

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Encouraging Responses in Sexual and Relationship Violence Prevention: What Program Effects Remain 1 Year Later?

Moynihan, M. M., Banyard, V. L., Cares, A. C., Potter, S. J., Williams, L. M., & Stapleton, J. G. (2015). Encouraging responses in sexual and relationship violence prevention: What program effects remain 1 year later? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(1), 110-132. doi:10.1177/0886260514532719

SUMMARY: In order to prevent sexual and relationship violence, some colleges and universities have implemented bystander training programs. These programs train students to diffuse risky situations, identify and challenge perpetrators, and assist victims. The effectiveness of these programs on the long-term behaviors of bystanders is unknown. In this study, researchers used an experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Bringing in the Bystander in-person program.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Participants who received the in-person prevention program plus exposure to the social marketing campaign reported higher levels of bystander behavior one year post-program.
- The program was more effective for participants who began the program with more awareness regarding sexual and relationship violence on college campuses.
- The program did not appear to influence prosocial bystander behaviors of participants who had already encountered opportunities to help as bystanders prior to prevention programming.
- Gender affected behavior for the program group but not the control group. Women were more likely to intervene in situations of sexual or relationship violence and more likely to intervene to help a stranger.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Collaborate with organizations connected with Service members and their families on the importance participating in bystander prevention programs and high-risk settings for sexual and relationship violence
- Facilitate support groups for Service members and/or their family members who have experienced sexual and relationship violence

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Disseminate information regarding prosocial bystander behaviors to Service members and their families
- Engage Service members and their intimate partners in classes that increase prosocial bystander behaviors

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of bystander prevention programs focused on decreasing sexual and relationship violence for Service members and their families
- Continue to support programs that focus on the identification and prevention of sexual and relationship violence in military families

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METHODS

- Participants were randomly assigned to either a control or program group after expressing interest in the bystander sexual and relationship prevention program.
- All participants took a pretest (n=948) and 346 participants took a 12-month follow-up survey.
- Measures included No-Awareness Subscale of the Readiness-to-Help Scale, Opportunity to Engage in Bystander Behaviors, Perceptions of Peer Helping, and the Bystander Behavior Scale.
- Researchers evaluated the effectiveness of the Bringing in the Bystander in-person program by analyzing differences between the control and program groups.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 948 first-year college students ages 18-24 recruited from two campuses in the northeastern United States.
- The students were recruited on campus via flyers, class announcements, online bulletin boards, email announcements, and weekly meetings with resident advisors.
- Approximately 47.8% of the students were women and 85.2% identified as White.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample lacked in racial and ethnic diversity, thus lacking generalizability to other populations.
- The study measured behaviors by asking "yes" and "no" questions, and this does not provide information regarding the frequency of engaging in bystander prevention behaviors.
- The control group was exposed to prosocial bystander messages conducted by the college campuses prior to the beginning of the study, thereby reducing the validity of the findings.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recruit a sample that includes more racial and ethnic diversity in order to increase generalizability
- Use measures that assess the frequency of bystander behaviors (e.g., ask "how many times" the students engaged in these behaviors)
- Conduct a study that includes a control group that has not been exposed to prevention messages in order to increase the validity of the findings

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