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
### RCT Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Receives building-level</th>
<th>No building-level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receives Classroom</td>
<td>7 schools &amp; 28 classrooms</td>
<td>6 schools &amp; 23 classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Both</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No classroom</td>
<td>8 schools &amp; 30 classrooms</td>
<td>9 schools &amp; 36 classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Building only</strong></td>
<td><strong>Neither</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15 schools &amp; 58 classrooms</td>
<td>15 schools &amp; 59 classrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Methods (Cont’d)

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

- **Behavior** of the students (DV/H reductions),
  - Prevalence/frequency of peer and dating partner violence and sexual harassment
- **Attitudes** towards DV/H
- **Knowledge** of DV/H
- Intentions to intervene as *bystanders*
- Behavioral *intentions* to reduce DV/H
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
Interventions generally reduce sexual harassment

Treatment group has three desirable significant findings for lowering the frequency of sexual harassment victimization and perpetration at 6 months follow-up (two building only and one both txt)

However, one undesirable result for the building only txt for having a higher prevalence of any sexual harassment at 6 months follow-up
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 groups
- 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 intervention reduce sexual dating violence

Treatment – Building intervention only

↓ ~ 50% lower prevalence and frequency of incidents of sexual dating violence *victimization* at 6 months follow-up

↓ ~ 50% lower frequency of incidents of sexual dating violence *perpetration* at 6 months follow-up

Both classroom and building intervention

↓ 27% lower frequency of incidents of sexual dating violence *perpetration* immediately after txt (*p*= .17)

*No statistically significant findings for classroom only*
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

- Txt increases **behavioral intentions** to reduce violence
- Increases in more **positive bystander intervening** for txt
- Building intervention alone can be effective and is a low cost efficient approach to violence reduction
- Classroom lessons alone are not effective, but can be when combined with the building intervention
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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