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## VICTIMIZATION PREVENTION PROGRAMS: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE AND REACTIONS

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**Abstract**—The National Youth Victimization Prevention Study interviewed a representative sample of 2,000 U.S. children and their caretakers about the children's experience with child abuse and victimization prevention programs. Two-thirds of the children reported being exposed to at least one program at some time, 37% within the last year. Programs that gave children a chance to practice, that prompted discussions with parents, and that included information on dealing with bullies were more likely to result in utilization of the program skills. Although satisfaction levels were generally high for all groups, girls, black children, and children from lower socioeconomic status families, as well as their parents, had more positive reactions and reported more skill utilization. Some children did report, and their parents confirmed, more worry about abuse and fear of adults. However, the children with increased worry and fear were also the children who themselves and their parents reported the most positive feelings about the programs and the most skill utilization. This suggests that the level of worry and fear induced by the programs was appropriate to the subject.

**Key Words**—Sexual abuse prevention, Child victimization, Abuse prevention programs, Prevention skills.

### INTRODUCTION

IN RESPONSE TO growing public and professional concern about child abuse and other crimes against children, schools, and other community organizations in the 1980s began to develop and implement programs aimed at helping children to avoid and to report sexual abuse and other victimizations. Such programs were not an entirely new concept, since many schools and organizations had long-standing arrangements with local police or other public safety officials to teach children about personal safety. But the programs of the 1980s were a departure in their strong emphasis on sexual abuse and in their use of more innovative and intensive teaching techniques (Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992). Although the programs varied widely in their format and their content, most contained certain core concepts: helping children to recognize sexual abuse, teaching them to say no to or otherwise avoid unwanted overtures, encouraging them to tell an adult about such episodes, and assuring them that such incidents were never their own fault (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1992).

These programs have been adopted widely and quickly throughout the United States (Breen, Daro, & Romano, 1991; Kohl, 1993). In recent years, however, some voices of caution have been raised, pointing out that these programs have been developed and disseminated without a great deal of monitoring and systematic evaluation (Krivacska, 1990; Reppucci & Haugaard, 1989), and in some cases questioning their underlying concepts and philosophy (Berrick &

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Gilbert, 1991; Malton, 1992). In response, an increasing number of evaluation studies have appeared (Finkelhor & Strapko, 1992). Most have demonstrated that children acquire the concepts they have been taught, a few show that children are prompted to disclose (Kolko, Moser, & Hughes, 1989) and at least one has shown children act as instructed in a simulated abduction attempt (Kraizer, Fryer, & Miller, 1988). But many facets of children's exposure and reaction to these programs have yet to be systematically examined.

The National Youth Victimization Prevention Study was a nationwide survey designed to evaluate the exposure and reaction that young people are currently having to programs intended to prevent sexual abuse and other kinds of victimization. The present paper investigates several important gaps in our knowledge about such programs. First, how many children nationwide have received exposure to such programs, at what ages, and to what types of programs? Second, how have children and their parents evaluated and responded to the programs they have been exposed to?

### METHODOLOGY

The study interviewed by telephone a sample of 2,000 young people (1,042 boys and 958 girls) between the ages of 10 and 16, and their caretakers. Although many children younger than 10 are exposed to prevention education programs, we judged that valid interviews with younger children might be difficult to obtain and conduct within the study's methodology. The sample was selected using a multistage area probability/random digit dialing strategy. This technique was specifically designed to ensure that a sample was nationally representative, based on both geographic stratification and important demographic characteristics such as gender and racial/ethnic identification.

After households were screened for the presence of appropriate age children, interviewers spoke with the primary caretaker in each household, asking him or her some questions relevant to child victimization prevention and explaining the objectives of the study. They then obtained parental permission to interview the designated child (the one with the most recent birthday in the case of multiple eligible children). Speaking to the children, the interviewers again explained the study, obtained their consent, and proceeded with an interview that lasted between 30 minutes and an hour.

The participation rate was 88% of the adults approached, and 82% of the eligible children in the households of cooperating adults, quite respectable given that the study involved children, a potentially sensitive topic, a lengthy interview and required the consent of two individuals. Four-fifths of the refusals came from the caretakers denying permission to interview the children and the rest from the children not wishing to be interviewed.

Telephone interviewing has perhaps been underestimated as an effective means of surveying young people. Children of this age generally spend a lot of time talking on the phone with friends, often about personal subjects. Moreover, telephone interviews give children a great deal of control over a potentially threatening situation. By simply hanging up, they can always terminate this kind of anonymous interview, something much more difficult in a face-to-face encounter.

In our survey debriefings, two-thirds of the youth said the interview had been a good experience for them. Only five children reported that it had been bad. The rest indicated neither bad or good. Despite our asking about experiences of personal victimization including sexual victimization, only 39 said they found anything in the interview upsetting.

The final sample was well matched to U.S. Census statistics for a population of this age: about 10% black, 7% Hispanic, 3% other races including Asian and Native American. Fourteen percent came from families with incomes of under \$20,000. Fifteen percent were living with

Table 1. Exposure to School-Based Prevention Education Programs

Current Grade	Ever	Last Year
All Grades (n = 2000)	67%	37%
4 (n = 139)	53%	38%
5 (n = 265)	62%	43%
6 (n = 344)	68%	43%
7 (n = 314)	73%	41%
8 (n = 256)	71%	37%
9 (n = 284)	71%	38%
10 (n = 259)	66%	26%
11 (n = 138)	68%	16%

a single parent, another 13% with a parent and stepparent, and 3% with some nonparental caretaker.

#### *Exposure to School-Based Programs*

Overall, 67% of the children (95% confidence interval: 60%–74%) in this national sample reported having received a school-based abuse or victimization prevention program at some time, 37% (95% confidence interval: 30%–44%) within the last year. Of children who reported having any programs, 49% had been exposed to two or more. This is an impressive level of exposure, and consistent with other sources (Breen, Daro, & Romano, 1991; Helge, 1992), shows widespread adoption of programs in recent years by schools.

The younger children, especially those in grades 5 and 6, were the most likely to have received a program in the last year, and the oldest were the least likely (Table 1). This suggests that schools have been concentrating their attention on elementary-age children, a trend consistent with the philosophy of many prevention educators.

However, few children (only 8%) remembered having received exposure in grades 1 through 3, suggesting that most of the training is starting later than many prevention educators recommend. Moreover, there is evidence that training is a relatively recent addition to the curriculum: The proportion of children saying that they had ever received such training peaks for the seventh graders and declines somewhat among the older children. More of these older children had apparently passed through elementary years without receiving any program.

The demographic data show the programs to be extremely well-distributed. There were no regional, racial, or class differences in children's exposure. There were some differences, however, according to the type of schools. Children who attended private, nonparochial schools (a small 5% of the population) were much less likely to have received a program than children in public or parochial schools; only 19% had received a program in the last year compared to 39% of parochial schools and 37% of public schools ( $\chi^2 = 17.6, p < .05$ ). This may reflect the orientation of two different sets of private schools: (a) elite schools, where parents and teachers feel remote from the risk of victimizations; and (b) conservative private schools, which cater to parents who do not want school personnel teaching nonacademic subjects or subjects that some parents believe are better left to parents themselves. However, we are limited to speculation as this hypothesis goes beyond the actual scope of the data.

In addition to school programs, a small number of the children (4%) reported having received a prevention education program elsewhere—the main site being churches. However, most of these children had received school programs as well. Nonschool programs were the sole program for a scant 1% of the children; thus, the findings of this study essentially concern school-based programs.

Table 2. Program Contents Cited By Children

Topic	Percent
Tell an Adult	95%
Kidnapping	81%
Good Touch/Bad Touch	81%
Yell/Scream	80%
Sexual Abuse	80%
Incest	74%
Abuse Not Child's Fault	74%
Confusing Touch	70%
Bullies	63%

### *Program Content*

We asked children many questions about the content of the program they had received (the one they remembered the best, if they had received several). According to the children, most of the programs covered most of the topics that educators would like to see included, such as sexual abuse and sexual abuse in the family, the touch continuum, strategies for stopping abuse attempts, admonitions to tell an adult, and reassurances that abuse is never the child's fault (Table 2).

Above all else, the programs included or the children remembered the admonitions to "tell an adult." The content on sexual abuse and kidnapping were also among the most frequently mentioned. Among the least frequently covered topics was the problem of bullies. This is unfortunate since from other portions of the survey, it is clear that being bullied or beaten up by peers was a prime concern for children.

Some of the program content does get varied according to the age of the children. Sexual abuse and sexual abuse in the family were topics that appeared more systematically in the reports from older children. Some schools may feel this is too highly charged for their younger students. Kidnapping, by contrast, appears to be more stressed with the younger children. It is a widespread notion (but mistaken, see Finkelhor, Hotaling, & Sedlak, 1990) that younger children are more vulnerable to being kidnapped.

Prevention educators believe that programs tend to be more effective when they occur on multiple occasions, when they allow children opportunities to practice the skills they are learning, and also when programs involve parents, who can reinforce the skills at a later time at home. When asked about these components, 72% of the children said the program had been more than a single-day presentation and almost a third said it had continued over period of a few weeks. As for practice, a little more than half (55%) of the children who had received training said that it included a chance to practice skills right in class. Only about 1 in 10 children (11%), however, reported that their parents had been asked to come to a meeting or class related to the program. (However, children's memories in this regard may be less reliable since they may not have attended such meetings themselves.) Still, more than half the children (54%) did end up discussing the program at home with their parents or caretakers. Younger children were nearly twice as likely as older children to have discussed the programs at home ( $\chi^2 = 25.8, p < .001$ ).

### *Evaluation of Programs*

When asked for their evaluation of the programs and their usefulness, the children and their parents were quite positive. Almost all the children (95%) said they would recommend the program to other children. Almost three-quarters (72%) described it as helpful. Two percent called it not helpful and 26% somewhere in between helpful and not helpful. Almost half

(46%) found it interesting, with only 5% describing it as boring and 49% in between interesting and boring. When asked whether they already knew the things they were being taught, 17% said they already knew them. The rest said the program was primarily things they didn't know (5%) or a mixture of things they did and didn't know (78%).

Parents were also generally positive. Virtually all found the program very (52%) or somewhat (46%) helpful. There was also virtual unanimity that as a result of the programs, children were more aware of the problem (92%) and better prepared to avoid the danger (94%).

Positive ratings from the children were associated with certain types of programs. The multi-day trainings and those that gave them an opportunity to practice in class were seen as more interesting and helpful. The topics of sexual abuse, bullies, and confusing touch were most associated with the program being seen as interesting, and all the topics were associated with the program being helpful. When the program had information for the children to take home and when it prompted a discussion with parents, it was more likely to be seen as both interesting and helpful. Moreover, interest in the programs did not wane after multiple exposures; children exposed to three or more programs actually found the programs more interesting than those experiencing their first exposure.

#### *Putting the Skills to Use*

In addition to their evaluation of the programs, we asked children to try to remember concrete instances in which the program information had proved useful to them. Forty percent said it had specifically helped them, and they cited examples such as getting out of fights or avoiding suspicious strangers. A quarter said that they had used the information to help a friend. Five percent said that there had been some time when they had had to say no to an adult and they thought of the program. Fourteen percent remembered a time when they decided to tell an adult about something because of what they had learned in the program, although no information is available regarding the specific content of these disclosures (i.e., whether they involved telling an adult about past or ongoing abuse). These are encouraging signs of the specific utility of the programs, but, of course, we do not know whether the young people would have done such things even in the absence of any training.

One sign that the programs actually contributed to these behaviors was the fact that children who had received programs containing some specific components seemed more likely to have actually used it. For example, consistent with Kraizer et al.'s (1988) evidence, children in the current sample who had been given a chance to practice skills in class were indeed more likely to say they had used the skills in real life, to have said no to an adult, to have told someone and to have helped a friend. Also consistent with the philosophy of prevention educators, programs that were multi-day presentations and those that gave children information to take home had a greater likelihood of actually being put to work. Moreover, the children most likely to have used the skills they had been taught were the ones who had had discussions about the program with their parents. Children who had been exposed to several programs were more likely to have used the information to help a friend.

Interestingly, one of the more influential program components was a discussion about how to deal with bullies. This was among the less frequently covered topics, but when it was included, children were more likely to say they had made use of the program knowledge. From other aspects of the survey and other studies we know that dealing with bullies is the most common kind of victimization threat children deal with (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Apparently programs that address themselves to this very relevant concern seem to get utilized more.

On the other hand, some program components seemed to make little difference. For example, when programs included exhortations to "tell adults," it had little effect. Children who had

Table 3. Children's Ratings of Programs by Sex, Race, Parents' Education

Rating	Sex		Race		Parent Education				
	Girls	Boys	Black	White	LT HS	HS Grad	Some Coll	Coll Grad	Coll+
Helpful	75%	69%	80%	71%	79%	77%	71%	66%	66%**
Interesting	53%	40%***	67%	43%***	50%	49%	45%	45%	42%
Used the Information	45%	36%*	59%	38%***	51%	46%	40%	38%	26%***
Used Info to Help a Friend	31%	19%***	42%	23%***	36%	24%	25%	21%	25%*

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

received such exhortations were no more likely than any other children to have actually told an adult, nor did they use the information in any other way. This is probably because children are given this kind of exhortation so frequently from so many sources that one more time does not make a difference.

Another component that made little difference was the identity of the person teaching the prevention program. A question often debated by prevention educators is whether programs are more effective when presented by familiar school personnel or by outside prevention educators with special training and extensive experience. Children reported that about half the school-based training (46%) was done by school personnel alone. Police officers were involved in about a third (37%) of the programs and an outsider in about a quarter (27%). But the identity of the trainer made no difference in children's evaluation of the programs or the degree to which they utilized the knowledge. Of course, the identity of the trainer is not the same as their skill and specialization. The outside personnel mentioned by the children were not necessarily people with specialized training. But these findings support other research (Hazzard, Kleemeier, & Webb, 1990) suggesting that whether the trainers come from inside or outside the school makes little difference.

#### *Differences by Gender, Age, Race, and Social Status*

In addition to some program content that made a difference, we also found that there were important differences according to characteristics of children and their families. Not all children and parents felt equally positive about the programs, and not all children were equally likely to use their skills. First, there were some predictable but also some unexpected patterns in who gave programs high ratings. On the predictable side, girls tended to find the programs more interesting, more helpful, and full of more new information (Table 3), a finding consistent with a recent evaluation of teen suicide prevention programs (Shaffer, Garland, Vieland, Underwood, & Busner, 1991). Boys may have rated the programs less helpful, interesting, and new because they had learned some of this information on their own. But the disinterest of boys may also have stemmed from bravado combined with the fact that some programs may have been designed or perceived by the boys as having been designed with girls as the primary audience.

Younger children also tended to find the programs more helpful and containing more new information. Older children probably were more likely to have heard the information before, and thus felt more boredom about the training.

But girls and younger children were also more likely to claim to have used the training skills. More girls than boys helped friends with the information they got. And younger children were more likely to have used it in some specific situation and to have told an adult because of their training. Girls perhaps are more prone to helping friends in general, and boys are

perhaps more reluctant to show that they needed to be taught anything about self-protection, but it may also be that the programs made more of a lasting impact on girls and younger children.

In addition to the positive response of girls and younger children, the unexpected finding from this portion of the survey was that black children and children from lower socioeconomic status (SES) families were also much more likely to have had positive reactions and to have used the information. (Our measure of SES here is the educational level of the primary parent; low SES children were those whose parents had not finished high school.) By significant margins more children of black and of less-educated parents found the programs interesting. For example, 67% of the black children found the programs interesting compared to 43% of the white children ( $p < .001$ ). The children whose parents did not finish high school found the programs more useful than the children of those with a graduate education by a margin of 51% to 26% ( $p < .001$ ) and more helpful by a margin of 79% to 66% ( $p < .01$ ). More blacks than whites (59% vs. 38%,  $p < .001$ ) and more low SES than high SES (51% vs. 26%,  $p < .001$ ) said they had used the information in specific situations.

It is important to note that we cannot say conclusively that the effects of race and SES are independent of one another, because of the small number of middle-class minority respondents. This limitation should be kept in mind when interpreting these findings.

The enthusiasm of black and lower SES children for the programs might in theory be explained by the fact that they lived in environments where the information was perceived as more useful and important. However, the study asked parents and children to rate the dangerousness of the communities where they lived and in multivariate analyses, this did not explain the positive responses of black and lower SES children.

We also considered the possibility that black and lower SES children might be more enthusiastic because the programs were providing them information that they were not getting at home. However, this was not the case, either. The black and lower SES children reported that they got information from their parents about sexual abuse just as often as other children. In fact, when we asked the parents themselves about information that they had provided, the high SES parents were the ones who said they had given the *least* information to their children.

Another possibility is that the programs leave a more favorable impression on black and lower SES children because of their educational approach. If the regular academic programs are based on individualized competitive learning, the prevention education with its more practical, multi-media, skills-oriented approach may provide a positive contrast for children who may be struggling in other areas. Thus they may rate it favorably and make use of it.

The positive attitude toward the programs was not limited to the lower SES children. The lower SES *parents* shared these positive perceptions as well. They were substantially more likely to report that the programs had been helpful: 60% of those with only a high school education rated the program very helpful versus only 38% of those parents with a graduate education ( $p < .001$ ). Thus, the group that was least enthusiastic about the programs appears to be the best educated parents. More than half (58%) of these parents called the programs only somewhat helpful or worse. Perhaps these parents are the ones who most object to schools devoting time to what they consider academically irrelevant material. Or perhaps they have the most qualms about the intellectual content or the proven effectiveness of the programs.

#### *Possible Negative Reactions*

In spite of positive reactions from children and parents and testimony that they had put some of what they learned into practice, the survey also inquired about possible negative effects from the programs. We asked the children themselves about whether the program had made them worry about being abused or made them scared of adults. We also asked the parents

Table 4. Parents Noting in Children More Fearfulness, Anxiety, and Disobedience, by Educational Level of Parent

Parent's Education	% Parents Noting in Children More:		
	Fear of Adults	Anxiety in General	Disobedience
Less Than HS	34%	31%	9%
HS Graduate	16%	17%	5%
Some College	14%	13%	2%
College Graduate	15%	12%	3%
College +	12%	8%	1%
	$\chi^2 = 24.3, p < .001$	$\chi^2 = 30.9, p < .001$	$\chi^2 = 17.9, p < .01$

if they had observed increased fears, anxieties, or disobedience as a result of the program. Overall, 8% of the children said the program made them worry a lot and 53% worry a little about being abused. The program made 2% worry a lot and 9% worry a little about being abused by a family member. And the program scared 2% a lot and 20% a little of adults.

The parents of 16% of the children confirmed more fearfulness of adults as a result of the program and 15% confirmed that it had made their children more anxious in general. The parents of 3% said that their children had become more disobedient. These percentages are generally consistent with those obtained in other prevention program evaluation studies, both from parents (Hazzard, Webb, & Kleemeier, 1988) and from children (Binder & McNiel, 1987).

These findings suggest that the programs do increase levels of fear and anxiety in some children. However, the meaning of this can be interpreted in different ways. Fears and anxieties can be bad if they are unwarranted and preoccupy children and inhibit their spontaneity, curiosity, and access to valuable experiences. But some types of fears and anxieties about true dangers are adaptive, especially when matched with skills and resources for coping with the dangers. Safety programs intend for children to have some anxiety and fear about the dangers they warn about. When teenagers are taught about auto safety, for example, the programs intend to instill some fear and anxiety about the dangers of speeding or driving while drunk. Similarly, victimization prevention programs want to instill some concern about abuse and victimization. In fact, the children who reported that they had become more worried about being abused may have been trying to convey to our interviewers that they had indeed taken the message of the programs seriously.

One sign, however, that the anxieties and fears might not be altogether of the benign variety was the fact that they were not evenly distributed among the children. They tended to occur disproportionately among ostensibly more vulnerable children: the younger, the black, and those from lower SES backgrounds. The parents reported that the youngest children were almost three times more likely than the oldest to have become more fearful of adults as a result of the programs (23% for the fifth graders vs. 12% for the eleventh graders,  $p = .067$ ). According to the parents, a full one-third of the children from the lowest educated families were more fearful or more anxious, and they also had the most disobedience (Table 4). The children from well-educated backgrounds had much less fearfulness (12%,  $p < .001$ ) and less general anxiety (8%,  $p < .001$ ).

The parents' testimony of disproportionate fear and anxiety among vulnerable children was corroborated by what the children themselves said. Younger children and those from less-educated backgrounds reported that the programs made them worry more about possible abuse. Younger children were also more likely to say the program made them scared of adults. Three times as many black as white children (21% vs. 6%,  $p < .001$ ) said the program made them worry a lot about being abused. The percentage of black children who worried a lot about abuse in their families was also higher (6% vs. 1%,  $p < .001$ ).



Table 5. Children's Use of Skills by Level of Worry and Fear

Level of Worry	Used the Information	Told an Adult
Worried about Abuse		
A lot	64%	19%
A little	43%	17%
Not at all	33%	9%
	$\chi^2 = 36.6, p < .001, n = 1367$	$\chi^2 = 16.8, p < .001, n = 1362$
Fearful of Adults		
A lot	65%	24%
A little	53%	19%
Not at all	37%	12%
	$\chi^2 = 30.8, p < .001, n = 1374$	$\chi^2 = 11.0, p < .01, n = 1369$

Once again, we looked for the possibility that these increased worries might be the adaptive responses of those living in the most dangerous communities. However, the higher level of anxieties and fears among black and lower SES children were not explained by living in more dangerous neighborhoods.

However, possibly the most provocative observation about the fears and anxieties was that they occurred among the *same groups of children who also gave and whose parents gave the most positive feedback about the programs and their usefulness*. For example, 92% of the children who said the program scared them "a lot" about adults rated the program as helpful compared to only 70% of the children who said it hadn't scared them "at all" ( $p < .01$ ). Similarly, 87% of the children who were caused to worry a lot about being abused also rated the programs as helpful versus 67% of those who were "not at all" worried ( $p < .001$ ). In multivariate analyses, reporting "worry" was the most powerful predictor of rating the program as "helpful."

In addition, those with increased worries and fears were the ones who had been more likely to actually *use the skills* they had been taught (Table 5). For example, 64% of the children who said the program made them worry "a lot" about being abused said they had actually used the knowledge in some specific situation compared to only 33% ( $p < .001$ ) of the children who hadn't been worried "at all." Exactly twice as many children who had been scared "a lot" by the programs actually told an adult about something as a result of the program. These signs of very positive responses from the same children who reported worry and anxiety must temper any hasty judgment about what worry and anxiety mean.

One interpretation of the finding, consistent with our earlier discussion, is that the fears and anxieties may have been disclosed by children and parents as testimony to an appropriate, not bad, outcome. When children said the program made them worry about being abused, they were telling interviewers, in effect, that they were taking the message of the training seriously. It should especially be realized that the parents who gave the programs good ratings were the ones most aware of their children's increased anxieties and fears. The parents who noted that their children had become more anxious in general rated the program as more helpful than the parents who noted no such effect (62% vs. 49%,  $p < .05$ ).

The fact that they gave good ratings in spite of seeing these effects may mean that they actually approved of the greater anxiety and fear and saw it as a useful way of helping the children avoid victimization. At the very least, it should restrain professionals from assuming that reports of increased fear and anxiety are a negative outcome of training programs (Garbarino, 1987), if the parents of the children showing the majority of such feelings fail to downgrade the value of the programs on this account, and in fact, give even more positive ratings.

### CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study suggest that the majority of children in the U.S. are being exposed to victimization prevention education programs. The findings suggest that the overall

response of children and parents to these programs is positive, confirming the results of specific program evaluation studies (Hazzard et al., 1990).

The study was somewhat unique in its design, in that, unlike many evaluations it did not examine the response to one or two particular programs whose components were known to the researchers. The advantage to this design is that it allowed us to evaluate the response to prevention instruction as it is currently available to all American children, the good and the bad, taken all together. The disadvantage to this approach is that we cannot generalize the findings to particular programs. Some are undoubtedly more effective than others, but we cannot identify them specifically by name or locale.

There are also some specific policy recommendations from some of the findings. First, prevention education programs need to do more to ensure that children discuss programs and their concepts with their parents. It is clear from our findings that when children have such discussions, they are more likely to use the concepts they have learned. Parental involvement is a goal many programs already have. But it is not as regular a feature of programs as some other components.

Second, prevention education programs need to devote more emphasis to dealing with bullies and threats to children from other children. According to study findings, this specific program component seemed to result in more concept utilization, probably because of its great relevance to the circumstances of many children. However, it was a topic that many programs failed to touch upon.

Third, prevention education programs need to improve their appeal to boys. The study revealed signs that boys are moderately less enthusiastic about the programs they have received and make less use of the skills. It is possible that educators and programs have a subtle bias, communicating more effectively to girls. Or it may simply be that boys, because of their peer culture, are a somewhat more resistant audience. In any case, educators should try to overcome the obstacles to reaching boys.

Fourth, educators and researchers need to better understand and capitalize on the special appeal these programs have to minority and lower SES youth. The enthusiasm of these youth is certainly a positive sign that the programs are reaching what for many educators feel is a difficult-to-reach audience. But by understanding the sources of this enthusiasm, educators may help improve the appeal of programs to other groups of young people.

Finally, more research is needed to understand what it means when children and parents report increased anxiety and fear in children as a result of the programs. Because they were associated with positive ratings and use of the concepts, this study strongly suggests that such anxiety and fear are not signs that the programs are having negative effects. What negative effects are occurring may need to be assessed with more subtle and differentiated indicators.

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**Résumé**—Dans cette étude nationale pour prévenir que les jeunes deviennent des victimes, on a interviewé 2,000 enfants américains ainsi que les personnes les ayant à charge, dans le contexte d'un échantillon représentatif. L'interview portait sur les programmes pour prévenir les mauvais traitements et la victimisation. Les deux tiers des enfants ont rapporté avoir fait partie au moins d'un programme au cours de leurs études; durant l'année précédente, le chiffre était de 37 p.c. Les programmes conçus pour permettre aux enfants de pratiquer ce qu'ils ont appris, les programmes qui encouragent les échanges entre parents et enfants et ceux qui comprennent des informations sur la façon d'affronter les enfants agressifs sont les programmes qui sont les plus aptes à faire en sorte que les enfants auront recours aux compétences apprises. Bien que les niveaux de satisfaction étaient généralement élevés dans tous les groupes—les filles, les enfants noirs et les enfants issus de milieux socioéconomiques inférieurs ainsi que leurs parents étaient ceux qui avaient des réactions plus positives et qui rapportaient avoir utilisé plus de compétences apprises. Certains enfants—et ceci a été confirmé par leurs parents—ont avoué avoir été plus inquiets par rapport à des expériences abusives et plus appréhensifs devant les adultes en général. Cependant, ces enfants étaient aussi ceux qui étaient les plus heureux des programmes de prévention et qui rapportaient avoir le plus de compétences apprises, chose que leurs parents ont confirmée. Ceci sous-entend que les inquiétudes et les craintes vis-à-vis des programmes étaient propres au sujet en question.

**Resumen**—El Estudio Nacional de Prevención de la Victimización de la Juventud entrevistó una muestra representativa de 2,000 niños americanos y sus cuidadores sobre la experiencia de los niños con el abuso y los programas de prevención del abuso a los niños. Dos tercios de los niños reportaron haber sido expuestos a por lo menos uno de los programas en algún momento, el 37% en el último año. Los programas que le dieron a los niños una oportunidad de practicar, que promovió discusiones con los padres, y que incluyeron información sobre cómo manejar a los abusadores fueron los que mejor posibilidad tenían para utilizar las ventajas del programa. A pesar de que los niveles de satisfacción fueron generalmente altos para todos los grupos, muchachas, niños negros, y niños de familias de bajo nivel socioeconómico, así como sus padres, tuvieron mejores reacciones positivas y reportaron haber utilizado mejor las destrezas aprendidas. Algunos niños sí reportaron, y sus padres lo confirmaron, más preocupación sobre el abuso y miedo a los adultos. Sin embargo, los niños con un aumento de preocupación y miedo fueron también los niños y los padres que reportaron más sentimientos positivos acerca de los programas y la mayor utilización de las destrezas. Esto sugiere que el nivel de preocupación y miedo inducido por los programas fue adecuado para el sujeto.