

THE RESPONSE OF ADMINISTRATORS AND INSTRUCTORS IN THE ORANGE  
COUNTY, FLORIDA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM TO DATING VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION PROGRAMS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT  
AND IMPLEMENTATION.

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Adolescent dating violence occurs in high schools at an alarming rate. To educate adolescents about dating violence, some public high schools have incorporated prevention programs into their curriculum. These programs, which are predicated upon empiricism and behavioral theories, tend to produce limited results. In order to improve prevention programs, it has been suggested that schools should play a larger role in their development and implementation. However, dating violence studies have yet to examine how much school personnel know about adolescent dating violence and prevention strategies.

The current study surveyed administrators and instructors at six public high schools in Orange County, Florida about their perceptions of dating violence and attitudes toward dating violence prevention programs. The results indicate that administrators and instructors are fairly knowledgeable about adolescent dating violence, approve of school-based dating violence prevention programs, and are willing to participate in prevention efforts. The results also indicate that administrators' and instructors' sociodemographics have the potential to affect how they feel about dating violence and prevention strategies. Implications of these findings for prevention program development and implementation as well as future research are discussed.

To my parents, Valen and Caroline. I cannot express in words how thankful I am for your unwavering love and support of my education and my personal goals. Thank you for all of the sacrifices you have made for me.

To my husband, Anthony. I will forever remember that day when you helped me realize my true calling.

To those of my friends who suffered abuse and violence at the hands of others. I promised you that one day I would do something to change things. Consider this my start.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

For the past thirty years, dating violence has captured the attention of the scholarly community as a public health issue. Focusing predominantly on college and high school populations, a majority of research efforts have attempted to identify the risk factors associated with dating violence perpetration and victimization (Carson, 1987; Chapelle, 2003; Makepeace, 1981; Martin, 1990; Saunders, 2002). Studies have identified a variety of individual and societal factors that place adolescents at a greater risk for exposure to dating violence. These include, but are not limited to, a history of familial abuse, delinquency, alcohol and substance abuse, academic achievement, school safety, race and ethnicity, community solidarity, and gender. However, dating violence research has been criticized for the use of divergent definitions of dating violence, small sample sizes, and varying methodologies, all of which have produced equivocal prevalence estimates of victimization and perpetration across gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). Consequently, those dating violence studies that are rife with suggestions for the development and implementation of educationally based prevention programs (Foshee et al., 1998) may fail to address specific demographic risk factors. This can potentially result in prevention programs being ineffective. If school-based dating violence prevention programs are unable to demonstrate any substantial attitudinal or behavioral changes in students, then the likelihood of a school adopting these types of interventions becomes minimized.

It has been suggested that specific research into both dating violence in schools and school-based dating violence prevention programs is needed (Molidor & Tolman, 1998; Schnurr

& Lohman, 2008). Yet, schools have often been overlooked in dating violence literature, and research on the effectiveness of dating violence prevention programs has not thoroughly investigated the influence of school environment, the knowledge of teachers and school administrators, or a schools willingness to accept primary prevention programs as a part of its curriculum. It is important to the success and viability of dating violence prevention programs that research begin to assess the motivating factors for schools to either incorporate these programs as a part of the classroom instruction or disregard them altogether. This particular investigation should begin with an analysis of the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and school administrators toward dating violence and prevention programs. For a prevention program to retain any level of effectiveness, be it changes in attitudes among youth or simply an increased awareness of resources, a school administration must be responsive to and encouraging of such measures within its classrooms (Hermann & Finn, 2002). Additionally, aside from parents, guardians, or other family members, teachers and other high school administrators often become an influential adult network in which youth can entrust and rely upon (Cunningham, 2000; Hermann & Finn, 2002). There is a high probability that more involvement and positive reinforcement from a school administration will change youth reporting behaviors and increase the retention of information propagated in dating violence prevention programs.

Prevention programs have been incorporated into the high school curriculum for the past twenty years (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). During this time, dating violence research has been able to demonstrate short-term success in attitudinal changes and in the acquisition of knowledge toward dating violence, but long-term behavioral changes produced by these programs have been minimal or are unknown (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Foshee et al., 2000; O'Brien, 2001).

Contributing to these moderate success levels is the content and arrangement of prevention programs and the inconsistency with which they are utilized across institutions (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004; O'Brien, 2001). These programs are typically ephemeral in nature, with instruction that lasts only hours, days, or at most weeks with the goal of assessing adolescents' pre- and post-program dating violence perceptions (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Hickman et al., 2004; O'Brien, 2001). The variations in which prevention programs exist across classrooms, grade levels, and school districts also give adolescents a limited comprehension of dating violence behaviors and any available recourse (Hickman et al., 2004; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). As a result, both adolescent victims and perpetrators of dating violence preferentially confide in and seek help from informal resources, such as friends and acquaintances as opposed to formal resources, such as parents, law enforcement officials, counselors, or school personnel (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Black, Tolman, Callahan, Saunders, & Weisz, 2008; Weisz, Tolman, Callahan, Saunders, & Black, 2007). These findings signify that more consistent and stable forms of outreach are necessary, and that there needs to be a particular emphasis on resources. They also imply that educators need to assume a more active role in dating violence prevention strategies. Building trust between students and school personnel is an important step in eliminating the stigma that adolescents attach to reporting dating violence (Ashley & Foshee, 2005).

Despite their limitations, prevention programs are essential to eliminating and reducing dating partner violence (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Although it is recommended that these efforts initiate in middle school (O'Donnell et al., 2006), the characteristically stable, serious, and long-term nature of older adolescent relationships underscores the importance of having

prevention programs readily available to high school populations (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987). As such, the goal of the present study is to investigate the ways in which public high schools attend to the issue of dating violence. This study examines how much administrators and teachers know about dating violence and prevention strategies, and how receptive they are to having these programs operating within their high schools. By approaching the study of dating violence from the perspective of administrative and instructional staff within high schools, research can begin to explore how prevention programs can become a permanent fixture within the curriculum thus increasing their social impact on youths. The results are used to develop recommendations for how high schools can involve administrators and instructors in order to integrate these programs effectively, and offer new directions for research that focuses on adolescent dating violence prevention.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### Adolescent Dating Violence at School: An Issue of Safety

Although literature on dating violence and its effect on youth is extensive, few studies have investigated how a school's environment either encourages or inhibits dating violence from occurring and how both teachers and administrators mediate the incidence of dating violence between students on campus (Astor, Meyer, & Behre, 1999; Bennett & Fineran, 1998; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Molidor & Tolman, 1998). Similarly, although studies on school safety and violence have been regularly conducted over the past fifteen years, dating violence is minimally discussed as a risk factor. School safety studies have specifically focused on the design of interventions for vulnerable students as well as the legal and ethical issues involved in the identification and reporting of students who pose a threat to themselves or to others. Safety issues typically include gun control, suicide ideation, bullying, stalking, and harassment (Cunningham, 2000; Hermann & Finn, 2002). Domestic violence has also been identified as increasing the propensity for adolescents to engage in school violence, but even here dating violence is not discussed (Kearney, 1999). Legally, school personnel are expected to act reasonably in the prevention of foreseeable school violence, but are not expected to act upon nor anticipate random acts of school violence (Hermann & Finn, 2002). And although dating violence threatens the safety of students, it is arguably not the responsibility of the school to regulate this occurrence since it is not traditionally categorized under the auspices of "school violence."

Yet, the few studies that have examined the rate of dating violence at schools reveal that it is a common occurrence. In their survey of 635 high school students (330 boys and 305 girls), Molidor and Tolman (1998) found that 42 percent of males and 43.2 percent of females who reported dating violence indicated that the abuse occurred either inside the school or on school property. Fifteen percent of the 463 students in Bennett and Fineran's (1998) study reported that severe acts of dating violence, which included punching, kicking, and sexual assault, occurred at school. In a similar study, Fineran and Bennett (1999) also found that of 342 students at one high school, 87 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys were victims of sexual harassment by other students. In Astor et al.'s (1999) study on "unowned" places in public high schools, students reported that violence (e.g. fights, stabbings, shootings, rape, and sexual assault) transpired during the school day in places that were unoccupied by teachers and administrators. These areas included empty classrooms, stairwells, desolate hallways, gyms, and playgrounds.

In reference to dating violence, Astor et al. (1999) state that "teachers and administrators expressed confusion about how to proceed when violence was relationship oriented, particularly boyfriend/girlfriend relationships involving sexual issues" (p. 26). One teacher remarked, "The stairwells are the prime location where the boys get the girls...I came upon a boy assaulting a girl in the stairwell. He had her mouth covered...he was choking her, and her clothes were kind of all torn off" (Astor et al., p. 22). An administrator further stated that "one of our hall monitors saw a boy smack his girlfriend. And I said 'You know, why would you do that?' And he said, 'Well she's gotta know I care about her!'...and he was serious" (Astor et al., 1999, p. 22). As Theriot (2008) notes, schools facilitate student relationships by providing numerous opportunities for dating partners to personally interact throughout the day, and that a greater

understanding of the prevalence and characteristics of dating violence in public schools is necessary to ensure the personal safety of adolescents. Based upon their analysis and their review of existing literature, Fineran and Bolen (2006) also conclude that attending school is a risk factor for encountering sexual harassment, and that the amount of harassment that students receive is dependent upon a school's environment. The prevalence of dating violence on school property as reported by the preceding studies certainly supports these claims.

Dating violence and school safety studies are similar in that their results are frequently used to generate recommendations for prevention programs. Dating violence prevention programs are typically implemented in high schools in order to reach a vast majority of students. These particular prevention programs, though, are designed based upon the risk factors which emerge from the empirical literature as well as the behavioral theories that dominate dating violence research, and not necessarily from the input of the schools in which they operate (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). This is particularly important because although dating violence research has progressed, methodological and theoretical issues present within the literature have affected how much is known about dating violence prevalence, perpetration, and victimization. As a result, numerous programs are available, but many have been unsuccessful. In order to improve prevention programs, the findings from dating violence research need to be combined with the recommendations from school safety studies. School safety studies propose that schools, members of the community, and organizations collaborate to design prevention programs (Cunningham, 2000; Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears, 1998). Schools in particular have the ability to serve as liaisons between the needs of the community and the educational system. School personnel also have daily exposure to students, and are in a far better



position to provide suggestions for how schools can create an action plan to prevent violence (Keys et al., 1998).

These findings indicate that measuring the attitudes and perceptions of school administrations and instructors toward dating violence prevention is warranted. By understanding their perspectives on adolescent dating violence, prevention programs can be strengthened. In order to be successful in this endeavor, the following questions need to be addressed. First, if dating violence occurs at school as often as some studies have documented (Astor et al., 1999; Bennett & Fineran, 1998; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Molidor & Tolman, 1998), then why aren't schools focusing more attention on prevention programs? How do gender and other sociodemographics influence the need for and design of prevention programs? What theoretical perspectives are important to consider when addressing dating violence and prevention? And lastly, what prevention programs exist and how can these inform future programs? The following sections will address these questions, and will specifically examine how methodology, demography, and theory can help to inform teachers and administrators about the importance of dating violence prevention. If high school administrators and instructors are expected to be involved in the prevention of dating violence, research must determine if they believe it to be a problem worth addressing. With this information, we can better begin to understand how and if the recommendations from school safety studies can be applied to the development of school-based prevention programs.

#### Identifying Dating Violence as a Prevalent Issue: Barriers for Administrators and Teachers

Over the past thirty years, dating violence has been established as a prevalent issue that affects adolescents. Landmark and current studies focusing on adolescent dating violence report

that between 9 and 57 percent of adolescents have been victimized by their dating partners (Eaton, Davis, Barrios, Brener & Noonan, 2007; Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd & Christopher, 1983; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; O'Keefe, 2005; Watson, Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, & O'Leary, 2001; Levy, 1990;). Measurement and definitional issues that pervade dating violence research are primarily responsible for this variable prevalence rate (Gover, 2004; Grasley, Wolfe, & Wekerle, 1999). For instance, Grasely et al. (1999) suggest that developmentally inappropriate dating violence assessments have confounded those behaviors that youths consider abusive from those that they consider normative. While behaviors such as hair pulling, finger bending, pinching, and name calling are considered abusive in adult relationships, these behaviors are more often indicative of flirting or a need for attention in adolescent relationships (Pittman, Wolfe, & Wekerle, 2000). Also, a universally accepted definition of dating violence has yet to emerge within the dating violence literature (Gover, 2004). Most studies define dating violence as a combination of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse as well as verbal threats (Banyard, Cross, & Modecki, 2006; Bergman, 1992; Cyr, McDuff, & Wright, 2006; James, West, Deters, & Armijo, 2000; Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1995). Only a few studies, though, have examined the prevalence rate of each of these types of dating violence (Bergman, 1992; Jezl et al., 1995). In Bergman's (1992) sample of 631 adolescent respondents, 10.5 percent reported sexual dating violence, 12 percent physical violence, and 11.3 percent verbal threats; combined sexual and physical dating violence victimization was experienced by 17.7 percent, and 28 percent incurred verbal, sexual, and physical violence. Furthermore, Jezl et al. (1995) found that of 257 students surveyed, 96 percent sustained psychological abuse, 15 percent were

forced to engage in sexual activity, and 59 percent were physically victimized at least once in a current or previous relationship.

Limitations in sample design, size and generalizability notwithstanding, studies have statistically concluded that adolescents receive and perpetrate variable forms of dating violence at high rates. Since dating violence has been demonstrated to occur throughout the school day (Astor et al., 1999; Bennett & Fineran, 1998; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Molidor & Tolman, 1998), and because the rates of adolescent dating violence are high, it can be assumed that dating violence on school grounds is certainly not a random act of school violence that administrators and instructors need to anticipate. Instead, dating violence should be considered a foreseeable form of school violence by administrators and instructors, which implies that there is an ethical responsibility on their part to actively intervene to preserve student safety. However, as prevalent as dating violence may be at a school, it is understandable that some administrators and instructors may not be able to properly identify adolescent dating violence. For instance, school personnel may not be able to distinguish between behaviors that are truly abusive and those that are considered normative for students. Also, school personnel may only apply their particular definition of dating violence to certain behaviors hence neglecting other behaviors that may actually signify dating that dating violence is taking place. Therefore, in the endeavor to improve prevention efforts, it is important to determine if school personnel are aware of the various forms of dating violence, that dating violence is a frequent and prevalent issue, and that dating violence has the potential to threaten the safety of their school's environment. If school personnel are able to demonstrate awareness of dating violence behaviors and their propensity to

occur, then there is a greater likelihood that they will be willing to participate in program development.

### Identifying Who's at Risk for Dating Violence: Gender and Sociodemographic Considerations

In comparison to adult relationships, patterns of violence among adolescent dating couples are not easily demarcated by gender (Carlson, 1987; Martin, 1990). Violence in debasing marriages is typically found to be exclusively directed by husbands onto their wives, whereas with dating violence there was evidence of reciprocity of violence between male and female partners (Martin, 1990). In general, although adolescent males and females physically assault and psychologically intimidate one another at comparable rates (Howard & Wang (2003a; Howard & Wang, 2003b; Makepeace, 1986), sexual coercion is primarily instigated by males (Banyard et al., 2006; Makepeace, 1986; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; O'Keefe & Treister, 1998). The most cited motivations for male provocation are a female partner's rejection of sexual advances, followed by jealousy (Molidor & Tolman, 1998; O'Keefe & Treister, 1998). It has been suggested that the high percentages of adolescent dating violence behaviors reported to be committed by females are often evidenced as retaliation toward their male partner in response to forced sexual behavior or coercion (Hettrich & O'Leary, 2007). Females' dating violence behaviors have also been classified as defensive since males are more apt to cause severe physical injury through such actions as punching and kicking (Foshee et al., 1998; O'Keefe, 1997). Among females, reciprocal aggression is the strongest predictor of perpetrating and sustaining dating violence (Cyr et al., 2006).

Despite these mainstream assumptions, the frequencies with which adolescent males and females engage in dating violence are elusive (Sears, Byers, Whelan, & Saint-Pierre, 2006). A

series of studies, for instance, have found that adolescent females are more physically and psychologically abusive than males (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; Cyr, et al., 1996; Foshee et al., 1998; James et al., 2000; O’Keefe, 1997; Sears et al., 2006). Although rare, additional research has found that females cause more severe physical harm to their male partners (Arias, Samios, & O’Leary, 1987; Bethke & Dejoy, 1993; Jezl et al., 2006). Alternatively, studies have also indicated that females are more often subject to physical abuse by their male partners (Bergman, 1992; Watson et al., 2001). These inaccuracies are thought to occur for numerous reasons, the foremost being whether participants are assessed of their use of violence or their experiences with violence (Sears et al., 2006). Another issue is underreporting. Females more often participate in studies pertaining to dating violence (Gray & Foshee, 1997), causing an overrepresentation of their perspective. Males who do participate in these studies may refrain from divulging that they have been abusive (Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, O’Leary, & Cano, 1997; O’Keefe, 1997), making it appear as if females are more often the primary aggressors. Lastly, adolescents view behaviors as abusive only in particular contexts (Sears et al., 2006). Sears et al. (2006) determined that boys focus on the intent of the violent behavior (e.g. whether it was an accident or purposeful), and girls focus on the impact of the violent behavior (e.g. if it caused physical harm, fear, or anger).

A number of sociodemographic characteristics also increase the probability that adolescents will engage in dating violence behaviors. For both males and females, perpetration of physical, psychological, and sexual violence in dating relationships has been associated with experiencing childhood sexual abuse (Cyr et al., 2006; Lavoie et al., 2002; Loh & Gidycz, 2006), being a victim of physical abuse, substance and alcohol use, depression, parental divorce, low

parental monitoring and support, lower school attachment, and a diminished sense of social responsibility (Banyard, et al., 2004; Howard & Wang 2003a; Howard & Wang 2003b; O’Keefe, 1997). Socioeconomic status shares a connectedness with dating violence through parental monitoring (Pflieger & Vazsonyi, 2006). In Pflieger and Vazsonyi’s (2006) study, low socioeconomic status youths were more likely to experience dating violence victimization if they perceived less support from their mothers and had low self esteem; in high socioeconomic status youths, low maternal support and low self esteem caused a greater endorsement of dating violence attitudes and perceptions. In a substantial amount of the literature, race and ethnicities other than Caucasian are thought to be at a greater risk for perpetrating and enduring dating violence. African American youths have been demonstrated to be at the highest risk for perpetrating and experiencing dating violence (Howard & Wang, 2003a; Howard & Wang, 2003b; O’Keefe, 1997; O’Keefe & Treister, 1998; Watson, et al., 2001). Yet, it is important to note that Hispanics, Latinos and Latinas are typically shown to have the lowest risk (Howard & Wang, 2003a; Howard & Wang, 2003b; Watson et al., 2001). Geographically, Spencer and Bryant (2000) found that teenagers in rural school districts are more likely to be victimized in their dating relationships in comparison to their urban and suburban counterparts. These results contrast with those of Bergman (1992), which found that students at suburban high schools experience dating violence to a much higher degree than those enrolled in rural and urban public education institutions, and those of Makepeace (1986), which found that students in urban areas have higher dating violence rates than those in less urbanized areas. These differences are theorized to be resultant of familial and kinship influences, socialization, and community

disorganization, all of which gravely affect boys' and girls' normalization of dating violence into adulthood.

As this literature demonstrates, understanding culture and community is an important factor in dating violence prevention. High school administrators and instructors may have preconceived notions about who is more likely to engage in destructive behaviors. For instance, they may assume that males are the exclusive perpetrators of violence within dating relationships. While the empirical literature has demonstrated that males perpetrate dating violence, and in many cases more severe and injurious forms of violence, females commit dating violence at a similar rate (Hettrich & O'Leary, 2007; Howard & Wang, 2003a; Howard & Wang, 2003b; Makepeace, 1986; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; O'Keefe & Treister, 1998). Administrators and instructors who witness a female physically and verbally assaulting their dating partner should not dismiss this behavior as normative when it could indeed be an indicator that there is a serious issue within their romantic relationship. Also, administrators and instructors may assume that ethnic minorities who are from disadvantaged communities are more apt to engage in dating violence. While the dating violence literature has supported this assumption with African-American youths, it is not representative of Hispanic youths who are demonstrated to be at the lowest risk for experiencing dating violence (Howard & Wang, 2003a; Howard & Wang, 2003b; O'Keefe, 1997; O'Keefe & Treister, 1998; Watson et al., 2001). In order for the school safety model to be useful in the development and implementation of dating violence prevention programs, stereotypes need to be eliminated and the levels of risk associated with certain gender and demographic characteristics need to be accounted for. Few studies have even proposed and demonstrated that prevention programs are more effective if their instruction is tailored to reach

youths from certain types of communities (Weisz & Black, 2001; Whitaker et al., 2005). A suggestion for designing and multiplying these types of prevention programs would be to consult school personnel and members of the community, all of whom could provide insight into the major risk factors that youths encounter as well as the resources required to reduce violence. Acknowledging that youths representative of all demographic backgrounds are at risk for dating violence may increase their administrators' and instructors' acceptance of prevention programs within their schools.

### Conceptual Frameworks

Both behavioral and structural theories have been used to contextualize the risk factors associated with dating violence perpetration and victimization, and have also been used to formulate a basis for dating violence prevention programs (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; Astor et al., 1999; Chapelle, 2003; Foshee, Bauman, & Fletcher Linder, 1999; Foshee, Benefield, Ennett, Bauman, & Suchindran, 2004; Ismail, Berman, & Ward-Griffin, 2007; Newman, Lohman, Newman, Myers, & Smith, 2000; Noland, Liller, McDermott, Coulter & Seraphine, 2004; Purdie & Downey, 2000; Sears et al., 2006). However, while social learning theory and Feminist theory have been used rather extensively to explain dating violence and the need for prevention programs (Whitaker et al., 2005), theories that discuss social disadvantage are not apparent in this area of research. In order to directly understand the role of schools in dating violence prevention, there is a need for each of these theories to be explored in order to determine why certain adolescents may be at a greater risk for dating violence victimization. A combination of behavioral theories that focus on the transmission of violence and structural theories that focus



on race, ethnicity, and gender may prove more useful in the design and implementation of school-based prevention programs than merely relying on one of these particular theories.

### *Behavioral Theory*

Attempts to conceptualize adolescent dating violence have consistently adopted the social transmission of violence thesis, which implies that parental violence, sibling violence, and dating violence experienced by acquaintances impact an individual's acceptance of violence in their own personal relationships (Arriaga & Foshee, 2004; Foshee et al., 1999; Foshee et al., 2004; Noland et al., 2004; Sears et al., 2006). Studies that have gathered support for this connection most often frame their findings in terms of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977). Social Learning Theory presumes that children and adolescents who are repeatedly exposed to interpersonal violence within their nuclear family or social networks will, over time, begin to model aversive behaviors and accept violence as a means of resolving personal conflict. Therefore, dating violence is interpreted as positively reinforcing by the victimizer.

Although the Social Learning Theory paradigm has received support from a large portion of dating violence research, other studies have countered the argument that adolescent dating violence is exclusively the result of an intergenerational transmission of violence. In Chapelle's (2003) study of 980 ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders involved in dating relationships, multivariate analyses revealed that adolescents who witnessed parental violence experienced lower levels of parental attachment and monitoring. Parental attachment in this instance was associated with a lesser perpetration of and stronger attitudes against dating violence. Chapelle (2003) expounded these results in terms of Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory (1969), which proposes that destructive and delinquent behaviors in adolescence are a product of weak parental

attachments and controls. Within this theoretical context, adolescent dating violence results from low levels of parental monitoring and advising, which ultimately causes adolescents to act out and associate with other delinquent youths within their schools and their communities.

### *Social Disorganization Theory*

The basis of Hirschi's Social Control Theory shares similarities with criminological theories that explain deviant behaviors in terms of social disadvantage, the most common being Social Disorganization Theory (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Social Disorganization Theory proposes that communities with greater degrees of disorder are incapable of regulating the criminal behavior of its residents, particularly due to a lack of a shared value system. Structurally, these communities are characterized by high degrees of poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, and social mobility, all of which are related to increased rates of youth crime and delinquency. These considerations are particularly important to design and implementation of dating violence prevention programs. As Newman et al. (2000) discuss, ethnic minority youths are statistically more likely to reside in economically and socially disadvantaged neighborhoods. These adolescents are exposed to high poverty and crime rates, and some may come from unstable homes, all of which affect their transition into high school and their access to resources. For students in Newman et al.'s (2000) study, positive interactions with teachers led to an increase in school involvement and success, indicating the influence that administrator's and teachers can have on youth defined as "at risk." The perception of race and ethnicity at schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods is also significant. Astor et al. (1999) interviewed students about the intersection of race and school violence. Findings revealed that "there was a pervasive sense amongst many of the students who attended the inner city schools that society (and their

schools) had already given up on them because of their life circumstances. Clearly, the students believed that their race and class had a profound effect on their education. Furthermore, they believed that they had little or no power to change problems (such as poor educational funding) that were directly related to discrimination based on their race and socioeconomic status,” (p. 26). Students in Astor et al.’s study who attended predominantly minority and low income schools also felt that underfunding of their education was resultant of institutional discrimination; the deteriorated conditions of these schools caused by underfunding was thought to lead to increased opportunities for violence.

Theriot (2008) recommends that dating violence assessments and prevention programs need to be especially aware of factors outside of the school that may contribute to dating violence behaviors and prevent adolescents from obtaining assistance. However, Social Disorganization Theory can also be used in this context to understand how the very factors outside of the school that influence violent behaviors in youths also affect the availability of resources that the school has to offer students. For instance, lower performing schools which are typically located in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods are usually the first to sustain cuts in state funding. School administrators and instructors may not be able to envision a viable way to incorporate dating violence prevention programs when other extracurricular and academic programs are being eliminated in order to save money. Additionally, this particular theoretical framework in conjunction with the empirical findings supports the recommendations made by school violence studies that the creation and implementation of prevention programs need to be a collaborative endeavor between teachers, administrators, parents, and other community organizations. Teacher’s have an especially important role in this context. As collaborators in

the development of prevention programs, teachers can positively impact students by exploring their own expectations for them, creating meaningful relationships with them, and encouraging their abilities (Astor et al., 1999).

### *Feminist Theory*

While behavioral theories have been influential to understanding dating violence prevention, Feminist Theory retains equal importance within this discussion. Feminist Theory maintains that rigid gender-role stereotypes transmitted during socialization are responsible for instilling male dominance and female subservience as “heteronormative” practices. As children mature, these stereotypes become internalized and operate to define their interpersonal and romantic relationships. Feminist Theory also claims that gendered discourses surrounding heterosexuality influence the meaning that youth’s attach to intimacy and how they conciliate sexual equality within their dating relationships (Chung, 2005; Ismail et al., 2007). Several studies that have contextualized dating violence prevention in terms of Feminist theory emphasize how schools can perpetuate gendered discourses. Ismail et al. (2007), for instance, suggest that “the perceived lack of social support and the subtle sanctioning of violence in schools and the media may contribute to the normalization of violence and compound the difficulties of recognizing and leaving abusive relationship” (p. 455). These findings imply that schools and teachers have a rather powerful influence in defining females’ experience with dating violence. Similarly, Purdie and Downey’s (2000) study of 154 adolescent females, it was found that a heightened sensitivity to rejection from peers and teachers increased females’ risk for relationship difficulties. Female’s who experienced rejection from others were highly dependent upon their dating partners, which increased their chances for experiencing dating

violence. Gender is also a significant predictor of how much violence females receive at school (Astor et al., 1999). Females in Astor et al.'s study reported that 25 to 30 percent of areas in and around their respective schools were dangerous. This conclusion was based upon these girls either being victims of or witness to sexual harassment, sexual coercion, or rape by male students. It should also be noted that students, teachers, and administrators in Astor et al.'s (1999) study reported that girls were more likely to be involved in fights with males and females. As a result, it was concluded that females are doubly victimized in that they are at risk for physical and sexual violence more so than males.

Understanding the role that schools have in the prevention of dating violence for females validates the use of Feminist theory within the current study. From this theoretical perspective and the supporting literature, it can be concluded that if administrators or teachers believe that females instigate or deserve violence within their relationships, then it will logically affect how they respond to female students who are being victimized as well as their acceptance of prevention programs. In their outreach to youths, administrators and teachers need to be capable of identifying attitudes that are empirically demonstrated to be "myth based" causes of domestic and dating violence. The elimination of these attitudes is critical to the viability of prevention programs within schools, and it ensures that females are not being victimized by administrators or teachers who should be acting as a social support network. In addition, school personnel, parents, and community organizations that collaborate on the design of prevention initiatives need to consider how females are socialized into romantic relationships and how the school environment influences their rate of victimization. Dating violence prevention programs must be

designed to address the more severe forms of violence and coercion that are largely experienced by young girls.

### *The Effects of Theory on Prevention Programs*

Although theoretical frameworks of adolescent dating violence are multitudinous, the lack of a sound perspective has been problematic to the design and implementation of prevention programs. In their review of eleven primary and secondary prevention programs, Whitaker et al. (2005) acknowledges that each program incorporated a combined theoretical approach which included either or a combination of Feminist and Social Learning theoretical approaches. Yet, O'Brien (2001) has noted that researchers design and tailor their prevention programs based upon the theory that they believe has the most empirical grounding, despite the fact that more than one valid explanation exists. This has become an ongoing issue with both primary and secondary prevention programs, where any sizeable results have yet to be communicated (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999).

### Primary and Secondary Prevention Programs

During the 1990s, prevention programs were introduced in order to address the bidirectional nature of dating violence in adolescent couples. Prior to this, these programs were targeted at older populations, such as married couples and college students (Lavoie, Vezina, Piche, & Boivin, 1995). Primary prevention programs are most often integrated into middle and high school curriculums, and their instruction is intended to teach students how to avoid dating violence behaviors. (Avery-Leaf et al., 1997; Cornleius & Resseguie, 2006; Foshee et al., 1998). Secondary prevention programs, conversely, are instituted in community settings, with the

intention of preventing the reoccurrence of dating violence (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2006; Foshee et al., 1998). In few cases, both of types of prevention programs have also been used simultaneously in order to reach more adolescents (Foshee et al., 1998).

Primary and secondary prevention programs are theoretically designed to encompass the needs of youths from all sociodemographic backgrounds (Lavoie et al., 1995; Foshee et al., 1998); however, some target specific ethnicities (Hammond, Yung, & Kadis, 1990; Weisz & Black, 2001) or one gender over another (e.g. Coaching Boys into Men, coaches-corner.org). Regardless of the population of interest, each program strives to reduce and prevent physical, psychological, verbal and sexual dating violence, and to enhance the social and conflict management skills necessary to maintain healthy relationships (Avery-Leaf et al., 1997; Hammond et al., 1990; Jaffe, Sudermann, Reitzel, & Killip, 1992; Foshee et al., 1998; Lavoie et al., 1995; Weisz & Black, 2001). To fulfill these objectives, primary prevention programs conduct informational sessions within the classroom, which operate to identify and define dating violence and to understand the rights and responsibilities of each member of a dating relationship (Avery-Leaf et al., 1997; Lavoie et al., 1995). Some of these programs choose to further supplement their instruction with student-based activities, such as letter writing (Lavoie et al., 1995), or psychodramas (Hammond et al., 1990). In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the material, students are typically administered pre-and post-questionnaires that measure dating violence attitudes and beliefs. In most cases, immediate positive effects are demonstrated to occur. However, in follow-up evaluations conducted months or years following the initial assessments, long-term behavioral differences are not typically apparent (Jaffe et al., 1992). Few

programs have expressed that adolescent's awareness of community resources and conflict management skills had been maintained (Foshee, 2000; Lavoie et al., 1995).

Secondary prevention programs are nationally and locally available to schools and youth organizations. On the national level, *Building Healthy Teen Relationships*, and *Coaching Boys into Men* are two exemplary dating violence prevention programs. Sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Building Healthy Teen Relationships* funds grants to support the creation and evaluation of secondary prevention, community-based programs that help youths ages 10-14 develop positive relationships that are void of violence ([buildinghealthyteenrelationships.org](http://buildinghealthyteenrelationships.org)). In many ways, this particular program also meets the goals of primary prevention programs by reaching out to youth who may have not yet been involved in serious relationships. *Coaching Boys into Men* is sponsored by the Family Violence Prevention Fund, and maintains that school athletic coaches are in a unique position to influence the opinions of his athletes and to eliminate calloused attitudes toward women. Coaches who are interested in participating in this program are provided a "playbook" which contains coaching tips and advice to address and prevent male athletes' violence against women ([coaches-corner.org](http://coaches-corner.org)).

State Coalitions Against Domestic Violence have also developed dating violence programs to address the needs of youths in local populations. Relevant to this particular study, the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) has sponsored a teen dating violence prevention program, *Teen Dating Violence: Runaway and Homeless Youth* ([FCADV.org](http://FCADV.org)). This secondary prevention program provides training and knowledge to Florida's domestic violence advocates, rape crisis center advocates, and homeless youth service providers so that they can



better serve victims of adolescent dating violence (FCADV.org). Programs such as these are integral to the success of reaching youths who are truant from school, which are arguably at a higher risk for engaging in dating violence (Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999). The FCADV initiated this program in the September of 2005, funded by a three year federal grant (personal communication, December 4, 2008). During this time, a standard protocol was established and intervention strategies were determined with the assistance of an advisory board consisting of individuals from the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, Florida Coalition Against Sexual Assault, two Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Caucuses, the Child and Youth Caucus, and the Hispanic/Latin Caucus (FCADV.org). Valuing a collaborative intervention strategy, community education staff from runaway youth and domestic violence service organizations trains teachers, parents, and community leaders on how to respond to teen victims and perpetrators (FCADV.org).

Public school systems also may establish their own prevention and mediation programs to address the social issues that their students may experience, including drug abuse, familial and relationship violence, bullying, suicide, gang activity, eating disorders, and date rape. An example of these more permanent prevention initiatives is the Student Assistance and Family Empowerment, or SAFE, program, which has operated in all of the public and post-secondary schools within the Orange County Public School System in Orlando, Florida since 1987. SAFE operates with the goal of preventing discord in an effort to create a more peaceful learning environment for students. Additionally, SAFE Coordinators provide outreach to at-risk students and their families in order to prevent and reduce teen pregnancy, truancy, dropouts, suicide, and violence. In order to realize these objectives, SAFE relies upon student's to organize prevention

and awareness activities. Examples of these activities include suicide prevention, bullying prevention week, mock D.U.I's, and the AIDS red ribbon awareness week. SAFE also collaborates with community organizations and agencies. Pertinent to this study, SAFE partners with Harbor House of Central Florida and the Orlando Police Department in order to assist both students and parents in recognizing the warning signs of domestic and dating violence (<https://www.ocps.net/cs/services/student/SAFE/Pages/default.aspx>).

Although prevention programs have burgeoned over the past two decades, development and implementation strategies are in their infancy. From the programs that have previously been implemented, it is known that primary and secondary prevention efforts have at least been able to inform young adults that resources exist. It is critical to ensure that this goal continues to be met with future programs. Prevention programs cannot merely assume that youths who are entrenched in dating violence will, upon the completion of such programs, approach adults for advice and assistance. While, according to Watson et al. (2001), adolescents are more likely to predict that they would use formal resources, such as police, teachers, and parents, in the event of future dating violence incidences, few actually follow this presumption. Instead, most adolescents choose to confide in their friends for advice on how to handle their abusive situations (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Black et al. 2008; Molidor & Tolman, 1998; Weisz et al., 2007).

Despite a broader awareness, these programs have been largely unsuccessful in instilling more permanent behavioral and attitudinal changes (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007; Foshee, 2000; O'Brien, 2001). There have been numerous suggestions as to why this is the case. One limitation is that there is a significant lack of uniformity across prevention programs, making crosswise comparisons between their design and execution a difficult feat (Aronoff et al. 2004;

Cornelius & Resseguie 2007; Wekerle & Wolfe 1999). Very few programs incorporate supplemental activities that require student participation, and it has been inferred that without such interactive components the likelihood of behavior change will be minimal (Cornelius & Resseguie 2007). Another shortcoming is that dating violence prevention programs appear to discount the personal and social transitions inimitable to adolescent populations (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Primary prevention programs should be designed to include the peer pressures that influence adolescent decision making processes; and, intimate partner violence prevention programs that are specifically utilized with college-level students are not necessarily appropriate for discerning the risks surrounding adolescent dating violence (Cornelius & Resseguie, 2007). Furthermore, prevention programs are not permanent across the school curriculum. Research teams or community organizations have been largely responsible for disseminating the information contained in the prevention programs to youths enrolled in particular classes or in extracurricular activities (Foshee et al., 1998; Hammond et al., 1990; Lavoie et al., 1995), and in some instances schools that espouse prevention programs will assign this responsibility to teachers in health or life studies courses (Avery et al., 1997). Especially in the case of dating violence, these differences in implementation and instruction may strongly influence the outcome of prevention programs. Although it is evident from existing research that particular dating violence prevention programs have been more successful than others, it remains unclear as to how the presence of teachers and the high school administration in general affect the success of these interventions. Since public schools have evidently become an outlet where prevention programs are easily integrated, there is an increased importance for research to measure a school administrations knowledge of and attitudes toward dating violence in general,

and its experiences with primary prevention programs specifically. Taking into consideration the variable economic circumstances of each community and of each school system, it is also essential to determine if certain high school's are more apt to endorse prevention programs as a uniform component of the curriculum and how this executive decision ultimately affects youths who are at a higher risk for experiencing dating violence victimization.

### Current Study and Hypotheses

The literature on dating violence has provided valuable insight into its prevalence, risk factors and demographic considerations for dating violence victimization and perpetration, and prevention efforts that mitigate youth's exposure to dating violence. What has also been demonstrated is that addressing and preventing dating violence has become increasingly important at the school level. For nearly two decades, prevention programs have been tested within public schools to determine their long-term and short-term effectiveness of youth's opinions of dating violence and their propensity to engage in violent behavior. These programs are modified based upon their findings, and subsequently promoted to public schools as a beneficial addition to their curriculum. However, dating violence research on school-based prevention programs have not yet studied how the school administration thinks of and reacts to these types of programs within the classroom, and has not considered the ramifications that the acceptance or rejection of these programs by school administrations would have on the vitality of youths who may need access to this information.

The current study will contribute to the advancement of the dating violence literature and prevention efforts in several ways. It will address high school administrators and instructors in various high schools located throughout Orange County, Florida in order to apprise their

perceptions of dating violence and its prevalence, their knowledge of prevention programs, the necessity of prevention programs in general, and their evaluation of whether they believe such programs to be effective. These responses will be used to evaluate how they deal with, or have dealt with, dating violence situations, their willingness to participate in dating violence prevention, and their thoughts towards permanent prevention programs that would reach out to students in the freshman through senior years on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, the collection of data from a broader, county-wide regional area increases the likelihood that responses from schools in different types of communities will be received. These results can be applied to the existent discussions of dating violence risk factors and demography and can also be used to frame dating violence in connection with structural theories, such as Social Disorganization theory and Feminist theory. Lastly, meaningful results obtained from the responses of high school administrations in regard to dating violence prevention can be used to generate new discourses and recommendations surrounding public policy. If prevention is indeed viewed as necessary by administrators within public high schools, this could be used to prompt a rather strong argument that more funding needs to be directed to implementing formalized programs that operate to reduce violence and training administrator's to use these programs within their own classrooms. Furthermore, involving various types of administrator's in the process of dating violence prevention can only result in an increased awareness of risk factors for victimization and perpetration; if dating violence can become fully recognized as a problem that deeply affects youths, this may also generate discussions as how to separate official reports of dating violence from other instances of domestic violence, child abuse, and neglect. Dating violence in this study will be defined as the infliction of any combination of physical, sexual,

verbal or psychological abuse with the intent to cause harm, fear, or intimidation to a partner in a dating relationship. The following areas will be investigated, and the expected findings are as follows:

- High school administrators and instructors will agree that dating violence is a serious issue that affects adolescents dating relationships, but will not identify dating violence as an issue that occurs in schools.
- High school administrators and instructors will be familiar with the SAFE program, but will not be able to identify other dating violence prevention programs.
- High school administrators and instructors will agree that dating violence prevention programs are effective, but will not view them as needed within schools.
- High school administrators and instructors may agree that schools should be involved in dating violence prevention, but will not view themselves or the schools as responsible for dating violence prevention.
- Sociodemographics will effect how administrators and instructors respond to prevention programs and prevention strategies.

In order to clarify these expectations, the following hypotheses will be tested:

- Administrators and instructors who agree that adolescent dating violence is a serious and frequent issue will express more approval toward school-based dating violence prevention programs.
- Administrators and instructors who identify that dating violence occurs within high schools are more likely to agree dating violence as an issue of school safety, and are more likely to condone a collaborative approach to dating violence prevention.

- Administrators and instructors who feel that they are a resource for students will feel more prepared to deal with reports of adolescent dating violence and will agree that training of school personnel is important.
- Administrators and instructors who agree that schools are responsible for preventing dating violence and distributing information about dating violence prevention are more likely to have previously witnessed dating violence between students or who have been approached by a student who experienced dating violence.
- Administrators and instructors who have participated in the SAFE program and believe it to be effective are more likely to agree that students and faculty are receptive to dating violence prevention programs and that a collaborative approach to dating violence is necessary.
- Female administrators and instructors are more likely to endorse prevention programs.
- Administrators and instructors who identify themselves as racial and ethnic minorities will be less likely to endorse prevention programs than those who identify themselves as Caucasian.
- Administrators and instructors who have lower yearly household incomes will be less likely to endorse prevention programs as a part of the high school curriculum.
- The higher an administrator's or instructors' educational degree, the more likely they are to accept dating violence prevention programs as part of the high school curriculum.
- Female administrators and instructors will be less accepting of domestic violence.
- Administrators and instructors who identify themselves as racial and ethnic minorities will be more accepting of domestic violence.

- Administrators and instructors who have graduate educational degrees will be less accepting of domestic violence in comparison to those who are college graduates or less.
- Administrators and instructors who have lower yearly household incomes will be more accepting of domestic violence.
- Administrators and instructors who endorse empirically-based or myth-based causations of domestic violence are more likely to minimize the need for school-based dating violence prevention programs.



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### Data

Data were gathered from high school administrators and instructors from six public high schools in Orange County, Florida during the 2009-2010 school year. Administrators and instructors include deans, principals, teachers, counselors, coordinators, nurses, and coaches. This particular group was selected as the population of interest since they are apt to have consistent contact with students across grade levels and are more likely to deal with students who are experiencing dating violence. Also, the participating schools range in ethnic composition, percent free and reduced lunch, and Florida Comprehensive Academic Test (FCAT) scores. Recruitment from a variety of schools is important, since theoretically some youths are considered at a higher risk for dating violence victimization and perpetration (Howard & Wang, 2003a; Howard & Wang, 2003b; O'Keefe, 1997; O'Keefe & Treister, 1998; Watson, et al, 2001).

The Orange County Public School Board was contacted in order to seek permission to conduct the study within their respective public high schools. Once permission was received by the Orange County School Board, approval was sought from the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB). After approval was granted from the Institutional Review Board, the principal of each Orange County public high school was contacted by e-mail. A list of the current public high schools in Orange County, Florida and the acting principals for the academic year 2009-2010 was obtained from the Orange County Public Schools website ([www.ocps.net](http://www.ocps.net)). In accordance with the regulations of the Orange County School Board as well as the Institutional Review Board, each principal must provide verbal or written permission

before a survey can be administered to any staff member. The e-mail that was sent to each principal contained a digital copy of both the OCPS and IRB approval documents. For each school that agreed to participate, the e-mails for all of the staff designated “administrative” or “instructional” on each schools website were complied. Any other employee of the school who was not listed under one of these classifications was excluded from the study. Initially, three principal’s replied to the e-mail and granted approval. Two of these principals granted full participation and one principal granted partial participation. Full participation included all administrative and instructional staff. Partial participation included only administrative staff. One week after the initial e-mail, another e-mail was sent to those principals who had not replied. Following this, two more principals granted full participation and one additional principal granted partial participation. After another week had passed, principals who still did not reply were contacted by telephone. Two were reached and declined to participate. The remaining eleven principals were unavailable.

An electronic survey was created through *survey gizmo*, and a link to this survey was sent to the school e-mail accounts of each of the administrative and instructional staff employed with this study’s participating schools. The e-mail contained an introductory message that explained the purpose of the study, that participation was encouraged but not required, and that the survey would take approximately ten minutes to complete. Prior to beginning the survey, each participant electronically completed an informed consent form. This informed consent form verified that each participant was eighteen years of age or over and emphasized that their responses to each question were anonymous and SQL encrypted to ensure confidentiality. The link to the online survey remained live for three weeks. Administrators and instructors could

choose to complete the online survey at their convenience, and could save their progress as needed. Reminder e-mails were sent through *Survey Gizmo* to those administrators and instructors who either had not responded to the survey after the first week, or had started a survey but not completed it. A second reminder e-mail was sent the following week, and a final e-mail one day before the close of the survey. The e-mails were sent to a total of 616 administrative and staff members. The total sample for this analysis includes 109 respondents from the six schools that participated, which signifies an 18% response rate.

## Measures

### *Sociodemographics*

The sociodemographics assessed in this study include age, gender, race and ethnicity, annual household income, highest level of education completed, high school of employment, current position held at high school of employment, and duration of employment. Participants were able to enter their age into a field given in the survey. Participants were then able to indicate their gender as (1) male or (2) female. Race and ethnicity were identified as (1) Asian/Pacific Islander, (2) Black/African American, (3) Caucasian, (4) Latino/Latina, (5) Native American/Alaska Native, and (6) Other/Multiracial. In a separate question, participants indicated whether they identified themselves as Hispanic by responding (1) yes or (2) no. Participants were also asked to estimate their 2008 household income as (1) less than \$25,000, (2) \$25,000 - \$39,999, (3) \$40,000 - \$59,999, and (4) \$60,000 or more. Participants were also assessed of their highest level of education completed as (1) high school graduate, (2) some college, (3) college graduate, (4) some post-graduate education, (5) graduate degree, and (6) other professional degree. Participants were then able to type into the survey their current high

school of employment and their current position at the high school in which they worked. The final question asked participants to specify how long they have worked in the field of education as (1) less than 1 year, (2) 1-2 years, (3) 3-5 years, and (4) 6 years or more.

### *Social Desirability*

In order to protect against socially desirability among participants, a short-form version of socially desirable response categories was taken from the Quality of American Life survey (Campbell & Converse, 1971). This short-form version consists of six items that assess the veracity of participant responses to culturally and socially sensitive items. Participants are asked to respond to each statement as (1) not true of me, (2) somewhat true of me, or (3) very true of me. Each of these items are scored or reverse-scored to indicate a respondent's level of socially desirable responding. The results of this measure will be used as an indicator of a respondent's willingness to respond to dating violence based upon their own knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs as opposed to what they may believe is expected of them as high school administrators.

### *Attitudes toward Dating Violence and Prevention Programs*

A self-authored survey that evaluates the attitudes of high school administrators and instructors toward dating violence, prevention programs and prevention strategies was constructed. This instrument consists of twenty-five statements that assess the knowledge of high school administrators toward dating violence prevalence, their role in dating violence prevention, and their attitudes toward dating violence prevention. A combination of closed ended and open ended questions was utilized in the development of this instrument. Twenty-two of these questions are objective. Participants were instructed to either respond to questions and

statements such as such as “Have you witnessed dating violence occur between adolescents on your high school’s property?” and “dating violence is a serious issue affecting youth’s romantic relationships” by answering (1) yes or (2) no, or by responding to each statement by using a five-point Likert scale with the following response categories: (1) strongly agree; (2) agree; (3) neither agree nor disagree; (4) disagree; (5) strongly disagree. Three of these statements are subjective. Respondents were instructed to provide their opinion to a series of statements, such as “in your opinion, what causes dating violence to occur?” and “In your opinion, who should be responsible for preventing dating violence?”

#### *Causation of Domestic Violence*

Questions regarding the causes of domestic violence were comprised of two subsets of closed-ended questions developed by Worden and Carlson (2005). Worden’s and Carlson’s (2005) survey consists of ten statements that identify the causation of domestic violence. The first subset of five questions is empirically-grounded statements of causation, and asks participants about the nature of domestic violence and the risk factors associated with abuse. These statements included (a) people who are violent toward their family members are not likely to change; (b) husbands who shout, yell, and curse at their wives are likely to become physically violent eventually; (c) society teaches boys to be physically aggressive; (d) a lot of what is called “domestic violence” is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration; (e) some violence is caused by women starting physical fights. The second subset of five questions asks participants about myths and misperceptions about domestic violence that often results in blaming the victim. These statements included (a) some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way; (b) most women could find a way to get out of an abusive relationship if

they really wanted to; (c) some violence is caused by the way women treat men; (d) most men who act abusively toward family members have psychological or personality problems; (e) much domestic violence is caused by alcohol and drug abuse. Participants in Worden and Carlson's (2005) study were asked to respond to each statement as agree, disagree, or don't know. Five of these questions were used in the current analysis as a means of gathering data on high school administrators' and instructors' existing perceptions of interpersonal violence. Whether administrators and instructors accept or disagree with common myths and risk for interpersonal violence is an important factor in how they respond to dating violence prevention efforts. Also, added into this section was one open-ended question that asked administrators and instructors "how do you define dating violence?" This question was not a part of Worden and Carlson's (2005) study, but was added as a way of assessing administrators and instructors conceptions of dating violence behaviors.

### Analyses

Univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted to determine the relationships between sociodemographics, knowledge of and attitudes toward dating violence and prevention programs, experience with dating violence and prevention programs, and beliefs of causation of domestic violence. Frequency distributions are provided for (1) respondents' sociodemographics, including their age, gender, race and ethnicity, estimated 2008 household income, highest level of education completed, how long they have worked in the field of education, (2) respondents high school of employment and current job position, (3) respondents knowledge of dating violence and prevention programs, (4) respondents experience with handling dating violence and prevention programs, and (5) respondents beliefs of empirically-based and myth-based causation

for domestic violence. For subjective, open-response measures, frequencies are produced by coding and grouping common answers into categories. The results from the open-ended questions are presented with the frequency distributions. Bivariate correlations and chi-square tests of independence are used to determine the relationships that exist between administrators' and instructors' knowledge of and experiences with handling dating violence and prevention programs, and sociodemographics, acceptance of dating violence prevention programs, and school responsibility for prevention. Independent samples t-tests are used to determine the relationships between sociodemographics and beliefs of domestic violence causation.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### Univariate Analyses

#### *Sociodemographics*

The total sample for this study consists of 109 administrative and instructional staff members from public high schools in Orange County, Florida. Of this sample, 43% (N=47) are male and 57% (N=62) are female. Table 1 presents frequency distributions for the sociodemographic characteristics of the total sample, as well as sociodemographic characteristics by gender. Although a majority of respondents were between the ages of 18-34 (37.3%), the age distribution was nearly equal across categories. Almost one third of respondents were between the ages of 35-49 (31%) and nearly another third were age 50 or over (31.8%). Among males, the majority of the population was age 50 or older (37%). Females, though, were generally younger and between the ages of 18 and 34 (44.8%). Across respondents, the vast majority identify themselves as non-Hispanic and Caucasian. A little more than three quarters of the total sample is Caucasian, with 72% of males and 81.4% of females identifying themselves as Caucasian. Respondents representing other racial and ethnic categories were fairly evenly distributed throughout the total sample and by gender. More than half of the respondents (54.8%) reported a 2008 household income of \$60,000 or more. Although more than half of males (58.1%) and more than half of females (52.5%) had a 2008 household income of \$60,000 or more, females on average tend to have earned less than males. More than half of the respondents indicated that they have earned a graduate degree (56.1%), and this is relatively evenly distributed among males and females (57.8 and 54.8%, respectively). Most respondents



have worked in the field of education for 6 years or more (77.6%). This is also nearly evenly distributed between males and females (82.7 and 73.8%, respectively). The only disparity here is that more female respondents reported working in the field of education for 3-5 years (21.3%) than males (8.7%).

Table 1: Frequency Distribution for Sociodemographics

Variable	Total (N=109)	Male (N=47)	Female (N=62)
<b>Age</b>			
18-34	37.3%	28.2%	44.8%
35-49	31.0%	34.8%	27.6%
50 and older	31.8%	37.0%	27.6%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>			
African American	8.8%	11.7%	6.8%
Caucasian	77.5%	72.0%	81.4%
Latino/Latina	8.8%	11.6%	6.8%
Other	4.9%	4.7%	5.0%
<b>Percent Hispanic</b>			
	11.1%	10.9%	11.3%
<b>2008 Household Income</b>			
Less than \$25,000	1.0%	< 1.0%	1.7%
\$25,000 - \$39,999	13.7%	7.0%	18.7%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	30.4%	34.9%	27.1%
\$60,000 or more	54.9%	58.1%	52.5%
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>			
Some college	<1.0%	<1.0%	1.6%
College graduate	24.3%	22.2%	25.8%
Some post-graduate education	17.8%	17.8%	17.8%
Graduate degree	56.1%	57.8%	54.8%
Other professional degree	<1.0%	2.2%	<1.0%
<b>Worked in Education</b>			
Less than 1 year	2.8%	4.3%	1.6%
1-2 years	3.7%	4.3%	3.3%
3-5 years	15.9%	8.7%	21.3%
6 years or more	77.6%	82.7%	73.8%

Note: Sample sizes vary for certain variables due to missing cases.

Table 2 presents the frequency distributions for respondents' school of employment as well as their position type. A majority of respondents are employed at School 4 (26%). There is fairly even distribution among four schools in this study: School 1 (23.6%), School 2 (20.1%), School 4 (26%) and School 5 (23.6%), and each of these schools are located in eastern Orlando. School 3 and School 6 have the lowest number of respondents (2.4% and 4.8%, respectively), which are located near downtown Orlando. These lower numbers can be attributed to the partial participation that these schools granted for this study (i.e. administrative staff members only). There were more male respondents from School 1 (27.3%), School 3 (6%), School 5 (27.3%), and School 6 (6%). Conversely, there were more female respondents from School 2 (23.5%) and School 4 (31.4%). In order to better understand the demographics of these participating schools, the 2008-2009 statistics on FCAT grade, percent free and reduced lunch, and percent minority rate were gathered from the State of Florida Department of Education (fldoe.org) (see Appendix C for a statistical comparison between participating schools and non-participating schools). Among these participating schools, School 1 has the highest rate of minority students (80%) and the highest rate of free and reduced lunch (59%), and, although relative, has an FCAT score of C. School 3 is 62% minority students, is 46% free and reduced lunch and has an FCAT score of D. School 4 is 49% minority students, 33% free and reduced lunch, and has an FCAT score of C. School 5 is 65% minority students, 43% free reduced lunch, and has an FCAT score of C. School 6 has the lowest rates of minority students (39%), free and reduced lunch (26%), and has an FCAT score of A. School 2 is a newer school, and does not have statistics available for the 2008-2009 year. However, a projection of this school's demographics can be derived by looking at surrounding high schools. School 2 is very near School 4, so it can be estimated that School 2

would service about 50% minority students, have about one-third free and reduced lunch, and an FCAT score of C.

In terms of position type, administrative staff includes those staff members who identified themselves as deans, principals, assistant principals, or program directors. Instructional staff includes all academic teachers and program coordinators; nurses were also included in this category as there was some ambiguity per school as to what category these particular personnel belonged to. Guidance counselors are typically categorized in the Orange County, Florida public high school system as “guidance”, which is not categorized as administrative or instructional. Therefore, “guidance” is included as its own category in order to maintain consistency with the Orange County public schools. The majority of respondents are classified as instructional (83.5%), with 73.7% of males and 90.5% of females identifying themselves as instructional staff members. Administrative staff members only constituted 13.2% of respondents, with more males than females in this category (23.7 and 5.7%, respectively).

Table 2: Frequency Distributions for School of Employment and Position Type

Variable	Total (N=109)	Male (N=47)	Female (N=62)
School of Employment			
School 1	23.6%	27.3%	19.6%
School 2	20.1%	15.0%	23.5%
School 3	2.4%	6.0%	---
School 4	26.0%	18.0%	31.4%
School 5	23.6%	27.3%	21.6%
School 6	4.8%	6.0%	3.9%
Position Type			
Administrative	13.2%	23.7%	5.7%
Guidance	3.3%	2.6%	3.8%
Instructional	83.5%	73.7%	90.5%

Note: Sample sizes vary for certain variables due to missing cases.

Table 3 presents frequency distributions for administrators and instructors knowledge of adolescent dating violence and dating violence prevention programs. The response scale for each variable ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The frequencies are given below for the percent of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with each variable. The mean response and the standard deviation are also provided for each variable. Overall, more than half of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with every variable with three exceptions. 46.1% of respondents either strongly agree (8.5%) or agree (37.6%) that dating violence is an issue at their high schools. Although this is nearly half of respondents, it is a much lower rate of agreement in comparison to the amount of respondents who strongly agree or agree that dating violence is an issue at other Orange County public high schools (13.8 and 46.6%, respectively). Only 26% of respondents strongly agree (2.5%) or agree (23.5%) that high schools are responsible for preventing dating violence among their students. Yet, while most respondents appear to disagree that high schools should be responsible for preventing dating violence, most agree that schools can serve a role in prevention efforts by disseminating information, and making programs available to adolescents. For instance, respondents strongly agree or agree that high schools should be responsible for distributing information on dating violence prevention (16.8 and 58.0%, respectively), that it is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum (29.1 and 47.0%, respectively), and that primary prevention programs are an effective way of addressing dating violence (20.3 and 55.9%, respectively). Just 40% of respondents either strongly agree (5.7%) or agree (34.3%) that students at their school are generally receptive to dating violence prevention programs. More respondents strongly agree or agree that teachers and administrators at their school are

generally receptive to dating violence prevention programs (11 and 54.1%, respectively). The highest rates of agreement are found with two variables. 88% of respondents either strongly agree (23.9%) or agree (64.1%) that there is a need for high schools to partner with community agencies and organizations to educate students about dating violence prevention, and 82.9% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that school personnel need to be trained on how to help students deal with dating violence. Such high respondent agreement rates with these variables are indicative of willingness for administrators and instructors to be more proactive in the prevention of adolescent dating violence. Other variables of this study demonstrate this willingness. For instance, approximately two-thirds of respondents (64.8%) feel that they are a resource for students who are experiencing dating violence, and 60% feel prepared to address the needs of students who disclose to them that they are experiencing dating violence. A majority of respondents (78.2%) recognize that dating violence is a serious issue affecting adolescents' romantic relationships, and a more than half (56.4%) believe that dating violence occurs frequently among adolescents. Additionally, 64.6% of respondents agree that dating violence is an issue of school safety. The tendency for respondents to identify adolescent dating violence as a prevalent issue that poses a serious risk to school safety perhaps motivates them to want to become more involved with prevention efforts.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution for Knowledge of Dating Violence and Prevention Programs Variables

Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	$\bar{x}$ (SD)
Dating violence is a serious issue affecting adolescents' romantic relationships.	28.6%	49.6%	3.97(.93)
Dating violence is an issue at the high school in which I work.	8.5%	37.6%	3.38(.89)
Dating violence is an issue at other Orange County public high schools.	13.8%	46.6%	3.67(.81)
Primary prevention programs are an effective way of addressing dating violence.	20.3%	55.9%	3.89(.83)
It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum.	29.1%	47.0%	3.97(.90)
I am a resource for students who are experiencing dating violence.	14.3%	50.5%	3.64(.92)
High schools are responsible for preventing dating violence among their students.	2.5%	23.5%	2.69(1.03)
High schools should be responsible for distributing information on dating violence prevention.	16.8%	58.0%	3.79(.89)
I feel prepared to address the needs of students who disclose to me that they are experiencing dating violence.	13.0%	47.0%	3.42(1.11)
There is a need for high schools to partner with community agencies and organizations to educate students about dating violence prevention.	23.9%	64.1%	4.09(.67)
School personnel need to be trained on how to help students deal with dating violence.	22.2%	60.7%	4.03(.69)
Students at my school are generally receptive to dating violence prevention programs.	5.7%	34.3%	3.40(.69)
Teachers and administrators at my school are generally receptive to dating violence prevention programs.	11.0%	51.4%	3.68(.74)
Dating violence prevention programs are needed at the school in which I work.	10.2%	42.4%	3.55(.79)
Dating violence occurs frequently among adolescents.	12.0%	44.4%	3.50(.93)
Dating violence is an issue of school safety.	15.5%	49.1%	3.60(1.0)

Note: Sample sizes vary for certain variables due to missing cases. Response options for each category ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



Table 4 displays frequency distributions for administrators and instructors experience with adolescent dating violence and dating violence prevention programs. For each variable, respondents indicated (1) yes or (2) no. The frequencies are given below for the percent of respondents who answered “yes” for each variable. The Student Assistance and Family Empowerment (SAFE) program is a prevention program that almost all respondents report that they are familiar with (96.5%), and approximately two-thirds have participated in a SAFE event at the high school in which they work (68.2%). Most respondents (86.7%) also feel that the SAFE program is effective. However, it appears that many respondents fail to identify the SAFE program as a prevention program. Very few respondents (16.5%) indicated that they were familiar with prevention programs that focus on dating violence and a similar amount of respondents (19.0%) were knowledgeable of dating violence prevention programs ever operating at their school. The SAFE program focuses on a variety of issues that affect adolescents, and these lower rates of recognition among administrators and instructors may be indicative of the SAFE program either not exclusively focusing on dating violence or the SAFE program not covering dating violence as an issue. This problem in identification may pose issues for administrators and instructors. Although very few respondents indicated that they have witnessed dating violence occur between students at their schools (13%), approximately one-quarter of respondents have had a student approach them about dating violence (22.6%). If the SAFE program is not addressing dating violence to the point where administrators and instructors are unable to identify it as a prevention program that deals with this very subject, it is likely that administrators and instructors are unprepared to direct adolescents to resources. And, although 63.7% of respondents would be willing to incorporate a dating violence prevention

program into their classroom, this lack of identification also implies that training is needed so that these particular administrators and instructors could effectively communicate the information.

As a part of this section of the survey, administrators and instructors were presented with a series of open-ended questions that examined what prevention programs, if any, they were familiar with, what they believed causes dating violence to occur, who should be responsible for dating violence, and if they had any additional comments about dating violence prevention. Certain patterns emerged from respondents for each of these questions. Of the 109 respondents, only 17 (15.6%) were able to list a prevention program that they were familiar with. Most of the respondents who provided an answer (64.7%, N=11) directly referenced the SAFE program. Other responses included Teens Ending Abusive Relationships (TEAR) program (N=2), New Horizons (N=1), peer mediation (N=1), and the National Youth Violence Prevention Fund (N=1). It should be noted here that SAFE, TEAR, and New Horizons are structured prevention programs. While peer mediation arguably assists adolescents in abusive relationships, it is by definition a prevention program. Also, the National Youth Violence Prevention Fund helps to fund prevention efforts, but it in and of itself is not a prevention “program”. Respondents were also asked to identify any prevention programs that have operated within their schools. Of the total sample, 19 respondents (17.4%) provided an answer to this question. Again, the SAFE program is mentioned by a majority of respondents (84.2%, N=16). Other responses included New Horizons (N=2) and TEAR (N=2), as well as peer mediation (N=1) and the Department of Children and Families (N=1). It should be duly noted here that peer mediation is not a

prevention program, and that the Department of Children and Families only intervenes when dating violence or domestic violence is reported to the authorities by a school.

Respondents were also asked to explain why they believe adolescent dating violence occurs, and 79.8% (N=87) of the total sample provided a response. Some key themes emerged from these responses. Most respondents (43.7%, N=38) believed that an abusive home or modeling from parents was the major contributor to adolescent dating violence. This is closely followed by adolescents aggression, jealousy, and control issues (37.9%, N=33), as well as by lack of resources (e.g. programs, friends, role models, and education) (17.2%, N=15) and violent media (14.9%, N=13). Other small, but noteworthy responses were also apparent. Community acceptance of violence and culture was reported by 6.9% (N=6) respondents, males not respecting females by 6.9% (N=6), biology (e.g. genetics, hormones) by 5.7% (N=5), females not accepting responsibility for their actions in a relationship (e.g. not complying with males, not leaving after being abused by their partner) by 3.4% (N=3), peer pressure to engage in violence by 3.4% (N=3), and substance abuse by 2.3% (N=2). Following this question, respondents were asked to provide their opinion on who was responsible for preventing adolescent dating violence. Of the total sample, 79.8% (N=87) provided a response, and a clear polarization of ideas emerged. Administrators and teachers in this sample either believe that parents are responsible for preventing adolescent dating violence (52.9%, N=46), or that prevention should be a collaborative effort between parents, schools, community agencies, churches, and professionals (e.g. psychologists and counselors) (40.2%, N=35). A small number of respondents believe that adolescents involved in the abusive relationship should be responsible for preventing their own violence by seeking out education and resources (6.9%, N=6). Many respondents who felt that

parents were responsible for preventing adolescent dating violence also felt that schools were a second line of prevention (23%, N=20). Ultimately, these respondents felt that they were not the primary caretakers of adolescents and thus should not be responsible for modifying the behaviors that they learned from the parents/guardians. However, they did feel that schools had the responsibility of setting programs in place to assist adolescents. Lastly, respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments about dating violence behaviors and prevention. Of the total sample, 42 respondents (38.5%) provided an additional comment. Administrators and teachers appeared to use this opportunity to reaffirm that schools either were or were not responsible for dating violence prevention. Most respondents here expressed that dating violence prevention is worth addressing at the school level (73.8%, N=31). Other respondents felt as if dating violence was an issue to be addressed some place other than schools (26.2%, N=11).

Table 4: Frequency Distribution for Experience Handling Dating Violence and Prevention Programs

Variable	Total Sample (N=109) % Yes	Male (N=47) % Yes	Female (N=62) % Yes
Are you familiar with primary prevention programs that focus on dating violence?	16.5%	15.2%	16.1%
To your knowledge, have any primary prevention programs on dating violence ever operated within your school?	19.0%	23.4%	14.5%
Are you familiar with the Student Assistance and Family Empowerment (SAFE) program?	96.5%	97.8%	96.8%
Have you ever participated in any of the SAFE events at the high school in which you work?	68.2%	66.7%	71.7%
Do you think that the SAFE program is effective?	86.7%	93.3%	81.4%
Would you be willing to incorporate a dating violence prevention program into your classrooms curriculum?	63.7%	62.2%	62.3%
Have you witnessed dating violence occur between adolescents on your high school's property?	13.0%	10.6%	14.5%
Has a student at your high school approached you about experiencing dating violence?	22.6%	17.4%	27.4%

Note: Sample sizes vary for certain variables due to missing cases.

Table 5 displays the frequency distribution for respondents' beliefs about the causes of domestic violence. The percentage of the total population who strongly agree or agree with each variable as well as the means and standard deviations are presented. The percentage of males and female who either strongly agree or agree with each variable is also presented. The highest rates of agreement were found with the empirically grounded statements as defined by Worden and Carlson (2005). The majority of respondents (71.3%) strongly agrees or agrees that society teaches boys to be physically aggressive. A similar response rate was reported for respondents' belief that some violence is caused by women starting physical fights (69.4%). More females than males strongly agreed or agreed with these empirically grounded statements, with one exception. Although few respondents agree that a lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration, more males than females supported this claim. Fewer respondents' demonstrated agreement for those items defined as myth-based causation for domestic violence in comparison to the empirically-grounded causation for domestic violence. About one-third of respondents strongly agrees or agrees that some violence is caused by the way women treat men. Approximately 17.8% strongly agree or agree that some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way. While more men than women express agreement that women secretly want to be abused, an almost even number of males and females express agreement with the myth that some violence is caused by the way that women treat men.

Within this section of the survey, respondents were asked to define dating violence. Of the total sample, 75.2% (N=82) provided a response. Most respondents identified dating violence as a combination of verbal and physical abuse (26.8%, N=22), or a combination of

physical and emotional abuse (19.5%, N=16). While only 4 respondents (4.9%) identified dating violence as a combination of physical, emotional/mental, verbal, and sexual abuse, dating violence as a combination of verbal, physical, and emotional/mental abuse was reported by 10 respondents (12.2%), a combination of emotional/mental, physical, and sexual abuse by 3 respondents (3.7%), and a combination of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by 1 respondent (1.2%). Six respondents identified dating violence as solely physical abuse (7.3%), 1 respondent identified dating violence as solely sexual violence (1.2%), and 1 respondent identified dating violence as a combination of physical and sexual abuse (1.2%). Also worthy of mention, 7 respondents defined dating violence as a series of forced behaviors and actions (85.4%), and 1 respondent identified stalking as an action present within dating violence (1.2%). Although not every respondent identified all forms of dating violence within their definition, this analysis demonstrates that administrators and teachers have a moderate to high comprehension of what dating violence is.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution for Causation of Domestic Violence Variables

Variable	Strongly Agree	Agree	$\bar{x}$ (SD)	% Strongly Agree		% Agree	
				Males	Females	Males	Females
Some violence is caused by women starting physical fights.	11.1%	58.3%	3.69(.84)	11.1%	11.3%	53.3%	62.9%
Society teaches boys to be physically aggressive.	17.6%	53.7%	3.78(.88)	13.3%	21.0%	48.9%	56.5%
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration.	1.9%	4.7%	1.81(.90)	4.5%	---	6.8%	3.3%
Some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way.	1.9%	15.9%	1.93(1.2)	4.5%	---	22.7%	11.3%
Some violence is caused by the way that women treat men.	5.6%	28.7%	2.85(1.2)	4.4%	6.5%	29.0%	29.0%

Note: Sample sizes vary for certain variables due to missing cases. Response options for each category ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



## Bivariate Correlations

### *Dating Violence Knowledge, Experience, and Prevention*

In order to test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who agree that adolescent dating violence is a serious and frequent issue will express more approval toward school-based dating violence prevention programs, bivariate correlations were conducted for the following variables: administrators and instructors belief that adolescent dating violence is a serious issue, that adolescent dating violence occurs frequently, that it is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum, that dating violence prevention programs are needed in high schools, and that prevention programs are effective. The Pearson's correlation coefficients for these analyses are presented in Table 6. Weak to moderate positive, significant relationships were found between most of the variables. The strongest relationships were found between the following variables: "dating violence prevention programs are needed at the high school in which I work" and "it is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum" ( $r = .593, p = .000$ ), and "dating violence occurs frequently among adolescents" and "dating violence prevention programs are needed at the high school in which I work" ( $r = .466, p = .000$ ). Administrators and instructors who agree that dating violence prevention programs are needed at their high schools tend to agree that it is important for high schools to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into their curriculum. Also, administrators and instructors who agree that adolescent dating violence occurs frequently tend to agree that prevention programs are needed where they work.

Moderate positive relationships were also demonstrated between the following variables: "dating violence is a serious issue affecting youths romantic relationships" and "it is important to

incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum” ( $r = .368, p = .000$ ), “dating violence is a serious issue affecting youths romantic relationships” and “dating violence prevention programs are needed at the high school in which I work” ( $r = .311, p = .001$ ), and “dating violence occurs frequently among adolescents” and “dating violence is a serious issue affecting youths romantic relationships” ( $r = .300, p = .001$ ). Those administrators and instructors who agree that adolescent dating violence is a serious issue tend to agree that dating violence prevention programs should be a part of the high school curriculum, and also tend to agree that dating violence prevention programs are needed at their respective high schools. Furthermore, administrators and instructors who agree that adolescent dating violence is a frequent occurrence tend to agree that adolescent dating violence is a serious issue.

The weakest, yet significant, relationships were demonstrated between the following variables: “prevention programs are an effective way of addressing dating violence” and “it is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum” ( $r = .274, p = .003$ ), “dating violence occurs frequently among adolescents” and “it is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum” ( $r = .247, p = .007$ ), and “dating violence is a serious issue affecting youths romantic relationships” and “prevention programs are an effective way of addressing adolescent dating violence” ( $r = .217, p = .018$ ). Administrators and instructors who agree that dating violence prevention programs are effective tend to agree that it is important to have these prevention programs as a part of the school curriculum. Administrators and instructors who agree that adolescent dating violence occurs frequently also tend to agree that it is important to have dating violence prevention programs as a part of the school curriculum. Lastly, administrators and instructors who agree

that adolescent dating violence is a serious issue tend to agree that dating violence prevention programs are effective. There was not a significant relationship between administrators and instructors who believe that dating violence prevention programs are effective and those who believe that dating violence prevention programs are needed at their respective high schools ( $r = .181, p = .051$ ). There was also not a significant relationship between administrators and instructors who believe that prevention programs are effective and those who believe that adolescent dating violence occurs frequently ( $r = .114, p = .224$ ).

Table 6: Correlations between dating violence recognition and approval of prevention programs (N=109)

Variable	It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum	Dating violence prevention programs are needed at the high school in which I work	Prevention programs are an effective way of addressing dating violence	Dating violence is a serious issue affecting youths romantic relationships
It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum	---			
Dating violence prevention programs are needed at the high school in which I work	.593***	---		
Prevention programs are an effective way of addressing dating violence	.274**	.181	---	
Dating violence is a serious issue affecting youths romantic relationships	.368***	.311**	.217*	---
Dating violence occurs frequently among adolescents	.247**	.466***	.114	.300**

Note: Responses range from 1 to 5 with a higher score indicating more agreement with the statement.

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

In order to test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who agree that dating violence occurs within high schools are more likely to identify dating violence as an issue of school safety and to condone a collaborative approach to dating violence prevention, bivariate correlations were conducted between the following set of variables: administrators and instructors beliefs that dating violence is an issue at their high school, that dating violence is at other high schools, that dating violence is a school safety issue, and that schools, communities and organizations should collaborate to prevent dating violence. The Pearson correlation coefficients for these analyses are presented in Table 7. Half of these relationships demonstrated at least a weak to moderate correlation.

A moderate to strong relationship was apparent between the variables “dating violence is an issue at other Orange County public high schools” and “dating violence is an issue at the high school in which I work” ( $r = .724, p = .000$ ). Administrators and instructors who believe that dating violence is an issue at their respective high school also tend to believe that dating violence is an issue at other high schools in their regional area. A weak to moderate positive relationship was demonstrated between the variables “dating violence is an issue of school safety” and “high schools need to partner with community agencies and organizations to educate students about dating violence prevention” ( $r = .341, p = .000$ ), and between the variables “dating violence is an issue in the high school in which I work” and “high schools need to partner with community agencies and organizations to educate students about dating violence prevention” ( $r = .220, p = .018$ ). Administrators and instructors who believe that dating violence is an issue of school safety tend to believe that high schools should collaborate with community organizations to help prevent adolescent dating violence. Also,

administrators and instructors who believe that dating violence is an issue at their respective high school tend to believe that high schools should partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence. No significant correlations were found between the following variables: “dating violence is an issue at other Orange County public high schools” and “high schools need to partner with community organizations and agencies to prevent dating violence” ( $r = .144$ ,  $p = .126$ ), “dating violence is an issue at other Orange County public high schools” and “dating violence is an issue of school safety” ( $r = .129$ ,  $p = .174$ ), and “dating violence is an issue at the high school in which I work” and “dating violence is an issue of school safety” ( $r = .134$ ,  $p = .156$ ).

Table 7: Correlations between dating violence, school safety, and community collaboration (N=109)

Variable	High schools to partner with community agencies and organizations to educate students.	Dating violence is an issue of school safety	Dating violence is an issue at the high school in which I work.
High schools to partner with community agencies and organizations to educate students	---		
Dating violence is an issue of school safety	.341***	---	
Dating violence is an issue at the high school in which I work	.220*	.134	---
Dating violence is an issue at other Orange County public high schools	.144	.129	.724***

Note: Responses range from 1 to 5 with a higher score indicating more agreement with the statement.  
 \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

In order to test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who feel that they are a resource for students will feel more prepared to deal with reports of adolescent dating violence and agree that training of school personnel is important, bivariate correlations were conducted between the following variables: administrators and instructors beliefs that they are a resource for students experiencing dating violence, their beliefs that they are prepared to respond to students who disclose to them that they are being victimized, and that training of school personnel to respond to dating violence is important. The Pearson correlation coefficients for these analyses are displayed in Table 8. Only one correlation demonstrated a moderate relationship: “I am a resource for students who are experiencing dating violence” and “I feel prepared to address the needs of students who disclose to me that they are experiencing dating violence” ( $r = .524, p = .000$ ). This suggests that administrators and instructors who agree that they are a resource for students who are victimized also tend to agree that they are prepared to handle a dating violence situation.



Table 8: Correlations between personal responsibility and school preparedness (N=109)

Variable	I feel prepared to address the needs of students who disclose that they are experiencing dating violence	School personnel need to be trained to deal with dating violence
I feel prepared to address the needs of students who disclose that they are experiencing dating violence	---	
School personnel need to be trained to deal with dating violence	-.100	---
I am a resource for students who are experiencing dating violence	.524***	.039

Note: Responses range from 1 to 5 with a higher score indicating more agreement with the statement.  
 \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

In order to test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who agree that schools are responsible for preventing dating violence and distributing information about dating violence prevention are more likely to have previously witnessed dating violence between students or have been approached by a student who experienced dating violence, separate two-way contingency analyses using crosstabulations were conducted. Tables 9 and 10 provide the chi-square percentages for the relationships between administrators and instructors who believe that high school should be responsible for preventing dating violence or distributing information on dating violence prevention, and have witnessed dating violence between students or have been approached by a student who is being victimized. Only one relationship was significant: believing that high schools should be responsible for preventing dating violence is significantly related to witnessing dating violence between adolescents ( $\chi^2(2) = 8.513, p = .014$ ). The largest proportion of administrators and instructors have not witnessed dating violence occur between students. Those administrators and instructors who have not seen dating violence occur between students are less likely to believe that high schools are responsible for preventing dating violence. A small proportion of administrators and instructors have witnessed dating violence occur between students, but a majority of this population remains neutral on whether high schools have a responsibility to prevent dating violence.

Table 9: Contingency table for witnessing dating violence by high school responsibility for prevention

Variable		High schools should be responsible for preventing dating violence		
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Have you witnessed dating violence occur between adolescents?*	Yes	7.1	29.6	9.7
	No	92.9	70.4	90.3
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Has a student approached you about experiencing dating violence?	Yes	25.0	18.5	20.0
	No	75.0	81.5	80.0

Note: Original response categories for the independent variable ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In order to reduce the chance of a type II error, response categories were collapsed for the chi-square analysis and ranged from 1 (disagree) to 3 (agree). \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

Table 10: Contingency table for witnessing dating violence by high school responsibility for distributing information

Variable		High schools should be responsible for distributing information on prevention		
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Have you witnessed dating violence occur between adolescents?	Yes	---	12.5	14.9
	No	100.0	87.5	85.1
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Has a student approached you about experiencing dating violence?	Yes	8.3	31.3	22.1
	No	91.7	68.8	77.9

Note: Original response categories for the independent variable ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In order to reduce the chance of a type II error, response categories were collapsed for the chi-square analysis and ranged from 1 (disagree) to 3 (agree). \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

To test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who have participated in the SAFE program and believe it to be effective are more likely to agree that students and faculty are receptive to dating violence prevention programs and that a collaborative approach to dating violence is necessary, a series of two-way contingency analyses using crosstabulations were conducted. Tables 11 and 12 provide the chi-square percentages for the relationships between administrators and instructors participation in and perceived effectiveness of the Student Awareness and Family Empowerment (SAFE) program and their beliefs of whether students and faculty are receptive to prevention programs, and their belief that school-community collaboration is important. Two relationships demonstrated significance. Administrators and instructors who believe that the SAFE program is effective also agree that students are receptive to school-based prevention programs ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.924, p = .031$ ). The largest proportion of administrators and instructors who believe that the SAFE program is effective remain neutral on whether they believe students are receptive to school-based prevention programs. In comparison to administrators and instructors who do not believe that the SAFE program is effective, a larger proportion who do believe that the SAFE program is effective agree that students are receptive to prevention programs. An equal proportion of administrators and instructors who do not believe that the SAFE program is effective agree and disagree that students are receptive to prevention programs. The second significant finding was that administrators and instructors who believe that the SAFE program is effective are more likely to be receptive to school-based prevention programs ( $\chi^2(2) = 12.173, p = .002$ ). A larger proportion of administrators and instructors who agree that the SAFE program is effective also agree that school personnel are generally receptive to

prevention programs. No significant relationships were observed between participation in SAFE events and beliefs about prevention program receptiveness. Also, no significant relationships were observed between participating in SAFE events, believing the SAFE program to be effective, and believing that schools should collaborate with communities to prevent dating violence.

Table 11: Contingency table for SAFE program participation by school receptiveness

Variable	Participated in SAFE		
	Yes	No	
Students at my school are generally receptive to dating violence prevention programs	Agree	44.5	30.0
	Neutral	48.5	63.3
	Disagree	6.1	6.7
Administrators and instructors at my school are generally receptive to prevention programs.	Agree	62.9	58.6
	Neutral	30.0	37.9
	Disagree	7.1	3.4
Schools need to partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence.	Agree	87.7	84.4
	Neutral	11.0	12.1
	Disagree	1.4	3.0

Note: Original response categories for the dependent variables ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In order to reduce the chance of a type II error, response categories were collapsed for the chi-square analysis and ranged from 1 (disagree) to 3 (agree).

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 12: Contingency table for SAFE program effectiveness by school receptiveness

Variable	SAFE Program is Effective		
	Yes	No	
Students at my school are generally receptive to dating violence prevention programs*	Agree	46.6	28.6
	Neutral	50.0	42.9
	Disagree	3.4	28.6
Administrators and instructors at my school are generally receptive to prevention programs**	Agree	65.0	37.5
	Neutral	31.7	25.0
	Disagree	3.3	37.5
Schools need to partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence.	Agree	87.3	87.5
	Neutral	11.1	12.5
	Disagree	1.6	---

Note: Original response categories for the dependent variables ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In order to reduce the chance of a type II error, response categories were collapsed for the chi-square analysis and ranged from 1 (disagree) to 3 (agree).

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001



### *Sociodemographics and Dating Violence Prevention*

In order to test the hypotheses that gender, race/ethnicity, household income, and level of education affects approval of dating violence prevention programs and prevention efforts at the high school level, a series of two-way contingency analyses using crosstabulations were conducted. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 13 through 20. Significant differences emerged between gender and high schools responsibility for distributing information about dating violence prevention, between race/ethnicity and high schools responsibility for distributing information about dating violence prevention, and between race/ethnicity and schools collaboration with community agencies to prevent dating violence. Females are more likely than males to agree that high schools should be responsible for distributing information about dating violence prevention ( $\chi^2(2) = 7.321, p = .026$ ). While the greatest proportion of both White and non-White respondents agree that schools should be responsible for distributing information about dating violence prevention, a larger proportion of White respondents agreed with this statement ( $\chi^2(2) = 6.196, p = .045$ ). While the greatest proportion of both White and non-White respondents agree that schools should partner with community agencies and organizations to prevent adolescent dating violence, more White than non-White respondents agree with this statement ( $\chi^2(2) = 8.195, p = .017$ ). No significant differences were found for household income and educational degree. Also, no significant differences were reported between gender, race/ethnicity, household income, and highest educational degree earned and the variables that measured how much administrators and instructors approve of prevention programs. .

Table 13: Contingency table for gender by prevention program approval

Variable	Gender		
	Male	Female	
Prevention programs are an effective way of dealing with dating violence	Agree	82.6	75.8
	Neutral	13.0	17.7
	Disagree	4.3	6.5
It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the curriculum	Agree	71.7	80.3
	Neutral	21.7	13.1
	Disagree	6.5	6.6
Dating violence prevention programs are needed at my high school	Agree	50.0	56.5
	Neutral	43.5	37.1
	Disagree	6.5	6.5
I would be willing to incorporate a dating violence prevention program into my classroom	Yes	62.2	62.3
	No	37.8	37.7

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree).

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Table 14: Contingency table for gender by school responsibility for prevention

Variable	Gender		
	Male	Female	
High schools should be responsible for distributing information on dating violence prevention*	Agree	63.8	85.5
	Neutral	19.1	9.7
	Disagree	17.0	4.8
High schools are responsible for preventing dating violence	Agree	31.9	23.0
	Neutral	21.3	26.2
	Disagree	46.8	50.8
There is a need for schools to partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence	Agree	84.8	90.2
	Neutral	15.2	8.2
	Disagree	---	1.6

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for some of the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree).

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 15: Contingency table for race/ethnicity by prevention program approval

Variable	Race/Ethnicity		
	White	Non-White	
Prevention programs are an effective way of dealing with dating violence.	Agree	78.5	71.8
	Neutral	17.7	15.4
	Disagree	3.8	12.8
It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the curriculum	Agree	75.9	76.3
	Neutral	17.7	13.2
	Disagree	6.3	10.5
Dating violence prevention programs are needed at my high school	Agree	57.7	42.5
	Neutral	37.2	47.5
	Disagree	5.1	10.0
I would be willing to incorporate a dating violence prevention program into my classroom	Yes	62.3	66.7
	No	37.7	33.3

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree).

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Table 16: Contingency table for race/ethnicity by school responsibility for prevention

Variable	Race/Ethnicity		
	White	Non-White	
High schools should be responsible for distributing information on dating violence prevention*	Agree	81.0	62.5
	Neutral	12.7	17.5
	Disagree	6.3	20.0
High schools are responsible for preventing dating violence	Agree	27.8	23.1
	Neutral	26.6	17.9
	Disagree	45.6	59.0
There is a need for schools to partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence*	Agree	93.6	76.9
	Neutral	6.4	17.9
	Disagree	---	5.1

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for some of the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree).

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Table 17: Contingency table for household income by prevention program approval

Variable	Household Income		
	\$39,999 or Less	\$60,000 or More	
Prevention programs are an effective way of dealing with dating violence	Agree	73.3	79.1
	Neutral	13.3	17.4
	Disagree	13.3	3.5
It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the curriculum	Agree	80.0	76.5
	Neutral	13.3	17.6
	Disagree	6.7	5.9
Dating violence prevention programs are needed at my high school	Agree	80.0	50.0
	Neutral	13.3	43.0
	Disagree	6.7	7.0
I would be willing to incorporate a dating violence prevention program into my classroom	Yes	57.1	64.7
	No	42.9	35.3

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for some of the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree). The independent variable was also collapsed from 4 income categories into 2.

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

Table 18: Contingency table for household income by school responsibility for prevention

Variable	Household Income		
	\$39,999 or Less	\$40,000 or More	
High schools should be responsible for distributing information on dating violence prevention	Agree	80.0	74.7
	Neutral	20.0	12.6
	Disagree	---	12.6
High schools are responsible for preventing dating violence	Agree	33.3	23.3
	Neutral	20.0	25.6
	Disagree	46.7	51.2
There is a need for schools to partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence	Agree	93.3	88.2
	Neutral	6.7	10.6
	Disagree	---	1.2

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for some of the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree). The independent variable was also collapsed from 4 income categories into 2.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 19: Contingency table for level of education by prevention program approval

Variable		Level of Education	
		College Grad or Less	Graduate/Prof Degree
Prevention programs are an effective way of dealing with dating violence	Agree	80.4	76.7
	Neutral	15.2	16.7
	Disagree	4.3	6.7
It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the curriculum	Agree	84.4	70.0
	Neutral	11.1	21.7
	Disagree	4.4	8.3
Dating violence prevention programs are needed at my high school	Agree	62.2	45.9
	Neutral	33.3	45.9
	Disagree	4.4	8.2
I would be willing to incorporate a dating violence prevention program into my classroom	Yes	62.2	64.4
	No	37.8	35.6

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree). The independent variable was also collapsed from 6 education categories into 2.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$



Table 20: Contingency table for household income by school responsibility for prevention

Variable		Level of Education	
		College Grad or Less	Grad/Prof Degree
High schools should be responsible for distributing information on dating violence prevention	Agree	69.6	80.3
	Neutral	17.4	11.5
	Disagree	13.0	8.2
High schools are responsible for preventing dating violence	Agree	17.4	31.7
	Neutral	30.4	20.0
	Disagree	52.2	48.3
There is a need for schools to partner with community agencies to prevent dating violence	Agree	87.0	89.8
	Neutral	10.9	10.2
	Disagree	2.2	---

Note: To reduce the odds of a type II error in the chi-square analysis, original response categories for the dependent variables were collapsed from five variables (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) to three categories (1=Disagree to 3=Agree). The independent variable was also collapsed from 6 income categories into 2.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

### *Sociodemographics and Beliefs About Domestic Violence Causation*

In order to test the hypothesis that female administrators and instructors will be less accepting of domestic violence than males, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of females and males across empirically-based and myth-based statements about the causes of domestic violence. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 21. Significant gender differences were demonstrated for one of the myth-based causation of domestic violence variables: some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way ( $t(104) = 2.965, p = .004$ ). Significant gender differences were also found for one of the empirically-based causation of domestic violence variables: a lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration ( $t(103) = 2.299, p = .024$ ). Among the significant relationships, females were less likely to endorse that dating violence is a normal reaction to daily stress and frustration and that some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way.

Table 21: Bivariate results for T-test of domestic violence causation by gender

Variable	Total (N=109)	Males (N=47)	Females (N=62)
Some violence is caused by women starting physical fights	2.58	2.53	2.63
Society teaches boys to be physically aggressive	2.61	2.51	2.68
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration	1.20	1.34	1.10*
Some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way	1.42	1.68	1.24**
Some violence is caused by the way that women treat men	1.96	2.07	1.90

Note: Response categories for domestic violence causation variables for this analysis ranged from 1 to 3, with a higher number indicating more agreement. The data presented in this table represents the mean response score for both males and females.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

In order to test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who identify themselves as non-White will be less accepting of domestic violence than those who identify themselves as White, independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores of white and non-white administrators and instructors across empirically-based and myth-based statements about the causes of domestic violence. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 22. Significant racial differences were found for only one of the empirically-based domestic violence causation variables: a lot of what is called domestic violence is just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration ( $t(104) = -2.788, p=.006$ ). Administrators and instructors who are non-White are more likely to believe that dating violence is a normal reaction to daily stress and frustration.

Table 22: Bivariate results for T-test of domestic violence causation by race

Variable	Total (N=109)	White (N=78)	Non-White (N=31)
Some violence is caused by women starting physical fights	2.58	2.64	2.45
Society teaches boys to be physically aggressive	2.61	2.64	2.53
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration	1.20	1.11	1.42**
Some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way	1.42	1.36	1.58
Some violence is caused by the way that women treat men	1.96	1.99	1.90

Note: Response categories for domestic violence causation variables for this analysis ranged from 1 to 3, with a higher number indicating more agreement. The data presented in this table represents the mean response score for both males and females.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

In order to test the hypotheses that administrators and instructors who have graduate or professional degrees will be less accepting of domestic violence in comparison to those who are college graduates or less, and that administrators and instructors who have a higher yearly household income will be less accepting of domestic violence, independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores of these variables across empirically-based and myth-based statements about the causes of domestic violence. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 23 and 24. No significant results were found between administrators and instructors educational degrees and their acceptance of empirically-based or myth-based causations of domestic violence. Also, no significant results were demonstrated between administrators and instructors 2008 household income and their acceptance of empirically-based or myth-based acceptance of domestic violence causation

Table 23: Bivariate results for T-test of domestic violence causation by level of education

Variable	Total (N=109)	College graduate/Post Baccalaureate or less (N=45)	Graduate or professional degree (N=60)
Some violence is caused by women starting physical fights	2.58	2.58	2.60
Society teaches boys to be physically aggressive	2.61	2.56	2.65
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration	1.20	1.19	1.17
Some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way	1.42	1.41	1.43
Some violence is caused by the way that women treat men	1.96	2.02	1.95

Note: Response categories for domestic violence causation variables for this analysis ranged from 1 to 3, with a higher number indicating more agreement. The data presented in this table represents the mean response score for both males and females.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Table 24: Bivariate results for T-test of domestic violence causation by household income

Variable	Total (N=109)	\$39,999 or less (N=15)	\$40,000 or more (N=85)
Some violence is caused by women starting physical fights	2.58	2.00	1.96
Society teaches boys to be physically aggressive	2.61	2.60	2.64
A lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration	1.20	1.21	1.14
Some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way	1.42	1.67	1.35
Some violence is caused by the way that women treat men	1.96	2.00	1.97

Note: Response categories for domestic violence causation variables for this analysis ranged from 1 to 3, with a higher number indicating more agreement. The data presented in this table represents the mean response score for both males and females.

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001



In order to test the hypothesis that administrators and instructors who endorse empirically-based or myth-based causations of domestic violence are more likely to minimize the need for school-based dating violence prevention programs, bivariate correlation analyses were conducted. The analyses used the empirical and myth-based domestic violence causation variables taken from Worden and Carlson's (2005) study, administrators and instructors' belief that prevention programs are effective, administrators and instructors' belief that it is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum, and that dating violence prevention programs are needed at their respective high school. The Pearson correlation coefficients for these analyses are presented in Table 25. None of the correlations demonstrated significant relationships between the variables.

Table 25: Correlations between beliefs of domestic violence causation and prevention program acceptance (N=109)

Variable	Prevention programs are an effective way of addressing dating violence	It is important to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into the high school curriculum	Dating violence prevention programs are needed at the high school in which I work
Some violence is caused by women starting physical fights	.156	.059	.025
Society teaches boys to be physically aggressive	.040	.038	.151
A lot of what is called domestic violence is just a normal reaction to day to day stress and frustration	-.130	.066	-.152
Some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way	-.025	-.153	-.071
Some violence is caused by the way women treat men	-.080	-.065	-.083

Note: Responses for the dependent variables range from 1 to 5 with a higher score indicating more agreement with the statement. Responses for the independent variable are (1) yes or (2) no.

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

## **CHAPTER 5: DISSCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate how much information high school administrators and instructors have about dating violence behaviors and dating violence prevention, and to use this information to provide recommendations on how to improve dating violence prevention programs. Based on the previous literature and theoretical explanations within the areas of dating violence prevention and school safety, the current study strived to determine the relationships between high school administrators' and instructors' knowledge of and experiences with handling dating violence and prevention programs, if their demographic characteristics were associated with their approval of prevention programs and need for school intervention, and their personal domestic violence beliefs. Determining these relationships is important because they ultimately signify whether a collaborative, community based approach to preventing dating violence is possible. In order to strengthen prevention programs, school safety studies have recommended that schools, members of the community, and organizations collaborate to design and implement these interventions (Cunningham, 2000; Keys et al., 1998). Schools in particular play a rather important role in this endeavor. Schools not only serve as liaisons between the needs of the community and the educational system but administrators and teachers are in the best position to provide suggestions for how schools can implement prevention programs that focus on ending violence (Keys et al., 1998).

### Discussion of Hypotheses: Dating Violence Knowledge, Experience, and Prevention

The first set of hypotheses focused on the potential relationships between administrators' and instructors' knowledge of dating violence prevention programs, experiences handling dating

violence prevention programs or situations between students, and their personal views on how dating violence should be handled and who should be responsible. Overall, it is apparent from analyses that administrators and instructors largely agree that adolescent dating violence is an issue, that prevention programs are needed in high schools, and that they are an effective way of dealing with dating violence. It was also observed that administrators and instructors believe that dating violence is an issue that occurs in high schools as well as an issue of school safety. There is also a general agreement among administrators and instructors that they are a resource for students who are experiencing dating violence, and that they are prepared to deal with students who are experiencing dating violence. Administrators and instructors also tend to believe that the SAFE program is effective, that school personnel and students are receptive to prevention programs, and that they would be willing to incorporate dating violence prevention programs into their classrooms.

Among the univariate and bivariate analyses, some notable findings emerged. First, while administrators and instructors agree that high schools should institute prevention programs and distribute information about dating violence prevention, they do not tend to agree that high schools are responsible for preventing dating violence. This was indicated by the univariate analyses and subjective response questions, where less than half of the population believed that schools were responsible. This is also represented in the bivariate analyses. While administrators and instructors tend to agree that dating violence is an issue within high schools, many of them believe that dating violence is an issue that should be dealt with by community agencies and not necessarily by the schools themselves. Also, most administrators and

instructors who have witnessed dating violence remain neutral as to whether schools are responsible for the prevention of dating violence.

The next notable finding is that administrators and instructors in this sample appear to not have witnessed dating violence at their schools or to have been approached by students who are experiencing dating violence. These findings are consistent with previous research which has suggested that adolescents typically do not confide in formal resources, such as school personnel, when disclosing dating violence victimization (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Black et al., 2008; Weisz et al., 2007). The other issue is that administrators and instructors in this sample may not be able to recognize that they have witnessed adolescent dating violence because their conception of dating violence varies. According to the subjective data, most of the administrators and instructors in this study identified dating violence as a combination of only physical and verbal abuse, or combination of only physical and emotional abuse. These findings support the assumption made in the literature review in connection to dating violence prevalence rates that some administrators and instructors may only apply their particular definition to certain dating violence behaviors, thus making it difficult for them to identify all instances where dating violence is occurring.

Another notable finding is that most administrators and instructors are unable to identify whether prevention programs, especially those that focus on dating violence, have taken place at their schools. While the subjective responses indicated that most administrators and instructors were familiar with the SAFE program, it is clear from the data that many were unable to identify the SAFE program as a general prevention program or dating violence prevention program. Part of the issue with this identification may be that SAFE is organized by students in the form of

school-wide events, and not always implemented as part of the classroom curriculum. It may also be that SAFE does not solely focus on dating violence prevention, but instead attempts to prevent a myriad of issues (e.g. teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, gang violence, bullying, suicide, etc.) that affect adolescents. And, it may also be that while most administrators and instructors are familiar with SAFE and believe it to be an effective program, only about two-thirds have actually participated in SAFE events at their school.

Also, administrators and instructors in this study who believe that the SAFE program is effective are more likely to believe that their fellow staff members as well as students are receptive to prevention programs. However, while administrators and instructors are more likely to agree that their fellow administrators and instructors are receptive to prevention programs, they are more likely to remain neutral as to whether students are receptive to prevention programs. Since administrators and instructors in this study seem to be proponents of dating violence prevention programs, but seem uncertain as to whether students at their respective high schools care about prevention programs, their role as school personnel could be to help students become engaged in prevention strategies. As school safety research has suggested, as collaborators in dating violence prevention programs, teachers can positively impact youths by exploring their own expectations for them (Astor et al., 1999) and positive student-teacher interactions can lead to an increase in students' school involvement and success (Newman et al., 2000).

The last notable finding among these hypotheses is that training of school personnel is needed on how to handle dating violence that occurs between students. From the univariate analyses, it is evident that administrators and instructors believe that training is necessary. Some

of the results from the bivariate analyses support this. For instance, the tendency for administrators and instructors in this study to misidentify SAFE as a prevention program warrants training. Additionally, the data demonstrate that a higher proportion of administrators and instructors who have witnessed dating violence remain neutral when asked if schools are responsible for preventing dating violence. Clearly, there is some confusion as to who is responsible for preventing dating violence in this situation, which also calls for training. Also, while administrators and instructors appear to condone training on dating violence prevention, those who already feel prepared may not feel that training is a necessity. It is important that administrators and instructors realize that simply being an authority figure does not entirely prepare them to effectively handle dating violence situations.

#### Discussion of Hypotheses: Sociodemographics and Dating Violence Prevention

The second set of hypotheses focused on the relationships between sociodemographic characteristics and acceptance of school-based dating violence prevention programs. Overall, gender, race/ethnicity, annual household income, and educational degree did not profoundly affect how much administrators and instructors approve of dating violence prevention at their schools. However, what is notable here is that gender and race/ethnicity were associated with how administrators and instructors felt about their schools responsibility for prevention. Female, for instance, were more likely to believe that schools have a responsibility to distribute information about dating violence prevention in comparison to males. Additionally, White respondents were more likely to believe that schools have a responsibility to distribute information about dating violence prevention in comparison to non-Whites. Also, Whites were

also more likely to agree that there is a need for schools to collaborate with community agencies to prevent dating violence in comparison to non-Whites.

These particular findings indicate that sociodemographics may play a role in how administrators and instructors respond to dating violence prevention. More significant relationships between gender and race/ethnicity may have been found if a larger sample was used. Future studies that focus on dating violence prevention should take this into consideration and use larger sample sizes to uncover the connections between these variables.

#### Discussion of Hypotheses: Sociodemographics and Domestic Violence Causation

The last set of hypotheses focused on the potential associations between administrators' and instructors' sociodemographic characteristics and their beliefs in myth-based or empirically-based causes for domestic violence. Including this section was particularly important because of what dating violence research and Feminist theory demonstrate to us about the gendered nature of violence. Any connections between domestic violence causation variables and sociodemographic characteristics have the potential to indicate if particular administrators and instructors believe certain stereotypes that may result in the misidentification of dating violence or the sanctioning of violence in schools.

The univariate analyses reveal that a majority of males believe that domestic violence is a normal reaction to daily stress and frustration and the some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way. Females are more likely to agree that some violence is caused by women starting physical fights and that society teaches boys to be physically aggressive. Interestingly, though, almost an equal number of males and females believe that some violence is caused by the way that women treat men.



Also included in this analysis is whether administrators and instructors domestic violence beliefs influence their endorsement of dating violence prevention programs. Within this particular sample, the level of agreement with empirically-based or myth-based domestic violence causation does not significantly affect administrators and instructors attitudes about school-based prevention programs. Although significant relationships do not appear here, the correlations do suggest a negative pattern between all of the myth-based causation variables and approval of dating violence prevention programs.

The bivariate analyses revealed that gender and race/ethnicity were related to beliefs about domestic violence causation. Females were less likely to agree that dating violence is a normal reaction to daily stress and that some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way. Also, administrators and instructors who identified themselves and non-White were more likely to agree that dating violence is a normal reaction to daily stress. Annual household income and educational degree were not related to administrators and instructors beliefs about domestic violence causation.

These findings have implications for structural theories used in this study. Dating violence studies have demonstrated that females are at an increased risk to experience severe forms of dating violence (Foshee et al., 1998; O'Keefe, 1997). Feminist theory argues that schools play a role in defining these experiences for females, and that the normalization of certain dating violence behaviors by school personnel could affect if females are able to leave their abuse relationships (Ismail et al., 2007). More males than females in this study agree that dating violence is a normal reaction to daily stress and frustration and that some women who are abused secretly want to be treated that way. These attitudes could certainly affect how male

administrators and instructors approach dating violence prevention, how they interpret dating violence situations between students, and how they respond to students who may disclose to them that they are experiencing dating violence. Also, administrators and instructors in this study who identify themselves as non-White agree that dating violence is a normal reaction to daily stress and frustration. Not only could this attitude affect how non-White administrators and instructors respond to dating violence incidences and prevention, but it also has the ability to normalize some of the factors outside of the schools that can influence adolescents' violent behaviors, such as familial violence or neglect, or poverty rates. Behavioral and structural theories have discussed how these variables, for instance, influence violent behaviors in youths also affect the availability of resources that the school has to offer students (Astor et al., 1999; Chapelle, 2003; Newman et al., 2000; Theriot, 2008). More investigation is needed in this area, and race/ethnicity should be studied in broader categories than just White and non-White in order to further elaborate upon these relationships.

### Conclusions

The overall findings of this study were mostly contrary to those that were originally proposed. As opposed to what was originally thought high school administrators and instructors demonstrate moderate to high levels of comprehensiveness about dating violence behaviors and prevention programs. On average, these administrators and instructors are able to identify dating violence as both a prevalent and frequent issue, and not just merely as an occurrence in high schools but also one that threatens the safety and stability of the entire school. Also, these administrators and instructors seem to agree that dating violence prevention programs are wholly effective, and many express a need for these types of programs within their schools and within

their classrooms. Also, at least within this particular sample of administrators and instructors, their demographic characteristics did not largely affect their opinions about prevention programs or school involvement in dating violence prevention.

One of the expectations that was supported focused on the school's role in dating violence prevention. This sample of administrators and instructors believe that schools should be responsible for instructing students on how to prevent dating violence, whether by distributing information or by collaborating with communities. However, they do not believe that schools should be entirely responsible for preventing dating violence behaviors that are assumed to begin elsewhere. This sentiment is apparent in the answers to the subjective questions in this survey, where over half of administrators and instructors believed that their role is to teach and not necessarily assume a parental role. The other expectation that was supported dealt with the familiarity of prevention programs. The Student Awareness and Family Empowerment (SAFE) program is a standard prevention measure that has been instituted in all Orange County public schools for over two decades. Yet, administrators and instructors within this sample seem to have difficulty in identifying it as a valid dating violence prevention program. This perhaps suggests that more focused forms of prevention that directly involve faculty are needed, and that awareness training is important.

As a whole, the results of this study suggest that a collaborative approach to dating violence prevention is possible. As suggested by school safety studies, schools are instrumental in this collaboration that also includes members of the community, organizations and institutions, such as colleges, churches, coalitions, and non-profit agencies (Cunningham, 2000; Keys et al., 1998). From this particular study, we can conclude that administrators and teachers in this

particular regional area are familiar with prevention programs, believe that they are necessary, and believe that they are effective. This optimism about prevention programs may indicate administrators' and instructors' willingness to participate in dating violence prevention efforts alongside individuals within communities and community agencies. By including these administrators and instructors in a collaborative approach to prevention, dating violence prevention programs have the promise of being strengthened. The most immediate result from including administrators and instructors in the design and implementation of prevention programs is that they will likely become a more permanent part of the school. Over time, schools can then work with other within the community as well as their students to design dating violence prevention programs that are tailored to fit the needs of adolescents from particular backgrounds. This study is certainly just the beginning to what can become a vast and fruitful area of research. Certain limitations need to be addressed so that future sociological research can expand on this area of dating violence prevention and strengthen the overall findings.

### Limitations

There are three major limitations within the current study. First, this study used a convenience sample of public high schools within one county in central Florida. The particular schools that participated within this study are largely centralized in east Orlando and near a university, which does not necessarily comprise a diverse sample from the entire county. While a few of the schools in this sample were more diverse than others in terms of student composition and socioeconomic status, the majority of the participating schools had a very similar population of students. This limited the current study's analysis because it did not allow for a comparative examination between the attitudes and knowledge of administrators and

instructors from disadvantaged schools with those that are located in wealthy communities. The second limitation related to the first in that the sample size for this study was small and somewhat homogenous. There are currently nineteen public high schools in Orange County, Florida, and only six granted participation in this study. The potential number of participants was 618, and only 109 usable responses were collected, resulting in an 18% response rate. Also, while there was a substantial amount of both males and females who participated in this study, the responses reflect mostly female, White, non-Hispanic individuals who have a graduate level degree or a professional degree and earn \$40,000 or more per year. While most administrators and instructors will likely have at least a college degree if not a graduate degree, differences in gender, racial, ethnic, and income distributions could affect some of the findings of this study. The final limitation is that this study is somewhat exploratory. This study presents the first known data set that examines high school administrators' and instructors' knowledge and attitudes toward dating violence and prevention programs, and thus there is currently no basis for comparison for this data. Hence, this study should be used as a basis for future research in the areas of dating violence prevention and school safety, and replication is both encouraged and required.

#### Contribution and Future Directions

While this study has its limitations, the strength of this study is that it presents a framework for future sociological and educational research to expand upon as well as a data set that indicates its importance as an area for future investigation. This study also bridges the literature on dating violence prevention with that of school safety studies, and uses elements of both areas of research to suggest a plan on how to improve school-based prevention programs.

This new information has the ability to impact youths from different types of communities. By improving prevention efforts in schools, adolescents who are at risk for abusive relationships or engaged in abusive relationships will have more options and resources to end this violence before it has a chance to persist into adulthood intimate relationships.

Future research in this area should begin with replication of this study in the Orlando regional area. More involvement from public high schools in this metropolitan region is needed to help clarify the relationships that were hypothesized to occur in this study. It would then be useful to expand this particular data collection and analysis to other regional areas, whether they are exclusive to the Orlando metropolitan region, state-wide, or even national. By gathering data from different areas, regional comparisons can be made between administrators' and instructors' knowledge of and attitudes about dating violence and prevention. This data would be able to indicate whether school personnel from different areas are more receptive to dating violence prevention; if differences are found, investigations could then be made into why school personnel from different regional areas are more apt to champion prevention efforts. Also, regional comparisons of administrators' and instructors' knowledge of and attitudes toward dating violence and prevention could serve as a basis for strengthening those few studies that suggest that prevention programs would demonstrate more effectiveness if they were tailored to meet the needs of youths in particular communities (Weisz & Black, 2001; Whitaker et al., 2005).

Also, there is a need in the future for research on school-based prevention programs to evaluate the responses of students and members of the community to dating violence prevention. If the success of prevention programs is dependent upon community involvement and

collaboration, there are more individuals involved in this effort than just administrators and instructors. It is equally as important to the viability of prevention programs that members of the community, such as students, parents or guardians, directors of programs and centers, and clergy, for instance, are knowledgeable and willing to participate in program design and implementation.

Once a vast library of literature and data in this area is secured, research can then progress to truly determine how the school safety model of collaboration can work to make prevention programs as effective as possible. Areas of research should focus on how to facilitate community collaboration, how to implement these programs in high schools (e.g. permanent part of the curriculum or voluntary to students who need them), how to reach the certain needs of students in the community who may be experiencing dating violence, and how to prepare schools to communicate with students about dating violence prevention, actively advocate that dating violence be reduced so that it does not threaten the safety of the school environment, and even raise public awareness. Overall, the current study provides the basis and support for these future areas of research. Therefore, it is important that these objectives be considered in forthcoming research on dating violence prevention.

**APPENDIX A: UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL**





University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

**From:** UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138  
**To:** Denise Crisafi  
**Date:** October 15, 2009

Dear Researcher:

On 10/15/2009, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Initial Review  
Project Title: The Response of Administrators and Instructors in the Orange County, Florida Public High School System to Dating Violence Prevention Programs: Recommendations for Program Development and Implementation.  
Investigator: Denise Crisafi  
IRB Number: SBE-09-06475  
Funding Agency: None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 10/15/2009 11:10:17 AM EDT

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Turchin".

IRB Coordinator

**APPENDIX B: ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS APPROVAL**

Submit this form and a copy of your proposal to: <b>Accountability, Research, and Assessment</b> P.O. Box 271 Orlando, FL 32802-0271	<b>Orange County Public Schools</b>  <b>RESEARCH REQUEST FORM</b>	<b>Your research proposal should include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Title</li> <li>• Purpose and Research Problem</li> <li>• Instruments</li> <li>• Procedures and Proposed Data Analysis</li> </ul>	
Requester's Name <u>Dennis N. Crisafi</u> Date <u>September 10, 2009</u>			
Address <u>876 Upper Cape Rd. Apt. 103</u> <u>Orange City FL</u> <u>32763</u> Phone <u>(407) 823-6402</u> <small>Street City, State Zip</small>			
Institutional Affiliation <u>University of Central Florida - Sociology Department</u>			
Project Director or Advisor <u>Dr. Jana Jasinski</u> Phone <u>(407) 823-3568</u>			
Address <u>4000 Central Florida Blvd./Phillips Hall, Room 403</u> <u>Orlando, FL 32816-1360</u>			
Degree Sought (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Associate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Masters <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable			
Project Title: <u>The Response of Administrators and Instructors in the Orange County, Florida Public High School System to Dating Violence Prevention Programs: Recommendations for Program Development and Implementation.</u>			
<b>ESTIMATED INVOLVEMENT</b>			
PERSONNEL/CENTERS	NUMBER	AMOUNT OF TIME (DAYS, HOURS, ETC.)	SPECIFY/DESCRIBE GRADES, SCHOOLS, SPECIAL NEEDS, ETC.
Students	0	N/A	N/A
Teachers	approx. 200	15 minutes/one time online survey	OCPS Public High Schools/ Grades 9-12
Administrators	approx. 200	15 minutes/one time online survey	OCPS Public High Schools/ Grades 9-12
Schools/Centers	19	15 minutes/one time online survey	OCPS Public High Schools/Grades 9-12
Others (specify)			
Specify possible benefits to students/school system: <u>A better understanding of how the attitudes of high school personnel influence the success of dating violence prevention programs and also share the experiences of youths who are being victimized by dating violence.</u>			
<b>ASSURANCE</b>			
Using the proposed procedures and instrument, I hereby agree to conduct research in accordance with the policies of the Orange County Public Schools. Deviations from the approved procedures shall be cleared through the Senior Director of Accountability, Research, and Assessment. Reports and materials shall be supplied as specified.			
Requester's Signature <u>Dennis Crisafi</u>			RECEIVED SEP 14 2009
Approval Granted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Date: <u>9-18-09</u>	
Signature of the Senior Director for Accountability, Research, and Assessment:		<u>Lee Balcer</u>	

**APPENDIX C: 2008-2009 STATISTICS FOR ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC  
HIGH SCHOOLS**

School	Minority Rate	Percent Free Reduced Lunch	FCAT Grade 2008-2009
School 1	80%	59%	C
School 2	n/a	n/a	n/a
School 3	62%	46%	D
School 4	49%	33%	C
School 5	65%	43%	B
School 6	39%	26%	A
School 7	56%	39%	C
School 8	41%	29%	A
School 9	83%	53%	B
School 10	60%	34%	B
School 11	97%	69%	D
School 12	69%	44%	B
School 13	99%	79%	D
School 14	n/a	n/a	n/a
School 15	90%	66%	D
School 16	62%	45%	D
School 17	52%	25%	B
School 18	65%	49%	C
School 19	55%	33%	B

Note: Schools 1-6 participated in this study. Schools 7-19 did not participate in this study, but percentages and FCAT grades are provided for comparison. All of the schools listed were public high schools in Orange County, Florida during the 2008-2009 school year. School names are not provided to protect anonymity.

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