

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

The Impact of an Operation Purple Camp Intervention on Military Children and Adolescents' Self-Perception of Social Acceptance, Athletic Competence, and Global Self-Worth

Chawla, N., & Macdermid Wadsworth, S. (2012). The impact of an Operation Purple Camp intervention on military children and adolescents' self-perception of social acceptance, athletic competence, and global self-worth. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 40(3), 267-278. doi:10.1080/01926187.2011.611782

SUMMARY: Children and adolescents participated in a one-week Operation Purple Camp intervention (a summer camp intended to empower military families and their children to develop and maintain healthy relationships during the course of deployments) to test the effect of the camp on self-perceptions of social acceptance, athletic confidence, and global self-worth. Adolescents showed significant improvement after the camp in perceptions of social acceptance and athletic competence, and children showed improvement in perceptions of global self-worth.

KEY FINDINGS:

- For children (9-12 years), self-worth was significantly higher after camp compared to before camp.
- For adolescents (13-15 years), athletic competence and social acceptance scores significantly increased from pre-camp to post-camp.
- At the post-camp assessment, children rated themselves as having significantly higher self-worth than adolescents.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Educate military families about the importance of community-based activities for young people, including potential benefits for children
- Partner with community-based organizations to co-sponsor or work together to recruit and offer programming for military youth
- Disseminate information to military families regarding available community-based opportunities for military youth both on and off base

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support outreach and programs that serve military youth
- Recommend professional development for personnel running youth development activities to ensure that camp structure and curricula are optimal to meet military children's needs
- Encourage collaboration among DoD and community-based youth programs to meet the needs of military youth both on and off base

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Children and adolescents between 9 and 15 years old who attended Operation Purple Camp in the summer of 2008 at Purdue University participated in the study.
- On the first and last days of camp, participants completed measures of self-acceptance, athletic competence, and social acceptance.
- The one week camp curriculum consists of activities to facilitate relationships among military children, encourage camaraderie, and increase athletic competence.

PARTICIPANTS

- Forty-four children and adolescents participated (50% female).
- The average age of participants was 11.95 years (SD = 1.71 years); race of participants was not provided.
- Eighty-six percent had fathers serving in the military, 5% had mothers serving.
- Eighty-four percent were Army, 11% Navy, and 5% Air Force; 41% were National Guard; 30% were Reserves, and 25% were Active Duty.

LIMITATIONS

- There was no comparison group, so it is unknown whether any observed changes were due to the passage of time or the camp intervention.
- Demographic information was incomplete; therefore, generalizability of results is unknown.
- Some of the measures used were not previously validated, reducing the studies overall validity.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Use a longitudinal design with a larger, more representative sample to try to replicate these findings
- Assess if participation in camps or other youth programs relate to family or school outcomes
- Utilize a comparison group to determine whether changes in youth outcomes are associated with the intervention

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>