

Science Minors and Achievers Retrospective Study

Research and Evaluation Executive Summary

Goal

This study began as a “where are they now?” investigation of the alumni of the first 10 years of the Science Minors and Achievers (SMA) study.

Why

The SMA program was celebrating its 10-year anniversary.

What

Alumni were measured on a broad range of topics including their science attitudes, career interests, memories of the program and how it compared to other memories they have of their life at the time.

Who

We reached out to all alumni for which we had contact information (~500). We received surveys back from 167 alumni. We subsequently interviewed 49 of them to look for deeper meaning in their answers.

How

Surveys were sent via postal mail and email to the last contact information we had on record. Postcard reminders were also mailed. Interviews were conducted via telephone. Participants received a \$15 incentive for each survey returned another \$20 for each interview conducted.

When

Surveys were mailed during the holiday season of 2014 and interviews conducted in the winter and spring of 2015. A second round of interviews was done in the summer of 2016.

Results

Major findings include:

- Female youth show a significant increase in STEM career interest while in the program. This is contrary to the general population, which tends to see female youth lose STEM interest during adolescence.
- Interviews and data suggest female youth had a different type of relationship with staff than male youth. They saw staff as more like teachers while male youth saw them as mentors. Both groups often compared staff to family.
- Sample quotes (using pseudonyms):

“If there is one thing that I’m thankful for is that the program just helped me to accept who I am. I am a loveable nerd.”

“Being around a lot of people who were not white and who were also in this program but also nerdy, I think that sort of helped me be more comfortable with being super into school... a lot of my friends in school weren’t black and so to have like a bunch of people who were black and brown like working with me in Science Minors was just like kind of different for me.”

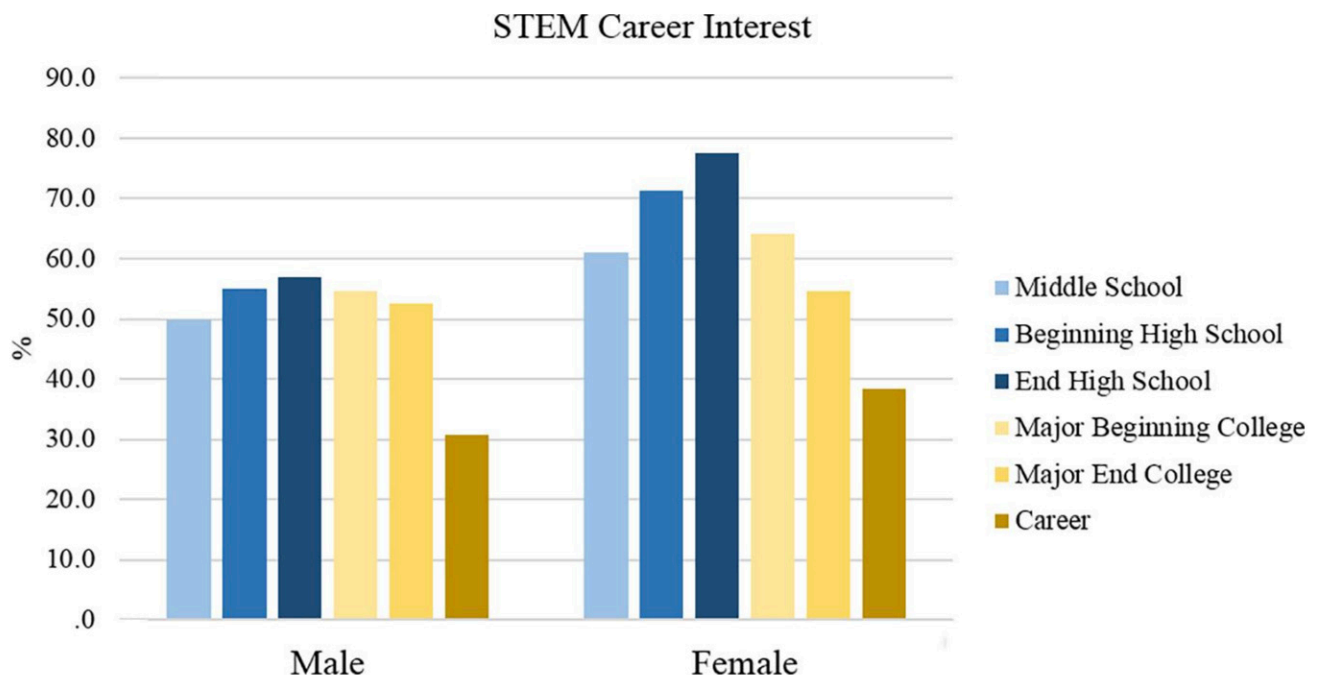
“It was just the people. You know, honestly it was people... So, Mr. Jones, who’s an amazing, amazing guy, like maybe even a mentor to me, honestly. He’s like a grandfather to me.”

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¹<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398090> - We purchased a copyright to the article so it may be reproduced and shared widely.



Blue represents times associated with SMA program participation. Yellow represents times after graduation from school and the program.

These results have been peer-reviewed. They were published in the Journal of Applied Development Science¹.

Our NSF-funded *Developing YOUth!* study is a direct follow up to this research.