

Can the Family Environment Impact the Effectiveness of After-School Programs?



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Introduction

Little is known about how youth involvement in ASPs can mediate the association between the family environment and youth developmental outcomes.

- Youth who have positive feelings and interactions with their families are more likely to remain in ASPs (Persson et al, 2007). Family connectedness may support youth receptivity to messages delivered through ASPs.
- Participation in ASPs can cultivate self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2004) through exposure to caring adults who foster a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness to others.
- Youth goal setting is an important youth development outcome which can promote healthy stress management, self efficacy, and self-determination (Snyder et al, 1987; Carruthers, 2006; Hui, Tsang, 2006).

Present Study

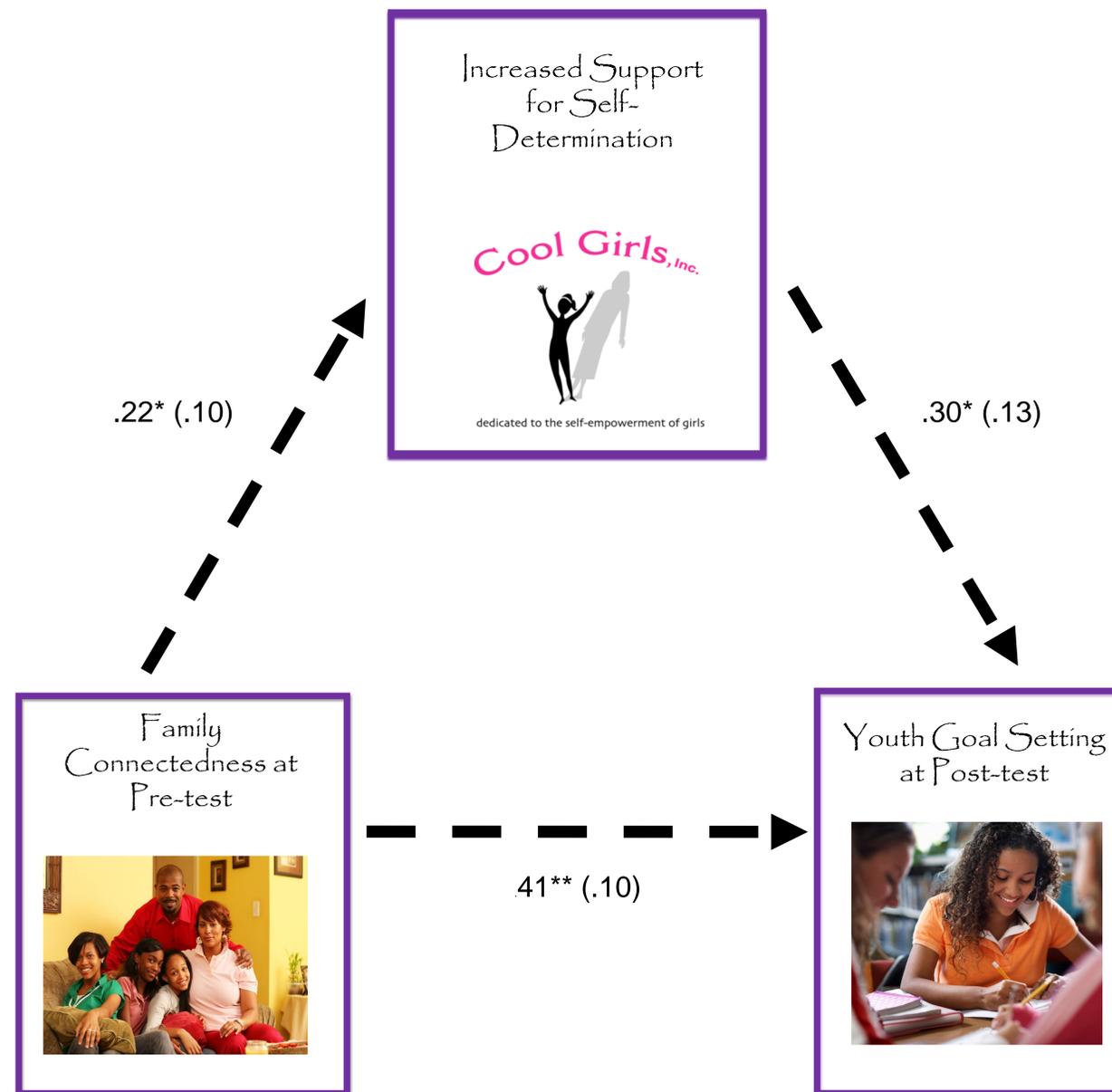
We examined whether support for self determination offered through an ASP can mediate the association between family connectedness and youth goal setting.

Participants

61 girls in 5th through 8th grade participating in the Cool Girls Inc. program, an ASP in metropolitan Atlanta.

- 77% African American, 23% other
- 94.8% Free or reduced price lunch eligible
- Mean Age: 12.4 years
 - 49.2% 5th graders
 - 36.1% 6th graders
 - 6.6% 7th graders
 - 8.2% 8th graders

Youth After School Program Involvement Mediating the Association Between Family Connectedness and Youth Goal Setting



* $p < .05$
** $p < .001$

Note: Estimates are unstandardized regression coefficients. Values in parentheses are standard errors. Increased support for self-determination implied by residualized change in post-test controlling for pre-test.

Measures

Support for Self-determination- Perceived support for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in relationships while at Cool Girls Club.

- 1 = Not at all true to 4 = Very true
- Example: "I feel close to my parents"

Parent Connectedness- 5-item scale measuring how frequently students feel that their parents know and monitor where the students go and with whom they are with.

- 1 = Almost never to 4 = Almost always
- Example: "When I am at Cool Girls I feel free to be who I am"

Goal Setting – 6-item scale based on the Cool Girls curriculum, developed to measure the students goal setting and decision making skills.

- 1 = Not true to 4 = Always true
- Example: "When I set a goal, I think about what I need to do to achieve that goal"

Results

• Using bias-corrected bootstrap mediation, change in support for self-determination offered through the Cool Girls Inc. program from pretest to posttest was found to significantly mediate the association between family connectedness at pretest and youth goal setting at posttest, CI.95 = .007, .19.

- Each of the pathways in the mediation model were statistically significant, $p < .05$.

Conclusions

- ASPs can mediate the association between family environment and youth developmental outcomes.
- ASPs should work to support positive family environments to facilitate youth development.

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