

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Moving Beyond Youth Voice

Serido, J., Borden, L. M., & Perkins, D. F. (2011). Moving beyond youth voice. *Youth & Society*, 43(1), 44-63.
doi:10.1177/0044118X09351280

SUMMARY: Survey data were used to examine whether youth engagement in positive relationships with adult staff in youth programs contributed to the development of youth voice and influenced youth's perception of the benefits of program participation. Positive relationships with an adult staff increased youth's perception of voice in a program, which increased youth's perception of benefits from program participation.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Youth who reported more positive relationships with adult staff and a stronger voice in the program reported more benefits from their program participation.
- Youth voice partially explained (i.e., mediated) the association between relationships with adults and benefits gained from program participation. Having positive relationships with adult staff predicted having a strong voice, which in turn predicted youth reporting more benefits from participation.
- Native American youth were more likely to feel that relationships with adults in the program were less supportive and that their voice was not as strong compared to Latino/Latina, Black, White, and Asian-American youth.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with organizations connected with military parents to emphasize the importance of youth programs for all families
- Examine ways to create positive relationships with children involved in youth programs

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide opportunities for youth to practice using their voice in the presence of supportive adults who view youth as partners and encourage youth empowerment and skill development
- Provide education to military youth regarding how to develop positive adult relationships and use their voice

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage professional training for staff who work with military children regarding how to form supportive adult-youth relationships that encourage youth voice
- Continue to support youth programs for military children

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

- This study used a convenience sample of youth (N = 748) who participated in the Engaging Youth Serving Communities initiative from 29 states.
- Only civilian youth were included in the current study.
- Participants completed web-based or paper-and-pencil surveys.

PARTICIPANTS

- Seven hundred forty-eight youth (68% females) participated.
- The majority of participants were White (76%).
- The age of participants was 15 years.

LIMITATIONS

- Without longitudinal data, there is no clear evidence that supportive relationships cause program benefits in general or youth voice development in particular.
- Other aspects of the outcome may be missed if only one informant was used (e.g., youth may have been trying to respond in the best way).
- Participants included only civilian youth; therefore, results may not be generalizable to military youth.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Replicate the directional and causal effects suggested in this study using a longitudinal design
- Incorporate additional objective measures or multiple informants to measures youth perceptions
- Examine whether youths perceived quality relationships with adults contribute to strengthening of youth voice with a sample of military children

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>