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Title: The Ecological Effects of Universal and Selective Violence Prevention Programs for Middle School Students

Text: The Multi-Site Violence Prevention Project evaluated the impact of two very different approaches to reduce violence among early adolescents - a universal intervention that involved implementing a student curriculum and teacher training with sixth grade students and teachers; and a selective intervention in which a family intervention was implemented with a subset of sixth grade students exhibiting high levels of aggression and social influence. The design involved random assignment of 37 schools at four sites to four conditions including a no-intervention control to examine the separate and combined impact of the two approaches. This paper reports the effects for a sample of approximately 80 students from each cohort randomly drawn from each of the 37 schools (total N = 5,581). This "cohort-wide" sample represented the ecological effect of the interventions within the grade level targeted by these interventions. Mixed effects models were used to analyze data based on student and teacher reports across multiple waves with an emphasis on evaluating changes during the intervention year on aggression, victimization, and social-cognitive processes targeted by the interventions. Analyses of main effects indicated increases in aggression and school norms for aggression among students at schools assigned to the universal intervention schools relative to those at control schools. Further analyses indicated that intervention effects were moderated by students' pre-intervention level of risk as assessed by a multi-component risk factor index. Students at lower risk levels at intervention schools reported higher levels of

aggression and victimization at the initial posttest than those at control schools. In contrast students at higher risk reported relatively lower levels relative to controls. Similar patterns were found on social-cognitive processes including goals and strategies supporting aggression, individual norms supporting aggression, self efficacy for nonviolent responses, and beliefs supporting nonviolent behavior. In each case, the differential direction of effects for low and high-risk students suggests that the interventions may produce some movement toward a group mean that works to the benefit of those at higher levels of risk, but may elevate levels of aggression and associated processes among low-risk students. This pattern of moderated effects suggests that the overall increase in aggression for students at universal intervention schools reflects changes among the relatively higher percentage of students at lower levels of risk. The implications of findings for developing effective middle school violence prevention programs will be discussed, with focus on understanding the ecological impact.

Theme Groups: 6 Efficacy Trials

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