Bystander Attitudes and the Prevention of Sexual Assault

Sexual assault has been a growing concern on college campuses in the past few years. This concern has resulted in a number of different education and prevention models. These include giving presentations on campus in order to educate general students and combat rape myths; targeting and educating specific groups such as male fraternities and male athletes that may be more likely to tolerate sexual violence; and bystander intervention training. Bystander intervention training involves teaching students who see sexual violence occurring—or situations that they believe may lead to sexual violence—to intervene in a number of ways in order to prevent violence. A factor that influences bystander intervention behaviors are bystander attitudes, that is to what degree one believes they can comfortably intervene in a perceivably violent situation. This study examines the effectiveness of bystander intervention trainings at a mid-size regional university in the south. Attitudes are measured before the training and immediately following the training to determine if the programming is effective in changing bystander attitudes. We hypothesize that the comfort level of intervening behaviors will be higher after the training than before the training. Secondly, we expect to find gender differences in self-reported comfort levels with intervening behaviors. We conclude with recommendations for further programming.