



After-School Programs as a Prosocial Setting for Bonding between Peers

Wright, R., John, L., Duku, E., Burgos, G., Krygsman, A., Esposito, C. (2009). *Child and Youth Services*, 37, 74-91.
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a929931821~frm=abslink>



Civilian-
Focused
Article



This quantitative study assessed the relationship between peer social support, family interactions, and psychosocial outcomes, namely, conduct problems, emotional problems, hyperactivity, indirect aggression, prosocial behavior, and self-esteem of youth ages 9 to 15 years.

Key Findings:

- The analyses shows that peer social support (e.g., how well youth get along with peers) is positively related to prosocial behaviors and self-esteem.
- Prosocial behaviors (e.g., empathetic and helping behaviors) and self-esteem decreased and negative outcomes (e.g., emotional problems, aggression) increased when negative family interactions were present.
- Comparisons between youth participants and a matched comparison group revealed that the structured after-school arts program increased prosocial behaviors and bonding with peers for youth from low-income communities.

Implications for Programs:

- Participation in a structured after-school arts program may increase prosocial behaviors and bonding with peers for youth from low-income communities.
- Activities and curricula should offer opportunities to build supportive relationships among youth participants, including time to process as a group what was learned and experienced.
- Consider integrating family strengthening efforts, such as opportunities for family bonding, or family group meetings, and psychoeducational offerings (e.g., teaching families about bonding and coping) to support families, as part of youth programs to enhance positive interactions with family members and potentially improve youth outcomes.

Implications for Policies:

- Making afterschool programs widely available to youth may improve their social adjustment, psychological health, and prosocial behavior.
- Providing funding for programs that promote prosocial behavior could increase prosocial behavior and decrease behavior problems.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research should assess activities and strategies that build supportive peer relations, particularly when youth are transient, within afterschool and youth development programs; these can include alternative means of communication, such as e-mail, social networking sites, etc.
- Evidence is needed about which program activities and strategies can effectively improve positive family interactions, including program duration or specific curricula.
- Research focusing on community arts programs for youth should be expanded to include concentrating on a targeted population of at-risk youth, comparing different types of arts media, and varying levels of duration and intensity of the art programming.

Prepared by Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit <http://reachmilitaryfamilies.arizona.edu>



Background Information

Methodology:

- Wright and colleagues used 183 parent & youth participant reports on questionnaires that contained six self-report behavioral outcome measures from the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY): conduct problems, emotional problems, hyperactivity/attention deficit, indirect aggression, prosocial behavior, and global self-esteem.
- This article focuses on civilian children.

Participants:

- Children ranged from 9 to 15 years, and were from low-income communities in Canada.
- Structured after-school arts program (Youth development)

Limitations:

- A matched sample design was used to ensure both the comparison and intervention groups were similar in socioeconomic status and psychosocial functioning. However, due to a lack of random sampling, those who participated in the program may have been more willing to do so, suggesting the potential for skewed responses or selection bias.
- This study featured 183 youth, ages 9 to 15 years, from low-income communities in Canada that were enrolled in a structured after-school arts program, and may not be representative of all youth in afterschool programs.
- Youth in the control group may have attended another type of program, skewing the results.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★ ★ ★)	Appropriate (★ ★ ★)	Limited (★ ★ ★)	Questionable (★ ★ ★)	
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★ ★ ★)	Appropriate (★ ★ ★)	Limited (★ ★ ★)	Questionable (★ ★ ★)	
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent <i>Minor Limitations</i> (★ ★ ★)	Appropriate <i>Few Limitations</i> (★ ★ ★)	Limited <i>Several Limitations</i> (★ ★ ★)	Questionable <i>Many/Severe Limitations</i> (★ ★ ★)	
The limitations of this study are...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications				Quality Rating:	N/A
	Excellent (★ ★ ★)	Appropriate (★ ★ ★)	Limited (★ ★ ★)	Questionable (★ ★ ★)	
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
☒ Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
Overall Quality Rating					★ ★ ★

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