

Brothers as Allies Project

A Strengths-Based Curriculum for Sexual Violence Prevention

Janis Whitlock, PhD, MPH Cornell University
Ann-Margret Foley, MSW, NYS DOH
Mary Maley, MS, Cornell University

NEW YORK STATE | Department of Health

Cornell University

Agenda



Who we are and how we came to be



Project aims



Project partners and places



Approach



What did we learn?

Who we are and how we came to be

A Collaboration for Sexual Violence Prevention

- Funding goal:
  - To advance understanding of upstream approaches for sexual violence prevention
  - Five total sites funded
- Funded awarded to NYS DOH from the CDC in 2016
- Partnership with DOH, Cornell and PPCWNY (a NYS RPE & CAPP provider)



Goals

To evaluate the efficacy of a strengths-based curriculum to reduce risk for future sexual violence perpetration among middle school-aged boys (ages 12-14).

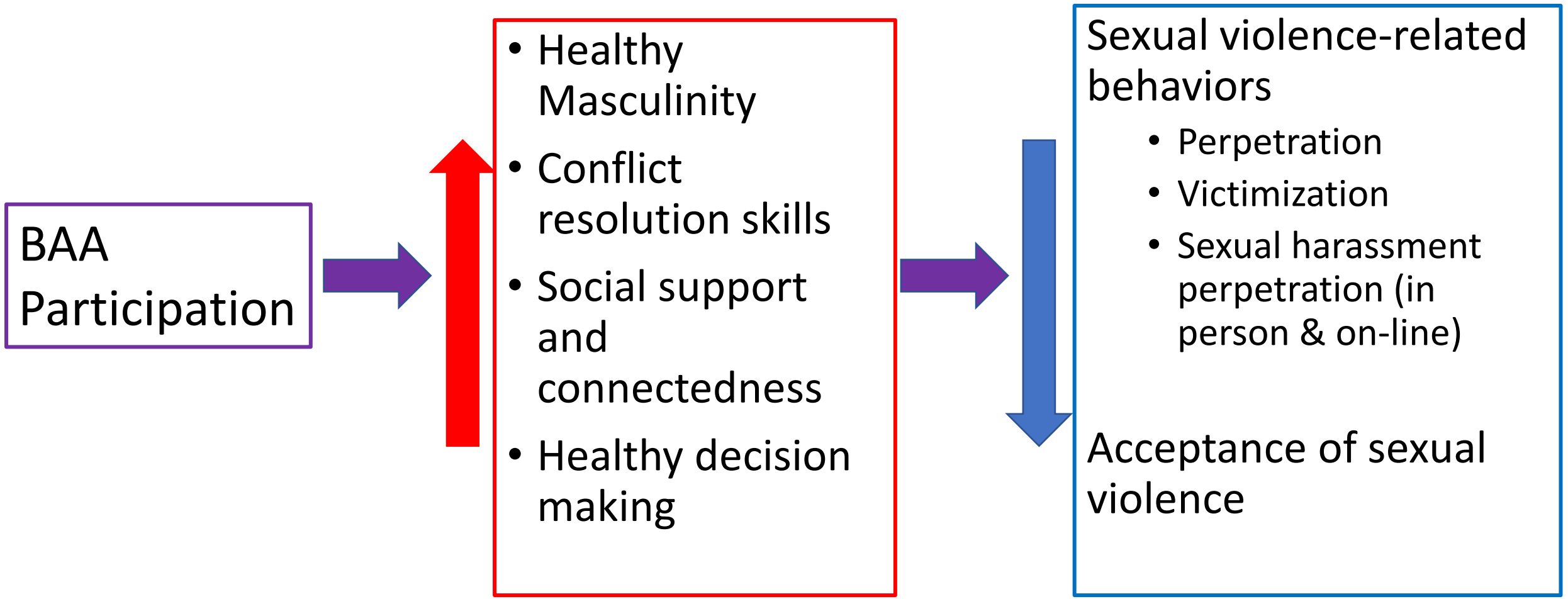
To assess the extent to which the curriculum leads to improved relationships and stronger connections with adults in afterschool settings.

To determine the implementation factors which impact the efficacy

The suite of BAA studies

- **Outcome evaluation**: Does it work to reduce sexual violence?
- **Supp study 1**: Would violence prevention programs, such as BAA, be feasible in rural / tribal communities?
- **Supp study 2**: What do participants, facilitators, and study site staff take away from the BAA?

Theory of Change: Primary outcomes and measures



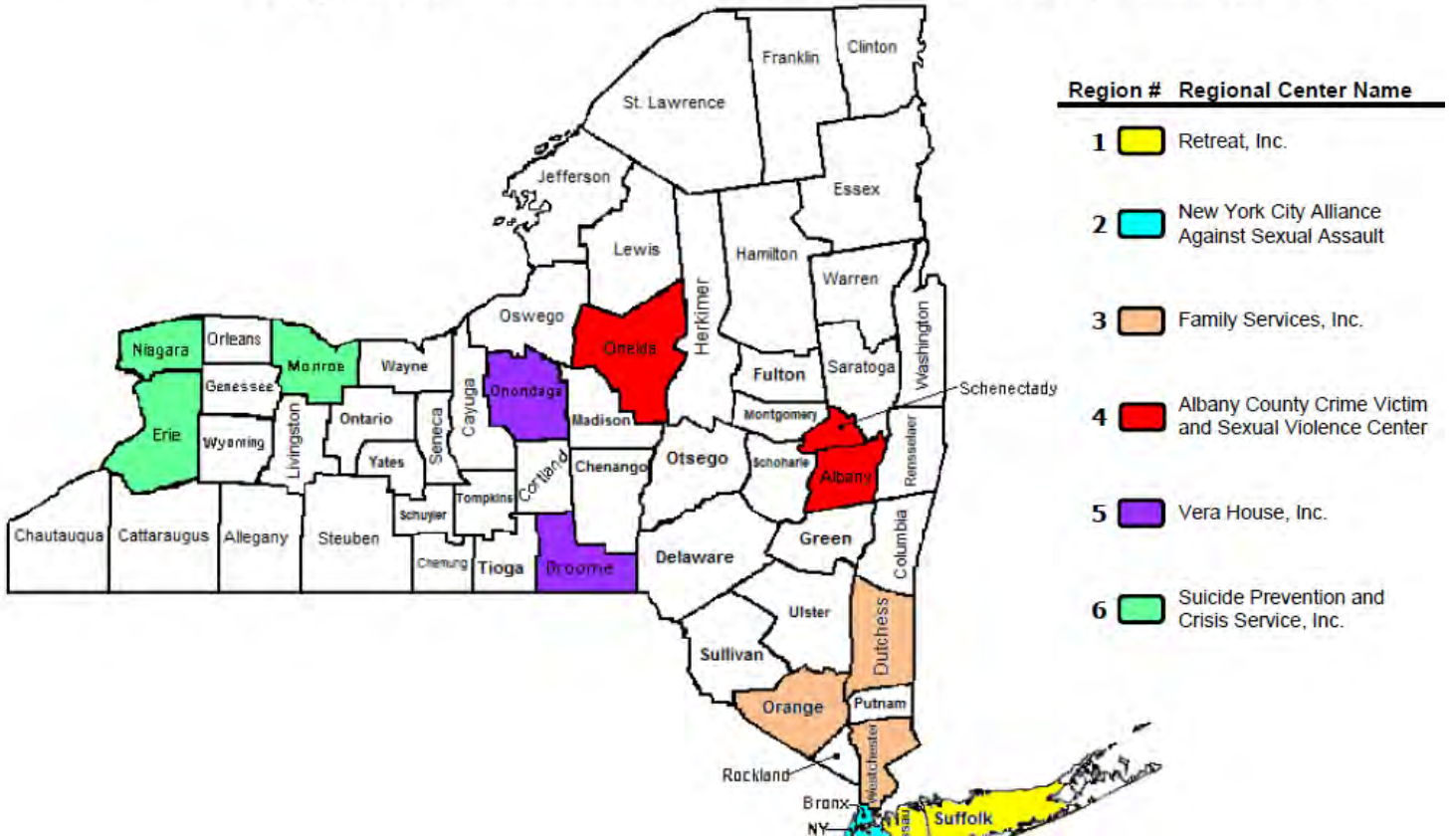
Secondary outcomes

- Homophobia
- Bullying
- Bystander efficacy
- Pornography exposure and use
- Psychological distress
- Drug and Alcohol use

Who was involved? Project partners and places

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Department of Health

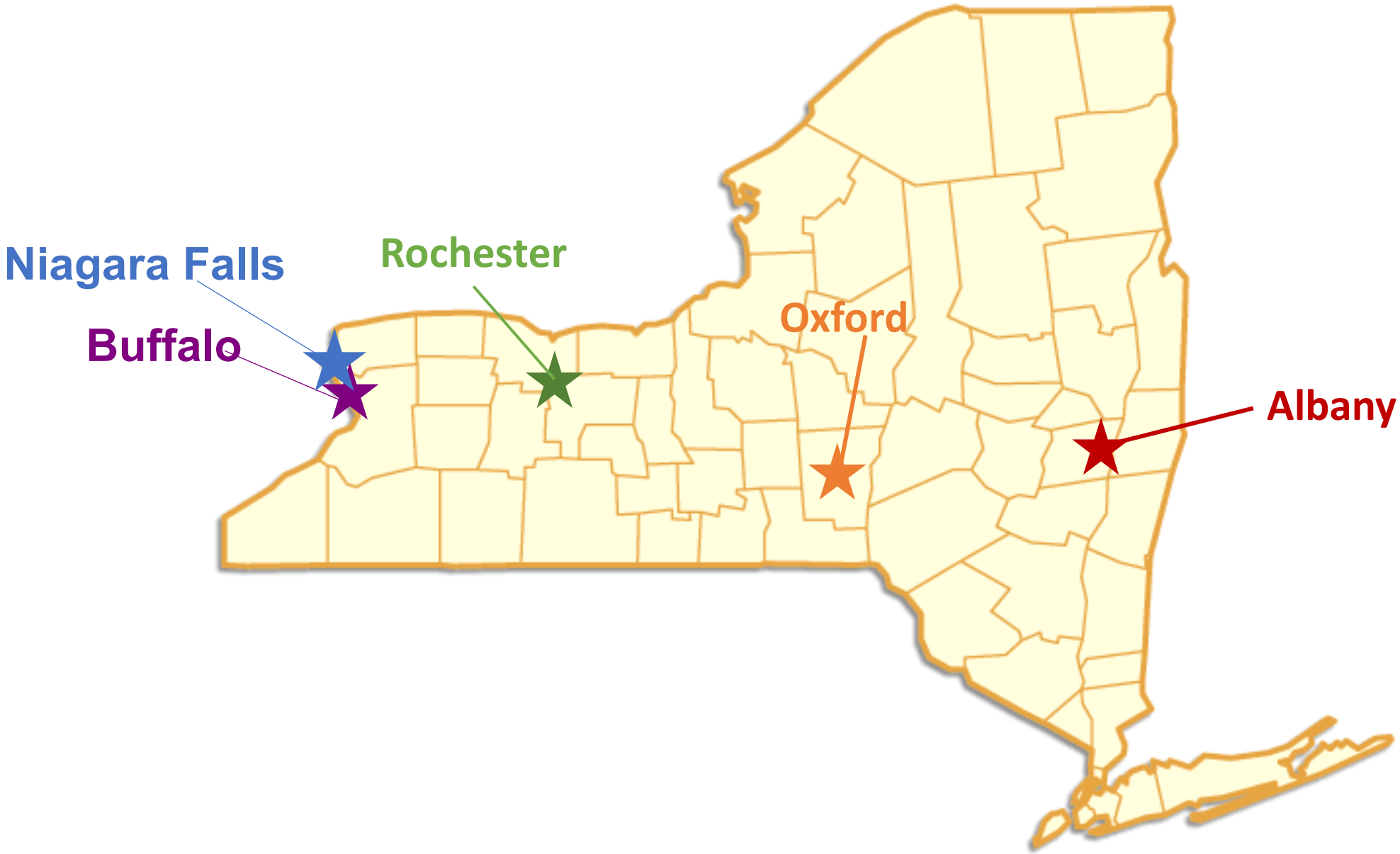
Regional Centers for Sexual Violence Prevention



Region #	Regional Center Name
1	Retreat, Inc.
2	New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault
3	Family Services, Inc.
4	Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Violence Center
5	Vera House, Inc.
6	Suicide Prevention and Crisis Service, Inc.

NYS Rape Prevention Education Initiative

BAA sites



BAA Trainers

- BAA activities
- SVP Content
- Toxic Masculinity
- Facilitation Skills





And, our participants!

What is the Brothers as Allies Curricula?



One Circle Foundation Curricula: Boys Council & Girls Circle

- Grounded in:
  - Experiential learning
  - Strength based
  - Relational-Cultural Theory
- Small discussion and activity groups
- Ages 9-18 (but older youth as well)
- Facilitated by trained adults



Brothers as Allies Approach

- Merger of 2 OC curricula
- 10 sessions, 60-90 minutes each
- Male facilitator, groups of 8-10 middle school boys
- Strengths-based model
- Facilitates youth engagement and adult/youth connectedness
- Emphasizes process over content

Gender Roles & Expectations

Respecting Intimate Partners

Boys & Their Emotions

Forming Healthy & Safer Sexual Practices

Unlocking the Code


Study approach

The study component: Testing the Efficacy of BAA

Randomized waitlist design

Sites: 22

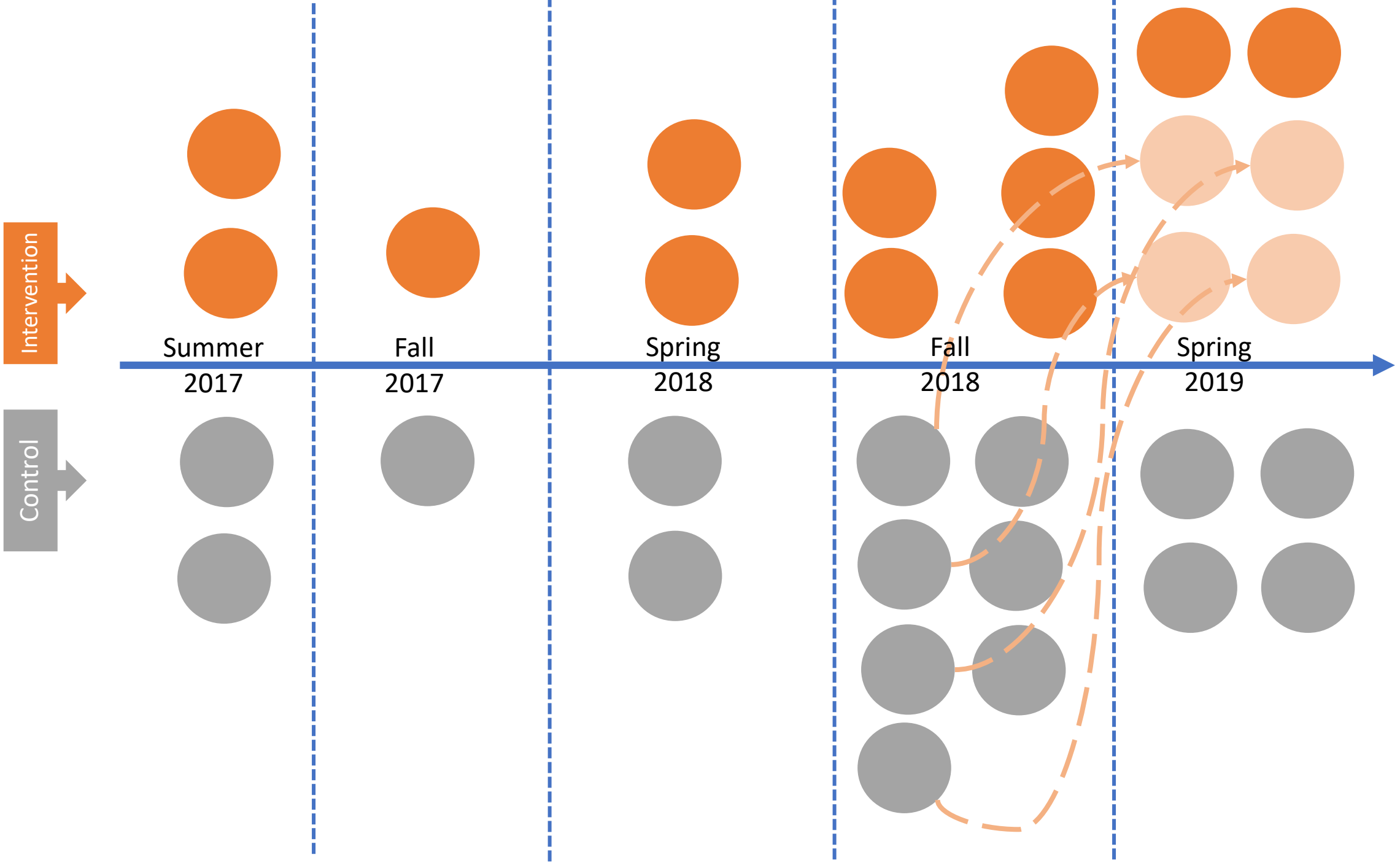
- 17 intervention cycles
- 15 control
- 4 crossovers

# of facilitators: 11

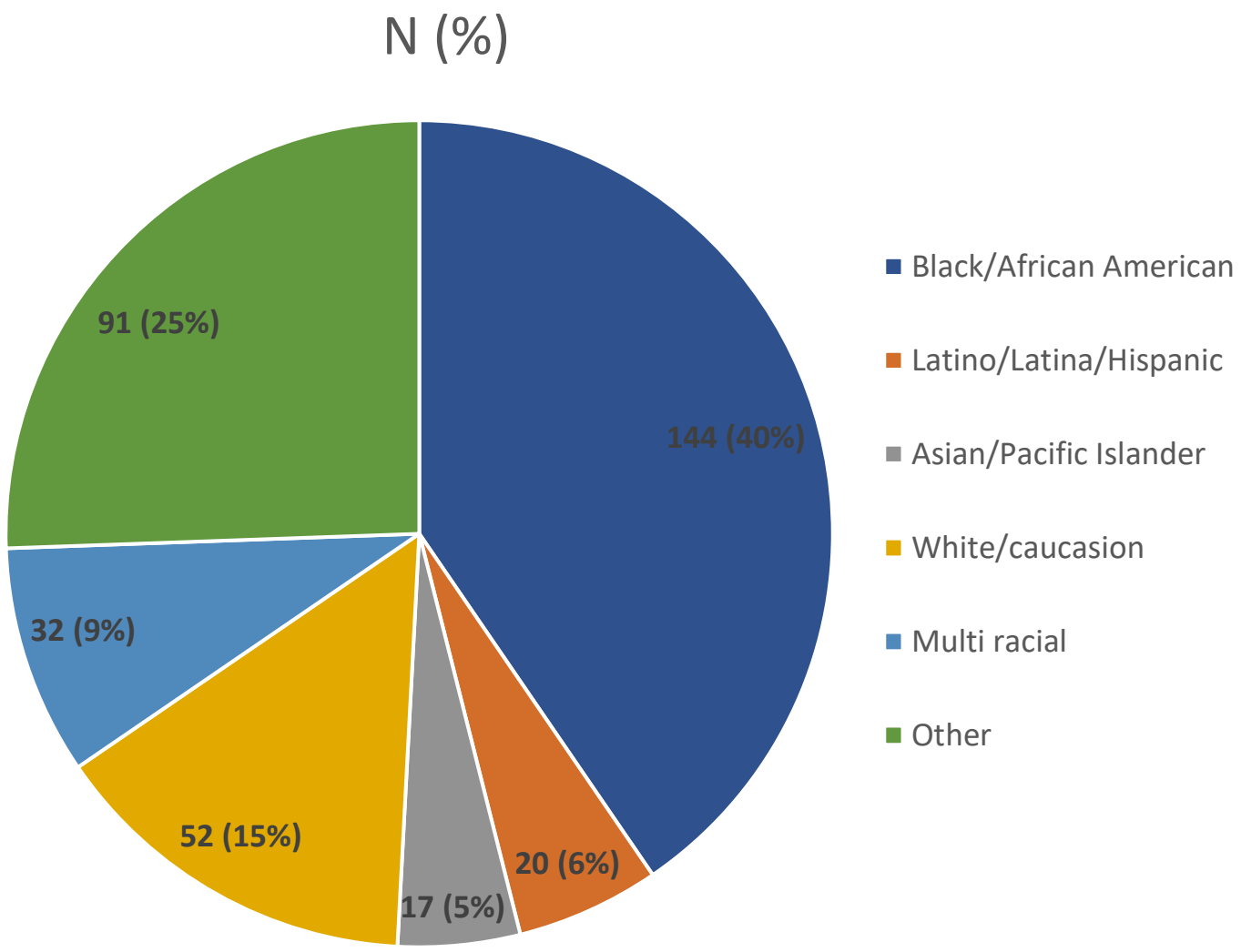
#Cycles completed: 36

Participants

- 379 total
- 341 at least one timepoint
- 271 at least 2 timepoints


Intervention
Control
Summer 2017
Fall 2017
Spring 2018
Fall 2018
Spring 2019

Who participated?



What we learned from the quantitative data

From time 1 to time 2 and when compared to control group, boys in the BAA group showed:

- Higher reports of victimization
- Lower sexual violence perpetration
- Lower reported sexual harassment
  - Touch, grab, pinch
  - Sexual graffiti
  - Sexual blocking
- Very few other results, except:
  - BAA part more likely to tell someone how they feel
  - BAA part less likely to call someone “homo” or “gay” if they thought they were gay

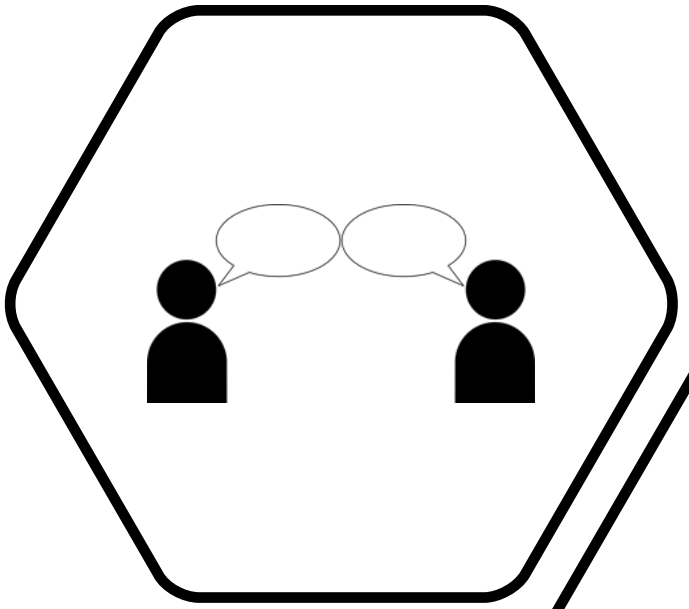


So..

The intervention was effective

Not clear why

A Qualitative Assessment of BAA





- Key Informant Interviews
  - 9 facilitators,
  - 6 site coordinators,
  - 3 participants
- Two focus groups with youth participants in Buffalo

Key takeaways



Essential partnerships between youth-serving organizations, practitioners, and researchers



The need for organizational capacity, time and support



Facilitator approach and background as an essential component



Training on both SVP content, masculinity and facilitation skills



Focus on making space for organic youth insights

Participant reflections



Healthier relationships

“It really helped with, you know, having healthier relationships with friends and stuff. Because…it gave me a different outlook on like certain situations and like respecting females.” (Youth Participant)

The importance of consent

“The most important thing I learned was you know, to always ask for consent. Because, consent is a very important thing...because sometimes people are peer pressured and they…make it seem like they want to do it, but they really don’t. So like it’s good to check in and stuff to make sure that they’re like 100% through it, like 100% they consent.” (Youth Participant)



Being a man

“Brothers as Allies taught me to be a man, …we talked about you know, how people like toxic masculinity… like you’re too soft…oh you’re being a girl right now, stop crying like a little girl. Uh, we talked about all that stuff, and you know, it really helped me.” (Youth Participant)

Emotions

“I feel that as boys or as men… I feel that a lot of the times we suppress our emotions and being able to talk to one …Sometimes it has to be, you know, like a friend that you know you can trust. So a lot of the times I felt like I formed a closer bond with the person in that group. So I feel like the group was something that was good and necessary.” (Youth Participant)

Facilitator reflections

What are the most important facilitator qualities?

“Consistency, commitment, patience, receptivity or openness, sacrifice... and love.” (Facilitator)

On need for the program

“Younger folks ... become older folks that carry some of the baggage into adulthood” (Facilitator)

“Without question, a lot of organizations, they want to serve this segment, this demographic, but they don't have the tools.” (Facilitator)

“I just remember being a young man and actually needing similar resources and them not being as available, so any time I see programming, you know, when they’re willing to help the children in that population I always jump at because I know how rare it is that people what to do, you know that kind of work.”

(Site Coordinator)



“If this is not a passion of yours, if this is not something that you're invested in in terms of building relationships then you may be better suited to do other different types of work and that's okay, but we're preparing the ambassadors of our future and this is serious work that we're doing…” (Facilitator)



Making Space

"…it is important to have a safe space like this for boys to be able to explore their ideas of identity and manhood and masculinity because it is not happening in any other space, and without that it's like… you have to deal with a lot of- often times negative repercussions of them not being able to express themselves in that healthy kind of way." (Facilitator)



Ideas about Manhood

“...a lot of the conversations that we had were like the first time they...most of them had like any of those conversations, so I felt like it definitely opened up their perspective, as far as like what it is to be a man and just not what they’re getting from either home or television and films.” (Facilitator)



Ideas about Girls & Women Changed

“Yes, the way they talk about girls definitely changed. Cause in the beginning, you know, it was pretty much just...like a ‘ew’ kind of thing and then...later on you know, they were a little more comfortable…When I would dismiss them to the cafeteria, they were a little more integrated as the sessions went on.” (Facilitator)





Ideas about bullying changed

“ A member of the group who was the most quiet …was talking about not just like what it feels like when you get bullied directly but then how that changes how that ripples outward and affects how you talk to other people and what you think of as your friends and you know, ***was really having a revelatory and vulnerable moment there****.” (Facilitator)*



What we take away

- Partnerships matter – a lot!
- Facilitators are the program backbone: select wisely and train robustly
- Boys are engaged by the BAA focus on process & ritual over content
- Sustainability matters for more than program longevity – participants want places and ways to continue conversations



Thank you!!

Thank you!



Questions? Reflections?