

Feature Article: Frequently Asked Questions About the Social Norms Approach



My original experience with the social norms approach began in 1994 at the University of Arizona (UA), where our social norms marketing campaign has produced a 29 percent reduction in heavy and high risk drinking. Since then I have supervised six social norms substance abuse prevention federal grants and I am frequently asked to consult with colleagues who are developing their own social norms campaigns. In my work I have observed a number of common problems and pitfalls with which many social norms practitioners struggle. In addition there seem to be a number of generic questions that repeatedly come up in consultations, group workshops and presentations. This article summarizes my top ten most frequently asked questions about social norms campaigns along with my usual responses and observations.

Is a social norms campaign the same as any other advertising campaign? A social norms campaign is not about the sale of a product or the sale of a concept. It is about using social marketing techniques to reach students with information that corrects misinformation that may be guiding a student to a misinformed conclusion. A social norms campaign should *not* look like an advertising campaign – slogans and gimmicks have a very limited shelf life. The best campaign aims to inform, not persuade, chastise or threaten. In the first few years of the UA alcohol social norms campaign, “4 or fewer” was the mantra but student feedback taught us that in order to keep their interest, maintain visibility and provide the data needed to inform, we had to do more. The current campaign provides information about what students do to enhance their safety when they drink in addition to how much they drink, and other key

factors related to consumption (including drinks over time, BAC, etc.). It also explores whether they agree with or endorse campus alcohol policy and state laws, plus attitudes they hold about how much is too much.

A social norms campaign is a public health education campaign that uses market research techniques to engage, not pitch to a target audience. Students are savvy consumers and easily recognize a sales pitch. A campaign that appears to have something to sell has very little to say.

Does it really matter who sponsors the campaign? Messages are only as good as the messenger—if you, your techniques or your motivation are suspect, so is the social norms campaign that bears your logo. Projects that are attached to a well-respected organization that students trust and believe has their best interest at heart have much greater credibility than those with a negative reputation among students. Projects that are attached to a well-respected source don’t have to fight the suspicion that the institution is acting more out of concern for its own liability than the health and safety of its students.

Does social norms trample on the rights of the individual? The norms are—simply stated—“what the majority of students do, and the attitudes and beliefs they hold.” The UA alcohol norms campaign has not caused heavy drinkers shame or blame, or caused students to feel manipulated. Broadcasting college norms simply turns up the volume on how most students safely handle alcohol, without passing judgment on those who do not typically make safe choices. (Note: Issue #2 of the *Social Norms Quarterly* has a discussion of the “conformity” issue from a variety of perspectives.)

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Editor's notes

This issue of the *Social Norms Quarterly* coincides with the Fifth National Conference on the Social Norms Model to be held from July 10-12 in Philadelphia. It contains a review of the book *The Tipping Point* by Malcom Gladwell (who will be the conference keynote speaker), Koreen Johannessen's answers to the 10 most frequently asked questions about social norms, and a model program featuring an "uncrashed car." It also inaugurates a new occasional feature titled "Notable Quotes" providing examples of the "good and bad" that is being said about social norms.

The "Recent Research" feature for this issue is subtitled "Does Prevention Work?" It contains an analysis of findings from three national studies and concludes that programs adopting a philosophy consistent with social norms are effective and likely to be successful in reducing high-risk drinking on campus.

Finally, the recently released NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking report suggests that social norms has ensured itself a place "at the table" of promising and recommended drug prevention strategies. Many of us will complain (myself included) that we were unfairly denied our place at the head table (or even as keynote speaker!), but nonetheless, we have been recognized and validated in this report. It is likely that the evidence in support of social norms will continue to grow, and hopefully, the recognition will, too. At the same time, we must expect and be prepared for an ongoing uphill battle against our culture's preoccupation with the negative at the expense of the positive.

As always, if you have any comments or reactions to this issue, or any suggestions for future ones, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Alan D. Berkowitz, PhD

Editor

The Social Norms Quarterly

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Contributions:

Do you have a promising practice or successful application that you would like to contribute to the *Social Norms Quarterly*? Would you be interested in reviewing research and/or program materials or making recommendations to your colleagues? Is someone doing creative work in this field that should be recognized? If you have anything that you would like to contribute to the *Quarterly*, or if you would like to suggest a topic for a working paper, please contact:

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FAQs

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Why aren't we telling students to drink less? We have enough data at this point to know that telling students not to drink, no matter how cleverly we deliver the message, is not likely to result in less drinking.

College students look to their peers for shortcuts to social success and often make choices based on what they believe those who are socially successful do in social situations. This seems especially true if they are new to the social scene. As with student choices in clothing, music and speech, many alcohol choices are as much about being chosen as they are about personal likes and preferences.

Thus, the cornerstone of a social norms approach is to provide students with a more accurate picture of their actual referent group—a group that is invisibly making fewer risky choices than is commonly believed.

I administered the Core but can't find information about healthy drinking norms to feed back to students. In order to provide this information we have to identify the appropriate questions to ask students. In past years the Core did not ask specific enough questions about drinking norms, attitudes and beliefs to provide enough positive information to students, so supplemental questions were needed. If you are using the Core Survey, I would suggest adding questions about the following:

- ◆ drinks students had the last time they drank
- ◆ drinks consumed per week
- ◆ drinks per hour
- ◆ weight (in order to calculate BAC)
- ◆ behaviors students engage in in order to protect themselves if they know they will be drinking
- ◆ attitudes they hold about how much is too much

The UA Health and Wellness survey has a good variety of these questions and can be found at www.social-norms.campushealth.net.

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Recent Research

Does Prevention Work?

In the past few months there has been an explosion of information and research published on social norms. This is partly due to the release of the much awaited NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking Report that coincided with a special supplemental issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* and a recent issue of the *Journal of American College Health*. This column reviews three of these important studies, with the remaining to be reviewed in a future issue.

- ◆ **Trends in College Binge Drinking During a Period of Increased Prevention Efforts.** (2002). Wechsler, H et. al. *Journal of American College Health*, 50(5):203-217.
- ◆ **Epidemiology of Alcohol and Other Drug Use Among American College Students** (2002), O'Malley, PM & Johnston, LD. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Supplement 14:23-39.
- ◆ **Prevention Efforts Underlying Decreases in Binge Drinking at Institutions of Higher Education.** (2002) Ziemelis, A, Bucknam, RB & Elfessi AM. *Journal of American*

College Health, 50(5):238-252.

These three articles provide an interesting perspective on the question: *Are our efforts making a difference?* Both

the title and the content of Henry Wechsler's latest analysis of the College Alcohol Survey (CAS) suggest that we are not. Wechsler and his colleagues report that "during a period of increased prevention efforts" 'binge' drinking rates have remained constant. At the same time the percentages of abstainers and frequent heavy binge drinkers has increased, with more abstainers on campus and more heavy drinking off campus. These findings contain two implications: that things are not getting better even though we are doing more, and that drinking patterns are getting polarized with the exporting of heavy drinking to off-campus settings.

In contrast, O'Malley and Johnston's analysis of data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) project suggest that things are getting better: 30 day prevalence of drinking is down from 83 percent in 1982 to 70 percent in 1999 and heavy drinking has decreased from 45 percent in 1984 to 40 percent in 1999. Who, then, are we to believe? Without going into the details of different longitudinal studies, sampling techniques and measurement, it is important to note that the Wechsler data is not the last or definitive word on this subject, despite the media blitz and attention that it has received, which appear to confirm our culture's preoccupation with the negatives of alcohol.

While one could debate the findings of CAS and MTF, neither will help us determine what actually works in prevention. In particular, we have no way of knowing from these national data sets what programs or strategies are being used on college campuses and which ones work. This brings us to the Ziemelis study, which is perhaps the most important and most overlooked of the three. Ziemelis and his colleagues studied campuses that received FIPSE grants in the early 1990s and tried to determine if there were any differences

between campuses that reported increases and decreases in high-risk drinking during the period of their grant.

Here's what they found:

- 1) FIPSE schools showed greater decreases in problem drinking than CAS schools,
- 2) more FIPSE schools showed decreases in problem drinking than CAS schools, and, most importantly,
- 3) decreases in drinking were associated with certain prevention strategies.

In other words, if you do certain things, you are likely to see a greater decrease in problem drinking than if you don't. Bingo: Prevention works!

Ziemelis and his colleagues found that positive changes were associated with programs that had:

- 1) activities "directed towards changing the campus social/cultural environment and efforts to influence campus norms regarding substance abuse," and/or
- 2) regulatory and physical change efforts that "involve students in their development and implementation," and/or
- 3) "prevention strategies that focus on discouraging or deglamorizing substance use are associated with better program outcomes than those merely banning or restricting such use."

Further support for these findings is the fact that schools reporting no change in high-risk drinking were already using these strategies, suggesting that they had already reaped the benefits from them.

While Ziemelis's findings are not an explicit endorsement of social norms, they are extremely consistent with what we do: focus on and involve students, influence and change norms, and don't impose solutions on students.

by Alan Berkowitz, PhD, Editor

"... positive changes were associated with programs that included efforts to influence campus norms regarding substance abuse."

Small is Powerful—A Review of Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*

In epidemiology the term “tipping point” refers to the fact that small changes have little discernible impact on a system until a critical mass is achieved. Then one additional small change can dramatically tip the system, resulting in a large and seemingly disproportionate effect. In *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Malcolm Gladwell suggests that the best way to understand the various changes that occur in our lives—be they fads or trends—is to think of them as epidemics. “Ideas and products and messages and behaviors,” he writes, “spread just like viruses do.”

Of course, not all viruses result in widespread infection. Those that do, however, seem to share a number of characteristics, and Gladwell proposes that these simple principles of epidemic transmission also characterize agents of social change. In his view, all social epidemics follow what he calls the three rules of the tipping point: The Law of the Few, The Stickiness Factor, and The Power of Context.

The Law of the Few posits that any kind of social epidemic is largely dependent on the involvement of a small number of people who possess very specific social skills. Three types of individuals are identified. *Connectors* are people specialists who circulate in many different worlds and link them all together. *Mavens* are information specialists, people who accumulate a fund of detailed knowledge and broker it liberally. Finally, *Salesmen* are specialists in persuasion who have both the verbal and non-verbal skills to enhance the reception of a seemingly dubious message.

The Stickiness Factor suggests that “in order to be capable of sparking epidemics, ideas have to be memorable and move us to action.” That is, they need to stick with us, to adhere to our consciousness in a motivating way. The point is perhaps self-evident; but what is not self-evident is the fact that ideas or messages are often caused to tip when small and apparently trivial changes are made in the way they are presented.

This, Gladwell notes, “is largely counterintuitive,” given our deeply held belief that the power of ideas resides more in their intellectual substance than in the minutiae of their style.

The Power of Context is the last rule. It refers to the tremendous influence that social environments have in shaping behavior. This runs counter to general thinking since we are accustomed to consider behavior as a function more of inner nature than of social context. For example, a criminal is commonly thought to commit a crime because he (or she) is, inherently, a bad person. But the Power of Context suggests that “a criminal may instead be prompted to commit a crime based on his perception of a permissive environment.” As Gladwell points out, this notion is essentially equivalent to Wilson & Kelly’s Broken Windows Theory, which posits that crime is the inevitable result of signs of social disorder, however small. In this view, even something as apparently insignificant as a broken window can send a message of widespread apathy and appear to give license to illicit action. Thus, even in the larger social context it is the little things that loom large.

Which Change Causes the Tip? “One of the things I’d like to do,” Gladwell has stated, “is to show people how to start ‘positive’ epidemics of their own. The virtue of an epidemic, after all, is that just a little input is enough to get it started.” (for the text of this interview go to <http://www.gladwell.com/books2.html>). This has obvious appeal as a formula for creating positive social change—“little things can make a big difference”—especially as it might appear to make it all so easy to achieve. But as Gladwell’s case studies reveal, determining precisely which small change to make in a system in order to trigger its dramatic transformation can be incredibly painstaking work. The creators of “Sesame Street,” for example, routinely assured its appeal by repeatedly asking the questions: Is the audience attending to the message? Does the

audience understand the message? But who would suspect that the investigation of these apparently simple questions would lead, in the case of one episode, to collaboration with a team of Harvard researchers who employed an infrared Eye-View Monitor to track children’s fovea movements? That is precisely what it took to answer the question: Are the kids seeing and learning about the words, or are they just looking at the Muppets? Well, it’s the little things that can make a big difference, and the devil is in the details.

Implications for Social Norms.

Most, if not all, of the ways that Gladwell suggests for comprehending rapid and widespread social change will be familiar to those in the field of social norms. After all, our work is based on a profound appreciation of the immense influence exerted by the social context—both real and perceived—as well as a solid sense of what it means to assure that one’s message repeatedly reaches, is understood, and is retained by one’s audience. Less clear, however, are the implications of Gladwell’s Law of the Few for the field of social norms, and I would like to close by briefly examining this question.

Almost any discussion of the influential sway that a small group of individuals can exert—at least in a college context—will inevitably evoke the image of peer educators. Interestingly, the importance of these groups is frequently alleged by quoting Alexander Astin’s statement: “The student’s peer group is the single most important source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398). Less well known, however, is a related passage in which Astin asks rhetorically: “How, then, does the peer group exert influence on its individual members?” And answers: “The key to understanding this process may well lie in the norms and expectations of the group members” (p. 401). I point this out to show that Astin’s comment is not the ringing endorsement of peer

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educators that it is often taken to be. Beyond that, however, I think it important to urge caution on those who would see an easy equivalence between any group of peers—be they educators or leaders—and the few connectors, mavens, and salesmen that Gladwell argues are indispensable to a social epidemic. Data gathered in social norms campaigns consistently show that students do not rate peers as highly credible sources of health-related information. Given that, is it reasonable to limit our search for the influential few solely to the realm of students? I'm not so sure.

An interesting attempt was made recently at Kansas State University (KSU) to identify those individuals whom students rated consistently as embodying the qualities that Gladwell enumerates, namely: trendsetters, communicators, and those linked to many social networks. Of the fifty-five students identified, twenty responded to an invitation to participate in focus groups. Their contributions to KSU's social norms campaign was significant: they provided feedback on ads, commented on proposed campus policies, and yielded insights into the development of student attitudes and behaviors. Important as their involvement was, however, there is nothing here to suggest that they were even remotely responsible for causing an epidemic of change to tip. Which leads me to wonder: Shouldn't we also consider looking for the indispensable few of our social norms campaigns among ourselves? After all, don't we use our skills as connectors, mavens and communicators to make our messages effectively resonate, or stick, with their intended audience? It's a little something to think about.

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References: Astin, A (1993) *What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.; Newton, FB, & Newton, D. (2001) "Marketing Good Student Behavior: What The Tipping Point Can Teach Us." *About Campus*, November/December 2001, p 26-28.



Editor's Note: The "Gathering Place" brings together news, announcements, and important developments in the field of social norms.

A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges

The much-heralded report of the Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has been released, with a packet of materials sent to all college and university presidents. Although the media and publicity on this report tends to reinforce the negative and focus on exaggerations of the problem, there is also much of value to social norms practitioners in the report itself. In particular, the Final Report of the Panel on Prevention and Treatment, titled: "How to Reduce High-Risk College Drinking: Use Proven Strategies, Fill Research Gaps" provides a strong endorsement of the social norms approach (along with other strategies) and contains a comprehensive overview of what we know about what works in prevention. You can get it from your campus president, by calling 732 445-2190 or from www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov. On the positive side, this report clearly places social norms on the map as one of the most promising and effective strategies available for drug prevention. On the other hand, the publicity for the report tends to exaggerate the problem and reinforce misperceptions, social norms gets buried in a long list of other "promising but not proven" strategies, and the high bar of "scientific proof" used tends to diminish the

impressive findings in favor of this approach. (See "Recent Research" this issue for additional information.)

Examining Social Norms Marketing: A Special Supplement to *The Dartmouth*

The daily student newspaper of Dartmouth College ran a special supplement on social norms marketing on May 15, 2002. It contains articles on the growth and history of social norms, beverage industry funding, applications to other issues, an assessment of its success, and Dartmouth student reactions, along with comments from prominent social norms advocates and critics. The article on student reactions to the campaign at Dartmouth is of particular interest. The Editors of *The Dartmouth* seem to fall prey to the naïve assumption that if students say they disagree with the campaign, it must not be working. In fact, student disagreements are to be expected as part of almost any campaign. The articles can be downloaded from www.thedartmouth.com/article.

The kids are all right: 'Social Norming' may be the strategy to keep them that way

The May 28, 2002 issue of *USA Today* prominently featured the social norms approach in a very favorable article on the front page of the Life section. The article, along with other recent reports in the national media, can be accessed through the website of the National Social Norms Resource Center (www.socialnorm.org).

Dying to Drink: Confronting Binge Drinking on College Campuses

... is the title of a book by Dr. Henry Wechsler to be released this summer by Rodale Press (www.rodale.com).

from *the* field

No "Crash Cars" on our Campus!

Editors Note: Each issue of the Social Norms Quarterly will feature model programs or interventions that have been successfully implemented in a community setting.

As a Health Educator I have formed the conviction that something good can come from unfortunate circumstances. I have been involved with alcohol prevention using mostly the BACCHUS & GAMMA materials during an alcohol awareness week with data collected from our campus. I know, and even teach social norms theory in my classes, but it wasn't until a campus tragedy resulted in our students being stereotyped into behaviors that are not representative of the norm, that the campus had to shift from knowing about social norms theory to incorporating it into our prevention strategies. This was not an easy shift to make when negative scare tactics had been the basis of our

previous approach to prevention.

The event in question took place in May 2000, when our city police were called to campus to break up a large party. Alcohol was clearly a factor contributing to the melee.

"The obvious came to light. 'Let's have a shiny, new, sporty car parked out in the Quad with a social norms message posted on four sides instead.' Brilliant!"

This incident brought into focus that this one event was not representative of our student body as a whole, but it still contributed significantly to a misperception of the norm by both students and community members.

To make a long story short, this began our process of applying for grants and receiving funding to plan, implement and evaluate a social norms misperception campaign addressing high-risk drinking behavior. After receiving our grant we developed posters with messages from our own data, worked on communicating more effectively on campus and with our community, and offered more late night, alcohol-free activities for our students. I realized how I had truly started to speak the language of social norms with students and staff when our campus task force was planning for the October 2001 Alcohol Awareness Week on campus. A student wanted to bring a "Crash" car from the Oregon Department of Transportation to campus. I educated them that this kind of intervention was counterproductive to a social norms campaign and might even encourage some risk-taking students to drink and drive for the thrill of the adventure. The obvious came to light. "Let's have a shiny, new, sporty car parked out in the Quad with a social norms message posted on four sides instead." Brilliant!

I am amazed at how easy it was to organize this intervention. Phone calls to the local car dealers were successful in bringing a different brand of car for four of the five days of the week. Our poster stated: "Alcohol Awareness Week 2001, Most Linfield Students are making healthy choices! 77 percent have NOT driven a car under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Pledge to make it 100 percent " The students were encouraged to sign a pledge at a nearby information table.

Many people on campus were talking about the car. I spent thirty minutes one afternoon off to the side asking students their opinions. One responded by saying, "I never thought about it that way." Another said, "It's cool. That crash car last year was hard to look at." We provided an opportunity for students to look at alcohol use and subsequent consequences in a different way, AND talk to about it. Seeing a brand new car in the Quad certainly made students stop and think, "What is that cool car doing here?" Some felt that it was a more positive way to encourage low-risk alcohol use.

Having the opportunity to implement a social norms intervention has brought the theory into practice for our campus and community. And we are already starting to see the impact of positive approaches. I received two phone calls from student groups, one week after Alcohol Awareness Week, to ask for funds for late-night, alcohol-free events. Student norms and alcohol use was the subject of the student-created newspaper cartoon for two weeks in a row. Our city police have increased enforcement of underage drinking laws and officers attended a Halloween toga party (that in years past had to be broken up) and reported that they didn't see any violations of the laws. These little steps are contributing to a larger environment of corrected misperceptions.

So, to those of you who are just beginning a social norms approach, initial program planning can be frustrating and it takes a tremendous amount of time, but these positive approaches to changing behavior are the most rewarding.

by Susan Chambers, M.Ed., Adjunct Faculty, Health and Human Performance, Linfield College (Oregon), schambe@linfield.edu

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Other surveys include the American College Health Association (ACHA) National College Health Assessment and the CORE survey. The National Social Norms Resource Center (www.social-norms.org) has additional resources and examples for survey development. If you do not have the resources to conduct your own survey, consider asking normative questions on other health and lifestyle surveys conducted by your institution. Many colleges are also experimenting with online surveys, which is usually much less expensive and can reach a wide audience of students. If you don't feel you have the expertise to conduct a survey or analyze data, you may want to team with campus faculty. This is an excellent way of sharing expenses, gaining expertise and creating faculty buy-in for your substance abuse prevention efforts.

My campaign is quite clever and creative but I am not seeing results. No amount of creativity can make up for cutting corners on market research and testing when you are developing a campaign. Student feedback is essential at each stage of development in order for a campaign to be successful at reaching your target population and dosing the information enough to make an impact. You need to know what images, information, placements and designs are most likely to be seen/read/heard by students. In order to do this you have to know where students get their information, what they like to look at and when, how

much or how little information is necessary, etc.

For example, some schools have discovered that providing bus posters reaches more students than residence-based or classroom posters which have to compete with other sales materials for student attention. Wes Perkins and David Craig have demonstrated success utilizing campus computer networks and curriculum infusion to reach students with campus norms. Still others disseminate social norms through small group interactive sessions.

Other potential pitfalls to program success include: program believability; credibility of the source; lack of authenticity in design and message development; mixed messages; misinterpretation of the data; failure to provide convincing evidence that perceptions are incorrect; poor survey design and interpretation; and faulty data collection strategies. (See *Working Paper #3* for a discussion of the believability issue.)

How do you get information about what the majority of students are doing when you only have data on what the minority is doing? Social norms are a way of thinking, and communicating. The glass that is one-third empty is also two-thirds full. For example, if you have information about alcohol-related consequences and how often a student experiences these consequences, then you also have information about the *lack* of consequences. Another way to look at this data is as follows: most students who

drink are safe drinkers—or—when they drink, most students drink moderately and experience few consequences as a result of drinking. If the data tells you that 10% of students got into a fight or argument as a result of drinking, it also tells you that 90% did not. Take some time to think about the interpretation of the data you have, and also about what additional information you will need in order to counteract misperceptions about drinking.

Can I have a social norms campaign and a zero tolerance campaign operating at the same time? Social norms information makes sense to students when consistent with other substance use communications, policies and practices but can easily be dismissed if rules, words and deeds are contradictory. Students understand and support rules about drinking and every campus should have consistent, well-publicized rules. However, a public campaign that declares war on heavy drinkers and overstates the incidence and prevalence of college drinking can be counterproductive. This type of campaign fails to mobilize students and others who are moderate drinkers and may inadvertently divert attention from health and wellness issues.

Social norms campaigns can work synergistically with other environmental management strategies and early intervention techniques. The Higher Education Center has outlined an eight-step college substance abuse prevention standard that includes social norms. Other strategies that can work synergistically include techniques that specifically target populations needing early intervention more than primary prevention, utilized in programs such as BASICS. BASICS and other brief motivational interviewing strategies are very compatible with social norms strategies and, in fact, most include peer alcohol norms when working one-on-one and in group settings with students as a way of

notable quotes

An occasional feature sampling praiseworthy and critical comments about the social norms approach

“The Panel suggests that colleges and universities... Use social norms interventions to correct misperceptions and change drinking practices (p. vi)...Initial results from programs adopting an intensive social norms approach are promising.... Together these findings provide strong support for the potential impact of the social norms approach. Although any case report in this literature could be challenged methodologically, the results of each study are remarkably consistent (p.13)” **Final Report of the Panel on Prevention and Treatment, Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.** April 2002

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influencing heavy and high-risk drinkers to moderate their use.

Shouldn't a good campaign develop one recognizable and specific signature for example, "Drinking not everybody's doing it"? One-line slogans lose their punch quickly. Social norms campaigns should be like Dragnet—just the facts! The facts should add up to a more accurate picture that demonstrates how most students make reasonable decisions about their health and well being. Most of us would agree that developing a capacity for critical thinking and sound decision-making based on good information is an important developmental goal for all young adults.

Who is a key stakeholder and how do you work with key stakeholders? A key stakeholder can be a person who influences, leads and guides but can also be anyone who passes on information about college drinking to students. Key stakeholders can be administrators, teachers, campus press, building monitors (the ones in charge of campus postings) or even the person selling hot dogs in front of the Student Union (as was the case at UA). Information about community practices and standards surrounding alcohol use is passed along through campus policies and practices, speeches, mission statements, interviews, articles, pronouncements, lectures, presentations, and word of mouth. Students can find information about alcohol use on promotional materials (fliers tacked to a campus kiosk, or classroom bulletin board) and even online.

Developing relationships with key stakeholders that are mutually beneficial is a key to success. You can help them succeed in their own missions in many ways. Here are two examples:

1) The mission of the Office of Public Affairs may be to keep the community aware of the benefits the institution can provide to the community and thus enhance support for the college. Providing positive infor-

mation about student behavior allows public affairs staff members to use these points in articles, interviews and press releases. This helps them succeed in their mission and helps the prevention practitioner get the word out to those who interact with students.

2) One of the missions of the Office of the Dean of Students is to create and maintain a civil learning environment. By sharing survey information that says the majority of students endorse more conservative attitudes related to alcohol policies, the dean may feel less reluctant to set more conservative campus wide party policy then she would have if she received feedback from representatives from student government or Greek organizations.

One of the important goals of a social norms campaign is to change the public conversation on campus about alcohol from "all students are heavy users" to "most students drink moderately." And this can't happen if key stakeholders make decisions based on inaccurate information. For example, a faculty member may falsely conclude that most students go drinking on Thursday nights and therefore not schedule tests for Friday mornings.

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Key stakeholders tend to fall into two categories – "with you" or "against you." They can easily spread misinformation about college drinking (even when they mean well). But they can also help you correct misinformation in a number of ways. For example, stakeholders who are knowledgeable and informed about your campaign can:

- ◆ speak up about the norms,
- ◆ consider the moderate drinking and more conservative attitudes about campus drinking before creating alcohol policy,
- ◆ consistently enforce campus alcohol policy and law abiding behavior,
- ◆ fund regularly scheduled campus activities that provide opportunities for students to socialize, volunteer, and interact with faculty.

Summary. Social norms is still considered a new and emerging prevention strategy to reduce high-risk drinking but there is a growing body of literature that speaks to its efficacy. I hope this question and answer discussion has addressed some of the issues you have been thinking about when you consider utilizing a social norms strategy.

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