



CSPV POSITION SUMMARY

PS-003

1998

Positive Peer Culture Programs

Peer group interventions, widely used in schools and institutional settings, attempt to create a prosocial group climate, group controls on antisocial behavior, and supports for conventional attitudes and behaviors. Guided Group Interaction (GGI) and Positive Peer Culture (PPC) are two programs within this intervention approach designed to restructure peer interactions with the intent of increasing conformity to prosocial norms. Overall, the empirical evaluations of these programs are inconsistent; some evaluations yield no effect, others yield beneficial effects, and still others yield adverse effects. For instance, in the Provo experiment (Empey & Erikson, 1974) in one set of comparison conditions GGI treatment youth (who otherwise would have been incarcerated) were compared to incarcerated youth and found to have significantly fewer arrests after treatment. Conversely, an evaluation of a derivative of GGI, the Peer Culture Development (PCD) program, yielded an adverse effect including more drug use and more serious delinquency (Gottfredson, 1987). There are still other evaluations of peer group-based interventions that yield no significant effect.

There is some evidence that these types of programs help maintain or restore institutional order. For instance, some evaluation reports of schools in which these programs operated indicate that schools became safer over time, school-wide reports of negative peer influence went down, and school-wide belief in conventional rules went up. Therefore, these programs may have valuable environmental effects.

Overall, however, the adverse effect of some peer-based interventions is a serious warning sign for this type of intervention. When implemented, these interventions should be applied only in an experimental context because their beneficial nature and efficacy has not been consistently demonstrated.

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