THE TROUBLED JOURNEY:

A PORTRAIT OF 6TH-12TH GRADE YOUTH

By Peter L. Benson, Ph.D.

This report is a composite look at public schools in the first 111 communities that conducted the 152-item survey titled *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* (September 1989-March 1990) through the RespecTeen program. RespecTeen is a nationwide effort aimed at helping parents, adolescents, schools, youth-serving agencies, congregations, and communities work together in promoting positive youth development. It is a program of Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal benefit society based in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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THE VISION

There was a time in the not-too-distant past when we assumed that most youth would navigate successfully through childhood and adolescence, graduating without special effort or support to responsible adulthood. There were casualties, but they were relatively hidden from public view. Casualties were other people's children.

Our national perception is different now. There is great worry about the health and vitality of young people. Anxious images abound – "the forgotten half," "the hurried child," "at-risk," "the school dropout," "the teenage parent." We speak now of prevention and intervention, of school reform and teaching parents how to parent. Things once taken for granted – like effective schools, caring communities, supportive families – are now being reinvented.

It is not clear whether growing up now is riskier business than it once was, or whether we are simply doing a better job of naming and counting problems that have existed before. It does not really matter. What matters is that there are too many casualties, too many wounded, too many close calls. Our highest national priority should be to mobilize our collective energy, commitment, and ingenuity to ensure a bright future for each and every child.

The Vision

Step one in maximizing positive youth development– whether at the national level or at the level of a single community – is to articulate a vision of what we want for our children. As a reasonable starting point, such a vision would have these five elements.

1. External Assets	To surround all children with networks of care, support, and control
2. Internal Assets	To nurture within children the kinds of positive commitments, values, and social competencies needed for positive development
3. Deficits	To insulate young people from abuse, neglect, indifference, poverty, and hunger
4. Prosocial Behavior	To promote a prosocial disposition through encouraging and rewarding personal involvement in helping others
5. At-risk Behavior	To prevent health-compromising, future-jeopardizing behavior choices

This research report attempts to evaluate how well this vision is being met. It introduces working definitions for assets, deficits, at-risk behavior, and prosocial behavior; describes grade (6th-12th), gender, and racial/ethnic differences in these constructs; and identifies interrelationships among the constructs, with particular emphasis on explaining how external and internal assets are linked to the prevention of 20 kinds of at-risk behavior.

Why Another Study?

This report is only one of many national research efforts documenting the state of youth welfare. Certainly it will not be the last. It builds on the significant contributions made in recent years by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (*Monitoring the Future*), the Children's Defense Fund (see, for example, *A Briefing Book on the Status of American Children in 1988*), the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (see, for example, *Turning Points: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century*), the American Medical Association (*America's Adolescents: How Healthy Are They?*), the William T. Grant Foundation (*American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot*), and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education (*Trends in the Well-Being of American Youth*).

Each of these documents provides important baseline data for evaluating the current status of children and/or adolescents. Each, however, tends to focus on a compressed range of issues (e.g., school completion and performance, alcohol and other drug use, health, poverty, hunger, and nutrition), which limits our understanding of the co-occurrence of these problem areas. Each report uses somewhat idiosyncratic age or grade categories, making it difficult to chart age-related trends. And most do not investigate the community, family, and school factors associated with positive youth development.

The Troubled Journey seeks to address these gaps. It is comprehensive, both in its coverage of assets, deficits, and behavior and in its use of large samples of youth in each grade between 6 and 12; it is analytical, seeking to understand how environmental and personal dynamics prevent or exacerbate health-compromising choices; and it is practical, pointing to strategies that hold promise for ensuring the well-being of the next generation.

How Was The Study Done?

RespecTeen, a national program sponsored by Lutheran Brotherhood, Minneapolis, assists communities in developing comprehensive and coordinated strategies to promote youth welfare. RespecTeen makes available (free of charge) to public or private schools the opportunity to conduct a systematic study of youth perspectives, values, and behaviors utilizing *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors,* a 152-item inventory developed by Search Institute.* Between September, 1989 and March, 1990, public schools in 111 communities in 25 states took advantage of this opportunity. This report is based on the composite sample of 46,799 6th to 12th grade students involved in these local studies.**

In most communities, the survey was administered to all public school students in grades 7-12 (or 6-12). In a few larger communities, the survey was administered to random samples of students. In all communities, the survey was administered by school staff, employing standardized procedures outlined in a comprehensive administration manual. Special efforts were taken to guarantee anonymity to each participating student.

Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors contains items and scales that have been developed, piloted, and refined in a number of research projects spanning a 10-year period. Technical information on the survey can be acquired from Search Institute.

*Each participating district receives a comprehensive report describing grade and gender patterns in family composition, family dynamics, school climate and attitudes, social competencies, values, prosocial behavior, time use, sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, antisocial behavior, interests, and needs.

**49,340 surveys were processed. 2,541 were discarded for one or more of these reasons: 40 or more questions were left blank; the student claimed to have used a fictitious drug called Alawan; the student responded inconsistently on items measuring the same phenomenon; the student reported highly improbable levels of illicit drug use; or the student was in grade 5.

Figure 1 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

	Sample Size	Percent (%) of Total Sample
TOTAL	46,799	100
GRADE*		
6	1,623	3
7	7,352	16
8	7,587	16
9	8,678	19
10	8,194	18
11	7,101	15
12	6,208	13
GENDER*		
Female	23,414	50
Male	23,170	50
RACE/ETHNICITY*		
American Indian	869	2
Asian or Pacific Islander	373	1
Black or African American	2,166	5
Hispanic	815	2
White	42,274	90
REGION*		
East	1,403	3
Midwest	31,431	67
South	7,835	17
West	6,000	13

*Totals do not sum to 46,799 due to missing data

Sample demographics are presented in Figure 1. The sample is comprised mainly of students living in the Midwest, in communities under 100,000 in population. This portrait, then, tends to focus on middle America. It is not clear how the descriptive findings would compare to a more nationally representative sample. On key indicators for which representative national data are available (e.g., alcohol use, tobacco use, sexual abuse, involvement in extracurricular activities, exposure to television), we find percentages in this study remarkably similar to these other studies of in-school youth. In spite of the regional and community size biases in this report, it is likely that findings about grade trends, gender differences, and the connection of assets to behavioral choices would be applicable to any community.

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ASSETS

Positive development requires constant exposure to interlocking systems of support, control, and structure. In the ideal, young people – via schools, families, community organizations, and religious institutions – constantly interact with caring, principled adults. These patterns of support, control, and structure function as external assets, providing young people with webs of safety and love important for stimulating and nurturing healthy development.

Adolescence is the bridge between a childhood surrounded by networks of external support, and adulthood, in which these networks are partially supplanted by the internal checks and balances that enable the individual to make wise choices when beyond the reach of childhood's protective cocoon. It is of primary importance, then, to nourish – particularly during adolescence – a range of **internal** assets. They are the commitments, values, and competencies that help an individual thrive competently and responsibly when "on one's own."

30 Assets

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 list and define the 30 assets measured in this study. Sixteen of them are external assets, grouped into the three categories of support, control, and structured time use. Fourteen are internal assets, clustered into educational commitment, positive values, and social competencies. These 30 are a good starting point for naming the ingredients necessary for positive youth development. They were chosen, in part, because each is considered readily alterable – that is, it can be promoted in communities, given a certain will and commitment.

However, the list is not exhaustive. One asset not included is more intractable. It is economic security, the absence of which inhibits the kinds of nutrition, housing, and life experiences crucial for positive development. The United States leads the industrialized world in the percentage of children raised in poverty. In contemplating how to maximize positive youth development, there is no more urgent task than finding a solution to this persistent dilemma.

Figure 2.1 16 External Assets: Definitions

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME	ASSET DEFINITION
SUPPORT	1. Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support
	2. Parent(s) as social resources	Student views parent(s) as accessible resources for advice and support
	3. Parent communication	Student has frequent, in-depth conversations with parent(s)
	4. Other adult resources	Student has access to non-parent adults for advice and support
	5. Other adult communication	Student has frequent, in-depth conversations with non-parent adults
	6. Parent involvement in schooling	Parent(s) are involved in helping student succeed in school
	7. Positive school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment
CONTROL	8. Parental standards	Parent(s) have standards for appropriate conduct
	9. Parental discipline	Parent(s) discipline student when a rule is violated
	10. Parental monitoring	Parent(s) monitor "where I am going and with whom I will be"
	11. Time at home	Student goes out for "fun and recreation" 3 or fewer nights per week
	12. Positive peer influence	Student's best friends model responsible behavior
STRUCTURED TIME USE	13. Involved in music	Student spends 1 hour or more per week in music training or practice
	14. Involved in school extra-curricular activities	Student spends 1 hour or more per week in school sports, clubs, or organizations
	15. Involved in community organizations or activities	Student spends 1 hour or more per week in organizations or clubs outside of school
	16. Involved in church or synagogue	Student spends 1 hour or more per week attending programs or services

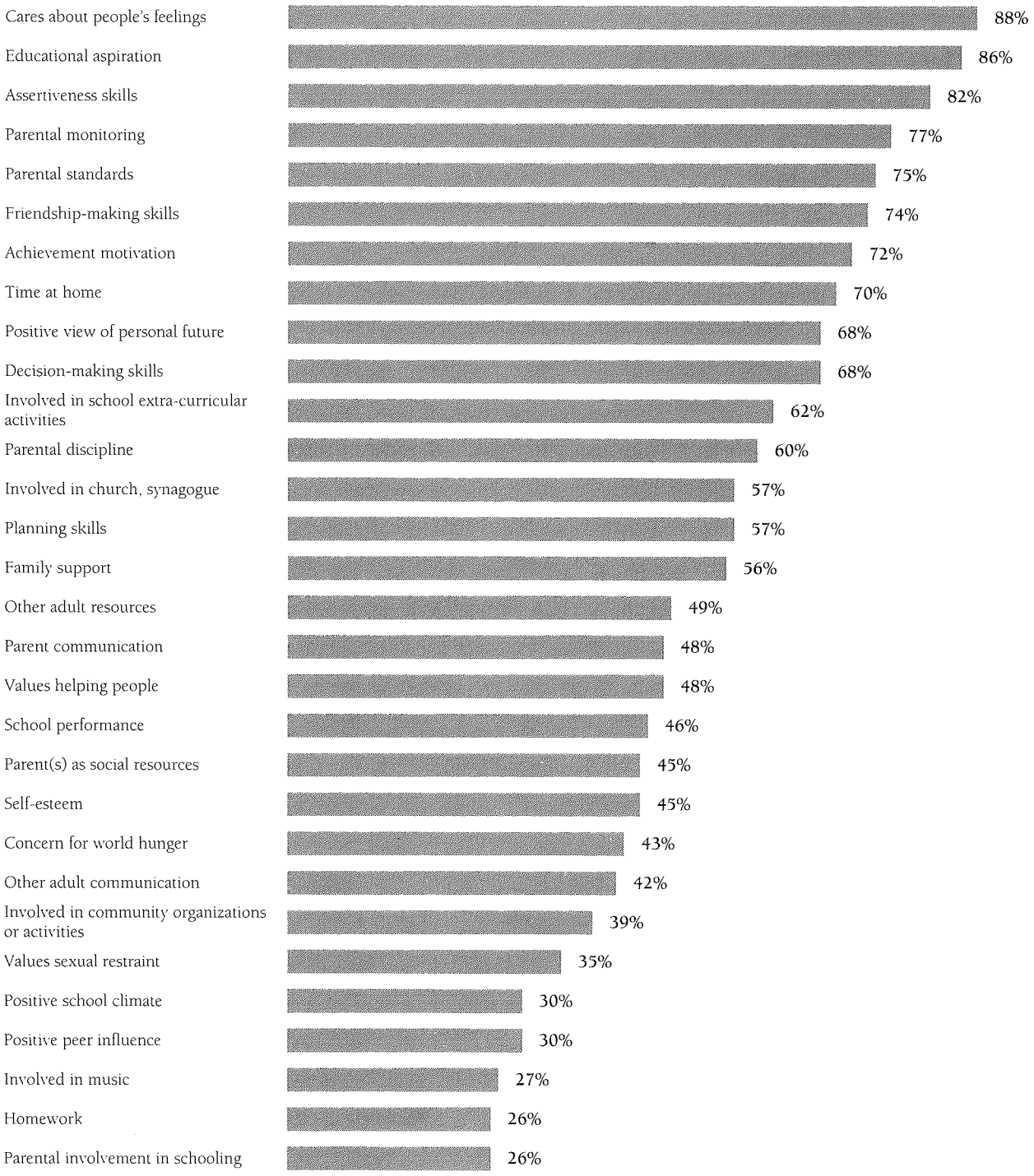
Figure 2.2 14 INTERNAL ASSETS: DEFINITIONS

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME	ASSET DEFINITION
EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT	1. Achievement motivation	Student is motivated to do well in school
	2. Educational aspiration	Student aspires to pursue post-high school education (e.g., trade school, college)
	3. School performance	Student reports school performance is above average
	4. Homework	Student reports 6 hours or more of homework per week
POSITIVE VALUES	5. Values helping people	Student places high personal value on helping other people
	6. Is concerned about world hunger	Student reports interest in helping to reduce world hunger
	7. Cares about people's feelings	Student cares about other people's feelings
	8. Values sexual restraint	Student values postponing sexual activity
SOCIAL COMPETENCE	9. Assertiveness skills	Student reports ability to "stand up for what I believe"
	10. Decision-making skills	Student reports "I am good at making decisions"
	11. Friendship-making skills	Student reports "I am good at making friends"
	12. Planning skills	Student reports "I am good at planning ahead"
	13. Self-esteem	Student reports high self-esteem
	14. Positive view of personal future	Student is optimistic about his/her personal future

Assets: How Are We Doing?

Figure 2.3 displays the percentage of all youth in this study with each asset, rank ordered from most to least frequent. Among the most frequent assets are educational aspiration (86%), parental monitoring (77%), and friendship-making skills (74%). Much less frequent are involvement in community organizations (39%), value on sexual restraint (35%), and positive school climate (30%).

Figure 2.3 PERCENTAGE OF ALL YOUTH WITH EACH ASSET (in rank order)



N = 46,779

A number of the assets decrease in frequency as grade increases (Figure 2.4). Those that drop substantially between the 6th and 12th grade include family support, parent involvement in schooling, parental standards, parental discipline, church or synagogue involvement, value on helping people, value on sexual restraint, and concern for world hunger.

Only two assets appear to increase substantially in frequency. They are 'other adult' communication and parent communication.

Figure 2.4 DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS, BY GRADE
(% with each asset)

	ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME	GRADE							TOTAL YOUTH
			6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
EXTERNAL	SUPPORT	Family support	73	67	61	54	52	48	51	56
		Parent(s) as social resources	57	53	46	43	41	41	45	45
		Parent communication	44	44	44	47	50	51	56	48
		Other adult resources	49	49	47	47	48	48	53	49
		Other adult communication	26	31	35	39	45	51	60	42
		Parent involvement in schooling	46	39	32	27	21	17	14	26
		Positive school climate	50	36	32	27	25	26	31	30
	CONTROL	Parental standards	89	87	83	78	73	66	57	75
		Parental discipline	66	64	63	61	59	57	50	60
		Parental monitoring	71	73	76	79	81	80	74	77
		Time at home	64	72	71	73	71	70	66	70
		Positive peer influence	38	35	31	28	28	29	31	30
	STRUCTURED TIME USE	Involved in music	15	33	31	28	25	25	23	27
		Involved in school extracurricular activities	48	65	63	61	63	63	61	62
		Involved in community organizations or activities	43	43	41	38	39	38	36	39
		Involved in church or synagogue	63	64	62	57	54	52	48	57
INTERNAL	EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT	Achievement motivation	82	77	75	72	69	67	68	72
		Educational aspiration	82	84	84	86	87	87	89	86
		School performance	48	46	47	45	43	45	49	46
		Homework	19	26	25	27	26	28	25	26
	POSITIVE VALUES	Values helping people	72	59	54	47	44	38	39	48
		Is concerned about world hunger	54	47	46	41	42	39	40	43
		Cares about people's feelings	86	85	86	87	88	90	91	88
		Values sexual restraint	53	54	46	34	27	24	21	35
	SOCIAL COMPETENCE	Assertiveness skills	82	80	81	80	82	84	86	82
		Decision-making skills	65	65	67	67	69	69	72	68
		Friendship-making skills	73	72	73	72	74	76	80	74
		Planning skills	59	57	58	56	56	55	59	57
		Self-esteem	52	48	45	43	43	42	47	45
		Positive view of personal future	68	68	69	66	67	68	72	68

Figure 2.5 AVERAGE NUMBER OF 30 ASSETS, BY GRADE

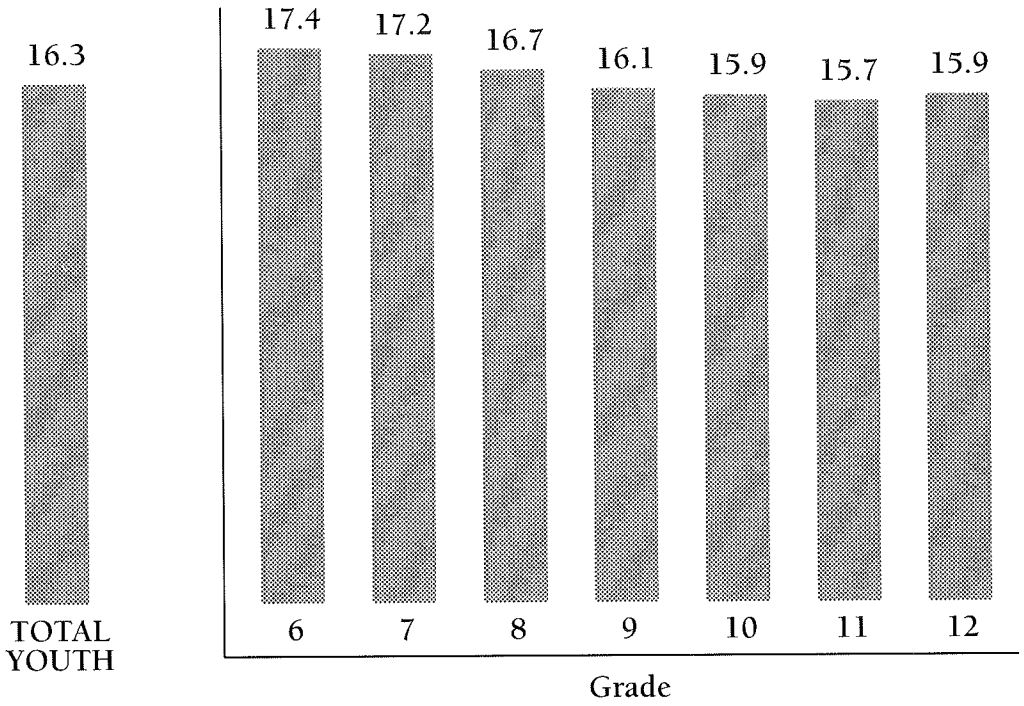


Figure 2.5 shows that the average number of the 30 assets decreases from grade 6 (17.4 out of 30) to grade 12 (15.7 out of 30). The overall number of assets for all youth combined is 16.3.

Figure 2.6 graphically portrays three asset dilemmas. First, students, on the average, report having only 50 percent of the external assets. Second, the average student has developed only 60 percent of the internal assets. Third, as students evolve to greater independence across the adolescent years, we should expect external assets to decrease (as they do), and internal assets to increase. However, we actually see a slight decrease in internal assets, from 64 percent in grade 6 to 58 percent in grades 10 and 11.

Figure 2.6 AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ASSETS, BY GRADE

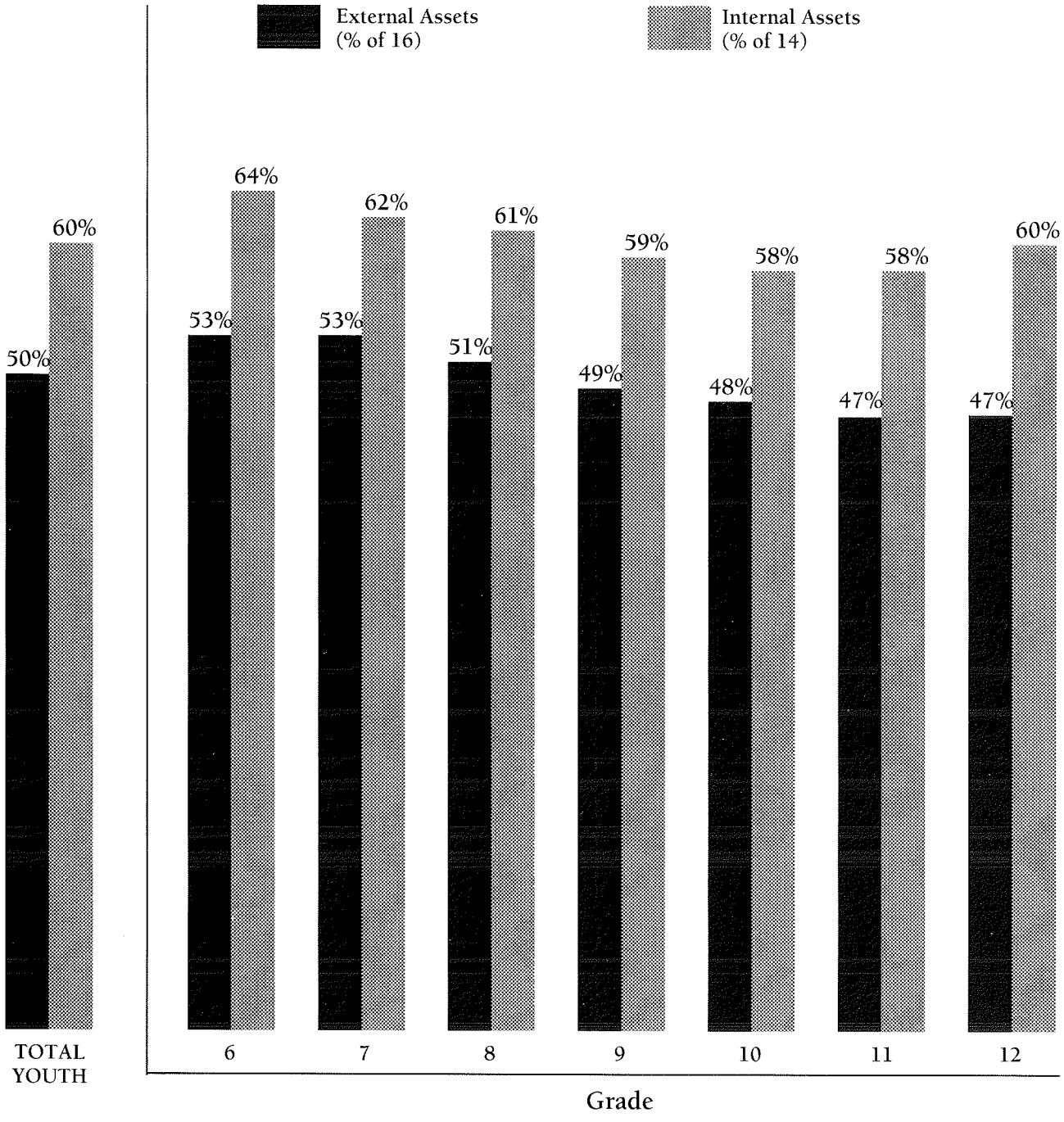
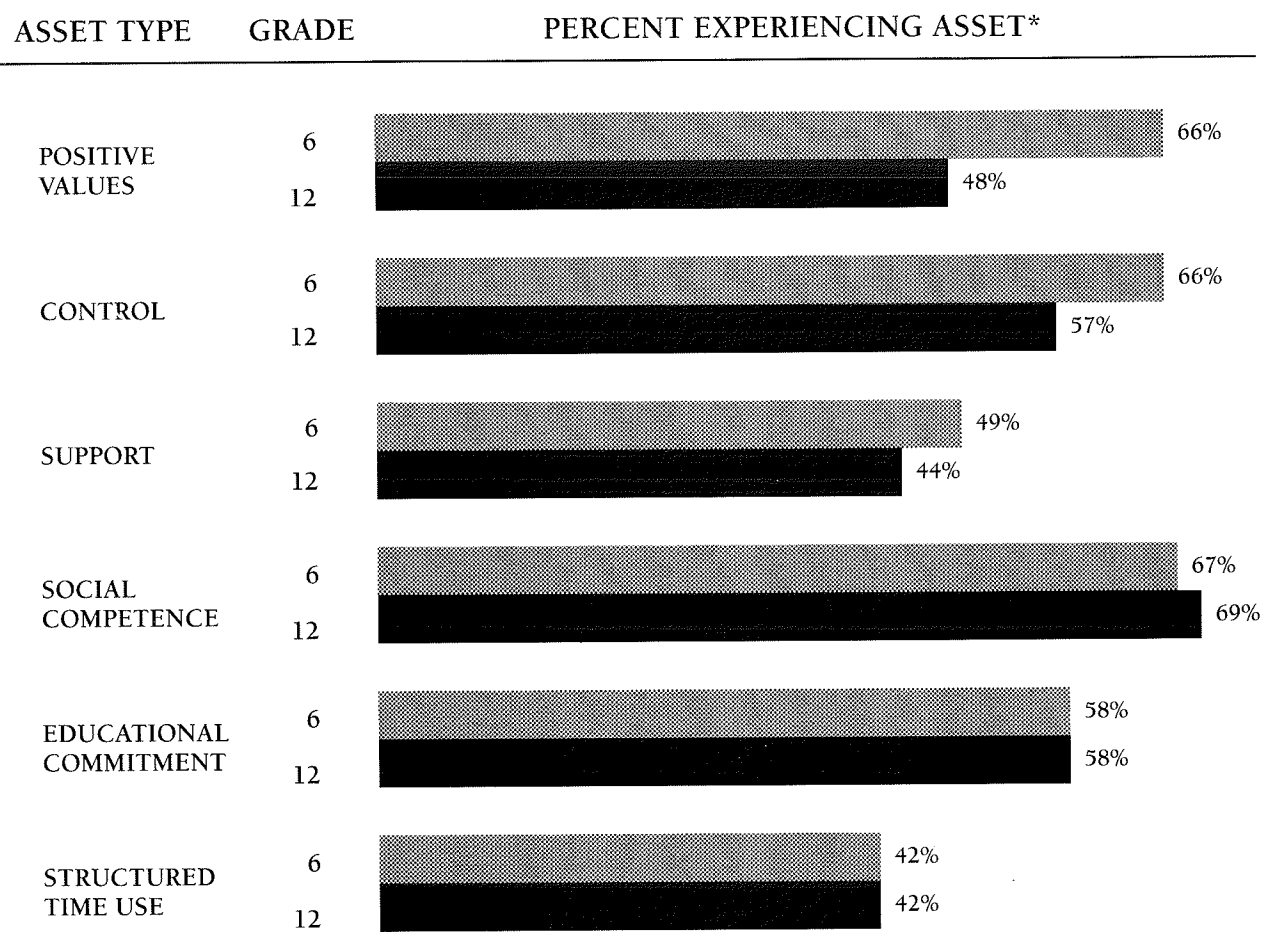


Figure 2.7 CHANGES IN 6 ASSET TYPES, GRADES 6 AND 12 COMPARED



* Percentage is the mean of percents for all assets within each asset type (see Figure 2.4)

Figure 2.7 shows how assets grouped into six asset types change between grades 6 and 12. Note that none of the six increases in frequency across this age span. Three asset categories decrease (positive values, control, social support), with the most dramatic reduction in the area of positive values.

The Challenge

Part of our current national dilemma in protecting youth from health-compromising behaviors such as teenage pregnancy, frequent alcohol use, and illicit drug use (the rates for which, in the United States, are among the highest in the industrialized world) may have to do with this portrait of assets. As we will see in chapter 7, assets are a key factor in prevention, with at-risk behaviors decreasing in frequency as the number of assets increase. One reasonable national goal is to ensure that each adolescent experiences 20 or more of the 30 assets. As shown below, no student subgroup in this study evidences meeting this minimal standard. The gap between the real and the ideal is more pronounced for boys than girls.

Student Subgroup	Percent with 20 or More of 30 Assets
Grade 6	35
Grade 7	36
Grade 8	32
Grade 9	27
Grade 10	26
Grade 11	24
Grade 12	25
Girls	34
Boys	22

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DEFICITS

Assets form part of the developmental infrastructure on which adult lives are built. Deficits are countervailing influences which can interfere with healthy development, limiting access to external assets, blocking development of internal assets, or easing the way into risky behavioral choices. Deficits are liabilities, none of which necessarily does permanent harm, but each of which makes harm more possible.

Ten Deficits

Listed in Figure 3.1 are 10 deficits measured in this study. Two are victimization experiences (sexual abuse, physical abuse). Four refer to negative social influences (drinking parties, television overexposure, negative peer pressure, parental addiction to alcohol or other drugs). The remaining four are hedonistic values, social isolation, stress, and "alone at home."

Each of the 10 deficits is associated with at-risk behavior: in each case, those students reporting the deficit also report a significantly higher number of at-risk indicators (e.g., frequent alcohol use, cigarette use, attempted suicide, sexual activity) than those not reporting the deficit. This connection between deficits and behavior will be explored more fully in chapter 7.

Figure 3.1 10 DEFICITS: DEFINITIONS

	DEFICIT NAME	DEFICIT DEFINITION
1.	Alone at home	Student spends 2 hours or more per day at home without an adult
2.	Hedonistic values	Student places high importance on self-serving values
3.	TV overexposure	Student watches TV 3 hour or more per day
4.	Drinking parties	Student frequently attends parties where peers drink
5.	Stress	Student feels under stress or pressure "most" or "all" of the time
6.	Physical abuse	Student reports at least one incident of physical abuse by an adult
7.	Sexual abuse	Student reports at least one incident of sexual abuse
8.	Parental addiction	Student reports a parent "has a serious problem with alcohol or drugs"
9.	Social isolation	Student feels a consistent lack of care, support, and understanding
10.	Negative peer pressure	Most close friends are involved in chemical use and/or are in frequent trouble at school

Figure 3.2 DISTRIBUTION OF DEFICITS, BY GRADE
(% with each deficit)

DEFICIT NAME	GRADE 6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL YOUTH
Alone at home	47	56	57	60	61	58	59	58
Hedonistic values	44	46	51	50	50	48	45	48
TV overexposure	54	48	48	43	39	32	28	40
Drinking parties	5	6	13	26	40	54	61	31
Stress	11	13	17	21	23	26	27	21
Physical abuse	13	14	17	17	19	19	17	17
Sexual abuse	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	10
Parental addiction	5	6	6	7	8	8	8	7
Social isolation	7	6	6	6	7	7	5	6
Negative peer pressure	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	2

Deficits By Grade

As displayed in Figure 3.2, four deficits strongly increase with grade: "alone at home," drinking parties, stress, and sexual abuse. The only deficit that dramatically decreases with grade is television overexposure.

Overall, the average number of deficits increases with grade, from 1.9 out of 10 deficits in grade 6 to 2.7 in grades 11 and 12 (Figure 3.3). It is relatively rare for a student to be immune to all 10: only 8 percent report none of the 10 deficits. In each grade between 6 and 12, the **majority** report at least 2 out of 10 deficits. In grade 12, more than half (52%) report at least 3.

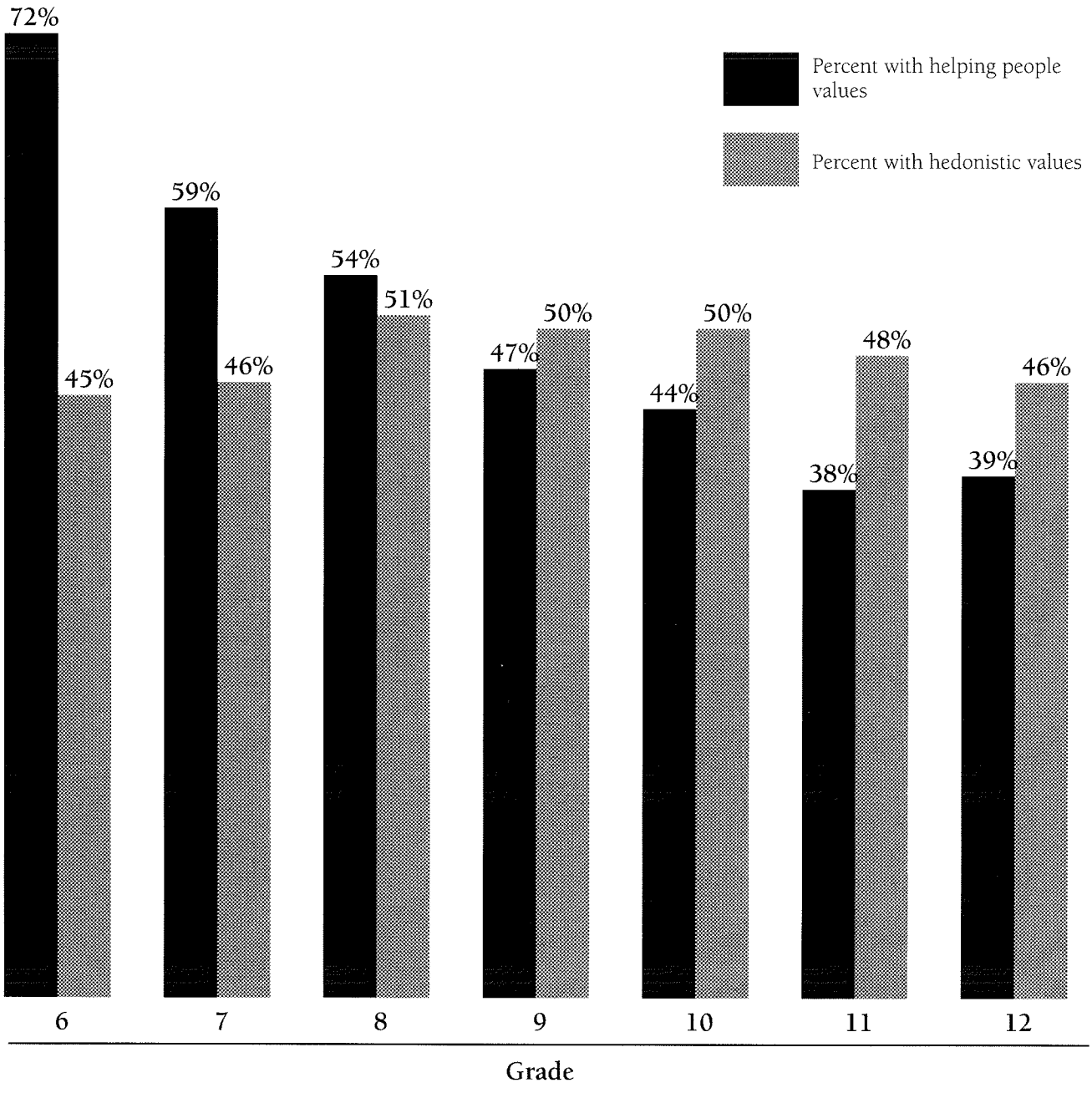
Figure 3.3 AVERAGE NUMBER OF 10 DEFICITS, BY GRADE

DEFICITS	GRADE 6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL YOUTH
Percent (%) with 0 out of 10	12	11	9	8	7	6	5	8
Percent (%) with 1 out of 10	28	27	23	21	18	17	17	21
Percent (%) with 2 out of 10	33	30	29	27	26	25	27	28
Percent (%) with 3 out of 10	16	19	21	22	24	25	25	22
Percent (%) with 4 out of 10	6	7	10	12	14	16	16	12
Percent (%) with 5 out of 10	3	3	5	6	7	7	7	6
Percent (%) with 6 out of 10	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	2
Percent (%) with 7 or more out of 10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total Percentage	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average Number of 10 Deficits	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.4

Shifting Values

In this study, two value orientations are measured. The first, a value orientation for helping people (also called a prosocial orientation), is already included as one of the 30 assets. The second, a hedonistic value orientation, is included here as a deficit, and refers to the importance one places on "having lots of money," "having lots of fun and good times," and "being popular or well-liked." Each student is measured on both value orientations. It is conceivable, though improbable, that a student evidences both simultaneously. As shown in Figure 3.4, more students hold a prosocial value orientation than a hedonistic one in grades 6, 7, and 8, with these two reversing places beginning in grade 9. This trend occurs largely because the percentage holding hedonistic values hovers around 50 percent in each grade, while prosocial values slide downward between grades 6 and 12.

Figure 3.4 PROSOCIAL VS. HEDONISTIC VALUES, BY GRADE



There are, however, important gender differences (Figure 3.5). The shift in which hedonism exceeds helping people values occurs largely because of a dramatic downturn in prosocial values for boys. Although a trend downward is also visible for girls, in no grade does a hedonistic orientation occur more frequently than a prosocial orientation. Note that in each grade, girls are more prosocial and less hedonistic in values than boys.

Figure 3.5 VALUE SYSTEMS, BY GRADE AND GENDER
(numbers refer to percentage scoring high on each value orientation)

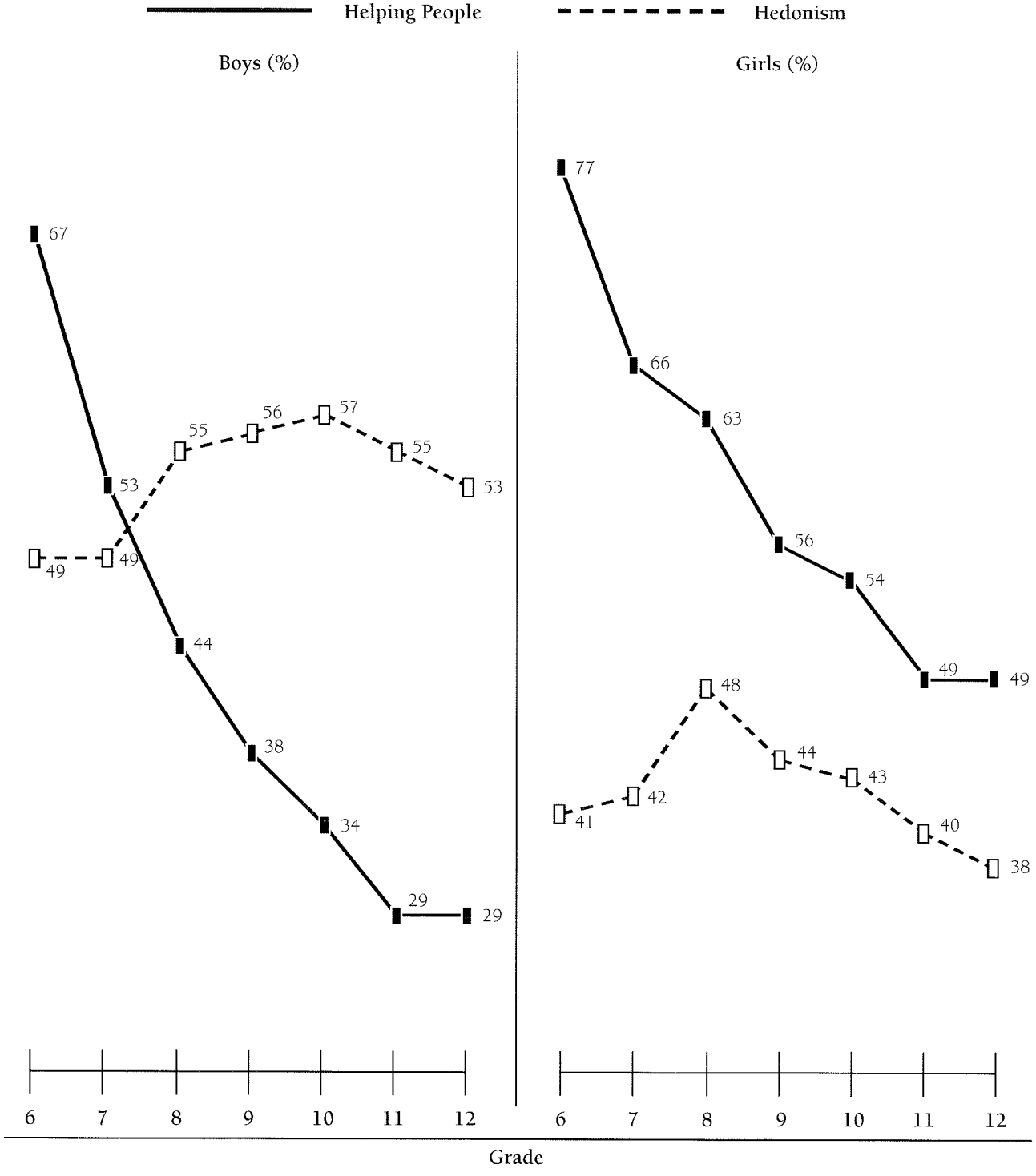


Figure 3.6 REPORTED PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE, BY GRADE AND GENDER
(% reporting once or more, lifetime)

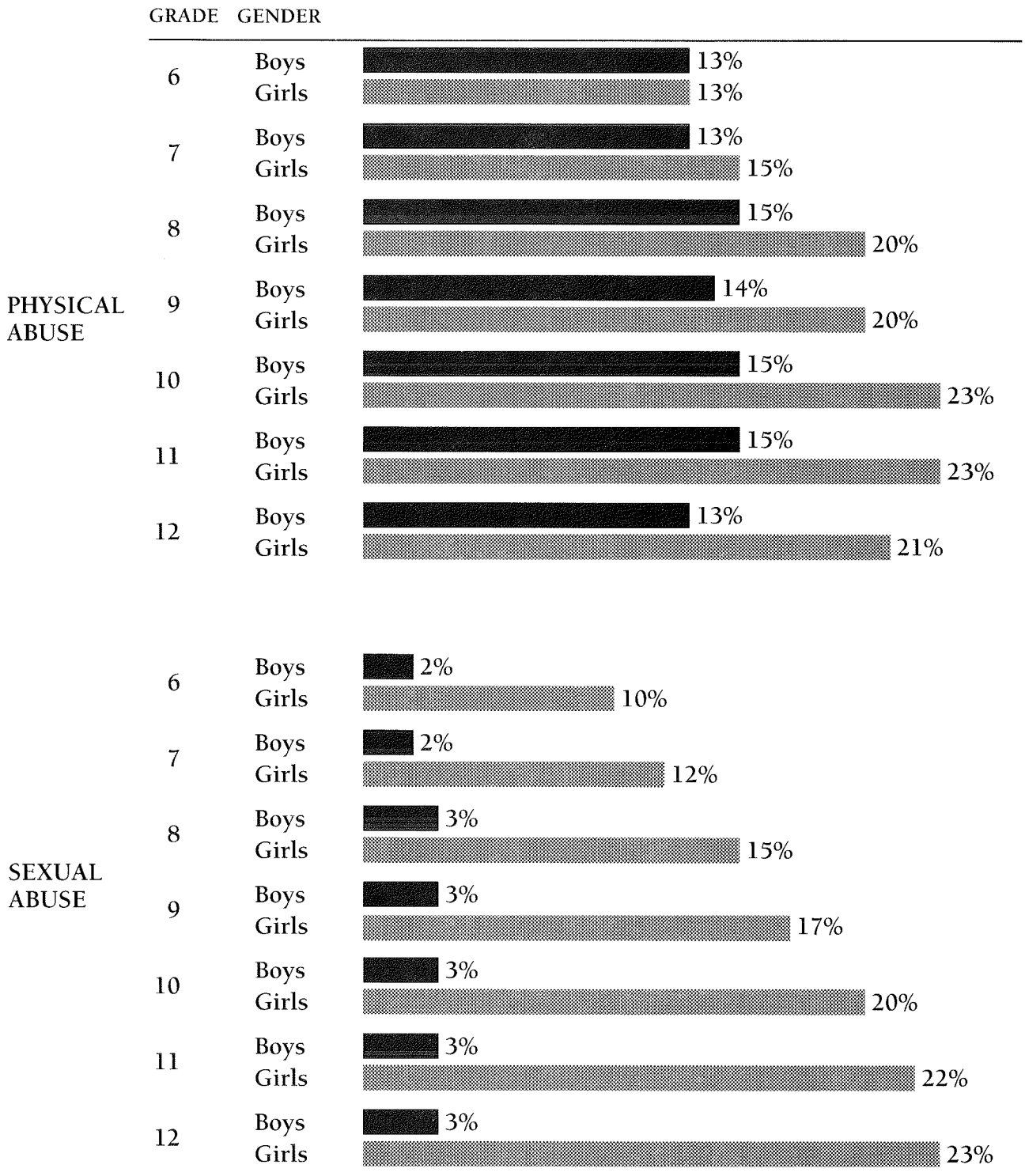
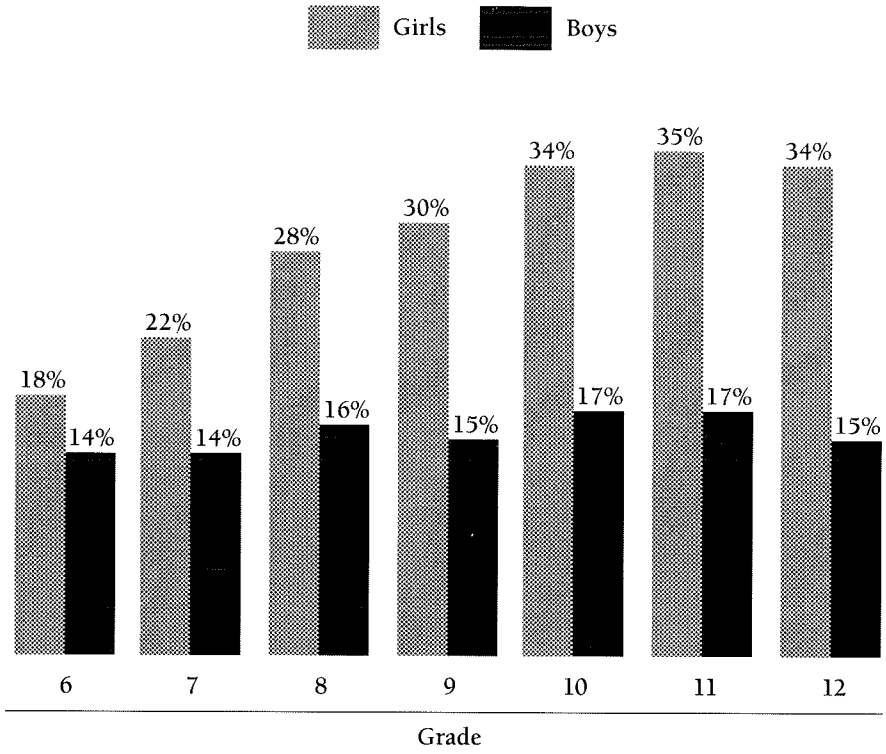


Figure 3.7 ABUSE VICTIMIZATION, BY GENDER AND GRADE
(% who have been physically and/or sexually abused)



Victimization

In the last decade, public consciousness has been raised about two forms of abuse, physical and sexual. These victimization experiences are particularly heinous. The victims are disproportionately female, as shown in Figure 3.6. By grade 12, 23 percent of girls report at least one sexual abuse incident. Even more graphic is the percentage of girls who are victims of either physical abuse or sexual abuse, or both (Figure 3.7). More than one-third of all girls in grades 10, 11, and 12 fall prey to one and/or both of these forms of abuse.

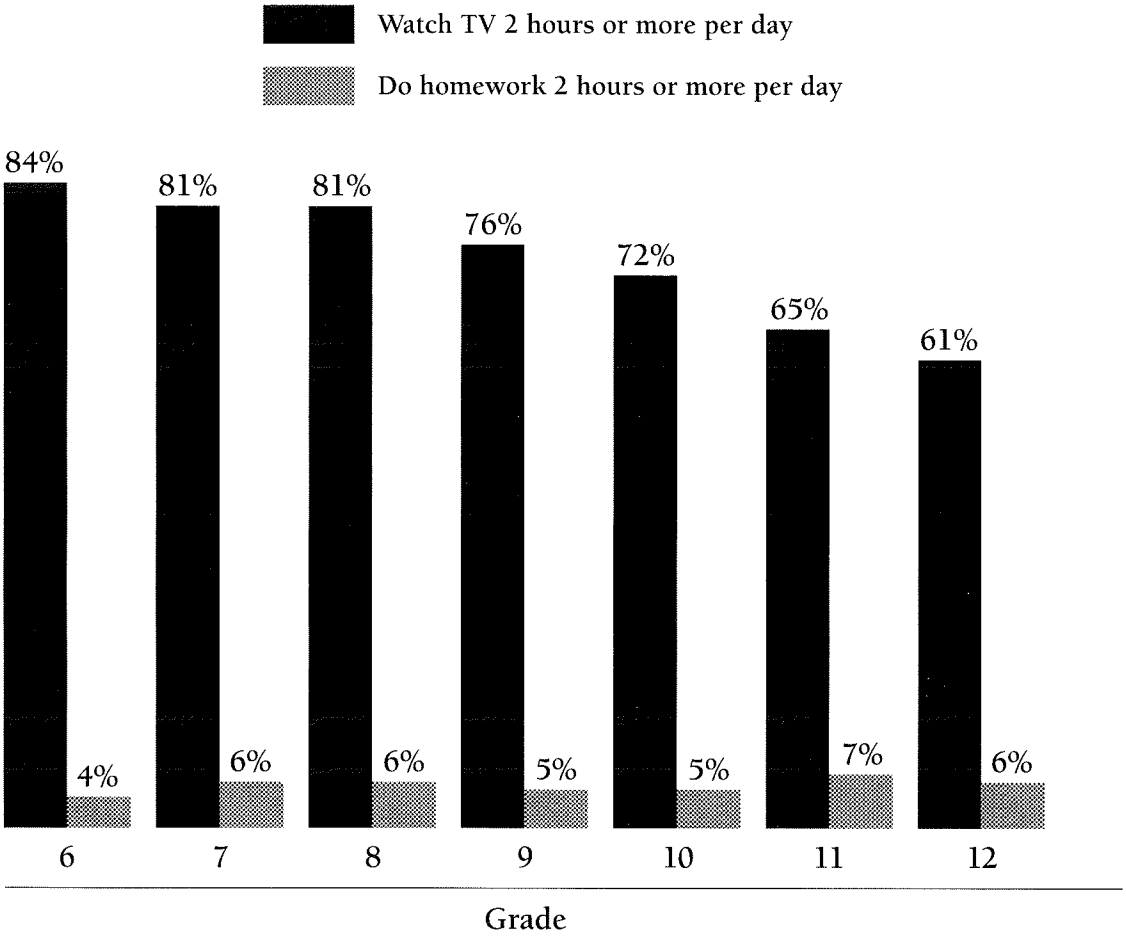
This study provides evidence of the damaging consequences. For girls, physical or sexual abuse more than doubles the chances of depression (16% of girls who have not been abused report they are sad or depressed "most" or "all of the time," compared to 36% who have been abused). Abuse doubles the chances of feeling persistently under stress (22% vs. 46%). And abuse nearly cuts in half the probability of high self-esteem (43%, not abused, vs. 24%, abused).

Misplaced Priorities

One of the obvious reasons why students in the United States lag behind students in other countries in academic achievement is the refusal or unwillingness to do homework, a situation that may be exacerbated by a failure in some schools to emphasize it.*

Part of the problem may be overexposure to television, which not only robs time but also may play a negative role in modeling violent resolution of conflict and promoting limiting stereotypes of women and minorities. Figure 3.8 shows that time spent watching television far exceeds that of time spent doing homework.

Figure 3.8 TIME SPENT DOING HOMEWORK VS. WATCHING TELEVISION, PER "AVERAGE SCHOOL DAY"
(% 2 hours or more per day)



The Challenge

Each of the 10 deficits potentially limits the positive development of young people. The ideal is to eliminate all 10 deficits, a goal reached on behalf of only eight percent of youth (see Figure 3.3). Even a much more limited goal – to ensure that youth experience 2 or less of the 10 deficits – is reached by only 57 percent. In seeking to prevent deficits, communities should heed important gender differences in deficits. Girls are much more likely than boys to experience physical abuse, sexual abuse, and stress. Boys are much more likely than girls to develop self-serving values, with a concomitant resistance to prosocial values.

* See, for example, international math comparisons as cited in Office of Educational Research and Improvement (U.S. Department of Education), Youth Indicators 1988, (p. 64).

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Prosocial behavior covers a wide range of human actions, including face-to-face helping of persons in distress, acts of interpersonal kindness, donating time or energy to voluntary service organizations, and efforts to alter political, economic, and social sources of injustice or inequality. The common thread is the desire or intent to promote the welfare of others.

Why It Matters

In our efforts to raise healthy children, it is as important to **promote** prosocial behavior as it is to **prevent** antisocial or health-compromising behavior. Several reasons are paramount. One is that prosocial behavior builds social cohesion. It is unlikely that any society can thrive unless citizens are able and willing to sacrifice personal gain for the common good. Providing help to others also functions as a teacher. Through acts of compassion, social competencies develop, positive values form, and the seeds for meaning and purpose in life are planted. This is why many of the school-based programs that encourage (or mandate) student involvement in service projects are called "service learning" programs. Additionally, prosocial behavior may actually reduce risky choices. As shown in Figure 4.1, students who engage in helping behavior on a weekly basis are less likely than non-helpers to report at-risk behaviors (defined in detail in the next chapter).

Figure 4.1 NUMBER OF AT-RISK INDICATORS, BY HELPING BEHAVIOR

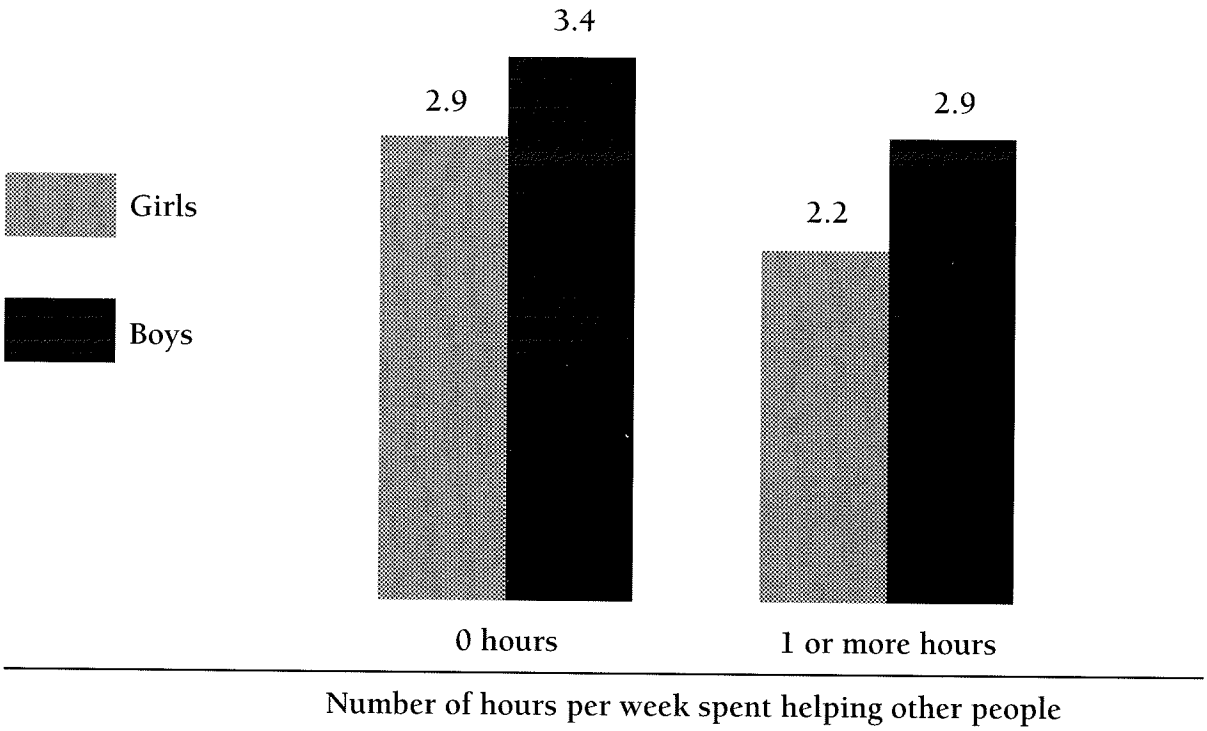
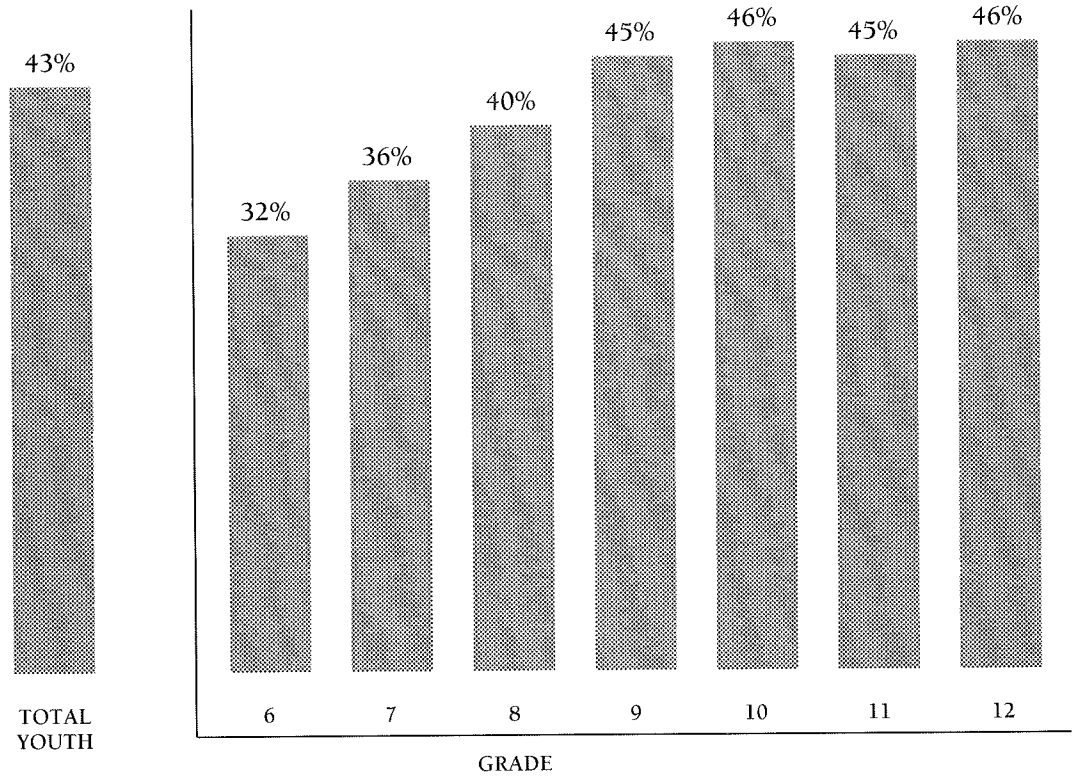


Figure 4.2 HELPING BEHAVIOR, BY GRADE

	GRADE							TOTAL YOUTH
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
During the last 12 months, how many times have you spent time helping people who are poor, hungry, sick, or unable to care for themselves?								
% never	40	48	52	55	56	56	56	53
% 1-4 times	42	39	38	36	34	34	34	37
% 5 or more times	18	13	10	9	10	10	10	10
On the average, how many hours per week do you spend doing volunteer work to help other people (such as helping out at a hospital, daycare center or nursery, food shelf, youth program, community service agency, etc.)?								
% none	61	59	63	67	67	67	68	65
% 1-2 hours	25	28	24	22	22	22	22	23
% 3 hours or more	16	13	13	11	11	11	10	12

Figure 4.3 NON-HELPERS, BY GRADE

Numbers represent the percentage of youth who report giving no volunteer help during "an average" week *and* who report no time spent during the last year "helping people who are poor, hungry, sick, or unable to care for themselves."



Frequency of Helping Behavior

Figure 4.2 displays the percentages of students involved in helping, as measured by two questions. The first is about action on behalf of social victims (e.g., poverty, hunger). More than one-half (53%) report no helping action "during the last 12 months." The second is about weekly involvement in some form of volunteer work. Two-thirds (65%) report no involvement. For only about 1 out of 10 students does helping approach what we might call a serious commitment to service, as represented in the percentage reporting three hours or more per week.

When combining the two questions together (Figure 4.3), we find that about half (43%) report no weekly volunteer work **and** no time spent during the last year "helping people who are hungry, sick, or unable to care for themselves." There is also a rather sobering grade trend, with non-helping increasing as grade increases.

The Challenge

The lack of service activity by young people may reflect a number of social phenomena, including inaccessibility to adults who model prosocial commitments and to programs that encourage service. We cannot expect the picture to get brighter unless adolescents are surrounded by prosocial models and enveloped in a community climate that values, rewards, and encourages a giving orientation. In working to increase prosocial behavior, communities should note two findings, as shown below. We have work to do with both boys and girls, but more with boys. And the need is clear to reawaken a giving instinct during the high school years.

Percent Involved in Volunteer Work, 1 Hour or More Per Week

Grade	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
6	37	41
7	37	45
8	33	41
9	29	38
10	28	38
11	29	38
12	26	38

AT-RISK BEHAVIOR

The term "at-risk" has a fairly short history. We first saw it as an adjective describing national life in the 1983 federal report called *A Nation At-risk: The Imperative for School Reform.* Since that time, it has become a term that describes individuals, as in "at-risk youth," and its primary use is in reference to those who are raised in poverty and/or have dropped out (or are likely to drop out) of school.

In this study, we have appropriated the term "at-risk" and expanded it to cover 20 behaviors. Our working definition is that at-risk behaviors are choices that potentially limit psychological, physical, or economic well-being during adolescence or adulthood. Many of the behaviors can have negative, long-term consequences. To some extent, our choice of these at-risk indicators is based on speculative and incomplete knowledge, for there is little firm evidence about the actual long-term consequences of certain choices during the first 18 years of life. We rely, then, on informed hunches, choosing indicators that one could reasonably argue are possible precursors to later difficulties. A case in point is daily cigarette use, which is one of the 20 at-risk indicators. The assumption is that smoking regularly during adolescence increases the probability of nicotine addiction in adulthood. Another case is binge drinking, defined as consuming "5 or more drinks in a row." This kind of behavior may increase the probability of either misuse of alcohol during adulthood or physical injury (as in automobile accidents).

Again, we are dealing here with probability, which means, in part, that a risky choice, or even several, during adolescence does not guarantee negative, long-term consequences. But given the possibility of harm, we press the point that prevention of these risk-taking behaviors is the prudent approach to long-term well-being.

20 At-Risk Indicators

The 20 at-risk indicators are named and defined in Figure 5.1. They are grouped into nine categories or domains: alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, sexuality, depression/suicide, antisocial behavior, school, vehicle safety, and other (the eating disorder known as bulimia).* In order to minimize taking an alarmist view of adolescent behavioral choices, the criteria used in assigning at-risk indicators to youth are relatively lenient. For example, one is considered at-risk in the area of frequent alcohol use only if six or more uses of alcohol in the past month are reported. This is a judgment call. Likewise, a student is considered at-risk in the area of sexual activity only if he or she reports intercourse 2 or more times. Where possible, we selected frequency criteria to tilt in the direction of a pattern of behavior rather than a single incident. The reader, then, when seeing the data in this chapter, might keep in mind that our criteria could be considered lenient, and, if so, the percentages at-risk conservative.

*The nine domains represent empirically-derived factors, based on principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. All indicators within factors have factor loadings of .40 or greater.

Figure 5.1 20 At-risk Indicators

AT-RISK DOMAIN	AT-RISK INDICATOR	DEFINITION
ALCOHOL	1. Frequent alcohol use	Has used alcohol 6 or more times "in the last 30 days"
	2. Binge drinking	Has had 5 or more drinks in a row, once or more "in the last 2 weeks"
TOBACCO	3. Daily cigarette use	Smokes 1 or more cigarettes per day
	4. Frequent chewing tobacco use	Has used 20 or more times "in the last 12 months"
ILLICIT DRUGS	5. Frequent use of illicit drugs	Has used marijuana, cocaine or crack, PCP, LSD, amphetamines, heroin or other narcotics 6 or more times "in the last 12 months"
SEXUALITY	6. Sexually active	Has had sexual intercourse 2 or more times
	7. Non-use of contraceptives	Is sexually active, and self or partner does not always use contraceptives
DEPRESSION/ SUICIDE	8. Depression	Is sad or depressed "most of the time" or "all of the time"
	9. Attempted suicide	Has attempted suicide once or more
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	10. Vandalism	Destroyed property "just for fun," 2 or more times "in the last 12 months"
	11. Group fighting	Took part in a fight between two groups or gangs, 2 or more times "in the last 12 months"
	12. Police trouble	Got into trouble with the police, 2 or more times "in the last 12 months"
	13. Theft	Stole something from a store, 2 or more times "in the last 12 months"
	14. Weapon use	Used knife, gun, or other weapon "to get something from a person," 2 or more times "in the last 12 months"
SCHOOL	15. School absenteeism	Skipped school 2 or more days "in the last month"
	16. Desire to drop out	Wants to quit school before completing high school
VEHICLE SAFETY	17. Driving and drinking	Has driven after drinking, 2 or more times "in the last year"
	18. Riding and drinking	Has ridden with a driver who had been drinking, 2 or more times "in the last year"
	19. Seat belt non-use	Does not use seat belts "all" or 'most" of the time
OTHER	20. Bulimia	Vomits on purpose after eating, once a week or more

Grade Patterns, 20 At-Risk Indicators

Percentages of students with each of the 20 at-risk indicators are displayed in Figure 5.2. Several increase dramatically with grade; they include **sexually active, frequent alcohol use, binge drinking, driving and drinking, and riding and drinking.** There are no surprises here. Several behaviors continue at relatively high levels, in spite of efforts in most communities to convince people otherwise. Daily cigarette use climbs to 18 percent of 12th graders. Contraceptive use is ignored by about half of sexually active youth.

Figure 5.2 AT-RISK INDICATORS, BY GRADE
(numbers refer to percentages)

AT-RISK DOMAIN	AT-RISK INDICATORS	GRADE 6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL YOUTH
ALCOHOL	1. Frequent alcohol use (6+, 30 days)*	2	3	5	9	12	17	22	11
	2. Binge drinking (1+, 2 weeks)	9	10	16	21	27	34	39	23
TOBACCO	3. Daily cigarette use	4	5	9	13	15	16	18	12
	4. Frequent chewing tobacco use (20+)	1	2	3	4	5	7	9	5
ILLICIT DRUGS	5. Frequent use of illicit drugs (6+, last year)	1	2	5	8	11	12	14	8
SEXUALITY	6. Sexually active (2+)	7	9	15	24	36	48	60	30
	7. Non-use of contraceptives**	61	59	55	54	52	49	47	51
DEPRESSION/ SUICIDE	8. Depression	12	12	14	16	17	17	15	15
	9. Attempted suicide	8	9	12	14	15	15	15	13
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	10. Vandalism (2+, last year)	5	7	9	11	11	11	10	10
	11. Group fighting (2+, last year)	14	13	16	14	12	11	10	13
	12. Police trouble (2+, last year)	3	4	6	7	8	11	10	7
	13. Theft (2+, last year)	3	7	10	11	13	12	11	10
	14. Weapon use (2+, last year)	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
SCHOOL	15. School absenteeism (2+ days, last month)	7	6	7	9	10	13	14	10
	16. Desire to drop out	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
VEHICLE SAFETY	17. Driving and drinking (2+, last year)	1	1	3	5	9	24	33	11
	18. Riding and drinking (2+, last year)	18	21	27	31	36	43	46	33
	19. Seat belt non-use	40	45	47	50	49	56	57	50
OTHER	20. Bulimia (1+, per week)	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2

* "6+" means 6 or more times; "1+" means 1 or more, etc.
** Refers to % of sexually active youth who do not always use contraceptives

Figure 5.3 Number of At-risk Indicators, by Grade

Number of At-risk Indicators	Percent (%) in Each Grade							Total Youth
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
0	40	33	28	22	19	14	11	22
1	26	30	27	24	20	16	15	22
2	14	15	15	16	15	13	13	15
3	8	9	9	11	11	11	12	10
4	4	4	6	8	9	10	10	8
5 or more	8	9	15	20	26	35	40	23
1 or more	60	67	72	78	81	86	89	78
2 or more	34	37	45	54	61	70	74	56
4 or more	12	13	21	28	35	45	50	31

Figure 5.3 shows both a dramatic increase in at-risk behaviors as grade increases and a high percentage in the early grades (6, 7, 8) with at least one at-risk indicator. Key findings include:

- Sixty percent of 6th graders and 67 percent of 7th graders have at least one at-risk indicator.
- Having one or more of the at-risk indicators becomes nearly universal by grades 11 (86%) and 12 (89%).
- Beginning in grade 9, a majority of students evidence multiple (2 or more) at-risk indicators. In grade 9, 54 percent report two or more; in grade 12, 74 percent report two or more.
- Nearly one-third (31%) of all students report 4 or more indicators, including half (50%) of 12th grade students. This troubling finding is graphically portrayed in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 PERCENTAGE WITH 4 OR MORE AT-RISK INDICATORS, BY GRADE

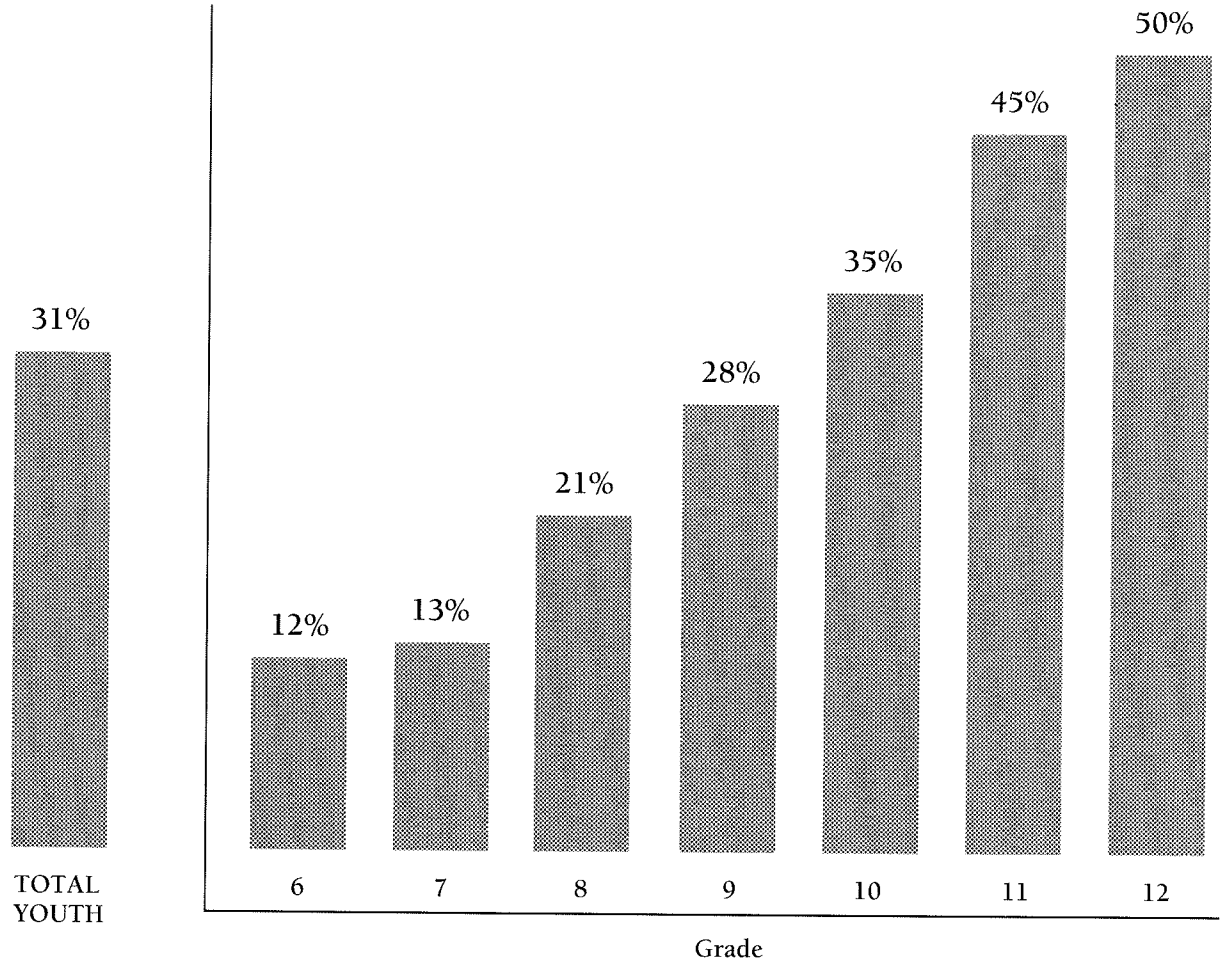
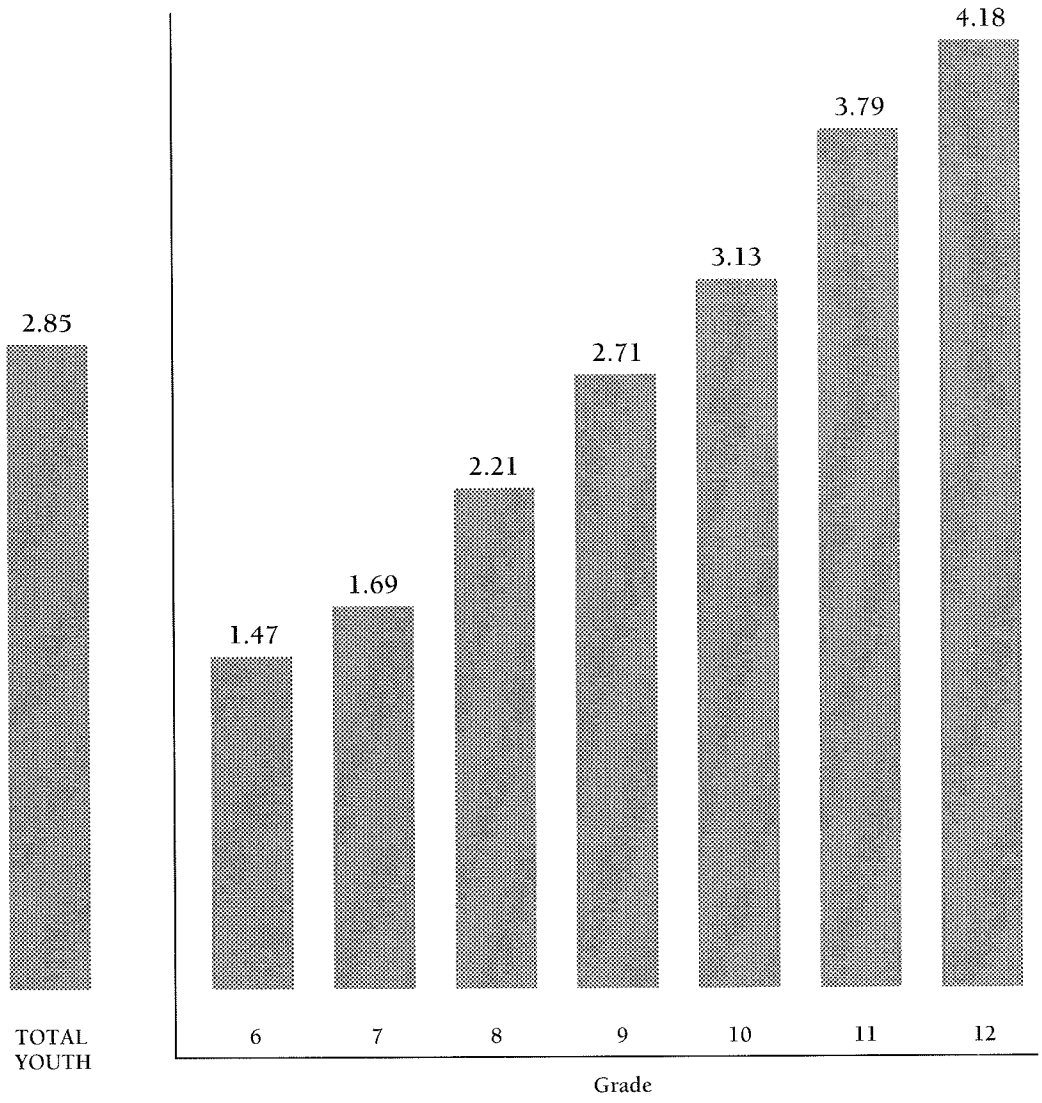


Figure 5.5 AVERAGE NUMBER OF 20 AT-RISK INDICATORS, BY GRADE



Overall, the average student, regardless of grade, has nearly 3 (2.85) of the 20 indicators (Figure 5.5), with a range from 1.47 in grade 6 to 4.18 in grade 12.

At-Risk Domains

In Figure 5.6, the indicators are collapsed into eight domains in order to synthesize the areas in which youth are at risk. Among 9th to 12th grade youth, at-risk percentages are highest in the areas of vehicle safety (65%), sexuality (44%), and alcohol (31%).

Figure 5.6 PERCENTAGE AT RISK IN EACH OF 8 AT-RISK DOMAINS, BY GRADE

AT-RISK DOMAIN	DEFINITION	GRADES 6-8 (%)	GRADES 9-12 (%)
ALCOHOL	Frequent use (6 or more times, last 30 days) and/or binge drinking (once or more, last 2 weeks)	13	31
TOBACCO	Daily cigarette use and/or chewing tobacco use 20 or more times in last 12 months	8	20
ILLICIT DRUGS	Use of an illicit substance 6 or more times in last year	3	11
SEXUALITY	Sexual intercourse 2 or more times and/or no use of contraceptives during first intercourse	16	44
DEPRESSION/ SUICIDE	Frequent depression and/or attempted suicide	19	25
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	Two or more incidents during last year on one or more of these: vandalism, theft, group fighting, trouble with the police, or weapon use	23	28
SCHOOL	School absenteeism 2 or more times in last month and/or desire to drop out of school	8	12
VEHICLE SAFETY	Driving after drinking and/or riding with a drinking driver and/or failure to use seat belts most or all of the time	55	65

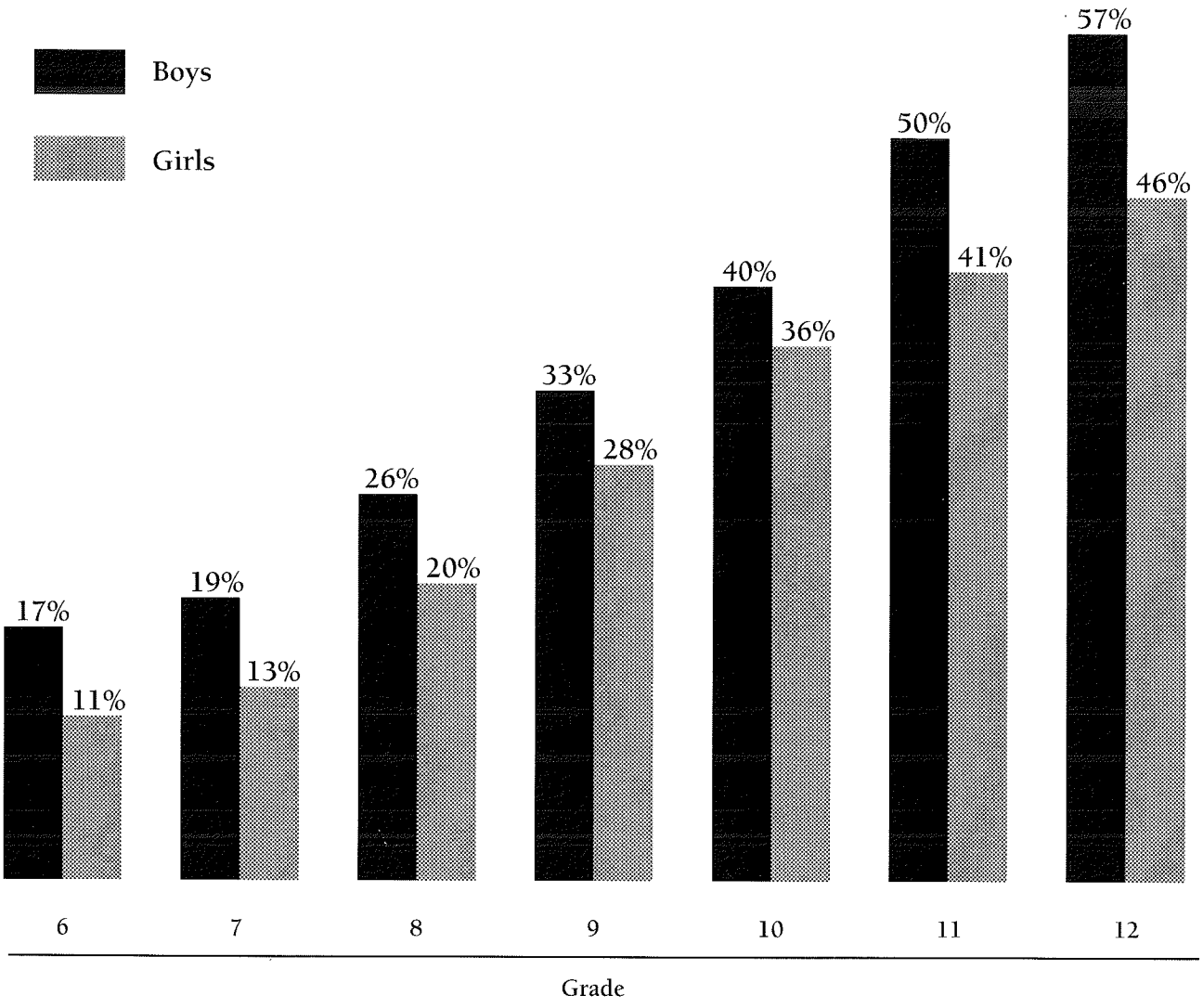
Figure 5.7 DISTRIBUTION OF FOUR TYPES OF YOUTH, BY GRADE

TYPE	DEFINITION	GRADE 6 (%)	7 (%)	8 (%)	9 (%)	10 (%)	11 (%)	12 (%)
Not At Risk	Is not at risk in any of the 8 at-risk domains	40	33	28	22	19	14	11
At Risk in a Single Domain	Is at risk in 1 and only 1 of the 8 at-risk domains	31	35	32	29	25	21	19
At Risk in Two Domains	Is at risk in 2 of the 8 at-risk domains	15	17	17	18	18	19	19
At Risk in Three or More Domains	Is at risk in 3 or more of the 8 at-risk domains	14	15	23	31	38	46	51
	TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Patterns of Co-Occurence

Using these eight at-risk domains, we investigated the frequency with which students are at risk in more than one domain. Each student was placed in one and only one of four categories: not at risk, at risk in a single domain, at risk in two domains, and at risk in three or more domains (Figure 5.7). Among the more significant findings are these: 29 percent of 6th graders are at risk in two or more domains; in each grade between 9 and 12, more than 50 percent of students are at risk in two or more domains; in grade 12, more than half (51%) are at risk in three domains; and at each grade, boys are much more likely than girls to evidence three at-risk domains (Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8 PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AT RISK IN THREE OR MORE OF EIGHT DOMAINS, BY GRADE AND GENDER



Based on findings from this study, it is estimated that in a typical high school, 40 percent of all students in grades 9 to 12 will be at risk in three or more domains. The most common clusters of at-risk behavior include these five: alcohol, sexuality, and vehicle safety; alcohol, sexuality, and tobacco; illicit drug use, sexuality, and tobacco; alcohol, antisocial behavior, and sexuality; and depression/suicide, sexuality, and vehicle safety. These clusters suggest that effective prevention and intervention programs must address multiple behavioral areas as well as the underlying social and cultural dynamics that give rise to such prevalent risk-taking.

Figure 5.9 presents patterns of co-occurrence, with calculations of the probability with which a student is at risk in another domain, given at-risk behavior in a particular domain. For example, **if** a student is at risk in the area of alcohol use, **then** the chances that he or she is also at risk in the area of sexuality is 70 percent, and the chances that he or she is at risk for vehicle safety is 86 percent.

Figure 5.9 PATTERNS OF CO-OCCURRENCE AMONG AT-RISK BEHAVIORS
(for students in grades 9-12)

		At-Risk, Alcohol Use (%)	At-Risk, Tobacco Use (%)	At-Risk, Illicit Drug Use (%)	At-Risk, Sexuality (%)	At-Risk, Depression/ Suicide (%)	At-Risk, Anti-Social Behavior (%)	At-Risk, School (%)	At-Risk, Vehicle Safety (%)
ALCOHOL*	If not at risk, then →	—	10	5	32	22	19	6	56
	If at risk, then →	—	42	27	70	33	49	23	86
TOBACCO	If not at risk, then →	22	—	6	36	22	22	8	61
	If at risk, then →	66	—	35	77	39	53	26	85
ILLICIT DRUGS	If not at risk, then →	25	14	—	39	23	24	9	62
	If at risk, then →	72	60	—	84	46	61	32	88
SEXUALITY	If not at risk, then →	16	8	3	—	18	18	6	56
	If at risk, then →	49	34	22	—	34	41	19	77
DEPRESSION/ SUICIDE	If not at risk, then →	27	16	8	39	—	25	9	63
	If at risk, then →	41	30	21	59	—	38	18	73
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	If not at risk, then →	22	13	6	36	22	—	8	59
	If at risk, then →	54	37	24	64	34	—	22	82
SCHOOL	If not at risk, then →	27	16	9	40	23	25	—	63
	If at risk, then →	62	43	31	72	40	53	—	82
VEHICLE SAFETY	If not at risk, then →	12	8	4	29	20	15	6	—
	If at risk, then →	41	25	15	52	28	35	15	—

*For definitions of each at-risk domain, see Figure 5.5.

The Challenge

In reporting data on the 20 at-risk indicators, most students – even in grades 6, 7, and 8 – have at least one at-risk characteristic. For many students, risk is multiple. By grade 12, 40 percent evidence 5 or more of the 20 indicators, and 51 percent evidence at-risk behavior in three or more at-risk domains. As one veteran youth observer remarked after reading a draft of this report, the findings must be considered "profoundly disturbing." For we are not reporting, here, single incidences of adventure or experimentation, but persistent patterns of health-compromising and future-jeopardizing choices.

20 At-risk Indicators, by Grade

Grade	Percent (%) 0 out of 20	Percent (%) 2 or less
6	40	80
7	33	78
8	28	69
9	22	61
10	19	53
11	14	43
12	11	38

The ideal is to protect youth from all 20 at-risk indicators. The numbers at left graphically demonstrate the substantial distance we have to travel to make this ideal a reality. A more achievable goal is to ensure that each child and adolescent "graduates" out of adolescence with 2 or fewer of the 20 indicators. This minimal standard is attained by only 38 percent of high school seniors.

The sample on which these findings are computed does not include either the urban poor or students who have already dropped out of school. It is likely that the addition of these two subgroups would substantially reduce the percentages listed on the left.

Figure 5.10 SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, BY GRADE AND GENDER

	PERCENT (%) SEXUALLY ACTIVE				IF SEXUALLY ACTIVE, PERCENT (%) USING CONTRACEPTIVES	
	1 or more times		4 or more times			
GRADE	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	At 1st intercourse (partner or self)	All of the time now (partner or self)
7	22	10	7	3	36	41
8	32	17	12	4	40	45
9	41	27	17	14	46	46
10	50	43	26	27	49	47
11	58	54	37	41	53	51
12	77	66	51	54	54	53

Alcohol and Sexuality

Two issues of particular national concern are alcohol use and sexuality. Figure 5.10 shows that the majority of both boys and girls are sexually active by grade 11, and the majority have had sexual intercourse four or more times by grade 12. This, combined with the fact that only about half of sexually active teenagers use contraceptives "all of the time," largely explains why the United States has the dubious distinction of being an international leader in teenage pregnancy rates. By grade 7, the majority of boys and girls have tried alcohol once or more, lifetime; by grade 8, the majority have used alcohol within the "last 12 months," and by grade 11, the majority have used alcohol during "the last 30 days" (Figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11 Alcohol Use, by Grade and Gender

GRADE	GENDER	PERCENT (%) USING ONCE OR MORE			PERCENT (%) REPORTING ONCE OR MORE	
		Lifetime	Last 12 months	Last 30 days	Binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row) during last 2 weeks	Driving after drinking, last 12 months
6	Boys	49	26	13	10	3
	Girls	39	17	7	7	1
	Total	44	22	10	9	2
7	Boys	67	40	19	12	3
	Girls	57	33	16	9	2
	Total	62	36	17	10	3
8	Boys	75	53	29	18	7
	Girls	60	50	26	14	4
	Total	73	51	28	16	5
9	Boys	83	65	38	24	11
	Girls	82	65	37	19	8
	Total	83	65	38	21	10
10	Boys	87	72	45	30	19
	Girls	88	74	46	24	14
	Total	88	73	46	27	17
11	Boys	91	80	56	38	41
	Girls	91	80	51	29	33
	Total	91	80	54	34	37
12	Boys	94	84	63	46	53
	Girls	93	83	57	32	44
	Total	93	83	60	39	48

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THE BIG PICTURE:
WHERE ARE WE IN PROMOTING THE WELL-BEING OF YOUTH

The vision on which this study is based, articulated in chapter 1, is to provide youth with external and internal assets, to prevent deficits, to maximize prosocial behavior, and to minimize at-risk behavior.

Operationalizing the Vision

To assess how well this vision for positive youth development is being achieved, we selected four empirical criteria, thereby defining well-being as follows:

- Having 20 or more of the 30 assets
- Having 2 or less of the 10 deficits
- Being involved in prosocial behavior at least one hour per week
- Having 2 or less of the 20 at-risk indicators

These criteria might be considered minimal standards for well-being. They do not appear to be overly strict. Indeed, some might argue that the standards for deficits and at-risk behavior are not strict enough.

Nearly all student subgroups fail to meet these minimal standards. As shown in Figure 6.1, the average number of assets is 16.3 (vs. the recommended standard of 20 or more), the average number of deficits is 2.4 (vs. 2), the average number of at-risk indicators is near 3 (vs. 2), and the percent of students involved in prosocial behavior is 35 (vs. the goal of 100%). Achievement of the four standards varies most by grade (with striking differences between grades 11 and 12 and grades 6 and 7). On three of the four standards, girls do better than boys. Racial/ethnic differences are not dramatic. Indeed, it appears that well-being has more to do with grade and gender than race or ethnicity. It might be otherwise if the sample included the urban poor and school dropouts, two social phenomena disproportionately represented among youth of color.

Figure 6.1 SUMMARY BY GRADE, GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY

STUDENT SUBGROUP	SAMPLE SIZE	AVERAGE			PERCENT (%)
		Number of 30 Assets	Number of 10 Deficits	Number of 20 At-risk Indicators	Involved in Prosocial Behavior, 1 Hour or More Per Week
TOTAL	46,799	16.3	2.4	2.85	35
Grade 6	1,623	17.4	1.9	1.5	39
Grade 7	7,352	17.2	2.0	1.7	41
Grade 8	7,587	16.7	2.3	2.2	37
Grade 9	8,678	16.1	2.4	2.7	33
Grade 10	8,194	15.9	2.6	3.1	33
Grade 11	7,101	15.7	2.7	3.8	33
Grade 12	6,208	15.9	2.7	4.2	32
Girls	23,414	17.2	2.5	2.6	40
Boys	23,170	15.4	2.3	3.1	31
Amerian Indian	869	15.1	2.8	3.8	39
Asian	373	16.0	2.5	2.4	33
Black	2,166	16.8	2.8	3.2	37
Hispanic	815	15.0	2.7	4.0	32
White	42,274	16.3	2.4	2.8	35

Figure 6.2 SUMMARY, BY GENDER WITHIN GRADE

	AVERAGE						PERCENT (%)	
	Number of 30 Assets		Number of 10 Deficits		Number of 20 At-risk Indicators		Involved in Prosocial Behavior, 1 Hour or More Per Week	
GRADE	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
6	17.9	16.8	1.9	2.0	1.2	1.7	41	37
7	18.0	16.5	2.0	2.0	1.5	1.9	45	37
8	17.5	15.9	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.4	41	33
9	16.9	15.3	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.9	38	29
10	16.8	15.0	2.8	2.4	2.9	3.3	38	28
11	16.8	14.7	2.8	2.5	3.4	4.2	38	29
12	17.0	14.8	2.8	2.5	3.7	4.7	38	26

Figure 6.2 shows that girls do better than boys in all grades in meeting the assets, at-risk, and prosocial behavior standards. Conversely, boys meet the deficits standard more than girls after grade 7, although the differences are rather modest. Figure 6.3 charts specific assets, deficits, and at-risk indicators on which boys and girls differ. No gender differences are found for bulimia (which other research suggests is found more among girls) and weapon use (which is usually associated more with boys). In this study, each of these behaviors is reported by less than two percent of all students, so that gender differences, if they occur, are masked by these low percentages.

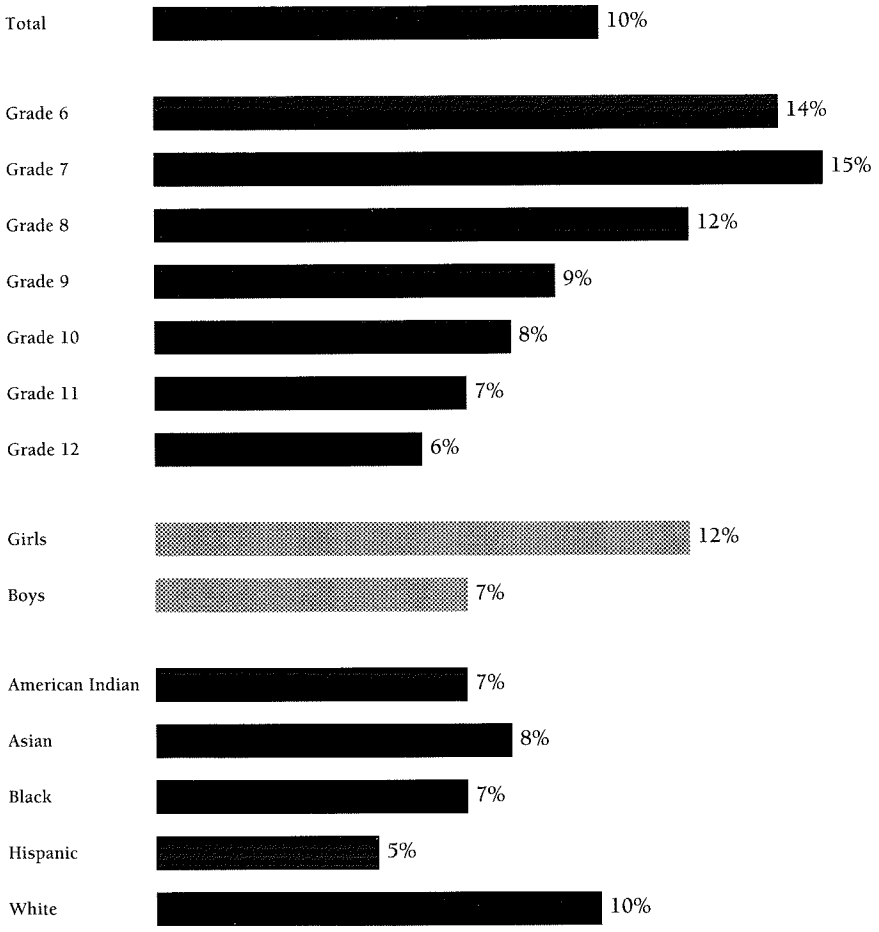
Figure 6.3 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ASSETS, DEFICITS, AND AT-RISK BEHAVIOR

	GIRLS MORE THAN BOYS*	BOYS MORE THAN GIRLS*	NO GENDER DIFFERENCES
ASSETS	Achievement motivation Other adult communication Time at home Involved in church/synagogue Educational aspirations Care about people's feelings Homework Concern for world hunger Involved in music Parental monitoring Parental standards Positive peer influence Values sexual restraint Values helping people	Decision-making skills Self-esteem	Other adult resources Assertiveness skills Positive school climate Parental discipline Friendship-making skills Parents as social resources Parent communication Parent involvement, school Planning skills Family support Positive view of future School performance Involved in community organizations/clubs Involved in school extracurricular activities
DEFICITS	Physically abused Sexually abused Stress	TV overexposure Hedonism	Negative peer pressure Drinking parties Social isolation Alone at home Parental addiction
AT-RISK BEHAVIOR	Depression Attempted suicide	Seat belt non-use Frequent chewing tobacco use Binge drinking Group fighting Police trouble Sexually active Theft Vandalism	Frequent alcohol use Bulimia Daily cigarette use Non-use of contraceptives Driving and drinking Weapon use Frequent use of illicit drugs Riding and drinking School absenteeism Desire to drop out

* Only gender differences of 5% or more are listed. Reported gender differences are statistically significant, $p < .0001$.

Figure 6.4 PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS MEETING FOUR CRITERIA

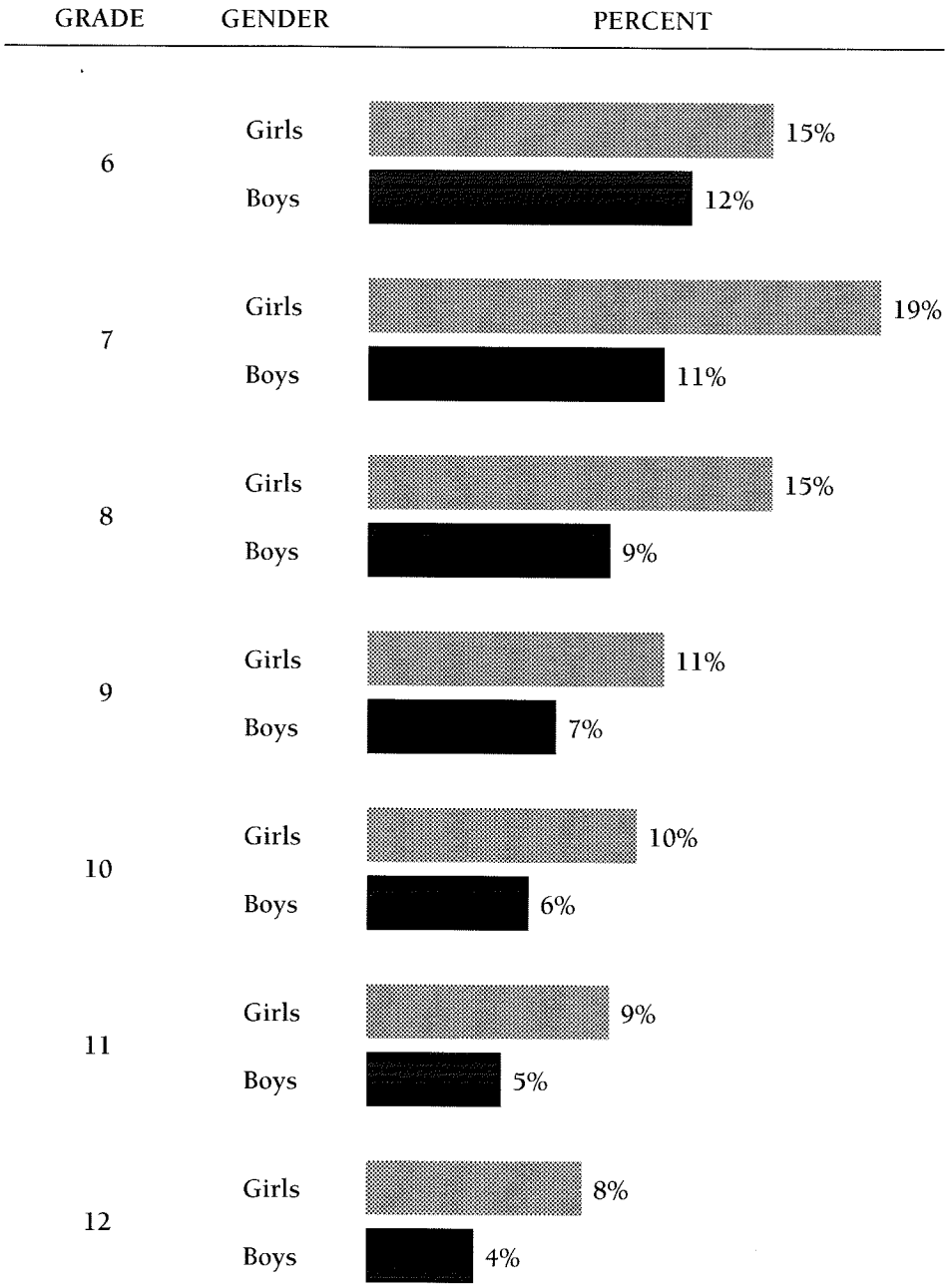
CRITERIA	
ASSETS	Have 20 or more of 30 assets
DEFICITS	Have 2 or less of 10 deficits
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR	1 hour or more per week
AT-RISK BEHAVIOR	Have 2 or less of 20 indicators



Probability of Meeting All Four Criteria

How many youth meet all four criteria simultaneously? The percentages who have 20 or more assets **and** 2 or less of 10 deficits **and** 2 or less of 20 at-risk indicators **and** engage in 1 hour or more of prosocial behavior per week are displayed in Figures 6.4 and 6.5. Among all the students in the study (46,799), that number is 10 percent. Across student subgroups, the range is very tight, from a low of 4 percent (12th grade boys) to a high of 19 percent (7th grade girls).*

Figure 6.5 PERCENTAGE MEETING FOUR CRITERIA, BY GENDER WITHIN GRADE



When we look at each of the 111 communities in this study individually, the highest percentage of youth meeting all four criteria is 16. The range is from 4 percent to 16 percent, suggesting that the dilemma we face in raising healthy children touches each and every town or city.

The Challenge

It is difficult to place in historical perspective the fact that only 10 percent of students meet the four standards proposed earlier in this chapter for measuring the well-being of youth. We simply do not know if these criteria for positive youth development are better or worse than for previous generations of adolescents. We also cannot be sure what happens, long-term, to the 90 percent who fail to meet the criteria. Some, fortunately, will thrive. And some, unfortunately, will carry over into adulthood some scar or behavioral tendency that will stifle productivity. For many of the 90 percent, however, the effects of a less-than-optimal adolescence will be less dramatic, less visible. The personal loss for these adolescents could well be an unrealized potential in which happiness, success, family life, or social relationships are less satisfactory than they could be. Calculated at a personal level, the effects may be somewhat imperceptable. But calculated at a national level, summing across millions of youth, the cumulative effects on society could be substantial.

*When the criteria are made stricter (assets 20 or more, deficits 1 or less, at-risk 1 or less, and prosocial hours 1 or more), the percent of all students meeting all four criteria falls to 2).

THE DYNAMICS OF PREVENTION

Both deficits and assets, as measured in this project, are strongly tied to at-risk behaviors. A two-pronged approach – to **prevent** deficits and to **promote** assets – is necessary to alter the frequency with which adolescents make health-compromising or future-jeopardizing choices.

It should be noted, however, that the deficits and assets used in this study, while powerful in predicting at-risk behavior, do not fully **explain** at-risk behavior.* Other factors likely to play a role are family income, specific family discipline styles, school dynamics other than climate, and exposure to particular kinds of prevention programs. Further research is needed to elucidate these relationships. At the same time, it should be noted that broad social and cultural factors may be at work, each of which is beyond the capacity of communities to alter.

Six important conclusions about the dynamics of prevention are reviewed in this chapter. In understanding these conclusions, a word of caution is in order. The data in this study, as in most research on adolescence, is correlational. At best, we can describe the strength of interrelationships among variables. Directions of causality can only be inferred. In presenting conclusions in this chapter, we cautiously make such inferences, assuming that the reduction of deficits and an increase in assets will help throttle at-risk behaviors. Again, however, much additional research is needed to be more precise and more certain about cause and effect.

*The deficits and assets employed in this study account for about 55 percent of the variance in the 20-item at-risk index.

1. Reducing Deficits

The ten deficits examined in this study are strongly linked to at-risk behavior. The greater the number of deficits, the greater the at-risk behavior.* One possible explanation for this finding is that deficits may interfere with the development of internal assets (e.g., positive values, commitment, social competence). Another is that some deficits (particularly negative peer pressure and drinking parties) may provide rewards for certain at-risk behaviors. And some deficits (parental addiction, abuse) may signal dysfunctional dynamics in family life.

Figure 7.1 shows the degree to which at-risk behavior is connected to each deficit. The increase in risky choices is most associated with negative peer pressure and drinking parties. Efforts to reduce the incidence of these and the other eight deficits is likely to improve the at-risk picture in a community.

Figure 7.1 THE RELATIONSHIP OF DEFICITS TO AT-RISK BEHAVIOR

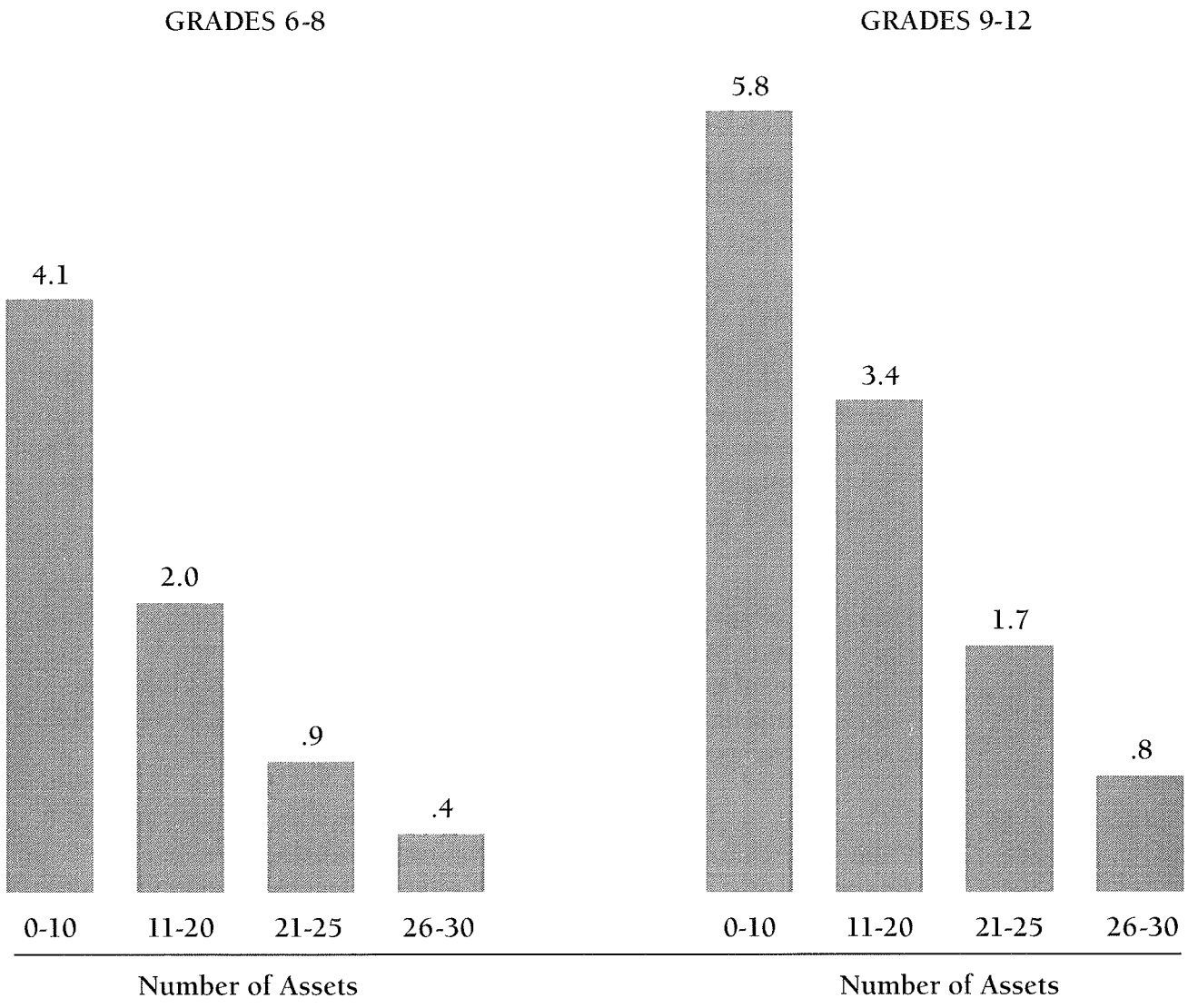
DEFICIT	AVERAGE NUMBER OF AT-RISK INDICATORS	
	If student does not have deficit	If student does have deficit
Parental addiction	2.7	4.6
Alone at home (2 or more hours per day)	2.5	3.1
Hedonistic values	2.4	3.4
Negative peer pressure	2.7	9.2
Attends drinking parties	1.7	5.4
Physical abuse	2.5	4.5
Sexual abuse	2.7	4.4
Social isolation	2.8	4.6
Stress	2.2	4.2
Television overexposure	2.8	3.0

2. Increasing Assets

Figure 7.2 shows the cumulative effect of the 30 assets. Assets appear to be additive: the more one has, the less at-risk behavior. Each increment in assets (from 0-10 to 26-30) generally cuts the number of at-risk indicators in half. This holds not only for all 20 indicators combined but also for each of the eight at-risk domains taken individually (alcohol, antisocial behavior, depression/suicide, illicit drug use, school, sexuality, tobacco, and vehicle safety). This evidence suggests, then, that strategies aimed at increasing assets will also bring a reduction in at-risk behavior. As discussed earlier in chapter 2, there is ample reason for developing greater asset frequency within both the external and internal asset categories.

*Based on multiple regression analyses, each of the 10 deficits independently explains some of the variance in at-risk behavior.

Figure 7.2 AT-RISK INDICATORS, BY NUMBER OF ASSETS



3. Some Assets Matter More Than Others

Although the assets are cumulative (with 26-30 assets providing more insulation from at-risk behavior than fewer assets), some are more strongly associated with prevention than others. As shown in Figure 7.3, three of the six asset types (support, control, structured time use, positive values, educational commitment, and social competencies) have particular power in explaining at-risk behavior. These three are educational commitment, control, and positive values. This finding holds for both grades 6-8 and grades 9-12. Recall from chapter 2 that all three of them tend to decrease between grades 6 and 12.

The strongest preventative assets vary some by at-risk category. Note that educational commitment is most associated with the prevention of tobacco use, positive values are most connected to the prevention of at-risk sexual behavior and unsafe vehicle practices, and social competencies are most linked to the prevention of depression and suicide attempts.

Figure 7.3 also shows the strongest connections among the 30 individual assets and the at-risk categories. There are several surprises. One is the frequency with which "values sexual restraint" is strongly associated with prevention, even in areas that have nothing to do with sexuality. It may be that this value is a proxy for a larger constellation of internalized values having to do with the control of personal behavior. Relatively conspicuous in its absence is self-esteem, which is among the strongest prevention factors only in the case of depression/suicide. Although we find that high self-esteem – like all the 30 assets – plays a role, it is generally among the weakest of the 30 assets in explaining at-risk behavior.

Figure 7.3 ASSETS* MOST ASSOCIATED WITH PREVENTING AT-RISK BEHAVIOR, IN RANK ORDER

	GRADES 6-8		GRADES 9-12	
AT-RISK DOMAIN	From list of 6 asset types	From list of 30 assets	From list of 6 asset types	From list of 30 assets
ALCOHOL	Positive values Control Support Educational commitment	Parental standards Values sexual restraint Achievement motivation Family support	Control Positive values Educational commitment	Parental standards Values sexual restraint Time at home Achievement motivation
ILLICIT DRUGS	Educational commitment Control Positive values	Achievement motivation Parental standards Educational aspirations Values sexual restraint	Control Educational commitment Positive values	Parental standards Achievement motivation Involved in school activities Time at home Values sexual restraint
TOBACCO	Educational commitment Control Positive values Support	Educational aspirations Parental standards Values sexual restraint Family support	Educational commitment Control Structured time use	Involved in school activities Values sexual restraint Educational aspirationg Parental standards Time at home
SEXUALITY	Positive values Educational commitment Control Social competence	Values sexual restraint Parental standards Educational aspirations	Positive values Control Educational commitment Social competence	Values sexual restraint Parental standards Church/synagogue Time at home
ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR	Positive values Educational commitment Control Structured time use	Values sexual restraint Achievement motivation Parental standards Family support	Positive values Educational commitment Control	Achievement motivation Values sexual restraint Time at home Cares about people's feelings
DEPRESSION/ SUICIDE	Social competence Support Positive values	Self-esteem Family support Parents as social resources Church/synagogue	Social competence Support Positive values	Self-esteem Family support Parents as social resources Values helping people
SCHOOL	Educational commitment Positive values Control	Educational aspirations Achievement motivation Parental standards	Educational commitment Positive values Control	Educational aspirations Achievement motivation Involved in school activities Parental standards Time at home
VEHICLE SAFETY	Positive values Educational commitment Control Support	Values sexual restraint Family support Parental standards Educational aspirations	Positive values Control Educational commitment	Values sexual restraint Parental standards Parents as social resources Achievement motivation Positive peer influence
ALL 20 AT-RISK BEHAVIORS COMBINED	Educational commitment Positive values Control Support	Values sexual restraint Family support Parental standards Educational aspirations	Educational commitment Control Positive values Support	Educational aspirations Values sexual restraint Values helping people Achievement motivation Family support

* Assets in each category listed in this chart are those that explain the most variance (partial R^2) in multiple regression analyses run separately for grades 6-8 and grades 9-12. In each category, the assets are rank ordered from higher to lower R^2.

4. Dealing With Co-Occurrence

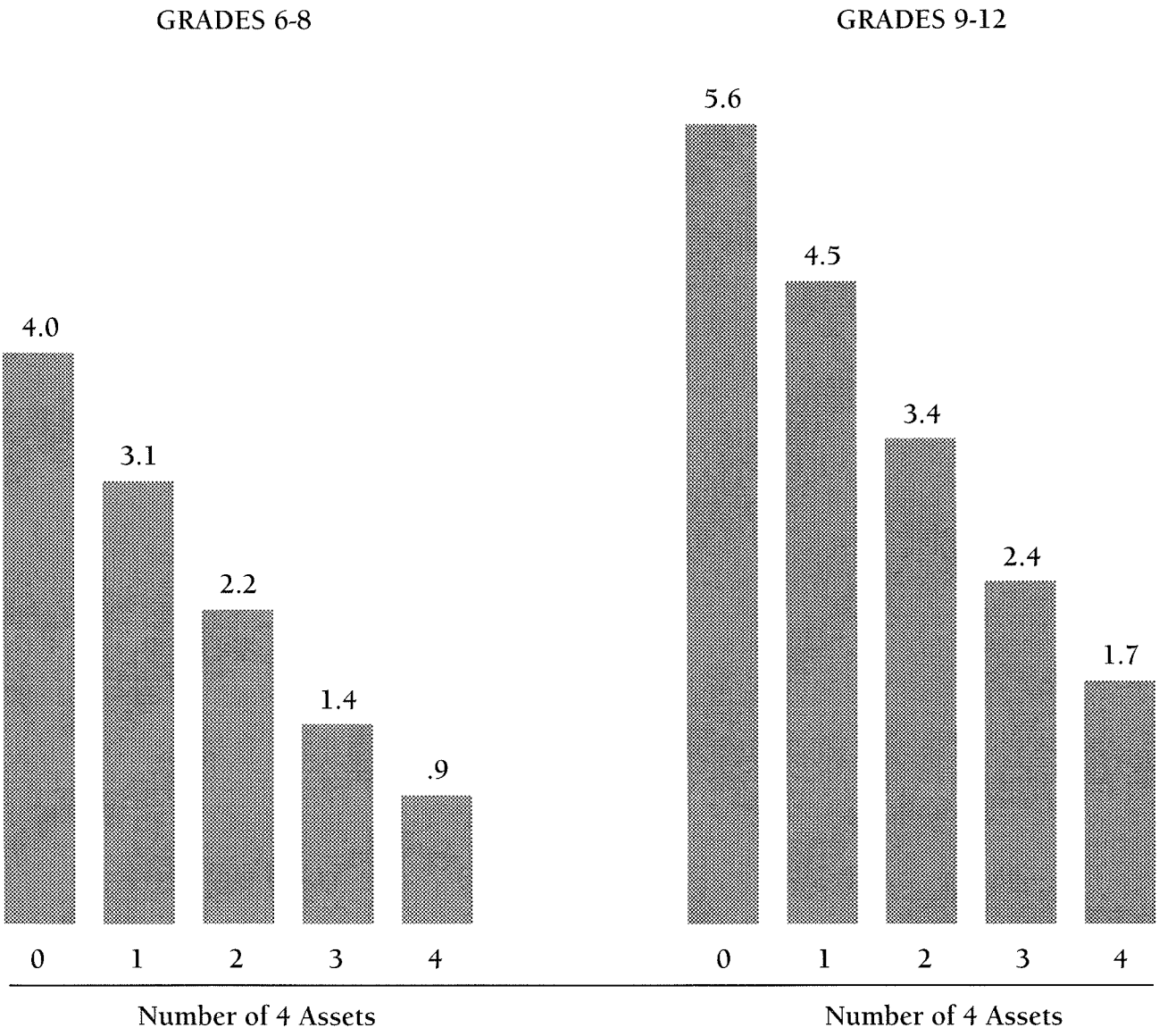
As described in chapter 5, most adolescents are on a path toward experiencing at-risk behavior in multiple at-risk domains (e.g., alcohol, sexuality, vehicle safety). Accordingly, it is crucial that communities seek to address this co-occurrence problem. One way to do so is to offer quality prevention programing in multiple areas. Another strategy, which may in the long run be equally powerful, is to equip youth with multiple internal and external assets. This kind of effort puts the focus on strengthening the ability of families, schools, and other institutions to provide strong support and control, and to nourish in young people the kinds of commitment, values, and competencies that are necessary for healthy choice-making.

5. A Comprehensive Community Approach

As a corollary to point 4 above, the ability to nourish healthy children and adolescents requires the support, involvement, and cooperation of multiple youth-serving sectors. One sector alone (e.g., family or school) cannot by itself provide all the ingredients necessary for positive youth development, as shown in Figure 7.4. Here we took assets involving four youth-serving sectors and calculated the extent to which having all four matters. The four assets examined were family support, positive school climate, involvement in structured extracurricular activities in the community and at school, and involvement in a church or synagogue. Each of these assets contributes to a reduction in at-risk behavior. Having two of the four assets is better than having one; having three is better than two, and having all four is better than three. What this suggests, then, is that families, schools, youth-serving clubs and organizations, and religious institutions each have a role to play. It is likely that the power of these four sectors would be even stronger if deliberate efforts were taken by communities to build meaningful partnerships across them.

Figure 7.4 The Utility of a Comprehensive Community Approach

This figure displays the average number of at-risk indicators (out of 20) as they relate to the following 4 assets that students have: positive school climate, family support, involvement in structured youth activities (school-based or community-based), and involvement in church or synagogue.



6. Service Learning

Finally, a sixth suggested prevention dynamic emerges from findings about prosocial behavior. As discussed in chapter 4, involvement in projects and programs to help others is associated with lower at-risk behavior rates. It would be advantageous in all communities to involve all youth in service learning. One of the ways the four youth-serving sectors (family, school, youth-serving organizations, church/synagogue) can begin to build partnerships is to collaborate on the design and implementation of these learning opportunities.

RESILIENCY

Beating The Odds

Some youth beat the odds. Although certain social deficits such as physical or sexual abuse strongly increase the probability of at-risk behavior during adolescence, the tendency is not universal. That is, some youth thrive in spite of social deficits.

This study provides some insight into how a significant minority of youth with social deficits become insulated from at-risk behaviors. Those who beat the odds are blessed with a series of external and internal assets. We looked at youth who have experienced physical or sexual abuse, or have a parent with an alcohol or other drug problem. And we discovered that the majority of them report five or more at-risk behaviors. However, a minority of youth with one of these three deficits report no at-risk behavior during adolescence. Those with no at-risk behavior were compared with those reporting five or more at-risk indicators to determine whether resiliency is associated with assets. To this analysis we also added youth in single-parent families to see what distinguishes thrivers from those with high at-risk profiles.

Asset Differences

Figure 8 shows 14 assets which appear to promote resiliency. The 14 are quite robust, related to resiliency in each of the four areas of physical abuse, sexual abuse, parental addiction, and single-parent families. For example, in each of the four areas of potential difficulty, youth who show no at-risk behavior are about twice as likely to be involved in a church or synagogue than are their peers for whom abuse, addiction, or single parenting yield risky behavior.

Figure 8 ASSETS PROMOTING RESILIENCY

(numbers are percentages with asset)

ASSETS	POTENTIAL DIFFICULTY	SEXUAL ABUSE		PHYSICAL ABUSE		PARENTAL ADDICTION		SINGLE PARENT FAMILY	
	NUMBER OF AT-RISK INDICATORS	0	5 or more	0	5 or more	0	5 or more	0	5 or more
Church/synagogue involvement		72	37	68	38	62	31	60	30
School extracurricular activities		66	44	66	45	67	41	61	43
Community clubs and organizations		53	33	50	34	42	28	42	29
Parental standards		88	54	90	51	85	47	87	46
Parental discipline		72	54	78	52	64	47	63	41
Achievement motivation		87	55	83	50	83	49	85	51
Educational aspirations		96	75	92	72	92	70	92	71
Homework		42	19	40	17	34	15	33	14
Helping people values		67	47	64	40	62	38	63	40
Concern for poor		63	44	57	36	61	36	56	33
Values sexual restraint		70	9	60	8	59	8	58	7
Family support		66	28	51	22	57	21	70	33
Parent(s) as social resources		60	26	51	24	54	24	64	33
School climate		42	19	34	16	46	17	42	16

Five asset themes differentiate thrivers from non-thrivers. Thrivers are much more likely to be connected to adult-led, structured youth programs (church, school organizations, community organizations); to have families that exercise control (parental standards and discipline); to hold strong educational commitments; to hold positive values (helping people, concern for poor, value on sexual restraint); and to be surrounded by adult care, concern, and support in both the family and school contexts.

Note that the thrivers benefit not only from positive family dynamics but also from a positive connection to other systems of support (clubs, organizations, churches, and synagogues). Additionally, thrivers are much more likely to feel the care and concern of teachers at school (school climate). Thrivers, then, seem to receive support and care from a number of sources outside of the family.

It is interesting to note that thrivers benefit from strong families even though three of the deficits do (parental addiction) or may (physical abuse, sexual abuse) occur within the family context. How some families overcome certain dysfunctional dynamics is not clear, but the inference that it is possible is encouraging.

The point is this: deficits are not destiny. With the right configuration of external and internal assets, the potential negative effects of adversity can be neutralized.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Each and every community, regardless of size or location, faces the immense challenge of universalizing positive youth development. In the language of this report, assets are too few, deficits too many, and behavioral choices too frequently health-compromising and too seldom prosocial. The solutions are not easy. Positive change will require extraordinary commitment to children and adolescents by multiple sectors, including government, business, schools, parents, service organizations, law enforcement, youth-serving organizations, and religious institutions. What follows are 34 recommendations based on findings reported in chapters two through eight.

Community Leaders

1. Assemble a permanent child and youth task force involving key leaders from all community sectors. Ideally, raise funding to staff permanently the task force.
2. Create a community-wide vision for positive youth development.
3. Assess how well the vision is being met, through interviews augmented by some systematic exploration of youth perceptions, behavior, values, and needs.
4. Create a detailed action plan to promote positive youth development, with an emphasis on increasing youth access to effective schools, families, and youth-serving organizations.
5. Mobilize public support for the plan.
6. Implement the plan.
7. Monitor how well the plan is implemented and what impact it has. Revise the plan in light of emerging evidence about the plan's effectiveness.
8. Advocate for greater state or federal support for school effectiveness, parent education, day care and after school care, prevention programming, and other efforts crucial for promoting positive youth development.
9. Ensure that one's community offers a range of support services for families and structured, adult-led activities for youth.

Parents

10. Place high priority on giving frequent and tangible expressions of love, care, and support. Avoid the common tendency to assume high school-aged adolescents are less in need of such expressions than are younger adolescents.
11. Institute or maintain effective discipline and control strategies. Set clear rules and limits, negotiate with children reasonable consequences for rule-breaking, consistently follow through with consequences, and consistently reward positive behavior.
12. Encourage involvement in structured youth activities.
13. Minimize attendance at drinking parties; ban together with other parents to prevent their occurrence.
14. Model responsible chemical use and vehicle safety behaviors.
15. Make family helping projects, in which parents and children together give help to others in need, a priority.
16. Encourage and reward achievement motivation, post-high school educational aspirations, and homework.
17. Minimize overexposure to television and other mass media forms.
18. Emphasize the development of positive values, including prosocial values and values of behavioral restraint.
19. Advocate for effective schools and community youth-serving organizations.

Educators

20. Personalize schools so that each and every child feels cared for, supported, and important.
21. Enhance social competencies, including friendship-making skills, caring skills, assertiveness skills, and resistance skills.
22. Emphasize the development of positive values, particularly those that build a sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of others.
23. Offer quality prevention programming in multiple areas of risk, including alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, suicide and depression, sexuality, and vehicle safety.
24 Enhance academic effectiveness to ensure that students in all income levels gain in academic motivation and competence.
25. Emphasize service learning programs, seeking to provide all students with helping opportunities and personal reflection on the meaning of helping.
26. Provide strong support services for youth at risk.

Staff and Volunteers in Congregations and Other Youth-Serving Organizations

27. Reinvent programming for high school-aged youth.
28. Connect youth to adult mentors.
29. Provide and/or advocate for quality day care and after school care.
30. Place a premium on the development of positive values.
31. Equip parents with parenting skills, particularly in the areas of support-giving, control, and values formation.
32. Involve youth in helping projects.
33. Program directly to multiple at-risk behavior domains.
34. Build social competencies.

There are certain redundancies in these recommendations. They are intentional. Some developmental tasks, such as nourishing positive values and building a passion for helping others, require extensive across-sector "practice" to offset countervailing pressures which abound in current American society. One of the reasons why it is crucial for communities to develop a multi-sector commission or task force is to help ensure that community, school, family, and congregational strategies for positive youth development are integrated and complementary.

APPENDIX
Composite Data on Selected Survey Items and Indices

Composite Data on Selected Survey Items

The information presented in this Appendix includes single items and indices included in the report prepared for each school or school district participating in *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors.* It allows schools to compare local data to national, composite data based on 46,799 public school students in 111 communities.

Social and Personal Resources

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Family									
Live with two parents all or most of the time	81	82	82	80	80	82	81	82	81
Live with one parent all or most of the time	21	18	19	20	20	18	18	18	20
Parents are divorced or separated	28	26	28	29	29	26	26	27	29
Mother had paid job (half-time or more) all of the time while student was growing up	36	33	35	33	33	30	30	32	33
Have had a good conversation with a parent that lasted 10 minutes or more (once or more, last month)	82	82	81	83	83	84	86	82	85
Say their parents ask where they are going or with whom they will be (most or all of the time)	75	76	78	81	82	81	75	75	83
School [Percent combines "agree" and "strongly agree" responses]									
I like school	60	57	55	57	57	55	60	51	63
My teachers really care about me	63	44	40	35	34	37	44	38	41
I get a lot of encouragement at my school	60	53	50	45	43	42	44	44	49
At school I try as hard as I can to do my best work	86	80	76	72	67	64	64	65	78
It bothers me when I don't do something well	80	79	80	81	83	84	85	79	85

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
[Percent combines "often" or "very often" responses]									
Parents talk with child about school	64	59	55	54	53	48	46	55	52
Parents attend meetings or events at school	41	43	37	36	32	34	32	35	36
Use of Time									
Spend time doing homework (6 or more hours per week)	19	26	25	27	26	28	25	21	31
Watch TV (3 or more hours, average school day)	54	48	48	43	39	32	28	43	38
Listen to music (3 or more hours, average school day)	26	30	36	39	40	39	38	30	43
Spend time at home without an adult present (2 or more hours, average school day)	48	56	57	60	61	58	59	57	59
Work for pay (11 or more hours per week)	6	11	12	13	23	42	52	26	21
Involvement in Youth Activities									
[Involved at least 1 hour/week]									
In band, choir, orchestra, music lessons, or practicing musical instrument	51	61	54	40	35	33	30	33	52
In team sports at school	37	58	54	48	45	43	39	53	42
In clubs or organizations at school	27	28	30	33	39	42	44	28	43
In clubs or organizations outside school	43	43	41	38	39	38	36	37	42
In church or synagogue programs or activities	64	65	62	57	54	52	48	53	61
Peers									
[Most or all close friends]									
Use alcohol once a week or more	2	3	5	9	14	21	27	14	11

APPENDIX

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Have used marijuana or cocaine	1	1	3	5	8	8	10	6	5
Do well in school	64	64	59	57	55	57	60	53	65
Help other people	42	36	32	30	31	32	34	22	43
Student Values									
[Percent combines "quite" and "extremely important" responses]									
Helping other people	82	75	72	69	69	69	70	62	80
Helping to reduce hunger and poverty in the world	69	58	53	46	42	36	36	37	55
Having lots of money	43	44	50	51	55	56	58	59	45
Having lots of fun and good times	74	78	80	80	80	79	78	81	77
Being popular or well-liked	52	52	56	54	51	49	44	55	47
Against my values to have sex while a teenager ("strongly agree" or "agree")	54	54	46	34	27	24	21	24	46
Self-Concept									
Students with high self-esteem (average 4.0 or higher on a 5-item scale that ranges from 1, low, to 5, high)	52	48	45	43	43	42	47	51	39
Students good at making decisions ("strongly agree" or "agree")	67	66	67	68	69	69	73	72	65
Students good at making friends ("strongly agree" or "agree")	73	72	74	73	75	76	80	72	77
Students reporting high degree of loneliness (average 4.0 or higher on a 3-item scale that ranges from 1, low, to 5, high)	7	6	6	6	7	7	5	5	7
View of the Future									
Worry a lot about my future	58	62	68	73	77	79	82	70	75
Good at planning ahead	60	58	58	56	57	55	59	57	57
Ten years from now, will be very happy	68	68	70	67	68	69	73	71	67

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Behavior Patterns									
Prosocial Behavior									
Been involved in a project to help make life better for other people, last 12 months									
Never	41	39	42	42	41	38	38	47	34
3 or more times	19	18	16	17	18	20	20	15	21
Given money or time to a charity or organization that helps people, last 12 months									
Never	31	37	41	44	43	42	40	48	34
3 or more times	28	21	18	18	18	19	19	16	22
Spent time helping people who are poor, hungry, or sick, last 12 months									
Never	40	48	52	55	56	56	56	61	46
3 or more times	23	16	14	12	13	13	14	10	18
Alcohol									
Lifetime use, once or more	44	62	73	83	88	91	93	82	78
Last 12 month use, once or more	22	36	51	65	73	80	83	64	62
Last 30 day use									
Once or more	10	17	28	38	46	54	60	40	37
3 or more times	3	6	11	18	24	31	37	22	18
Five or more drinks in a row, last 2 weeks									
Once or more	9	10	16	21	27	34	39	27	20
3 or more times	2	3	6	7	10	13	16	11	6
[Last 12 months]									
Attended a party where "other kids your age were drinking"									
Once or more	15	22	38	55	69	78	83	55	56
5 or more times	3	4	7	15	26	38	47	22	20
Driven a car after drinking									
Once or more	2	3	5	10	17	37	48	21	16
5 or more times	1	1	1	2	3	10	16	6	3
Ridden in a car whose driver had been drinking									
Once or more	31	36	42	49	54	59	63	48	52
5 or more times	9	10	12	13	15	20	24	15	14

APPENDIX

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Tobacco									
Cigarette use, once or more lifetime	33	37	49	54	60	62	66	55	52
Cigarette use, once or more last 30 days	10	11	18	22	25	28	30	22	22
Cigarette use, 1/2 pack or more per day, last 2 weeks	2	2	5	7	8	10	11	7	6
Smokeless tobacco use, 20 or more times, last 12 months	1	2	3	4	5	7	9	10	0
Other Drugs									
[Used one or more times]									
Marijuana									
Lifetime	5	6	11	18	25	27	34	21	17
Last 12 months	2	3	7	12	18	19	22	14	11
Last 30 days	1	2	4	7	9	10	12	8	6
Cocaine									
Lifetime	1	1	3	4	5	6	7	5	3
Last 12 months	1	1	1	3	3	4	4	3	2
Last 30 days	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Amphetamines									
Lifetime	7	7	12	15	18	20	22	13	17
Last 12 months	3	4	8	11	12	14	14	9	12
Last 30 days	2	2	4	6	6	6	7	4	6
LSD ("acid"), last 12 months	0	1	2	4	4	5	5	4	3
Heroin or other narcotics, last 12 months	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Alcohol and Drug Use Patterns									
(For these findings, a student is placed in 1 and only 1 of the 4 categories)									
Problem drinker (reported use of alcohol 6 or more times, last 30 days, and/or consumption of 5 or more drinks in a row, last 2 weeks once or more, and no use of an illicit drug 6 or more times, last year)	8	10	13	16	20	26	30	21	16
Problem drug user (reported use of an illicit drug 6 or more times, last year, and use of alcohol 5 times or less, last 30 days, and no report of consuming 5 or more drinks in a row, last 2 weeks)	0	1	1	2	4	3	3	2	3

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Problem drinker and problem drug user (reported use of alcohol 6 or more times, last 30 days, and/or consumption of 5 or more drinks in a row, last 2 weeks once or more, combined with the use of an illicit drug 6 or more times, last year)	1	1	3	6	8	9	11	7	5
Neither problem drinker nor problem drug user (student does not fall into 3 categories above)	90	88	82	75	68	61	56	70	76

Comparisons to National Norms[1]

	National 1988 Seniors %	Composite Seniors (1989, 1990) %
Used alcohol, once or more, lifetime	92	93
once or more, last 12 months	85	83
once or more, last 30 days	64	60
Drank 5 or more drinks in a row, once or more, last 2 weeks	35	39
Smoked 1/2 pack of cigarettes or more per day, last 30 days	11	11*
Used marijuana, once or more, lifetime	47	34
once or more, last 12 months	33	22
once or more, last 30 days	18	12
Used cocaine, once or more, lifetime	12	7
once or more, last 12 months	8	4
once or more, last 30 days	3	2
Used amphetamines, once or more, lifetime	20	22
once or more, last 12 months	11	14
once or more, last 30 days	5	7
Used illicit drug, once or more, lifetime	54	42

[1] High school seniors are compared using national estimates from the annual Monitoring the Future Project conducted by the University of Michigan under contract to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
* During last 2 weeks

Stress, Depression, Anxiety, and Suicide

Strain, stress, pressure, past month ("almost more than I could take")	9	10	12	14	16	16	16	10	17
Anxious, worried, upset, past month ("most" or "all of the time")	15	18	22	25	28	30	30	18	32

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Sad, depressed, past month ("most" or "all of the time")	12	12	14	16	17	17	15	11	20
Tried to commit suicide ("yes, 2 or more times")	2	3	4	6	6	6	5	3	7
Sexual Intercourse									
"Have you ever had sexual intercourse" ("gone all the way", "made love")?									
No	85	84	76	66	54	44	33	56	66
Once	7	6	9	9	10	8	7	10	6
4 or more times	5	5	9	16	26	39	52	24	22
[For those reporting sexual intercourse] Always use contraception	39	41	45	46	47	51	53	49	48
Antisocial Behavior									
[Once or more, last 12 months]									
Stolen something from a store	9	14	19	19	22	21	19	23	14
Gotten into trouble with the police	9	12	15	18	20	26	26	26	12
Cheated on a test at school	25	32	44	53	61	63	59	52	50
Committed an act of vandalism	11	15	19	21	20	21	19	27	11
Hurt someone badly enough to require bandages or a doctor	13	12	14	13	13	13	11	20	5
Days of school skipped, last 4 weeks									
None	87	89	86	84	80	76	73	81	83
1-2	9	7	9	11	13	17	19	13	12
Physical and Sexual Abuse									
Physical abuse ("where an adult caused you to have a scar, black and blue marks, welts, bleeding, or a broken bone")									
Once or more	13	14	17	17	19	19	17	14	20
Sexual abuse ("someone in your family or someone else did sexual things to you that you did not want, or forced you to touch them sexually")									
Once or more	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	3	18

At-Risk Index

The at-risk index included in individual school reports is slightly different than that reported in this monograph. In the individual school reports released during 1989 and 1990, the 20-item at-risk index substituted physical abuse and sexual abuse for seat belt use and vandalism. In this monograph, the two forms of abuse have been recategorized as deficits. Presented below are findings based on the at-risk index constructed for individual school reports.

1. FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL USE: 6 or more times in last 30 days
2. BINGE DRINKING: drunk once or more in last 2 weeks
3. DRIVING AFTER DRINKING: twice or more in last 12 months
4. RIDING AFTER DRINKING: ridden in a car with someone who had been drinking, twice or more in last 12 months
5. CIGARETTES: 1 or more cigarettes per day
6. CHEWING TOBACCO: 20 or more times in last year
7. PROBLEM DRUG USER: used marijuana, PCP, LSD, cocaine/crack, amphetamines, or narcotics 6 or more times in last year
8. SEXUALLY ACTIVE: have had sexual intercourse
9. CONTRACEPTIVE USE: sexually active but do not use contraceptives regularly
10. DEPRESSION: sad or depressed "most of the time" or "all of the time"
11. ATTEMPTED SUICIDE: have attempted suicide once or more
12. BULIMIA: vomited on purpose once a week or more after eating
13. GANG FIGHTS: twice or more in last 12 months
14. WEAPON USE: used knife, gun, or club to get something from someone, twice or more in last 12 months
15. POLICE: in trouble with police, twice or more in last 12 months
16. THEFT: stolen something, twice or more in last 12 months
17. SCHOOL ABSENCE: skipped school 2 or more days in last month
18. SCHOOL DROPOUT: want to "quit school as soon as I can"
19. PHYSICALLY ABUSED: those reporting abuse once or more
20 SEXUALLY ABUSED: those reporting abuse once or more

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Students with 1 or more indicators	51	55	62	68	77	82	86	71	70
Students with 3 or more indicators	20	20	29	36	44	53	58	39	38
Students with 5 or more indicators	8	8	14	18	24	31	36	22	20

Opportunities for Helping Youth

Interests

[Percent who are "very interested"]

Getting better at making and keeping friends	73	71	68	65	62	62	60	60	70
Learning how to read better	52	44	37	32	30	30	29	34	35
Doing things to help other people	59	48	44	40	39	38	40	31	53
Learning values that will help guide me throughout my life	71	67	63	60	59	57	57	55	66
Learning how to deal with pressure to use alcohol or other drugs	56	51	44	35	28	23	19	31	38
Learning more about sexuality	38	35	36	31	28	26	23	33	27

APPENDIX

	Grade %							Gender %	
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	M	F
Getting better at making my own decisions	67	62	58	53	52	52	51	50	60
Having a better relationship with my parents	64	56	50	44	41	40	38	42	49
Deciding what I should do with my life	71	66	67	64	64	65	61	61	68

Factors Related to Positive Behavior[1]

[The correlation given for each factor represents its relationship to the at-risk index. The more students report each of the following, the less they report being involved in at-risk behaviors.]

	Correlation
POSITIVE FAMILY LIFE: The degree to which one's family provides love and support	-0.39
ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION: The degree to which one cares to do well in school	-0.36
PARENTAL STANDARDS: The degree to which parents would be upset "if they found out I'd been drinking"	-0.36
PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING: The extent to which parents are active in school life	-0.30
POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE: The degree to which school is viewed as a caring environment	-0.30
SELF-ESTEEM: The degree to which one feels good about oneself	-0.29
EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION: The level of interest in pursuing formal education	-0.29
CHURCH INVOLVEMENT: The frequency with which one attends church or synagogue services and programs	-0.28
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: How well one does in school, compared to other students	-0.27
POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE: The degree to which one's friends are socially and academically responsible	-0.24
HOMEWORK: Amount of homework done each week	-0.22

[1] Only those factors are listed that have a correlation between -1.00 and -.20 with the at-risk index (composed of 20 at-risk indicators).