A Proposal for a Prevention Program for Dating Violence

An Honors Thesis (HONRS499)

by

Jennifer G. Bissell

Jan Gildner

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

April 25, 1994

May 7, 1994
Purpose of Thesis

This thesis is a proposal for a prevention program for dating violence. Dating violence, and violence in general involving adolescents, is a social issue that is being given increased attention during the 1990's. This proposal gives a review of the research on dating violence, and proposes the adoption of a violence prevention program to be put in place at the high school level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to say thank you to Jan Gildner for all of her patience and advice in preparing this thesis. I would also like to thank Ronald Dolan for his help, and Betsy Last from the Indiana chapter for the Prevention of Child Abuse for allowing me to borrow the Second Step curriculum.
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Domestic violence was once a hidden issue. People believed that it was something that happened infrequently. It is now estimated that in 30-50 percent of adult relationships women experience some kind of abuse. Violence is a big issue in the 1990's. Gang violence, domestic violence, child abuse, and violence involving guns are always making headlines. There is a type of violence that is still a hidden issue--dating violence among adolescents.

Dating violence has only become an area of research during the past decade. Dating violence, for the purpose of this proposal, is defined as actual or threatened acts that physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse a member of an unmarried couple. This couple could be either homosexual or heterosexual, and the perpetrator of the violence could be male or female.

National estimates of the prevalence of dating violence vary a great deal. In a review of 40 dating violence studies, it was found that 40 percent of women, and 33 percent of men have used violence against their dating partner. (Stith, 1992) In another research review the mean prevalence rate of dating violence in studies published between 1985 and 1987 is 31.2 percent. In the Midwest the mean prevalence rate is 25.7 percent. (Levy, 1990) These percentages were taken from research including samples from both high school and college students. The mean prevalence rate
for high school students is 22.3 percent, and the mean prevalence rate of college students is 34.6 percent. (Levy, 1990) Bergman did a study of high school students in which she found one in four females reported severe violence (physical or sexual violence). She also found that violence in high school dating relationships seems to be an acceptable form of dating behavior. (Bergman, 1992) Another study found that the majority of violent incidents between dating couples were relatively mild, one-third to one-half resulted in physical injury, especially if the violence was accompanied by alcohol. This study found that although both men and women can be perpetrators of violence, women are more likely to experience severe violence, and more likely than men to suffer mild, moderate, and severe injury. (Carlson, 1987)

When sexual violence is included in prevalence rates, the problem of dating violence becomes even greater. One in four women is sexually assaulted or raped by the time they reach college. Approximately 80 percent of these rapes are date and acquaintance rapes. (Levy, 1990) From these statistics it can be concluded that dating violence is a problem, but it is not known for certain how large a problem.

Dating violence has a wide range of effects on those involved. O'Keefe, Brockopp, and Chew found that violence which occurs at an early stage of interpersonal development increases the likelihood of violence in later adult relationships. They also found that nearly half of the high school students who were experiencing
dating violence were exposed to violence in their homes. (O'Keefe, Brockopp, and Chew, 1986) Dating violence may be an important link in the intergenerational transmission of violence. Roscoe and Benaske did a study of women who had been abused by their husbands and found many had also had abusive dating relationships. They felt that any attempt to understand and to intervene in the transmission of values that tolerate the use of violence in marital relationships should include dating violence. (Alexander, 1991)

Besides having an increased propensity for violence, adolescents who are exposed to violence in their dating relationships may have lowered self-esteem, psychosomatic reactions, depression, and an increased use of alcohol. Dating violence may also influence grades in school and social relationships. (Stith, 1992) Even though the consequences of dating violence can be severe, only 1 in 25 dating partners experiencing violence ever seeks help. This is a problem that leaves adolescents feeling socially isolated. They do not have anyone to turn to because dating violence is not a problem commonly recognized by adults, nor is it seen as a problem by their peers. Adolescent peer groups define what is normal, or acceptable masculine or feminine behavior. These norms often fit the stereotypical patterns of dominance and passivity. (Levy, 1990)

There are several factors which place adolescents at risk for dating violence. Adolescents who grow up in an abusive home, or in a home that instills patriarchal values are at risk. (Alexander,
People with low role taking ability, or the inability to show empathy are more likely to inflict or sustain aggression. (Stets, 1992) The inability to rationally problem-solve also increases the likelihood of using violence in a relationship to solve problems. Also, in a relationship where there is one partner controlling another's thoughts, feelings, or actions, more conflict and aggression can be expected. (Stets, 1992)

Given the prevalence rates and the affects on adolescents, dating violence is a problem that affects a significant number of people. Too often dating violence is not directly addressed. A dating violence prevention program is needed to attempt to decrease the occurrence of this problem.

OBJECTIVES

This prevention program has two objectives: 1. High school students participating in an eight week program will demonstrate an increased knowledge of dating violence by improving their scores by at least 20 percent on the Second Step pre/post test, which covers the areas of empathy, problem solving, recognizing anger warning signs, and using anger-reduction techniques. 2. Parents of the participants in the program will show an increased awareness and concern about dating violence after completing an eight week program by starting a media campaign to educate other parents in the community.
METHODS

1. Curriculum: A prevention program for dating violence must address the factors that place adolescents at risk for this problem such as: violence in homes and communities, the inability to show empathy, lack of problem solving skills, and power issues in relationships. This prevention program will be based on the violence prevention curriculum called Second Step, Grades 6-8 by Kathy Beland, M. Ed.. Although this curriculum is designed for grades 6-8, it was made to be adapted for older adolescents. This curriculum is designed to help students learn prosocial skills by increasing their ability to identify other’s feelings, take other’s perspectives, and respond using empathy to other people’s situations. The Second Step curriculum is also designed to reduce impulsive-aggressive behavior by recognizing anger warning signs and triggers, using anger-reduction techniques, applying a problem-solving strategy to social conflicts, and practicing behavioral social skills to deal with potentially violent situations. The Second Step curriculum teaches general violence prevention. In order to make this program more tailored to dating violence, specific topics such as violence and sex, violence and jealousy, power in relationships, and dating and alcohol will be included.

Second Step, Grades 6-8 has 15 lessons which are 50 minutes long. These lessons are divided into 4 units. In each of these units participants learn through videos, role plays, visual reinforcement, activities, and homework.
Unit I: Understanding the Problem

Unit one introduces dating violence as a societal problem which is a topic of concern to adolescents. Statistics will be given to help participants form a mental image of the problem. There will also be a discussion of the factors which contribute to dating violence, which will set the stage for the prevention strategies in the following units. This unit will give students a sense of how complex the factors are that lead to violence. Students will be encouraged to be reflective about their own behavior.

Unit II: Training for Empathy

Learning to show empathy for others is a very important part of developing prosocial behaviors and interpersonal problem-solving skills. Without being able to have empathy for others, people may learn a problem-solving model that will only benefit themselves. This is why learning to develop empathy first is important. The strategy which this curriculum uses to teach empathy was first used as an intervention measure for aggressive children, but this strategy becomes preventative when it is applied before antisocial behavior begins. (Beland, 1990)

First, cognitive strategies which guide students in recognizing feelings from a variety of physical and situational cues will be used. Students will use role plays, and will be asked to notice expressions on the actor's face, and the circumstances surrounding him. Next, students will be encouraged to assume the point of view of another person. Last, they will be asked to respond emotionally
to another. This will be encouraged in the participants by relating similarities in the other person and avoiding labeling, stereotyping, and forming prejudices. Participants will also be taught communication skills such as "I" messages and active listening, which also help to respond emotionally to another person. These skills will be encouraged throughout the rest of the program.

**Unit III: Creating Options**

This unit uses three teaching strategies for reducing impulsive and aggressive behavior in adolescents: Anger Management, Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS), and Behavioral Social Skills Training (BSST).

The first part of this unit will teach adolescents anger reduction techniques and skills for channeling their feelings into socially acceptable directions. Physical relaxation and mental imagery are combined with the cognitive strategies of self-instruction and problem solving. With anger management, participants will be taught to recognize triggers to anger, to recognize anger cues (physiological sensations that signal the level of anger), to make self-instructional statements, to use "reducers" to calm down (breathing exercises, counting, etc), and to reflect on how they reacted in a provocation situation.

In the Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving lesson, participants will use a five step problem solving approach:
1. Identify the problem.
2. Brainstorm solutions.
3. Evaluate the solutions on the basis of safety, effect on those involved, fairness and workability.
4. Choose a solution and use it.
5. Evaluate whether the solution is working and change to an alternative solution if necessary.

Participants will be given hypothetical situations to try these problem solving steps.

The last part of this unit, Behavioral Social Skills Training, involves learning how to carry out a solution. Role plays are once again used, and participants are encouraged to develop their own skill steps in order to develop ownership of their solution.

**Unit IV: Applying Skills**

This unit will concentrate on applying the skills learned to situations specific to dating violence. Problems will presented as vignettes to which the participants apply the problem solving strategy, anger management, and performing their own skill steps.

**Structure of the Program:**

This program will be put in place at a high school. It will be a pilot program for two years. Before the program is put in place, a survey should be conducted to determine the prevalence of dating violence in the community. Participants in the program will be students ages 14-18. The program will be open to all students,
however, teachers will be asked to identify students who they think are at risk. These students will receive a personal invitation by the social worker. Participant will be divided into small groups of 8-10 participants to facilitate learning. Each group will have a volunteer facilitator from the community. The groups will meet once a week for two hours. The program will take eight weeks to complete. After the eight weeks are completed, students will be encouraged to meet informally at the community center. This informal group will serve as a support group, and as a place to brainstorm ideas of educating other students and community members about dating violence.

While the adolescents are at their meetings, parents will be encouraged to attend their own sessions in order to understand what their children are learning. Parents will be taught how to generate discussions in their homes to reinforce the lessons. These parents will also be asked to be involved in a community awareness campaign. A committee of parents will be formed to be in charge of this project, and will work with students who complete the program.

Staffing: The school will hire a social worker with a bachelor's degree to direct this program. This individual should have experience with group work, adolescent development, family systems theory, and preparing and implementing a program. This individual will be responsible for adapting the curriculum, recruiting and training volunteer facilitators, recruiting participants,
facilitating the parent's group, and heading the community education campaign. Volunteer facilitators will include adults from the community, preferably those who have a background in a helping profession. Older students who have completed the program may be used the second year as facilitators.
Time Line:

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EVALUATION

The survey that is used to determine the prevalence of dating violence will be used at the end of two years to evaluate any changes in the prevalence rate. The program will be evaluated to determine its effectiveness, and to see if the program should be continued or expanded. The tool used will be the evaluation instrument from the Second Step curriculum, and also a client satisfaction survey, which will be developed by the program director. The Second Step Evaluation Instrument consists of 18 questions regarding the content of the course (see appendix). This instrument will have to be adapted to specific dating violence questions, and to the needs of high school students. Examples of the questions include "Empathy is...a. feeling sorry for someone, b. understanding someone else's point of view, c. feeling what someone else is feeling, d. identifying how someone else is feeling, e. b-c-d." or "If you were asked to fight, what are 3 ways you can avoid the fight?" This tool will be administered both at the beginning and the end of the program. The client satisfaction survey will be administrated six months after a participant has completed the program. This survey will contain questions regarding how will the program met the needs of the participants, as well as questions to determine how much of the information was retained and used by the participants.
BUDGET

Total Requested: $5,385

Total Requested      Total Donated

I. Personnel Wages

A. Director @ $15.00/hr,
   8 hrs a wk X 10 mos.                      $4,800

B. Curriculum          $285

C. Consumable Supplies $300

D. Space costs

X
APPENDIX

Survey for determining prevalence of dating violence (Bergman, 1992):

Age __________________________ School __________________________
Grade Level __________________________ Average Grade In School
9th__ 10th__ 11th__ 12th__ A__ B__ C__ D__ F__

1. How frequently do you date?
   _almost every night    _3-4 times a week
   _1-2 times a week     _once every two weeks
   _a few times a month  _a few times a year

2. How many boyfriends/girlfriends have you had since you began dating?
   _only one  _a few  _5-10  _more than 10

3. While you have been out on a date with someone, has any of the following ever happened to you? (check all that apply)
   _Been hurt physically (for example: shaken, slapped, shoved, punched, kicked, or held down)
   _Been forced to do something sexual that you didn’t want to do (for example: kiss, hug, pet, or have intercourse)
   _Been called bad names or threatened with harm
   _Been threatened by your date that he would hurt himself if you did not do what he said.

Other things that were uncomfortable for you (please explain)
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Evaluation Instrument
Second Step 6-8

Name ________________________________ Pre ___ Post ___
Date ___________________ Grade ______ Teacher ____________________________

Directions: Circle one answer to each of the following or fill in the blanks.

1. Which of the following are examples of interpersonal violence?
   a. Someone dies from starvation.
   b. Someone accidentally shoots him or herself.
   c. Someone’s nose is broken in a fist fight.
   d. Someone dies in a war.
   e. All of the above.

2. Empathy is…
   a. feeling sorry for someone.
   b. understanding someone else’s point of view.
   c. feeling what someone else is feeling.
   d. identifying how someone else is feeling.
   e. b-c-d.

3. What is the best way to tell a friend you are angry at her or him for not returning your tape?
   a. “I’m angry at you for not returning my tape.”
   b. “You make me angry when you don’t return my things.”
   c. “I feel angry when you don’t return my things.”
   d. “I feel like never lending you any of my tapes again.”
   e. None of the above.

4. Which of the following may cause someone to be violent?
   a. being really angry
   b. not getting their needs met
   c. not knowing how to solve problems
   d. being hurt (abused) by others
   e. all of the above

5. A point of view is…
   a. what someone thinks and feels about a situation.
   b. when the problem got started.
   c. how well someone sees things from a distance.
   d. understanding how the other person feels.
   e. none of the above.

6. Acting on impulse means…
   a. doing what you are told to do.
   b. doing the first thing that pops into your head.
   c. doing what you think is best.
   d. doing the wrong thing.
   e. doing the right thing.
7. When you identify a problem you state...
   a. what happened.
   b. how each person feels.
   c. what each person needs.
   d. what some solutions are.
   e. a-b-c

8. After you identify a problem the next step is to...
   a. evaluate some solutions.
   b. decide on a solution.
   c. decide if a solution is working.
   d. brainstorm solutions.
   e. do the right thing.

9. Which of the following is a question you should ask yourself about a possible solution to a problem?
   a. Is the solution safe?
   b. Is the solution fun?
   c. Is the solution easy?
   d. Is the solution in my favor?
   e. None of the above.

10. Which of the following are cues which let you know you are angry?
    a. a red flag
    b. body tension
    c. blurred vision
    d. slow heartbeat
    e. b-c-d

11. Which of the following triggers anger?
    a. saying to yourself, “That really makes me mad!”
    b. breathing slowly
    c. counting backwards
    d. going to a quiet place
    e. b-c-d

12. “Fight or flight” means...
    a. working a problem out.
    b. solving a problem by running away.
    c. choosing a solution.
    d. fighting/arguing or leaving the situation.
    e. fighting with a gang.

13. Which of the following is a good way to calm down?
    a. pretend that you aren’t mad
    b. scream
    c. eat
    d. cry
    e. talk to yourself

14. Name 3 ways you can tell when someone is feeling sad.
    a. __________________________
    b. __________________________
    c. __________________________
15. If you were being followed home by an older kid calling you names, what are 3 things you would do?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

16. If a friend tried to get you to do something illegal, what are 3 things you would say or do?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

17. If someone tried to get you to join a gang, what are 3 things you would do?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

18. If someone called you out to fight, what are 3 ways you could avoid the fight?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
WORKS CITED


