Investigating the Impact of Participation as Peer Sexual Health Educator

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Presenter Disclosures

Charles Senteio

No personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months.
Important to understand impact of being a peer sexual health educator

- Adolescents use peers as sources of health information and their behavior is influenced by them – delicate health topics are more effectively addressed through peer-led health promotion activities\(^1\)

- Important to understand impact of participation in a peer sexual health education program, few programs assess long-term impact\(^2,3\)

- Difficult to assess long-term impact because process evaluation (i.e. delivery) and outcomes (i.e., impact) are most commonly obtained at program conclusion \(^4\)

- Evaluations of peer influence for peer-led sexual health education has not included minorities\(^4\), despite persistent racial disparities – in Michigan: AA HIV infection \(8x\) of all other groups, \(85\%\) of teens with HIV are AA \(^5,6\)
Designed qualitative study: semi-structured interviews of former peer sexual health educators (n=11)

- HOPE Project: CDC-funded, STI-reduction program (2009 – 2014) in Genesee County (Flint), MI to integrate peer sexual health education and technology for STI/HIV awareness and prevention, emphasis on among youth aged 18 – 24\(^5\).\(^7\)\(^9\). Two types of peer educators, worked together to develop and conduct training workshops, staff health fairs, and do community presentations:
  - **SeXperts** (n=6): (aged 12 – 18) worked very closely with the HOPE project in various capacities
  - **Personal Health Information Mentors** (PHIMS) (n=5): (aged 18 – 24) tasked with increasing access and use of sexual health information resources among peers in Genesee County

- Interview Targeted **Personal** Dimensions of impact
  - General **impact** of being peer sexual health educator (SeXpert/PHIM)
  - Impact on personal development (i.e., self-esteem, health behavior, social network composition), educational goals (i.e., programs of study, pursuit of college degrees/certifications), career pursuits (i.e., working in health education field, working as a clinician or healthcare provider)
RADaR technique for Qualitative Data Analysis

- **Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction**\(^{10}\) (**RADaR**)
  1. Code
  2. Summarize
  3. Condense all the interview data collected

- Proceeded from *All Inclusive Data Table* → *Final Phase Data Table*
Results

Impact: Three themes

Perceptual Impact
- self-esteem, self-confidence, self-respect
- “owning” your sexuality
- motivation to learn

Cognitive Impact
- Transmission, prevalence, incidence about STIs/HIV
- prevention strategies

Relational Impact
- interactions and connections with others: peers, current or prospective partners, parents, etc.
Perceptual Impact

I’ve been sexually active from a young age ... just trying to be with the in-crowd. [Being a SeXpert] made me cautious, I could be like another vulnerable girl out here ... A dude could be like, “Oh, no, I'm only with you,” that pillow talk. I could’ve fell for it and become infected with a STI or HIV. (P01, SeXpert)

I am ultimately in control ... to live my life in a more fluent way that is safer. (P03, SeXpert)

Health is just important. We used to always say that we save lives. We work towards saving a life. Even one life. It’s a matter of teaching and it's a matter of gaining knowledge, but it's also a matter of saving the lives of others. (P05, SeXpert)
Cognitive Impact

Stigmas need to be washed away. I learned that the respect for [another] person’s body is not as high as it should be.
(P08, PHIM)

I learned so much. I learned how to protect yourself.
(P01, SeXpert)

I was so informed, so educated about things ... about sexuality, sexual health ... had I not had that education ... I wouldn't be where I am today. I would not be the same person. I'm being so serious.
(P03, SeXpert)
Relational Impact

If you’re confident enough to go get tested with me, then [I] can take our relationship further. But if a guy don't wanna go to get tested, that should tell you something. (P09, PHIM)

Just knowing that I had peers around my age to talk to. I looked at them as family ... it wasn’t like my friends or my other peers. (P06, SeXpert)

We normalized the conversation of sexual health. We opened up the whole world of sexual health ... it's not something that's normally talked about and I think we just kind of gave it a voice and kind of gave it a platform. (P05, SeXpert)
Implications

1. Former peer sexual health educators continue to be impacted in 3 ways:
   1. **Perceptual** – “own” their sexuality
   2. **Cognitive** – **knowledge** of incidence, prevalence, risk reduction strategies
   3. **Relational** – **empowered** to have sensitive conversations with current or prospective sexual partners

2. Impact “themes” for health educators and practitioners to measure and communicate outcomes

3. Insights to inform strategies to enhance sexual health communication
References


Questions and Answers

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The Ruth Mott Foundation funded YOUR Blessed Health (YBH) 2006-2013. The SeXperts were an outgrowth of YBH. The PHIMs were a part of the community based advisory group for the HOPE "home party" project, which was funded by the Centers for Diseases Control 2009 -2014 and was a collaboration with the Prevention Research Center of Michigan/U of M School of Public Health.

HOPE is actually the curriculum developed by Dr. TaMara Griffin, that both YBH SeXperts and the PHIMS use for HIV prevention.

YBH is a 5 week -3 hour session for adolescents (11-17)
HOPE (HIV Outreach, Prevention, Education) home parties is a three hour session for young adults and adults (18-24+)

The curriculum focuses on helping participants understand what their values are and based on those values how
• Make decisions based on those values
• How to communicate their decisions about what behaviors they will/will not engage in
• How to negotiate for behaviors they will/want to engage in
• Create a plan for how to keep themselves safe or safer

The session (s) begins with an overview of the reproductive system and how it connects to HIV and other STIs. Sessions are very interactive and includes role plays, games, teach backs etc...

The SeXperts and PHIMs received the same level of initial and ongoing training. They often worked together to develop and conduct training workshops, staff health fairs, and do community presentations.