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Publisher: Routledge

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Journal of Child Sexual Abuse

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wcsa20>

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Version of record first published: 20 Sep 2012.

To cite this article: Isabelle Daigneault, Martine Hébert, Pierre McDuff & Jean-Yves Frappier (2012): Evaluation of a Sexual Abuse Prevention Workshop in a Multicultural, Impoverished Urban Area, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21:5, 521-542

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2012.703291>

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Evaluation of a Sexual Abuse Prevention Workshop in a Multicultural, Impoverished Urban Area

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Participants in the ESPACE sexual abuse prevention workshop were in grades 1 through 4 and attended three Montreal, Canada, public schools in low socioeconomic areas. The sample was culturally diverse, with half born outside of Canada. An evaluation was conducted to explore the effects associated with participating in the workshop and the effects of booster sessions conducted two years later. Outcomes included knowledge gained, the ability to offer behavioral responses to abusive situations, peer victimization, sense of safety, empathy, self-efficacy, and support. Results revealed that participants in this sample obtained low scores on measures of sexual abuse knowledge and that short booster sessions that elicit children's recall of the learned material might produce greater improvements.

KEYWORDS child sexual abuse, prevention, school-based intervention, cultural sensitivity, program evaluation

Submitted 28 February 2011; revised 15 June 2011, 2 August 2011; accepted 2 August 2011.

The authors would like to thank the Montreal Assault Prevention Center and the instructors of ESPACE for their collaboration and involvement. This research was made possible through a grant from the UBS Optimus Foundation.

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The high prevalence of sexual abuse and the fact that it can occur when children are young are among the factors that have motivated the development and implementation of educational interventions aimed at enabling children to protect themselves against possible abuse and intended to heighten adults' awareness of the phenomenon. The main intervention strategies have been inspired by the fact that few parents actually talk to their children about sexual abuse, as revealed by a study that found parents talk to their children about sexual abuse less than they talk to them about verbal or physical violence (Fecteau, Hébert, & Piché, 1995). Research indicates that many children do not disclose abusive situations (Hébert, Tourigny, Cyr, McDuff, & Joly, 2009) and that a number of adults who were sexually abused during childhood claimed they would have been spared the abuse had they had more knowledge about the issue and about available prevention resources (Wurtele & Miller-Perrin, 1992). Therefore, the need to implement prevention strategies and actions has become evident.

Although school-based programs geared toward children are but one option among the available prevention strategies (Tutty, 1991; Wurtele, 2009), they represent, together with judicial initiatives such as offender management, the most popular approach to date (Finkelhor, 2009). Indeed, considering the young age of many victims, grade school appears to be the ideal setting for reaching the maximum number of children. While school-based programs may vary in their format (duration, activities, etc.), their goals are generally similar: to diminish children's vulnerability and to improve their personal safety by providing them with appropriate knowledge about sexual abuse, enabling them to develop self-affirming behaviors, encouraging them to follow safety rules, and teaching them how to respond in at-risk situations.

Despite the proliferation of programs in school environments, the effects of such programs have been infrequently assessed. Nonetheless, recent meta-analyses have indicated that participation of grade school children in a prevention program is beneficial. More specifically, meta-analyses and reviews suggest that grade school children who have participated in a prevention program have an increased knowledge of sexual abuse concepts (M. Davis & Gidycz, 2000; Rispens, Aleman, & Goudena, 1997; Wurtele, 2002; Zwi et al., 2007) and preventive behaviors (M. Davis & Gidycz, 2000; Rispens, et al., 1997; Zwi et al., 2007). Moreover, these gains were maintained for up to one year after participation in the program (Wurtele, 2002). A recent study of reviews on child maltreatment prevention in general, including child sexual abuse, indicated that child sexual abuse prevention is one of three types of maltreatment prevention interventions that appears effective in reducing risk factors for child maltreatment, in this case it reduced risk factors for child sexual abuse specifically (the two other types of interventions were home

visiting and parent education, which were effective in reducing risk factors for parental neglect; Mikton & Butchart, 2009).

A host of studies have found that characteristics of prevention programs have a moderating impact on their effectiveness (Rispen et al., 1997). Most effective programs are those of longer duration (four sessions or more), those that involve a repetition of important ideas and concepts, those that demand active participation from children with multiple occasions to practice new skills and abilities, and those that are based on concrete concepts rather than abstract notions (M. Davis & Gidycz, 2000). However, the poor methodological qualities of the studies, such as inadequate allocation concealment, assessor blinding, and a lack of information on attrition rates (Zwi et al., 2007) may produce artificially large effect sizes (M. Davis & Gidycz, 2000); therefore, their results should be interpreted with caution. In addition, the vast majority of prevention programs have been developed without consideration of cultural differences, which can limit their applicability in multicultural settings (Fontes, 2005).

Despite some enduring controversies surrounding child maltreatment prevention in general (see *Child Abuse and Neglect*, volume 29, issue 3), leading researchers in the specific field of child sexual abuse prevention have concluded that (a) children are able to acquire preventive concepts through participation in these programs without negative consequences to their development, (b) sexual abuse prevention programs may foster earlier disclosures and less self-blaming following victimization, and (c) such programs play an important role in preventing sexual abuse and should be further developed and evaluated (Finkelhor, 2009; Wurtele, 2009). Further studies can be especially important where at-risk, underserved, or understudied populations are concerned (Mikton & Butchart, 2009). For example, children from low socioeconomic environments have shown lower initial baselines in their knowledge of sexual abuse and fewer beneficial potential outcomes following prevention programs (Topping & Barron, 2009). In order to determine program effectiveness, researchers have also recommended that follow-ups must be conducted more than one year after the child participated in the program. (Finkelhor, 2009; Wurtele, 2009; Zwi et al., 2007).

Although we can begin to understand what children learn, in general, from sexual abuse prevention programs, few of these programs' evaluations have explored their effectiveness for specific populations, such as those from culturally diverse (Kenny, 2010; Zwi et al., 2007) or low socioeconomic backgrounds (Mikton & Butchart, 2009; Topping & Barron, 2009). In addition, there are few studies that assess the effects of a repeat program or booster session (for an exception, see Hazzard, Webb, Kleemeier, Angert, & Pohl, 1991) even though one may think that such preventive programs would require repetition to be effective in reducing risk factors for child sexual abuse (Lee & Tang, 1998; Topping & Barron, 2009).

ESPACE PREVENTION WORKSHOP

The ESPACE workshop for grade school children in Quebec is a French adaptation of the Child Assault Prevention (CAP) Project (Cooper, 1991), which was evaluated in pre- and postdesign (Binder & McNiel, 1987). The Quebec adaptation was the subject of an evaluation that showed evidence of its effectiveness (Hébert, Lavoie, Piché, & Poitras, 2001; Zwi et al., 2007). The analysis involved 133 children from Canadian-born middle class families attending first and third grades in the Quebec city area. The results showed that participants who took part in the ESPACE workshop had, relative to the participants of the control group, greater gains in knowledge and preventive skills (e.g., say no, ask for help). After a two-month follow-up, knowledge and skill scores remained higher than they were at the time of the pretest. However, the analysis of the short-term retention of the initial effects of the workshop also revealed that children who took part in the prevention workshop showed a significant reduction in their preventive skills (e.g., say no, ask for help) after two months, underscoring the need to develop ways to maximize gain maintenance, such as booster sessions following the initial presentation of the workshop.

STUDY GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

The goal of the present study was to overcome limits identified in the literature by evaluating gains in children's knowledge of inappropriate touching and their abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation soon after participating in the ESPACE sexual abuse prevention workshop with multicultural populations living in low socioeconomic urban areas. A second goal was to evaluate the ESPACE workshop over a longer follow-up period of two years. A third goal was to document implementation data and unintended negative effects using a more precise outcome: feelings of safety. Furthermore, the present study explores, as a fourth goal, the effects associated with three booster sessions.

The study's first hypothesis is that participants in the ESPACE prevention workshop will show greater knowledge of inappropriate touching and greater abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation following the program compared with nonparticipants and that these gains will be maintained at a two-year follow-up. A second hypothesis is that for children in third and fourth grade, knowledge of inappropriate touching and abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation of participants receiving a brief booster session (recall only—see workshop description for details) will be comparable to those participating in a complete booster of the ESPACE workshop and that both of these groups will show greater knowledge and abilities than those receiving no booster session. A third hypothesis is that, for children in fifth and sixth

grade, knowledge of inappropriate touching and abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation of participants receiving a comprehensive booster session (ESPACE + general violence prevention—see workshop description for details) will show greater gains than those receiving no booster session. A fourth hypothesis is that there will be no significant negative effect of the workshop at any time during the study.

METHOD

Workshop Description

The ESPACE workshop, offered by the Montreal Assault Prevention Centre (MAPC), is a French adaptation of the CAP workshop (Cooper, 1991) intended to prevent bullying as well as psychological, physical and sexual abuse in children 3 to 12 years of age. The 90-minute workshop is led by three trained community workers who use role-playing, guided discussions, behavior modeling, and rehearsals to enhance, promote, and teach children awareness of personal rights (safe, strong, secure), self-assertion skills (self-defense yell), and appropriate responses to any instances of abuse (seeking out peer support for help and confiding in a trusted adult). Contrary to other prevention programs, which are devoted only to sexual assault, the ESPACE workshop also aims to prevent verbal and physical violence through similar activities. Children are invited to actively participate in three role-plays based on specific situations presented to them. They then replay the situations with alternate endings, allowing them a chance to rehearse/practice the proposed strategies. The role-plays consist of a bullying situation by peers, a potentially abusive situation by a stranger asking for help while grabbing the child's arm, and an inappropriate sexual request by a known adult. Strategies of self-defense are also taught, such as the special yell (loud and strong). The ESPACE workshop evaluated in the present study was implemented with a basic cultural adaptation, that is, the MAPC hired and trained community workers from diverse ethnic backgrounds as recommended by Fontes (2005).

Three types of booster sessions were offered to participants two years after they had received the ESPACE program. Children who are currently in third and fourth grades (first and second grades, respectively, during the initial workshop) received either a complete ESPACE booster consisting of the same ESPACE workshop or a brief ESPACE booster consisting of a revision of concepts and abilities where children were asked to recall what they had learned two years earlier. The brief booster session was developed because it was economically more advantageous for schools and it required less time to administer, thus allowing MAPC to reach more schools and more children within a single school year.

Children currently in fifth and sixth grades (third and fourth grades, respectively, during the initial workshop) received a booster called

“Confidence, Solidarity, Respect” (CSR), which was developed in continuity with the ESPACE workshop in response to schools asking for a more comprehensive booster session for older children. Basic ESPACE prevention knowledge was briefly revised and discussions were led by instructors on definitions of aggression and violence, the cycle of violence, ways of using power positively, and the impact of one’s behavior on others. Thus, the workshop (a) supported self-confidence and confidence in others so as to enable and encourage children to disclose situations of abuse and violence, (b) supported a feeling of solidarity with victims of violence and the positive use of power as a witness of violence, and (c) sensitized children with respect to the impact of their own behavior on others and the use of power while respecting the rights of others. This comprehensive CSR 90-minute booster workshop addressed not only the children’s roles as potential victims of violence but also their roles as witnesses and agents of violence.

Participants

There were 160 workshop participants (52% girls and 48% boys) with complete data at Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2) ($n = 70$ for the experimental group and $n = 90$ for the control group). They were aged between 5 and 11 years at T1 ($M = 7.75$, $SD = 1.23$) and attended three grade schools that were among the most underprivileged in the province of Quebec, with low income threshold ranks of 10 (on a scale of 1 to 10), indicating the most elevated proportion of families whose income was close to or under the low income threshold. Children were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with 52% being born outside of Canada and 90% of the children’s parents also being born outside of Canada (84% of the experimental group and 95% of the control group; $\chi^2 = 6.18$; $p = .013$). The breakdown of self-reported region of origin for children not born in Canada was as follows: 28% Middle East, 25% Asia, 19% Africa, 14% Europe, 8% South America, 6% North America, and 1% Oceania. The majority of children (82%) lived in intact families or with their mother only (15%). The remaining children (3%) lived with their father or grandparents. At T4, we recruited an additional 19 children in fifth and sixth grades for the experimental groups. These children were not included in the first phase of the study but did receive the ESPACE workshop during the 2006–2007 school year. They were similar to initially participating children except in their knowledge of inappropriate touching (higher scores for additional participants – $M_{\text{additional}} = 17.81$, $SD = 3.11$, $M_{\text{initial}} = 15.43$, $SD = 4.22$; $t_{(1,128)} = 2.48$, $p = .015$).

Procedures

This study was approved by the Ethical Research Committee of the Sainte-Justine Hospital Research Center where the research originated. Approval

was also obtained from two Montreal island school boards, the teachers' association, and each participating school's council. Three francophone schools on the island of Montreal were selected for our sample. None of these schools had previously received the ESPACE prevention workshop, but they had expressed an interest in receiving the workshop and in participating in the study. Research assistants distributed information and consent forms (French and English versions) in all classes for first through fourth grades. Children were instructed to take the information packets home to their parents. Parents could then return the consent form through regular mail via a prepaid, preaddressed envelope. Participation rate was low, as only 23% of eligible children obtained parental consent to participate. In the majority of cases, consent forms were not returned to the research team rather than being returned with a refusal to participate. Research assistants helped participating French speaking children complete the research questionnaires in small groups of 6 to 12 participants by reading items aloud and answering children's questions about the test when necessary. Nonparticipating children remained in their classrooms with their teachers.

A preexperimental design was used in which schools were randomly assigned to experimental conditions across the two years of the study (see Table 1). Interviewers ($n = 7$) and ESPACE instructors ($n = 4$) were blind to school status at T1 and T2. Only interviewers were blind to school status at T4 and T5, as instructors knew which booster was administered to which school; however, they did not know which school served as the control group. Another assistant observed the workshops for program implementation assessment and was not involved in other aspects of the study such as participant assessment. In the first year of the study (2006–2007), children were seen twice in the experimental group (one week prior to and one week after the prevention workshop—T1 and T2) and three times in the control group (two weeks apart—T1, T2, and T3). The workshop was offered to children after the first two assessments. In the second year of the study (2008–2009), all children were seen twice (T4 and T5). They were seen one week prior to and one week after the workshop for the experimental group and twice two weeks apart for the control group. The control group received the complete booster session after the study was over during the same school year as the children attending the experimental schools.

Measures

All measures were developed for the study in French or were translated into French from original English versions. If no existing French translation was available, a back translation was done using two independent translators, as recommended by Vallerand (1989).

TABLE 1 Number of Participants By Experimental Conditions, Grade Levels, and Assessment Times

Group and grade level	Year one (2006–2007)				Year two (2008–2009)				
	<i>n</i> – T1	<i>ESPACE</i>	<i>n</i> – T2	<i>ESPACE</i>	<i>n</i> – T3	<i>n</i> – T4	Booster type	<i>n</i> – T5	
Experimental group	Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4	70	Yes	70	No	Grades 3 and 4 Grades 5 and 6	24 12	Complete Brief	24 12
Control group	Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4	90	No	90	Yes	Grades 3 and 4 Grades 5 and 6	22 32	No No	22 32

Workshop Implementation

A 70-item dichotomous checklist (*item presented during the workshop* versus *item absent during the workshop*) was developed for the study from the workshop synopsis. The total score is divided by the total number of items to yield a percentage of items presented during the workshop. The scale also allowed research assistants to document the workshop duration, the number of children, whether the workshop was presented in the morning or afternoon, the quality of the children's participation, the teacher's presence, and previous discussion of sexual abuse in class.

Child Outcome Measures

As a proximal outcome, a French translation of Tutty's (1995) 24-item inappropriate touch subscale from the revised version of the Children Knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire (CKAQ-R) was used. Children responded to each item using a three-point scale: *true*, *false*, and *I don't know*. Correct answers were summed to yield a total score that varied from 0 to 24 where a higher score indicated a greater knowledge of inappropriate touching. The inappropriate touch subscale has been validated with more than 300 children from grades 1, 3, and 6 and demonstrated adequate metric properties (Tutty, 1995). The Cronbach alpha for the French version was found to be adequate ($\alpha = .78$).

As a second proximal outcome, children's abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation were assessed using an adaptation of the What If Situation Test (WIST; Wurtele, Hughes, & Owens, 1998). One subscale was derived that assesses children's ability to recommend appropriate behavioral responses following three illustrated vignettes closely matched to the role-play scenarios of the ESPACE workshop (peer bullying, grabbing by a stranger, and inappropriate sexual touching by a known adult). After reading each vignette, participants were asked if they would recommend (*yes* or *no*) four behaviors to the problem situation faced by a child as illustrated in four different cartoons. Recommended responses were closely matched to those in the ESPACE workshop (say no, ask for help, tell a trusted adult). Thus, 12 items assessed children's ability to recommend an appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation. The total score varied from 0 to 12 where a higher score indicated a greater ability to recommend an appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation (French adaptation $\alpha = .69$).

As a distal outcome, children's peer victimization experiences over the past week were assessed on a 7-point scale (10 items—e.g., "A student pushed or shoved me"; Orpinas & Kelder, 1995) representing the number of such victimizations over the past week (0 = *zero times* to 6 = *six times or more*). The total score varied from 0 to 60 where a higher score indicated

a greater frequency of victimization over the past week (French translation $\alpha = .91$).

As an unintended negative outcome, children's feelings of safety were assessed using an 11-item self-report measure (e.g., "I feel safe outside my house"; Henry, 2000, adapted from Schwab-Stone et al., 1995). Participants indicated the degree to which they felt safe on a three-point scale (0 = *never*, 1 = *sometimes*, and 2 = *always*). An average item score was calculated where higher scores indicated a greater sense of safety (French translation $\alpha = .87$).

Additional Child Outcome Measures for T4 and T5

In the second year of the study, for the CSR booster, older children completed four additional proximal outcome measures that assessed four aspects of this new booster: general knowledge about violence, feelings of confidence, empathic concern, and respect toward others.

To assess general knowledge about violence, a questionnaire was specifically developed for the study using nine *true* or *false* items closely matched to information about violence discussed during the CSR workshop (e.g., "If you laugh at somebody's appearance, it is not really violence"). Participants completed a tenth item by choosing which of three definitions best described aggression. Correct answers were summed to yield a total *knowledge of violence* score ranging from 0 to 10 with higher scores indicating greater knowledge of violence in general ($\alpha = .68$).

Participants' confidence in others was assessed using the nine-item Vaux Social Support Record (e.g., "At school, there are adults I can talk to who care about my feelings and what happens to me"; Vaux, 1988). Participants reported the degree to which they agreed with the items on a three-point scale (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *some*, and 2 = *a lot*). The total score ranged from 0 to 18 with higher scores indicating a greater confidence in family, friends, and adults at school (French translation $\alpha = .78$).

CSR's effect on children's concern toward one another was assessed using the seven-item empathic concern subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (M. H. Davis, 1980, 1983; French translation by Pelletier, Tourigny, Clément, & Lavoie, 1998). Participants indicated the degree to which each item represented them on a five-point scale (0 = *does not describe me well* to 4 = *does describe me well*). The total score ranged from 0 to 28 with higher scores indicating greater empathic concern (French translation $\alpha = .68$ to $.73$ for original translation and $.52$ with the present sample).

A last measure assessed CSR's effect on participants' respect towards one another. The five-item Self-Efficacy questionnaire from the Teen Conflict Survey (Bosworth & Espelage, 1995) was used to assess participants' degree

of confidence in their ability to control their aggressiveness and to solve conflicts by using nonviolent strategies (e.g., “Calm down when you are mad”). Participants indicated on a five-point scale the degree to which they felt confident in their ability to use nonviolent strategies (1 = *not at all confident* to 5 = *very confident*). The total score ranged from 5 to 25 with higher scores indicating a greater sense of confidence in their ability to solve conflicts in a nonviolent way (French translation $\alpha = .60$).

Analyses

Groups were compared on all descriptive variables and all dependent variables to assess their equivalence at pretest. A series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were then conducted using group status to compare posttest scores of each dependent variable (at T2 and T5) while controlling for pretest scores (at T1 and T4; Gliner, Morgan, & Harmon, 2003). The first ANCOVA series, comparing T2 scores while controlling for T1, was performed by pooling all grades for both groups (experimental and control), while the second ANCOVA series, comparing T5 scores while controlling for T4, was completed separately for the second cycle (third and fourth grades) and the third cycle (fifth and sixth grades) students, who received different booster sessions.

The time effect at the two-year follow-up/booster pretest (T4) was assessed using a similar analysis with all children in one group while controlling for the most recent outcome scores (T2 for experimental group and T3 for control group), all of which were measured one week following the ESPACE workshop. An a priori type I error rate of 5% was adopted.

RESULTS

Workshop Implementation

At T1, one research assistant observed 19 of the 24 workshops in the experimental groups using the implementation checklist. An average of 22.05 children per group ($SD = 3.61$) were equally distributed between morning and afternoon presentations. The assistant assessed the quality of child participation in role-plays to be an average of 4.50 on a five point scale ($SD = 0.58$) across four possible role-plays (between *good* and *excellent*). In only two out of 48 role-play assessments was quality of participation rated as *average* (5%) and there were no cases in which quality was rated as *poor* or *passable*. All teachers were present during workshops, and 50% reported previously discussing sexual abuse in their classroom. The workshops lasted, on average, 85.58 minutes ($SD = 24.74$) and instructors completed, on average, 95% of the checklist's items.

Short-Term Effects Associated with Participation in the ESPACE Workshop—First Year

Experimental and control groups were similar at T1 except for two measures: percentage of parents born in Canada and knowledge of inappropriate touching as measured by the CKAQ-R. Children from the experimental group had a higher percentage of parents born in Canada, $\chi^2(1, 159) = 6.18, p = .013$ and a higher total knowledge of inappropriate touching, $t(1, 165) = 2.81, p = .005$. The ANCOVAs used allowed for the control of pretest differences in the dependent measures. Parents' country of origin was unrelated to outcomes and was therefore excluded from the analyses.

T1 results revealed low initial knowledge of inappropriate touching scores for both schools (an average of 12 out of 24) where incorrect responses were recorded for 50% of the items (see Table 2). Participants recorded elevated initial levels in their ability to offer appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation with 9.44 to 9.79 out of 12 items being answered correctly. This suggests participants were relatively capable of hypothetically responding appropriately in approximately 75% of abusive situations. On average, participants reported some degree of victimization with a baseline level of 14.66 to 17.21 events out of 60 over the week prior to the study. Finally, baselines at T1 on the sense of safety scale revealed that participating children almost *always* felt safe at school and at home (1.6 out of 2).

Results of ANCOVAs for T2 scores (Table 2) revealed that after adjusting for preintervention scores, there were no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group on posttest scores with respect to dependent variables.

TABLE 2 Average Scores on Outcome Measures at T1, Adjusted Means for Outcomes at T2 and ANCOVA Results According to Experimental Group at T2 for All Grade Levels

	Workshop (<i>n</i> = 70)				Wait-list (<i>n</i> = 90)				Group effect		
	T1		T2		T1		T2				
	M	SD	M _{adj}	SD	M	SD	M _{adj}	SD	F _(df)	P	η_p^2
Knowledge	13.03	4.36	13.70	5.02	11.08	4.54	13.30	4.59	0.58 _(1, 157)	.448	0.00
Ability	9.79	2.22	10.96	1.39	9.44	2.43	10.81	1.75	0.42 _(1, 131)	.521	0.00
Bullying	17.21	16.69	15.55	17.56	14.66	15.21	14.93	16.95	0.11 _(1, 157)	.736	0.00
Safety	1.63	0.48	1.66	0.39	1.62	0.35	1.62	0.38	0.60 _(1, 154)	.438	0.00

Note: Knowledge = child knowledge of abuse (inappropriate touching); ability = ability to recommend an appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation; bullying = reported experiences of peer bullying or victimization over the past week; safety = sense of safety around school and the home. Degrees of freedom vary as there are missing data in some dependent variables.

ESPACE Workshop—Two-Year Follow-Up

Among children who participated in the ESPACE workshop in 2006, 106 (66%) were still attending the participating schools at T4 and T5. Analyses revealed no significant difference between dropouts and nondropouts on any outcome variable. Remaining participants were seen again for two follow-up assessments. The first assessment (T4) served as a long-term follow-up of the ESPACE workshop as well as a pretest for the different types of booster sessions: brief versus complete ESPACE workshops for younger children or CSR for older children. Results revealed that two years after the ESPACE workshop, all participating children had greater knowledge of inappropriate touching, $F(1, 80) = 7.32$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, $M_{T3} = 14.67$, ($SD = 5.03$), $M_{T4} = 16.04$ ($SD = 4.26$) and were significantly less often victimized by peers, $F(1, 81) = 11.46$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.12$, $M_{T3} = 13.39$ ($SD = 15.44$), $M_{T4} = 7.50$ ($SD = 9.90$). There was no statistically significant change in the other two outcome measures during the two years between T3 and T4.

Booster Session Effectiveness—ESPACE and CSR

Results of ANCOVAs (Table 3) with children in the second cycle of grade school (third and fourth grades) revealed that, after adjusting for prebooster session scores, children who received the brief booster sessions had greater knowledge of inappropriate touching at posttest (T5) than those in the no booster or the complete booster groups. This difference was confirmed using post hoc analyses that revealed significant differences in average scores between the brief booster group and the complete booster group (difference = 2.41, $p = .031$) and between the brief booster group and the control group (difference = 2.26, $p = .011$) but not between the complete booster group and the control group (difference = $-.15$, $p = .885$). There was no difference between the experimental and control groups on any other outcome measure.

Results of ANCOVAs (Table 4) with children in the third cycle of grade school (fifth and sixth grades) revealed no difference in outcomes assessed at T5 when controlling for T4 between the experimental group receiving the CSR booster and the control group.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effectiveness of a school-based sexual abuse prevention workshop for children in first through fourth grades and the effectiveness of booster sessions to this workshop for children in third through sixth grades. It is first important to note that the documented implementation

TABLE 3 Adjusted Means for Outcome Measures at T5 and ANCOVA Results According to Experimental Groups at T5 for Grades 3 and 4

	Complete booster (<i>n</i> = 24)		Brief booster (<i>n</i> = 12)		Wait-list (<i>n</i> = 22)		Group effect		
	<i>M</i> _{adj}	SD	<i>M</i> _{adj}	SD	<i>M</i> _{adj}	SD	<i>F</i> _(df)	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Knowledge	14.43	4.58	16.84	4.35	14.58	4.00	4.06 _(2, 53)	.023	.13
Ability	11.02	1.38	11.35	0.90	11.05	1.32	0.49 _(2, 54)	.614	.02
Bullying	9.62	10.16	5.45	7.23	7.91	14.29	1.22 _(2, 54)	.303	.04
Safety	1.76	0.26	1.72	0.31	1.65	0.26	1.43 _(2, 54)	.247	.05

Note: Knowledge = child knowledge of abuse (inappropriate touching); ability = ability to recommend an appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation; bullying = reported experiences of peer bullying or victimization over the past week; safety = sense of safety around school and the home. Degrees of freedom vary as there are missing data in some dependent variables.

TABLE 4 Adjusted Means for Outcome Measures at T5, ANCOVA Results According to Experimental Groups at T5, for Grades 5 and 6

	CSR booster (<i>n</i> = 32)		Wait-list (<i>n</i> = 32)		Group effect		
	<i>M</i> _{adj}	SD	<i>M</i> _{adj}	SD	<i>F</i> _(df)	<i>p</i>	η_p^2
Knowledge	17.81	3.85	17.50	4.26	.32 _(1, 60)	.575	.01
Ability	11.18	1.60	11.17	1.54	.15 _(1, 60)	.696	.00
Bullying	6.21	6.34	5.51	8.70	.29 _(1, 61)	.591	.01
Safety	1.75	0.25	1.75	0.25	.00 _(1, 61)	.948	.00
Violence knowledge	7.52	1.68	7.38	1.47	.25 _(1, 61)	.617	.00
Support	23.50	3.75	23.53	2.81	.00 _(1, 61)	.965	.00
Empathy	14.39	2.81	14.02	3.49	.20 _(1, 51)	.659	.00
Self-efficacy	20.57	3.34	20.25	3.25	.23 _(1, 59)	.635	.00

Note: Knowledge = child knowledge of abuse (inappropriate touching); ability = ability to recommend an appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation; bullying = reported experiences of peer bullying or victimization over the past week; safety = sense of safety around school and the home; violence knowledge = general knowledge about violence; support = vaux social support record; empathy = empathic concern scale; Self-efficacy = confidence to solve conflicts in a nonviolent way. Degrees of freedom vary as there are missing data in some dependent variables.

data revealed an excellent adherence to the workshop synopsis across ESPACE instructors, a rarely assessed aspect of prevention programs. In addition, there was no negative impact from the workshop in terms of children's feelings of safety, which remained the same over the entire study. This result confirmed our last hypothesis: there were no statistically significant negative effects on children's feelings of safety as a result of the ESPACE workshop.

ESPACE Workshop Short-Term Effectiveness—First Year

The results indicate, contrary to the primary research hypothesis, that there were no statistically significant differences in knowledge of inappropriate

touching and abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation of workshop participants compared with those of non-participants at T2. Previous ESPACE evaluation studies have demonstrated significant improvements (Hébert et al., 2001), although different measures of knowledge and abilities were used and the samples were predominantly nonimmigrant children. Other studies using the CKAQ and WIST have also demonstrated significant effects of prevention programs in terms of knowledge and abilities (Zwi et al., 2007) while excluding a lack of measurement sensitivity hypothesis to explain our study's results.

Our study's participants showed lower initial knowledge scores than the norms, and there does not seem to be a significant ceiling effect for this measure. Participants' scores on the CKAQ-R were lower than the average English-speaking validation sample (Tutty, 1995); in fact, they were almost two standard deviations below the mean for the entire sample ($M = 19.0$, $SD = 4.4$). Moreover, Tutty (1992) explained that the better results of the control group of her sample were because the sample was composed primarily of Canadian-born parents, suggesting that children from Canadian-born parents would have higher scores than children of non-Canadian-born parents.

It is important to note previous evaluation studies of the ESPACE program with French-speaking grade school children were performed outside Montreal in middle-income areas of the province without the cultural and linguistic diversity represented in the current study (Hébert et al., 2001). This is in accordance with observations from Topping and Baron's (2009) review, which indicated children from low socioeconomic backgrounds had lower initial baselines and learned less from prevention interventions. In this regard, studies of academic achievement and knowledge acquisition revealed poverty is related to lower academic achievement (Whipple, Evans, Barry, & Maxwell, 2010), and, in the U.S., minority children face cumulative challenges also related to lower academic achievement (Paik & Walberg, 2007), one of which is poverty.

Although it lacks a control group and cannot attribute observed changes to the assessed intervention, it is interesting to note the preliminary study of an intensive 16 hour child sexual abuse education program with ethnically diverse families reported significant improvements in preschoolers' knowledge of general safety concepts and personal safety rules (Kenny, 2010). This suggests that programs of longer duration could be more effective with ethnically diverse families and children as well as with general populations of children. Moreover, Kenny (2010) also reported there was less parent-child communication about safety and sexual topics in Spanish-speaking families and in another study (Kenny & Wurtele, 2008) that fewer Spanish-speaking children knew the correct names for genitals. This result points to a possible cultural difference between the values promoted in sexual abuse prevention workshops and the values promoted within certain ethnic communities.

For example, values promoted in ESPACE (such as self-assertiveness) may conflict with the values promoted in the immigrant families that compose our sample, such as respect and deference toward elders and parents in Asian and Middle-Eastern families. This conflict may have posed an obstacle for learning new concepts or abilities that were contrary to parental values promoted in the home. In brief, although a basic cultural adaptation was made in hiring instructors from diverse ethnic backgrounds, cultural adaptations to the workshop content and structure might also be necessary with this population (for further cultural adaptation recommendations, see Fontes, 2005).

In addition, the cultural diversity and lower socioeconomic status of the sample used in the present study may have had an impact on the involvement of parents. ESPACE is one of the few prevention programs that offers workshops specifically designed for parents of children involved in prevention sessions. A prior study found that the participation of parents is linked to a better knowledge of sexual abuse concepts (Hébert, Lavoie, & Parent, 2002). When exploring the impact of parental involvement on children's outcomes, data suggested that, while no difference was evident for knowledge, posttest ability scores for children whose parents took part in the meeting were higher (Hébert et al., 2001). Parent participation was not formally assessed in the current study, but workshop instructors reported it to be low. Furthermore, parents from varied ethnic origins have lower levels of knowledge about sexual abuse and discuss sexual abuse less frequently with their children (e.g., Chen, Dunne, & Han, 2007).

ESPACE Workshop—Two-Year Follow-Up

Because there was no difference between participants and nonparticipants at T2, we could not test the secondary hypothesis as to whether gains following the workshop were maintained at the two-year follow-up. However, results show that during that two-year interval, after all participants received the workshop, their knowledge of inappropriate touching increased and their reported experiences of victimization by peers decreased. Because of the absence of a control group not receiving the workshop during that interval it is impossible to know if changes can be attributed to the workshop, to the passage of time, or to a maturational effect whereas children learn about sexual abuse and are less often victimized by peers as they grow older. This result is consistent with studies that indicate that there is a general decrease in bullying among children and adolescents as they progress through school from primary grade levels to high school (Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Furthermore, children's improved scores on the CKAQ-R's knowledge of inappropriate touching subscale over the two-year interval between the workshop and the booster session were consistent with observed differences in average scores across grade levels in

other studies using the CKAQ-R, which also revealed a positive relationship between scores and grade level (i.e., increased scores were consistent with increased grade level; Tutty, 1997).

Booster Session Effectiveness—ESPACE and CSR

Results also indicated that, when controlling for T1 scores, participants in a brief booster session had greater knowledge of inappropriate touching scores at T2 than those receiving a complete booster or no booster. This partially confirmed our secondary hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of the brief versus complete booster sessions in that they were not comparable. Our initial hypothesis was that they would be. However, as the goal of the analysis was to determine if a brief booster session could be administered instead of a complete booster without detrimental impact, the results, although indicating the effectiveness of the brief booster only and not the complete booster, still positively answers our research question.

Our hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of a new comprehensive CSR booster for older children addressing multiple aspects of violence was not confirmed, as children participating in this booster session did not demonstrate greater knowledge of inappropriate touching, increased abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation, more confidence in others, greater empathy, or self-efficacy at T5 when compared with nonparticipants. The absence of CSR booster effectiveness suggests that more comprehensive prevention programs that address multiple aspects of violence might not be as effective, at least when given in an 85-minute booster session format. This is an important finding, as schools face growing pressures to cover more prevention topics in their already full curriculum (Finkelhor, 2009) and the temptation to pool resources to offer more in the same package may be difficult to resist. Future research should continue to assess the effectiveness of such comprehensive programs to determine ways in which they can be improved so that children learn safety prevention and sexual abuse prevention. Following M. Davis and Gydycz's (2000) meta-analysis, which revealed that the greatest effect of prevention workshops was observed for those using the four prevention session or more format, intensive programs are being developed (e.g., Kenny, 2010). These intensive and comprehensive programs need to be assessed to determine their optimal dose-response effectiveness and their cost-efficiency.

Limitations

Participation rate was low, as only 23% of eligible children obtained parental consent to participate. Although information and consent forms were written in both French and English, some parents may not have been able to read

in either of those languages, thus excluding their children from the study. As there was no other commonly spoken language that could have reached a majority of the parents, we decided not to translate the forms in other languages to avoid including some communities (e.g., Arab speaking) to the exclusion of others (e.g., Vietnamese or Chinese speaking). This could have induced a greater selection bias as there were varying family ethnic origins across schools. This being said, the low participation rate entailed a low total number of participants, which limited the statistical power to detect smaller changes and may have precluded the identification of small changes in participant knowledge, ability to recommend appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation, or victimization following the workshop or booster sessions.

Although the CKAQ-R (Tutty, 1995) did not show evidence of a ceiling effect, the ability to recommend an appropriate behavioral response to an abusive situation measure developed for this study from the WIST (Wurtele et al., 1998) seemed to tap relatively well-developed abilities in those children. This measure may not have been sensitive enough to detect changes in participating children's abilities to recommend appropriate behavioral responses to an abusive situation. It is also important to note that this measure has no norms and a low alpha value was obtained for the study.

The study's target population attended schools located in the lowest socioeconomic areas in the province, with the majority of families living under the low-income threshold. Furthermore, half of the participating children were recent immigrants, and 90% of the participants' parents were born outside Canada. Although the present study was interested in exploring the ESPACE workshop's effectiveness for these children specifically because they represent the workshop's usual clientele in Montreal, our results and recommendations apply only to children of similar environments and backgrounds and cannot be generalized to all children (e.g., Canadian-born or those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds).

Conclusion

More intensive prevention efforts should be implemented with those populations similar to the one in this study (i.e., populations in which the majority of individuals are immigrants of low socioeconomic status who have minimal initial knowledge about sexual abuse). There is a general recommendation that all sexual abuse prevention workshops last at least four to five sessions (Davis & Gidycz, 2000; Topping & Barron, 2009) with the understanding that it may be necessary to increase the number of sessions for specific populations, such as those with characteristics similar to the population in this study. It is further suggested to adapt the workshops to include aspects relevant to

the various cultures represented in the audience (Fontes, 2005). A more general adaptation might be necessary where there is significant multicultural and ethnic diversity rather than an adaptation for a specific culture, as in the Montreal area where the ESPACE workshop is currently offered. At the very least, future research on prevention programs should include measures of ethnic origin as possible effectiveness moderators. These data can also be used to describe the populations to which the results can be generalized (Kerig, Volz, Moeddel, & Cuellar, 2010; Topping & Barron, 2009).

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