Perceptions, Peer Groups and Partnerships:

insights and preliminary results from the first Australian ‘trial’ of Social Norms

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Session outline

1. Background
2. Project overview
3. Media and dissemination
4. Comparisons and preliminary results
5. Final stages
6. The future
1. Background
In the beginning….

- Article by Perkins and Berkowitz
- Reading, talking, planning
- Chicago Conference 2004
- Long ‘gestation’
- Funding application
Successful funding bid

• US$390,000
• 2 years 2006-2007
• Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation

www.aerf.com.au
Youth drinking in Australia

Trends and issues
Policy context – Harm minimisation
Prevention focus
Legal drinking age – 18 years

www.alcohol.gov.au
www.adf.org.au
2. Project overview
Project objectives

• To reduce alcohol-related harm among high-school age youth in two rural municipalities

• To establish whether students, parents and/or teachers misperceive the extent of risky drinking among students

• To determine whether correction of misperception reduces alcohol-related harm among students
Project objectives (continued)

• Resource kit (school/teacher, alcohol focus)

• Recommendations - wider implementation of SN (alcohol, students) in Tasmania.

• Evidence base – SN strategies for minimising harm from licit and illicit drugs, around Australia.
About the collaboration

• University of Tasmania
  – Department of Rural Health
  – Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies

• Departments of:
  – Police and Emergency Management
  – Health and Human Services
  – Education

• Local high-schools and councils

• International expert – Prof Alan Berkowitz
Rosebery – West Coast
Huonville – Huon Valley
Hobart – Capital of Tasmania
Challenges

• Small, isolated rural communities
• Alcohol ‘taken for granted’
• Geographically dispersed
• Multiple stakeholders
• New to ‘Social Norms’
Project Management Committee
(Hobart)
(Video/teleconferenced regular meetings)

Project Director
(Hobart)

Research Coordinator
(Hobart)

Local Project Officer
(Huon Valley)

Huon Valley Local Working Group

Local Project Officer
(West Coast)

West Coast Local Working Group

Expert Advisory Panel
(Virtual)
Multi-disciplinary
Community engagement

• Onsite project officers
• Local working groups
• Regular updates
• Certificates of appreciation
• Diverse EAP
Tasmanian Education System etc

• ‘Primary school’
  – Kindergarten through Grade 6 = Ages 4 to 11
• ‘High School’
  – Grades 7 through 10 = ages 12 to 16
• Grades 11-12 non-compulsory
• Three school terms
  – (Feb-May, Jun-Sep, Oct-Dec)
• Long vacation over (southern) summer
- Four small public schools
- Rural/remote
- ‘District High Schools’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>School name</th>
<th>2006 student enrolments</th>
<th>T1 baseline 2006</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huon Valley</td>
<td>Huonville High</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geeveston District</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>Mountain Heights</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosebery District</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three main sources of data for SNAP are:

• students at the four trial high schools;
• teachers/parents associated with the trial schools; and
• police data holdings.
Processes

T1 (baseline) data collection – October 2006
   T1 media campaign for remainder of third term

T2 data collection – June 2007
   T2 media campaign throughout second term

T3 data collection (to be conducted October 2007)
Student Survey

• Planned online
• Developed with EAP
• 50 items
• Grades 7 through 10
• Mostly “tick ‘n’ flick”
Administration of student survey

- Aim for ‘census’
- Procedures for obtaining consent
- LPO explanation/supervision
- At school during class time
- Examination conditions
- Emphasis on
  - anonymity/privacy
  - aggregate level data
3. Media & Dissemination
High-impact visuals
Image and branding
Participation of community
Most students make healthy choices
Most Geeveston District High students make healthy choices!

Most (83%) choose non-alcoholic drinks when hanging out with friends.

Data: 83.8% of GDH students mostly choose non-alcoholic drinks (16.4% mostly choose alcoholic drinks) when hanging out with friends on the weekend. Survey question 9.

Source: Social Norms Analysis Project (SNAP) Survey of Geeveston District High students (Grades 7-10), October 2006. SNAP is an initiative of the University of Tasmania. Funded by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation.
Most Mountain Heights students make healthy choices

3/4 choose non-alcoholic drinks when hanging out with friends*

* Data: 77.7% of NH students (grades 7-10) mostly choose drinks other than alcohol when hanging out with friends on the weekend (Survey question 8)
Source: Social Norms Analysis Project (SNAP) Survey of Mountain Heights students (Grades 7-10), October 2006
SNAP is an initiative of the University of Tasmania
Funded by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation
Most Geeveston District High students make healthy choices!

Most (83%) choose non-alcoholic drinks when hanging out with friends.

*Survey: 98.7% of GDSN students mostly choose non-alcoholic drinks (41.4% mostly choose a non-alcoholic drink) when hanging out with friends on the weekend. Survey Source: Social Norms Analysis Project (SNAP) Survey of Geeveston District High Students (January 7-10, October 2004) & (March 3-6, November 2004) Funded by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation
SNAP Wristbands
Sign designed by students

73% of Huonville High students RARELY or NEVER drink alcohol
4. Preliminary results
US/Australian Comparisons

- Relatively few high-school based studies
- Evanston Township High School
  - Christensen and Haines (2003)
- ETHS 3000 students, 300 staff
- HHS 400 students, 35 staff
- Time differences etc
Comparisons - continued

73% of ETHS students have never smoked cigarettes

74% of HHS students have never smoked cigarettes
Comparisons - continued

83% of ETHS students do not smoke cigarettes, but perceive that only 15% of their high school peers do not smoke.

74% of HHS students do not smoke cigarettes, but perceive that only 4% of their high school peers do not smoke.
Comparisons - continued

71% of ETHS students choose not to smoke marijuana.

85% of HHS students choose not to smoke marijuana.
Comparisons - continued

53% of ETHS choose not to drink alcohol, but perceive that only 8% of their high school peers do not drink

17% of HHS choose not to drink alcohol, but perceive that only 7% of their high school peers do not drink
Comparisons - continued

72% of ETHS students choose options other than drinking when they hang out with friends.

83% of HHS students choose options other than drinking when they hang out with friends.
Preliminary results

- Student data only
- Whole of sample (all schools)
- Alcohol focused
- Mostly descriptive
- Further information available
T1 (baseline) results

- The age at ‘first drink’ ranged from 6 to 16 years (median 12 years)
- 14% of students reported that they had never had an alcoholic drink.
- 20% of Grade 7 students report ‘never’ drinking alcohol
- Less than 5% of Grade 10 students report ‘never’ drinking alcohol
Frequency of alcohol consumption, by gender

Boys

Girls
‘Actual’ and ‘perceived’ Frequency of alcohol consumption

- Actual (self)
- Perceived (other)
Alcohol-related harms (self vs other)
Changes between T1 & T2

Decline in mean frequency of:

- alcohol consumption **
- attendance at parties where alcohol was consumed by high-school students**
- getting drunk*
Changes between T1 & T2 - continued

Decline in the perceived mean frequency of friends:

• Consuming alcohol**
• Getting drunk**

Decline in perceived level of friends’ agreement with:

• ‘It is okay for high school students to drink alcohol’**
• ‘It is okay for high school students to get drunk’**
Some unexpected changes....

Decline in the mean percentage of students who have ever smoked cigarettes**

Decline in the mean percentage of peers who are perceived to have ever:

• smoked cigarettes**
• smoked marijuana**
• used other illicit substances**
5. Final stages
T2 campaigns

• Harm minimisation messages
  – Safe drinking – protective behaviours
  – Peer disapproval of drunkenness

• Student participation
  – Design competitions
  – Screensavers

• Flyers and other items
The SNAP ‘To Do’ list

- T2 media campaigns
- T3 data collection
- Qualitative component
- Further analyses
- Writeup and reporting
- Website and resource kit development
Resource kit

• Alcohol focused
• Targeting schools/teachers
• Booklet format
• Other kits in future?
6. The future
Are we witnessing a cultural shift?

Will attitudinal change prompt behavioural change?

Will the results be sustainable?
• A ‘New Paradigm’
• Impact – policy and practice
• International linkages
• Other applications/funding
• Potential Australian Centre for Social Norms Research
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