role developmental relationships play is thus central in promoting greater equity of opportunity for youth from historically-marginalized communities, especially young people systemically denied opportunity due to racial and socioeconomic discrimination. Committing to ensuring that all children and youth have high-quality developmental relationships with adults across the contexts of their lives does not substitute for the necessary larger work of achieving racial and economic justice through revamping and tearing down racist and discriminatory structures and norms. But ensuring that experience of developmental relationships is an important part of this larger equity agenda.

Individual Differences

It is clear that research supports the importance and potential for the positive impact of each of the elements and actions included in the Developmental Relationships Framework. It is also clear that the elements and actions are not equally valuable for all young people at all points in their development. For example, Share Power and Expand Possibilities may have special importance for young adolescents, roughly ages 10-15, as they transition to defining their personal and social identities more sharply and need to explore more fully their interests and capacities, particularly engaging in meaningful activities that make a contribution. Our ongoing qualitative and quantitative studies in schools, families, out-of-school time programs, peer programs, mentoring partnerships, sports, and other settings have and will continue to shed light on when specific actions are most salient for young people in particular circumstances and settings (e.g., family, schools, youth programs) or relationships (e.g., parent, peer, teacher, coach). In addition, future studies will examine how these actions in specific relationships contribute to specific desirable outcomes for young people in particular cultures, contexts, and settings.

Future studies will also seek to understand how the number of developmental relationships in a young person's life influences their outcomes and development. Although it is desirable to surround young people with as many such relationships as possible, some youth in our qualitative studies identified single, powerful relationships that for them had all five elements of a developmental relationship. So, more relationships may be better, but one intensive relationship may be catalytic in some instances. Likewise, for some youth the power may be more in experiencing a relationship defined by challenging growth than, for example, expanding possibilities (or, for that particular young person, challenge may be the preferred entry point for the relationship).

Cultural Variations

The final reminder is about how the Developmental Relationships Framework is experienced across diverse cultures and contexts. Even in the limited research review we have presented here, we can appreciate that the Framework has reasonable face validity across cultural settings, but that what each of the elements means, and how each ideally is expressed, varies depending on the context. Examples are how Express Care is appropriately communicated in schools, for example, versus family settings, or in how Share Power is defined and demonstrated in more individualistic versus collectivist cultures.

There are inherent risks in proposing a single, integrated framework that does not explicitly reflect the diversity in how different people and cultures approach relationships. Although the perspectives of diverse youth, parents, educators, and scholars in the United States have been integrated into this developmental relationships work to date, and although

we have embarked on an even deeper journey to better culturally contextualize the Framework through working with a network of diverse established and emerging scholars and positive youth development organizations, no single framework can adequately reflect the range of cultural resources and approaches that shape relationships. Sometimes those culturally diverse practices align with a named action in the Framework; at other times they do not. The task ahead is to continue refining the Framework to resonate—not perfectly, for that is impossible, but with reasonable validity—across many different cultures and contexts within the United States and internationally (see Scales, Hsieh, & Benson, 2022, and Scales, Redmond, & Benson, 2022 for more on cultural validity issues around developmental assets, developmental relationships, and youth thriving).

In the process, culturally specific practices will enrich a shared understanding of what developmental relationships are and how they work and can be strengthened within and across cultures. A similar process unfolded over more than a decade of work in more than 30 countries, as Search Institute's developmental assets framework was used to study and promote positive youth development around the world. In some countries, all of the external (relational, environmental) and internal (values, attitudes, skills) assets were found to be culturally relevant and valid, while in other countries, some concepts and measures aligned well in the culture and some did not (Scales, Roehlkepartain, & Shramko, 2017).

We suspect a similar result will be seen as the Developmental Relationships Framework is studied in more cultural settings within the U.S. and globally. Each of the five elements may have somewhat different accents and validity across diverse cultures, but like the Developmental Assets framework proved to be over the last 30 years (see Scales, Hsieh, & Benson, 2022), we hope and expect that the Developmental Relationships Framework as a whole will be found over the next decades to be a critically important scientific and practical means for both understanding and promoting positive youth development across cultures worldwide.

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Search INSTITUTE

Search Institute
3001 Broadway Street NE #310
Minneapolis, MN 55413

800.888.7828

612.376.8955

info@searchinstitute.org

www.searchinstitute.org