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[A Multifaceted Social Norms Approach to Reduce High-Risk Drinking: Lessons from Hobart and William Smith](#)

[Colleges](#) by H. Wesley Perkins and David W. Craig

The Hobart and William Smith Colleges Alcohol Education Project tested the social norms approach on the HWS campus to see if communicating accurate norms about actual student drinking behavior could produce substantial positive effects on alcohol use. The project's five components—(1) data collection; (2) print media campaigns; (3) electronic media campaign; (4) curriculum development; and (5) campus presentations, staff development, and cocurricular activities—worked in concert to create a comprehensive initiative to influence perceptions of social norms regarding alcohol use among students and, in turn, reduce actual high-risk drinking behavior. The U.S. Department of Education funded the implementation of the campus intervention, analysis of the results, and preparation of the dissemination report. This publication describes the five components and the results of the project's efforts. The HWS Project provides further evidence for the effectiveness of social norms efforts to reduce high-risk drinking and associated problems at colleges and universities. Order #117 2002

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[A Practical Guide to Alcohol Abuse Prevention: A Campus Case Study in Implementing Social Norms and Environmental Management Approaches](#)

by K. Johannessen, C. Collins, B. Mills-Novoa, and P. Glider

This guide describes the integration of a two pronged approach to reducing heavy drinking at The University of Arizona. Detailed instruction in how to conduct a social norms media campaign and environmental management strategies, costs for the program, information on how to evaluate, and evaluation findings are included. Additional information about this program is available on-line at

www.SocialNorms.CampusHealth.net 38 pp. Order # 909 1999
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[Social Marketing Strategies for Campus Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems](#) by R. Zimmerman

This guide explores how social marketing can be employed to bring about changes in the perceptions and patterns of student alcohol and other drug use. It examines how social marketing draws on the lessons learned from commercial marketing and explains how the two differ. Through relating the experiences of 10 colleges and universities, it illustrates the benefits of a social marketing campaign. 36 pp. Order #110 1997
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["College Student Misperceptions of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms Among Peers: Exploring Causes, Consequences and Implications for Prevention Programs"](#) by H.W. Perkins.

In: *Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs in Higher Education: Bringing Theory into Practice*. Newton, MA: The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention. 292 pp. Order # 901 1997.

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["Social Marketing for Prevention"](#) *Prevention Update*

A 2-page primer on social marketing, including the basic principles, keys to a successful social marketing program, and tips on how to get started. Also includes a few case examples. 2 pp. Order # 708 1996
To order visit our publications page at www.higheredcenter.org/pubs/.

[A Social Norms Approach to Preventing Binge Drinking at Colleges and Universities](#) by M. P. Haines

Research has demonstrated that at many colleges and universities there is a significant disparity between student estimates of binge drinking by students and actual binge drinking behavior. This publication describes a campus-based mass media program instituted at Northern Illinois University aimed at changing student perceptions of the drinking habits of their fellow students. It also suggests ways of adapting this approach on other campuses. 32 pp. Order # 108 1996
To order visit our publications page at www.higheredcenter.org/pubs/.

["Scope of the Problem: Misperceptions of Alcohol and Drugs,"](#) by H. Wesley Perkins

Catalyst, Vol. 1, No. 3 This article (subtitled "Prevention Through Correcting Misperceptions of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms: Notes on the State of the Field) provides an overview of the research in the field of social norms and misperceptions and discusses the development of

programs to address these misperceptions. 8 pp. Order # 601 1995
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Raising More Voices than Mugs: Changing the College Alcohol Environment through Media Advocacy by U.S. Department of Education/CSAP, DHHS (Developed by the Advocacy Institute.)
Media advocacy is an environmental strategy that can be used to support alcohol prevention and policy development efforts. This guide will help prevention program coordinators and students use media advocacy to bring attention to alcohol-related problems on campus and help win support for the solutions, while effectively countering the arguments of groups with differing viewpoints. Sections review the role of alcohol on college campuses, discuss the key elements of media advocacy, describe how to gain access to the media, and look at four policy areas that may be affected through media advocacy. 74 pp. Order # 900 1994
To order visit our publications page at www.higheredcenter.org/pubs/.

Resources on the Web

Social Norms Network

<http://communities.mostofus.org/>

MOST of Us™ is initiating a free "virtual community" that will allow social norms practitioners to discuss various issues and to view and comment on posters, radio and television commercials, etc. This network will benefit all who are interested in the opportunity to form a unified community that benefits health promotion and the field of social norms.

The Report on Social Norms

www.socialnormslink.com

The Social Norms Link is your place to get information on the Social Norms Approach, sample issues, link to other sites, and (for the media members) The Social Norms Report - a leading source of social norms information.

Also check their calendar of recent and upcoming events and presentations on social norms--they are always adding information to keep you up-to-date.

National Social Norms Resource Center

www.socialnorm.org

The National Social Norms Resource Center is an independent center that supports, promotes and provides technical assistance in the application of the social norms approach to a broad range of health, safety and social justice issues, including alcohol-related risk-reduction and the prevention of tobacco abuse.

Montana Social Norms Project

www.mostofus.org

The Montana Social Norms Project is home to the MOST of Us campaign, a public information and education project aimed at improving the health of all Montana citizens by communicating the healthy norms practiced by the majority of people. Through research and marketing strategies, positive trends and statistics are broadcast back to specific target populations as a way to strengthen health and safety norms. Current efforts are focused on (1) Reducing alcohol-related crashes in Montana among young adults ages 18-25; (2) Tobacco use prevention (abstinence/non-use) among youth ages 12-17; (3) Positive effects of parent-child communication on alcohol and other drug issues.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges Alcohol and Other Drug Education Project

<http://academic.hws.edu/alcohol/>

This site describes is a broad collection of education and research initiatives based on correcting misperceived norms, including the HWS (College) Campaign to Reduce Misperceived Norms (with impact data), Curriculum Development, Secondary Education Initiatives, and Research Publications.

BACCHUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network

www.bacchusgamma.org

The BACCHUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network is a national non-profit that supports peer education programs on over 1,000 campuses. BACCHUS and GAMMA launched a social norms program in the fall of 1999 targeting sexual health and tobacco cessation on 11 campuses.

Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development

http://foundation.novartis.com/social_marketing.htm

This site provides a short description of social marketing, including the elements of social marketing and the concept of "product."

Prevention Primer: Media Advocacy

<http://www.health.org/pubs/PRIMER/media.htm>

This document provides a thorough explanation of the media advocacy approach, particularly as it applies to the prevention of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. This page is part of the PREVLINe (Prevention Online) site.

Making Health Communication Programs Work – A Planner’s Guide

http://rex.nci.nih.gov/INTRFCE_GIFS/INFO_PATS_INTR_DOC.htm

This publication is an excellent step-by-step guide to developing

messages, written by Elaine Bratic Arkin and distributed by the National Cancer Institute's Office of Cancer Communications. Sections include "Planning and Strategy Selection," "Selecting Channels and Materials," "Developing Materials and Pretesting." "Implementing Your Program," "Assessing Effectiveness," and "Feedback to Refine Program." To access this publication, click on the link above, select "Communication and Education Resources," then "Program Planning Publications," and then "Making Health Communications Work."

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) materials about campaign development and testing.

<http://www.health.org:80>.

Specific publications include:

A Key Step in Developing Prevention Methods is to Obtain Expert and Gatekeeper Reviews

<http://www.health.org:80/govpubs/MS492/>

You Can Avoid Common Errors as You Develop Prevention Materials

<http://www.health.org:80/govpubs/MS497/>

Pretesting is Essential; You Can Choose From Various Methods

<http://www.health.org:80/govpubs/MS498/>

You Can Manage Focus Groups Effectively for Maximum Impact

<http://www.health.org:80/govpubs/MS495/>

Social Marketing Primer

<http://www.health.org:80/govpubs/PHD627/smarket.htm>

Media Campaign Planning and Development Process

<http://www.mediacampaign.org/publications/summary/append2.html>

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) awarded a contract to the communications firm Porter Novelli to develop an anti-drug media campaign targeting youth ages 9 to 17 and the adults who influence them. This document, Appendix 2 of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, Summary (December 1997) provides an overview of the campaign planning process.

Simply Put

<http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/simpput.pdf>

This document explains effective ways to create easy-to-read print

materials, including message content, text appearance, use of visuals, layout and design, tips on translation, and testing for readability.

Other Publications

Berkowitz, A.D. (1999). Questions About Social Norms Theory and Its Applications. *Alcohol Issues & Solutions*. Produced by PaperClip Communications, P.O. Box 465, Garfield, NJ, 07026. 973-546-3097. This article presents a brief overview of social norms theory, distinguishes between social norms theory and social norms marketing, examines common questions about social norms theory, and offers a list of how-tos, dos and don'ts, and lessons learned about implementing campaigns.

Berkowitz, A.D. (1998). The Proactive Prevention Model: Helping Students Translate Healthy Beliefs into Healthy Actions. *About Campus*, September-October 1998, p. 26-27. A very brief overview of the theory and its applications which is useful as a brief introduction to the model.

Berkowitz, A.D. (1998). How We Can Prevent Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault. *Educator's Guide to Controlling Sexual Harassment*, 6(1), p. 1-3. An overview of how social norms can impact sexually harassing behavior. Includes a step by step guide to converting bystander behavior.

Berkowitz, A.D. (1997) "From Reactive to Proactive Prevention: Promoting an Ecology of Health on Campus". In *Substance Abuse on Campus: A Handbook for College and University Personnel*. P. Clayton Rivers and Elise R. Shore, Eds. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. This chapter presents an overview of the theory in the context of other approaches to drug prevention, reviews relevant research, and presents examples of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions in the form of case studies.

Berkowitz, AD (2000) Applications of Social Norms Theory to Other Health and Social Justice Issues. To be published as Chapter 9 in *The Social Norms Approach to Prevention*, H. Wesley Perkins, Ed. Explores applications of social norms theory to sexual assault prevention for men, eating disorders, and bystander behavior with respect to second hand effects of binge drinking and prejudicial behavior. Available from the author.

Clapp, J.D., and McDonnell, A.L. (2000). The Relationship of Perceptions of Alcohol Promotion and Peer Drinking Norms to Alcohol Problems Reported by College Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(1), p. 19-26. Describes an evaluation study of 433 randomly selected

college students interviewed using a modified version of the Core survey to assess alcohol consumption and its related problems.

DeJong, W. (2000). [Scare Tactics](#). *Prevention Pipeline*, January/February 2000, p. 11. Discusses why messages of fear are not effective in preventing high-risk drinking, and how media campaigns emphasizing true social norms can more effectively impact this behavior.

DeJong, W. and Linkenbach, J. (1999). [Telling It Like It Is: Using Social Norms Marketing Campaigns to Reduce Student Drinking](#). *AAHE Bulletin*, December 1999, p. 11-14. An overview of social norms marketing campaigns designed to reduce student drinking, including a discussion of perceived norms, examples of social norms marketing campaigns from several campuses, implications for administrators, and a discussion of the term "binge drinking" vs. "destructive" or "high-risk" drinking.

Dimeff, L, Baerk J, Kvilahan, D & Marlatt, AG. (1999). *Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students: A Harm Reduction Approach (BASICS)*. NY: Guilford Press. A thorough overview of the excellent research conducted at the University of Washington on harm-reduction interventions for abusers and a curriculum for implementing the model.

Far, J & Miller, J. (2000). *Training Manual: Small Group Norms-Challenging Intervention*. Project Culture Change, Pullman: Washington State University. A step by step approach to developing social norms interventions for targeted groups such as fraternities and sororities, athletic teams, and academic classes.

Haines, M.P. (1997). Spare the Rod and Get Results: A Wellness Approach to Health Promotion Media. *Wellness Management*, 13 (3), p. 1-4. A discussion of "scare tactics" used in the health and wellness field to try to motivate behavior change, and why they don't work. Includes a section called "Media Pie" which can be used to evaluate media under consideration for wellness programs.

Haines, M.P. (1998). Community Generated Protective Norms Reduce Risk and Promote Health. *ACTION – Newsletter of the American College Health Association*, 38 (3), April/May/June. Briefly introduces a general theory of "Indigenous Protective Norms" and describes some of the components of a specific model developed at Northern Illinois University.

Haines, M.P. (1998). Social Norms: A Wellness Model for Health Promotion in Higher Education. *Wellness Management*, 14 (4), p. 1 and 8. An overview of social norms theory based on the experience of

Northern Illinois University, including assessing norms, communication actual norms, and communicating false norms and imaginary peer pressure.

Haines, M.P. and Spear, S.F. (1996). Changing Perception of the Norm: A Strategy to Decrease Binge Drinking Among College Students. *Journal of American College Health*, 45, p. 134-140. Describes a 5-year study of 23,000 students which demonstrated a reduction in college student's "binge" drinking associated with an intervention to change perceptions of drinking norms.

Lederman, L.C. (1996). *Asking Questions and Listening to Answers – A Guide to Using Individual, Focus Group, and Debriefing Interviews*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Lederman, L.C. (1990). Assessing Educational Effectiveness: The Focus Group Interview as a Technique for Data Collection. *Communication Education*, 39 (2), p. 117-127. An essay describing the focus group interview as a technique for data collection for researchers interested in a variety of educational issues. Explains the technique, summarizes its history, examines its underlying assumptions, and explores its advantages and limitations.

Miller, D.T., and McFarland, C. (1991). When Social Comparison Goes Awry: The Case of Pluralistic Ignorance. Chapter 11 in Suls, J & Wills, T (Eds) *Social Comparison: Contemporary Theory and Research*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. An excellent overview of the theory of "pluralistic ignorance" and citations of earlier work in this area.

Perkins, H.W. (2003). The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse. This is a handbook for for educators, counselors, and clinicians. For ordering information, please visit http://academic.hws.edu/alcohol/socialnorms_approach_handbook.htm

Perkins, H.W. and Craig, D.W. (2002). [A Multifaceted Social Norms Approach to Reduce High-Risk Drinking Lessons from Hobart and William Smith Colleges](#). The Hobart and William Smith Colleges Alcohol Education Project tested the social norms approach on the HWS campus to see if communicating accurate norms about actual student drinking behavior could produce substantial positive effects on alcohol use.

Perkins, H.W. and Craig, D.W. (2002). [A Multifaceted Social Norms Approach to Reduce High-Risk Drinking Lessons from Hobart and William Smith Colleges](#). The Hobart and William Smith Colleges Alcohol Education Project tested the social norms approach on the HWS campus

to see if communicating accurate norms about actual student drinking behavior could produce substantial positive effects on alcohol use.

Perkins, H.W., and Wechsler, H. (1996). "Variation in Perceived College Drinking Norms and Its Impact on Alcohol Abuse: A Nationwide Study." *Journal of Drug Issues*, 26(4), p. 961-974. An analysis of the Harvard Alcohol Study data set documenting the importance of misperceptions in predicting alcohol abuse.

Prentice, D.A. and Miller, D.T. (1993). Pluralistic Ignorance and Alcohol Use on Campus: Some Consequence of Misperceiving the Social Norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, p. 243-256. Describes 4 studies which examine the relation between college students' own attitudes toward alcohol use and their estimates of the attitudes of their peers. All studies found widespread evidence of pluralistic ignorance: students believed they were more uncomfortable with campus alcohol practices than was the average student.

Resiberg, L. (2000). 'Social Norms' Marketing, First Used Against Alcohol Abuse, Now Focuses on Smoking and Sex. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 28, 2000, p. A60. An overview of social norms marketing and how the method is now being applied on campuses to behaviors other than alcohol use, such as smoking, safe sex, sexual-assault prevention, racism, and homophobia. Includes a variety of examples of current campus campaigns, as well as criticism of the approach.

Rosen, J. (1997). The Social Police: Following the Law, Because You'd Be Too Embarrassed Not To. *The New Yorker*, October 20-27, 1997, p. 170-181. A discussion of social norms, the "informal standards of behavior that people obey rather than risk ostracism or humiliation" and the ways in which norms can influence behavior more effectively than laws; how norms and laws together can influence behavior; and how norms and law can influence each other.

Wallack, L., Dorfman, L., Jernigan, D., and Makani, T. (1993). *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. Available directly from the publisher. A book about the use of media advocacy as a strategy to promote public health. Contains concrete examples and advice on using the mass media to convey public health messages. Available directly from the publisher.