

The Social Norms Approach to the Prevention of Alcohol and other Drug Abuse

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Overview

- Approaches to Prevention
- Definitions and Theory
- Implementation
- Case studies and examples
- Other campaigns
- Challenges and next steps

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
- Infra-structures must be created to deliver the product
- Prevention is a process and efforts must be adapted and modified over time

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?

Change Strategies

- Fear of negative consequences (increase perception of risk)
- Guilt or shame
- Moral appeals (do the "right" thing)
- Emphasize the positive
- Provide feedback about actual norms

Three Approaches to Behavior Change

- Health Terrorism
- The Science of the Positive
 - Marketing Positive Messages
 - Marketing Positive Norms

“Health Terrorism”

INDUCING FEAR OR OTHER NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AS A WAY OF GETTING PEOPLE TO CHANGE

(“SCARED STRAIGHT” APPROACH)

**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 **PLCB**
In The Public Interest

© 2008 Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board



**Are your
kids under
the right
influence?**



www.attitudesmatter.com

Flight 4



Labeled:

Just another ~~stupid~~ ~~nerd~~ ~~weird~~ ~~way off.~~
I'm a thinker, an uncle, ~~and the best thing I do up with a single~~ ~~unlabeled~~ ~~My decision.~~

[f] [a] [m]
BY ART-DIGITAL

Problems with Health Terrorism

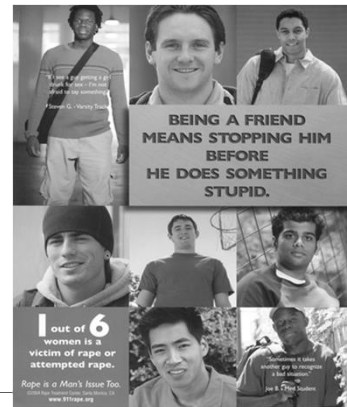
- Unintentionally reinforces the problem by fostering the misperception
- Doesn't speak to the majority who are doing the “right thing”
- Incorrect assumptions about what motivates behavior
- Conditions for effective use of fear are not present

Problems with Health Terrorism, cont'd

- Is not credible to target audience (individuals with problem behaviors)
- May reinforce negative images of marginalized groups
- Not supported by research
- Reinforces “shock culture” and “either/or” thinking

“The Science of the Positive”

- Designed to affirm and enhance positive healthy behavior
- Speaks to the healthy majority
- Fosters intolerance of problem behavior
- Undermines denial of individuals engaging in unhealthy behavior



What is a Norm?

- “Social norms” refer to the acceptability of an action or belief
- Are unspoken rules about what is “normal” for that group or setting
- Perceptions of social norms predict what people will say and do.
- Norms exist for individuals, groups and communities

Examples of Alcohol Norms

- Frequency and quantity of use
- Attitude towards under-age drinking
- Alcohol provided by parents to under-age
- Tolerance of high-risk behavior
- Support for policies and enforcement

Correcting Misperceived Norms

- People *over*-estimate risk behaviors and *under*-estimate protective behaviors*
- *Misperceived norms* exert powerful (and unconscious) effects on behavior*

*Documented in hundreds of empirical studies: see Berkowitz (2004A & B) & Perkins (2012) for reviews

Misperceptions are pervasive and influential

Documented overestimations include:

- ✦ Alcohol use
- ✦ Risky and dangerous use
- ✦ DUI and DWU
- ✦ Parental permissiveness (parents & children)

Documented underestimations include:

- ✦ Willingness to intervene and confront abuse
- ✦ Support for policies and enforcement
- ✦ Seat belt use

Other Misperceptions

Documented overestimations include:

- ✦ Gambling
- ✦ Sexual activity and coercive sexuality
- ✦ Anti-immigrant sentiment
- ✦ Homophobia among heterosexuals
- ✦ Bullying and sexting

Documented underestimations include:

- ✦ Willingness to intervene and confront abuse
- ✦ Respect for someone who intervenes
- ✦ Support and practice of green behaviors
- ✦ Spirituality and religiosity

Stages of Evidence for the SNA

- Misperceptions have been documented
- Misperceptions are correlated with behavior
- Misperceptions at time one predict behavior at time two
- Correcting misperceptions changes behavior
- Social norms campaign can create a “ripple effect”

What beliefs underlie misperceptions?

- **Pluralistic Ignorance:** the incorrect belief that one's private attitudes, judgments or behavior are different from others.
- **False Consensus:** the incorrect belief that one represents the majority when one is actually a minority.

Influence of Perceptions

Research suggests that one of the strongest influences on behavior is the (mis)perception of peer attitudes and behavior.

Perceptions are easier to change than other causes

(Documented in correlational, longitudinal and outcome evaluation studies: see Berkowitz 2004A&B & Perkins 2012 for reviews)

Research suggests that correcting misperceptions can:

undermine beliefs & behaviors that contribute to alcohol use and abuse

provide a context for responding to patterns of abuse and undermine abuser denial

Social Norms Methods

- Use media channels to inform people of **actual** (healthy) norms = Social Norms Marketing
- Social norms interventions in small groups (“snowball survey”)
- Tailored individual feedback

The goal is to correct misperceptions to create behavior change

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 misperceptions accomplish?
- What healthy behaviors could be increased?

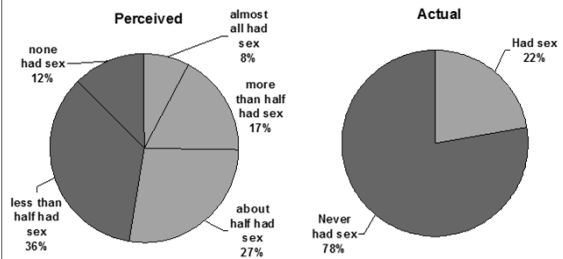
Example Questions

- On how many occasions have you consumed alcohol in the past 30 days?
- On how many occasions during the past 30 days do you think the **average or typical student** at this school has consumed alcohol?

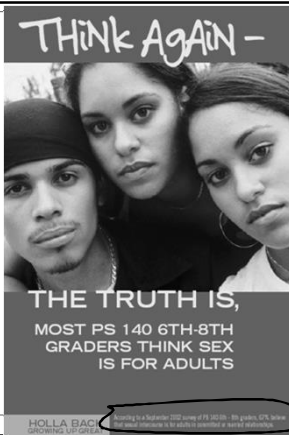
Girls Perceived v. Actual Intercourse

By the end of the eighth grade, how many girls do you think have had sexual intercourse?

Have you ever had sexual intercourse (had sex, made love, gone all the way)?



8th grade girls, surveyed June 2002 by PPNYC



According to a September 2002 survey of PS140 6-8th graders, 67% believe that sexual intercourse is for adults in committed or married relationships.+

Defining the Terms

SOCIAL MARKETING
&
SOCIAL NORMS
MARKETING

Social Marketing

- The application of commercial marketing techniques and advertising principles to advance social causes
- Uses audience research to tailor messages and materials for a particular audience
- 4 P's: product, price, place, promotion

Social Norms Marketing

Using the techniques of social marketing to correct norm-misperceptions by advertising the correct norm to a group or population

Implementing a Social Norms Marketing Campaign

Assessment & Message Selection

- **Assessment**
 - How much of "X" actually exists?
 - How much of "X" do others *believe* exists?
- **Selection of normative message**
 - Is "X" a norm?
 - Is the message positive, inclusive & empowering?

Message choice based on the strength of the norm, degree of misperception and relevance to program outcomes

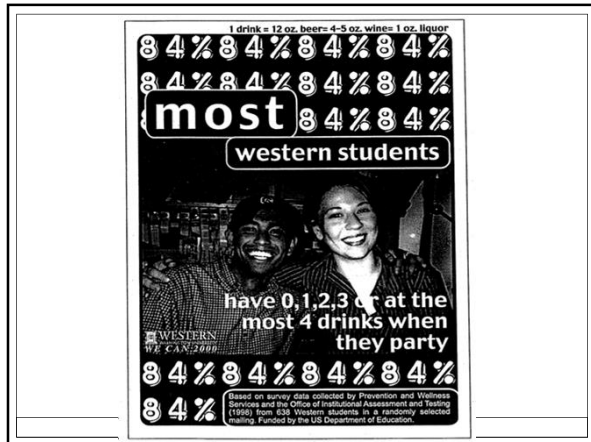
Designing the Poster

- Select possible statistics
- Market test the statistics
- Design pilot posters
- Market test the poster designs
- Select final poster and statistic
- Implement the campaign and solicit feedback through surveys and intercept interviews

The poster features a central photograph of three students smiling. To the left of the photo are three circular icons, each containing a different student's face. Below the photo, the text reads: "65% of UA students have four or fewer or no drinks when they go out." At the bottom left, it says "we got the facts from you. Health & Wellness Survey 2004. (UAH registration administered by a random sample of entry-level classes at the UA)." At the bottom right is the "CAMPUS HEALTH SERVICE" logo.

Callouts on the right side of the poster point to:

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



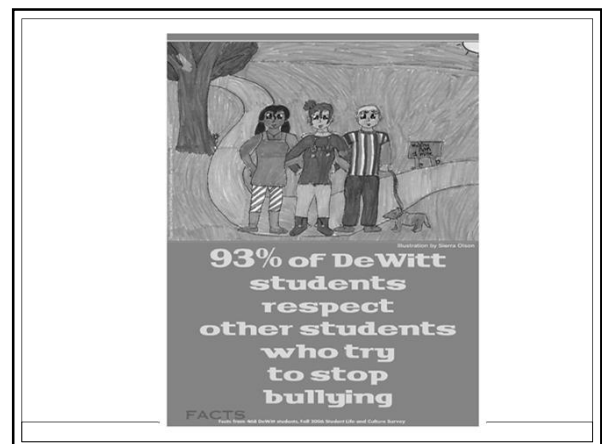
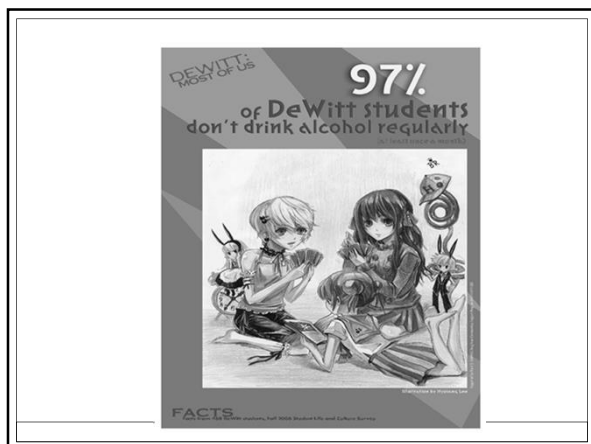
Case Studies and Examples

- ### Social Norms Marketing Campaigns: reductions in high-risk drinking
- Northern Illinois University – 44% over 10 years
 - Hobart & Wm Smith Colleges - 40% over 5 years
 - Western Washington University – 20% over 3 years
 - University of North Carolina – 30% over 5 years
 - University of Arizona – 29% over 3 years
 - University of Missouri-Columbia - 21% over 2 years
 - Michigan State University - 26% over 3 years

Alcohol, Cigarette and Marijuana Case Study

DeWitt Middle School
(Ithaca, NY)

Special thanks to Kris Bennett



DeWitt Campaign Elements

- Data used in health classes along with discussion of misperceptions
- Data used in math class exercises
- Students in art classes design posters
- Workshops for teachers, staff and parents

Two- year follow up findings

- 30 day alcohol use decreased 22% (from 21% to 16%)
- 30 day marijuana use decreased 51% (from 6.7% to 3.3%)
- 30 day cigarette use decreased 48% (from 8.1% to 4.2%)
- Misperceptions of alcohol, marijuana and cigarette use significantly reduced

Other Outcomes of High School Social Norms Campaigns

DeKalb and Sycamore (DCPE-Safe)
13% decrease in 30-day alcohol use
9% decrease in 30-day cigarette use

Evanston Township (ETHS)
5% decrease in 30-day alcohol use
25% decrease in 30-day cigarette use

Outcomes of State-wide Youth SN Campaigns

Most of Us Don't Drink and Drive
14% decrease in DWI
15% increase in use of designated driver

Most of Us Wear Seatbelts
5% increase in use 90% of the time
4% increase in last-time use
7% increase in asking passengers to wear

Vernon Hills High School

SOCIAL NORMS CAMPAIGN LONGITUDINAL DATA

Fall 2011

VHHS students prefer to keep the drama on the stage.

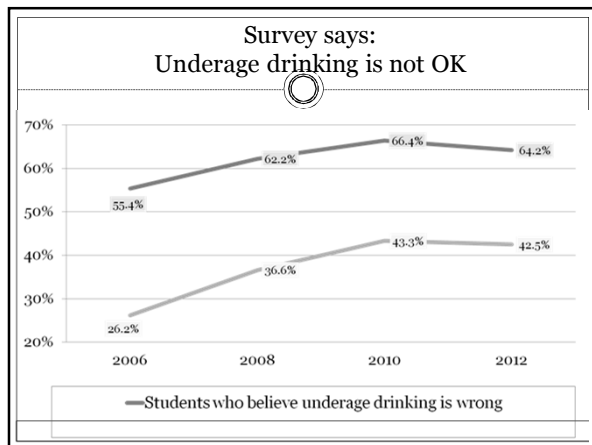
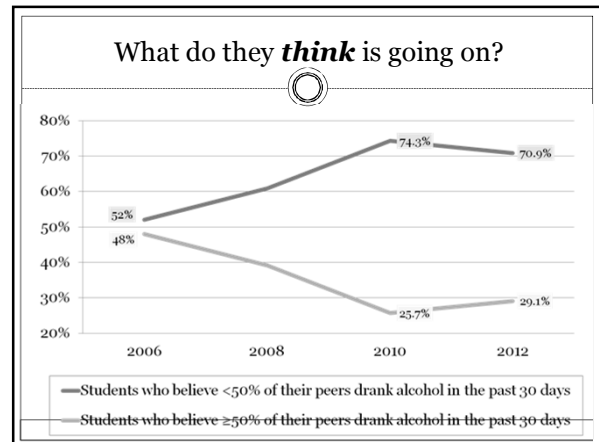
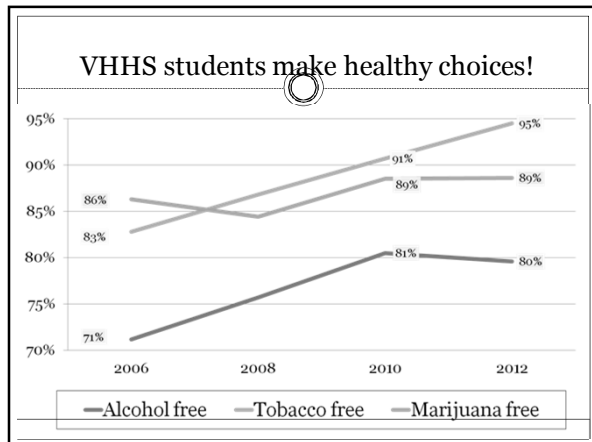
81% ALCOHOL FREE

RESPECT IS YOURS

Most are alcohol free so they can participate in sports & activities.

201206 VHHS Youth Norms Survey, Oct. 2010. Funding provided by the Illinois Dept. of Human Services, VHHS and Local Companies. For more information email: VHSocialNorms@gmail.com

Lake County



- ### A Research Study
- Federally funded social norms intervention with matched experimental and control groups conducted by Bill DeJong of the Higher Education Center
 - Trial one found that experimental schools had slightly less use whereas control schools had increased use.
 - Trial two found no effect of the social norms intervention.
 - Additional data analysis determined that alcohol outlet density predicted whether or not social norms media campaigns were effective.
 - Comments: Must address environmental issues and/or strengthen SN component

- ### Changing the Normative Culture A Model Rape Prevention Program
- Developed by Alan Berkowitz
 - Tested by Christine Gidycz of Ohio University in a CDC funded study
 - Incorporates definition of consent, normative feedback (group and campus) and practice in bystander intervention strategies (responding to scenarios)
 - Offered in parallel with a women's risk-reduction program
 - Workshop recipients were men and women in residence halls with matched control groups

- ### Seven Month Findings
- Perceived that their peers would be more likely to intervene (including sexually aggressive men)
 - Sexually aggressive men perceived less reinforcement from peers for sexually aggressive behavior
 - Participants associated less with sexually aggressive peers
 - Were less likely to engage in sexually aggressive behavior (1.5% experimental versus 6.7% control)*
 - Less use of pornography
- *Reduction in assaults at 4-months not sustained at 7-months*

Challenges and Next Steps

Challenges to Effectiveness of Social Norms Campaigns

READINESS
SALIENCE
BELIEVABILITY
EVALUATION
UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

(SEE BERKOWITZ, 2004B)

Keeping things fresh – diversifying your campaign

- *Internally to your issue* - focus on another aspect of your target problem. For example, with alcohol focus on event specific norms, relevant protective behaviors, specific sub-populations, etc.
- *Horizontally to other issues* - expand to incorporate other issues such as violence prevention, leadership development, ecological/green issues. etc.
- *Developmentally within an issue* - look at your issue developmentally and identify the next step in a developmental continuum. For example, after addressing individual alcohol use one can begin to address bystander issues. Using a Stages of Change model, one can identify layers of the issue that are misperceived even while perceptions have been corrected for the original target issue.
- *Vertically to get "underneath" an issue* - incorporate issues that underlie the problem, i.e. begin to address spirituality, self-esteem, values and intentions, self-confidence etc. from a social norms framework. (i.e. create a "ripple" effect from below)

Other applications of SNA

- As a philosophy of prevention
- Providing normative feedback in small groups
- Providing normative feedback one on one
- As a component of another strategy

Correcting other Misperceptions

- Beliefs that inhibit bystanders from intervening
- Underestimations of support for policies and enforcement
- Violence and other co-occurring behaviors
- Prejudice, gambling, energy use, tax compliance, etc.

Social Norms Data on Policies & Enforcement

- 73% support stricter discipline for repeat offenders but only 41% perceive majority support
- 60% support stricter penalties for fake ID's but only 24% perceive majority support
- Campus policies with the greatest student support include: increase DUI enforcement, mandated server training and provide safe ride programs

(Alcohol-EDU Data – EverFi)

Sharing your program with others

- Present your data on misperceptions to community groups and coalitions
- Offer training in the social norms approach and in particular educate about misperceptions
- Seek out opportunities to address criticisms and disbelief
- Reach out to and engage partners and potential allies, including individuals who are fostering the misperceptions
- Combine different program elements that are synergistic and avoid efforts that sensationalize abuse

Wide Spread Diffusion of the SN Approach

Journal publications for SN studies in 2011

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Alcohol and Alcoholism | Teaching of Psychology |
| Journal of Anxiety Disorders | Violence against Women |
| Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment | Alcohol and Alcoholism |
| Communication Research | Journal of American College Health |
| Journal of Urban Health | Psychology and Marketing |
| Addiction | Psychology of Addictive Behaviors |
| Group Processes and Intergroup Relations | Addictive Behaviors |
| Journal of Occupational Health Psychology | Journal of Urban Health |
| Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs | New Media and Society |
| Journal of Consumer Behavior | |
| Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention | |

Countries conducting SN Research (published 2011)

| | |
|---------------|----------|
| United States | Holland |
| Korea | Scotland |
| Denmark | England |
| Switzerland | |

The critical question

What increases or decreases the misperception?

Anything that increases the misperception is bad for prevention no matter what the issue or strategy

Misperceptions are one of many influences on abuse and their correction can be combined with other strategies

Integrating SNA into other strategies

- Higher alcohol establishment density pushes the misperception up, thus correcting it is beneficial
- Increase support for policies and enforcement by advertising true norm
- Assess and advertise community willingness to implement strategies (compliance check, etc)
- Publicize enforcement in a way that reinforces actual norms (without fostering the misperception)
- Misperceptions of use need correction because they reinforce negative information promoted by beverage industry to normalize use

Concluding points

- SNA (misperception correction) is effective as a stand-alone strategy with individuals, groups and communities
- SNA can be integrated as a component of other strategies to enhance them
- Misperceptions when uncorrected create a climate that works against our prevention efforts
- SNA is a way of thinking about prevention as well as a specific strategy

Goal

To develop mutually reinforcing programs and activities that create synergy between each other and foster a comprehensive environment of change.

Resources: Websites

www.socialnorms.org
www.hec.org
www.mostofus.org

Studies Cited

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- Perkins, H.W. (2012). Misperceptions of Peer Substance Use Among Youth Are Real. *Addiction*, 107: 888–889.

Other Resources & Studies

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- DeJong W., Schneider S. K., Towvim L. G., Murphy M., Doerr E., Simonsen N. et al. (2006) A multisite randomized trial of social norms marketing campaigns to reduce college drinking. *J Stud Alcohol* 2006; 67: 868–79.
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- A Grassroots Guide to Fostering Healthy Norms to Reduce Violence in Our Communities: A Social Norms Toolkit. (2013). New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Available from www.alanberkowitz.com

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