

# HEALTHY ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIP PROJECT (HARP)

## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

FALL, 2013

We are writing to let you know what we have learned so far from the Healthy Adolescent Relationship Project (HARP).

### WHAT WAS HARP AGAIN?

HARP tested two 12-week programs designed to help adolescent girls (ages 12-19) who came to the attention of the child welfare system learn about healthy relationships. **Program 1 (Social Learning/ Feminist Theory)** taught teen girls about: power in relationship violence; skills to build healthy relationships; and social influences on violence (such as media messages). **Program 2 (Risk Detection/Executive Function)** taught teens about: safety in relationships, including how to recognize and respond to internal (e.g., one's own emotions) and external (e.g., other people's emotions, behaviors) safety signals; and attention regulation.

### WHO PARTICIPATED?

We initially interviewed 180 adolescent girls, who ranged in age from 12 to 19 (average age = 15.85). Of the 151 teens who told us their race/ethnicity, 36% (n=54) identified as White/Caucasian, 36% (n=54) as Black/African-American, 3% (n=4) as Asian/Asian-American, 7% (n=11) as American Indian/Native Alaskan/Native American, 18% (n=28) as 'Other', and 67 (37%) as Hispanic/ Latina. The majority of teens (n=139; 77%) identified as "Heterosexual/ Straight".

After the first interview, 67 teens were randomly assigned to the Risk Detection/Executive Function program and 67 to the Social Learning/Feminist program. Girls who participated in the programs attended an average of nearly 70% of sessions. Another 42 girls did the interviews, but did not participate in either healthy relationship program (for example, because their schedules did not allow or they chose not to do so). We ran each of the two healthy relationships programs 12 times. After each round of healthy relationship programs ended, we interviewed girls 3 more times: immediately after and then 2- and 6-months later.

### WHAT DID WE FIND?

Teens who participated in the Risk Detection/Executive Function group were nearly **5 times** more likely to **not** report sexual revictimization over the course of the study period compared to teens who did not participate in either group but completed interviews. A statistical trend also suggested that girls who participated in the Social Learning/Feminist Theory group were **2.5 times** more likely to **not** report sexual revictimization relative to the teens who did not participate in either group but completed interviews.

For physical revictimization, the odds of **not** being physically revictimized were **3 times** greater in the Social Learning/Feminist Theory group and **2 times** greater in the Risk Detection/Executive Function group compared to the group of teens who did not participate in either group but completed interviews.

While the primary goal of the current study was to look at revictimization, we also examined teens' ratings of physical, emotion, and sexual conflict tactics in dating relationships using a well-validated, continuous measure of aggression. Participants reported on their partners' as well as their own aggression at each interview. Across time, all adolescents (whether or not they participated in a healthy relationship program) reported significant decreases in physical and emotional/psychological aggressive conflict tactics.

We also asked teens to tell us what it was like to be part of the research interviews, which asked about their experiences of abuse and violence. Using a well-established measure (called the Response to Research Participation Questionnaire), adolescents reported that the benefits (for example, feeling respected, learning about oneself) of being part of these interviews far outweighed the costs (for example, feeling negative emotions, thinking about upsetting things).

## WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

We tested two approaches to decreasing revictimization with adolescent girls from the child welfare system. Both approaches were linked with lower likelihood of reporting revictimization from post-intervention to six-month follow-up relative to girls who did not participate in the programs. Given the challenges that many teens faced in their daily lives (such as changes in school and care placements, teen parenthood), their participation in an average of 70% of sessions was quite impressive. Further, these programs were able to reach adolescents outside of traditional school settings, showing that youth can be engaged in alternative settings particularly when they are not consistently attending traditional schools. In addition, we were able to stay in touch with teens across four interviews, with 83.0% of teens completing the Time 4 interview. When we asked teens about being in the interviews, they reported significantly greater benefits of participating in these trauma-focused interviews than costs. As healthcare providers, counselors, and caseworkers increasingly need to screen for and address trauma/violence as part of providing effective mental and physical healthcare, this finding provides important information about assessing violence exposure as a routine part of practice.

## THANK YOU!!

**On behalf of our entire team, thank you for all you did to make this project successful. We look forward to continuing to work with you on other projects. We leave you below with some notes from teens in one of the HARP groups.**

**Anne P. DePrince, Principal Investigator  
Ann T. Chu, Project Director**

**So, after all these  
classes...**

**here's OUR advice to  
other teens:**

**Respect yourself!**

**Know your rights as a  
woman!**

**You have the right to stick  
up for yourself!**

**You are worth it!**

**Know your boundaries –  
so you can know when  
they're being crossed!**

**TAKE TIME AND SPACE TO  
SOLVE PROBLEMS**



**Get help when you  
need it – especially  
from friends and  
family.**

**NOTICE! PAY  
ATTENTION!  
STAY-OFF AUTOPILOT!**

**Pay attention to warning  
signs in:**

- **Other people** (like body language, facial expressions)
- **Yourself** (like your intuition or instincts)
- **The environment** (am I some place that isn't safe?)

**ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR  
EMOTIONS! WATCH  
YOUR OWN SIGNALS!**

**Use your coping skills!**

**Brainstorm LOTS OF  
OPTIONS** when you  
notice danger clues!

**Abuse is never OK.  
Don't put up with it.  
Leave a dangerous situation when  
you need to.**

**PARTICIPATE AND  
PRACTICE! TAKE IT TO THE REAL  
WORLD!**