

An Evaluation of the *Owning Up* Curricula: Educational Intervention into the Cycle of Violence



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Executive Summary

This report examines the effectiveness of the *Owning Up* curricula, a school-based program that addresses the gendered origins of youth violence. The findings reported here are based on two samples: A sample of 180 female students ages 14 to 19, and a sample of 222 male students, ages 14 to 19. Interesting aspects of the samples are summarized first, followed by summaries about the gendered origins of youth violence. The last part of this executive summary reports on the effectiveness of the *Owning Up* curricula by looking at changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as a result of the program.

Sample Descriptions

Students in the two samples have experienced high rates of violence in their lifetime.

- Seventy percent of female respondents say they have been hit, kicked, or punched in their lifetime. One-in-four female respondents in the sample have been threatened with a weapon, such as a gun or knife (23.5%), and 5.4% have actually been assaulted with a weapon at some point.
- Three-quarters of male students say they have been hit, kicked, or punched in their lifetime. Nearly half of the male sample report that they have been threatened with a weapon at some point in their life (46.7%), and one-in-four respondents have been assaulted with a weapon (25.6%).
- Lifetime experience of family violence is positively correlated with victimization and perpetration of violence for both male and female students. The greater the violence experienced by students in their home, the more likely they are to be involved with violence outside the home.

Perpetration of violence is also high among respondents in both samples.

- Eight-in-ten female students say they have hit, kicked or punched someone during their lifetime. One-in-five female respondents have threatened someone with a weapon (17.6%), and 7% have actually assaulted someone with a weapon.
- Eight-in-ten male respondents report that they have assaulted someone during their lifetime. One quarter of students in the male sample report threatening someone with a weapon (25.4%), and one-in-five say they have actually assaulted another person with a weapon at some point (18.8%).

Gendered Origins of Youth Violence

Male respondents hold beliefs that have been linked to perpetration of violence to a greater extent than female respondents in the respective samples.

- Male students are significantly more likely than female students to uphold traditional gender roles.
- Male students are significantly more accepting of violence in dating relationships than female students.

Lower self-esteem is related to both perpetration and victimization of violence.

- The lower a female student's self-esteem, the more accepting she is of violence in dating relationships.
- The more a female student upholds gender stereotypes, the lower her self-esteem.
- Female students with low self-esteem are significantly more likely than other female students to have been victims of violence in the recent past.
- The lower a male student's self-esteem, the more accepting he is of violence in reaction to situations of conflict.
- The lower a male student's self-esteem, the more permissive he is of violence in dating relationships.
- Male students with low self-esteem are more likely to have perpetrated acts of violence in the recent past than other male students.
- Low self-esteem is more common among followers (as opposed to leaders) for both male and female students.

Knowledge

After completing the program, respondents in both samples reported improvement in knowledge about different topics presented in the curricula.

1. Two-thirds of male respondents report an improvement in knowledge about "sexual harassment" (68%), "abusive relationships" (67%) and "rape" (65%). A sizable but smaller proportion of male students say their knowledge of "social hierarchies" (45%), "bystanding" (44%), "consent" (43%), and "posing" (40%) increased.

- Six-in-ten female students (61%) report that their knowledge of “abusive relationships” increased after attending the program. Fifty-five percent report increased knowledge about “consent,” and 54 percent report the same for “sexual harassment” and “rape.” Half the female respondents say their knowledge of “social hierarchies” improved (49%), and 44% report the same for “bystanding.”

Attitudes

After completing the program, respondents in both samples reported significant shifts in certain attitudes and competencies.

- Female students’ acceptance of violence in response to conflict declined significantly after completing the program as measured by the Attitudes Toward Conflict scale.
- Female students were significantly less likely in the post-survey to agree with the statement “It’s okay for me to hit someone to get them to do what I want” than in the pre-survey.
- Post-program, both female and male students were significantly more likely to agree with the statement, “When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually think of a solution.”

Improvements were also found in beliefs about rigid gender stereotypes.

- Female students were significantly more likely to *disagree* with the statement “Swearing is worse for a girl than for a boy” after completing the program, a measure of the degree to which respondents apply different standards to girls and boys.
- Female students were significantly more likely to agree that “It is all right for a girl to ask a boy out on a date” after participating in the program.
- After completing the *Owning Up* curricula, respondents in both samples were significantly more likely to *disagree* with the idea that “On a date, a boy should be expected to pay all expenses.”

Behavior

Perhaps the most significant finding about the effectiveness of the *Owning Up* curricula is the drastic improvement in conflict resolution style reported by both male and female students. Respondents in both samples reported a significant decline in verbal, physical, and overall aggression in response to hypothetical situations of conflict.

- Average verbal aggression scores dropped significantly from pre- to post-survey among female and male students. This indicates that students were less likely to respond with a verbal counterattack in a situation of conflict after completing the program.
- Average physical aggression scores dropped significantly for female and male students from pre- to post-survey, indicating that students were less likely to respond with a physical counterattack in a situation of conflict after completion of the program.
- Average overall aggression scores (a combination of verbal and physical aggression) declined significantly from pre- to post-survey for both male and female respondents.

The findings of this research indicate that the *Owning Up* curricula is generally effective in eroding gender stereotypes and other beliefs that have been linked to gendered violence. Furthermore, the curricula improve students' conflict resolution skills, confidence in solving problems, and knowledge about the origins of youth violence. These are all important factors in diminishing youth violence.

Program Description

The *Owning Up* curricula, developed and administered by The Empower Program, is premised on the idea that pro-active interventions addressing gendered violence among youth will significantly alter the future of violence. Early intervention for adolescent females and males, both of whom play out scripts of violence, aggression, and gender-based assumptions, is important in breaking the cycle of violence. As young people develop intimate peer relationships, they also enter a world of intimate violence, power, and control. Negotiating these new social roles and responsibilities is challenging, and few interventions exist to assist youths during this crucial developmental stage. The *Owning Up* curricula addresses violence among youth by challenging the social roles, societal norms, attitudes, and behaviors that lead to violence.

The *Owning Up* curricula revolves around the idea that “boxes” of rigid femininity and masculinity -- societal ideals of what it means to “be a woman” (e.g., submissive, “pleasing”) and “be a man” (e.g., “macho,” physically threatening) -- create cultural scripts that support violence. These cultural scripts typically cast boys as perpetrators and girls as victims, although there are important exceptions. Social hierarchies, also known as cliques, are the primary mechanism for enforcing the norms of the feminine and masculine boxes for students.

Boys who fit well within the box of masculinity are more likely to perpetrate violence (against both girls and boys), whereas boys who do not fit within the box (e.g., gay youth, smaller and weaker boys, “weirdos”) are more often the targets of violence. In a small but growing number of situations, boys who are outside the box of masculinity perpetrate violence in protest of their “outsider” status. Such was the case with the Columbine massacre where female students and jocks were targeted as a result of the aggressors’ “outsider” status (Katz, 1999).

Rigid femininity is also a major part of cultural scripts that support violence. Girls who fit well within the box of femininity are at greater risk for victimization of intimate violence due to the high value placed on submissiveness. Furthermore, “policing” of girls (primarily by other girls) to keep girls within the box of femininity can be brutal. This “policing” often involves gossip and teasing which leave girls prey to depression and insecurity about their status, and vulnerable to aggressors.

High-profile school shootings have brought national attention to one important but rare type of gendered violence: non-intimate violence perpetrated by “outsiders.” Students’ daily experiences with intimidation and physical abuse are largely ignored. The *Owning Up* curricula is one of the first school-based programs to directly address the gendered origins of many different types of youth violence.

Background

Gendered violence – violence whose origins lie with gendered socialization -- is an epidemic in the United States. The Empower Program began with an emphasis on violence in intimate relationships as men and boys commit 90% of violence in the United States, and virtually all violence against women is perpetrated by men (Katz, 1999). While intimate violence (primarily boy on girl violence) remains the core of the program, the *Owning Up* curricula has been revised in recent years to reflect the reality that boys are also victims of violence and that girls perpetrate more subtle but highly damaging acts of violence in their social hierarchies.

Intimate violence, the core of the *Owning Up* curricula, has been established as a national issue in recent years. It is estimated that in the United States, three to four million women are beaten by their partners annually, and that 1,000 women die from this abuse each year (National Research Council, 1996). Intimate violence is typically considered an adult problem, but young people are often the victims and perpetrators of this type of violence. The highest rate of rape and sexual assault occurs among young women ages 12 to 24 (Bachman and Saltzman, 1995). As the NRC writes, “Females in their teens and 20s are those most likely to be dating, and therefore, subject to dating violence” (1996: 20). Furthermore, violence in the home is the most frequent type of youth crime (Matlock, 1994). And, in the related realm of sexual assault, the American Medical Association reports that nearly two-thirds of women who are assaulted are attacked *before age eighteen*. Additional statistics on intimate and non-intimate violence indicate that this is a major issue in the lives of many young people:

- Forty-nine percent of teens experience one or more forms of abuse in their dating relationships (Nebraska Domestic Violence Assault Coalition, 1996).
- An estimated 523,000 youth ages 12 to 19 sustained physical injury due to an assault in 1990 (McCordy and Darrow, 1994).
- The highest rates of intimate violence affect women ages 16 to 24 -- about one violent victimization for every 50 women (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998).
- A quarter (26%) of adolescent girls report physical, sexual, or date abuse (The Commonwealth Fund, 1997).

The early start and pervasiveness of youth violence points to social rather than individual causes. The *Owning Up* curricula works with the fact that most violence is either gender-based or is spurred by the gender socialization process that occurs as boys and girls learn what attributes and behaviors are acceptable for men and women. The NRC writes of social scripts that shape violent behavior: “Expectations about dating and intimate relationships are conveyed by culturally transmitted scripts. Scripts support violence when they encourage men to feel superior, entitled, and licensed as sexual aggressors with women as their prey. By adolescence, both boys and girls have been found to endorse scripts about sexual interaction that delineate justifiable rape. For example, 25 percent of middle school, high school, and college students state that it is

acceptable for a man to force sex on a woman if he spent money on her (Goodchilds and Zellman, 1984; Muehlenhard et al., 1985; Goodschild et al., 1988)” (NRC, 1996: 65-6). Intimate violence is a major issue for both girls and boys in the United States.

In addition to intimate violence, there is evidence that the recent school shootings, a form of non-intimate violence, have clearly gendered origins. Jackson Katz, a leading expert in the area of youth violence, writes that:

Political debate and media coverage keep repeating the muddled thinking of the past. Headlines and stories focus on youth violence, ‘kids killing kids,’ or as in the title of a CBS ‘48 Hours’ special, ‘Young Guns.’ This is entirely the wrong framework to use in trying to understand what happened in Littleton - or in Jonesboro, Ark., Paducah, Ky., Pearl, Miss., or Springfield, Ore. This is not a case of kids killing kids. This is boys killing boys and boys killing girls. What these school shootings reveal is not a crisis in youth culture but a crisis in masculinity. The shootings - all by white adolescent males - are telling us something about how we are doing as a society, much like the canaries in coal mines, whose deaths were a warning to the miners that the caves were unsafe.

The *Owning Up* curricula addresses both intimate and non-intimate violence with gendered origins.

Curricula Description

The *Owning Up* curricula, developed over a number of years by experts and/or survivors of intimate violence, are designed to assist students in developing skills to negotiate the pitfalls of peer relationships. The specific goals of the program include:

- Gaining student familiarity with elements of gendered violence (such as consent, sexual harassment, rape, intimate abuse, boundary setting, bystanding, social cliques, and “posing”);
- Getting students to recognize how socially prescribed gender roles shape scripts of violence;
- Increasing the self-confidence and self-control of individual program participants;
- Developing problem-solving and decision-making skills;
- Improving participants’ interpersonal communication skills;
- Bringing about positive changes in attitudes and behaviors relating to female and male peers and intimate partners (e.g., a decrease in gender stereotyping, critical thinking about youth dating violence);
- Decreasing rates of violent occurrences experienced by participants following the program;
- Decreasing rates of violent occurrences perpetrated by participants following the program.

Two different curricula are administered by the Empower Program, one for girls and one for boys. Empower staff take great care to avoid labeling or addressing boys as perpetrators and girls as victims in the classroom setting. Male and female students both learn techniques of boundary setting and identifying violent patterns in peer relationships. Empower trainers use a combination of lecture, discussion, role- playing, and other exercises to help students build competencies and knowledge pertaining to gendered violence.

The *Owning Up* curricula begins by addressing peer relationships and pressures in general. Once students have formed a basic understanding of their influence on each other, gender-based violence is introduced. Early focus on peer relationships educates students about how cliques and stereotyping isolate certain individuals, and how this isolation limits choices and puts them at greater risk of experiencing violence. In other words, the mechanism for enforcing rigid gender roles – social hierarchies – is addressed prior to discussing gendered violence itself.

The second part of the curricula builds upon the first but focuses specifically on the gendered roots of intimate violence. Classes concentrate primarily on sexual harassment, domestic violence, and date rape. Through our years of working with youth, we have found that most students are not able to recognize the signs of an abuser and have little factual information about gender-based violence. By the end of the course, many students learn the practical skills of:

- Questioning their own assumptions about gender roles and gender-based violence;
- Recognizing the signs of an abuser;
- Safely stopping or getting out of a violent situation;
- Assisting others in safely stopping or getting out of violent situations.

The *Owning Up* curricula brings years of research on the gendered origins of violence to bear in a classroom setting. Students learn practical ways to negotiate dating and other peer relationships without falling into the roles of perpetrator, victim, or bystander.

Report Overview

The focus of this report is twofold: cursory verification of previous findings about the gendered origins of youth violence, and determination of the effectiveness of the *Owning Up* curricula. Changes in students' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors as a result of the program were evaluated in the 2000-2001 school year to ascertain whether the program achieved its stated goals. The *Owning Up* curricula have been well received by schools and recognized by numerous national publications and news organizations. Until this point, however, program success has primarily been based upon this recognition, feedback from school personnel and students, the amount of repeat work at schools, and constant requests for services from new schools and organizations. While these factors indicate a high level of satisfaction with the program among youth service providers, the results of the scientific investigation reported here go a step further and provide empirical evidence of program effects.

Survey Methods

The evaluation of the *Owning Up* curricula allows us to examine two primary areas of interest. First, the data allow us to empirically examine factors of youth violence that have been identified by Empower. The *Owning Up* curricula is fairly unique in its identification of the role of gender socialization as a primary origin of youth violence, and social hierarchies as the mechanism of enforcement for youth violence. This research tells us what role, if any, these factors play in youth violence.

The second primary area of interest with this research is evaluating the effectiveness of the *Owning Up* curricula in achieving its stated goals. In this study, program effectiveness is measured along three lines:

1. Immediate changes in knowledge about intimate violence;
2. Immediate changes in attitudes that have been established as pre-cursors to perpetration and victimization of youth violence (gender stereotypes, acceptance of dating violence, low self-esteem, acceptance of violence in general);
3. Longer-term behavioral changes (conflict resolution style, perpetration of violence, victimization of violence, engagement in high-risk behaviors).

In order to address these primary questions of interest and to produce results that can be generalized to similar curricular interventions, questionnaires were administered to students at the start and end of the program to measure the effects of program participation.

Questionnaire Development

Questionnaires were selected as the most appropriate measure of program effectiveness, based upon the number of students involved and the sensitivity of the attitudes and behaviors in question. Four survey instruments were developed to measure factors of youth violence and the effects of student participation in the *Owning Up* curricula: Two pre-surveys for female and male students, and two post-surveys for male and female students. All of the surveys included standardized scales previously used to measure attitudes and behaviors of youth populations. Surveys for female and male students are almost identical as their curricula had similar goals. These questionnaires underwent a rigorous review process by youth violence experts, Empower staff, university faculty, and statistical analysts.

The four surveys (boys' and girls', pre- and post-) included the following standardized measures for youth populations, adopted from prior established research.

Scale	Characteristics	Consistency	Developer
Attitudes Toward Conflict Scale	8-item measure of attitudes toward the use of violence in response to disagreements or conflicts.	.66 to .72	Lam, 1989
Attitudes Toward Women Scale	12-item measure of gender stereotyping	.62 to .86	Galambos, Petersen, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985
Dating Violence Scale*	9-item measure of attitudes toward dating violence	NA	Youth Dating Violence Project, 1999
General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale	10-item measure of self-efficacy (self-esteem)	.90	Schwartz & Jerusalem, 1993
Conflict Resolution Style**	5 vignettes that measure styles of handling conflict situations.	NA	Slaby & Guerra, 1988

* The dating violence scale was modified to include three questions on an additional act of dating violence – humiliation -- that was not a part of the original survey.

** The Conflict Resolution Style measure was modified to include measures of humiliation and bystanding. The language was also revised to account for lesbian and gay relationships (e.g., “your girlfriend” was replaced with “the person you are dating.”)

Several new scales were developed to measure lifetime experience with violence (as a victim, perpetrator, and bystander) and high-risk behaviors, and experience with these activities in the past three months. These scales were based on questions from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (1993) and the SAGE Baseline Survey (1993), but tailored for the *Owning Up* curricula. A measure of student leaders versus followers was included in the pre-survey, and measures of change in knowledge about different ideas presented in the curricula were included in the post-evaluations.

Sample Selection

At the start of the 2000/2001 school year, approximately 4,100 students were slated to participate in the Empower curricula at 25 different sites. Pre- and post- surveys were administered at the start of the program at two sites: Suitland High School in Suitland, Maryland, and Woodrow Wilson High School in Washington, D.C. These sites were selected because they provided access to a large number of students and school officials were willing to participate in the evaluation process.

Only students who completed both a pre- and post survey were included in the final analysis. 180 female students completed both a pre- and post survey, and 222 male students did the same. No significant differences were found in terms of responders and non-responders to the post-survey when it came to age, race, class, teacher, Empower trainer, or school. These relatively large samples allow us to analyze relationships in the data set in some detail.

Survey Considerations

Several provisos are worth noting about the survey instruments. First, given the short period of time between pre- and post-survey administration, we anticipated finding changes in attitudes but little if any change in behavior. Attitudinal change is a precursor to behavioral change, but change in behavior is not an instantaneous or even quick process. We anticipate behavioral changes to surface in our 1-year follow-up evaluation with these students, scheduled for Spring of 2002.

The second issue with the survey involves respondent desire to give the “right” answers based on social desirability. We anticipated that respondents would over-report positive attitudes and behaviors on the pre-evaluation in particular given the social desirability of answers to certain questions. For example, we suspected that students would be more likely to over report their positive behavior in situations of conflict (e.g., “I would try to get them to both calm down and stop fighting”) because they would perceive this to be the “right” response. Furthermore, students were expected to under report their experiences with high-risk and violent behavior, on the pre-survey in particular, due to the sensitivity of many of these questions. Social desirability and sensitivity issues were thought to be less of a factor for the post-survey since students had engaged in approximately 14 weeks of frank and non-judgmental discussion about their attitudes and behaviors with a trainer who had earned their trust. We expected *reported* changes in attitudes and behaviors as a result of the program to be smaller than *actual* changes due to social desirability and sensitivity on the pre-surveys. (This leaves less room for improvement from pre- to post-survey.)

The last proviso of the survey concerns the learning curve from pre- to post- that we anticipated influencing the behavioral data in particular. Specifically, we expected students to become more aware of their experiences of violence after participating in the program, causing a false increase in rates of violence from pre- to post-survey. For example, if a student learns from the curricula that humiliation by a dating partner is a form of violence, she would have classified herself as a victim of intimate violence on the post- but not pre-survey, even though her experience had not actually changed. The learning curve issue was expected to taint the data on experiences with violence and high-risk behaviors to such an extent that these questions were not scheduled for inclusion in this report. And indeed, students reported major increases in their experiences of violence (both perpetration and victimization) and high-risk behavior from pre- to post-survey that are highly inconsistent with the remainder of the findings. Student confirmation of significant changes in their behavior as a result of the program in

open-ended questions confirm our suspicions that social desirability, question sensitivity, and a learning curve all call into question the validity of the quite large increase in negative behaviors from pre- to post-survey. Behavioral changes are not reported here due to these issues and the short period of time from pre- to post-survey. (In designing this research, we did not anticipate any significant behavioral changes in the short-term). Behavioral data from the post-survey will be used as a baseline for the 1-year follow-up survey as it is considered to be far more accurate.

Despite the inevitable obstacles noted here, we anticipated finding significant changes in respondent knowledge and attitudes as a result of participation in the *Owning Up* curricula. We also anticipated finding changes in experience and perpetration of violence in our one-year follow survey.

Fielding Procedures

Surveys were administered by an experienced Empower trainer at each site. Trainers were given a set of fielding instructions prior to administering the survey. Trainers did not report any significant problems in administering the surveys. Students were cooperative in completing the questionnaires as requested. On average, students spent about 20 minutes completing both the pre- and the post- survey, respectively. Almost all students answered at least 80 percent of the questions in the survey, the cut-off point for inclusion in the final data set.

Sample Description

Prior to analyzing the factors of intimate youth violence and the effectiveness of the *Owning Up* curricula, it is useful to first describe the male and female samples used in this analysis. This section of the report provides information on respondent race, age, parental status, leader versus follower status, and lifetime experience of violence and high- risk behaviors.

Background Characteristics

Table 1 provides information on race, age, and parental status for students in the female sample.

Table 1
Female Sample
Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Percentage	Total (n=180)
Race/Ethnicity		
-- African-American	85.1%	85.1%
-- Hispanic	1.7	86.8
-- White	2.9	89.7
-- Asian	.6	90.3
-- Other	9.8	100.0
Age		
-- 14 years old or younger	.6%	.6%
-- 15 years old	71.5	72.1
-- 16 years old	15.1	87.2
-- 17 years old	10.5	97.7
-- 18 years old or older	2.3	100.0
Parental Status		
-- Student is parent	1.8%	1.8%
-- Student is not a parent	98.2	100.0

As shown in **Table 1**, the vast majority of respondents in the female sample are African-American (85.1%). About five percent of students are Hispanic (1.7%), White (2.9%), or Asian (.6%).

Most girls who participated in the program are 15 years old (71.5%). One quarter of respondents in the female sample are 16 years old or older (25.6%).

Less than two percent of female program participants report that they are parents (3 students in the sample).

Table 2 reflects the background characteristics of respondents in the male sample.

Table 2
Male Sample
Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Percentage	Total (n=222)
Race/Ethnicity		
-- African-American	87.6%	87.6%
-- Hispanic	1.5	89.1
-- White	5.2	94.3
-- Asian	.5	94.8
-- Other	4.5	100.0
Age		
-- 14 years old or younger	1.0%	1.0%
-- 15 years old	51.3	52.3
-- 16 years old	29.6	81.9
-- 17 years old	8.5	90.5
-- 18 years old or older	9.5	100.0
Parental Status		
-- Student is parent	7.1%	7.1%
-- Student is not a parent	92.9	100.0

As with the female sample, the vast majority of male respondents are African-American (87.6%). Five percent of respondents are White, while fewer are Hispanic (1.5%) or Asian (.5%).

About half of the respondents in the male student sample are 15 years old (51.3%). Three-in-ten respondents are 16 years old (29.6%), and two-in-ten are 17 years old or older (18%). The male sample is slightly older than the female sample. The average age for respondents in the female sample is 15.4 years old compared to 15.8 for the male sample.

A greater percentage of male students report that they are parents than female students (7.1% compared to 1.8%).

Leaders and Followers

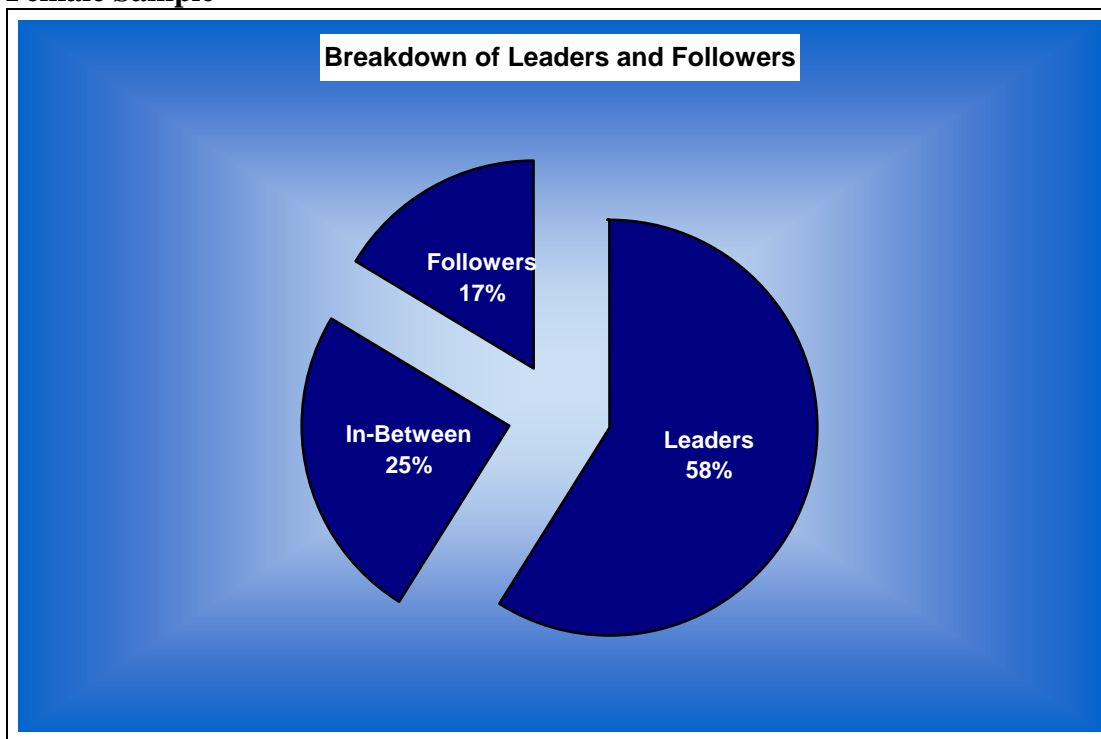
Respondents were asked two questions to measure whether they are generally a leader in their social circles, a follower, or somewhere in-between:

“In your group of friends, would your friends say that you are one of the leaders of the group?”

“Would you say that most of the time your friends listen to you, or most of the time you listen to your friends when it comes to making decisions?”

Respondents who report that their friends consider them a leader, and that they make decisions in their circle most of the time, are classified as “leaders.” Respondents who report a leadership position in one question but not the other were classified as “in-between.” Respondents who say their friends do not consider them a leader, and that they defer to their friends when it comes to decision-making, are classified as “followers.” **Figure 1** presents data on leaders and followers for the female sample.

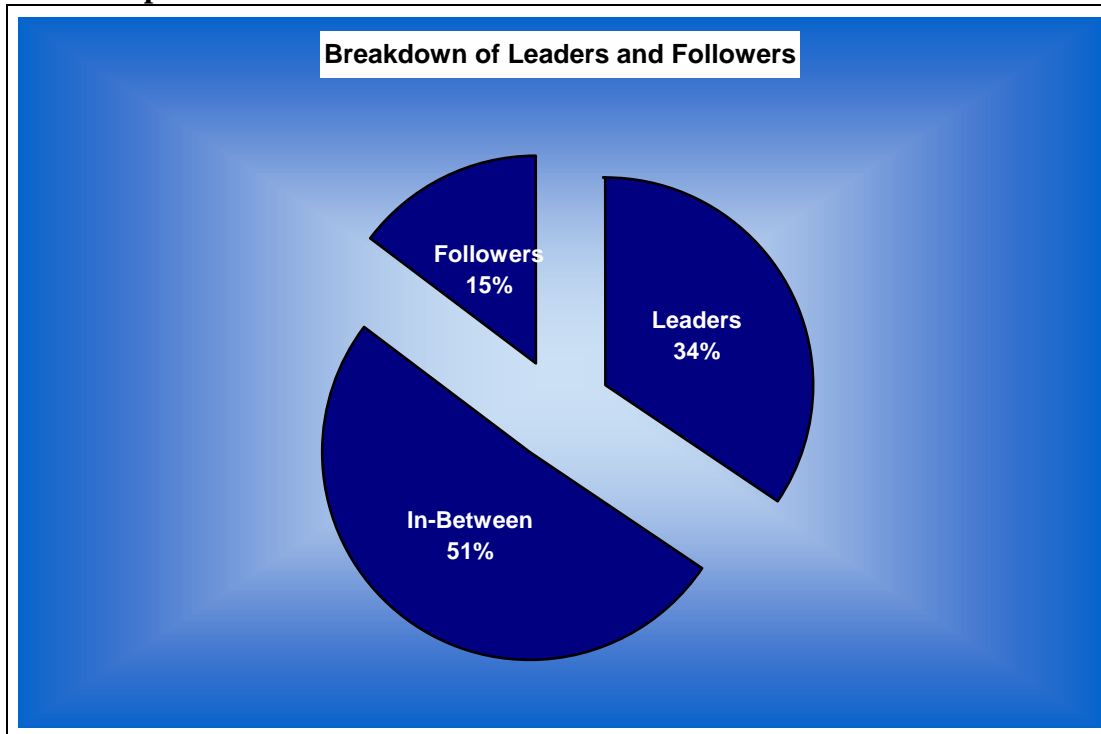
Figure 1
Female Sample



As indicated in **Figure 1**, a comfortable majority of respondents in the female sample report that they are leaders (58%). One-quarter of the sample fall in-between the “leader” and “follower” categories, and one-in-five female respondents are classified as “followers.” As noted earlier, we anticipate finding that students who are lower on the social hierarchy, i.e., followers, have a greater chance of being victims of violence.

Figure 2 reports the percentage of respondents in the male sample who are “leaders,” “followers,” and somewhere in-between.

Figure 2
Male Sample



One-third of male students are classified as “leaders” in the data set. A slim majority (51%) fall somewhere in-between the “leader” and “follower” categories, and 15% of male respondents say they are “followers.”

Almost twice as many female students fit the “leader” classification than male students in the two datasets (58% compared to 34%). About the same percentage of students in each dataset fit under the “follower” classification.

Lifetime Experience of Violence

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their experience and engagement in different types of violence in their lifetime. **Table 3** and **Table 4** show the percentage of respondents who have been victims of or initiated different types of violence at least once in their lifetime. Information is also provided in the next section about the average number of violent acts respondents have been involved in, and the frequency of their involvement.

Female Sample

Table 3
Female Sample
Lifetime Experience of Violence

Violent Act	Percentage of Respondents who Experienced Violent Act in their Lifetime
Been hit, kicked, or punched by someone in your family?	69.6%
Been hit, kicked or punched by someone other than a family member?	69.4%
Been threatened with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	23.5%
Been assaulted with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	5.4%
Hit, kicked, or punched someone in your family?	70.0%
Hit, kicked, or punched someone other than a family member.	80.7%
Been humiliated or yelled at by someone other than a family member?	68.0%
Threatened someone with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	17.6%
Assaulted someone with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	7.1%
Humiliated someone other than a family member?	65.9%
Humiliated or fought with someone you didn't want to because a female friend got you into it?	36.1%
Humiliated or fought with someone you didn't want to because a male friend got you into it?	20.6%

The 12 different violent acts measured above reflect victimization and perpetration of violence, both inside and outside of the home. Seven in ten female respondents say they have been hit, kicked, or punched by family members and others. About the same high percentage of respondents have been humiliated by family members and others. One-in-four female respondents in the sample have been threatened with a weapon, such as a gun or knife (23.5%), and 5.4% have actually been assaulted with a weapon.

When it comes to perpetration of violence, eight-in-ten female students say they have hit, kicked or punched someone outside of their family, and seven-in-ten report

doing the same to a family member. One-in-five respondents have threatened someone with a weapon (17.6%), and seven percent have actually assaulted another person with a weapon.

Male Sample

Table 4 reflects the percentage of male respondents who report experiencing or initiating these twelve acts of violence in their lifetime.

Table 4
Male Sample
Lifetime Experience of Violence

Violent Act	Percentage of Respondents who Experienced Violent Act in their Lifetime
Been hit, kicked, or punched by someone in your family?	73.6%
Been hit, kicked or punched by someone other than a family member?	77.1%
Been threatened with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	46.7%
Been assaulted with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	25.6%
Hit, kicked, or punched someone in your family?	71.4%
Hit, kicked, or punched someone other than a family member.	83.8%
Been humiliated or yelled at by someone other than a family member?	73.5%
Threatened someone with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	25.4%
Assaulted someone with a weapon, such as a gun or knife?	18.8%
Humiliated someone other than a family member?	72.7%
Humiliated or fought with someone you didn't want to because a female friend got you into it?	33.8%
Humiliated or fought with someone you didn't want to because a male friend got you into it?	38.8%

Three-quarters of male students say they have been hit, kicked, or punched by a family member or someone else. About the same percentage report that they have been

humiliated or yelled at during their lifetime. Nearly half of the respondents in the male sample say they have been threatened with a weapon, such as a gun or knife, at some point in their life (46.7%), and one-in-four respondents report being assaulted with a weapon at some point (25.6%)

In terms of perpetration of violence, seven-in-ten male respondents say they have hit, kicked, or punched someone in their family, and eight-in-ten report say they have done this to someone other than a family member at some point in their life. A quarter of male students report threatening someone with a weapon (25.4%), and one-in-five male students say they actually assaulted another person with a weapon during their lifetime (18.8%)

Students in the male sample are significantly more likely than students in the female sample to have been threatened or assaulted with a weapon during their lifetime. Male students are also more likely than female students to report perpetration of violence against family members and others.

Overall Experience of Violence

Overall experience of violence is examined in two different ways. The first is a simple count of the number of different acts of violence the respondent has experienced in his or her lifetime. The second measure is a scale of violence that takes frequency into account. The greater the frequency of violent acts experienced/initiated, the higher the score on the scale. Each of these measures of violence is reported in turn.

Out of the 12 possible acts of violence measured in these surveys, female respondents report an average of 5.03 acts. Male respondents report an average of 5.75 violent acts during their lifetime. This difference is significant which indicates that male students have experienced a greater variety of violent acts in their lifetime than female students in these two samples.

A scale was developed to measure the frequency of violent experiences – both victimization and perpetration – ranging from a low of 12 (low frequency) to 48 (high frequency). Female respondents scored an average of 20.30 on this scale, and male students scored an average of 23.05. This difference is also significant, indicating that male students have experienced a greater degree of violence than female students in their lifetime.

Both female and male respondents in their respective samples report unusually high rates of victimization and perpetration of violence. Both samples are ideal target groups for the *Owning Up* curricula.

Lifetime Engagement in High-risk Behaviors

Respondents were also asked about their engagement in a series of six high-risk behaviors: getting drunk, using marijuana, using cocaine, having unprotected sex, skipping school, and getting pregnant (or getting someone else pregnant.) **Table 5** shows the percentage of female respondents who report engaging in each behavior during their lifetime.

Female Sample

Table 5
Female Sample
Lifetime Engagement in High-risk Behaviors

High-risk Behavior	Percentage of Respondents who Engaged in Behavior in their Lifetime
Gotten drunk?	30.0%
Used marijuana?	17.5%
Used cocaine?	0.00%
Had sex without a condom?	15.7%
Skipped school?	40.2%
Gotten pregnant?	4.3%

One-third of respondents in the female sample report getting drunk during their lifetime, and about one-in-five have used marijuana. No students in the female sample have used cocaine in their lifetime.

Sixteen percent of female students report that they have had unprotected sex during their lifetime, and 4.3% have gotten pregnant at some point.

Male Sample

Table 6 shows the percentage of each high-risk behavior among respondents in the male sample.

Table 6
Male Sample
Lifetime Engagement in High-risk Behaviors

High-risk Behavior	Percentage of Respondents who Engaged in Behavior in their Lifetime
Gotten drunk?	35.7%
Used marijuana?	36.5%
Used cocaine?	5.6%
Had sex without a condom?	23.9%
Skipped school?	44.5%
Gotten someone pregnant?	9.2%

One-third of respondents in the male sample report getting drunk at some point in their lifetime, and a slightly higher percentage say they have used marijuana at some point. About six percent have used cocaine during their lifetime.

One-in-four male respondents say they have had unprotected sex at some point in their lifetime, and 9% have gotten someone pregnant.

Male students are significantly more likely to have gotten drunk, used marijuana, and used cocaine than female students. Likewise, a greater percentage of male students have had unprotected sex than female students in the two samples.

Demographic Differences

This analysis examines whether attitudes, beliefs, and experiences vary by demographic characteristics in the two samples, that is, whether significant differences were found in terms of race, gender, age, or other characteristics.

Gender Differences

Male students scored much higher on the scale measuring gender stereotypes than female students on average (25.7 compared to 20.3). This means that male students hold more rigid gender stereotypes than female students in these two samples.

Male students scored significantly higher on a scale measuring beliefs about youth dating violence than female students on average (20.0 compared to 17.3). In other words, male students are more accepting of violence in dating relationships than students in the female sample.

Male students are more likely to say they have been both a perpetrator and victim of violence during their lifetime than female students. These two groups have experienced about the same amount of family violence in their lifetime.

Male students are slightly more likely than female students to have engaged in high-risk behaviors, both in the recent past and in their lifetime.

Racial Differences

No significant differences were found in attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors among different racial groups in the female or male student samples. This finding (or lack of a finding) may be due to the fact that both samples are primarily African-American with few students from other racial groups. When little racial variety exist in a sample, racial differences that do exist will not be significant because of the small number of respondents from certain races.

School Grade Differences

Scores on the physical conflict resolution scale and the overall conflict resolution scale improve significantly for female respondents as grade in school increases (i.e., 10th, 11th, 12th grade) ($p=.032$ for physical conflict resolution and $.016$ for the overall conflict resolution). That is to say, the higher the grade, the better the conflict resolution skills female students have, especially when it comes to physical responses to confrontation. The same relationship between grade and conflict resolution style is not found for male students.

A positive relationship is also found between grade and perpetration of violence ($p=.042$). Female students in the sample are less likely to perpetrate violent acts against others as they go up in grade. Students in the 9th grade scored an average of 9.6 on the perpetration of violence sub-scale (which ranges from 3 to 12) compared to 8.9 for 10th graders and 7.9 for 11 graders. Perpetration of violence does not decline in a similar manner for male respondents as they advance in school.

Origins of Youth Violence

The *Owning Up* curricula is based on several assumptions about the relationship between attitudes/beliefs and violence. The rather sizable samples for both male and female students allow us to test some of elements of the curricula. More specifically, we can examine whether attitudes towards violence, gender stereotyping, beliefs about dating violence, conflict resolution style, self-esteem, and place in the social hierarchy (leader or follower) influence respondent perpetration and victimization of violence and engagement in high-risk behaviors. Findings from both samples are detailed in this section.

Measurement

The statistical test used to measure relationships between variables (e.g., the relationship between attitudes about dating violence and engagement in acts of violence) in this section is the Pearson Correlation. This test produces a number from -1 to 1 that describes the relationship between two variables. Scores closer to -1 and 1 indicate a close relationship between two variables whereas a score closer to 0 means that the two variables of interest are not related to each other. If the correlation statistic is a negative number, the two variables are negatively correlated. That is to say, as one variable increases, the other decreases. For example, automobile speed and gas mileage are negatively correlated. As the speed of a vehicle increases, gas mileage decreases. If the correlation statistic is a positive number, the two variables are said to be positively correlated. As one increases, the other also increases. For example, education and income are positively correlated. As education increases, income also tends to increase.

Correlation statistics merely define the intensity and direction of the relationship between two variables. It is up to the researcher to determine whether causation is involved. For most of the correlations presented below, it is rather obvious which way the causal arrow runs. A causal relationship is not identified when the details of the relationship between two variables is less than obvious. When likelihood is mentioned with regard to the correlation (e.g., “male students with low self-esteem are more likely to perpetrate acts of violence”), this means that an additional probability test has been conducted to verify the degree of significance.

Victimization of Violence

Female Sample

Several significant correlations were found in terms of victimization of violence in the female sample:

- Scores on the Youth Dating Violence Scale are positively correlated with victimization of violence. In other words, the more accepting a female student is of violence in dating relationships, the more likely she is to be a victim of violence (or vice-versa).

- Lifetime experience of violence is also positively correlated with recent victimization of violence. That is to say, the greater the lifetime experience of violence for female respondents, the more likely they are to report that they have been victimized in the past three months.
- Family violence is positively correlated with victimization of violence in the female sample. In other words, female students who come from homes with violence are more likely to be victims of violence outside the home.
- Self-esteem and victimization of violence are negatively correlated. The lower a female student's self-esteem, the more likely she is to be a victim of violence (or vice-versa).
- Engagement in high-risk behaviors, such as unprotected sex or using drugs, is positively correlated with victimization. Female students who engage in high-risk behaviors are more likely to be victims of violence. It is unclear which way the causal arrow runs with this relationship.

Male Sample

Several pertinent relationships were found in terms of victimization of violence in the male sample:

- Lifetime experience of violence is positively correlated with victimization of violence in the male student sample. The greater the lifetime experience of violence, the greater the likelihood the respondent has been a recent victim of violence.
- Scores on the Physical Conflict Resolution Scale are positively correlated with victimization of violence for male students. Students in this sample who resort to physical aggression when resolving conflicts are more likely than others to be victims of violence.
- Family violence is positively correlated with victimization. Male students who experience violence in their home are more likely to be victims of violence outside the home than other respondents.

Family Violence

Family violence warrants its own section as previous research suggests that a young person's home life shapes their attitudes and behaviors in ways that alter their life outside the home. Our data lend support to the idea that violent experiences in the home do indeed influence student's experience outside the home.

Female Sample

Victimization of violence and perpetration of violence are both positively correlated with experience of violence in the home. Physical conflict resolution style and self-esteem are negatively correlated with experience of family violence. In other words, violence in the home produces young people who are likely to perpetrate violence outside the home who have poor conflict resolution skills and lower self-esteem.

Lifetime experience of violence is highly positively correlated with experience of family violence, indicating that students who experience violence in their home have likely experienced it throughout their lifetime.

Male Sample

The findings pertaining to family violence from the female sample, reported above, are mirrored in the male sample. Male students who experience violence in the home are more likely than others to be perpetrators of violence with poor physical conflict resolution skills. Male students who experience family violence also have lower self-esteem and face a greater likelihood of being a victim of violence.

Perpetration of Violence

Female Sample

- Scores on the Attitudes Toward Violence Scale are positively correlated with perpetration of violence in the female sample. This means that the more a female respondent hold permissive attitudes towards violence (e.g., “It’s okay for me to hit someone to get them to do what I want”), the more likely she is to have perpetrated violence in the past three months. Beliefs about violence seem to influence perpetration of violence in the female sample.
- Scores on the Youth Dating Violence Scale are also positively correlated with perpetration of violence for female respondents. The more permissive a female respondent is toward dating violence, the more likely she is to have perpetrated violence recently.
- Lifetime experience of violence in general, and family violence in particular, are positively correlated with recent perpetration of violence. As noted above, the greater the level of violence experienced in general and inside the home, the greater the propensity of female students to commit acts of violence.
- Conflict resolution skills -- physical, verbal, and overall -- are negatively correlated with perpetration of violence. That is to say, female students who are skilled at resolving conflicts without resorting to physical or verbal aggression were less likely to have perpetrated violence in the past three months.

- Engagement in high-risk behaviors among female respondents, both throughout their lifetime and in the recent past, is positively correlated with perpetration of violence. The more a female student engages in high-risk behaviors, the more she perpetrates violence. The causal relationship here is not clear. Do students who perpetrate violence then turn to high-risk behaviors, or does the opposite relationship exist? Does something else explain both of these behaviors?

Male Students

Several interesting correlations are found in the male sample concerning perpetration of violence:

- Scores on the Gender Stereotyping Scale are positively correlated with perpetration of violence for male students. The more a male respondent agrees with gender stereotypes, the more likely he is to perpetrate violence.
- Scores on the Attitudes Toward Conflict Scale are also positively correlated with perpetration of violence. The more accepting the respondent is of violence in general, the more likely he is to perpetrate violence.
- Scores on the Youth Dating Violence Scale are positively correlated with perpetration of violence in the male sample. The more accepting the respondent is of violence in dating relationships, the more likely he is to have perpetrated violence recently.
- Lifetime experience of violence and family violence are positively correlated with perpetration of violence in the male sample. Respondents in this sample who come from a background of violence and have experienced it in their home are more likely to commit acts of violence.
- Physical conflict resolution skills are negative correlated with perpetration of violence. Male respondents who resort to physical aggression in response to conflict are more likely to have engaged in violence in the past three months than other students.
- Engagement in high-risk behaviors in the past three months is positively correlated with perpetration of violence. Male students who engaged in high-risk behaviors are more likely than others to have also perpetrated violence.
- Self-esteem is positively correlated with perpetration of violence. The lower a student's self-esteem in the male sample, the greater his perpetration of violence.

Engagement in High-risk Behaviors

Female Students

- Lifetime of experience of violence is positively correlated with recent engagement in high-risk behaviors for female students. The greater the experience of violence during a respondent's lifetime, the greater her recent propensity for engaging in high-risk behaviors.

Male Students

- Scores on the Gender Stereotyping Scale are positively correlated with engagement in high-risk behaviors for male students. That is to say, the more a male respondent upholds gender stereotypes, the more likely he is to engage in high-risk behaviors, such as using drugs and having unprotected sex.
- Scores on the Attitudes Toward Conflict Scale are positively correlated with recent engagement in high-risk behaviors. The more permissive male students' attitudes are toward conflict, the more frequently they engage in high-risk behaviors.
- Scores on the Youth Dating Violence Scale are also positively correlated with high-risk behaviors in the male sample. The more accepting the student is of violence in dating relationships, the more high-risk behaviors he engages in.
- Recent engagement in high-risk behaviors among male students is also related to poor physical conflict resolution skills, perpetration of violence, and lower self-esteem.

Self-efficacy (Self-esteem)

Self-efficacy or self-esteem surfaced as a significant variable in many of the findings above. Several additional findings of interest are presented here:

Female Sample

- Perceived Self-efficacy is negatively related to gender stereotyping in the female sample. The more female students hold rigid gender stereotypes, the lower their self-esteem.
- Scores on the Attitudes Toward Conflict Scale are negatively correlated with self-esteem. The lower a female student's self-esteem, the more accepting she is of violent behavior.
- Scores on the Youth Dating Violence Scale are negatively correlated with self-esteem. The lower a student's self-esteem, the more permissive she is of violence in dating relationships.

- Self-esteem is negatively correlated with the position of female students in the social hierarchy. The lower a female student's self-esteem, the more likely she is to be a follower as opposed to a leader. This finding provides support for the Empower theory that position in the social hierarchy influences self-esteem and ultimately may lead to victimization of violence.
- Self-esteem is negatively correlated with physical and overall conflict resolution style. Female students who lack skills in these areas are more likely to have low self-esteem. As noted above, experience of violence in the home likely produces both low self-esteem and poor conflict resolution skills.
- Self-esteem is negatively correlated with victimization of violence in the female sample. The lower a student's self-esteem, the more likely she is to be a victim of violence. Low self-esteem is not correlated with perpetration of violence among female respondents.

Male Sample

- Self-esteem is negatively correlated with scores on the Attitudes Toward Violence Scale in the male sample. The lower a male student's self-esteem, the more accepting he is of violence in general.
- Self-esteem is negatively correlated with scores on the Youth Dating Violence Scale. Male students with low self-esteem are more permissive of violence in dating relationships.
- Self-esteem is negatively correlated with position in the social hierarchy. Male students with low self-esteem are more likely to be followers as opposed to leaders in their social circles.
- Self-esteem is negatively related to experience of family violence and perpetration of violence. The more violence male students have experienced in their homes, the lower their self-esteem. The lower a male respondent's self-esteem, the greater the likelihood that he perpetrated a violent act in the recent past.

It is interesting to note that low self-esteem among female students is related to victimization of violence but not perpetration, while low self-esteem among male students is related to perpetration of violence but not victimization.

Effectiveness of Program Intervention

The core of the Empower curricula is the idea that youth violence will decrease if young people can think outside of gender boxes and understand how “ideals” of femininity and masculinity lead to perpetration of violence on the part of boys and victimization on the part of girls. This idea is based on research documenting that rigid gender roles lead to heightened perpetration of violence on the part of males – whether they are inside the box (intimate violence) or outside the box (non-intimate violence) (Katz, 1999) and greater receptivity to gendered violence on the part of females. This section assesses changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that relate to gendered violence as a result of participation in The Empower Program curricula.

Measurement

Paired sample t tests are used in this section to determine whether changes from the pre- to post- surveys were significant, meaning that the changes were “real” and not just due to chance. The paired t-test procedure calculates the difference between each student’s answer on the pre-survey and the post-survey and determines if a “real” (significant) change has occurred.

Paired t-tests produce a p-value or a probability value. P-values range from 0 to 1 with 1 indicating that the change from pre- to post- is not significant (the change is due to chance and is not “real” change) and a 0 indicating that the change is significant. In other words, the smaller the p-value, the greater the probability that the change from pre- to post- is “real” and not just due to chance. Changes from pre- to post- with p-values of .05 and smaller will be considered significant in this report (a standard level of significance in social science research).

Knowledge

Students were asked about change in their knowledge pertaining to issues of consent, rape, sexual harassment, abusive relationships, social hierarchies, bystanding, and posing the in the post-surveys. A Change in Knowledge Scale was developed measuring the degree of change reported, ranging from a minimum of 6 (no change in knowledge) to a maximum of 18 (much change in knowledge) for girls, and a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 21 for boys. The results for female and male students are reported below.

Female Sample

A majority of female students report that their knowledge increased on 4 of the 6 topics measured. Six-in-ten female students (61%) report that their knowledge of “abusive relationships” increased, followed by 55 percent for “consent,” and 54 percent for “sexual harassment” and “rape.” Half of the female respondents (49%) say their

knowledge of “social hierarchies” increased, and 44 percent report the same for “bystanding.”

The average change in knowledge from pre- to post-survey for female students indicates a big improvement in overall understanding of the origins and mechanisms of gendered violence. Two-thirds of the sample (62%) report a big increase in their knowledge of the program curricula in the post-evaluation.

Some students in the female sample commented on their new-gained knowledge after completing the *Owning Up* program:

“My attitude has changed a lot in Empower class, especially about relationship abuse. I used to think that women were stupid to let men beat them. Now I understand deeper into the situation.”

“[I am] more aware of consent and abusive relationships. I have more knowledge.”

Male Sample

A majority of male students report an increase in knowledge on 3 of the 7 topics measured. Two-thirds of respondents report an increase in knowledge of “sexual harassment” (68%), “abusive relationships” (67%) and rape (65%). A sizable but smaller proportion of male students say their knowledge of “social hierarchies” (45%), “bystanding” (44%), “consent” (43%), and “posing” (40%) increased.

The Change in Knowledge Scale reflects a significant increase in knowledge of these seven issues related to youth dating violence among male respondents. Two-thirds (64%) of students in the male sample say their overall knowledge improved dramatically after participating in the program.

A greater percentage of male students report an increase in knowledge of rape, sexual harassment, and abusive relationships. More female students report an increase in knowledge of consent than their male peers.

Some respondents in the male sample noted improvements in their knowledge when asked about the impact of the *Owning Up* curricula on their life:

“I learned about many things such as sexual harassment and rape. I know a lot more now.”

“I have learned a lot of positive things and how to deal with certain issues. I gained more knowledge.”

“I now know a lot about issues I didn’t at first. I am happy that I don’t have to use drugs to be happy.”

Attitudes

The Empower curricula is based on the idea that changes in understanding of and attitudes about youth dating violence (gender stereotypes, acceptance of dating violence, conformity to rigid gender roles, perceptions of appropriate responses to conflict, low self-esteem) will eventually bring about changes in behavior. Students were asked about their attitudes toward the proper response to conflict, gender stereotypes, and youth dating violence. They were also asked a series of questions about self-efficacy, a proxy for self-esteem. Each of these is addressed in turn.

Attitudes Toward Conflict

The Attitudes Toward Conflict series of questions was used to measure beliefs about the use of violence in response to disagreements or conflicts. The eight questions in this series concern various responses to conflict, including “I try to talk out a problem instead of fighting,” and “If people do something to make me really mad, they deserve to be beaten up.”

Female Sample

Students in the female sample scored in the middle on average in terms of their attitudes about proper responses to situations of conflict. The scale ranged from 8 (appropriate response) to 32 (inappropriate response), and female students reported an average of 16.35 on the pre-survey and 16.04 on the post-survey. This improvement in attitudes about appropriate responses to conflict is significant ($p=.020$).

A significant difference was also found with one question in the series. Female students were significantly less likely in the post-survey to agree with the statement “It’s okay for me to hit someone to get them to do what I want” than in the pre-survey ($p=.002$).

When asked about the impact of the *Owning Up* curricula, some female students commented about changes in attitudes toward violence:

“I now know a lot of things are wrong and are not called for.”

“Like my friend has a boyfriend that hits her and I told her the reason why they shouldn’t be together and she stopped going out with him. I never did that before.”

Male Sample

No significant difference was reported from the pre- to post-survey for boys in terms of response to conflict. Likewise, no significant change was found in the specific questions in the series.

Many students in the male sample did report changes in the way they think about dating violence and violence in general in open-ended questions:

“I know now it is not good to hit a girl, even if she hits you or humiliates you in front of friends.”

“I have learned to avoid abusive relationships and how to handle them when I do get into a relationship.”

“Respecting females has become more important. My attitude has also changed about abusive relationships.”

Gender Stereotyping

The Attitudes Toward Women scale was used to measure the extent to which students embrace gender stereotypes. Twelve questions were asked in this series, including “It is more important for boys that girls do well in school” and “Girls should have the same freedom as boys.” The findings for the male and female student samples are reported below.

Female Sample

A significant change on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale was not found from pre- to post- in the female student sample. However, significant changes were found in three of the individual questions in this series:

- Female students were significantly more likely to disagree with the sentiment that “Swearing is worse for a girl than for a boy” from pre- to post-survey ($p=.030$).
- Respondents in the female sample were more likely to disagree with the idea that “On a date, a boy should be expected to pay all expenses” ($p=.005$).
- Female students were more likely to agree that “It is all right for a girl to ask a boy out on a date” in the post-survey ($p=.017$).

Male Sample

As with female respondents, an overall change in the Attitudes Toward Women Scale was not found among male students. However, a significant change was found in one question in the series:

- Male students were significantly more likely to disagree with the idea that “On a date, a boy should be expected to pay all expenses” ($p=.043$).

Perceived Self-Efficacy

The Perceived Self-efficacy Scale was used to measure student’s self-esteem. Students were asked their level of agreement with ten questions in this series, including “I can handle whatever comes my way” and “It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish goals.” Responses from both samples are reported here.

Female Sample

A significant change was not reported from pre- to post- among female students on the overall Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale. However, a significant change was found for one question in the series:

- Students in the female sample were significantly more likely to agree with the statement “When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually think of a solution” after completing the program ($p=.005$).

Male Sample

Respondents in the male student sample did not report a significant change from pre- to post-survey in terms of the overall Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale. However, significant improvement was found on one item in the scale:

- Students in the male sample were significantly more likely to agree with the statement “When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually think of a solution” on the post-survey ($p=.017$).

The fact that this finding surfaced in both samples supports the idea that this is a “real” change. After participating in the *Owning Up* program, students’ confidence in solving problems improves.

Student Voices

Students in both samples were asked whether their attitude changed in any way as a result of the program. Most responses were positive. The quotes below are some typical responses about attitudinal change in each sample.

Female Sample

“I believe my attitude has changed by being in Empower classes. I learned to look at everything from every possible angle. I learned that friends aren’t always right and you don’t have to follow them.”

“My attitude has changed toward other girls. I respect them more now.”

“Yes, [my attitude has changed], because now I have set limits that others cannot cross no matter who they are.”

“Yes, [my attitude has changed] because I feel that these classes teach stuff that aren’t learned in the book stuff we have to deal with during school.”

“Yes, [my attitude has changed]. I see people that have been in different situations, like abusive relationships, differently.”

“Yes, my attitude toward other people has changed greatly. I don’t talk about people anymore and I defend people I don’t even know.”

Male Sample

“My attitude has changed. I learned a lot of positive things and how to deal with certain issues.”

“Yes, [my attitude has changed] because I now know more about every day things and other things that I may run into along the way.”

“Yes, [my attitude has changed.] I realize how girls feel about our actions and what we say.”

“Yes, [my attitude has changed.] I stopped disrespecting my female friends.”

Behavior

While questions about recent experiences of violence on the pre-survey are not reported here due to social desirability, question sensitivity, and the learning curve from pre- to post-, students were asked about their likely response to hypothetical situations of conflict that likely did not face these problems. Changes reported in conflict resolution

style, including verbal and physical aggression, are reported here. The CDC classifies this scale as measure of behavior.

Conflict Resolution Style

Female respondents were presented with 5 vignettes and male students were presented with 6 vignettes and asked their likely response to situations of conflict. Sub-scores are computed for physical aggression and verbal aggression. Although these vignettes are hypothetical, they are a good measure of how students are likely to respond in actual situations of conflict.

Female Sample

Significant declines in aggression were reported among female students in terms of their style of conflict resolution. More specifically:

- Average verbal aggression scores dropped significantly, from 1.80 in the pre-survey to 1.30 in the post-survey, among female students ($p=.000$). That is to say, female students are significantly less likely to respond to conflict in a verbally aggressive manner after completing the program.
- Average physical aggression scores dropped significantly, from 1.10 in the pre-survey to .80 in the post survey, among female respondents ($p=.001$). In other words, the likelihood of a physical response in situations of conflicts declined significantly from pre- to post-survey.
- Average overall aggression scores, a combination of verbal and physical aggression, declined significantly, from 2.90 in the pre-survey to 2.01 in the post-survey, among female respondents ($p=.000$).

Male Sample

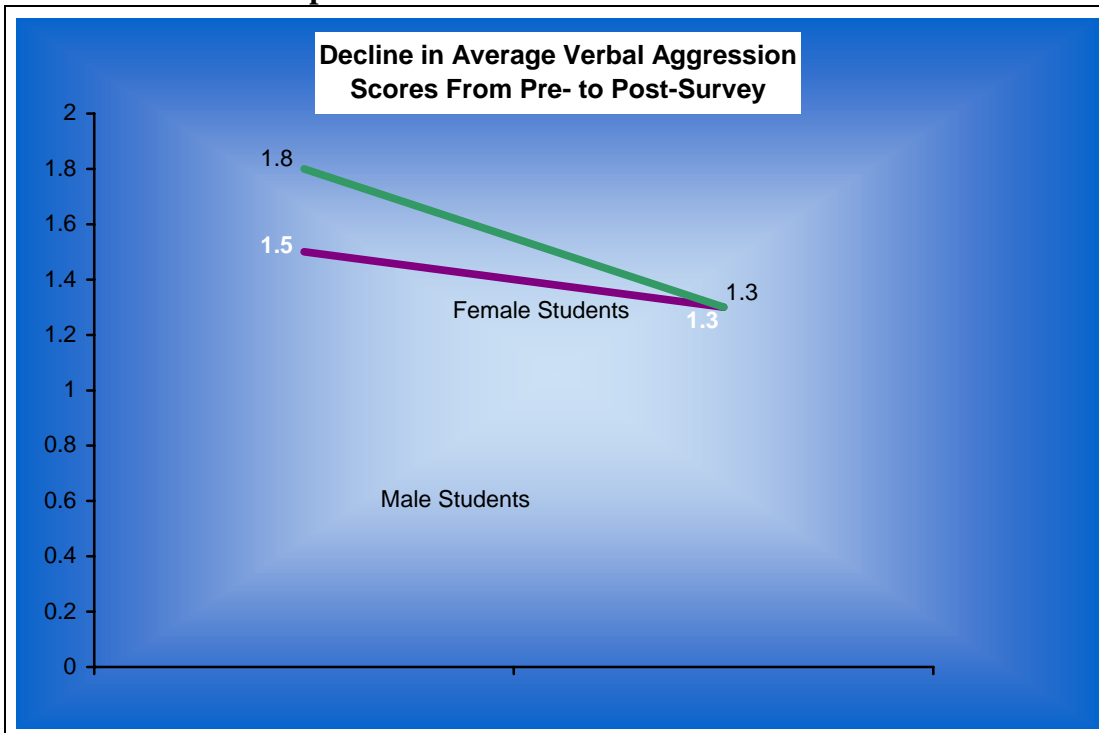
Significant declines in aggression were also reported among male students in terms of their style of conflict resolution:

- Average verbal aggression scores dropped significantly, from 1.50 in the pre-survey to 1.30 in the post-survey, for male students ($p=.081$). Students in the male sample were less likely to say they would respond to a conflict in a verbally aggressive manner after participating in the program.
- Average physical aggression scores dropped significantly, from 1.40 in the pre-survey to .90 in the post survey, among male students ($p=.000$). That is to say, the likelihood that male students would respond to conflict with physical aggression declined significantly from pre- to post-survey.

- Average overall aggression scores, a combination of verbal and physical aggression, declined significantly, from 2.90 in the pre-survey to 2.20 in the post-survey, among male respondents (p=001).

Figure 3 provides a graphical illustration of the decrease in verbal aggression among male and female students from pre- to post-survey. Each point represents the average student score on the Conflict Resolution Style Scale for each sample. Note that the scale for this figure runs from 1 to 2 to highlight the comparison between the two samples.

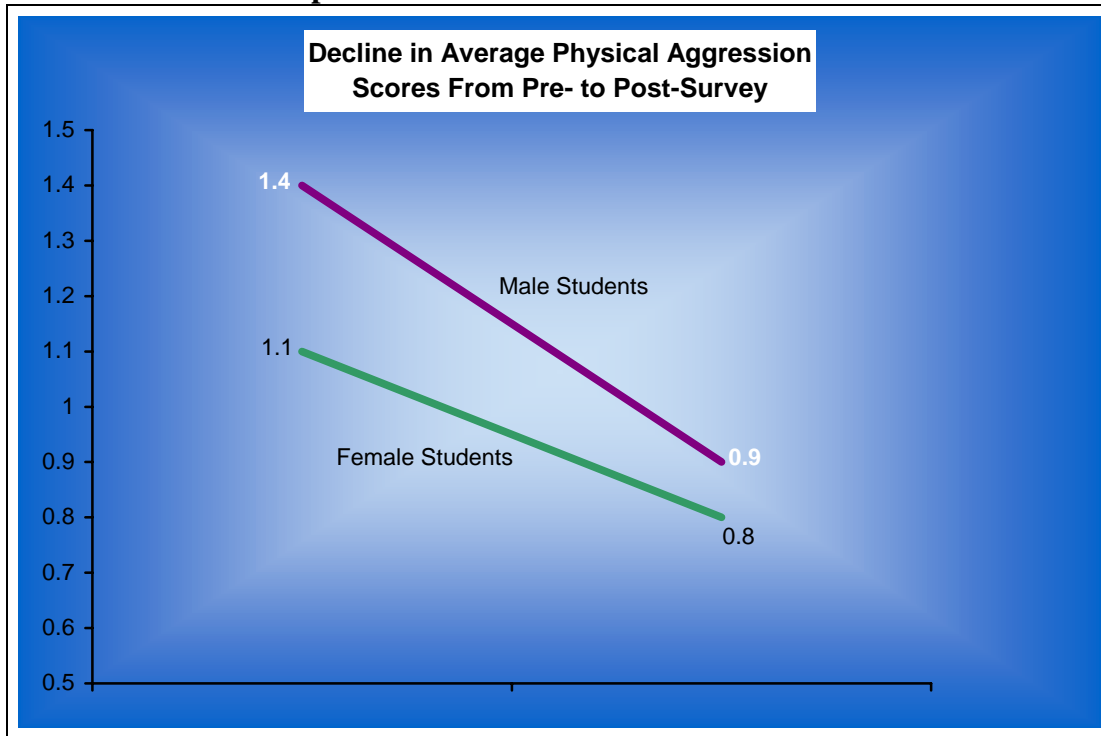
Figure 3
Male and Female Samples



This figure indicates that while female students began the program with greater verbal aggression than male students in response to conflict, students in both samples ended the program with similar and significantly lower levels of verbal aggression.

Figure 4 shows the decline in physical aggression scores for both samples from pre- to post-survey. Note that the axis runs from .5 to 1.5 in this figure to highlight the comparison between the two samples.

Figure 4
Male and Female Samples



As **Figure 4** indicates, male students started and ended with higher rates of physical aggression in situations of conflict than their female peers. However, declines in rates of physical aggression among students in both sample are steep and significant.

A few findings pertaining to conflict resolution style are worth noting further. First, female students were found to be more verbally aggressive than male students in the pre-survey, and male students were found to be more physically aggressive than their female peers. Secondly, while both physical and verbal aggression scores improve significantly for respondents in both samples, male students continue to be more physically aggressive in their conflict resolution style than female students.

Student Voices

Students in both samples had many positive things to say about changes in their behavior as a result of the *Owning Up* curricula. The student quotes below are representative of many behavioral changes noted by respondents in both samples:

Female Sample

“I’m more patient.”

“I don’t hit my ex-boyfriend anymore.”

“I act differently in school. I respect other people in my class and other friends.”

“I don’t care as much as I did before about fitting in. . . I’m not desperate for friends or popularity.”

“I am more aware of my surroundings.”

“In school I’ve stood up for myself. . . With my friends I don’t let them humiliate me or anyone else in front of a group of people.”

Male Sample

“Basically, I’m a little less hot-headed. I’m not trying to jump into any fights and I’m not trying to fight the first dude that comes at me with a problem.”

“If I see my girl with another guy I would just walk away because that’s her choice and I am not her father.”

“I feel differently about what I say in front of girls.”

“I take control of my anger and talk things out more.”

“I act the same way except when it comes to drugs, sex, and abusive relationships.”

Overview of Findings

The findings of this report indicate that the *Owning Up* curricula is generally effective in addressing the gendered origins of youth violence. After completing the program, students were less likely to support certain gender stereotypes and less accepting of certain types of violence in dating relationships. Female students were also less accepting of certain types of violence more generally after participating in the program.

Student participation in the *Owning Up* curricula also led to improved knowledge about the origins of both intimate and non-intimate violence. Both male and female students reported significant improvement in knowledge about sexual harassment, abusive relationships, rape, bystanding, consent, posing, and social hierarchies.

While a dramatic shift in self-esteem as a result of the program was not found, students in both samples did report enhanced problem-solving skills after completing the curriculum. They felt more confident that they could handle difficult situations after participating in the program.

The most striking finding of this research is the dramatic improvement in students' conflict resolution style after participating in the program. Students in both the female and male samples reported lower verbal and physical aggression in response to hypothetical situations of conflict. According to self-report, students are better able to handle conflict without resorting to violence after completing the program.

The *Owning Up* curricula is generally effective in achieving its goals of improving knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors pertaining to violence. Significant shifts were found in the positive direction from pre- to post-survey in all of these areas. It would appear that the school-based program model, focusing on gendered violence, is an effective and virtually untapped avenue for addressing the crisis of youth violence in the United States today.

When asked for any additional comments about the program on the post-surveys, students from both samples had many things to say. We conclude this report with student voices:

“Empower is the best. It should be everywhere in the world and made a class in school.”

“I appreciate everything Empower has done for me and every other student at Suitland. Through these classes someone’s life was changed and I just want to thank you.”

“I think the Empower programs are good and useful, but I wish it should have been longer (like for the whole year).”

“This class has helped me to see things that I haven’t seen and now I can open my eyes and see the truth about things.”

“I really like the Empower program because you get to talk to students about some thing you wouldn’t talk to anybody about.”

“Keep teaching the youth because in this day and age the youth need it.”