

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Testing a Developmental Cascade Model of Emotional and Social Competence and Early Peer Acceptance

Blandon, A. Y., Calkins, S. D., Grimm, K. J., Keane, S. P., & O'Brien, M. (2010). Testing a developmental cascade model of emotional and social competence and early peer acceptance. *Development and Psychopathology*, 22(4), 737-748.  
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**SUMMARY:** Survey data from a larger prospective study were utilized to examine how emotion regulation influenced externalizing behaviors of children over time and whether children's social skills influenced peer ratings of acceptance. Results indicate that children's externalizing behaviors and social skills were stable over time. Children's early social skills predicted later peer acceptance.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Children's behavior at any point was influenced by their past behavior.
- Higher emotion regulation was strongly related to better social skills and less externalizing. Externalizing behaviors predicted poorer social skills.
- Children with better social skills were more liked by their peers, but only between kindergarten and second grade.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with other professionals in the field regarding developmentally appropriate ways military parents can support their child's emotional and social development
- Facilitate support groups for military children struggling with externalizing behavioral issues to help them further develop emotional regulation and social skills

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Collaborate with schools to offer more structured school environments that encourage better self-regulation and thereby reduce their disruptive behavior
- Offer workshops to young military children that teach emotional regulation skills that are developmentally appropriate

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that work with military children who exhibit externalizing behavior problems
- Recommend professional development courses to service providers working with military families regarding the unique factors that may influence military children's emotional and behavioral development

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## METHODS

- The current study included children from a larger, longitudinal study.
- This article is focused primarily on civilian children recruited from day care centers, health departments, and WIC (Women, Infant, and Children) programs.
- Children with higher levels of externalizing behaviors were oversampled.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 440 children (212 male, 228 female).
- Children ranged in age from 2-7 years old.
- There was some ethnic diversity in the sample; 67% were White, 27% were Black, 4% were biracial, and 2% were Latino/Latina.

## LIMITATIONS

- A selection bias should be considered as children in the study were oversampled for externalizing behavior problems; consequently, results may not generalize to a population who are not at risk for developing future externalizing behavior.
- This study included civilian children and may not generalize to a military sample of children.
- Not all constructs (i.e., emotional regulation) were measured at each time-point making it difficult to evaluate behaviors longitudinally.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Extend the longitudinal study to older children and adolescents and military connected youth
- Examine other potential predictors of peer likeability to increase the low level of predictability of social skills after second grade among military youth
- Explore military specific factors that could influence children's externalizing behaviors and emotional regulation

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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