

Dating violence prevention programs in New York City public middle schools: A multi-level NIJ experimental evaluation



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Introduction to “Dating Violence and Harassment” (DV/H)



- DV/H has serious health consequences for youth, including significantly poorer mental and physical health, more trauma symptoms, and increased school avoidance.
- Sexual harassment is a violation of federal civil rights law (Title IX) and schools can be sued.
- Most studies on DV/H have focused on students in the 8th grade and up; few 6th and 7th grade DV/H interventions and fewer evaluated rigorously.

Methods

- NIJ funded randomized experiment, longitudinal design
- Setting in NYC – largest school district in U.S.
- 30 public middle schools with all three waves of data
 - Two 6th and two 7th grade classrooms in each building
 - Total of 117 classrooms (n=58 classes in 6th grade & 59 in 7th grade)
 - 2,655 students (n=1,266 students in 6th and 1,388 in 7th)
 - 10 to 15 years old (mostly 11-13)
 - 54% of our sample was girls and 46% boys

Methods (Cont'd)



- Quantitative student surveys
 - Before the intervention
 - Immediately post-implementation
 - About six months post-intervention
- Qualitative focus groups
 - Interventionists
 - Students

Description of sample



- 45% Hispanic
- 27% African American, 26% Asian, 26% Caucasian, 18% multi-racial, and 3% other
- 39% of our sample had prior experience with a violence prevention educational program
- 48% had been in a dating relationship (> 1 week) at least once in their lifetime; of those 44% had 1 or 2 prior partners (73% had ≤ 6)
- 70% never in relationship > than 6 months.

Violence in Lifetime

- Experienced any dating violence as a victim in lifetime----**19.4%**
(9.8% Nation, 10.9% NYC- 09 YRBS/CDC TDV for 9th-12th grade)
- Any dating violence perpetration against others -----**20%**
- Experienced any peer violence as a victim ----- **66%**
- Any peer violence perpetration against others -----**57%**
- Experienced any sexual harassment as a victim -----**69%**
- Any sexual harassment perpetration against others -----**46%**

DV/H Knowledge & Intentions



- ↑ Increases in knowledge of DV/H immediately post-treatment and six month post for “both” group
- ↑ Increases in behavioral intentions to reduce violence immediately after “building only” intervention: Results dissipate 6 months post txt
- ↑ Our “building only” intervention was associated with more positive intentions to intervene as a bystander (e.g., reporting an incident of violence to a teacher) at 6 months post txt
- Txt no effect on attitudes against TDV

Building intervention reduces youth dating violence



Treatment – Building intervention only

- ↓ ~ 50% fewer incidents of victimization & perpetration of any dating violence at 6 months follow-up
 - ↓ 2 findings $p < .05$ and 1 finding between $p < .05$ to $.10$ level

Both classroom and building intervention

- ↓ 31% drop in prevalence of victimization of any dating violence at 6 months follow-up ($p = .09$)

Classroom only intervention

No statistically significant findings

Mostly desirable effects of treatment on any peer violence



- Focus of treatment was on TDV and SH not peer violence
- 5 desirable findings and 2 undesirable findings
- Immediate post txt prevalence of any peer violence perpetration higher for building only group, but this finding does not appear at 6 months follow-up and turns to a desirable result for a 30% lower frequency of peer violence perpetration at 6 months for the building only and both txts
- 6 months follow-up for the prevalence of any peer violence victimization is higher for building only group, but for those experiencing it the # of victimization and perpetration incidents is lower by about 30% for the building only and both txts groups

Building only and the both intervention group reduce peer sexual violence for a total of 10 data points



Both classroom and building intervention

- ↓ Over 30% lower prevalence **and** frequency of incidents of peer sexual violence **victimization** (all combos significant $p < .05$) immediately after txt & at 6 months post follow-up
- ↓ 36% lower frequency of incidents of peer sexual violence **perpetration** at 6 months post txt

Treatment – Building intervention only

- ↓ Over 34% lower prevalence **and** frequency of incidents of peer sexual violence **victimization and perpetration** at 6 months post treatment

SUMMARY OF VIOLENCE RESULTS

- 28 significant ($<.05$) results in desired direction (txt works)
 - 17 significant results for “building only” group
 - 11 significant results for the “both” group
 - 0 significant results for “classroom only” group
- Txt reduced “Any” dating violence
- Txt reduced peer and dating partner sexual violence
- 3 of 5 significant results suggest sexual harassment was reduced due to interventions
- 5 of 7 significant results suggest “any” peer violence was reduced due to interventions

SUMMARY OF NON-VIOLENCE RESULTS



- Knowledge increased for “both” group
- Txt promotes some pro-social attitudes against TDV
- Txt group more likely to intend to avoid perpetrating violence (more pro-social behavioral intentions)
- Increases in more positive bystander intervening for txt group

SUMMARY OF THREE BACKFIRE EFFECTS/UNDESIRABLE RESULTS



- I. One occurred immediately post txt but not present at 6 months, and replaced with desirable effects at 6 months
- II. Another was for prevalence only but the frequency measures were in the desirable direction of treatment working
- III. Third, was one undesirable result for sexual harassment among three other desirable effects for sexual harassment

Implications



- Txt improved DV/H knowledge
- Txt led to reductions in “any” dating violence
- Txt led to reductions in peer and dating partner sexual violence
- Majority of evidence is that the interventions may be effective at reducing sexual harassment and “any” peer violence but require more research

Implications



- On balance, we believe these interventions are promising but require more in-depth study
- In January 2011, our team started a new 3-year NIJ experimental evaluation
 - In the future we will collect/analyze school disciplinary records to provide more objective measures of violence needed to estimate reporting effect of Tx
 - Longer follow-up for surveys
 - Modifications to intervention- grade differentiation, addition of 8th grade (along with 6th and 7th grades), saturated environment

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