



ADVANCING HEALTH EDUCATION &amp; RESEARCH

AVA Research Reviews provides AVA members with recent published, peer-reviewed articles in a broad array of violence and abuse topics. The goal is to highlight and disseminate violence and abuse research in a timely fashion, and to enhance healthcare providers' practice by fostering the educational mission of AVA

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# AVA Research Review

## ADVANCING HEALTH EDUCATION & RESEARCH

**Review Title:** High School Students in a Health Career Promotion Program Report Fewer Acts of Aggression and Violence

**Reviewer:** Elizabeth A. D. Lee, PhD, APN, ACNS-BC, Eleanor Mann School of Nursing, University of Arkansas Fayetteville

**Article:** Oscos-Sanchez MA, Lesser, J, Oscos-Flores, LD. High School Students in a Health Career Promotion Program Report Fewer Acts of Aggression and Violence, *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2013; 52: 96-101.

**Article Summary:**  
*Brief Overview:*

Homicide and other acts of physical violence are increasing at alarming rates among teenagers and young adults in the United States. This article addresses the need to test school based programs

focused on decreasing violence among Latino youth. A growing part of the population, Latino youth, especially those attending alternative school programs, often experience or participate in violent behavior. Latino elementary school children reported less violence after participating in the cultural character development program El Joven Nobel, but the program had not been tested in middle and high school youth.

#### ***Aims of the article:***

The purpose of the quasi-experimental repeated measures study was to determine the effect of the El Joven Nobel on decreasing violence among Latino middle and high school students attending an alternative school. The authors tested their hypothesis that Latino youth who participated in El Joven Nobel would report fewer acts of nonphysical aggression, physical violence, and intimate partner violence compared to

those in the alternative program, the Teen Medical Academy for health career promotion. El Joven Nobel was offered the first year to high school students ( $n = 71$ ) and the second year to participants in middle school ( $n = 75$ ). Likewise, Teen Medical Academy was offered to middle school students ( $n = 77$ ) in the first year and participants in high school ( $n = 75$ ) the second year. El Joven Nobel used a variety of interactive educational strategies, including storytelling, small group discussions, crafts, and Native American talking circles. The activities sought to facilitate an attachment to, a commitment to, an involvement with, and a belief in a nonviolent cultural identity that replaces violence-provoking norms and attitudes with beliefs that support harmony and balance in all relationships. In a previous community-based participatory action violence prevention research study, local community members selected El Joven Noble as an intervention and were trained to implement the program with elementary schoolchildren. In contrast, the control group (usual condition) was The Teen Medical Academy, a health career promotion program that focused on common medical conditions frequently managed by primary care physicians. The sessions focused on

teaching human anatomy and pathology using hands-on diagnostic and therapeutic medical equipment. In the Teen Medical Academy sessions, participants learned how to manage and treat lacerations, nondisplaced fractures, asthma, heart attacks, liver disease, and gallstones. Both of the programs were offered twice a week for 45 minutes, and students who previously participated in either program were excluded the second year. Trained local community members conducted the El Joven Nobel program and family medicine faculty and residents, a community facilitator, and a project coordinator implemented the health career promotion sessions. Self-reported perpetration of violence was measured by nonphysical aggression (Cronbach alpha = .90), physical violence (Cronbach alpha = .88), and intimate partner violence (Cronbach alpha = .93) instruments at baseline, 3 months, and 9 months. Separate repeated-measure analyses of covariance were applied to the three violence measures.

### ***Relevant findings:***

Unexpectedly, the high school control group focused on health career promotion had lower nonphysical aggression ( $p < .001$ ), physical violence ( $p$

= .002), and intimate partner violence scores ( $p = .02$ ) than high school participants in the El Joven Nobel intervention. However, there was no significant difference in any of the violence measures between middle school intervention and control participants.

### ***Authors' Conclusions:***

A health career promotion program in schools may be a viable violence prevention strategy for Latino high school students. The Teen Medical Academy was based on a theoretical framework focused on promoting access to positive life options to decrease youth health risks. Study limitations included the nonrandomized quasi-experimental design, a higher attrition rate in the El Joven Noble program. Because the study did not measure violence among students who did not participate in either of the programs, the researchers were thus unable to make comparisons. It may be that levels of violence decrease with time among most students. The authors appropriately suggest a qualitative study of individual student interests, self-esteem, and social support could provide more insight into reasons for success of the health career promotion program.

***Reviewer's Comments:***

This article is especially relevant for professionals working with youth of any race living in a culture of violence. Despite limitations, the article supports providing positive health career development programs for Latino high school participants admitted to alternative school programs for acts of aggression and violence. Culture character development programs may be more useful for Latino elementary and middle school students than with high school students approaching workforce age. Developing viable school based violence prevention programs will become increasingly important in crime prevention efforts. The quasi-experimental cross-over study design may have limited the intervention effectiveness. Randomizing schools (rather than cross-over design in the same school) to intervention and control may have provided a different result. While this study did not demonstrate effectiveness in reducing violence experiences in this violence prevention intervention, it stands to reason that this type of research is an investment worth funding.