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Applying Social Norms Theory to the Prevention of Gender Based Violence in Middle Schools:
Theory, Research and Practice

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Presentation Learning Objectives
1. Describe core components of social norms theory.
2. Apply social norms theory to the creation of a social norms marketing campaign
3. Describe examples of various types of social norms marketing campaigns.

Example 1
Integrate a social norms campaign with workshops grounded in social norms theory

Example 2
Stand-alone social norms marketing campaigns.

Example 3
Social norms marketing campaigns & community change strategies.
Sexual Assault & Dating Violence

What is dating violence? What is sexual assault?

Rhode Island
8.6% Experience forced sexual intercourse in the past year.

Nationally
10.4% Experienced sexual violence in the past year.

Impact of SA & DV

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
Re-victimization
Depression
Poor Academic Performance

2 of 3 Who are sexually victimized are re-victimized
12 Times more likely to be re-victimized
### Sexual Assault in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obscene Gestures</th>
<th>Sexual Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Jokes</td>
<td>Kissing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whistles / Cat Calls</td>
<td>Touching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Rumors</td>
<td>Rape</td>
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<tr>
<td>Requesting Sexual Favors</td>
<td>Attempted Rape</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Giving, Sending or Displaying Pornography</td>
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### Sexual Violence in Middle Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Type of Violence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Unwanted Sexual Touching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Sexual Rumors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Sexual Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Homophobic Name Calling</td>
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Assumptions

Prevention programs must be theory based and research driven.

Interventions must be based on a correct understanding of the problem.

Barriers and challenges must be addressed.

Infrastructures must be created to deliver the product.

Prevention is a process - efforts must be adapted and modified over time.

Fundamental Questions to Ask

What attitudes or behaviors do we want to discourage, inhibit or prevent?

What attitudes or behaviors do we want to encourage, increase or facilitate?
"Health Terrorism"
The "Scared Straight" Approach

Inducing fear or other negative emotions as a way of getting people to change.

Instills a fear of consequences.

Increases perceptions of risk.

If You’re Under 21 And Try To Buy Alcohol, We’ll Do Worse Than Tell Your Mom.

IT’S NOT A LECTURE, IT’S THE LAW: THE LEGAL DRINKING AGE IS 21

Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board
In The Public Interest

What other examples of “health terrorism” have you seen?

What are your concerns about this approach?
Problems with Health Terrorism

Unintentionally reinforces the problem by fostering the misperception.

Doesn’t speak to the majority doing the “right thing”.

Not supported by research.

Message is not credible to audience members with problem behaviors.

Reinforces “shock culture” and “either or” thinking.

“The Science of Positive”

Undermine denial of individuals engaging in problem behavior.

Speak to the healthy majority.
"The Science of Positive"

Designed to affirm and enhance positive behaviors and norms.

"Your choices everyday help stop violence against aboriginal women."

"The Science of Positive"

Fosters intolerance of problem behaviors.

"I'm the kind of guy who takes a stand."
What is a Social Norm?

The acceptability of an action or belief.

Perceptions of social norms predict what people will say and do.

Norms exist for individuals, groups and communities.

Unspoken rules about what is "normal" for a group or setting.

Examples of Alcohol Related Social Norms

- Frequency and quantity of use.
- Attitude towards under-age drinking.
- Alcohol provided by parents to under-aged.
- Tolerance of high-risk behavior.
- Support for policies and enforcement.
What are some common misperceptions about factors that contribute to sexual violence?

Social Norms Contributing to Sexual Violence

Most high school students are sexually active.

Sexual activity is the mark of a man.

Guys like to hear about each others’ sex lives.

Sexual violence and rape are shameful for victims.

Sex is a taboo subject.

Sex is a man’s right in a relationship.

I shouldn’t interfere with another guys chances to have sex.

Nobody is bothered by bullying but the victim.
Misperceptions of Norms

People OVER-estimate risk behaviors and UNDER-estimate protective behaviors.

(Mis)Perceptions of peer attitudes & behaviors are some of the strongest influences on behavior.

Perceptions are easier to change than other causes.

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Social Norms Methods

1. Use media channels to inform people of ACTUAL (healthy) norms = Social Norms Marketing.

2. Social norms intervention in small groups.

3. Tailored individual feedback.

The goal is to correct misperceptions to create behavior change.
Social Marketing

Examples

Drink more water
Wear a seat belt.
Don’t litter.
Quit smoking.
Use a condom.
Get STD tested...

NOT Data-driven
NOT Community Specific

Social Norms Marketing

Using the techniques of social marketing to correct misperceptions by advertising the correct norm to a group or population using data collected from that group.
Questions to be Answered

- What misperceptions exist?
- Are they held by the majority?
- What effect do they have on behavior?
- Does the target audience function as a group?
- What would changing the misperceptions accomplish?
- What healthy behaviors could be increased?

Implementing a Social Norms Marketing Campaign

Assess using Surveys
- How much of “X” actually exists?
- How much of “X” do others believe exists?

Selecting a Normative Message
- Is “X” a norm?
- Is the message positive, inclusive and empowering?
Exposing the Actual Norms

Example Questions

Actual Norm
On how many occasions have you consumed alcohol in the past 30 days?

Mispercieved Norm
On how many occasions during the past 30 days do you think the average or typical student at this school consumed alcohol?

What questions might be relevant for a social norms marketing campaign addressing sexual violence?
Questions Addressing Student Perceptions of Sexual Violence

What percentage of students in your school are bothered when someone is teased in an unfriendly or hurtful way?

Are you bothered when someone is teased in an unfriendly or hurtful way?

What percentage of students at your school aren't bothered if a guy has sex with a girl who has had a lot to drink?

Are you bothered if a guy has sex with a girl who has had a lot to drink?

What percentage of students at your school would respect someone who gets involved to address sexual violence?

Would you respect someone who gets involved to address sexual violence?

Designing the Posters

- Select possible statistics (Normative Message)
- Market test the statistics
- Design pilot posters
- Market test poster designs
- Select final statistics and poster
- Implement the campaign and solicit feedback through surveys and intercept interviews
Components of a SNM Poster

- Engaging photo
- Normative message
- Tag line
- Recognizable logo
- Credible source

Select Statistic to Dispel Misperceived Norms

"According to a 2002 survey of PS140 6th - 8th graders, 67% believe that sexual intercourse is for adults in committed or married relationships."
Challenges to Effectiveness of Social Norms Campaigns

Readiness
Developing necessary infrastructure to support the campaign.

Salience
Deciding which messages are appropriate and relevant for each audience.

Believability
Creating credible messages in terms of message, source and explanation of data.

Evaluation
Making sure that program evaluations are thorough and reveal any success.

Carriers of Misperceptions

"Misbehaving is typical of teenagers."

Advocate for Change!
Supporting the Social Norms Campaign

"Students must have lied on the survey so they wouldn't get into trouble."

"The school must be making up all of the data."

"It can't be true. I hear so many stories of people doing that stuff!"

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Spread the Good News!

Negative stories of the minority are circulated. These will support mispercieved norms.

Stories of common, positive events are not circulated.

These will dispell mispercieved norms.
Addressing Student “Kick-Back”

It may be helpful to remind students...

Events that are out of the ordinary are talked about most.

Ask skeptical students how they responded; their answers typically match the healthy norm.

Teachers and school staff have no access to the data.

Surveys were anonymous — no reason for students to lie.

Data was gathered in recent months from students in the school.

What Beliefs Underlie Misperceptions?

Pluralistic Ignorance
Prevents Bystander Intervention

The incorrect belief that one’s private attitudes or behaviors are different from others.

False Consensus
Influences Perpetration

The incorrect belief that one represents the majority when one is actually a minority.

Be an Active Bystander!

Send the right message!

Be interested!

Open Conversation!

Every Time!

Reflect!

Protect!

Social Norms Approach

Summary

Uncorrected misperceptions create a climate that works against prevention efforts.

Misperception Correction is effective as a stand-alone strategy with individuals, groups and communities.

SNA is a way of thinking about prevention as well as a specific strategy.

SNA can be integrated as a component of other strategies to enhance them.
Changing the Normative Culture

A Model Rape Prevention Program

Developed by Alan Berkowitz
Tested by Christine Gidycz

- Defines Consent
- Provides Normative Feedback
- Bystander Intervention Training

Recipients were men & women in residence halls.
Parallels a women’s risk-reduction program.


7-Month Findings

Less association with sexually aggressive peers.

Sexually aggressive men perceived less peer reinforcement for behaviors

Perceived higher likelihood of peer intervention.

Less use of pornography.
EXAMPLE 2

Social Norms Marketing Campaign

Bystander Intervention Training
What is a bystander?

The YVYV Workshops

Workshop #1
- Introduce & Discuss...
  - Sexual Assault
  - Dating Violence
  - Bystander responsibility
  - Prevalence of sexual violence

Workshop #2
- Recognizing abusive behaviors
- Identifying risky situations

Workshop #3
- Single-Gender Session
- False Accusations
- Gender Roles
- Victim Blaming

Workshop #4
- Examine Barriers to Intervention
  - Learn Strategies to Overcome Barriers
  - Confront
  - Distract
  - Get Help
Your Voice Your View
Social Norms Marketing

Where do we get the data?
How does it work?
More Exposure = More Change!

Social Norms Posters
Student Feedback Survey

What do your friends REALLY THINK?
7 out of 10 students at Times2 STEM Academy agree that bystanders have a responsibility to say or do something to prevent someone from being hurt.

97% Noticed the poster in the school.
89% Believed the message was true.
54% Discussed the poster with others.

What do your friends REALLY THINK?
86% of students in grades 11 & 12 at Warwick Vets are bothered when someone is teased in an unfriendly or hurtful way.

77% Noticed the poster in the school.
32% Believed the message was true.
32% Discussed the poster with others.
DeWitt Middle School
Ithaca, New York

Data used in health classes along with discussions of misperceptions.

Workshops for teachers, staff and parents.

Posters designed by students in art classes.

DeWitt Middle School
Two-year follow-up findings

30-day alcohol use decreased 22%

30-day marijuana use decreased 51%

30-day cigarette use decreased 48%

Misperceptions of alcohol, marijuana and cigarette use significantly reduced.
Reducing College Drinking
Lessons from a multi-site randomized trial

First Trial
Experiment Schools
Drinking Decreased

Control Schools
Drinking Increased

Second Trial
Social Norms Campaign
had NO effect on
drinking.

High density of alcohol outlets in 2nd
trial prevented change as a result of the
social norms campaign.

EXAMPLE 4

Community-Level Primary Prevention
of Dating & Sexual Violence
Middle Schools

HYPOTHESIS
A compressive social norms
marketing campaign will result in...
(1) - More accurately perceiving community norms relating to the perceptions of violence, gender roles, sexual activity, sexual communication and consent, support for victims, bystander intervention among students and more accurate perception of student attitudes and behaviors among parents & teachers.

(2) - Increased communication of true norm messages by parents and teachers in their interactions with students.
(3) - **Increased provision of information regarding dating and sexual violence to students** from parents, teachers, posters and fliers in their community.

(4) - **Decreased rates of dating and sexual violence victimization and perpetration among students.**
Project Overview
Steps to Successful Intervention

1. Engaging Stakeholders
2. Identifying Misperceptions
3. Selecting / Testing the Message and Media
4. Readying the Community
5. Implement Media Campaign
6. Addressing Criticism
7. Evaluate

Project Components
Phase I - Refinement & Planning

Meetings with Research Advisory Board

Conduct Stakeholder Interviews (N=30) to Refine...
Lunch & Learn Teacher Training
&
Teacher Workbook

Conduct Open Trial to Assess Clarity, Content,
Acceptability & Feasability
Project Components
Phase 2 - Intervention Phase

Conduct Randomized Controlled Trial in 30 Middle Schools
Demonstrate efficacy of intervention over 6-month follow-up in comparison to wait-list control.

Schools matched on demographic characteristics prior to randomization.

Project Components
Phase 3 - Analysis & Dissemination

Prepare materials to allow for subsequent dissemination.

Provide feedback to schools and professionals.

Conduct cost analysis of implementing the campaign.
Social Norms Marketing Campaigns

Grounded in theory of behavior change.

Targeting community-wide change by correcting misperceived norms.

Can be tailored to address group-specific norms.

Can be developmentally tailored for various age groups

Can be integrated with other change strategies.

Social Norms Marketing

Case studies show promising effects. Warrant additional randomized evaluations.

Changing community norms may be most salient at earlier developmental levels, as these early attitudes may shape the trajectory for violence later in life.
Thank You!

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