ABSTRACT

EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF THE KNOW MORE PEER-EDUCATION PROGRAM ON RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

With incidents of domestic abuse increasing and funding to battle the problem dwindling, peer-education projects like kNOw More (Know Your Limits – No Abuse) have become increasingly important. The kNOw More program trains high school students to deliver emotional presentations about teen relationship abuse to their classmates. This study evaluates how effectively this program educates teenagers about relationship abuse and how to get help. Pre- and post-presentation data were collected from 301 teenagers who received the kNOw More presentation at schools. It was hypothesized that the kNOw More program would (a) increase understanding of relationship abuse and (b) increase understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse. A series of dependent-samples t-tests indicated that the kNOw More presentation did indeed increase teenagers’ understanding of relationship abuse and understanding of how to seek help, although effect sizes were small. Open-ended questions also indicated that participants absorbed the information presented by the kNOw More peer educators.

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EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF THE KNOW MORE PEER-EDUCATION PROGRAM ON RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

by

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APPROVED

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Figure 1. Pre- and post-training means are based on a 5-point scale that ranges from disagree (1) to completely agree (5). ............................................................... 30
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Domestic abuse has been deemed a serious public health problem by a wide variety of researchers who have focused on everything from long-term psychological effects to burdens on healthcare systems (Department of Health and Human Services, 2003; Foshee et al., 1998). Research sponsored by the National Institute of Justice indicates that approximately 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are victims of intimate-partner violence every year in the United States (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), and 40%-50% of all murders of women in the U.S. are intimate-partner homicides (Campbell et al., 2003).

Since 1998, the kNOw More (Know Your Limits – No Abuse) peer-education program has attempted to battle the issue from a preventative standpoint, teaching Fresno, CA area youth about relationship abuse as they reach dating age. Under current economic conditions, programs that focus on relationship abuse prevention may be more vital than ever. The downturn in the United States economy has led to a vicious circle with respect to the issue of domestic violence (DV). Financial stress has risen and so has DV. Fresno police reported a 30% increase in DV from March through June of 2009 compared to the same time period in 2008 (Fresno Police Department, 2009). However, resources to fight the battle have been cut. Many critics of the current system suggest that money would be better spent on prevention rather than intervention, because the cycle of violence is generational and difficult to stop.

Although many think of domestic abuse as an issue in adult relationships, in reality this behavior often starts at dating age. It is estimated that one in four high school students will experience physical violence perpetrated by someone they date (Camarena, Carrillo, & Fuentes, 2009). The shame, guilt, and
embarrassment surrounding domestic abuse often make it a silent and tragic problem. This is why early intervention and prevention are key.

Over the years, peer-education programs such as kNOw More have been helping to alleviate the problem by building a foundation of young leaders who are certified as domestic violence advocates before they graduate from high school. These leaders’ advocacy and influence over their peers may be a viable first step in quashing domestic abuse before it starts. However, additional research is needed to demonstrate the actual effectiveness of such programs.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The domestic violence literature is large and varied. This study focuses on some very basic information about what domestic violence is as well as national, state, and local statistics. This chapter also details the big picture of the prevalence of DV, the burden on healthcare systems, and the effects that DV has on children. Cultural issues that influence perceptions of abuse are also discussed. Because kNOw More is a relationship-abuse prevention and peer-education program, similar programs evaluated in the literature are included. The chapter concludes with a description of the kNOw More program and the goal of this study.

Domestic Violence Overview

In California, domestic violence (DV), also termed intimate-partner violence, is legally defined as, “. . . abuse committed against an adult or a minor who is a spouse, former spouse, cohabitant, former cohabitant, or person with whom the suspect has had a child or is having or has had a dating or engagement relationship.” Within that definition, abuse is further defined as “. . . intentionally or recklessly causing or attempting to cause bodily injury, or placing another person in reasonable apprehension of imminent serious bodily injury to himself or herself, or another” (California Department of Justice, 2008a, p. 107). On a more broad level, domestic violence may be defined as: “A pattern of behaviors where one partner tries to maintain control over the other through the use of physical force, intimidation, and threats” (Bright, 2009, p. 5). Abuse can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and financial control. Domestic violence is found in all socio-economic, educational, racial, and age groups (California Department of Justice, 2009).
Victims stay or return to abusers for many reasons, including love, low self-esteem, self-blame, learned helplessness, rationalizing/minimizing the abuser’s behavior, fear of being beaten more severely, shame, economic dependence, keeping families together, religious beliefs, promises of change, emotional dependence, fear of insanity, isolation, and simple exhaustion (Bright, 2009). Abusers also suffer from low self esteem, generally have a history of family violence, and display characteristics of poor impulse control, emotional dependency, limited capacity for delayed gratification, strong ego needs, jealousy, and lack of awareness of others’ personal boundaries. They perceive themselves as having poor social skills, describe their relationship with victims as the closest they have ever known, and believe their behavior is for the good of the family (Bright, 2009).

On average in the U.S., a victim is abused eight to 15 times before alerting law enforcement and will return to an abusive relationship seven times before leaving for good (Agnew, 2009). The cycle of violence is thought to continue through the generations, as behavior is modeled for and learned by children.

That cycle can be characterized by three stages: (1) tension building, (2) explosion, and (3) honeymoon phase. When tension building starts, the abuser begins to get angry and the victim feels (s)he is walking on eggshells. The explosion is any type of abuse, whether it be physical, sexual, emotional, etc., and the honeymoon phase follows, when the abuser may apologize, promise to never do it again, and offer gifts. Eventually, when the abuser realizes the victim is not leaving, the honeymoon phase is eliminated (Bright, 2009).
Domestic Violence Statistics

Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) state that more than 35% of women (approximately 42.4 million) and more than 28% of men (approximately 32.3 million) in the U.S. have been victims of intimate-partner violence. The survey reports that nearly 33% of women have endured physical violence and more than 9% have been raped by an intimate partner. For men, the majority of intimate-partner violence is physical (Black et al., 2011). The Centers for Disease Control examined the cost of domestic violence in the early 2000s and estimated that 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year (Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Too often, the violence turns deadly. For example, in 2010, nearly 1,100 women and 241 men were killed by an intimate partner in the United States (United States Department of Justice, 2011).

In California, law enforcement officials received more than 158,500 DV-related calls in 2011; nearly 62,000 of those involved weapons, including firearms and knives (California Department of Justice, 2011a). According to the state’s most recent homicides report, California logged 84 spousal homicides in 2010 (California Department of Justice, 2011b). The California DOJ’s latest DV-arrest statistics date back to 2004, when 46,353 people were apprehended for spousal abuse (80% men and 20% women) (California Department of Justice, 2004).

In Fresno County, DV-related calls in 2009 stood at 8,205 with 1,649 weapons involved (California Department of Justice, 2010). As of September 2009, the City of Fresno alone reported approximately 5,600 cases of DV for the year, up 781 cases for the same time period in 2008, according to Fresno Police Department Sergeant Brenda Trobaugh (personal communication, October 26, 2009). The numbers easily make DV the top crime in the city of Fresno.
(Camarena et al., 2009). In fact, while DV-related calls in the State of California decreased by nearly 19% from 1993 to 2003, the number of such calls in Fresno County increased by nearly 61% (California Department of Justice, 2004). Furthermore, 70% of the Fresno Police Department’s DV cases have children present (Agnew, 2009).

**Underreporting Domestic Violence**

The statistics indicate domestic abuse is pervasive, but many researchers suspect the crime is still grossly underreported. The National Violence Against Women Survey estimated that only approximately one-quarter of all physical assaults, one-fifth of all rapes, and one-half of all stalkings perpetuated against females by intimate partners are reported to police (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the most frequent reason given for not reporting nonfatal intimate-partner violence is that it is a private or personal matter. Between 2001 and 2005, almost 40% of male and 22% of female victims gave this reason (Catalano, 2007). Other reasons included fear of reprisal, protection of the offender, and thoughts that DV is a minor crime or that police will do nothing about it.

Contrary to victims’ beliefs, domestic violence is much more than a private matter. It impacts entire social systems, spreading to family members, friends, neighbors, police, courts, clergy, social services, and healthcare establishments. It ultimately influences politics, laws, culture, education, social movements, and economics (Bright, 2009).

**Burdens on Healthcare Systems**

The U.S. medical community treats millions of DV victims each year. Of the estimated 7.7 million intimate-partner rapes and physical assaults perpetrated
against women and men annually, approximately 2.6 million will result in an injury to the victim and more than 680,000 will result in some type of medical treatment to the victim (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Furthermore, many treated victims receive multiple forms of care (e.g., ambulance services, emergency room care, physical therapy) and multiple treatments (e.g., several days in the hospital) for the same victimization, which means millions of medical personnel treat injuries annually.

A study by the Department of Health and Human Services (2003) found that the costs of intimate-partner rape, physical assault, and stalking exceed $5.8 billion each year, nearly $4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health services. Approximately $1.8 billion more is lost in productivity and earnings as DV victims lose nearly 8 million days of paid work – the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs – and nearly 5.6 million days of household productivity (Department of Health and Human Services, 2003).

**Effects on Children: The Generational Cycle of Abuse**

Research has pointed to significant risks to children stemming from exposure to domestic violence. The persistent fear of living in a domestic violence environment and the neurophysiological adaptations to that fear can alter the development of a child’s brain, resulting in changes in physiological, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and social functioning (Perry, 1997).

Domestic violence can affect children starting in the womb, as DV frequently begins or intensifies during pregnancy and can lead to problems including decreased prenatal care, low birth weight, prematurity, interrupted brain development, and miscarriage (Argain, 2009). More than 50% of children with parents involved in DV have been characterized with “disorganized attachment”
and up to 45% of children who witness DV meet the criteria for a clinical

Because behavior is learned, children who grow up around domestic
violence may continue the cycle, either as an abuser, a victim, or both. They are
also more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol, and become involved in
gangs and crime (Argain, 2009). Studies have found that a majority of violent
prison inmates were raised in abusive homes (Harlow, 1999). This leads to an
important question: How can society stop the generational cycle of violence?
Research has shown that batterer programs have not been particularly effective in
stopping the cycle (Hage, 2000). Feder and Wilson (2005) reviewed high-quality
research on court-mandated batterer intervention programs and found little
evidence for their effectiveness in reducing future victimization. While
experimental studies indicated that batterer programs provided modest benefits in
the eyes of DV perpetrators, victims indicated no effect (Feder & Wilson, 2005).
Because these intervention programs show little promise in stopping the cycle of
violence, prevention strategies should be made a priority.

Wolfe et al. (2003) pointed to the importance of early intervention with
respect to relationship abuse, suggesting that midadolescent dating violence may
represent a bridge between childhood maltreatment experiences and patterns of
relationship violence in adulthood. They examined the intergenerational cycle of
violence in which maltreated youths are at greater risk of becoming victims or
perpetrators of relationship abuse than their nonmaltreated peers. Youngsters
exposed to healthy role models are more likely to approach dating with the skills
needed for positive outcomes: self-confidence, problem-solving abilities, and
emotion-regulating abilities. Conversely, those who experience caregiving that is
inconsistent, authoritarian or neglectful, and who lack positive role models in their
lives are more likely to enter the dating arena with power-based expectations (Galliher, Rostosky, Welsh, & Kawaguchi, 1999; Wolfe et al., 2003). Fortunately, teens are highly motivated to learn about healthy relationships and conflict resolution as they seek to develop intimate relationships (Dryfoos, 1993; Wolfe et al., 2003). However, in an area as culturally diverse as Fresno County, teens no doubt enter dating relationships with a large range of expectations.

**Cultural Issues**

It is important to be culturally competent when dealing with the issue of domestic violence, as cultural influences are thought to shape individual perceptions of abuse. This is especially true in an area as culturally diverse as Fresno County, which has a total population of 930,450 and an ethnic makeup that includes 50.3% Hispanic/Latino, 32.7% White, 9.3% Asian, and 4.8% African-American (California Department of Finance, 2011).

What is legally defined as physical and emotional abuse is accepted behavior in some cultures, and closely held family values, religious beliefs, limited resources, and other factors make victims feel it is impossible to leave the situation. This is especially true in cultures that emphasize rigid sex role differentiation, and have values that objectify women (Mattson & Ruiz, 2005).

For example, a study on DV in Latino families found that men and women of that culture said *Machismo* (exaggerated masculinity) influenced the occurrence of and perpetuation of violence (Mattson & Ruiz, 2005). *Marianismo* – a belief that “women are to bear everything for the sake of the family” – also played a role in teaching women not to argue with their husband or go against his wishes, even if they are harmful to her. This is further exemplified in a study by Julliard et al. (2008) in which a Latina participant explained in an interview that she waited
years before telling her doctor she was a victim of domestic abuse. “In our society, the women try to preserve their marriage until the last consequences,” she said. “Our women think they will be rejected just because they are divorced … we need to preserve the family” (p. 547).

Similarly, the notion of male privilege is one of the many barriers that Asian-American and Pacific Islander families face when dealing with domestic abuse. Many Asian cultures also value the needs of the family above individual interests, so divorce is highly stigmatized and outside intervention is strongly discouraged for fear of bringing shame and dishonor to the family (Weil & Lee, 2004). Further, it is considered a sign of weakness to ask for help with family problems. Some Asian groups may also harbor feelings of mistrust in seeking assistance from social service agencies because of bad experiences in their home country. Domestic violence among refugees and immigrants is even more complex since they lack traditional resources, speak little English, and are unfamiliar with and unable to use resources in the U.S. (Ho, 1990). Their partners may also threaten them with deportation for reporting abuse.

In Arab and Islamic societies, there is an attitude that DV is a private matter and a justifiable response to misbehavior on the part of the wife (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker, & Ghachem, 2003). It is considered a personal/family problem rather than a social/criminal problem, reflecting the fear that intervention from welfare or legal services would break through the boundaries of the family, ruin its good reputation and, thereby, damage the cultural, social, economic, educational, political, and religious status of all family members. Those wishing to justify violence against women can also turn to the Koran, which includes a verse (IV, 34) that seemingly allows a husband to beat his wife in some circumstances. It states, in part, “as for the women who show rebellion, you shall first enlighten
them, then desert them in beds, and you may beat them as a last resort” (Douki et al., p. 168).

Other even more widely held religious beliefs permeate many cultures and may also serve as a barrier for leaving an abusive relationship. It is not unusual for victims of domestic violence to turn to faith leaders for help, but research has shown that victims are oftentimes advised to keep families together. A study of female abuse survivors found that churches were cited as one of the first places battered women turned but also as one of the most likely institutions to suggest negative coping strategies (e.g., self-blame, woman needs to try harder, and honor family norms) (Hage, 2000).

A study of five abused women in a conservative Christian subculture found that participants experienced isolation and alienation as the church denied or minimized the severity of domestic violence and often suggested the problem would be alleviated if the women would submit to their husbands (Giesbrecht & Sevcik, 2000). When one of the participants attempted to report severe physical abuse to her minister, she was told, “You married him. You made a commitment, so you have to work this out. Pray more. Submit more” (p. 235). According to the researchers, the greatest obstacle was the church’s spiritualization of the problem. For example, one victim was told repeatedly that faith, prayer, belief, and obeying the Word would get her through the abuse. This only compounded her guilt and self-blame. After turning to social support outside of the church, all five women in the study eventually left their abusers and rebuilt their spiritual identity.

Another sub-culture with its own unique challenges to consider is the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender (GLBT) community. In a heterosexist, homophobic society, GLBT relationship violence is confused by gender role socialization and false beliefs that abuse is mutual or a form of sadomasochism
(Brown, 2008; Walsh, 1996). While victims of same-sex partner abuse experience all the same threats as heterosexual victims, they also face the threat of being “outed” to employers, friends, and family members, which can lead to greater isolation. An abusive partner may also threaten to limit the victim’s involvement in the gay community, or discourage the victim from reporting the abuse because doing so would shame the gay community (Brown, 2008).

Deeply imbedded cultural beliefs and learned behavior may serve as significant barriers to preventing relationship abuse. However, early education delivered by peers shows promise for teaching new behaviors and changing attitudes, thus allowing for primary prevention (Foshee et al., 2004; Story, Lytle, Birnbaum, & Perry, 2002).

### Findings from Abuse-Prevention & Peer-Education Programs

Relationship Abuse Prevention Programs

Relationship abuse has been deemed an epidemic by a host of researchers and experts, and it is apparent that schools, communities, and lawmakers are taking notice. Rhode Island became the first state to require that dating violence be incorporated into school curriculums for students in the 7th through 12th grades (“RI exposes dating violence,” 2008). The act, spearheaded by the parents of a 23-year-old woman who was murdered by her boyfriend, requires every school district in the state to develop a model dating-violence policy and a procedure to address incidents of dating violence involving students.

This early prevention/intervention effort is supported by research stating that among women who have experienced intimate-partner violence, more than 22% endured some form of such violence for the first time between the ages of 11
and 17. For men who have endured intimate-partner violence, 15% experienced some form of it between ages 11 and 17 (Black et al., 2011).

To meet the need for effective primary prevention, researchers continue to evaluate relationship-abuse programs, some of which have been educating school children for more than a decade. A goal of the current study is to add to that pool of knowledge with data from the kNOw More program.

A long-term study of the Safe Dates school program was conducted from 1994 to 2005 by several research teams led by Foshee. Researchers assessed the effects of the Safe Dates program on primary and secondary prevention of adolescent dating violence after follow-up periods stretching from 1 month to 4 years. Primary prevention is defined as preventing the first perpetration of dating violence and secondary prevention intends to halt dating abuse that has already begun.

The Safe Dates study began with 14 public schools in a predominately rural county in eastern North Carolina. Eighth and ninth graders with a mean age of 13.8 (assumed to be around the start of dating age) were stratified by grade and matched by school size, and a member of each pair was randomly assigned to either a treatment or control group. The treatment condition included exposure to Safe Dates school activities and community activities while the control condition was exposed to community activities only. School activities included a theater production performed by peers, a 10-session curriculum, and a poster contest, while community activities included special services for adolescents in abusive relationships (i.e., a crisis line, support groups, materials for parents) and community service provider training (Foshee et al., 1998). Baseline data were collected through questionnaires, which were completed by 81% (N=1,886) of the 2,344 eligible participants. Program activities took place from November 1994
through March 1995. Of the adolescents who completed baseline data, 90% completed the questionnaires again 1 month after the program activities ended (N=1,700).

Four victimization and four perpetration variables were measured using parallel scales for psychological abuse, nonsexual violence, sexual violence, and violence in current relationship. Mediating variables were dating violence norms (acceptance/nonacceptance and perceived positive/negative consequences of dating violence), gender stereotyping, beliefs in need for help, awareness of services for victims and perpetrators, help seeking, conflict management skills, communication skills, and responses to anger (Foshee et al., 1998).

At the 1-month follow-up, researchers found 25% less psychological abuse perpetration, 60% less sexual violence perpetration, and 60% less violence perpetrated against the current dating partner in the treatment group versus the control group (Foshee et al., 1998). They also found that the Safe Dates program affected several mediating variables, the largest differences being in dating violence norms, gender stereotyping, and awareness of services. Foshee et al. (1998) concluded that the Safe Dates program showed promise for preventing adolescent dating violence and therefore, potential for public health impact.

In the 1-year follow-up, 85% of the original participants (N=1,603) completed questionnaires again and the same measures were taken. Results indicated that behavioral effects of the Safe Dates program faded but cognitive-risk-factor effects were maintained. Compared to the control group, adolescents in the treatment group were less accepting of dating violence, perceived more negative consequences from engaging in dating violence, reported using less destructive responses to anger, and were more aware of victim and perpetrator
services. Differences between the groups on those scores ranged from 8% to 52% (Foshee et al., 2000).

Two years after the project started, Foshee and her research team implemented a booster intended to reinforce the content of the original Safe Dates program in order to maintain or regain initial program effects. The booster consisted of a newsletter mailed to the participants and a phone call from a health educator. At this point, 620 adolescents had permission from their parents to continue the study, and the original treatment-group participants were randomly assigned to booster and non-booster conditions. The study, which was included in the Safe Dates 4-year follow-up, found that the booster did not improve the effectiveness of the program (Foshee et al., 2004). In fact, adolescents exposed to Safe Dates and the booster reported significantly more psychological abuse perpetration and serious physical and sexual victimization at follow-up than those exposed only to Safe Dates, but only when prior involvement in those forms of abuse was high. Researchers suggested this may have resulted from adolescent victims being prompted to leave abusive relationships, as previous studies have shown that partner violence escalates when victims try to leave the abusive relationship (Wilson & Daly, 1993). Foshee et al. (2004) concluded that the booster should not be used in the future.

As with the previous follow-ups, the 4-year program evaluation found that compared with the control group, adolescents in the Safe Dates treatment group reported significantly less physical and sexual dating violence perpetration, and victimization (Foshee et al., 2004). Researchers inferred that long-term effects may have been realized because Safe Dates was offered at the beginning of the adolescents’ dating careers and included information and skills that could be incorporated into dating practices and continued throughout the high school years.
Throughout their years of research, Foshee et al. also found that neither race nor
gender moderated the effects of Safe Dates research outcomes.

Building on the Safe Dates study, a drama-based domestic-violence
program delivered to eighth graders in the UK also reported promising results after
a 1-year follow-up (Bell & Stanley, 2006). The Healthy Relationships program,
which included a play followed by a series of weekly workshops, was pilot tested
on 85 students in a metropolitan secondary school chosen for its low levels of
achievement. A local theater company with experience in theater-in-education
work was commissioned to deliver a production and collaborate with project staff
in developing a series of related interactive workshops. The production and
workshops covered issues including self-esteem, self image and respect; cultural
and social influences on gender identities; and traditional gender roles and their
effects on relationships. The first workshop was delivered by members of the
theater company immediately following the performance, and five subsequent
workshops were delivered on a weekly basis by a school nurse, youth worker, and
a domestic-violence project worker.

Surveys including open-ended and closed questions were administered to
participants 1 week before the drama performance, at the end of the final
workshop, and then again 1 year later. A total of 55 of the original 85 participants
completed the final stage of the evaluation. Questionnaires following the program
showed a distinct shift in students’ definition of the term “domestic violence”
(Bell & Stanley, 2006). Students also showed a markedly improved understanding
of issues including DV prevalence in their age group, DV prevalence in general,
and misconceptions about the gender of victims and perpetrators. Following the
program, participants also indicated they would be significantly more likely to talk
to family members about DV.
In their work on teenage relationship-abuse, Wolfe et al. (2003) attempted to address other studies’ limitations (experimental design, measurement, and follow-up) by incorporating random assignment, control conditions, broad-based outcome measures, and repeated follow-up. The researchers’ 2-year study analyzed a dating-violence intervention intended for at-risk teens aged 14 to 16. The program, which aimed to prevent abusive behavior and promote healthy relationships, recruited 191 participants from Child Protective Service agencies. The experimental group participated in the Youth Relationships Project, which comprised an 18-session health-promotion curriculum involving three components: (1) abuse education/awareness and power dynamics in close relationships, (2) skill development, and (3) social action. Following the intervention/control period, the teens were contacted bi-monthly by telephone to determine whether they were involved in a dating relationship and, if so, to fill out questionnaires regarding that relationship. Face-to-face interviews were scheduled at 6-month intervals to readminister all outcome measures. At the study’s conclusion, researchers found the intervention group reported a larger decrease in frequency and severity of abuse, and a larger reduction in emotional distress than the control group (Wolfe et al., 2003). However, the intervention group did not show expected growth in healthy relationship skills, though researchers suggested their relationship-skills measure may have lacked sufficient sensitivity to change. Researchers concluded that the 14 to 16 age group may represent a valuable window of opportunity for reducing the cycle of violence.

Wolfe et al. (2003) also discussed the pros and cons of community interventions versus school programs, stating that youths may feel safer in a community-based environment rather than face peer interference at school. However, community initiatives are stigmatized by the perception that programs
are intended to “treat” people with problems. Schools, on the other hand, eliminate any such stigmatizing labels by offering programs universally. They also have easier access to the time, space, and personnel needed to implement such programs.

**Peer-Education Programs**

Previous research indicates that peer-education initiatives are more effective in improving knowledge, changing attitudes, and promoting self-efficacy than other teaching models (Story, Lytle, Birnbaum, & Perry, 2002). Drew Hunter, the executive director of the BACCHUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network, has opined that “nearly any peer program succeeds on some level because of the positive impact on feelings of self worth and development of interpersonal skills that peer educators experience” (Hunter, 2004, p. 42). In addition, he believes peers play a particularly important role in dealing with students’ problems with things including sexual assaults, alcohol abuse, and drug use because of the countless “teachable moments” that occur informally as peer educators talk to roommates, teammates, and classmates. A 1999 study of Network’s peer educators found that 95% reported they had directly affected another person in a positive way, 82% said they had taught new information, 64% believed they had changed an attitude or perception, and 55% reported they had confronted or challenged a risky behavior in the previous year (Hunter, 2004).

Caron, Godin, Otis, and Lambert (2004) found that a high-school level AIDS/STD peer-education program had positive effects on psychosocial variables (including attitude, perceived behavior control, perceived normative beliefs, role beliefs, and perceived self-efficacy) related to postponing sexual intercourse and condom use. The study evaluated the effects of the Protection Express Program on
peer educators and students receiving the presentation in two regions of Quebec, Canada. Researchers recruited an experimental group of high school seniors and juniors; the seniors participated in a 25-hour training program and helped develop the AIDS/STD presentation, and the juniors received the presentation. A control group underwent usual sex education. A total of 477 seniors and 945 juniors agreed to participate in the study. At a 9-month follow-up, senior respondents consisted of 147 and 159 in the experimental and control groups, respectively, and junior respondents consisted of 396 and 329 in the experimental and control groups, respectively (Caron et al., 2004).

The Protection Express evaluation found that even though the junior class intervention was brief (approximately 150-180 minutes), it was encouraging, as the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group on all psychosocial variables. It also indicated that involvement by peer educators in the development of creative and educational activities for others brought about a positive change in their own behavior (with respect to condom use, in this case). Researchers suggested the positive effects of the program may have been partly related to the peer-education approach, which comprised age- and culture-appropriate language, and teaching methods that included sketches and role-play scenarios that were interesting and pertinent to the target audience (Caron et al., 2004).

A mid-1990s study on peer mediation fueled the notion that peers can have a significant influence on school-aged youth. The study was initiated by a middle-school counselor in College Park, GA, as suspension rates soared to an all-time high and regulation of student behavior became overwhelming (Thompson, 1996). Teachers and counselors recruited students rated high on leadership abilities as peer mediators in a program that promoted the following: positive school climate;
student empowerment and responsibility; increased student self-esteem; school safety; effective communication skills; and a reduction in discipline (fight) referrals to the administration. Twenty-five peer mediators were trained in two 20-day sessions, with the core curriculum consisting of four components: the role and qualities of the peer mediators; understanding conflicts; communication skills; and steps in peer mediation. Ongoing advanced training was also scheduled. Peer mediators held their sessions in the mediation center, which was staffed by counselors (in case adult intervention was necessary), and were instructed to mediate students one grade below their level whenever possible.

An evaluation of the program reported a reduction in suspensions by 18.5% the first year and 50% in the first two years (Thompson, 1996). It also reported a reduction in incidences of fighting, increased self-esteem scores, enhanced problem-solving skills, a reduction in teacher transfers, and improved school morale. The belief that the peer-mediation program worked and had improved school morale was expressed by 92% of teachers surveyed. Thompson (1996) pointed to several factors that may have fostered the program’s success, such as providing students with choices and alternatives; involving students in decision-making about disciplinary approaches; increasing student ownership of the resulting program; and promoting a greater sense of responsibility for behavior and its consequences.

The previously mentioned studies have implications for our evaluation of kNOw More because it is a peer-education initiative. As previously mentioned, peer education has been shown to be more effective than other teaching methods in some cases.
kNOw More Evaluation

The kNOw More program is composed of many, but not all, of the elements found in the relationship abuse prevention programs that have been evaluated previously. Each school in the kNOw More system has a team of 10 to 15 peer educators (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) who commit for 1 year and run the program themselves with the help of an advisor (E. Camarena, personal communication, September 16, 2009). The peer educators provide a dramatic production that covers dating violence norms, gender-stereotyping, social and cultural influences, communication skills, and awareness of services for victims. Their presentation targets youngsters considered to be at the beginning of their dating careers. However, the kNOw More program does not stretch into the school curriculum or offer follow-up workshops. It is therefore important to evaluate kNOw More to gain a better understanding of the presentation’s impact and sustainability as compared to more extensive programs.

Though the kNOw More program continues to expand, it does so with great struggle. In recent years, California’s government has slashed funding for domestic-abuse resources, including the county’s only DV shelter-based assistance program, which oversees kNOw More.

The goal of this evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the kNOw More peer-education program to justify continuation, expansion, and funding. The present study focused on the following research questions: (a) Does the kNOw More program increase understanding of relationship-abuse? and (b) Does the kNOw More program increase understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse?
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Participants

Researchers worked with kNOw More to recruit a convenience sample of 301 high-school-aged participants who received the kNOw More presentation at four high schools in the central San Joaquin Valley. The number studied represents approximately 10% of the number of students who receive the kNOw More presentation each semester. However, survey data from many of those participants was eliminated due to incompleteness or inability to match pre- and post-presentation data. The final sample of 191 participants (63% of the total sample) comprised teenagers from four high schools – 62% girls and 29% boys (9% of the surveys were missing gender information). The age breakdown was as follows: age 14, 12%; age 15, 22%; age 16, 28%; age 17, 24%; and age 18, 5% (there was missing age information for 9% of the sample). Participants checked a box to identify their ethnicity, which resulted in the following: 48% Hispanic/Latino; 11% African-American; 11% Non-Hispanic White; 4% Southeast Asian; 6% other Asian; and 13% Other (7% of the surveys were missing ethnicity information).

Instruments

Pre- and post-training surveys with a series of closed- and open-ended questions were used to evaluate changes in participants’ level of relationship-abuse understanding, as well as understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse. Each item on the survey was treated as a separate variable.

A total of four items – two open-ended and two closed-ended – were used to measure level of relationship-abuse understanding. A total of three items – one
open-ended and two closed-ended – were used to measure understanding of how to seek help (see Table 1 and Appendix A).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Items Measuring Each Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed-ended (1-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What do you think the definition of teen relationship abuse is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Name one fact you believe to be true about teen relationship abuse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed-ended (1-5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What advice would you give to a friend who told you they were being abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The closed questions were rated on a five-point Likert Scale (1 = disagree, 2 = between disagree and somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat agree, 4 = between somewhat agree and completely agree, and 5 = completely agree). The answers to the open-ended items were content-coded by the researcher and categorized by top answers. Each of the seven items has unknown reliability but appears to be face valid. The instrument also collected demographic information including age, gender, and ethnicity (see Appendix A).
Interrater reliability for the open-ended questions was calculated by assigning answer categories to each item and comparing the researcher’s answer code to that of an undergraduate psychology student who volunteered for the reliability task. On a sample of 175 questions, interrater reliability was 90%.

This study’s independent variable, the 45- to 60-minute kNOw More presentation, was developed by employees of Fresno County in 1998. The interactive presentation includes a team of about 10 to 15 male and female peer-educators, who role play situations including abuse during pregnancy, two-way abuse, the role of technology in abuse, and friends helping friends in abusive relationships. Following role-play scenarios, the presenters involve audience members in talking about the situations. The presentation includes question-and-answer sessions to gauge the audience’s understanding of intimate-partner abuse (with prizes for those who answer correctly). It also includes statistics regarding domestic violence and teen relationship abuse; real 911 calls; poems depicting abusive relationships; and music lyrics containing abusive messages.

Throughout the presentation, the peer-educators repeat the following key points: (1) Violence is experienced in more than one out of four teenage relationships; (2) Abuse in relationships occurs with the rich, the poor, all races, religions, and cultural groups; (3) Abuse is a crime and is not OK; (4) Violence is a learned behavior; and (5) It is never the victim’s fault. Participants receive handouts including a Teen Power and Control Wheel which helps explain different types of abuse, a Teen Equality Wheel that explains qualities of a healthy relationship, and a chart that helps explain the cycle of violence. The presenters also use recent events in the news media to connect with their audience (e.g., the DV case involving popular singers Rihanna and Chris Brown).
At the end of the presentation, peer-educators hand out a Teen Relationship Abuse Resource Sheet that includes phone numbers for services including local police departments, the local battered women’s shelter, rape-counseling, a victims’ resource center, child abuse, youth crisis, Planned Parenthood, and the kNOw More organization. A Peer Resource Specialist is also available to refer individuals to a host of resources for issues including family conflict, school-related problems, and parenting issues. The kNOw More presentation (the independent variable) has face validity and unknown reliability.

**Research Design and Procedures**

The goal of this evaluation was to study how the independent variable, the kNOw More presentation, relates to participants’ understanding of relationship-abuse and understanding of how to get help for relationship abuse, as measured by seven questionnaire items. This is a quasi-experimental, within-subjects design.

kNOw More leaders were given data-collection procedures by the researchers. The organization sent home parent-information forms (see Appendix B) and parent-permission forms (see Appendix C) with each participant several days before each presentation. kNOw More peer educators presented to a variety of classes at four high schools in the central San Joaquin Valley. Participants were given Informed Assent forms (see Appendix D) and details about the current study shortly before the presentations. They were told their participation was purely voluntary. Those who chose to participate were given pre-training surveys, which took about 5 minutes to complete. Post-training surveys were administered immediately following presentations. kNOw More personnel were instructed to make sure there was no talking from the time the surveys were distributed until the
time they were collected. Participants used ID code numbers so that pre- and post-training surveys could be matched.

The following questionnaire items were used as variables in the first hypothesis (The kNOw More program increases understanding of relationship abuse):

1. “Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault.” We hypothesized that the score on this item would decrease (toward disagree) following the kNOw More presentation.

2. “Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community.” We hypothesized that the score on this item would increase (toward completely agree) following the kNOw More presentation.

3. “What do you think the definition of teen relationship abuse is?” We hypothesized that there would be a greater number of appropriate responses following the kNOw More presentation.

4. “Name one fact you believe to be true about teen relationship abuse.” We hypothesized that there would be a greater number of appropriate responses following the kNOw More presentation.

The following questionnaire items were used as variables in the second hypothesis (The kNOw More program increases understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse):

1. “I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship.” We hypothesized that the score on this item would increase (toward completely agree) following the kNOw More presentation.

2. “I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship.” We hypothesized that the score on this item would increase (toward completely agree) following the kNOw More presentation.
3. “What advice would you give to a friend who told you they were being abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend?” We hypothesized that there would be a greater number of appropriate responses following the kNOw More presentation.

The researcher determined which responses were appropriate. Any response that made sense and was not the antithesis of the kNOw More message was considered appropriate.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the kNOw More presentation in teaching high school students about relationship abuse. The primary goals were to determine (1) whether the presentation increased students’ understanding of relationship abuse and (2) whether the presentation increased students’ understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse. It was hypothesized that the kNOw More presentation would significantly increase high school students’ level of understanding about relationship abuse and how to get help.

Dependent-samples t-tests were used to evaluate four scaled items – two measuring understanding of relationship abuse and two measuring understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse. The two items used to measure understanding of relationship abuse were: (1) “Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault” and (2) “Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community.” The questions measuring understanding of how to seek help were: (1) “I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship” and (2) “I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship.” Each question was rated on a scale from 1 to 5. Cohen’s d effect sizes were also calculated. All items showed statistically significant changes in the expected directions, with primarily small effect sizes. Results are presented in Table 2.

Understanding of Relationship Abuse

Participants indicated that teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault to a lesser degree after training than before training, \( t(190) = 6.09, p = .001, d = .44 \). They were in greater agreement that teen relationship abuse happens a lot in
their community after training than before training, $t(190) = -5.00, p < .001, d = .36$ (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Table 2

*T-Tests Comparing Pre- and Post-Training Levels of Relationship-Abuse Understanding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th></th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p value</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of relationship abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be victim’s fault</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happens a lot in community</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>-5.00</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of how to get help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know someone to talk to</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>-1.98</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort asking for help</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>-3.08</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on a 1 to 5 scale whereas 1 = disagree, 2 = between disagree and somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat agree, 4 = agree, and 5 = completely agree (N = 191).

Understanding of How to Get Help for Relationship Abuse

Participants indicated that teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault to a lesser degree after training than before training, $t(190) = 6.09, p = <.001, d = .44$. They were in greater agreement that teen relationship abuse happens a lot in their community after training than before training, $t(190) = -5.00, p < .001, d = .36$ (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Gender Differences

The four scaled items were also evaluated for gender differences. For each item, a 2 x 2 one-between—one-within ANOVA was conducted with gender as the between-subjects factor and training (pre and post) as the within subjects
Figure 1. Pre- and post-training means are based on a 5-point scale that ranges from disagree (1) to completely agree (5). The full statements were: “Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault”; “Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community”; “I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship”; and “I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship” (n = 191).

The two items measuring understanding of how to get help for relationship abuse showed significant gender differences, while the two items measuring understanding of relationship abuse in general indicated no gender differences.

The item stating, “I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship,” resulted in a main effect for gender, $F(1,172) = 7.42$, $p = .007$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, and a significant main effect for training, Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted $F(1, 172) = 6.01$, $p = .015$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Girls reported that they were more likely to know someone they could talk to if they were in an abusive relationship than boys. Both boys and girls indicated they were more likely to know someone they could talk to after the training versus before the training (see Table 3).
Gender Analysis for Knowing Someone To Talk To

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Pre Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Post Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>4.34 (.99)</td>
<td>4.50 (.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>3.91 (1.32)</td>
<td>4.09 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The item stating, “I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship,” also resulted in a main effect for gender, $F(1,172) = 5.85$, $p = .017$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, and a significant main effect for training, Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted $F(1, 172) = 8.95$, $p = .003$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. Girls reported that they would feel more comfortable asking for help if they were in an abusive relationship than boys. In regard to training, both boys and girls indicated they would be more comfortable asking for help after the presentation versus before the presentation (see Table 4).

Table 4

Gender Analysis for Asking For Help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Pre Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Post Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>4.07 (1.13)</td>
<td>4.26 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>3.62 (1.43)</td>
<td>3.87 (1.26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open-Ended Questions

The pre- and post-presentation questionnaires included several open-ended items to evaluate the impact of the kNOw More presentation. All of the answers were coded, placed into categories, and analyzed via frequency tables (see Table
The items “What do you think is the definition of teen relationship abuse?” and “Name one fact you believe to be true about relationship abuse,” were meant to gauge participants’ level of understanding of relationship abuse. A third question, “What advice would you give to a friend who was being abused?” was meant to give researchers an idea about participants’ level of understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse. A final item, “Name one thing you learned from today’s kNOw More presentation,” appeared on the post-presentation questionnaire only and was included to help researchers gauge what stood out most in participants’ minds following the presentation.

The first relationship-abuse-understanding item, “What do you think is the definition of teen relationship abuse?” resulted in 42.9% of participants on the pre-presentation questionnaires indicating they thought it meant some combination of the following: “physical, emotional, verbal, mental, or sexual abuse.” That was the most frequent answer, followed by “hitting or beating” (14.1%) and “abuse within a relationship” (11.5%). The categories of “other” (various other answers) and “no answer given” tied for third place, also with 11.5% of the answers. “Physical, emotional, verbal, mental, or sexual abuse” was also the most frequent answer on the post-presentation questionnaire, although fewer participants fell into that category (38.2%). Nearly 18% of participants chose to give no answer on the post-presentation questionnaire, while 14.7 gave various other answers and 8.4% wrote an answer that fell into the category “abuse within a relationship.” “Hitting or beating” showed up in fifth place on the post-presentation questionnaire, tying with “hurting or harming someone.”

Items were also examined using a chi-square crosstabulation analysis to compare participants’ answers on the pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. The analysis determined how many participants gave answers that would be
Table 5

Comparison of Open-Ended Questions on Pre- and Post-tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions / Responses</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th></th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think is the definition of teen relationship abuse?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/emotional/verbal/mental/sexual abuse</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting/beating</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse within a relationship</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurting or harming someone</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling/threatening another</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice would you give to a friend who was being abused?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break up / get out of relationship</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break up AND get help</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get help / talk to someone</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer comforting comments</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call the police / call 911</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name one fact you believe is true about relationship abuse.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (various answers)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s not OK / it’s unhealthy / it’s bad</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is never the victim’s fault</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can be difficult to leave</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse happens a lot</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name one thing you learned from today’s kNOw More presentation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (various answers)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse happens a lot</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is never the victim’s fault</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can/should talk to someone about abuse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuse is not OK</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* n = 191
considered correct in pre- and post-testing versus no answer. Since very few of the written answers were deemed incorrect, researchers considered any attempt at an answer as “correct” and any blank answer as “incorrect.”

The crosstabulation analysis on the first set of pre and post items (“What do you think is the definition of teen relationship abuse?”) showed that 79% of participants answered correctly before and after the presentation, and 3% answered correctly post-presentation after giving no answer on the pre-presentation survey. Equal numbers – 9% – either gave no answer on both pre and post surveys or gave a correct answer before the presentation but no answer after the presentation (See Table 6).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstabulation Analysis on Definition of Teen Relationship Abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Presentation Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct/Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct/Wrong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wrong/Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wrong/Wrong)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next relationship-abuse-understanding item, “Name one fact you believe is true about relationship abuse,” resulted in a host of answers that were too varied to be coded on both the pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. Therefore, the most frequent answer on both questionnaires is coded as “other” (53.9% pre-presentation and 35.6% post-presentation). Some examples of answers in the “other” category are: “relationship abuse can happen to anyone,” “the victim can be male,” “abuse can happen in same-sex relationships,” and “abuse is a
learned behavior.” The second most frequent answer on both the pre- and post-presentation questionnaires was “no answer given” (18.8% pre-presentation and 23% post-presentation). The third most frequent answer on the pre-presentation questionnaire was “It’s not OK / It’s unhealthy / It’s bad” (9.4%) while the third most frequent answer on the post-presentation questionnaire was “Abuse happens a lot” (19.4%). The category “It’s never the victim’s fault” was the fourth most frequent answer on pre- (7.9%) and post-presentation (12%) questionnaires. The crosstabulation analysis indicated that 68% of participants gave correct answers on the pre- and post-presentation surveys while 9% of participants showed improved understanding by giving no answer before the presentation and a correct answer after the presentation. Another 9% gave no answer on pre and post questionnaires, and 14% answered correctly on the pre-test while giving no answer on the post-test (see Table 7).

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crosstabulation Analysis for Naming One Fact about Relationship Abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Presentation Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct/Correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct/Wrong)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The item used to gauge participants’ understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse resulted in the same most frequent answer on pre and post questionnaires. When asked, “What advice would you give to a friend who was being abused?” 41.9% of participants said “Break up / get out of relationship” on the pre-presentation questionnaire and 30.9% gave that answer on the post-
presentation questionnaire. That was followed by “Break up AND get help” (17.8%) and “Get help / talk to someone” (17.3%) in pre-testing. “Get help / talk to someone” was the second most frequent answer on the post-test (25.1%), with the “no answer given” category coming in third (16.8%). “No answer given” was the fourth most frequent category in pre-testing (11%) while “Break up AND get help” (9.9%) took that slot on the post test. “Call the police / call 911,” “Offer comforting comments,” and “Other,” in different orders, rounded out the bottom three categories on both pre- and post-presentation questionnaires. The crosstabulation analysis showed that 78% of participants gave answers on the pre- and post-presentation surveys that were correct. Another 5% showed increased understanding by giving a correct answer on the post-presentation survey after giving no answer on the pre-presentation survey. Ten percent of participants gave no answer on the pre- and post-presentation surveys while 7% answered correctly before the presentation but gave no answer after the presentation (see Table 8).

Table 8

_Crosstabulation Analysis on Advice to a Friend Who is Being Abused_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Presentation Correct</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct/Correct)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wrong/Correct)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Correct/Wrong)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wrong/Wrong)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to “Name one thing you learned from today’s kNOw More presentation,” 30.9% of participants gave answers that were too varied to be
coded. Answers included, “The cycle of violence,” “Females can abuse males,” “Anyone can be an abuser or victim,” and “There are different types of abuse.”

The second most frequent response was “no answer” (24.6%), which was followed by “Abuse happens a lot” (18.8%), “It is never the victim’s fault” (16.2%), “You can/should talk to someone about abuse” (5.8%), and “Abuse is not OK” (3.7%).
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Domestic abuse is a serious public health problem that affects every level of our social system and has detrimental effects on children. The problem is especially trying in today’s tough economic climate, as domestic abuse is on the rise but resources to fight the battle have been cut. Because the cycle of violence is generational and difficult to stop, it is thought that prevention, rather than intervention, is the best way to tackle the problem (Agnew, 2009; Black et al., 2011; Feder & Wilson, 2005). The kNOw More program attempts to address this issue from a preventative standpoint, educating teenagers about relationship abuse as they enter dating age.

The hypothesis of this study – the kNOw More presentation is effective in increasing teenagers’ understanding of relationship abuse and understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse – is supported by the results. The two scaled items measuring levels of understanding of relationship abuse (“Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault” and “Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community”) and the two scaled items measuring understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse (“I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship” and “I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship”) each showed a statistically significant increase in understanding following the kNOw More presentation.

These findings are consistent with previous research on relationship-abuse and peer-education programs. For example, a study evaluating the Healthy Relationships domestic-violence program measured many of the same awareness factors as this study. The UK program, delivered to 8th graders, indicated improved understanding of the definition of “domestic violence” and improved
understanding of relationship-abuse prevalence in participants’ age group and in general (Bell & Stanley, 2006). Following the Healthy Relationships program, which comprised a play and a series of workshops, participants also indicated they would be more likely to talk to family members about domestic violence.

Though the results of the current study are significant for all scaled items, effect sizes are in the small range. This could be partially due to a ceiling effect. Though participants were not asked if they had seen the kNOw More presentation previously, at least 16% of them gave written answers on the pre-presentation questionnaire that suggested they had seen the presentation before. For example, in response to the item, “Name one fact you believe to be true about teen relationship abuse,” a number of participants wrote, “It’s never the victim’s fault,” or “One out of four relationships are abusive,” or they named the stages of the cycle of violence. These are all things that are repeated in the kNOw More presentation and are thus likely to be remembered.

Despite a possible ceiling effect, the scaled items that measured information repeated frequently in the presentation (“Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault” and “Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community”) showed increased understanding. On the “victim’s fault” item, the mean decreased, as was expected, from 1.99 on the pre-presentation questionnaire to 1.52 on the post presentation questionnaire. The effect size of .44 is closer to a medium effect size (.50) than a small one (.20). On the “abuse happens a lot” item, the mean rose in the expected direction from 2.64 on the pre-presentation questionnaire to 3.27 on the post-presentation questionnaire. That item’s effect size, .36, was also closer to medium than small. Perhaps the effect sizes of these items would have been larger in a sample population that had no prior experience with the kNOw More presentation.
The two scaled items that measured understanding of how to get help for relationship abuse (“I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship” and “I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship”) showed statistically significant increases, though the increases were very small. This could be because these questions are more introspective. The answers to these questions were not repeated during the presentation like the previously discussed items, and may have required more thought and more time to answer. Perhaps taking some time to have participants volunteer to answer these questions during the presentation would be more effective in increasing understanding in this area.

Those items measuring understanding of how to seek help for relationship abuse also showed statistically significant differences by gender. Girls indicated that they have a better understanding of how to seek help than boys. Girls were more likely than boys to indicate that they (a) know someone they can talk to if they are in an abusive relationship and (b) would feel comfortable asking for help if they were in an abusive relationship. Both girls and boys significantly increased their understanding of how to seek help after seeing the presentation, but the boys’ level of understanding post-presentation was still not as high as the girls’ level of understanding pre-presentation. This is no surprise, as many years of research has shown that women are more likely than men to seek help for social and health problems (Thom, 1986). Researchers suggest that gender role expectations may play a part (Lehdonvirta, Nagashima, Lehdonvirta, & Baba, 2012). Domestic abuse is maintained by the failure of the victims to disclose their situation (Camarena et al., 2009). It is hoped that as a result of the kNowMore presentation, young women and men will be more likely to confide in someone if they are in an abusive relationship.
In analyzing the open-ended items on the questionnaires, researchers found that participants answered more questions on the pre-test than the post-test. For example, on the first question, “What do you think is the definition of teen relationship abuse?” more than 11% of participants failed to answer in pre-testing and nearly 18% failed to answer in post-testing. This happened despite the fact that participants should have been more prepared to answer the questions after the presentation. Perhaps participants were fatigued at the end of the emotional presentation, or maybe they did not have enough time to gather their thoughts and write them down before questionnaires were collected.

However, written answers indicated that a majority of participants were paying attention and absorbing the information. Two items on the post-presentation survey (“Name one fact you believe is true about relationship abuse” and “Name one thing you learned from today’s kNOw More presentation”) resulted in the most frequent answers coming directly from repeated information on the kNOw More script. On both items, about 19% of participants wrote something to indicate they think abuse is prevalent. In the kNOw More presentation, the peer educators repeatedly state, “Violence is experienced in more than 1 out of 4 teenage relationships.” On the same items, 12% and 16.2%, respectively, answered that relationship abuse is never the victim’s fault, and most repeated the exact phrase that was stressed several times in the presentation. A number of students (7.3% and 3.7%, respectively) also indicated in their own words that abuse is not OK. One of the repeated facts in the kNOw More presentation is, “Abuse is a crime and it is NOT OK.”

When comparing kNOw More with some of the other successful relationship-abuse prevention programs in schools, one major difference is the continuing education piece that follows the initial presentation. For example, the
Safe Dates program included a presentation that was followed by a 10-session curriculum and poster contest (Foshee et al., 1998), and the Healthy Relationships presentation was followed by a series of six weekly workshops (Bell & Stanley, 2006). Research into those programs found that participants maintained their improved understanding of relationship abuse a year or more after the training.

Perhaps the kNOw More program would improve its level of effectiveness if the presentation was followed by continuing education. This could give students a better opportunity for the type of active learning that could increase understanding.

**Limitations**

This study would have benefitted from tighter control over confounding variables. The researchers provided kNOw More staffers with a list of data collection procedures (including details on how to match questionnaires and directions to not allow participants to talk during data collection). However, the researchers themselves were not on hand to make sure controls were in place. Tight security policies in the school districts prevented the researchers from being present during data collection. As a result, it appeared that some students were sharing answers with each other. Also, many answers on the questionnaires indicated that a number of students were passive participants. For example, some of the students gave the same answers on the post-presentation questionnaire as they did on the pre-presentation questionnaire. Others participated in answering the questions on the pre-presentation survey but chose to leave the post-presentation survey blank. Perhaps participants were fatigued, unmotivated, or not given enough time to finish the surveys.
Another limitation was the researchers’ failure to take into consideration that some of the participants had apparently already seen the kNOw More presentation. Schools that have teams of kNOw More peer educators present to their students every year. Therefore, it made sense that a ceiling effect could contribute to small effect sizes.

Finally, this study did not include a control group to compare to the treatment group. This would have strengthened current findings and paved the way for long-term research comparing individuals who have seen the kNOw More program to those who have not.

**Future Research**

As with previous research on relationship-abuse programs in schools, there would be value in conducting a long-term follow-up to see if understanding persists over time. As previously mentioned, research into the kNOw More program would be strengthened by examining how actual relationship-abuse perpetration and victimization compare between the treatment group and a control group.

For future studies, it would also be interesting to compare kNOw More’s peer-education model to standard sex-education school models. Such a study could be valuable in bolstering previous research indicating that peer education is more effective than other models in improving knowledge, changing attitudes, and promoting self-efficacy (Story, Lytle, Birnbaum, & Perry, 2002).

**Summary and Conclusions**

This research to determine the effectiveness of the kNOw More program is important because domestic violence is reported to be on the rise and many researchers and experts consider early intervention the key to prevention (Wolfe et
al, 2003). Such efforts could help ease the burden on health-care systems, which treat millions of DV victims every year for physical and psychological damage (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Primary prevention efforts could also help break the generational cycle of violence that plagues families and interferes with healthy child development (Argain, 2009; Perry, 1997).

Programs like kNOw More hold great promise for primary prevention, and thus hope for stopping what may be a generational cycle of learned behavior. Long-term studies, such as those on the Safe Dates program, have reported encouraging results, indicating that those who participate in relationship-abuse-prevention programs report significantly less physical and sexual dating violence victimization and perpetration (Foshee et al., 2004). Furthermore, research has shown that peer-education programs are more effective in improving knowledge and changing attitudes than other teaching models (Story, Lytle, Birnbaum, & Perry, 2002).

The results of this study indicate that the kNOw More presentation is effective in increasing high school students’ understanding of relationship abuse and understanding of how to get help for relationship abuse. These findings may be useful as the struggling program looks to justify funding for its continuation and expansion.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: KNOW MORE QUESTIONNAIRE
Pre-Presentation Evaluation

You are about to see a presentation on teen relationship abuse. Please take 5 minutes to complete this survey. The information will help our program show its value for future funding.

**Circle one number for items 1-4 and write your answer for items 5-7.**

1. Teen relationship abuse can be the victim’s fault:
   1. disagree
   2. somewhat agree
   3. completely agree

2. Teen relationship abuse happens a lot in my community:
   1. disagree
   2. somewhat agree
   3. completely agree

3. I know someone I can talk to if I am in an abusive relationship:
   1. disagree
   2. somewhat agree
   3. completely agree

4. I would feel comfortable asking for help if I were in an abusive relationship:
   1. disagree
   2. somewhat agree
   3. completely agree

5. What do you think the definition of teen relationship abuse is?

6. What advice would you give to a friend who told you they were being abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend?

7. Name one fact you believe to be true about teen relationship abuse:
APPENDIX B: KNOW MORE PARENT INFORMATION
August 2010 - June 2011

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your student may have the opportunity to receive a presentation by kNOw MORE Peer Educators related to teen relationship abuse prevention during the 2010-2011 school year. This presentation includes drama, music and facts to demonstrate the seriousness of violence and abuse in teen relationships. The kNOw MORE Program is a peer education project developed in partnership with Fresno County area high schools and representing a diverse group of students. Schools currently participating in the kNOw MORE program are Central East, Clovis, Clovis West, Edison, Fresno, Fowler, McLane, Roosevelt, Sanger and Sunnyside High Schools. The goal is to educate youth on the devastating and long lasting effects of violence in teen relationships and local resources.

Before and after the presentation each student may have an opportunity to complete an anonymous pre and post-test to measure what he/she learned from the presentation and the impact abuse in relationships has on teens. The pre and post-tests as well as the content of the classroom presentation are available for your review at your student’s school. Please check with the school advisor listed below or call the Marjaree Mason Center, kNOw MORE Program.

The kNOw MORE Program is sponsored by the Marjaree Mason Center. It is supported in part by Central, Clovis, Fowler, Fresno, and Sanger Unified School Districts. If you would like more information, please contact your kNOw MORE School Advisor. The Advisors are listed below next to their High School. You may also contact Elizabeth Camarena, kNOw MORE Program Coordinator, at (559) 487-1352 or Elizabeth@mmcenter.org.

School Advisors:

Central East High School – 276-0280
Mrs. Lori Herb

Fowler High School – 834-6160
Mr. Mike Vellutini

Clovis High School – 327-1000
Ms. Tracy Fulton

McLane High School – 248-5121
Ms. Catherine Estes

Clovis West High School – 327-2000
Mrs. Kris Hawkins

Roosevelt High School- 253-5207
Mrs. Leslie Dildine

Edison High School – 457-2650
Mr. John Grieco

Sanger High School – 875-7121
Mrs. Melissa Barry

Fresno High School – 457-2780
Mrs. Meghan Schimmel

Sunnyside High School – 253-6700
Ms. Pat Chacon

Sincerely,

Elizabeth C. Camarena
kNOw MORE Program Coordinator
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Your child has been invited to participate in a study conducted by Kym Kilgore and supervised by Dr. Marilyn Wilson of California State University, Fresno. We hope to learn what effects the kNOw More program has on students. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because (s)he is scheduled to see the kNOw More presentation.

If your child participates, (s)he will be asked to fill out questionnaires before and after the presentation. These questionnaires will cover topics including relationship-abuse awareness and knowledge. They will also ask for demographic information including gender, age, school, grade and ethnicity. Questionnaires should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

Possible risks may include psychological discomfort and/or consumption of time. Benefits may include a better understanding of relationship abuse, which could help in kNOw More’s endeavor to educate young people and prevent relationship abuse in society. However, we cannot guarantee that your child will receive any benefits from this study.

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. If you give us your permission by signing this document, we plan to use questionnaire data to conduct a research study for the California State University, Fresno psychology department. Data will be used in a statistical analysis to determine effects of the kNOw More training program on knowledge and awareness of relationship abuse. Approximately 300 participants may be involved in this study.

Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not prejudice your or your child’s future relations with California State University, Fresno. If you allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child’s participation at any time without penalty. The Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects at California State University, Fresno has reviewed and approved the present research.

If you have any questions, Dr. Wilson will be happy to answer them: (559) 278-5129. Questions regarding the rights of research subjects may be directed to Constance Jones, Chair, CSUF Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects, (559) 278-4468.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep if requested.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE ALLOWED YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

________________________________________  ______________________________________
Date                                               Signature of investigator

________________________________________
Signature of parent
INFORMED ASSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Kym Kilgore and supervised by Dr. Marilyn Wilson of California State University, Fresno. We hope to learn what effects the kNOw More program has on students. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are scheduled to see the kNOw More presentation.

If you participate, you will be asked to fill out questionnaires before and after the presentation. These questionnaires will cover topics including relationship-abuse awareness and knowledge. They will also ask for demographic information including gender, age, school, grade and ethnicity. Questionnaires should take no more than 5 minutes to complete.

Possible risks may include psychological discomfort and/or consumption of time. Benefits may include a better understanding of relationship abuse, which could help in kNOw More’s endeavor to educate young people and prevent relationship abuse in society. However, we cannot guarantee you will receive any benefits from this study.

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. If you give us your permission by signing this document, we plan to use questionnaire data to conduct a research study for the California State University, Fresno psychology department. Data will be used in a statistical analysis to determine effects of the kNOw More training program on knowledge and awareness of relationship abuse. Approximately 300 participants may be involved in this study.

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If you have any questions, please ask us. If you have any additional questions later, Dr. Wilson will be happy to answer them: (559) 278-5129. Questions regarding the rights of research subjects may be directed to Constance Jones, Chair, CSUF Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects, (559) 278-4468.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep if requested.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

__________________________________________  ________________________________
Date                                             Signature of investigator

__________________________________________
Signature of participant
Fresno State

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Kimberly Kilgore
Type full name as it appears on submission

April 19, 2013
Date