

## Improving girls' attitudes towards science. Public Understanding of Science 5: 255-268.

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### Note:

Participation improved the images of science and scientists held by girls especially in the case of older age groups and after participation, the girls were more likely to describe a scientist as a real or normal person whereas pre-test they described scientists in more stereotypical terms (i.e safety glasses and a lab coat). The girls seemed to describe a fear of being hurt doing science that might be lessened by more consistent exposure - this fear was worse among older girls (i.e. the Guides). While all girls enjoyed the program there was a steady decline in their confidence with doing science, with obvious drops at ages 8 and 10

### Abstract:

This study evaluated the effect of an outreach project, called the "Scientist Badge for Brownies and Girl Guides", on science attitudes and achievements of girls aged 6-12. The programme reached nearly 1500 girls and consisted of ninety minutes of hands-on activities led by university science student volunteers. Participation appeared to improve the image of scientists held by all girls, but especially in the case of the older Girl Guides. Responses to specific statements designed to assess science attitudes appeared to be age-related: compared to older girls, fewer young participants believed that they will be hurt doing science and more believed that they should participate in regular science activities during their meetings. Although all participants enjoyed the programme, there was a steady decline in confidence in their own scientific ability, with obvious drops at ages 8 and 10. It appears that a small effort by volunteers can have a significant impact on both science achievement and attitude of young girls; however, more effort is required to improve the confidence of a group which is at serious risk of avoiding science.

