Preventing Sexual Violence: Social Marketing for Social Change

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June 23, 2011
Components of Presentation

PART I -- SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION TODAY: A SNAPSHOT

PART II -- WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF OUR PREVENTION EFFORTS?

PART III -- APPLYING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED: KEY BEST PRACTICES FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION
PART I - Sexual Violence Prevention Today…A Snapshot

Some of the current major trends in sexual violence prevention efforts include:

• The idea of a spectrum of violence prevention.

• The use of carefully developed comprehensive strategies based on theories of behaviour change.

• A focus on determinants or causes of violence against women.
• An emerging emphasis on engaging boys and men in prevention

• Neuroscience research findings on brain processing demonstrates that positive messages are most thoroughly processed

• An emphasis on the need for evaluation and evidence of effectiveness
Understanding the cause is the first step toward recognizing the solution. . .
Some Root Causes of Sexual Violence
(Social Context and Framing)

- Male dominated social system with codified gender imbalance
- Sexual violence is the ultimate expression of gender domination and it enforces male superiority
- Gender inequality is the social context of sexual violence
Men’s behaviour is shaped by socialization including attitudes, sex roles, emotions, perceptions, and cognitions that justify male dominance.

Dominant constructions of masculinity – of what it means to be a man -- are highly influential in some men’s use of violence against women.

Male economic and decision-making dominance in families and relationships is one of the strongest predictors of high levels of violence against women (Heise 1998; Heise 2006: 35).
“We have no choice but to address men and masculinities if we want to stop violence against women.”

Michael Flood (2010), White Ribbon Prevention Research Series, No.2.
Comprehensive Approaches -- which Address Root Causes -- Do Work

• A recent international review by the WHO, documents 57 interventions with evaluations, “Engaging Men and Boys in Changing Gender-Based Inequity in Health” (2007)

• The World Health Organization reports that well-designed programs do show evidence of leading to change in behaviour and attitudes (WHO 2007: 4).
Prevention Programs:

- which focused on transforming gender roles, promoting more gender-equitable relationships and positive masculinities had a higher level of effectiveness
- Mass-media campaigns which were integrated within community, and had a focus that went beyond individuals to their social contexts were also more effective (WHO 2007: 3-4; 11).
Social marketing or media campaigning

• There is a sizeable body of evidence that social marketing campaigns can produce positive change in the attitudes and behaviours associated with men’s perpetration of violence against women (Donovan and Vlais 2005).
Evaluation of Social Marketing Campaign that addresses masculinity

• Men Can Stop Rape’s “My strength is not for hurting” campaign uses media materials, in tandem with schools-based Men of Strength (MOST) Clubs for young men and other strategies, to build norms of sexual consent, respect, and non-violence.

• Students exposed to the campaign had slightly more respectful and equitable attitudes, while schools with MOST Clubs had more favourable social climates (Kim and White 2008).
Comprehensive Approach to Prevention: Incorporating media facilitated education and social marketing strategies into sexual violence prevention
MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

• Advertising industry has done a good job of demonstrating how to effectively adjust beliefs that translate into behaviour

• Based on persuasion theory
Elements:

- Grab and hold attention of audience
- Overcome clutter of other media
- Highlight personal relevance of the issue for the target audience
- Provide info in clear terms that can be readily understood
- Increase likelihood that participants will remember the message
- Emphasize arguments that are found to be strongest during pilot testing
- “My Strength Campaign” is an example
What is Social Marketing?

• The fundamental goal of social marketing campaigns is to bring about behavioural change (a strategy we can use for positive social change)

• This can range from encouraging people to change a specific behaviour on their own to seeking professional help about a difficult problem.
• Social marketing draws from a broad range of social sciences for the purpose of influencing people in socially desirable ways and generating social good and positive outcomes.

• Effective social marketing include strategies that target change in social environments, communities, social policies and legislation -- rather than relying solely on individuals to change their behaviour.
Articulating a relevant theory

• One or more theories of individual or community-level change should be articulated to inform the design of a social marketing campaign.
Social Marketing Strategies

• Informed by social norms approach and by social diffusion theory

• theory suggests that the attitudes and behaviors of a given community can be altered most efficiently by reaching a small percentage of the most socially influential members.
• Change strategies can therefore be designed to identify and influence this small group of popular opinion leaders because the rest of the community will follow suit.

Programs based on this approach include:
• media campaigns that portray men in positive, nonviolent roles
Changing Social Norms

• Based on belief peer pressure is primary influence on shaping people's behaviour

• Behaviours are influenced by incorrect perceptions of how peers think and act

• Social norms approach corrects misperceptions of group norms to decrease problem behaviours or increase positive ones
• Misperceptions are formed when a minority of individuals are observed engaging in highly visible problem behavior (such as public drunkenness, smoking, or making offensive comments)

• perverse result is that these problem behaviors are remembered -- more than the responsible behavior which is more common but less visible.
The Importance of Bystander Education Programs

• Represent a recent paradigm shift in sexual violence prevention.

• Focus on men and women as bystanders to changes social norms in a peer culture that supports abusive behaviour

• This approach addresses participants not as potential victims or offenders but as third parties who have an important role to play
Bystander Education Programs

• The intent is to foster a sense of community responsibility for violence prevention.

• Focus shifted from victims and perpetrators toward the community as having responsibility to prevent violence.

• All community members need to be educated and involved for effective change.
The central concern most bystanders report is not knowing how to respond

- Bystander intervention programs include role modeling exercises and opportunities to practice building bystanders skills and efficacy

- Also, modeling how to respond appropriately, makes bystander involvement more likely.

- When advising bystanders to get involved, we need to do so by using language that is personal
A social marketing campaign can assist in achieving the following goals:

• Shifting Central Responsibility for Prevention of Sexual Violence from the Individual to the Larger Community

• Social marketing in part appeals to the emotions
Sexual Violence Prevention Campaigns create a context for public engagement.

• Information is provided to change attitudes, encourage new behaviours and help create support by expanding the number of people who are willing to get involved in solving a social problem.
Reaching Specific Audiences

• Another social marketing strategy is to segment audiences: tailoring messaging to a particular group of people.

• This strategy works hand-in-hand with action-based messaging

• Engage young men through means other than information-sharing
Saturating an Environment with Consistent and Sustained Messaging

Theories of social and behavioral change emphasize the need for intense interventions that:

– saturate the community with prevention messages

– lead to the creation of new community norms, and

– consequently result in individual behavior change
PART II -- WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF OUR PREVENTION EFFORTS?
A Clearly Defined Focus is Essential
Comprehensive Approaches to Violence Prevention must consider:

• What are we trying to accomplish?

• What are our priorities in prevention work at this point in time?

• What are the gaps we need to address or approaches that we need to further develop?
• Who are we aiming to address? And Why? (Identifying Intended audience)

• What do they need to learn or be persuaded to do?

Assessment criteria:

• Do we understand what our intended audience already thinks about violence against women?
The Necessity of Focussed Interventions

• What message will help them learn this?

• Who will be the messengers?

• How will whatever initiative we propose move the work of prevention forward?
WHAT DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

• In 2010 the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) commissioned the research institute FrameWorks to study current perceptions held by the US public regarding sexual violence.
Frameworks interviewed:

• experts in the field of sexual violence prevention in order to understand the way experts understand and communicate about sexual violence

• engaged citizens in order to determine the most dominant cultural models or thought processed in play when people think about sexual violence.
Highlights of Significant Findings

• The public still views sexual violence as occurring at the individual level rather than in a larger social context

• Perpetrators of sexual violence are viewed as morally flawed, people who are inherently bad, mentally ill and cannot be rehabilitated
A Paradox

• The public is now better aware that most victims know the perpetrators who assault them.

• And yet ... victim blaming lives on with the public thinking that victims of sexual violence must be using poor judgment or hanging around the wrong crowds.
Another paradox

• The public now understands victims are not to blame for sexual violence

• Yet, also asserts that victims should make better decisions about what to wear, how to act, where to go, and who to hang out with.
Implications of this finding

• The general public’s distorted view of perpetrators interferes with effective or creative solutions and prevention strategies.

• Furthermore, they do not see any role for communities or organizations and the only relevant policy strategy suggested is long-term incarceration or castration.
When asked what causes offenders to be sexually violent:

• Typical responses were focused on bad parenting. Parents either raised good or bad boys and either strong of weak girls.

• The public understands sexual violence as acts that result in serious physical injury, where consent is denied.

• On this view, sexual violence happens when a larger, stronger male overpowers a smaller, weaker female.
The gender gap in attitudes towards violence against women

Flood and Pease (2009: 127-8) report that men:

• are more likely than women to agree with myths and beliefs supportive of violence against women,
• perceive a narrower range of behaviors as violent
• blame and show less empathy for the victim
• minimize the harms associated with physical and sexual assault
• see behaviors constituting violence against women as less serious, inappropriate, or damaging.
FrameWorks Recommendations to experts doing prevention work

1. Avoid using individual focused models to explain sexual violence
2. Provide other models about perpetrators besides the predator model
3. Broaden the ideas of what constitutes consent and harm
4. Promote the role of communities by telling stories about the social and cultural roots of violence.
PART III -- APPLYING WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED
Framing the Problem

• The way we identify the problem makes all the difference in how people are able to view the proposed solutions.

• When people understand social problems as individual issues, they may feel critical or compassionate but won’t see larger social change as part of the solution.
How to Get Social Context into Sexual Violence Communications Campaigns:

• Interpret the data: tell the public what is at stake and what it means to neglect this problem.
• Define the problem so that community influences and opportunities are apparent.
• Communicate on how well the community is doing in addressing this problem.
• Assign responsibility
• Present solutions
• Connect violence against women to root causes.
Best Practices

• Bystander intervention training
• Resistance training
• Single –gender programs
• Developing targeted programs that can be tailored for specific groups (high risk groups of men-- drug and/or alcohol abuse, already offending, college athletics & fraternities)
Best Practices

• selected interventions that can be tailored for women at high risk for sexual victimization, including women who:
  – have physical, developmental, or mental disabilities
  – are homeless or in transient housing situations
  – are involved in the sex trade.
Best Practices

Create Partnerships

• focus on capacity building and creating community partnerships
• strong link between sexual assault and the use of alcohol and drugs
• Need collaboration between those working to educate students about drugs and alcohol and those seeking to prevent sexual assault
• Collaboration between athletics and violence prevention (Mentors in Violence Prevention)
Change perceptions . . .

• by aligning with the positive and egalitarian social values you want to convey

• not by directly reinforcing the negative perceptions or behaviours you are trying to change
• The key to reaching most people is storytelling through pictures.

• The story becomes an experience … and experiences last.

• Need to engage with a social problem based on an emotional connection.
Finding an emotional hook...

• Once the audience cares they typically want a lot more information, so at the start there has to be an emotional hook to engage them.

• The emotional hook needs to appeal to their hopes or fears, their view of themselves or their desires for others.
Neuroscience & processing of positive messages

• Interestingly, the human brain processes positive and negative messages in different circuits.

• Negative tracks are hypersensitive compared to positive ones

• Recent research shows that arousal controlled, positive messages are more thoroughly processed than negative messages.
Key Components of Effective Sexual Violence Prevention Communications

- Don’t reinforce negative behaviours, attitudes or beliefs.
- Offer a solutions message.
- If we don’t believe in our message, others most likely won’t either.
- Connect people to the issues, connect people to communities. Create messages that promote a collective as well as an individual response to the social problem of sexual violence.
The End

Thank-you