Original Research

Assessing a comprehensive approach to prevent sexual violence on campus: Implications for program improvement

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ABSTRACT

Background: On college campuses, sexual violence (or sexual assault) is at epidemic proportions. As many as one in four college women experience sexual assaults, most of which are not reported, likely due to the adverse reactions stemming from social norms and attitudes about rape. To prevent sexual violence on college campuses, the multi-level factors influencing it necessitate implementation of a holistic approach channeled at all levels. The present multi-method study assessed the feasibility and effectiveness of a peer educator (PE)-facilitated program implemented as part of a comprehensive sexual assault prevention program in three small Georgia colleges.

Methods: Student participants (N=128) were questioned on their attitude toward rape myths, intention to rape, and likelihood to intervene in a potential rape situation. Paired t-tests for pre-/post-test scores assessed statistical differences in mean levels of outcomes at the data collection points. In addition, a qualitative assessment explored the feasibility of implementing, on campus, a long-duration program for prevention of sexual violence.

Results: The findings indicated that, after exposure to the program, participants demonstrated decreased rape myth beliefs and intention to commit rape and an increased likelihood to intervene in a potential rape situation. In addition, apart from attaining regular student attendance in the 10-week sessions of the program, implementation of the "One on Four & Beyond" program proved to be feasible.

Conclusions: This preliminary, multi-approach study suggests the effectiveness of a school PE-facilitated prevention program as a component of a comprehensive approach in reducing sexual violence on campus. Future studies are necessary to enhance understanding of the impact of the program.

Key words: Sexual violence; sexual assault; peer facilitator; sexual assault prevention program; college campuses; comprehensive approach; mixed method evaluation approach

INTRODUCTION

Population-based surveys show that sexual violence (used here interchangeably with sexual assault), including rape, remains a global problem (Bourey, Williams, Bernstein, & Stephenson, 2015; Michau, Horn, Bank, Dutt, & Zimmerman, 2015; World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010) with intense harmful effects on the health and affluence of individuals, their families, their community, and society (Taft & Small, 2014). Although anyone can be affected, women bear the overwhelming burden of sexual violence (Garcia, Lechner, Frerich, Lust, & Eisenberg, 2012), much of which is perpetrated by family members or partners (Breiding et al., 2014). A multi-country study of women's health and domestic violence against women found that, in the course of their lives, 15-71% of women experience either physical or sexual violence or both by an intimate partner (Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts, & Garcia-Moreno, 2008). Results for the United States (US) are similar.

Reports from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) show that an estimated 19.3% of women in the US were raped in the 12 months preceding the

survey (Breiding et al., 2014). The prevalence of sexual violence in the US applies to all races. According to NISVS, an estimated 32.2% of multi-racial women, 27.5% of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 21.2% of non-Hispanic Black women, 20.5% of non-Hispanic White women, and 13.6% of Hispanic women were raped during their lifetimes. The prevalence of first victimization of completed rape (defined as forced penetration and completed alcohol-or-drug-facilitated penetration) among females is 78.7% occurring before the age of 25 years, with 38.3% of completed rapes occurring during the age associated with college, 18-24 years (Black et., 2011). Supporting the NISVS data, various studies have shown that more than one in four college women report being forced to have sexual intercourse at some point in their lifetimes (Gidycz, Orchowski, King, & Rich, 2008; Gross, Winslett, Roberts, & Gohm, 2006; Untied, Orchowski, Mastroleo, & Gidycz, 2012). The estimated sexual violence reported by men is lower than that experienced by women. However, a report by Gidycz, Warkentin & Orchowski (2007), who asked college men to self-report sexually aggressive acts, suggested an incidence rate of 10%. Two other studies looking at self-reported behavior of college men found even higher rates of 17% (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005)

over 3-month period and approximately 35% over a 4-month period (White & Smith, 2004).

Despite the high rates of rape in the US and on US college campuses, few women disclose sexual assaults due to the negative social reactions emanating from broader social norms and attitudes about rape (Ullman, 2010). A triad, consisting of high female rape victimization, men's self-reported sexual aggressiveness, and low disclosure supports the need to focus on preventing sexual violence on college campuses in order to achieve the greatest population-level impact (DeGue et al., 2012a). Perpetration is the outcome of multiple interacting levels of influence, including individual, peer/partner, organization, and community (Basile, 2015). Thus, a sustainable prevention model should involve use of a framework that addresses the contributing factors at all levels (DeGue et al., 2012b).

Consequently, there is an emphasis on implementing holistic prevention strategies that address the various levels of influence for sexual violence and perpetration in the social ecology (Jozkowski & Ekbia, 2015), with an underlying shift of focus to perpetrators (Warkentin & Gidycz, 2007). Shifts of rape-supportive attitudes and beliefs that are fundamental to the rape culture inherent in college campuses and resulting in a high prevalence of sexual assault have proven to be effective (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006). Attitudes and behaviors can be changed within a short time, especially with implementation of effective sexual assault prevention principles (Abramsky et al., 2014; Pronyk et al., 2006).

In college settings, various programs have targeted potential perpetrators (Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2008; Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011; Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, & Stapleton, 2010; Warkentin & Gidycz, 2007) and, to assess program effectiveness, have measured changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and expected future behavior. Despite successes with increased exposure to education programs on prevention of sexual violence in longer interventions, its feasibility remains questionable, based upon the intensity of semester courses and the requirement to enroll in the program (Jozkowski & Ekbia, 2015). In addition to assessing knowledge, attitudes, and expected future behavior, understanding the feasibility of implementing interventions to prevent sexual violence based on effective prevention principles can be beneficial, owing to its allowance for improving the program to achieve its goals.

In this mixed-methods study, we assessed the impact and the feasibility for implementation of the "One in Four & Beyond" program (an adapted version of "The Men's Program") as a part of a comprehensive, multilevel approach for prevention of sexual violence related to participants' acceptance of rape myths, their likelihood of raping, and their bystander intervention behavior. The comprehensive strategy, framed within the context of the social ecologic model, utilized a public health approach (Basile, 2015).

For prevention of sexual violence, this study utilized a comprehensive, campus-based primary strategy (DeGue, 2014) comprising: (1) implementation of an adaptation of John Foubert's "Men's Program" using peer educators (PEs); (2) development/strengthening of school policies or services on campus related to reporting and responding to sexual violence; (3) engaging campus leadership to foster a culture of safety and respect on campus; and (4) through community-based awareness programs, decreasing social norms that facilitate sexual violence.

METHODS

Recruitment and Data Collection
In spring 2016, three small (less than 15,000 population) Georgia colleges or universities were selected to participate in the "One in Four & Beyond" program. The project was accomplished in three stages: testing of PE training, testing of student participants in the program, and assessment of activities related to community awareness. Program coordinators from the three schools interviewed and invited 33 PEs to be trained as facilitators of the program. Upon signing the consent form, the PEs were assigned unique identification numbers to engage in 18-20 hours of instructive learning, using program scripts and guidance on administration of the program protocol. At this phase, the evaluation included: (1) quarterly reports, with the aim of learning the process of recruiting and training PEs and (2) pre/post-intervention testing of PE learning of the key concepts and their attitudes related to rape myths (Figure 1).

In the phase of student participation, PEs and school program coordinators recruited 128 male students to participate in the intervention. Upon giving consent, participants were assigned unique identifiers and completed a 10-week "One in Four & Beyond" training. The evaluation at this phase included: (1) quarterly reports to assess the processes of planning and implementing the program, challenges, facilitators, and plans for sustainability; and (2) a pre/post-test to examine beliefs of participants related to rape myths, self-reported likelihood of committing sexual violence, and bystander intervention behavior.

Figure 1. Cascade model of the "One in Four & Beyond" intervention program
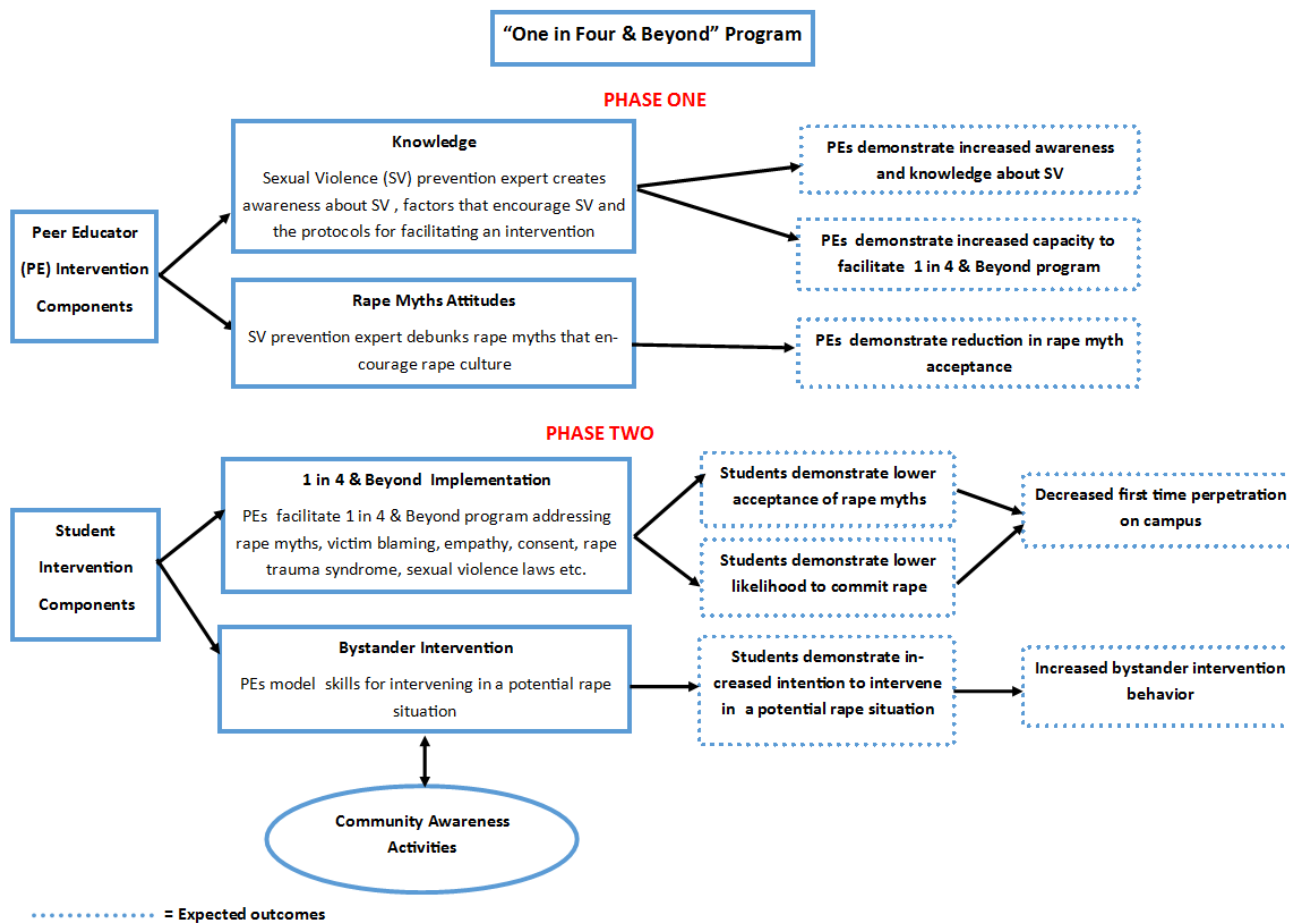
The Georgia Department of Public Health Institutional Review Board approved the study protocol. Written consent was obtained from participants. In the community awareness phase, 10 activities involving 4,363 students were conducted in the three participating schools to address social norms that encourage sexual violence. The evaluation also included quarterly reports describing the processes of planning and conducting awareness activities, facilitators, challenges, and concerns.

In the current report, we present data related to the intervention outcomes and the feasibility of implementing a long-duration program for prevention of sexual assault on campus.

"One in Four & Beyond" Program Description

The adapted "One in Four & Beyond" program is grounded in theory and intends to create awareness and alter norms that support sexual violence by engaging male PEs as facilitators to deliver messages, to male students, related to prevention of sexual violence. The program consisted of 18-20 hours of training for PEs led by a violence prevention expert to expose men (using a male-on-female victim empathy video) to what women might feel after experiencing rape and the more complex ways sexual violence is often framed and understood in the society. The video, which examined issues that are often dismissed as shameful, induced dialogues about sexual assault, consent, legal rights, and the politics surrounding gender violence

(Swauger, Witham, & Shinberg, 2013). PEs learned how to help and support rape survivors and ways they could intervene in a potential rape situation. Thereafter, with assistance from the expert on prevention of sexual violence, PEs developed and delivered a 10-week program to help men be supportive of women who have been raped, increase the likelihood of bystander intervention in potentially high-risk situations, and challenge men to change their own behaviors while influencing the behavior of others (Foubert, 2010).

Measures

Evaluation measures include attitude and behavior outcomes and assessment of feasibility:

1. Rape myth acceptance: A more inclusive version of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) was used to assess the level of validation of attitudes/beliefs that are supportive of sexual coercion. Participants rated their level of agreement with 22 items such as "When a person is sexually assaulted while drunk, they are at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand" on a 5-point scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (alpha coefficient=0.87) (Dang & Gorzalka, 2015). Higher scores indicated greater rejection of rape myths. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale is relevant to student populations because its language reflects the

sensitivities involved with rape myths (McMahon & Farmer, 2011).

2. Likelihood of raping: The participants rated their likelihood of raping someone (inclusiveness) if they knew that they would not face negative consequences (Briere & Malamuth, 1983; Malamuth, 1981) on a 5-point likelihood scale from "not at all likely" to "very likely." Malamuth found that higher likelihood of raping is associated with anger, aggression, and a desire to hurt women.

3. Bystander intervention behavior: A 10-item evaluation of bystander behavior for men (Burn, 2009) was used to assess sexual violence bystander intervention. Participants responded (a) to four statements regarding sexual violence bystander intervention in regard to friends such as "To keep my friends out of trouble, I will stop them from doing things that might meet the definition of sexual assault." and (b) to four statements regarding their sexual violence bystander intervention in regard to men they don't know (mean subscale = 0.76). Cronbach's alpha for both subscales is 0.82 (Burn, 2009). Additionally, participants indicated their extent of agreement with two statements: one about whether participants would be more likely to intervene if they know the potential victim and one about whether participants would be more likely to intervene if they know the potential perpetrator. A 5-point scale was used for the 10 items, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The percentage of participants' bystander intervention behavior represented the total number of situations in which they would intervene out of the total number of situations represented.

4. Feasibility assessment: School program coordinators were asked to complete quarterly reports related to the planning process, implementation, facilitating and challenging factors, and their concerns about the program as indicators of the degree of feasibility of conducting a long-duration program for prevention of sexual violence on campus.

Analyses
Descriptive analysis involving means and standard deviations were computed for pre- and post-test scores on assessment of attitudes and bystander intervention behavior. A chain of paired sample t-tests was computed to test attitude and behavior scores.

To derive the major themes, qualitative data were subjected to an inductive content analysis (Thomas, 2006). First, themes were identified and defined based on study aims specified in the quarterly report template and related to program planning, implementation, facilitators, challenges, and concerns. Following this, additional themes were derived from further reading of the reports. Thereafter, the themes were refined based on quotes conveying new insights. After the evaluation team agreed on the themes, a summary was developed to show the significant aspects of the reports, based on the study aims.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Average Age (years)		
18-20	88	69
21-23	35	28
Over 24	4	3
Race		
American Indian	0	0
Asian	0	0
Black/African American	92	72
White/Caucasian	34	26
Multicultural	2	2
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	7	6
Non-Hispanic	119	94

RESULTS

Participants' demographic characteristics
Most participants were between the ages of 18 and 20 (69%), identified as Black or African American (72%), and were non-Hispanic (94%).

Attitude and behavior assessments
Table 2 shows attitude scores for acceptance of rape myths, likelihood to commit rape, and bystander intervention behavior. The pre- and post-test score comparison across all attitude and behavior measures shows less acceptance of the rape myths, lower intentions to commit rape, and increased likelihood to intervene in a potential rape situation.

Table 2. Attitude and behavior assessments

Outcome	Pre n=128		Post n=84		T-test	p-value at critical two-tail (1.97)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Rape Myth Acceptance						
Victim responsibility for sexual assault	13.3	6.5898	10.85	5.1191	2.9923	0.003*
Intention to commit sexual assault	15.4	5.1518	13.01	5.3472	3.2767	0.001*
Relating to consent	9.1	4.0334	7.37	3.8016	3.0754	0.002*
Relating to sexual assault report as manipulation	12.6	4.8281	11.63	5.1945	1.4233	0.156
OVERALL	88.1	29.22	74.08	28.651	3.4727	0.0006*
Likelihood to commit assault	1.48	0.96	1.2	0.72	-2.2036	0.0299
Bystander Intervention						
Regarding friend	15.7	3.9615	17.83	6.4075	2.6961	0.008*
Regarding strangers	15.45	3.8635	17.75	6.0954	3.0318	0.003*
If potential victim is known	3.86	1.0993	4.06	1.0568	1.6685	0.097
If potential perpetrator is known	3.772	1.1618	4.04	1.0465	1.8497	0.066
OVERALL	69.93	16.716	79.26	19.631	3.5745	0.0004*

N= Number of participants; SD=Standard deviation; *=statistically significant

Acceptance of Rape Myths: The overall scale for acceptance of rape myths showed a statistically significant difference (t=3.47, p< 0.05) between pre- and post-tests, indicating that, after exposure to the program, participants' beliefs in rape myths was lowered. Nevertheless, the rape myth relating to 'manipulation,' that is, the construct that women lie about being raped as a way of getting back at males and including questions such as "Sexual assault accusations are often used as a way of getting back at the perpetrator" and "People who are caught cheating on their partners sometimes claim it was sexual assault," did not show a statistical difference at the two data collection points.

Likelihood of Committing Rape: There was no significant difference in participants' scores for likelihood of committing rape represented by the question "If you could be assured that no one would know and that you could in no way be punished, how likely, if at all, would you be to commit sexual assault?" However, the mean score lowered from pre- (1.48) to post-test (1.2), showing a positive effect.

Bystander Intervention Behavior: Statistically significant differences were found for all indexes used to measure participants' bystander intervention behaviors, except for those relating to 'friend' and 'stranger' intervention, showing that participants' decision to intervene in a potential rape-situation does not depend on the parties involved. The overall bystander intervention measure, however, showed a statistically significant difference (t=3.57; p< 0.05), indicating that, after exposure to the program, the participants were more likely to intervene in a potential rape situation.

Feasibility Assessment: Content analyses of the summaries of three quarterly reports describing planning and implementation of the "One in Four & Beyond" program were organized into three categories: (a) facilitators, (b) challenges, and (c) concerns. Facilitators (Table 3) were classified based on recommendations for effectiveness of (a) programs for prevention of college sexual violence (Vladutiu, Martin, & Macy, 2011), including the type of audience, facilitator, format, and program; and (b) public health intervention programs in general, including collaboration and availability of resources (including technical assistance) (Weiss, Lillefjell, & Magnus, 2016). For quality improvement, the challenges and concerns attributed to the program were also captured (Table 3).

Table 3. Quarterly report-identified facilitators and challenges attributed to planning and implementing "One on Four & Beyond" program

Theme	Quotes	Implication for Program Implementation
Facilitators Approaches in place for safety to increase awareness of sexual violence	"Our Be Brave poster campaign launched this semester. All posters are now up."	Ensuring environmental readiness to implement program
Technical assistance	"We had regular phone calls with GA-DPH and the prevention expert visited campus in early October to meet with male peer educators and check in."	Enabled guidance in planning and implementing

Theme	Quotes	Implication for Program Implementation
		program
Recruiting and training peer educators as facilitators	Returning shepherds were utilized and empowered with the ability to identify other potential recruits (3 were brought into the initiative through their due diligence)." "We reached out to many [sectors] to capture interest from any student that would be interested and committed to the facilitating role by explaining why the task is important and will impact many students." "The one-day 1 in 4 & Beyond training for facilitators was completed…"	Guaranteed fidelity in executing program
Planning and coordinating 10-week training	"We have 3 sessions a week. 2 to 3 peer educators led each session." "The participants are split between [sessions] depending on their availability." "We broke down the sessions to cover rape myths/victim blaming, empathy, what to do when a friend asks for help, Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS) /Post-traumatic Syndrome (PTSD) , consent, masculinity, alcohol and sexual violence laws."	Capacity to facilitate the program
Partner contribution	"Office of fraternity and sorority life…assisting the facilitator and participant recruitment." "Greek life, African American male Initiative/Center for Diversity and inclusion, Counselor Education and College Student Affairs Graduate program contributed by advertising the program, recruiting, and continued support for our programming."	Ensured diverse group engagement for accomplishing program goals.
Program success	"Successfully launched the weekly sessions." "Implementation steps in line with implementation timeline." "More than half of the students completing pre/post assessing the impact of the program in its entirety and, retaining info, and utilizing info to educate other males after the workshop."	Satisfaction with program conduct and impact
Challenges/Barriers	"Students did not complete the post assessment and students began to drop out of the program." "Continued management of attendance at individual sessions." "[Extra time] to make up sessions for students missing some of the modules and incentives." "Timing of everyone's schedules, unanticipated school closing due to weather [caused setback]	Apply flexibility in delivering program
Concerns	"Participants' attendance at weekly meeting has been inconsistent. As a result, we are thinking about trying a different format for the One in Four sessions next semester" "Students' committing to the entire program."	Apply flexibility in delivering program

DISCUSSION

Greater acceptance of rape myths (Payne et al., 1999) and likelihood of raping (Malamuth, 1981) may be factors in perpetrating sexual violence. The aim of the present study was to determine the impact and feasibility of implementing a long-duration program for prevention of sexual assaults on college campuses. The findings indicate that exposure to the "One in Four & Beyond" program results in lowered acceptance of rape myths. A comparison of pre-and post-test attitude measures showed that participants' overall acceptance of rape myths significantly decreased at the post-test. However, scores for items relating to 'sexual assault reports as manipulation' did not show a significant difference, although they moved in the direction of being less rape-supportive. Similarly, likelihood to commit rape, although reduced at post-test, showed no significant difference. Apart from a social desirability bias, these insignificant differences could be because participants showed both weak and low acceptance of the rape myth related to 'manipulation' and the level of intention to commit rape at pre-test. Also, the level of attrition (36%) could have resulted in the insignificant differences recorded. Nevertheless, the findings suggest an overall decrease in rape-supportive attitudes and likelihood to rape that could reduce sexual violence on campus.

The findings show that, after completing the program, participants demonstrated greater willingness to intervene in a potential rape situation. It did not appear that knowing the individuals involved in a rape situation would influence the participants' decision to intervene. Specifically, after exposure to the program, participants showed greater willingness to intervene in high-risk circumstances involving either 'friends' and 'strangers' or in situations where they know either the 'victim' or the 'perpetrator,' although the individual scores were not significantly different when the participants knew the victim or the perpetrator. This suggests that knowing the individuals involved in a rape-situation does not influence participants' decision to intervene and is not consistent with previous research (Burn, 2009) suggesting that men would be more likely to intervene if they know the victim or perpetrator. Improved willingness to intervene reflects a greater understanding of the skills needed to intervene in a high-risk situation. Previous research suggests that, as participants build intervening skills, they may be more willing to engage in behaviors that will help in eradicating the rape culture (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002).

In reports on the facilitators and challenges faced in planning and implementing "One in Four & Beyond," program coordinators indicated that, although more flexibility may be required in executing the program, specifically with conducting the 10-week sessions, it was feasible to implement the program to increase awareness of sexual assaults, especially where there is environmental readiness and approaches for safety are in place. The reports of the program coordinators showed that having regular guidance from experts was instrumental to accomplishing the goal. Similarly, recruiting PEs and reaching out to individuals from different sectors in the college ensured fidelity and diversity in decision-making and contributed to the success.

Because study results suggest that, due to the tight schedules of students and unanticipated events, such as inclement weather causing the school to close, it was difficult for students to commit to regular attendance during the 10-week sessions. The "One in Four & Beyond" intervention may be more effective when colleges are allowed more flexibility in offering the sessions. For instance, although research suggests that having programs with sufficient dosage lead to an effective prevention strategy (Daigle, Fisher, & Stewart, 2009; DeGue, 2014), the intensity of semester courses should be considered both for the peer educators and the participating students. It could be appropriate to allow colleges to combine the sessions to shorten the duration and thereby to increase the likelihood that students would commit to the entire program, which could also encourage more students to participate, thus reaching a larger part of the student body and increasing the chances that sexual assaults will be reduced.

Although conducting programs of long-duration is an effective strategy for prevention, the effects of compliance with regular attendance and the level of attrition should be evaluated. In view of the intensity of the semester courses, it would be helpful to determine how many sessions students are prepared to undertake. In this regard, the findings of the present study should be interpreted with caution and not generalized to all college students. To obtain a better understanding of the impact of the "One in Four & Beyond" program, an extended, follow-up quantitative assessment of the attitudes and behaviors is needed. It is possible that the present study was subject to social desirability biases and that students, although responding anonymously, may not have presented their actual attitudinal and behavioral stances (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

Sexual violence is a substantial issue for public health, and, as the need for evidence-based interventions and comprehensive strategies is becoming more widely understood, various prevention programs have been designed to deal with the epidemic on college campuses. Our findings suggest that implementing the "One in Four & Beyond" program, as a part of a comprehensive program for prevention of sexual violence in Georgia colleges can reduce rape-supportive attitudes, which may lower the incidence of rape. Specifically, the program lowered acceptance of rape myths and intention to commit rape and increased the likelihood of bystander interventions. Although the findings suggest that more flexibility is needed in implementation of the program, they provide evidence of changes in attitudes and behaviors that will help reduce sexual violence. Nevertheless, more studies are needed to assess the effects of the program.

Acknowledgements

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