Interruptions of Risky Online Behavior De-escalate Violent Conflict

Anastasia Knight[1], Corianna E. Sichel[1], Stephanie Ueberall[2], Roberta Liggett, Shabnam Javdani[1]
[1]Department of Applied Psychology, New York University; [2]Citizens Crime Commission of New York City

NYU | STEINHARDT

CITIZENS CRIME COMMISSION OF NEW YORK CITY

Introduction

- **E-Responder** was developed as a partnership between community psychologists and a non-partisan, non-profit organization to address youths' risky online behavior, bridging virtual and actual spaces (e.g., Cohen, 2014; Rizzo 2013).

- **E-Responder** draws on research from clinical (e.g., Linehan, 2014) and community (e.g., Watts, Griffith & Abdul-Adil, 1999), psychology to:
  - Proactively address violent norms
  - Leverage youths' strengths
  - Prevent the escalation of online provocation in to real-world violence

- **E-Responder** trains staff to assess online risk, provide effective interventions, and model digital citizenship.
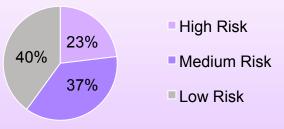
Present Study

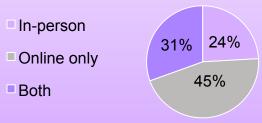| RQ1: Is there a relationship between perceived risk and selected delivery mechanisms (i.e., online, in person, or both)?	HYP1: High-risk posts are more likely to elicit in-person interventions. Medium and low risk posts are more likely to elicit online interventions.
RQ2: Are some delivery mechanisms more effective than others in addressing youths' risky online behavior?	HYP2: Interventions involving in-person interactions are more effective in addressing youths' risky online behavior.

Methods

- Violence Prevention Professionals (VPPs) at three community-based organizations received training to identify, assess, and respond to youths' risky posts via the **Interruption Toolkit**.

- During the six week intervention period 26 staff members reported 145 instances of youth risky behavior online.

- Staff also reported **risk level** (i.e., low, medium, high), **intervention modality** (i.e., in-person; online; both), and **outcomes** (i.e., violence prevention; healthy grieving; feelings of safety; emotion management techniques).

Risk Level of Online Behavior

- High Risk — 23%
- Medium Risk — 37%
- Low Risk — 40%

Delivery Mechanism

- In-person — 24%
- Online only — 45%
- Both — 31%

Results

- There was no significant impact of perceived risk level on the selected intervention modality (X^2=.243, p>.05).

- Choice of intervention modality did not impact the likelihood of positive outcomes (X^2=.36-4.53, p>.05)

- Positive outcomes of violence prevention, feelings of safety, and utilization of emotion management skills were not significantly more likely to be associated with any one risk level (X^2=.104-.419, p>.05).

- The positive outcome of healthy grieving/utilization of social support was significantly more likely to be associated with low-risk posts (X^2=.038, p<.05).

Discussion & Conclusion

- Counter to our hypotheses, risk level did not impact the likelihood of intervention modality and positive outcomes were no more likely to be associated with in-person versus online (or both) interventions.

- The outcome of healthy grieving/utilization of social support was more likely to be associated with low-risk posts. Additional analyses is needed to determine why this was the case.

- Our results may reflect the extent of the integration of virtual communications in youths' lives. Indeed, youth who grow up with social media may not differentiate between online and in-person interactions, as previous generations have.