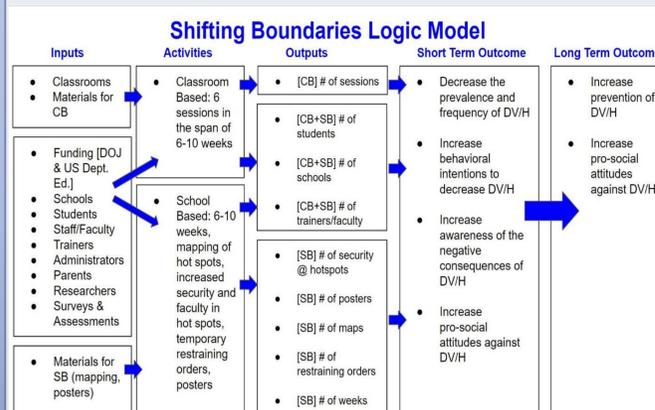


INTRODUCTION

Shifting Boundaries is a school-based intervention against both dating violence and sexual harassment. This program was implemented from September 2009 to June 2010 in 30 New York City public schools with a total of 2655 participants. Participants were between the ages of 11 and 15 years of age. Shifting Boundaries implemented three treatment strategies to compare against a control group: Classroom only in which educational lessons were provided in six sessions, building only in which posters were used to raise awareness with school-specific restraining orders being made available along with safety protocols, and the classroom and building combined treatment which combined both aspects of the aforementioned modes of intervention. The goal of the program was to foster prosocial attitudes and behaviors which reduce youth dating violence and increase bystander intervention.



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the effect of the Shifting Boundaries program on bystander intervention among middle school students?
2. Was this differentially effective for students contingent upon previous engagement in similar intimate partner violence intervention programs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Intimate partner violence is a preventable public health issue which most often begins in youth (Spivak et al., 2014).
- The prevalence of teen dating violence, both physical and sexual, is about 25% (Ashley & Foshee, 2005). Of the participants in the study, nearly half reported previously being in a relationship for a week or longer. This demonstrates a clear need for early intervention and education.
- 60% of victims and almost 80% of perpetrators do not engage in help-seeking behaviors for dating violence (Ashley & Foshee, 2005).
- Shifting Boundaries operated based on the theory of reasoned action which suggests norms and attitudes can shape behavioral intentions and in turn guides behavior (Golan & Banning, 2008).
- Suburban or rural areas with lesser access to community resources may not benefit from a program piloted in the largest city in the country. Rural areas specifically tend to see a linear increase in dating violence among high school students (Sianko et al., 2019).
- Changing social attitudes could increase utilization of preventive care and increase overall health outcomes (Kim & Kawachi, 2017).

ABSTRACT

Shifting Boundaries program aimed at delivering educational interventions to prevent or reduce the risk of dating violence and harassment among students in New York City public middle schools. Three main intervention groups (classroom only, building only, and classroom and building combined) were implemented and compared to a control group to determine program efficacy. This study assesses the effectiveness of the Shifting Boundaries program on increasing bystander intervention among the sample. Additionally, this study assesses whether this effect was differentially effective contingent upon previous engagement in similar educational programs. The study analyzed self-report surveys collected from 2655 participants at three points in time (baseline, post, six-month follow up). Results indicate the program was effective to varying degrees contingent upon treatment group. No significant impact was noted of previous education on bystander intervention levels. This study concluded that Shifting Boundaries is effective as a standalone program and earlier intervention coupled with periodic refresher courses may help produce greater long-term effects.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Design:

- This experimental longitudinal study utilized a cluster randomized pretest-posttest control group experimental design with three intervention groups
- Shifting Boundaries was implemented from September 2009 to June 2010

Sample:

- This study was conducted utilizing secondary data taken from ICPSR 32901's Experimental Evaluation of a Youth Dating Violence Prevention Program in New York City Middle Schools, 2009-2010 dataset
- 2655 total students from 30 remaining participating schools of an original 42
- Participants

Measures:

Dependent Variable

- The dependent variable (DV) is bystander intervention
- This is a composite variable created from survey items relating to behavioral intention to intervene against violence or other harmful behaviors
- This variable included 19 items scored on a range from -2 to +2, with a higher score being the ideal positive response of seeking help

Independent Variables

1. The primary independent variable is participation in a treatment group
 2. The secondary IV is previous attendance in similar educational program
- The original survey included a question specifically addressing this. Although it was asked at each timepoint, only baseline data was utilized for the purposes of this study. This prevents confusion as to whether Shifting Boundaries qualifies as previous education at post and follow-up

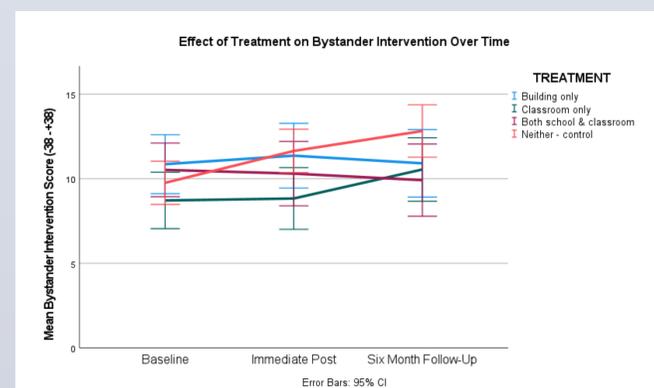
Data Collection

- Students were presented with self-report surveys consisting of 30 questions
- Surveys were administered at baseline, post, and six-month follow up timepoints

RESULTS

Inferential Analysis

- **A Wilcoxon signed-ranks test** was performed to compare bystander intervention by treatment group at baseline, post, and six-month follow up
- Results found a significant impact of the classroom only intervention group ($Z = 2.06, p = .04$) and the building only intervention ($Z = -2.29, p = .022$).
- Interestingly, the control group saw the most consistent increase in bystander intervention over time
- **A multiple linear regression** was performed to predict participants' experience with previous engagement in similar teen dating violence programs and bystander intervention scores. The regression model was significant ($F(5, 1164) = 64.596, p < .001$ with an R^2 of .217).
- When controlling for all other variables, bystander intervention at baseline was positively related to scores at post ($b = 0.53, p < .001$). Participants with higher baseline bystander intervention scores also reported higher scores at post.
- Previous engagement in a similar education program was not a significant predictor of bystander intervention scores at post ($b = -0.77, p = .367$), holding constant treatment condition and baseline scores.
- The sample's mean baseline score for bystander intervention was 7.72 (SD = 11.89). The mean score at post was 7.01 (SD = 13.71). The mean at six-month follow up was 9.68 (SD = 13.73). The classroom only model was the only treatment group which saw consistent increase in bystander intervention scores from baseline to follow ups.



DISCUSSION

Implications for Social Work

- The study findings generally support the existing body of research indicating effectiveness of preventive measures.
- Focusing on building social cohesion may facilitate changes in social attitudes which can increase utilization of preventive care and increase overall health outcomes (Kim & Kawachi, 2017)

Recommendations

- Future iterations of the program could benefit from inclusion of cultural differences in experiences of dating violence and harassment.
- "Refresher" courses could reinforce the program's effects while avoiding information overload of simply increasing program duration or intensity.
- Piloting the program in more suburban and rural areas could benefit populations shown to have linear increases in dating violence.

Limitations

- The singular implementation of Shifting Boundaries in a majorly populated city does not allow results to be generalized to less diverse areas or areas with fewer community resources available
- Cultural differences were not taken into account. Without a proper exploration and education of cultural differences and their impacts, individuals may not perceived specific actions as dating violence or harassment
- Self-report surveys leave room for error in what the respondent understands the questions and answers to mean. Additionally, the surveys would have done much better with open responses so the participants are not limited to a set of responses which may not capture their true intention or action in a given situation.

CONCLUSIONS

The study supported the program's efficacy in terms of increased bystander intervention. The classroom only results could be indicative of long-term impacts of the program as an education-based intervention. The Building only intervention could be a positive sign regarding a less resource intensive option for results. Further, given previous engagement in a similar education program did not have a significant impact on bystander intervention, Shifting Boundaries could be viable as a standalone program. This is beneficial for suburban and rural areas which see linear increases in dating violence and may have lesser access to community resources. Still, continued research is recommended to determine the efficacy of this program across populations.

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