Social Norms Toolkit: The Normalization of Violence

Explaining the connection between the normalization of violence and sexual assault

Systems of Oppression
- Normalization of violence
- Unhealthy sexuality
- Gender socialization
- Objectification/sexualization

Sexual Violence

Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault

www.wcasoa.org
What is the normalization of violence?

The normalization of violence is the acceptance that violence is an immutable part of life, that depictions of violence do not have real life consequences, and that it is the responsibility of the victim, not the perpetrator, to prevent violence.

Where do we see/experience it?

- We see it in movies, TV shows, video games, pornography, and advertisements that not only show violence as routine but frequently glamorize and celebrate its use, often romanticizing sexual violence.

- We experience it through language that makes light of violent acts (“I raped that game!”), popular songs that, intentionally or not, trivialize violence (“hit me baby one more time”), or common phrases that employ sexual violence as a casual insult (“go f*** yourself” or “suck it”).

References

National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey
How does the normalization of violence lead to sexual assault?

1. When violence is normalized it is expected and accepted as a natural part of society.*

2. The perpetuation of representations of men as intrinsically violent, the sexualization of violence, and the romanticization of violent sexuality contribute to a culture where sexual assault is not taken seriously, victims and survivors do not come forward, and the victim is blamed for their assault.**

3. Acts of violence are often framed by the media as isolated events instead of as part of larger narratives about violent masculinity and gender-based oppression.**

4. Institutions like the military***, sports teams****, and fraternities***** that rely on and encourage male aggressiveness have disproportionately high rates of sexual assault.

References

* Normalization of violence webinar
** Violence and the media
*** High rates of sexual assault in the military
**** Athletes and sexual assault
***** Fraternities and sexual assault
What can we do about it?

Below are links to age-appropriate activities for children, adolescents, and adults that teach the normalization of violence and the effect that this normalization has on individuals, communities, and society.

**Activities**

- Grades K-5

- Grades 6-8

- Grades 9-12 and College Level/ Young Adults

**Additonal Resources**

- Normalization of Violence Webinar
- Violence against women—it's a men's issue Ted Talk
- Dreamworlds III: Desire, Sex, and Power in Music Video
- Wrestling with Manhood: Boys Bullying and Battering

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Images
- Two Heads
- Victim Blaming Word Cloud

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