

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## The Impact of Socialization on Youth Program Outcomes: A Social Development Model Perspective

Duerden, M. D., & Witt, P. A. (2010). The impact of socialization on youth program outcomes: A social development model perspective. *Leisure Sciences*, 32(4), 299-317. doi:10.1080/01490400.2010.488189

**SUMMARY:** Prosocial attitudes and behaviors were analyzed in a sample of youth program participants. The study applied a social development model to determine if prosocial behaviors were linked to participation in an international immersion youth program. Findings suggest that participating in the program was positively linked with outcomes related to prosocial behaviors.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Youth who reported feeling connected to the program, reported higher outcomes (i.e., environmental knowledge, attitude, and behaviors) upon completion of the program than the comparison group.
- Participants reported that sharing similar experiences with others in the youth program was a major component of feeling connected.
- The youth program's focus on students' social development had a positive impact on their outcomes.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Develop curricula on military installations that emphasize the importance of teaching prosocial development
- Participate in professional development opportunities to improve positive relationships with military youth in youth programs

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Host peer support groups for military youth who are not able to participate in formal youth programs so they can share positive bonding experiences with peers
- Create parent education classes to teach military families about the importance of peer relationships in the development of prosocial behaviors

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage protocols that include a focus on prosocial behaviors across all youth programs for military families
- Support the increase of the amount of training about how prosocial behaviors impact adolescent development for professionals who work with military families

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.



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## METHODS

- For the intervention group, teachers recruited students from a nonprofit youth organization, Global Explorers that arranges international immersion experiences for junior and high school students.
- The same group of teachers also recruited students who were not part of the Global Explorers program to serve as a comparison group.
- Quantitative data were collected from students via self-report surveys. Qualitative data were collected via focus group interviews with a subsample (n = 46) of the participants and some of their parents (n = 8).

## PARTICIPANTS

- The sample was 157 junior and high school students; average age for intervention group was 14.5 years (SD = 1.65) and for comparison group was 13.6 years (SD = 0.89).
- The participant group was 108 students (51 females, 57 males) and the comparison group was 49 students (29 females, 20 males). No data were provided about the parents who participated in the focus groups.
- Among the participant group, 82% were White and among the comparison group, 90% were White. No other information about race or ethnicity of the remaining sample was provided by the authors.

## LIMITATIONS

- All participants were recruited by teachers, and teachers' preferences, attitudes, and opinions of the students may have biased their selection of who participated in the study.
- It is unknown if the comparison group of students were participating in a separate youth program, which would have impacted their responses and, therefore, not been a true comparison group.
- The authors reported qualitative data results from teachers; however, there is no description of any teachers as participants, and it is unclear if their responses were included in the quantitative analyses.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct a similar study with a comparison group of students who participated in a different youth program to compare effectiveness of each program
- Collect data from youth workers about students participation as it relates to desired outcomes
- Analyze data on parental reports of youth's functioning before and after participation in a youth program

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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