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## Teens understanding of the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol: Focus group discussions

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**TEENS UNDERSTANDING OF THE INDICATORS  
OF THE TENDENCY TO ABUSE  
ALCOHOL  
FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

**by**

**Bob Van Drimmelen**

**B.A., Management  
University of Phoenix,  
1994**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the**

**Master of Arts Degree  
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College of Urban Affairs**

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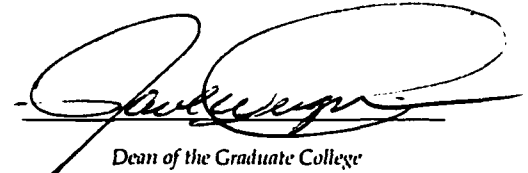
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Teens Understanding of the Indicators of the Tendency to Abuse Alcohol**

by

**Bob Van Drimmelen**

**Dr. Tony Ferre, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of Communication Studies  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas**

Alcohol abuse has become an epidemic in the modern world. The increase in this social problem has brought with it many consequences which everyone in society has to deal with. Unfortunately, the anguish of abuse has also spread through the world of teens. Are there indicators which portend the tendency for teens to abuse alcohol? Quantified research has revealed several of those indicators. Are we helping teens understand what those indicators are? Are teens accepting and learning about those indicators that they might be protected from the harsh consequences? This study begins to help society understand that efforts are being made to educate teens in regard to the indicators of alcohol abuse, though the efforts are diverse and sporadic. This study also finds that teens do not understand what those indicators are.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Memories are stirred and emotions touched when one hears any of the following: “Senior Prom; Pep Rally; Freshmen Orientation; Varsity Football; Cheerleaders; English; The Principal”;, and any of a myriad of other words which conjure up fond memories of adolescence. Yet many teens today don’t have the same fond memories, perhaps because they might remember some of the following words: “1,500 drivers ages 15-20 involved in fatal crashes...with an illegal blood alcohol level” (National Traffic Safety Administration, 1995). Perhaps they might recall that: “Of Massachusetts teens who abused alcohol, 44% of them also became sexually active” (Strunin & Hingson, 1992). More and more, teenage memories are becoming colored by the abuse of alcohol.**

#### **Purpose of Study**

**Modern research has uncovered many different indicators in teens which can predict a tendency to abuse alcohol. Do our teens understand what these indicators are? Have our teens been effectively taught about these indicators, so they have the necessary knowledge to effectively cope with the stresses of growing up in our world? Have they been given insight so that in future years, when they think of their “senior prom”, visits**

with “the principal”, or “varsity football” games, those memories will not be clouded by years of alcohol abuse? This research will investigate what the indicators of teen alcohol abuse are, and begin to discover how well our adolescents have been taught about those indicators.

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, a “teen” will be defined as anyone who is attending grades 7-12, or the junior high, senior high school years. Generally it will be the ages of 12-19, but as birthdays can vary, it may lap into the early twenties.

Defining specific terms associated with alcohol abuse is difficult. It is a stretch to associate “alcohol abuse” with “alcoholism”. Alcoholism is known also as “alcohol dependence” and “is a disease that included alcohol craving and continued drinking despite repeated alcohol related problems” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2001). This researcher will not equate “alcohol abuse” with “alcoholism”. It would be difficult to classify “alcohol abuse” as a “disease”.

At the same time, as “alcohol abuse” is discussed, there is much confusion about its’ specific definition. One study classified “alcohol abuse” as “drinking to drunkenness at least 6 times in the past year and/or suffering from negative consequences from alcohol consumption at least twice in the past year” (Nakashima and Wong, 2000). Another reference considered “alcohol abuse” “as having five or more drinks in a row” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1997). Each study seems to assign it’s own meaning to the term “alcohol abuse”. For purposes of this research, it will be assumed

that anyone who meets any of the criterion, are abusing alcohol. That means, “drinking to drunkenness at least 6 times in the past year; “suffered from negative consequences from alcohol consumption at least twice in the past year”; or, “having five or more drinks in a row”; will all qualify as “abusing alcohol”.

The term “indicator” is defined as “a pointer, dial, gauge, or other device that measures or shows something” (Websters New World Dictionary, 1992). In this study, an “indicator” will be a pointer which shows tendencies. The “something” these “pointers” or “gauges” will lead to, will be the tendency for teens to abuse alcohol. It is impossible to classify each and every teen and how they will react, but the word “indicator” allows us be more specific with high probabilities of abusing alcohol.

“Binge Drinking” is a term that is used often in many of the studies used. The National Institute on Drug Abuse defines “binge drinking” as “5 or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks” (“Youth Alcohol...”, 2001). The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (“Binge Drinking...”, 2001) use the same number of “five or more drinks in a row for boys and four or more in a row for girls”, but they don’t add the time constraints. This research will consider “binge drinking” to be five or more drinks in a row for boys, and four or more for girls. The time constraint will be dropped.

Alcohol abuse seems to be rampant. The following headlines have been seen in the media recently: “Bush daughters cited in Texas” (USA Today, 6/20/01). “Teenage drink and drugs in Europe..Europe’s young: drinking (% teenagers drunk 20 times or more)...Denmark: 41%” (BBC News, 2/20/01). “Young Hispanics top Cirrhosis Death Stats” (Associated Press, 8/16/01). From England, “this report confirms the worrying

recent trend which has been showing an increase in young people's drinking" (BBC News 7/26/01). From Texas to Denmark, Mexico to England, teens are drinking more and more. Even more alarming, it appears that teens are abusing alcohol more and more.

With the serious effects which can come as a result of abusing alcohol, it is imperative that society tries to mollify those effects. In order to put proper educational, social, etc; plans in place, we need to know who is at risk to abuse alcohol, and how well these risks have been communicated to society.

#### **Teen Abuse of Alcohol in the U.S.**

Within the United States alone, "about 10.4 million adolescents ages 12-20 reported using alcohol. Of those, 5.1 million were binge drinkers and included 2.5 million heavy drinkers who binged at least five times a month" (The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, "Binge Drinking...", 2001). Those numbers alone are a tremendous worry, especially if the effects of alcohol abuse are considered. Yet, as the research is magnified, results become even more worrisome.

If the ages are lowered to the group that includes 12-17 year olds, the numbers are still numbing. "7.2 million drank at least once in the past year. 2.7 million drank about once a month or more in the past year. 1 million drank at least once a week or more in the past year" (The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, "Youth and Underage...", 2001). These are our teens. The adolescents who are forming attitudes and habits that will carry them into their adult years. At the early end of the spectrum, very few of the early teens are capable of neither controlling emotions and actions totally, or

controlling their reaction to emotion and action totally. When alcohol compounds the problem at that age, the results can be devastating.

As we approach the upper end of the “teen spectrum”, High school seniors self reported that 51% of them were drinking on a monthly basis. 30.8% were binge drinking (National Institute on Drug Abuse, “Youth Alcohol...”, 2001). The statistics show that the percentages have increased steadily since the early nineties. The programs in place seem to be having limited effects on alcohol abuse, in fact, it seems that the numbers are increasing.

Yet, the older teens are not the only ones who are being impacted by the increase in the abuse of alcohol. Studies have shown that alcohol abuse is finding it’s way into younger teens. One study found that 25% of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders it surveyed reported they had drunk alcohol in the past month, with 8% reporting being drunk, and 15% reporting binge drinking in the 2 weeks prior to the survey (The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, 2001).

It is clear that teens abuse of alcohol is increasing. It is alarming that this abuse is occurring earlier in the lives of young people. With the increasing abuse of alcohol come the resultant effects of that abuse. Again, the questions have to be asked, “do we understand the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol”, and “are we able to communicate those indicators to teens and society in an effective manner?”

### **Effects of Alcohol Abuse Among Teens**

At first glance, the effects of alcohol abuse by teens seem evident. Yet, a few

current headlines seem to give a very real picture: "Students death prompts new CSU alcohol reforms" (San Francisco Chronicle, 5/15/01). "It is feared that alcohol abuse during the formative years sets a pattern for later in life" (BBC News, 7/6/00). "It has also been suggested that teenagers are more likely to have casual sex if they are regular drinkers" (BBC News 7/6/00). Perhaps this headline states a major problem very simply, "Teens risking future health" (BBC News, 7/26/01) With the increase in the abuse of alcohol by teens, come the well publicized problems associated with alcohol abuse. These problems can be physical, they can be emotional, they can injure individuals and families, they can be easily dealt with, they can be complex and consuming. Each situation brings its own unique set of consequences, and each consequence needs to be dealt with.

Perhaps the biggest risk associated with alcohol abuse among teens, is the increased risk for automobile accidents. "21 percent of young drivers 15 to 20 years old who were killed in crashes were intoxicated" (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Young Drivers...",1997). The numbers are increasing, as in 1998, almost 36 percent of deaths in 15 to 20 year olds were alcohol related (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Fatality Analysis...", 1998). In addition to the high incidence of fatalities while driving, there is also the increased risk of being seriously injured while involved in car crashes while being a passenger. Many of the readers will recall a former friend or acquaintance whose life was taken as a result of alcohol abuse. If each person thinks a moment more, they will remember another soul whose life was shattered because they played a part in that great loss.

"Drinking large amounts of alcohol can lead to coma or even death" (The National



Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, "Tips for Teens", Brochure, 2001).

Yet that is just the beginning. "Alcohol can damage every organ in your body. It is absorbed directly into your bloodstream and can increase your risk for a variety of life-threatening diseases including cancer" (Ibid.). As teens begin to abuse alcohol, they subject their bodies to traumas that generally do not follow non-drinkers or moderate drinkers. Future generations will reap the results of the alcohol abuse of the parents. Some of those repercussions will be physical, some will be emotional, but they are all effects that will have to be dealt with. Finding a way to predict those who may abuse alcohol could help generations to come.

It is extremely difficult to predict those who have tendencies towards alcoholism. But several factors play into those "educated guesses". Teens who begin abusing alcohol "before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who wait until age 21. Each additional year of delayed drinking onset reduces the probability of alcohol dependency [alcoholism] by 14 percent" (Grant, B.F., 1998). How important it is to slow down or stop the alcohol abuse early in the formative teen years. Again, as the maturation process is allowed to progress, each member of society is better equipped to handle many of the dilemma's which they face each day. Alcohol abuse and it's consequences become less of an issue, as wisdom supplants impulsiveness.

Sexual activity is not a moral issue in this research, but a practical issue. Within the confines of "unprotected sex", there are several almost predictable outcomes. Adolescents who abuse alcohol are "more likely to become sexually active at an earlier age, to have sex more often, and to engage in unprotected sex, which places them at a

greater risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases” (Office of Inspector General, 1992). It has been shown that higher “risk-taking”, and “sensation seeking behavior” follow teens who abuse alcohol (The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, “The Consequences...”, 2001). With “risk-taking” and “sensation seeking behavior”, there will be an increased chance of injury, accident and perhaps even death. This world is already dangerous without the mitigating effects of alcohol.

The effects of alcohol abuse among teens is straightforward and well documented. There are not only health issues, but social and familial responsibility issues as well (whether it be the family impacted by a drunk driver, or a pregnant thirteen year old unable to cope with being a mother/father). The results of alcohol abuse can be seen in generation after generation. This is not an issue which can be placed in an attic like a “crazy uncle”, with the assumption that whatever is “out of sight”, is indeed “out of mind”.

### **Significance and Scope of Study**

Teens are in current cultural, social, and intellectual battles that few “baby-boomers” can comprehend. One of the many battles facing teens is the prevalence of teen alcohol abuse. About these specific battles Samuel Becker (1995) stated what is echoed by many researchers: “there is increasing evidence that most of the patterns of behavior injurious to health tend to be set early in people’s lives...we need to provide...help when they are young, before their beliefs and habits are so ingrained and habitual that they are extremely difficult to change.” And then the call to arms for communication experts, as

Dr. Becker states, “communication scholars have key roles to play” in these battles. It is the assumption of Dr. Becker, and perhaps many in society, that “communication scholars” can play a vital role in the fight against alcohol abuse. This seems to indicate that the “help” that can be given will, of necessity, have to be “communicated” to someone. Whether that someone be an offender, or those who can help the offender.

This study will not be about “health communication”, but rather about the effectiveness of any communication with teens in regards to alcohol abuse. Simply put, how well do teens understand the indicators that portend alcohol abuse in their age group. Society is learning to recognize some of the “indicators” of teen alcohol abuse. Even as early as 1991, Zucker and Fitzgerald state that, “...early attributes of risk for later alcohol problems are starting to be identified and that for people with a heavy risk burden, the process of becoming alcoholic may be well underway by adolescence”. That we can identify the “indicators” is important, but then we need to be able to communicate effectively to those who have risk.

Ratzan, Stearns, Payne, Amato, Liebergott and Madoff (1994) state that, “health professionals know how to prevent and treat disease but are ineffective in communicating vital health information.” There is little reason to limit that pointed accusation just within the health professionals. Though no evidence is seen, it seems that educators, business managers, parents, and many others are just as lacking in their efforts to effectively communicate these indicators to the world’s young people.

This study will not be able to measure the knowledge of indicators that exist in those who ought to teach the teens. The study will be even more basic, and look at what

has been communicated to teens (in our sample) in regards to those chosen indicators.

There will be limitations with this study. It will be conducted in a large metropolitan school district, yet still it will be geographically limited. Alcohol abuse education among every school district is varied and thus the results of focus groups within a given school district will be different from what may come from another school district. But this is meant to be a beginning...a simple look at the battle of alcohol abuse among teens.

“There is little reason to expect developmentally beneficial results from frequent binge drinking. Not only does it increase the likelihood of engaging in other health-compromising or illegal behaviors, frequent binge drinking during late adolescence and young adulthood increases the likelihood of concurrent and long-term problems with alcohol” (Schulenberg, O’Malley, Bachman, Wadsworth, and Johnston, 1995). This is a strong statement, and yet we still see a tremendous number of our young people engaging in detrimental activity. Why? Are they being told about indicators of alcohol abuse? Do they understand what they are being told? Do they care about what they are being told?

These are questions we need to answer. If the problems associated with teen alcohol abuse are as staggering as they seem to be, it is time we join the “Becker Band Wagon”, and provide some “help while [our teens] are young”. This study will focus on the simplest of matters...what, how and how well are we communicating to the young people of the world the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol?

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The natural review would tend to focus on any data relating to how well teens understand the indicators of alcohol abuse. Currently, there have been no studies found which focus on that communication pattern. Because of the lack of data, this literature review will focus on research showing the leading indicators of teen alcohol abuse, so that the teens understanding of these indicators can be gauged.

For the purpose of this study, and the sake of organization, the review will be divided into three sections:

- A. Learned behaviors that are indicators of teen alcohol abuse
- B. Physiological or psychological indicators of teen alcohol abuse
- C. Genetic or biological indicators of teen alcohol abuse

As this study progressed, there were “new” indicators discovered. As those indicators were discovered, they were placed in one of the above categories.

#### **A. Learned Behavior Indicators**

There are many stimuli that can affect a teen coming from their immediate environment around them. There are also other things they are taught in that environment. These learned behaviors may come because of where they live, or who they associate with, or what they do with their lives each day. Quantifiable research was found

to indicate several areas of learned behavior which could have an impact on the tendency to abuse alcohol.

### **1. Parental or familial influencers**

Oostveen, Knibbe and DeVries were trying to find “what types of social influences were correlated with young people’s heavy drinking”. They found an extremely high correlation between “frequency of pressure on family” to drink (from parents to children), and alcohol abuse by teens living in the home. Though the study was completed in Holland, the questionnaire used, and the large sample size (1442) gave it some universal credibility.

Further research has been done by McGue, Sharma and Benson in 1996. This study was targeting question of “genetics” versus “shared environmental influences” as influencers of teen alcohol abuse. Their sample included 653 adoptive families where there is significant alcohol abuse among the adoptees. Each member of the family was provided with a self-report survey. This study shows a high correlation between fathers who abuse alcohol, are “authoritative” in the manner in which they function within the family, and have sons who are adolescent alcohol abusers. As it dealt with children who were adopted, there was no chance for a gene transfer to have taken place.

Both of the previous correlations were high. Koopmans and Boosman (1996) have experienced similar findings, yet place more of the blame on sibling influences. Koopmans and Boomsma state, “only 10% of this shared variance (variance of the results of testing 18+ year olds, with 15-18 year olds) might be influenced by parental alcohol use

due to cultural transmission. Stated simply, culture has some influence on teen alcohol abuse, but the bulk of the “pressure” comes from siblings. Again, this study was undertaken to try and differentiate between “cultural” and “environmental determinants”. This study focussed on 1396 families with twins. A questionnaire containing questions about alcohol and tobacco usage, coupled with sports activities, health and several other factors was used. Each parent, and both of the twins responded.

Each of the above mentioned studies dealt with specific “pressures” or “influences”, and effectively blocked any “genetic” indicators that may exist. In a longitudinal study done in New Zealand (Ferguson, Horwood, and Lyskey, 1995), 950 children were studied using both mothers and teachers reports. The reports were taken at age 8, and again at ages 15-16. Ferguson, et al., were able to trace personal characteristics and directly link those characteristics with a propensity to abuse alcohol, the study still seemed to fall back to “environment” as the greatest indicator of alcohol abuse among teens. The study states, “the risk of heavy drinking at age 14 was greatest among boys from disadvantaged homes who showed early onset conduct problems. Those findings suggest that the rapid progression from initial, experimental alcohol use to early alcoholism results from an unfolding interaction of individual dispositions with family and peer environments”.

“Sibling influence” is a term hard to define, but there seems to be little doubt that the actions and core values of each individual family will shape many of the actions of the teens within that family. They are what they are taught to be. O’Malley, Johnston, and Bachman, in a 1998 article drawing information from a Monitoring the Future survey, a

National Household survey, and a Youth Risk Behavior survey, affirm “that a close association exists between adolescents’ attitudes toward and beliefs about drinking and their alcohol-related behavior”. Those attitudes about drinking are spawned and nourished by parents, or parent-figures. Family and family values are one of the large indicators of teen alcohol abuse. Those who already have alcohol problems in the house, who have availability to alcohol and who have seen familial examples of alcohol abuse are “at-risk”.

This study has neither the time nor the inclination to do a thorough study of the root causes of some of the above mentioned findings. In a study by Barnes, Reifman, Farrell and Dintcheff (2000), they had hypothesized that “family factors, particularly parental support and monitoring” would play a significant role in the development of alcohol abuse among teens. Six waves of data were analyzed, based on “interviews with 506 adolescents. Though several cross-sectional studies had been done, this study was the first of a longitudinal nature. It was found that, “parenting practices predict adolescents’ initial drinking levels as well as their rates of increase in drinking behaviors”. Adolescents which had parents who exhibited both “parental support”, and “parental control” on a consistent basis were far less likely to abuse alcohol as teens, as those who were not products of such parenting practices.

In conjunction with the findings of Farrell and Dintcheff, a study by Naskashima and Wong (2000), found an unusually high correlation between the lack of alcohol abuse among teens, and situations where the parents “would strongly try to stop youth from getting drunk”. Of course the opposite held true also..a high correlation of alcohol abuse



among teens, in the situation where the parents allowed or even encouraged teen drinking. Nakashima and Wong used a standard survey with some small modifications, and found their sample of 3,697 adolescents from a general population of 13,374 students in the California school system. Though some of their findings were new towards Korean youth, they were developing previously espoused theories regarding parental support and alcohol abuse.

## **2. Socioeconomic status**

In a 1994 study, Persson, Hanson, and Rastam were investigating the association between “alcohol habits, the availability of alcohol and age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnic origin and family structure”. 689 students answered an anonymous questionnaire. Persson, et. al.; stated, “students living in apartments drink strong beer more regularly than students living in houses”. The figures almost double. There were some discrepancies, as the study generally assumes that those living in houses are in a different socioeconomic strata as those in apartments. In many suburban areas, that is true, but in many of the metropolitan areas of the United States, apartment living may appeal to the masses.

To put any credence on the above findings is to put one in direct opposition to the statement by O'Malley, Johnston, and Bachman in their 1998 review of the Monitoring the Future Study (done by the University of Michigan), which states that, “higher parental education (which serves as a proxy for higher socio-economic status) was associated with increased rates of alcohol use and being drunk”. Again, the discrepancy occurs when we

assume that those of “higher socio-economic status” would be living in houses as opposed to apartments.

Dusenbury, Epstein, Botvin and Diaz (1994) were looking for “demographic and social predictors of adolescent drinking. 3,129 respondents were given a self-reported, 143 item questionnaire. This study has found “substantial” evidence that Latino alcohol abuse among adolescents is “neighborhood centered”. In certain geographic areas of the survey population, the tendency for teens to abuse alcohol was much lower than in some other geographic areas. Again, there are some concerns as to “culture vs socio-economic status” in this case.

Research has found that some indicators of alcohol abuse among teens (specifically the familial influence) can be affected by locale (rural vs. urban areas). Rose, Viken, Kaprio, and Koskenvuo (1997b) “suggest that familial, shared environmental effects play a greater role in rural areas, where alcohol consumption is generally low, than in urban environments, where consumption among adolescents and their parents is higher”. This study used standard questionnaires, dealing with 776 sets of twins. The data was evaluated using correlation methods, as a follow-up to previous research, and under the hypothesis that there were differences in urban and rural tendencies to abuse alcohol as teens.

There seems to be conflicting data and theory as to “apartment” versus “house”, “urban” versus “rural, and “socio-economic status”. O’Malley, Johnston, and Bachman, in their 1998 review of several on-going studies, seem to have summarized well by saying, “taken together, the data indicate that adolescent alcohol use has permeated ALL socio-

demographic, subgroups of society to a similar extent: In general, only minor differences exist among socio-demographic subgroups defined by geographical region, population density, parental education, and family structure.”

Though there seems to be evidence that there is a small correlation between geographic region and teens abusing alcohol, it should be noted that Nakashima and Wong (2000), found that several things did not influence the correlation. They found that “variables...such as living in a safe neighborhood, and availability of diversion activities were not useful predictors of alcohol misuse”. Though the study was centered on Korean Americans, enough teens from other cultures were in the population to validate the findings for all (the total population of the study was 13, 374, with a sample size of 3,697 as noted before).

### **3. Peer Pressure**

“To be accepted by friends and do what they do”, has been found to be a leading cause of abuse of alcohol in 7 different studies (Augustn and Simons-Morton, 1996). Augustyn and Simons-Morton undertook a review of literature to help understand the “demographics and etiology of drinking and drinking/driving”. In every study, the correlations were high enough to be considered “extremely strong”.

Nakashima and Wong (2000) found the highest correlation in their study for predicting alcohol abuse among teens, came when “friends ask youth to get drunk a lot”. In this study, Korean youth who had friends who encourage them to get drunk, were found to have 17.94 times the likelihood of becoming a misuser of alcohol as those who were NOT influenced to drink by peers.. Caucasians in the same situation were found to

have 7.16 times the likelihood of becoming alcohol misusers as those who did not have those peer pressures (again, there was a large population and sample size given a modified America Drug Abuse and Alcohol Survey/ADAD).

#### **4. Binge Drinking during Transition**

During the course of the late teens (18-20), there was a correlation found between adolescents who participate in binge drinking (whatever the root cause), and those who become alcohol abusers (Schulenberg, O'Malley, Bachman, Wadsworth, and Johnston). Binge drinking was described as "having 5 or more drinks in a row, at least twice in the past two weeks".

#### **B. Physiological or Psychological Indicators**

It is extremely difficult to draw the line between physiological and psychological function of the human body. It is normally accepted that the physiological function can affect the psychological functions of the body (Hussong, Chassin, 1994). 426 adolescents self-reported the original data for Hussong and Chassin over the course of a 3 month time frame. The study states, "anger, anxiety and depression were found to differentially mediate the relation between stress and alcohol use". "Stress" being classified as physiological, was substantially higher when there was anger, anxiety or depression present. As stress is an indicator for alcohol abuse, logic dictates that the psychological can affect the physiological.

But the psychological has also been shown to affect the physiological functions of the body (Brown, Gleghorn, Schuckit, Myers, and Mott, 1996). Brown et al, were

examining “the extent to which conduct disorder type behavior predates substance use”. 166 adolescents who had previously experienced psychological (conduct) problems were part of the sample. Both the Customary Drinking and Drug Use Record (CDDR) and several clinical interviews were part of the procedure. This study found “that conduct disorder type behaviors are highly prevalent among adolescents entering treatment for alcohol and drug abuse...”.

### **1. Chemicals**

Evidence exists that changes in numerous chemicals within the body can increase the tendency for “voluntary alcohol consumption”. For example, estrogen levels in male and female mice were shown to significantly raise the tendency to abuse alcohol (Hilakivi-Clark, 1996). This was an observational study done over a 60 day time period. Though mice are not humans, there has been enough of a tie, over time, to consider the data generated.

In a 1999, Volpicelli, et. al, wrote of experiments they had done dealing with the chemical reactions in the body after a traumatic experience. It has been found that “endorphin activity increases in response to uncontrollable trauma”. As that trauma is replaced with normal biological functions, there seems to be a “resultant endorphin withdrawal”. Alcohol use can increase endorphin activity, and many people find that “drinking can compensate for the endorphin withdrawal that follows a traumatic experience”. Though just an ancillary finding, it was stated “that when people drink alcohol after traumatic events, the alcohol makes up for the lack of endorphin activity”.

Both of the studies were just “starting-point” studies, but both were fairly certain

that certain chemical imbalances can lead to a tendency to abuse alcohol. There is an obvious need for further study.

## **2. Mental Disorders (both normal and abnormal)**

Without trying to trace the root source of a change, several psychological measures can also affect the tendency to abuse alcohol. Hussong and Chassin found that anxiety, depression and stress have high correlations to the abuse of alcohol (see Section B).

Neff was trying to gain some understanding in regards to parental alcoholism and their children abusing alcohol. From that research, he found, “parental alcoholism appeared to have little impact” on the childrens alcohol habits. But the study led him to look at other factors that were broached in the initial study. Neff (1994) studies 1784 alcohol abusing adults and their children. Questionnaires were used, in conjunction with Rosenberg’s 10-item measure on self-esteem. This study classified “low self-esteem” as an influencer of teen alcohol abuse. Other studies also intimate and agree with this finding, but they use different terminology, ie; “fatalism”, “self-importance”, “determination”, etc;.

“Evidence suggest that some people may use (abuse) AOD’s (Alcohol Or Drugs) in part to self-medicate distressing mental states associated with underlying psychiatric conditions. Adolescents with AOD disorders exhibit a high prevalence of psychiatric disorders compared with the general population” (Solhkhah and Wilens, 1998). In addition to the above conditions, Solhkhah and Wilens include, “bi-polar disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and conduct disorders.” Solhkhah and

Wilens did a systematic search of 10 studies, 2 controlled, 4 open trials, and 4 were case reports. Though they felt that more controlled studies were needed, they felt confident in their conclusions.

In a 1998 review of present theories, Clark and Buckstein found several studies which state that “the presence of psychopathology increases the adolescents’ risk of developing an AUD (alcohol abuse or dependence) by either precipitating the onset of an AUD in vulnerable people or exacerbating mild alcohol problems”. The Clark/Buckstein study specifically mentions conduct disorders such as “1. aggression to people and animals, 2. destruction of property, 3. deceitfulness or theft, and 4. serious violations of rules”, as often being indicators of a tendency to abuse alcohol.

### **3. Traumas or Other Adverse Life Events**

For lack of a better category, this indicator of teen alcohol abuse will be cited in this general section...realizing that traumas are generally the cause of both psychological and physiological problems occurring later.

A study done by Clark, Lesnick, and Hegedus (1997) used data from many previous projects to categorize “trauma” as, “physical abuse, sexual abuse, violent victimization, witnessing violence, interpersonal violence, and other traumas” (divorce, close friend dies, non-acceptance by peers, etc;). Clark, et. al., used 132 adolescents with alcohol abuse. 73 of these were recruited from the community to form the control group. The objective of the study was to “determine the relationship among adolescent alcohol use disorders, and a broad range of traumas and adverse life events.”

According to this study, “an association between alcohol use disorders and

negative adverse events was seen for every...subscale". The most dramatic trauma's which had the highest correlation with adolescent alcohol abuse were arguments with parents, breaking up with boyfriend/girlfriend, and school suspension" (Clark, et.al., 1997).

Of course there is the caveat that "while these results demonstrate that a combination of childhood traumatic experiences and other adverse life events is typical in adolescents with alcohol abuse or dependence, these results do NOT permit causal inferences" (Clark et al., 1997). Other variables, such as parental substance abuse may have influenced both "the occurrence of traumatic events and the development of alcohol use disorders" (Clark et al., 1997). Indeed, it seems that the 1999 Study by Volpicelli, et. al, lead us to the conclusion that it isn't the trauma that causes the tendency to abuse alcohol, but the resultant release of endorphins, and then the endorphin withdrawal that results (see B1, discussion on "Chemicals").

Whether chemical or mental, and regardless of the root causes, there is a marked tendency towards adolescent alcohol abuse when some physiological and psychological conditions are present. These have been found to be valuable indicators.

### **C. Biological or Genetic Indicators**

Because there are so many factors that can influence alcohol abuse, it is difficult to ascertain whether the factors contribute to the abuse, or the factors manifest themselves as a result of the abuse. Almost every alcohol abuse study links the alcohol abusing parent with a highly probable chance of finding an alcohol abusing child (Windle, Windle, Scheidt



and Miller, 1995; and Schulenberg, O'Malley, Bachman, Wadsworth and Johnston, 1996).

Genetics as a factor of alcohol abuse in teens is difficult to quantify. When broken down, a specific inherited gene, chromosome or change in genetic or chromosomal patterns have not been found. Neff found a direct link between inherited “mental illness and alcohol abuse”, however there is no mention of any genetic factor that causes that link. Even Neff’s own finding states, “our data provide little or no support of the assertion that parental alcoholism may differentially impact...[child] alcohol abuse”.

One study was bold enough to state, “the results are consistent with the inference that genetic differences as well as familial-environmental influences significantly contribute to the childhood behaviors which play a central role in the development of alcoholism risk. Preliminary studies have implicated some genes in significantly contributing to individual differences in behavioral traits, such as novelty seeking. To date, however, those associations remain controversial.” (Rose, Kaprio, Pulkkinen, Koskenvuo, Viken and Bates, 1997a). This study is an ongoing longitudinal study, undertaken to observe 2800 sets of twins and their parents. There are assessments given by both classmates and teachers dealing with the actions of the twins, and the actions of the control group of other students. These assessments are given over the course of several years. There are no biological tests given, but strictly observation.

### **1. Gender**

In a limited study dealing with a small Puerto Rican population, Dusenbury, Epstein, Borvin and Diaz (see “socioeconomic status” section) , found that “the odds of being a current drinker were 3.22 times as great for boys than girls”. McGue, Sharma and

Benson also found that males tend to abuse alcohol more frequently than females, although the ratio was not as pronounced.

In 1992, Huselid and Cooper were researching “gender roles”, and the theory that how one “viewed themselves” in relation to gender would be an indicator of alcohol abuse. Professionally trained interviewers conducted personal interviews with 1,077 adolescents (ages 13-19). The researchers found that the “data indicates that gender-role attitudes are reliable predictors of drinking, particularly among adolescent males”. It seems that males have a greater tendency to abuse alcohol as teens.

As a sidebar to a study done by Clark and others in 1997, it was found that females who had been abused (physically or sexually) had a higher likelihood of abusing alcohol as an adolescent. But, again, this needs to be studied further to see root causes etc;.

Nakashima and Wong, in their survey from 2000, have stated that “gender is not a significant correlate of alcohol use or misuse”.

## **Summary**

### **Listing of indicators of Alcohol Abuse among teens**

The most mentioned among “indicators” of alcohol abuse seems to be parental related influencers. Is one or more of the parents an alcohol abuser? Is alcohol available in the home? Do the teens hear and understand “alcohol related” conversation? Is alcohol consumption accepted in the home? Are parents involved in the childrens lives? Are there both parental support and parental controls in place? Far and away, the most quantified

indicator of alcohol abuse among teens, was the parents using and having available alcohol in the home.

A close second was the sibling or familial influence. Several studies were very pointed in their findings that “sibling influence” was a strong indicator of the possibility of alcohol abuse. Siblings who already abuse alcohol are very likely to invite their younger brothers and sister (cousins, uncles, etc;) to participate in alcohol consumption...and to abuse the consumption of alcohol. Though this section seems similar to the parental influencer, it has been broken out to give further detail.

Traumatic and adverse experiences early in life tend to be a good indicator of alcohol abuse in the adolescent years. Among the best predictors of alcohol abuse was “chronic” arguments with parents. This study is not able to trace root cause on the traumatic or adverse experiences.

Conduct problems in early life seem to be a good indicator of alcohol abuse problems in later life. The root cause of these problems is not being studied at this point, but rather these problems as indicators. Many of the problems are traced to be physiologically motivated, while others tend to be psychologically motivated, yet either source can create depression, self-esteem problems, bi-polar disorders, and other conduct disorders which lead to the tendency to abuse alcohol. It is obvious that many of the conduct problems could be a result of familial struggles, and/or example.

Several studies found that males exhibit between 2 and 4 times the tendency to abuse alcohol. Thus, genetics have been proven to play a part in the tendency to abuse alcohol. Being born a male is an indicator of alcohol abuse.

Peer pressure plays a large part in an adolescent's desire to abuse alcohol, yet it was not found nearly as often as some of the previous mentioned indicators. Peers who encourage and perhaps supply alcohol seem to have an impact on desire to abuse alcohol, but many studies seemed to show that with a good "familial situation", peer pressure was something that could be overcome.

This study has found that quantifiable indicators of teen alcohol abuse are as follows (in order from strongest to weakest):

1. Parental pressures (1 or more parents abuse alcohol)
2. Sibling Influence (with siblings being "close relatives")
3. Traumas (regardless of root cause)
4. Conduct problems (regardless of root cause)
5. Males
6. Peer pressure

There has been no effort to try and decide whether the "trauma" or the "conduct problems" were the root cause of the tendency to abuse alcohol. Perhaps the conduct problems could have resulted from the alcohol abuse. Perhaps there were other root causes to the traumas. Regardless, they are both quantifiable indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol.

With 6 quantified indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol among teens, now questions can be formulated to use in a focus group setting. The focus was to question the teens in such a way as to discern whether the communication specialists in teens lives are doing an adequate job. Have teens been effectively taught what the indicators of the

tendency to abuse alcohol are?

There are extreme limits within the scope of this research, yet, there are some findings that will be beneficial to the communication group as a whole. This study defines “communication group” as anyone in a position to communicate valid warnings and knowledge to teens. It was expected that teens would know little about the indicators of alcohol abuse among their age group. It was assumed that some school programs and perhaps occasional counsel from parents or other adults would be remembered by teens.

With that said, perhaps the most valuable information will come as we ascertain how much of the information teens have dealing with alcohol abuse has come through concerted educational efforts. This study seeks to find how much the teens have been taught about the indicators of alcohol abuse, and where that education has come from. Again, this study tries to understand what, how and how well we are communicating the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol to our teens.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Focus Groups**

Owing to the complexity of the subject matter, the population of the study (teens), and the background of the researcher, focus groups was the vehicle used to generate the necessary data. Generally focus groups are meant to be “exploratory modes of research” (Ferre, 1993)

Focus groups have been found to be an effective way to “encourage discussion” of and “reactions towards” a set issue (Zikmund, 1991). Generally focus groups are composed of small groups of individuals (generally 10 or less) of a homogenous nature, in this case teens. For this study, three focus groups were held to get a thorough cross-section of the local high school population (see Sampling History)

“As a research tool, focus groups are designed as informal discussion sessions which allow a target population to respond to questions within a social context” (Singleton, et al., 1993). “Focus groups allow researchers to uncover important themes and salient issues of people through their comments and interactions as participants in small group discussions” (Ferre, 1993). This study is a beginning study with the purpose of uncovering valuable information which can be used in future studies. The use of focus groups allow an experienced communicator to involve a diverse number of people in a

single setting to explore their feelings, emotions and knowledge. Their advantages “being inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding and cumulative and elaborative” (Fortana and Frey, 1993).

As the respondents interact, the moderator was able to lead the discussion in a direction to find useful data for study. There was a hope that the respondents would feel at ease and information would flow freely. Basch (1993) stated, “participants may feel more relaxed and less pressured to answer every question because others are also responding”. In addition, “participants are able to express their experiences, feelings and opinion, and to respond to the views of others in the group” (Patton, 1987). It seems that a symbiotic experience occurs, and “experiences, feelings and opinions” are able to flow more freely.

Generally, focus groups are very flexible, with a moderator choosing from a list of various questions to discuss, as the moderator feels appropriate. The moderator (interviewer) for this study had a set list of questions to draw from. There were limits placed as to “invention” of new questions during the course of the study. This was to maintain consistency during the course of the groups. One study noted, “this article recommends to researchers...the selective use of devils advocate to reflect different perspectives to groups, to ask questions in a different way, to introduce new questions, and to avoid groups arriving at premature solutions” (Mcdougal and Baum, 1997). As teens are highly impressionable, only the asking of “questions in a different way” will be used in this research. From time to time the questions were rephrased for clarification and drawing out answers.

**“Focus groups are now being used as data collection tools...particularly for generating hypothesis, developing survey questions and interpreting quantitative data” (Hoppe and Wells, 1995). This study used the previous data generated from the Literature Review to formulate the questions, as this research tries to interpret that previous data.**

**The researcher then analyzed the new data and response generated by the focus groups. Sim (1998) states, “the examination of focus group data entails the use of analytical approaches similar to those applied to other qualitative research methods which are based on content analysis”. The researcher looked for themes, common answers and other similarities in the data from the respondents.**

**The researcher has had over 20 years of teaching High School and College aged students in a private religious setting. Many of the best teaching moments were nothing more than glorified focus groups. A successful class would be considered one where the students were “ready” to learn the information. The class would then be actively “participating” in the subject matter...sharing back and forth in an appropriate manner.**

**Within the focus group the researcher tried to help the students so they are “ready” to participate in the questions. The researcher actively allowed the students to “participate” in the questions, by asking directed questions, re-phrasing questions where necessary, and re-enforcing feedback from the students. As mentioned previously, a rigid outline of questions was used, with no leeway for new questions (direction) or the use of devils advocate techniques.**

**The researcher enlisted the aid of another highly skilled teacher (his wife) in**



assisting with some of the details, ie; making a recording of the session, getting names and name tags on the subjects, prompting the researcher from time to time as was necessary, and generally making the subjects feel comfortable.

### **Sampling**

The sample came from 3 different school districts in the Dallas/Arlington/Ft. Worth, Texas metroplex area. One sample came from the an area that is pre-dominantly referred to by the locals as “upper-class”. Another sample came from a school district which typically is seen (again, by the locals) as “middle-class”. The last sample came from a school district which is pre-dominantly “lower-class”. No specific income research was found, or median cost of homes, but rather the researchers knowlege of people and areas. Because this is a “random sampling”, there is the assumption that the sample in each area will be representative.

The moderator came early enough to identify the young people involved in the focus group, and make sure to match up parental permission slips with each subject. The moderator had them fill out name tags and wear them (to help in process of asking directed questions within the focus group). The moderator started to build enough of a “relationship of trust” with these groups, that some of the fear and tension was alleviated. The proceedings were recorded for help in transcribing the results of the focus group, and in maintaining accuracy.

### **Sampling History**

Within the State of Texas (where this study was done), there are many large and small school districts. The researcher resides in a large school district area in Arlington. Upon arriving in Arlington, a meeting was set up with a representative of the Arlington School District, in hopes of securing the opportunity to hold the focus groups at several of the schools in Arlington (a very diverse city). This was a request that was new to the administrators. They had handled many surveys being issued among the local students, but had not been party to focus groups being held in high school settings. Eventually an Associate Dean of the school district made the decision that the school district could not be involved. He did give the counsel that each principal had a tremendous amount of autonomy. There was no direct statement of authorization to contact the principals, but it seemed implied to the researcher.

For several months, the researcher approached different school districts in the Ft. Worth/Arlington area. Each time, many phone calls and visits were made, with the same results. The school districts just didn't feel they wanted to be involved in focus group work.

While struggling with trying to find the proper avenue to hold the focus groups, the researcher was involved in an outside situation which involved direct contact with a local high school. While making this contact, the issue of focus groups was brought up with the school representative (both a principal and an associate principal). Though they had never seen focus groups done in a high school setting, they were willing to listen. With that in mind, the direction of the work changed to individual high schools.

The principal of the local high school was contacted with the request, and the request forwarded to one of the associate principals. Several meetings followed as the associate principal became familiar with focus groups, their desired outcomes, the specifics of this study, and the background of the researcher. Over the course of time, a plan of actions was formulated as to how to get the necessary parental approval, a representative sampling, and fit within the time constraints of the researcher, the school, and the teachers.

After the initial school was contacted, it became a much simpler process (because of experience and precedent) to contact other schools. By this point in time, the method of contacting the principal, getting his verbal approval and a referral to an associate principal was found to be a very effective method of arranging the opportunity to hold the focus groups. As a result of the many school districts in the metroplex area (Dallas/Arlington/Ft. Worth), it was decided to go outside the Arlington School District to give a broader base to the sample. Several schools within other school districts were contacted, including schools in the Everman, Hurst/Euless/Bedford (HEB), Carroll, Mansfield and Ft. Worth school districts. Eventually relationships were set with Arlington, Hurst/Euless/Bedford, and the Carroll school districts. These were chosen because of the diversity of the students within each school district. Each school district encompasses a unique set of students, and the combination would give a tremendously wide sampling.

A definitive date was set with each administrator, in conjunction with their school activities and the researchers schedule. It was determined that it would be best to do the

focus groups on dates as close together as possible, so that the researcher could experience the continuity of the focus group questions, and have a more recent memory of trends that might have needed to be followed up on.

Generally 3 or 4 classes from each school were targeted. The researcher and administrators realized early on, that samplings from gym classes, or home economics classes would be highly limited in gender. It was also realized that both the more advanced classes (physics, chemistry, etc;), and the more remedial classes (beginning math, ESL classes, etc;), would also bring a skewing to the sampling. It was decided to approach classes which held the possibility of having 2 different grades in them, and classes which were more mainstream (English, Algebra, etc). Several teachers were approached by the administration to see if they would be willing to allow their students to be participants, and if it would be possible with the course load.

The researcher then visited the class, gave a brief description of when the focus groups were going to occur and what would occur during the focus groups. The researcher would then leave, and the teacher would ask for volunteers. Both the researcher and the teacher only told the students that the focus groups would be about “alcohol abuse”, and no more specifics than that. Those who volunteered were given parental permission slips (See Appendix I, II, III) to take home, and return by the following week.

Those who volunteered, and brought back the parental permission slips were then put in a pool (their names were given to the researcher, and were put in a pool, the teacher kept the permission slips till the day of the focus groups). Randomly the researcher drew

out 10 names, and contacted the teachers to have the students notified that they would be in the focus groups.

The focus groups were held during early classes of the day at each of the locations. This was done because of the researchers schedule. One class period was designated for each group. As the schools were all on the block schedule (8 classes, with each class held every other day), this allowed for almost a full 90 minutes for each group.

The researcher and his assistant got to the room about 15 minutes before the students arrived, and they were able to set up the room in a manner which would allow the researcher/moderator to face all the students, and be able to have the students see each other. In addition, there was a concern about recording the proceedings, as a single recording device was going to be used. The seating needed to be such that a single device could pick up the voices of all the participants. By setting the desks (or tables) in an arc or semi-circle, each voice was projected towards the microphone.

The students were brought into a classroom (or other agreed upon location), and the researcher had light morning refreshments for them (various juices and pre-packaged breakfast rolls). During this time, the researcher/moderator would just spend a few moments getting to know the students who had come in. Some background information was gathered. The assistant researcher made sure that each student had snacks if they wanted them, and had filled out and was wearing a name tag. At the same time, the assistant made sure that the students had filled out the student consent form (See Appendix I, II, III). Generally the get-to-know-you time was limited to 5 or 6 minutes. This was enough to put the students at ease, and prepare them for the time to come.

As the students were seated, the researcher/moderator would begin the questions as quickly as possible, so that the students knew that it was now time for the groups to begin. The assistant would make sure the recorder was working properly, and the researcher/moderator would proceed with the questions. There were times that brief forays into a newly discovered thought would occur, but generally the students were asked the questions as they appear in Appendix VII.

At the end of the session, the students were again offered snacks as they left. There were some small conversations among the participants, but generally there were time constraints which forced the students to leave immediately. The classroom was returned to its original form, the room was cleaned, and the researcher and assistant went over the consent forms and left.

### **Sampling Limitations**

Though the study was done as professionally as possible, there were still some items which ought to be taken into account. Perhaps in future studies these small items might be alleviated or avoided in some manner.

Having the researcher/moderator go into the classroom and explain the focus group did cause some skewing. Because the researcher/moderator was familiar to a large part of the sample (because of his full-time employment), there seemed to be an inordinate number of acquaintances in the focus groups. Many of those were not known to the researcher/moderator before the focus group time, but were familiar with him because of speaking assignments. As most of these were not known to the moderator, there was no chance when drawing the sample to make adjustments. It was evident that one

subclassification of the sample was over-represented. This sub-group came from a religious background which stresses abstinence from alcohol, and thus an unrepresentative number of these teens could skew the research.

After the initial presentation in the school classes, there seemed to be a bit of recruiting taking place. As this seemed to be a true representation of the population (other than the above aberration), it seemed strange that there would be a set of siblings in 2 of the 3 focus groups. This was seen by the researcher/moderator, but with no indication of the possibility for adaption till the focus groups were already meeting. As siblings came from the same home, that would skew the research also. After the first focus group, the sampling of the second group was checked. There were no evident siblings in this group, so no adaption was needed. The third group did have siblings, but because of the number in the sample, it was decided to leave them both in. With siblings, could come the tendency to have similar beliefs, training, etc;. Perhaps this over-representation could skew the results also.

A problem occurred in allowing the teachers to gather and hold the parental consent forms. When the researcher/moderator went to the first focus group, the teacher had misplaced the parental consent forms. Eventually these had to be found or replaced. In conjunction with this small inconvenience, there is also the concern that there is no way to know which parental consent form goes with which student consent form, unless the last name is the same. That was not noticed until the possibility of checking those correlations with the students was past. After the first focus group (where this was an issue), each co-operating teacher was called to make sure they had permission slips. Kids

with no permission slips were not allowed to participate.

After the first day, it was realized that inviting 10 students to the focus group might cause a problem. The first focus group only contained 5 students. Though that was enough for the task, it was decided to draw out 3 more names for the next 2 focus groups. This worked better, as the second day there were 9 at the focus group, and the third day there were 7.

One last problem with the sample came in the time constraints. Generally 90 minutes would be more than ample time for a focus group. In the school setting, the participants had to go to their class first, get the assignment, excuse themselves and come to the new classroom. Though this was not time consuming, it did take valuable time. Coupled with the necessity to develop a relationship with the participants, and the time involved there, it made for a bit of rush in one of the focus groups. After the first focus group, the classroom was procured in advance, and the co-operating teachers were given that information to announce to the class. The second group was a bit better, but the third group was fine. The moderator also streamlined the relationship building time.

These were valid concerns with the method and sampling. There were a couple of the concerns (unusual size of sub-group, and family members) which may well have affected the data. At very least, it affected the diversity of the sample.

### **Moderators Guide**

The focus group questions were developed over the course of classroom instruction, and the workings of the actual research itself. They have gone through several



modifications and adaptations. At the time of the focus groups, the questions were in a comfortable format for the researcher/moderator (See Appendix VII).

After the initial period of snacks and a few moments to try and build relationships of trust, the questions were set to try and start the focus groups with a “hot topic. That topic was the legality of teens having the right to drink alcohol. We had seen many teens in the news, having to face that issue in the press (see chapter 1, opening statements). It was hoped that this issue would spur and open feeling in the group. With that beginning, definitions could be explored (See Appendix VII, question 3), and the research could be brought to the school setting.

Question 4 began the process of trying to find how much the students knew about the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol, as the focus was taken from general beliefs and brought to their school, and social groupings in the academic setting. Questions 5 and 6 were used to reinforce and dig a little deeper into the peer and group pressures, and were also used to lead us to the direct questioning about indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol, in questions 7-9. With definitions set, and an open discussion, it was hoped that by simply asking if they understood what indicators might show the tendency to abuse alcohol, they would answer openly and honestly. Where the participants learned about those indicators was then explored.

Another “hot topic” would be introduced to try and generate a new enthusiasm for the subject. Because of experience with teens, the researcher felt that every 15-20 minutes the students would need to change focus, and take a new approach. Advertising and its possible effect on the tendency to abuse alcohol were then explored in questions 12-13, as

a means to (possibly) re-energize the focus group.

With that added energy, it was felt that blunt questioning about programs (question 14), moral issues (question 15), dangers (question 16), and specific influencers (questions 17-19) would be productive. This was also an opportunity to add information to the same questions which had been asked previously in a different format. It seemed to be very effective.

Questions 20 and 21 were there as a transition to end the focus group. The researcher wanted to leave the students with something which would cause them to think about their own moral responsibility, especially in relation to where they were individually and as a group.

One of the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol was not directly discussed in the questioning. That was the indicator of “traumas”. As the researched/moderator tried to include questions that might lead to a discussion of traumas, each question seemed to have had the tendency to lead participant to a conclusion. It was finally decided that the general questions about the tendencies they had been taught would be sufficient. In addition, there was not a direct question dealing with gender, but the “grouping questions” were felt to be appropriate to handle gender.

The number of questions seemed appropriate for the time constraints of the researcher/moderator, and the group. The order and focus seemed fairly good also. Perhaps just an additional well-placed question about familial influencers might have been useful, but the focus groups seemed to flow well. There were seldom pauses in the conversation, and the students seemed open in their responses. A bit more time to explore

the “why” answers would have been helpful, but at the same time, the students needed a break when the focus group was over.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

**Do our teens understand what the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol are? Are they being taught what those indicators are? Where is that knowledge coming from? In order to see how the results of the focus groups were able to answer those questions, this study will divide this chapter into two sections, “specific knowledge of the indicators of alcohol abuse”, and “where and how much have the students been taught about the indicators of alcohol abuse”. The same ranking of the indicators as found at the end of chapter 2 will be used.**

#### **A. Teens Specific Knowledge of Indicators**

**1. Parental Pressure (where one or more of the parents has a drinking problem, or furnishes alcohol)**

**There seems to be little doubt that the focus groups had been exposed to this indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. Several in each group expressed a knowledge of parents who abuse or furnish alcohol as being an indicator. A senior from Trinity High School said, “if it’s in your family...if your parents or grandparents are alcoholics, then in your genetic make-up, then it’s easier for you...to get the disease of alcoholism” (Appendix VI, p. 138, Justin). Morgan, a senior from Arlington High School mentioned that, “it’s in the family. Like my mom always told me, it’s almost like it runs in a family”**

(Appendix IV, p. 117). At Carroll High School, it was Michelle B., a senior who responded, "I've heard that if your mom...was an alcoholic then that possibly could have been carried down to you. You might have that tendency that if you do start drinking you could become and alcoholic" ( Appendix V, p. 127).

Justin used the term "genetic" in his response, and Michelle B. used the term, "carried down". Both of those intimate a belief that the tendency to abuse alcohol come by genetic inheritance. Perhaps Morgan had the best grasp, as he used the words, "it's almost like it runs in the family". Though Morgan may have had a grasp on the true indicator, it is apparent that the bulk of the students were of the belief that genetics were responsible for the tendency to abuse alcohol.

Yet, genetics alone were not seen by the students as totally responsible for thae tendency to abuse alcohol. Several other interesting comments were made regarding the influence parents can have on the drinking habits of our teens. Morgan in Arlington said, "if parents accept drinking and drink themselves then the kids will, even if their parents tell them not to" (Appendix IV, p. 116). This is also seen in a comment by Michelle G. in Carrol who states, "sometimes their parents will...help them. ...You hear all the times about the parents [who] will organize it saying, 'we'd rather you be drunk at our house, so we'll organize the party' .... They'll get it out, and then they're drinking with the kids, and they're just as guilty as the kids are" (Appendix V, p. 127).

Making alcohol available to the young people (by parents) was mentioned several times as leading to the tendency to abuse alcohol. When asked about the families influence of a teens desire to drink alcohol, Hollie said, "I think they do when they keep

alcohol around the house....it's just more natural for them. The parents usually allow their children to drink" (Appendix V, p. 131). That was followed by Meggie, "it makes them more curious and want to do it more" (Appendix V, p. 132). Adam at Trinity seemed to sum up the feelings of the groups when he said, "it goes back to the parents drinking. Because if the parents drink, it give the kids a sense of 'oh, it's ok because my parents do it" (Appendix VI, p. 142).

The focus groups this study dealt with had a fairly good understanding of the influence a parent could have in the tendency for a teen to abuse alcohol. We can see by some of the comments from above, that many of the group felt that this tendency was genetic. Yet, Brandon in Arlington was quick to input, when speaking of his alcoholic grandfather and grandmother, "does that mean that I am going to be an alcoholic? I don't think so" (Appendix IV, p. 118). It seems the bulk of the students felt that genetics were a major indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. The students of these focus groups also were aware that parents who abuse or furnish alcohol, are a leading indicator of the tendency for a teen to abuse alcohol.

## **2. Sibling Influence (close relatives)**

References were obscure at best. One reference was made to "the people you live with" when Morgan (Appendix IV, pg. 121) said, "if the people you live with drink and you're always around it, you feel it's just accepted". But that seemed to be qualified in the next sentence, as Morgan made allusions to "parents".

Another reference soon followed, as Margie (Appendix IV, pg. 121) mentioned that, "...families have an influence...". But she also immediately used the word "parents",

twice in the next two sentences.

There were few references to “sibling influencers”. Perhaps this is because the focus groups included siblings with their parental response. Perhaps it is because they don’t recognize siblings as an influencer. The parents in the house would be the natural providers of alcohol to the teens, so there may not have been a tie with siblings and providing alcohol.

Though the Literature Review found a strong tie between sibling pressure and the tendency to abuse alcohol in teens, no supporting statements of sibling pressure being an indicator were found.

### **3. Traumas**

There were no references to traumas as being indicators of alcohol abuse. Not even a veiled allusion could be found.

### **4. Conduct problems**

Justin (Appendix VI, p. 136) immediately began the group with a comment about “self-control”. He stated that many people who are not involved in sports drink because “they don’t have enough self-control”. Was he referring to not having enough self-control to play sports? Or, was he referring to not having enough self-control to abstain from alcohol? Though we can’t truly discern what was meant, later in the same focus group, Justin (pg. 140) talks again about “control”, as he says, “alcohol makes you lose control...and if you don’t have control over you, then you don’t have control over where your future’s going and where you are going to end up”. Though losing “self-control” can’t be directly attributed to conduct problems, it is probably at the very center of causes

of those who do have conduct problems.

Lindsay (Appendix V, pg. 130) states, "...if you drink at all you could be putting your life in danger". Though "putting your life in danger" is not a specific conduct problem, as society has not accepted suicide as proper behavior, then by association, by "putting your life in danger", you have a conduct problem. Morgan (Appendix IV, p.114) talking of those peers who seem to have a drinking problem said, "they're definitely not responsible enough". Though using semantics, there is still a strong indication that teens look at other teens who drink as having "conduct problems" of a sort.

Several references were made to the problem of driving drunk and the associated consequences of some of those actions. Michelle B. at Carrol High (Appendix V, p. 127) shares her opinion that one of those consequences of this conduct problem could be "killing everyone". That of course is not an acceptable behavior, and would therefore be considered a "conduct problem". Both Daniel and Jason shared their feelings in regard to car accidents caused by drunk drivers (Appendix VI, pg. 141).

There were no direct references to conduct problems being an indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. But there were several references to people with conduct problems being some of those who abuse alcohol. There was no evidence that any in the focus groups had direct knowledge that conduct problems were an indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol.

## **5. Males**

There did not seem to be any indication that the focus groups found any connection between being male, and having the tendency to abuse alcohol. Though there



were some veiled allusions to “football teams”, those were far from being considered as substantial.

## **6. Peer Pressure**

The lowest rated indicator as found by the Literature Review, was frequently indicated by those in the focus groups, as a major factor. As the responses have been read and re-read, it seems that the members of the focus groups found peer pressure to be the biggest indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. Interestingly enough, it was mentioned several times as both a negative and positive influencer.

John in the Carrol group says, “You could influence someone who is younger. You know, you could get them started in drinking and it could just ruin their life” (Appendix V, p. 130). John is very firm in the notion that teens can have a very specific and personal affect on other teens. This is confirmed by Daniel who said, “other people’ll just do anything their friends say”, referring to being influenced to drink (Appendix VI, p. 141). These seem to be very pointed references to direct conversation or action that could influence a peer to drink alcohol. But there seemed to be other influences mentioned.

In the Carrol focus group, Brandon stated, “I think peers are the whole reason people start, and the whole reason they continue” (Appendix V, pg. 130). Brandon in Arlington adds, “they think it’s cool to drink. Half the people I know think it’s the only thing they can do to have fun on the weekends is to go out and drink” (Appendix IV, pg. 119). Wes from Arlington was even more blunt about peers being an influence, when he was asked about parents influencing teens to drink. His response, “not as much as their friends” (Appendix IV, pg. 120). Morgan adds “friends would be more of a pressure than

the advertising (Appendix IV, pg. 120). These responses don't specifically say that one teen influenced another. Rather, they seemed to intimate that it was a feeling. They seemed to say that it was done "to be cool" (popular), or some other non-direct method of influence.

Peer pressure might be a bit of a misnomer. Brandon from Carrol has already input his feelings about "peers [being] the whole reason people start..." to drink (Appendix V, p.131). Yet, he immediately says "they do it for attention, and they do it for the positions they can have...I guess popularity". Lindsay mentions the reactions of other people when learning about someone abusing alcohol when she said, "people actually think, 'wow, you did that!' I think the whole response of everybody [is an factor]" (Appendix V, p. 132) It seems that though we term it peer pressure, it may well have to do with each individuals feelings about others reactions. Social acceptance was seen as a real factor in causing alcohol abuse. In addition, there was the general feeling that abusing alcohol is what is done to "have fun". Though not direct peer to peer pressure, these sorts of things are still very powerful influencers.

Near the end of the last two sessions, the group was asked which influencer they felt was the biggest factor indicating a tendency to abuse alcohol. Each group was unanimous in their opinion that peers played the biggest factor, with "parental just kind of aid[ing] in that" (Appendix V, pg. 132; Appendix IV, pg. 122).

Several students were very blunt about others pressure being a negative pressure (meaning it caused them to push alcohol further away). Justin from Trinity states, "I don't hang out with most of them [those who abuse alcohol], because it's bad" (Appendix VI,

pg. 143). For Justin, peer pressure to drink is a negative pressure. Daniel added, “All you have to do is say ‘no’, and then everybody else will help” (Appendix VI, pg. 143). Ryan in Arlington continues, “One of my friends said that he had access to beer and stuff. And I said, ‘naw, I don’t want any of that’, he never said anything after that” (Appendix IV, pg. 120). As these people are approached, they feel it is wrong, and so the peer pressure just seems to add to their determination to stay away. In two of the situations, peer pressure actually caused a group effort to rebut the pressure.

Daniel from Trinity continues, “all my friends, they know what I do and don’t do; so if somebody tries to get me to do one of those things, they’ll like stick up for me”. This is a very mild statement. Yet some of the other respondents had much firmer feelings about the effect peers had on their decision to not drink. Brandon from Arlington, in speaking of those who abuse alcohol, said, “[they are] the stupidest people I have ever seen. Makes them act so retarded. They don’t know what they are doing or what’s going on” (Appendix IV, p. 119). He has obviously had experience with peers and alcohol abuse, and that experience has negatively influenced him in a tremendous way.

Peer pressure was the most commonly mentioned indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. Peer pressure being both direct and indirect (social acceptance etc;.).

## **B. Where and How Much Have Teens Been Taught About the Influencers**

This became an extremely difficult question to help the students verbalize. That there had been some training was very evident. But it was equally evident that the training is not consistent, and has been done quite some time ago, and in very sporadic manner.

The researcher/moderator did not want to color the groups responses by delving too deeply into these matters, so it became trying to get true feelings.

Almost all of the students mentioned having been part of the D.A.R.E. program. Daniel at Trinity tells us, “you got the D.A.R.E program, but I guess that’s mostly drugs” (Appendix VI, pg. 140). This was echoed by Megan at Carrol (Appendix V, pg. 129). But upon further questioning, Megan mentioned that they did not have it any more, and John added that he had been a part of D.A.R.E in “5th grade in New York”. The group at Carrol (Appendix V, pg. 129) stated that they were in the program “early in school, in elementary school..6th grade”.

The curriculum outline concerning the D.A.R.E. program for the elementary students is delivered in the “fifth and sixth grades, and includes one lessons per week for 17 consecutive weeks”, though there are visits to the younger kids by a D.A.R.E. officer (Appendix VIII, p. 148). The curriculum is administered by the local police department, with a certified teacher in attendance. The D.A.R.E program is mandatory in most school districts for elementary students, but is by invitation in junior high and high school (Kantz, 2001). From the curriculum outline, it is evident that the D.A.R.E programs main emphasis is in regard to drug abuse, but alcohol and tobacco abuse are also included. That emphasis might be a partial reason for the lack of information regarding indicators of alcohol abuse.

By the time the students are in Junior High School, the main focus of D.A.R.E is to re-enforce the things taught in elementary school, and introduce the law and other behavior codes better understood by an early teen. There is also a strong emphasis on

choosing good friends, and avoiding places and people who may provide substances which could prove harmful.

The High School emphasis is focused on the consequences of substance abuse. In High School, the students are given information to help them make proper choices, and help them discern what is in their best interest. They are taught about “high-risk, low-gain” choices” (Appendix VIII., p. 151). Methods of dealing with feelings of anger and violence prevention strategies are discussed.

As part of the D.A.R.E. curriculum outline, one of the purposes was, “to make students aware of the various pressures that influence or persuade young people to use drugs” (Appendix VIII, p. 149). The only indicator the D.A.R.E. program tries to educate about is “peer pressure” (Kantzoz, 2001).

It is obvious that the all or almost all of the group had been introduced to alcohol and drug abuse information at an early age. At the same time, it seems that the organized information has been sporadic at best since elementary school. Morgan from Arlington says, “I want to say more in Junior High than in High School” when asked where he was made familiar with the D.A.R.E. program (Appendix IV, p. 119)

There are efforts by the individual school to inform the students of alcohol (and drug) abuse. These seem to come in the form of individual assemblies for the entire student body. Daniel stated, “at the beginning of the year, this guy came and talked about his girls that got hit by a drunk driver” (Appendix VI, pg. 140). The group from Carroll said, “every once in a while they have an assembly” (Appendix V, pg. 129). Apparently these are on-going efforts, as Michelle B. mentions, “they have someone come talk to us”

(Appendix V, pg. 129).

There does seem to be one other effort being made. Wes at Arlington stated that he had been taught about alcohol abuse in “health class” (Appendix IV, pg. 118). This was echoed by Justin at Trinity who tells he had received alcohol abuse insights “in health class” (Appendix VI, pg. 140). Yet these programs are apparently in conjunction with the current text being used, and neither traceable nor consistent.

In the Hurst/Euless/Bedford School District, they have a program entitled, “Every Fifteen Minutes”, stressing the fact that every fifteen minutes someone dies from a drunk driver. Both Jason and Jesse at Trinity stress that “it’s a program” (Appendix VI, pg. 6).

“Every Fifteen Minutes” is an ongoing program dedicated to helping teens understand the outcomes of drunken driving. Like D.A.R.E , “Every Fifteen Minutes” is governmentally sponsored. It is one of the pre-researched and written programs that public officials have access to. Generally it is funded and sponsored by the local Department of Public Safety (Black, 2001).

The premise of the program surrounds a mock drunken driver accident staged in front of the local high school. The students are briefed very lightly before the actual crash, and then allowed to witness the crash. The full range of emergency medical personnel are called to the scene, and victims (both portrayed as “dead” or “alive”) are taken away by the respective emergency agency. An assembly is then held explaining that every fifteen minutes someone dies in the United States as a result of drunk driving. School goes back to normal schedule, other than every fifteen minutes a bell is sounded, and someone is taken out of class, portraying that person who died as a result of drunk driving. The

person (who is portraying the victim) is then dressed in a black shirt and sent back to class. No one is allowed to speak to those portraying victims (Black, 2001).

Generally the “Every Fifteen Minute” program is a one time situation. Though from time to time throughout any given year, the administration of individual schools can have follow-up assemblies.

Educational efforts dealing with alcohol abuse among teens is an on-going process in the three school districts this study dealt with. These programs range from the shock therapy of the “Every Fifteen Minute” program, to the on-going attempts by the D.A.R.E. program. The D.A.R.E program is administered by local law enforcement, and though not mandatory, is still used often, though it differs from police department to police department, and from school to school. The “Every Fifteen Minute” program has been used in all of the school districts this study dealt with, though not on a yearly basis. Regular assemblies are planned and carried off in each school district from time to time as the district has time and resources to plan and implement those assemblies (Kantzog, 2001). In addition, the curriculum of high school health classes has included a section dealing with alcohol (and drug) abuse among teens.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The closing statement of Chapter 1 states, “this study will focus on the simplest of matters...what, how and how well are we communicating to the young people of the world, the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol”? The focus groups were helpful in getting a beginning point in our understanding of those questions asked at the onset of the study, and continued throughout the entirety of this research.

#### **What are Teens Being Taught About the Indicators**

There are many statistical studies which have been able to quantify the difference between parental influence to drink alcohol, and sibling influence to drink alcohol. Yet in trying to develop questions which would draw those thing out became unwieldy, leading and time consuming. For that reason, no attempt was made to differentiate between parental influence and sibling influence in the reporting chapter or this chapter. The analysis that follows should be interpreted as referring to parents, but understood as possibly applying to siblings also.

There can little doubt that the influence of parents on teens is understood by the teens in the focus groups. In each group, there were many references to the effect that parents can have on drinking habits, and the respondents were firm in those beliefs. As the researcher/moderator would ask questions, often there would be a time gap as the



respondents would ponder and prepare to answer. Those questions involving parental influence on the teens were the questions which were answered quickly, thoroughly and emphatically. If a word count were performed on the responses, it would become apparent that parental influences were the most talked about.

In analyzing the answers given by the respondents, it is evident that there is confusion as to the reason for parental influence in the alcohol abuse problem. A few of the members of the focus groups were able to express their inability to discern the root causes of those reasons for parental influence. But, the bulk of the respondents looked to that influence being genetic in nature. A couple of the respondents were upset with the notion that they could well be alcoholic simply because their grandfather was an alcoholic. But that was not a response coming from education, but rather a response coming from emotion.

There is basis for the confusion about the root cause of the parental influence on their children. There is a tremendous amount of ambiguity dealing with the “genetics” versus “environmental” versus “cultural” issues. Though no scientific research found to quantify that the tendency to abuse is genetic, it was still written about freely in the studies this research focused on. There was ample scientific evidence that parents influence teens to abuse alcohol, but as to the root cause, that needs more definitive research.

The teens seem to have a decent grasp of the influence parents can have in the tendency to abuse alcohol. They also seem to have a grasp on how strong that influence can be. The respondents were very aware that making alcohol available, and perhaps even encouraging alcohol usage would be an indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol.

It should come as no surprise that there were few responses indicating “trauma” as an indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, Moderators Guide, no attempt was made to include such questions, as those sorts of questions were extremely leading. Though each of the other indicators of alcohol abuse had either direct or veiled allusions, trauma did not seem to. The respondents of the focus group either had no knowledge, or didn’t feel to volunteer such knowledge when asked of indicators.

The Literature Review was blunt in finding that conduct problems were good indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol. There was some discrepancy as to whether the conduct problems were as a result of the alcohol abuse, or the alcohol abuse came as a result of the conduct problems. Judging by the responses of the focus groups, it seems they had the same question in their minds. Until some empirical research is done that can shed some light on the issue, there will be a hole in society’s ability to “help” solve the alcohol abuse problem among our teens.

If conduct problems do indeed cause alcohol abuse (which there is a small amount of empirical evidence to suggest), then the logical approach would be to educate those with conduct problems. Even better would be spending time and effort to help cure or ameliorate the conduct problems.

If, on the other hand, alcohol abuse is a root cause of conduct problems (which there is a small amount of empirical evidence suggesting also), then the logical approach would be finding ways to stop alcohol abuse. As they seem to be tied together, perhaps a multi-faceted approach would be most effective (see Summary).

Each reference to conduct problems in relation to alcohol abuse was a veiled reference. There were no direct statements by any of the respondents which tied conduct problems with the tendency to abuse alcohol.

The members of these focus groups did not have a strong knowledge of trauma being an indicator, but did seem to have an ancillary knowledge.

Males have a much higher tendency to abuse alcohol as found in the Literature Review. Several questions were pointed at finding the respondents understanding of that fact. Yet, there were no direct or indirect comments dealing with being male as an indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol.

One of the real surprises in the study was the commitment teens had to the theory that peers play a very important role in their tendency to abuse alcohol. The Review of Literature found that peer pressure was not rated nearly as highly as several other indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol. Yet it was one of the most oft mentioned indicators of the respondents. Time and again, answers would be brought around to peer pressure being a leading cause of alcohol abuse among teens.

The term “peer pressure” from the respondents was seen to have several different meanings. At times, some of the respondents were referring to direct comments made by peers, trying to influence others to drink alcohol. There were other references which termed “peer pressure” as a social acceptance issue. In conjunction with the social acceptance, there was also the view that drinking and perhaps abusing alcohol was a form of fun, at least “fun” in the terms of these focus groups.

Often strong words were used when the teens would refer to the impact that peers

could have on the tendency to abuse alcohol. Many of the respondents actually made the jump from having knowledge that peer pressure was a strong indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol, to sharing personal experiences in their own lives. From the responses, peer pressure is a very real, on-going situation within the lives of those in the focus groups.

Though the word count would not give it the same strength as the parental influence, peer pressure was felt strongly by the teens. If there were a way to measure emotion in the responses, peer pressure would have been seen as the indicator the respondents felt strongest about.

Just as a sidebar to both parental and peer influence, it was very evident in our focus groups that both of those influencers could be both negative and positive. The respondents were quick to point out that though we viewed peer pressure as negative, there could also be a tremendous amount of positive peer pressure. The same was implied about the influence non-drinking parents could have on their kids. There was also a strong positive pressure applied by some abstinent social groups.

The respondents were very knowledgeable about parental pressure as an indicator of the tendency to abuse alcohol. They did not seem to have a feel for how strong of an indicator it was. There was little knowledge of traumas, conduct problems, or being male as strong indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol. They were however, very knowledgeable about peer pressure and the influence it can have on the tendency to abuse alcohol. Many of them had actually internalized this indicator (peer pressure).

### **How are Teens Being Taught About the Indicators**

The attempts to educate teens about the indicators of alcohol abuse are being done in sporadic manners. Each of the programs or methods found to be used, are in totally discretionary situations. At sometimes and in some places they are being used, but according to this research there is no mandatory educational attempt.

The method mentioned the most was the D.A.R.E program. There is curriculum in place for both the junior high student, and the high school student (and elementary, though this study deals only with teens). The curriculum comes from a central agency, which disseminates the curriculum. This curriculum is sent to each qualifying police department. From there the educational administrators become involved, in working with the police.

School assemblies were mentioned often as another method of communicating indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol. Each time a mention was made of assemblies, it also seemed to come with the caveat that they had alcohol abuse assemblies, but it was just once in a while.

Another method of communicating these indicators was in health class. In none of the instances of a health class being mentioned were there any details given of what that meant. As "health class" was mentioned each time, it implies that there is a set curriculum that is incorporating standardized information. It is also a requirement for all students to take health.

The last method mentioned to aid in understanding the indicators of alcohol abuse was a presentation called, "Every Fifteen Minutes". This was only mentioned in one brief

response, but Mr. Black (2001) mentioned that the program had been done in the last 3 years in each of the schools within this study.

This study found that the following 4 items were identified as places where teens are learning about the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol:

1. D.A.R.E. program
2. Assemblies at school
3. Health class
4. Every Fifteen Minutes program

### **How Well are Teens Being Taught About the Indicators**

Extremely weak teaching seems to have taken place. This study cannot judge as to the reason, but the actual indicators of alcohol abuse were seldom talked about (with the exception of a few references to parental influence, and quite a few more references to peer influence).

Lacking scientific evidence as to root causes of parental influence on the tendency to abuse alcohol, has left the educators and parents to do the best they can with the information they have. An effort has been made to educate the teens about parental influence, but it is difficult to educate when there is faulty or missing information. In interviewing the D.A.R.E. officers and educational administrators, it was evident that a fear of legal action colors the training. It seemed that the administrators and officers were aware of the parents and siblings effect on the tendency to abuse alcohol, but it is not part of the curriculum. Each interviewee shared a fear of a parent instigating legal action if the

parent were implicated in the misdeeds of the child.

The focus of each of the teaching methods employed (which this study dealt with) seemed to be peer pressure and how to manage that pressure. Some of the reason for that belief has to go back to the school programs that are available to the kids. The D.A.R.E program looks at peer pressure as the only indicator that is taught. Many of the programs associated with D.A.R.E and other assemblies or on-going training are centered around the teen disassociating themselves from peers who are a bad influence. There is also much training on positive self-image building through proper associations. These things would re-enforce the idea of peer pressure being a greater influencer than it actually is.

This study assumed that teens had been taught little about the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol. That seems to be true. Yet, there seem to be other mitigating circumstances that don't allow us to point to the reason that there seems to have been little learning. We do not have access to the previous teaching moments, to be able to see if effective teaching was employed. We also do not have access to all the curriculum of health class and assemblies, so we can see if the teaching of "appropriate things" was occurring.

### **Limitations**

Several areas of concern arose during the course of the study. Each of these concerns was addressed in the most effective manner at the time. Several of these limitations were addressed in depth in Chapter 3, Sampling Limitations. If further research is done, these need to be given consideration before the study:

A. Familiarity of researcher and study population. Though it would have been hard to imagine with such a large population to draw from, we have found that the world is indeed “very small”. There were several of the participants of the study who were familiar with the moderator as a result of the moderators activity in religious matters. Though this may NOT have caused any deviation in getting reliable data, it certainly could be a pose a problem in keeping the data pure. This was overcome with a thorough pre-screening process for the later focus groups.

B. Certainly other researchers have faced the problem of getting parental permission slips back from the students. Even with school teacher help, there was still a need to approach 40-50 students to get enough to hold a proper focus group.

C. The lack of representation of ALL ethnic and culture groups was disturbing. Part of that may have been due to the necessity of having to have parental permission slips, but there may have been other factors. The time of day could well have played a factor. If there were kids abusing alcohol, they may not be the ones in early classes.

Though the research covered 3 very different high schools, from 3 very different areas, the subjects still were pre-dominantly white, and pre-dominantly well-mannered, high achieving kids (at least from the moderators perspective). There is little doubt that the lack of representation definitely skewed the research.

D. Familial recruiting did in fact seem to take place. As I looked through the permission slips, etc; there were 1 or 2 different sets of siblings at the various focus groups. This may NOT have been able to have been avoided, as family members seem to “follow” the older members, but there may be ways to lessen the impact. This was done



through the pre-screening process on the later focus groups.

E. A better method to be able to track what was being said, and record it in a manner that would be easier to transcribe. Perhaps microphones for each of the students would have been helpful. It is something that needs to be addressed in future focus groups.

F. There were a tremendous number of questions that seemed to be ancillary to the specific questions that we wanted to answer. They were put into the selection of questions as a means of developing relationships of trust to get honest and representative answers. It might be good to eliminate several of the ancillary questions, and focus more on the 3 main issues of the study. There were several times that the moderator would have liked to have developed a question, but because of the number of questions to get through, it was impossible.

G. Time constraints were a problem. Perhaps in refining the questions, the time restraints would NOT have been an issue. Most teens tend to have an attention span of something less than an hour on any given subject (personal opinion). The focus groups were geared towards that time frame. It is unlikely that more time would have helped, but perhaps coupled with reworking the questions, it may have helped to explore the real questions a bit deeper. In the end, more organization and less time building relationships of trust seemed to cancel out the time factor.

H. Group answers were a problem. Though they did show an agreement among the subjects, it was difficult to track responsibility for answers when transcribing. Perhaps giving each participant a microphone, and having them identify themselves before

answering may help in this issue. The moderator did learn to identify one of the individuals when group answers came. A follow-up question was directed to that person. It seemed to bring back order to the group, and allow the responses to be assigned properly.

### **Future Research**

The focus of this study was not limited in nature and scope. The main thesis question was, “what, how and how well are those responsible for educating our teens, teaching the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol”? This is a broad statement, but because of the limitation of time, expense, etc., the results were not broad, but rather narrow, but a good starting point.

Each individual school district has implemented alcohol abuse (and other substance abuse) education as they feel appropriate. Each school district uses different methods to try and provide that education. A firm look at specific school districts as a whole would be very helpful. Especially if the school district were of moderate size to provide statistics which could be more universal. A thorough review of the program could be undertaken, and then a well thought out survey issued to the students. With a survey, quantifiable data would be generated which would be a more reliable source of information. Many more teens could be surveyed, with district-appropriate questions. At least one district at a time could evaluate the effectiveness of their program.

There is difficulty in undertaking a study which would get to the heart of teen alcohol abuse issues. This study found, the bulk of the information about alcohol abuse,

that teens feel is valid, seems to come from their parents. Yet, that would be a difficult thing to quantify. But there are other issues which might lead the researcher closer to making that differentiation.

Targeting different ethnic or social groups to get their feelings dealing with the indicators of the tendency to abuse alcohol, would be one way to gather useful information. This study attempted to touch lightly on the different ethnic and social groups, but that was not the focus. As differences might be found in the education of different ethnic or social groups, it may lead to understanding of the effectiveness of the teaching efforts in each sub group.

There seemed to be a tremendous difference in the amount of time and energy expended on any given strategy to educate the teens, and the amount the teens remembered about that teaching. One valuable study would be to administer quantifiable surveys to the teens to get a firm understanding of what they are actually retaining from the educational efforts. This would help discern the most productive program, in relation to time allotted, money spent, etc;.

## **Summary**

This study was interested in the effectiveness of our (those in responsibility positions with teens) communication with teens. The research studied teen alcohol abuse, and the indicators of teen alcohol abuse. The research gave us some beginning insights into how well we have communicated those indicators to our teens. The subjects of this study seemed to be well-versed, and though misled in some areas, for the majority of the

information, they were well prepared.

The teens of the world seem to be able to parrot back the information they have been taught. But, nothing seems to be changing. In fact, the statistics show that teens are abusing alcohol in increasing numbers. They are not being helped with correct information; and/or they are not being helped effectively; and/or they are not interested in making changes to avoid the consequences of alcohol abuse.

It would seem that society would want to provide the help necessary in each area of concern. That will call for a multi-dimensional approach to the problem. If teens are not being helped with correct information, then the correct information needs to be found. Quantifiable research needs to be implemented to discover root causes of alcohol abuse among teens.

Methods need to be discovered which will help teens (and parents) understand the root causes of alcohol abuse. The "Every Fifteen Minutes" program seemed to have the most impact on the teens, so it may serve as a model for future programs. Perhaps educational efforts would best be suited to parents (though they may have an alcohol abuse problem). As creative methods are employed (like the "Every Fifteen Minute" program) with adults, the results can be much more dramatic in the older age group. Legislation could be incorporated to help parents understand their responsibilities to their children.

If teens are not interested in changing, some of the parental training would help alleviate attitudinal problems (as parents learn their responsibilities and train their children). In addition, early intervention programs for at-risk children could be funded and

a real attempt made to stop the cycle.

At the beginning of the study Samuel Becker was quoted in 1995: “there is increasing evidence that most of the patterns of behavior injurious to health tend to be set early in people’s lives...we need to provide...help when they are young, before their beliefs and habits are so ingrained and habitual that they are extremely difficult to change.” It has been six years since that statement, and it still holds true. This research would tend to conclude ~~that~~ those who are responsible for teaching about the indicators of alcohol abuse still have work to do, but they are not alone.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT AND PARENTAL PERMISSION FORMS**




### STUDENT ASSENT FORM

We hope that you will help us by participating in an important study. We are studying how well you have been taught the leading causes of alcohol abuse among teens. We will be meeting in a group setting (8-10 teens) for one hour. It will be held during class time, and on school property. Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary and you should discuss it with your parents as to whether or not you should participate. There are NO perceived risks to you, other than if you have a little discomfort talking about the subject of alcohol abuse among your peers. Your identity will remain completely anonymous, as NO names will ever be used in connection with this study.

If you have any questions, call Bob Van Drimmelen at (817) 861-6851 (BROVAN@JUNO.COM) or Dr. Tony Ferri (702) 895-1371. You can also call the Office of Sponsored Programs for The University of Nevada, Las Vegas at (702) 895-1357.

Please sign this, and along with the parental consent form, return them to the school on the day it was asked for. Thanks so much.

*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

  
SIGNATURE

Wes Anderson  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5-10-01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

### PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

This is a request for your son or daughter to participate in research being conducted by Bob Van Drimmelen, who is a masters candidate at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. While this project is not an official study of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the process has been reviewed and approved by the University.

The purpose of this study is to collect verbal data which will help formulate theories relating to how familiar teens are with the leading causes of alcohol abuse, where they have received that information, and how effective the communication of those causes has been.

The study will consist of three informal focus groups being conducted. Each group will consist of between eight and ten teens. The moderator will be a trained professional with an assistant to help in record the teens responses. The groups will meet one time, for no more than one hour. This meeting will be held during school hours, and at the school. The only risks involved may be a feeling of being uncomfortable discussing alcohol abuse among peers.

Your child's decision to participate in this group study is completely voluntary. It is important for you to know that there will be no names used in this study, every participant will remain anonymous. If this is acceptable to you, please sign this consent form and have your student return it to his or her teacher.

If you have questions regarding the project, you may contact Bob Van Drimmelen at (817) 861-6851 (BROVAN@JUNO.COM) or Dr. Tony Ferri by phone at (702) 895-1371. You may also contact the Office of Sponsored Programs at UNLV at (702) 895-1357 for questions regarding the rights of research subjects. An extra copy will be enclosed for your records.

*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

  
SIGNATURE

Brian C. Anderson  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/1/01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805






## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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Please sign this, and along with the parental consent form, return them to the school on the day it was asked for. Thanks so much.

*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

	<u>Brandon Gilliam</u>	<u>5/16/01</u>
SIGNATURE	PLEASE PRINT NAME	DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



### STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

	<u>Sean Morgan Gilliam</u>	<u>5-10-01</u>
SIGNATURE	PLEASE PRINT NAME	DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*


 Mary Lee Williams
 4-26-20  
 SIGNATURE PLEASE PRINT NAME DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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Please sign this, and along with the parental consent form, return them to the school on the day it was asked for. Thanks so much.

*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

Ryan Merkel  
SIGNATURE

Ryan Merkel  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

May 10, 2001  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

*[Signature]*  
SIGNATURE

Sandra P. Good  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

4/30/01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

Margie Whites  
SIGNATURE

Margie Whites  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5-10-01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*U. participate in this study.*

<i>H. Florio Whites</i>	<i>H. Florio Whites</i>	<i>4-22-01</i>
SIGNATURE	PLEASE PRINT NAME	DATE
<i>H. Florio Whites</i>	<i>H. Florio Whites</i>	<i>4-22-01</i>
SIGNATURE	PLEASE PRINT NAME	DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

Ashley Wilkes  
SIGNATURE

Ashley Wilkes  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5-10-01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805





## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

*Ryan Wilkes Jr.*  
SIGNATURE

RAY V. WILKES JR.  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/1/01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



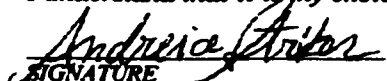
## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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Please sign this, and along with the parental consent form, return them to the school on the day it was asked for. Thanks so much.

*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*


 Andreia Striker
   
 SIGNATURE PLEASE PRINT NAME DATE 5-10-01

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

*William A. Striker*  
SIGNATURE

*William A. Striker*  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

*4-29-01*  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805

## **APPENDIX II**

### **CARROL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT AND PARENTAL PERMISSION FORMS**



## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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Please sign this, and along with the parental consent form, return them to the school on the day it was asked for. Thanks so much.

*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

Michelle E Bastian  
SIGNATURE

Michelle E Bastian  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/9/01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

Debra M. Bastian  
SIGNATURE

Debra Bastian  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/3/01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



### STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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Please sign this, and along with the parental consent form, return them to the school on the day it was asked for. Thanks so much.

*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

Lindsay Boulter      Lindsay Boulter      5/9/01  
 SIGNATURE      PLEASE PRINT NAME      DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

  
SIGNATURE

Bill Bowker  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/11/01  
DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
(702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805





## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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*I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.*

*Meggie Ledbetter*  
SIGNATURE

Meggie Ledbetter  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5-9-01  
DATE

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## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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SIGNATURE

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***I understand that it is my choice to participate in this study.***

1. Catherine J. Romney Catherine Romney 5/9/01  
SIGNATURE PLEASE PRINT NAME DATE  
SIGNATURE PLEASE PRINT NAME DATE

**Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
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Michelle Holding      Michelle Holding      5-8-01  
SIGNATURE      PLEASE PRINT NAME      DATE

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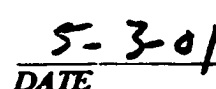
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Brandon Roark  
 PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/9/01  
 DATE

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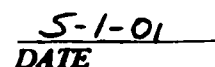
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John Kruse  
SIGNATURE

John Kruse  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5-9-01  
DATE

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<i>[Signature]</i> SIGNATURE	<i>Sherry Knuss</i> PLEASE PRINT NAME	<i>4/30/01</i> DATE
<i>[Signature]</i> SIGNATURE	<i>Sherry Knuss</i> PLEASE PRINT NAME	<i>4/30/01</i> DATE

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*Holly Rapleye*  
SIGNATURE

Holly Rapleye  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/9/01  
DATE

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<i>Sharon Rappleye</i>	<i>Sharon Rappleye</i>	<i>4/30/01<sup>10</sup></i>
SIGNATURE	PLEASE PRINT NAME	DATE
<i>Sharon Rappleye</i>	<i>Sharon Rappleye</i>	<i>4/30/01</i>
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 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
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## **APPENDIX III**

### **TRINITY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT AND PARENTAL PERMISSION FORMS**



## STUDENT ASSENT FORM

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Daniel Bond  
SIGNATURE

Daniel Bond  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

5/8/01  
DATE

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Karen Bond  
SIGNATURE

Jason  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

4/16/01  
DATE

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SIGNATURE

Jason Bond  
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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to participate in this study.*

Karen Bond      PLEASE PRINT NAME      4/16/01  
 SIGNATURE      PLEASE PRINT NAME      DATE

Greenspun College of Urban Affairs  
 Hank Greenspun School of Communication  
 4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 455007 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5007  
 (702) 895-3325 • FAX (702) 895-4805



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Jesse Richter  
SIGNATURE

Jesse Richter  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

05/03/01  
DATE

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## TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE PARTICIPATION STUDY

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*[Handwritten Signature]*

SIGNATURE

Bmd Richter

PLEASE PRINT NAME

4/14/07

DATE

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Adam Walton  
SIGNATURE

Adam Walton  
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5/6/01  
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Jennifer Walton  
SIGNATURE

Adam  
PLEASE PRINT NAME

4/14/01  
DATE

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*Understanding the conditions stated above, I give permission for my son or daughter to*

*PC Jennu Walton*

SIGNATURE

*Justin*

PLEASE PRINT NAME

SIGNATURE

PLEASE PRINT NAME

*4/14/01*  
DATE

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 \_\_\_\_\_
   
 SIGNATURE
   
 Justin Walton
   
 PLEASE PRINT NAME
   
 5/8/01
   
 DATE

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## **APPENDIX IV**

### **TRANSCRIPT FOR ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS GROUP**

**ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL  
ARLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT  
5/10/01**

**Participants:**

**MORGAN G. (M, 18, SR)  
ANDREIA S. (F, 17, SO)  
ASHLEY W. (F, 16, SO)  
MARGIE W. (F, 16, SO)  
BRANDON G. (M, 17, JR)  
RYAN M. (M, 16, SO)  
WES A. (M, 17, JR)**

**MODERATOR:** Is it right for teens to drink alcohol even though the law expressly forbids it?

**Andrea** you are shaking your head no. Why?

**ANDREIA:** Well first of all it's not healthy and it's has bad side effects and what are those things called? Consequences?

**MODERATOR:** But the question...is it appropriate even though the law forbids it?

**WES:** I don't think it appropriate for anybody no matter what the law.

**MODERATOR:** Why do you say that Wes?

**WES:** Because of what it does to your body.

**MODERATOR:** Interesting. Are the current laws regarding the consumption of alcohol appropriate? Why do you say that Morgan. Your head is shaking that is why I am asking.

**MORGAN:** Well there is no way that we can get rid of it. The law says the age of 21. That they think most of the kids are responsible enough to drink and that they break they laws when they drive.

**MODERATOR:** Now I am sorry to ask this question. But we have a lot of high school kids that obviously drink.. Should they not be doing that In your opinion?

**MORGAN:** They shouldn't. They're definitely not are responsible enough from what I have seen

**MODERATOR:** Interesting. What do you consider to be alcohol abuse by a teen? What in your mind would constitute a teenager abusing alcohol? You have an opinion Ashley.

**ASHLEY:** I think like excessive drinking would be...

**MODERATOR:** What is excessive drinking? A lot at one time or a lot of times in one week or..

**ASHLEY:** Just any , a lot of times any time.

**MODERATOR:** How much alcohol in one sitting is too much?

**ASHLEY:** What.. In what.

**MODERATOR:** In one sitting.. Tough question.

**WES:** What is a sitting?

**MODERATOR:** When somebody sits down has 3-4 hours and is going to drink how much is too much to drink?

**WES:** 18

**MARGIE:** One can

**MODERATOR:** Why did you say that Margie?

**MARGIE:** Cause, I don't know.

**MORGAN:** One can leads to another and another leads to another...

**MARGIE:** Yeah! Don't drink at all.

**MODERATOR:** (laugh) kind of like a Lay's potato chip. Thank you Morgan.  
Do there tend to be groups at school that drink more than other groups meaning ,  
Scholars, band, athletes, soccer.

**WES:** Band people

**MODERATOR:** Someone said Yeah. I don' have a clue about which group that is.

**MORGAN:** I don't think that like one particular group drinks more than another. I know a lot of athletes who drink and I know a lot of A students that drink. I don't believe that there is just one group that drinks more than others.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you Morgan. Any other thoughts?

ASHLEY: I know a lot of Theater people who drink.

MODERATOR: Is that because you hang around them.... I'm not saying that you drink ...

ASHLEY: That is because I spend time with them and they have explained it to me.

MODERATOR: So Ryan you spend a lot of time with Band people do they seem to drink a lot?

RYAN: There are quite a few that do.

MODERATOR: So it sounds like we have athletes, theater, band.. Who are we leaving out? Scholars? I wonder if they do too?

WES: He said the scholars. He said the A students. They don't talk about it as much. We have people who talk about it more. Like the athletes will talk about it more.

MARGIE: Yeah.

MORGAN: I think it takes some of the scholars longer to start drinking.

MODERATOR: Why is that (referring to the athlete talking about drinking)?

WES: Because they don't care. There not scholars. So...

MODERATOR: I hadn't thought about that thank you Wes.  
Do you think that students from specific background tend to abuse alcohol more? Those that have a car.. Come from large or small families. How about those that attend church?

WES: Yeah.

ASHLEY: Sometimes it does.

MODERATOR: Does it seem to make a difference?

WES. With some people it does.

MORGAN: Also if parents accept drinking and drink themselves then the kids will, even if their parents tell them not to. That's what I have learned.

MODERATOR: Thank you Morgan: We'll probably delve into that in a minute. Does access to money have any impact on the abuse of alcohol?

**MARGIE:** Yeah

**MODERATOR:** Wes has got a smile. What do you think Ashley?

**ASHLEY:** I think it is the people that have too much money and they don't know what to do with it and they can get into trouble with it. If they are accepted and rich and they a lot of money and they shop and shop and they run out of things to do with their money get bored with it they look for other alternatives.

**MODERATOR:** Being in the Southlake area yesterday and asking that question was most interesting. They screamed out YES most quickly. Any other thought about money affecting alcohol? Have you heard any things that might mean you have a tendency and could become an alcohol abuser?

What about you Brandon? Have you heard about anything?

**BRANDON:** That is a good question

**MODERATOR:** Yes it is. Have any of the others of you heard anything?

**MORGAN:** It's in the family. Like my mom always told me it's almost like it runs in a family.

**MODERATOR:** Does it mean it's genetic. ?

**MORGAN:** I don't know.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you Morgan. Do any of you come from alcoholic backgrounds? Meaning that you have more than one close relative like your grandpa or grandma. Do you have one in your family Andreia?

**ANDREIA:** My mom's mom. Her real mom.

**MODERATOR:** Is an alcoholic.

**ANDREIA:** Yeah, she died.

**MODERATOR:** Scary

**MORGAN:** Our mom's parents.

**MODERATOR:** Really? Both of them

**MORGAN:** Yeah

**MODERATOR:** I have uncles and aunts on both sides.  
Do you believe those things that you have heard? Meaning that genetics can play a role or familial situations?

**MORGAN:** I think so.

**BRANDON:** Does that mean that I am going to be an alcoholic? I don't think so.

**MORGAN:** No because if it is in you genes and you never try that means you will never have the experience and want to continue it. But once you try it and do it a couple of times then it's can continue to show up.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you Morgan and thank you also Brandon. Any other thoughts.  
Do you see a lot of advertisements dealing with alcohol.

**WES:** un Huh.

**MARGIE:** Yeah.

**MODERATOR:** What do these advertisements tell you?

**WES:** It's fun.

**MARGIE:** They all say it's "light".

**MODERATOR:** I don't understand.

**MARGIE:** Well like it's lite...

**BRANDON::** They make it sound like it's no big deal.

**MARGIE:** Yeah.

**MODERATOR:** I travel to Dallas each week and just as I get off the toll way

**MARGIE:** The waterfall.

**MODERATOR:** No just before that. And there is a picture of a Chihuahua. And it says that some dogs should be cats. Well I am driving with my son and he just breaks up and he just starts laughing. As we drive and we go 2 miles and it occurred to me... "do you have any idea what that is advertising?" "I don't know" "It's alcohol." It's interesting how they appeal to us.  
Anything that advertising tells you?

**WES:** They tell you it's fun and you'll have a good time if you do it. But in the end it will tell you real fast that you should use alcohol safely

**MODERATOR:** What did you say Morgan?

**MORGAN:** It makes it look like it's accepted.

**MODERATOR:** Have you been in programs in home, school or church that have taught you about alcohol abuse and the things to be careful of?

**WES:** Health Class

**MODERATOR:** Here in Arlington? The same for you Morgan?

**MORGAN:** I want to say more in Junior High than in High School. They informed you and tried to give you the facts before you get a chance to do it.

**MODERATOR:** Any others that can think of programs that they have been in? Is it morally right to drink alcohol as a teen... not legal .. moral.

**WES:** I guess if you want to you could if you don't care about your moral standards.

**MORGAN:** Alcohol it changes you so when you drink alcohol it changes your morals to do things that you wouldn't really do if you weren't drunk.

**MODERATOR:** Interesting Morgan. Well talk about that. Of this group how many here have seen friends intoxicated or acquaintances? Almost everybody. Did it have an impact on you?

**BRANDON:** The stupidest people I have ever seen.

**MODERATOR:** Why do you say that?

**BRANDON:** Makes them act so retarded. They don't know what they are doing or what's going on.

**MODERATOR:** Do all of you pretty well agree with that? Interesting. What are some of the dangers of drinking alcohol?

**MORGAN:** Alcohol poisoning.

**MODERATOR:** Alcohol Poisoning? Explain what that is Morgan



**MORGAN:** Well when you drink too much your system just can't handle it and it overloads and it's deadly.

**MODERATOR:** So in some cases they could die?

**MORGAN:** Yeah.

**MARGIE:** Bad liver, Bad kidneys

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Do your peers seem to influence people who drink and abuse alcohol. You're shaking your head yes Brandon. How come? Have you seen it?

**BRANDON:** Yeah. They think it's cool to drink. Half the people I know think it's the only thing they can do to have fun on the weekends is to go out and drink.

**MODERATOR:** Any others that believe that peers tend to influence others to drink. Has it happened to you Ryan? Have any of the Band people come up to you and asked you to go get drunk?

**RYAN:** Yeah

**MODERATOR:** Really?

**RYAN:** One of my friend said that he had access to beer and stuff. And I said naw I don't want any of that. He never said anything after that.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you Ryan  
How much does a family influence a teen desire to drink and abuse alcohol?

**WES:** Not as much as their friends

**MARGIE:** Yeah

**MORGAN:** If the people you live with drink and you're always around it you feel it's just accepted. But if you are in a home where you never see your parents drinking then you won't accept it and you won't be familiar with you and you probably won't drink.

**MODERATOR:** Margie did you have a comment?

**MARGIE:** Yeah. I do think that families have an influence because my friend's dad makes his own beer and her parents would give her some sometimes so they think it's ok for her to drink. She thinks it ok when her parents give it to her. She doesn't over indulge but... yeah

**MODERATOR:** She tips the old elbow once in a while? Interesting. Any other thought about family influencing? Does the media influence teens to drink and abuse alcohol? Now think about that for a minute... do they really influence you?

**WES:** No.

**MARGIE:** Not as much as your friends.

**MODERATOR:** Andrea was shaking her head.

**ANDREIA:** I agree with Margie. Not as much as my friends.

**MORGAN:** The friends would be more of a pressure than the advertizement. But the advertisement is just sticking always it back into your head. When you are driving down the freeway, watching TV. You see signs that just always put it back into your head.

**MARGIE:** It makes it seem ok.

**MODERATOR:** If you had to rate which one influences you more peers, family, or media. Which would you think?

**WES:** Peers

**MARGIE:** Peers

**ANDREIA:** Peers

**RYAN:** Peers

**ASHLEY:** Peers

**BRANDON:** None of them. I don't feel it..I don't let them

**MODERATOR:** Interesting, thank you Brandon.

**MORGAN;** Peers

**MODERATOR:** Should others try to convince you as a group that alcohol is good or bad for you. ? Is it right for someone to tell you whether it is good or bad? Now remember I said good or bad. So do you think it's right for someone to try to convince you one way or another?

**MORGAN:** I don't think so. Because I have a really good friend that always puts others

down because they drink and he's right, in that we should tell other people it's not good to drink. But I don't think it's his place to tell other people that drinking is bad and put them down for it. I am glad that he does it some times, but I don't think it's other peoples place.

**MODERATOR:** If you had to stop a friend from abusing alcohol, how would you try to do it?

**WES:** I'm not going to say.

**MODERATOR:** How come you're not going to say?

**WES:** Cause I'm not going to say anything.

**BRANDON:** Beat them till they stop

**MODERATOR:** Any other thoughts? I hope you never have to do it.

## **APPENDIX V**

### **TRANSCRIPT FOR CARROLL HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS GROUP**

**SOUTHLAKE CARROL HIGH SCHOOL  
CARROL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
5/09/01**

**Participants:**

**LINDSAY B. (F, 17, JR)  
MICHELLE G. (F, 18, SR)  
MICHELLE B. (F, 18, SR)  
KATIE R. (F, 18, SR)  
BRANDEN R. (M, 16, JR)  
MEGAN N. (F, 16, JR)  
HOLLY R. (F, 17, JR)  
JOHN K. (M, 18, SR)  
MEGGIE L. (F, 17, SR)**

**MODERATOR: Is it right for teens to drink alcohol even though the law expressly forbids it?**

**You said “no”, now I have to get your name.**

**KATIE: No, it’s not right for them to drink.**

**MODERATOR: Why?**

**KATIE: Because it can lead to very damaging things. It’s just stupid.**

**MODERATOR: Just because it’s against the law, that really matters? It’s against the law to go 70?**

**MICHELLE B.: Unless you’re in the middle of nowhere...where it’s legal**

**MODERATOR: Any other thoughts about “is it right for teens to drink alcohol even though the law expressly forbids it”?**

**LINDSAY: The law forbids it, so...?**

**MODERATOR: Thank you**

**Are the current laws regarding the consumption of alcohol appropriate?**

**You’re shaking your head Brandon, Why?**

**BRANDON: I think that they are appropriate because they...it’s obvious that they made laws to prevent bad things, so they’re...?**

**MODERATOR: Interesting. Did they get your input when they made the law though?**

**BRANDON:** No

**MODERATOR:** Does that upset you?

**BRANDON:** Not really.

**MODERATOR:** Any other thoughts about the current laws being appropriate or not?

**MICHELLE G.:** Well they are, but I think for one reason a lot of people break them just because that's what's cool about it ...it's not such a big deal to drink, because it's not something they can break, it's not something they can revel about. Because they have the restrictions, people think it's cool to drink, and there is a bigger drinking problem because of it.

**MODERATOR:** So you think some of the drinking comes because it's kind of forbidden?

**MICHELLE G.:** Yah

**MODERATOR:** It was that way in my day, so I suspect there is still some of that. What do you consider to be "alcohol abuse" by a teen? How much alcohol is too much in any one setting?

**MICHELLE B.:** Any

**MODERATOR:** Why did you say that?

**MICHELLE B.:** It's against the law.

**MODERATOR:** I'm grateful we have law-abiding kids..Any other thoughts?

**KATIE:** Well, I think that...personally it's wrong to drink it in the first place. But you abuse it when you drink it...you just drink to get drunk. Because I know some people who just drink to get drunk. They think it's cool. I think like that when you're going to do that then you are abusing it, and you shouldn't be doing it in the first place. So don't drink just to get drunk.

**MEGGIE:** There's also people that drink with their parents, like at dinners. Social functions.

**MODERATOR:** Katie, I need to ask you something. You said drink to get drunk?

**KATIE:** Like just so they can like pass out on the floor

**MODERATOR:** So are they more interested in the passing out, or how people are going to respond to them?

**LINDSAY:** Just like how people react to it when they get to school, the next day, or after the weekend. They're like "oh yah, it was really funny this last weekend". You're like "oh, did you know you did this.."? People actually think, "wow, you did that". I think the whole response of everybody...

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. So if we didn't respond that way, would they still get drunk?

**LINDSAY:** Probably not as much, but yah, probably.

**MICHELLE B.:** Some people just do it all the time.

**MODERATOR:** Because?

**MICHELLE B.:** Because they love it for some reason.

**MODERATOR:** I like that.

Do there tend to be groups at school who seem to drink more than other groups at school (scholars, athletes, musicians, etc;)? Any thoughts? You're shaking your head, "yes", why?

**BRANDON:** Pretty much all of the above (laughter).

**MODERATOR:** So tell me what that means Brandon. If you're in a group, you're going to drink?

**BRANDON:** Not necessarily if you're in a group, just that the majority of the groups drink.

**MODERATOR:** Does one group drink more than others?

**Michelle B.** is shaking her head...it's going to come off at the neck.

**BRANDON:** We don't really know, it's just the one who talk about it the most.

**MICHELLE B.:** Yah, yah, that's for sure.

**MODERATOR:** What you are telling me then, is that there are people who drink but don't talk about it?

They'll talk about it once in a while, but sometimes like real heavy drinkers don't want to talk about it?

**MODERATOR:** It makes my mind wonder why they don't talk about it? Any thoughts?

**JOHN:** Maybe they're not proud of it.

**MODERATOR:** I can see how like the Mormon kids wouldn't be...

**JOHN:** Cause if they're not in the crowd of all the athletes or the popular people, you know then they wouldn't even talk about it, because they wouldn't be doing it with them.

**MODERATOR:** Do you see students from specific backgrounds who tend to abuse alcohol? Meaning those who have a car, large or small families, attend church, etc; Do you see any specific indicators there?

**JOHN:** With a car...don't care what they do...come home real late.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you John, any other thoughts?

**MICHELLE G.:** A lot of people that I know that do it, like sometimes their parents will sometimes help them. Like you hear all the times about the parents will organize it saying, "we'd rather you be drunk at our house, so we'll organize the party", so all the big hangers will get to drink and everything. They'll get it out, and then they're drinking with the kids, and they're just as guilty as the kids are.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Does Access to money have any impact on the abuse of alcohol?

**MICHELLE B.:** Yes (Laughter again)

**MODERATOR:** Michelle B., again, we have this neck about coming off. Why did you do that?

**MICHELLE B.:** Well, they have the money, they can just go and get it....

**MODERATOR:** Then you are assuming that those that don't have money wouldn't drink?

**MICHELLE B.:** I don't know. Well I mean, they probably wouldn't be able to buy as much, and as good a quality, or whatever (laughter again).

**MODERATOR:** Have you heard of any indicators that might mean you have a tendency and could become an alcohol abuser? Have you heard of anything that might make you think you might have the tendency to abuse alcohol?

**MICHELLE B.:** I've heard that if your mom like was an alcoholic then that possibly



could have been carried down to you. You might have that tendency that if you do start drinking you could become an alcoholic.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Any other things you have heard?  
Do you see a lot of advertisements dealing with alcohol?  
You're shaking your head.

**LINDSAY:** Yes.

**MODERATOR:** Where do you see it most Lindsay?

**LINDSAY:** In tv and magazines.

**MODERATOR:** Do they affect you?

**LINDSAY:** No (laughter)

**MODERATOR:** Most of you have seen these advertisements?

**GROUP:** Yes

**JOHN:** They're dumb!

**LINDSAY:** I think some of them are kind of funny, but it doesn't mean you want to drink.

**MODERATOR:** John thinks they're dumb, and you think they're funny.

**LINDSAY:** I think you kind of get desensitized because there's so many of them. It's just like "oh there's another person drinking", and you don't even think anything of it anymore. It's kind of like, I don't know, it's just commonplace.

**JOHN:** The reason I think it's dumb, is because people make it out to be so glamorous. You hear all these people talk about how they got drunk and passed out and everything.

**MODERATOR:** It's does sound pretty glamorous doesn't it. They don't show them worshipping at the porcelain altar though, do they?  
What do the advertisements about alcohol tell you?

**JOHN:** They make it look glamorous.

**MODERATOR:** Any other thoughts about what the advertisements are trying to tell you?

**MEGAN:** It just goes to show you how deceiving and false advertising can be. And for people who are actually against it and oppose it, and know like the effects of it, it's not appealing at all.

**MODERATOR:** Have you been in programs at school, home or church that have taught you about alcohol abuse, and the things to be careful of?

**GROUP:** Yes (also nodding of heads).

**MODERATOR:** Most everybody has in here? When and where was that?

**MEGAN:** Like the D.A.R.E. program.

**MODERATOR:** You guys have D.A.R.E. up here also.

**MEGAN:** Not any more.

**JOHN:** 5th grad in New York.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. So you've been through some sort of program?

**MEGAN:** Yes.

**MODERATOR:** And it's been a while Megan?

**MEGAN:** Yes.

**GROUP:** Early in school...in elementary school. 6th grade. Elementary school.

**MODERATOR:** It sounds like it's been a while, and I better call your school district. 6th grade in Ohio for Katie. So they're doing it early on. In high school do you have any?

**GROUP:** No. Well, everyone once in a while they have an assembly.

**MICHELLE B.:** They have someone come talk to us.

**MODERATOR:** Is it morally right to drink alcohol as a teen? Now think about that before you just answer that off the top of your head. Is it morally right to drink alcohol as a teen? We're not talking legal, we're talking moral. Meggie, you're shaking your head "no", why?

**MEGGIE:** I just think it isn't good. I don't know.

**MICHELLE B.:** We're not responsible, we're teenagers.

**MODERATOR:** Explain that to me Michelle B.

**MICHELLE B.:** I don't know, we have all these teen-agers walking around with their emotional constipation, and they can't deal with everything and they drink and they're pretty much wild people that are going crazy with themselves.

**MODERATOR:** Then let's change it...Is it morally right or ok for an adult to drink?  
Michelle G shakes her head "no".

**MICHELLE G.:** Well I mean we know the consequences, and I guess everyone has the right to choose. But, I mean you know...there just so many consequences that have come out...I mean just recently in the last ten years and stuff...I just can't see why you'd want to put yourself in those kind of risks to...

**LINDSAY:** I was just going to say that socially it is ok. But even as adults the often times don't do it responsibly. How are they going to know if they will drink responsibly?

**MODERATOR:** That was my next question. I was curious what "drinking responsibly" would be?

**LINDSAY:** That's the biggest oxymoron. The say "drink responsibly", but what exactly is "drinking responsibly" since if you drink at all you could be putting your life in danger. It just depends on how much alcohol you can handle without getting like totally wasted.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. What are some of the dangers of drinking alcohol?

**JOHN:** You could influence someone who is younger. You know, you could get them started in drinking, and it could just ruin their life.

**MODERATOR:** I've not heard that, thank you. Any other consequences of drinking?

**MICHELLE B.:** Just in driving

**MODERATOR:** Say that again.

**MICHELLE B.:** Just in driving.

**MODERATOR:** Meaning?

**MICHELLE B.:** Killing everyone. (Laughter)

**LINDSAY:** Health issues. Because obviously it's not healthy.

**KATIE:** Also for girls, you could wind up pregnant the next morning. That's always a possibility.

**JOHN:** But in those cases, you could just have an abortion.

**KATIE:** Yah, abortion, sure.

**MODERATOR:** There's a whole other issue we had better not get into.

**HOLLY:** I think along with the drinking and driving, you also put other people's lives in danger. Like, you have men who go home drink, and they end up abusing their wives. They're not conscious of what they're doing, and so [you] could take somebody else's life through your dumb actions.

**MODERATOR:** Great, and we see that from time to time.  
Do your peers seem to influence people to drink and abuse alcohol?

**BRANDON:** I think peers are the whole reason people start, and the whole reason they continue. They do it for the attentions, and they do it for the positions they can have in, I guess...popularity or whatever.

**MODERATOR:** Any other thoughts?

**MICHELLE B.:** They think they're going to have fun while they don't know what they're doing.

**MODERATOR:** That was Michelle B., who likes to know what she's doing when she has fun. (Laughter). I'm sorry. How much does family influence a teen's desire to drink and abuse alcohol?

**HOLLIE:** I think they do when they keep alcohol around the house. The kids...it's just more natural for them. The parents usually allow their children to drink. I know people who live in their house will have like a little bar on the side of the house and they have all their liquor and everything. And I think that parents who don't drink at home are usually against it, and the child will be more against it too. Or at least it takes them longer to find it.

**LINDSAY:** We've never had alcohol at our house. Some people have it to cook, but my mom doesn't even have any sort of alcohol. And it's not even any sort of a temptation for me at all. I'm like, "it's not even attractive", and anyone who does it, it's like a really big turn off. And, it's not something I want to do. And I think it's mainly because my parents

haven't had it in the house. And it's not something I grew up around being ok.

**MICHELLE B.:** You take strength in knowing that your parents haven't tasted any either.

**MEGGIE:** I have friends whose parents have alcohol, and I think it's more like...it makes them more curious. Wondering...even if their parents don't do a lot of drinking, it makes them more curious and want to do it more.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. If we were to look at peer pressure versus parental pressure, which do you think is more of an influence on the tendency to abuse alcohol?

**GROUP:** Peer. Parental just kind of aids in that.

**MODERATOR:** Interesting. How does the media influence teens to drink and abuse alcohol?  
Or does it?

**MICHELLE G.:** Everything in media, I mean every teen-aged show. Whenever they're always going and having a little fun, they always have a little beer in their hand. It's almost as though you don't even notice it anymore. In everything, movies, tv...it's just kind of there. It's just natural...

**MODERATOR:** Yet it doesn't seem to influence you guys? Why?

**LINDSAY:** It's not something we value or care about

**BRANDON:** When I notice it on tv, it kind of affects me, because I think that when those people have that kind of a position that they need to show some kind of responsibility, and not promote that kind of a thing. Like she said [Michelle G.], all the time on tv shows, they always go out to bars and stuff like that. When I see that, I feel like they shouldn't be showing that image to teen-agers.

**JOHN:** Now it's like totally acceptable...on tv it's just acceptable.

**MODERATOR:** Should others try to convince you as a group that alcohol is good or bad for you?

**GROUP:** Should they?

**MODERATOR:** Well, we have groups at school trying to tell you the dangers of alcohol, it that appropriate?

**\*PRESTON:** Yes. Well people need to know the consequences of their actions. A lot of times people don't understand what happens when you drink. There's brain cells that you lose, and a lot of times you lose something worse.

**MODERATOR:** Thanks. Perfect. If you had to stop a friend from abusing alcohol, how would you do it?

**MICHELLE G.:** Confront them. Tell them that you know about it, and you're there to help them through it.

**MODERATOR:** Michelle G. said that...she's about 5'2", so...  
Any other ideas about how you might help someone stop abusing alcohol?

**KATIE:** Hopefully you would hope that you would never have to do that. Because you wouldn't want to have a friend who would do that. You would like to have friends around you who have your same standards, so hopefully you would pray that you would never have to stop a friend from abusing alcohol.

**\* Just wandered in late...no student release form**

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **TRANSCRIPT FOR TRINITY HIGH SCHOOL FOCUS GROUP**

TRINITY HIGH SCHOOL  
HURST/EULESS/BEDFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT  
05/08/01

**Participants:**

JUSTIN W. (M, 18, SR)

JESSE R. (M, 15, SO)

ADAM W. (M, 16, SO)

JASON B. (M, 16, SO)

DANIEL B. (M, 17, JR)

**MODERATOR:** As we talk about this realize that we are talking about Texas Law and Texas feelings so that is really the angle that we want you to come from.

Jason, do you think it is right for teens to drink alcohol even though the law expressly forbids it?

**JASON:** Probably not.

**MODERATOR:** Does anyone have any thoughts about that?

**DANIEL:** I don't think anyone should drink it.

**MODERATOR:** We are kind of biased against it aren't we?

**DANIEL:** Yes, But the effects it can have on the body

**JESSIE:** Yeah and also how many of the deaths by car pedestrian accidents are caused by drunk drivers.

**MODERATOR:** I wonder what that statistic is. I don't know. I don't have any idea Are the current laws concerning alcohol appropriate?

**DANIEL:** I don't think they are strict enough.

**MODERATOR:** Meaning?

**DANIEL:** Meaning... everybody breaks the laws. You go to a teenage party.. Well not all parties.. But some of the parties ... everybody gets completely wasted. That just means that we are not being strict enough.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you Daniel I appreciate that. I've noticed and you guys can correct me if I am wrong...it seems like Texas has some pretty strict school laws regarding alcohol abuses. I recall some cheerleaders up here getting thrown off the squad for getting



caught drinking... Is that true?

JESSIE: Yeah. At my school, drinking on school property is an expellable offense.

MODERATOR: On School property Thank you Jessie I did not know that. Justin you were about to say something?

JUSTIN: I think that the laws are there but the enforcement isn't always there.

DANIEL: Yeah, that's right

MODERATOR: Thanks Justin, thanks Daniel. By the way I will mention your name so that when my wife types up this she has an idea of who just made the comment. And that way we can kind of correlate them.

What do you consider alcohol abuse by a teen? Meaning how much alcohol is too much in any one sitting.

JUSTIN: I wouldn't know how much is too much. It would just depend on the tolerance and stuff I guess.

JASON: When somebody talks about passing out, that might be too much.

MODERATOR: (laugh) I like that Jason, that's a wonderful thought. I also think passing out is too much. What, Daniel?

DANIEL: But's that's the fun part.

MODERATOR: The passing out part?...I guess I don't understand that.

MODERATOR: Do there tend to be groups as school that tend to drink more than other groups? Meaning (I don't know whether you still have..) the cowboy group, and the jock group, the band group...are there groups that tend to drink more?

JUSTIN: Yes

MODERATOR: Justin, why do you say that, and which group?

JUSTIN: It's the group that...I don't want to stereotype..but...it's mostly the group that doesn't participate...like the fans of the school. Like the football team they do, but not as much as the people who go and watch the football games.

MODERATOR: That's interesting.

**JUSTIN:** ...Cause a lot of the people who go and watch would be playing football, but they're not...not...they don't have enough self control...not disciplined enough.

**MODERATOR:** It sounds as though what you are saying is that it is an attitudinal thing..they lack the discipline not to drink?

**JUSTIN:** The pressure's there all the time.

**MODERATOR:** And they drink more than the football team?

**JUSTIN:** Because they don't have the idea in the back of their head that they are an athlete and they need to stay in shape. So they just...

**MODERATOR:** Many times I have heard that it's the athletes that drink more?

**JUSTIN:** That's the thought, but...

**MODERATOR:** Thank you, I appreciate that Justin. Any other thoughts? Do you see specific groups that...?

**JESSE:** We don't have groups, we have little clusters of friends. And each of the clusters of friends who get drugged out the most are the ones who drink the most.

**MODERATOR:** Thanks you Jessie, I appreciate that. Do you see students from specific backgrounds that tend to abuse alcohol..we don't want to necessarily look at ethnic groups, but those who have a car, who come from large or small families, who attend church, etc;?

**DANIEL:** It really is the people at both ends

**MODERATOR:** Meaning?

**DANIEL:** The people with the most money, the people with the least money.

**MODERATOR:** So the middle of the groups don't seem to abuse it as much?

**DANIEL:** Yah,

**MODERATOR:** Do most of you see that same thing? Lot's of head shaking which must mean "yes".

Does access to money have any impact on the abuse of alcohol?

**DANIEL:** Yes

**MODERATOR:** Daniel, you said that pretty quick, why?

**DANIEL:** First, the people who don't have the money, they just go to parties.

**MODERATOR:** I didn't think about that...then having the money allows them to buy the alcohol?

**DANIEL:** Uh huh.

**MODERATOR:** Any other thoughts? Jessie you said something?

**JESSIE:** I also think that people with the largest families usually have the most parties at their house with alcohol. So those people abuse the alcohol more than the people with smaller families.

**JASON:** I think that might be the other way around, because you have more people at your house, and you're not going to throw a party when there's all their family in the house.

**MODERATOR:** Have you heard of any things that might mean you have a tendency and might become an alcohol abuser?

**JUSTIN:** If it's in your family, like if your parents or grandparents are alcoholics, then in your genetic make-up, then it's easier for you to become...to get the disease of alcoholism.

**MODERATOR:** You've heard that then Justin?

Anyone else, any other thoughts?

Where did you hear about those things being indicators, and in this case genetic?

**JUSTIN:** Just in health class, and in this case, I know a few people that are that way.

**MODERATOR:** Oh really, their parents...?

**JUSTIN:** Their parents or grandparents have been alcoholics, and so they don't drink because of that. It's like, it's pretty sad, but that's the only reason that they don't drink because they don't...because of their family.

**MODERATOR:** That's interesting, thank you. Any other thoughts about indicators that you might abuse alcohol..or someone might?

Do you trust those who have told you about the indicators of alcohol abuse?

You're shaking your head "yes", why?

**JASON:** I've just heard that.

**JESSE:** In our health class, it's like the first thing that we say...we do this type of thing about alcoholics.

**MODERATOR:** I don't understand that, explain it?

**JESSE:** If we have a few questions to ask our teacher, the teacher asks us questions about alcohol abuse. And why not to abuse alcohol or drink alcohol.

**MODERATOR:** So Jesse, apparently you have talked about it in school. Do you trust the teacher...what he or she says?

**JESSE:** Yes, in fact my dad has even given me this discussion.

**MODERATOR:** Interesting, do you trust your dad, and what he says?

[Jessie nods yes]

Do you see a lot of advertisements dealing with alcohol?

**DANIEL:** Yes, every bodies favorites are beer commercials

**MODERATOR:** You say you've seen a lot Adam?

**ADAM:** Yes

**MODERATOR:** Are they your favorites?

**ADAM:** No

**MODERATOR:** They don't impact you much?

**ADAM:** No

**MODERATOR:** Tell me Adam, what do these advertisements tell you?

**ADAM:** Like during the Super Bowl, that's when they usually make new ones. It's like if they come on, I never really think like 'oh I better go buy some beer or something'. But they always have like this comedy something that goes on with it...and sometimes it's funny, but I'm not thinking like...the beers.

**MODERATOR:** All of a sudden I have gone back to the frogs and Budweiser...

**JESSE:** The latest commercial...it's stupid.

**MODERATOR:** So apparently they don't appeal to you Jessie?

**JESSIE:** No.

**MODERATOR:** So it would never affect you to drink alcohol by the advertisements?

**JESSIE:** No.

**MODERATOR:** Have you guys been in programs at school, home or church that have taught you about alcohol abuse, and the things to be careful of?

**JUSTIN:** Uh huh.

**MODERATOR:** Justin, they've actually had things at school that have done that?

**JUSTIN:** Just in health class.

**DANIEL:** When we were in elementary, everybody does it. You got the D.A.R.E program, but I guess that's mostly drugs. But it teaches us the same.

At the beginning of the year, this guy came and talked about his girls that got hit by a drunk driver, and he started to talk about it.

**MODERATOR:** So was it like an assembly?

**ADAM:** Yes

**JASON:** And then we had that "every fifteen minutes"...

**MODERATOR:** Say that again. You had...?

**JASON:** "Every fifteen minutes". It's a program... it stresses the fact that "every fifteen minutes" somebody dies from drunk driving.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you, I've never heard of it.  
Is it morally right to drink alcohol as a teen?

**JESSE:** No

**MODERATOR:** Why not?

**JESSE:** It...because...I really don't know why I said "no".

**ADAM:** Because you just started your life. You have your whole life in front of you. If you just start drinking, it's just going to mess up the whole rest of your life.

**JUSTIN:** Alcohol does...it makes you lose control, and I think that as a teenager, I think you are looking for guidance in your life to figure out what you want to do, what you want to be. And if you don't have control over you, then you don't have control over where your future's going and where you're going to end up.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you, I like that. How about as an adult, is it ok for them to drink alcohol?

*Jesse's shaking his head (I hear the marbles rattling).*

**JESSE:** No! Because it is an influence to the younger people to start drinking.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you Jesse. Any other thoughts about adults drinking?

**JUSTIN:** I think...I personally don't like it, but everyone has their...everyone doesn't have the same opinions that I do. And so, what I see becomes a problem is if they drink too much. They abuse it. There are all those indicators, like if you drink alone, and you abuse it. You're abusing it if you....?

**MODERATOR:** So you've heard that somewhere...that if you drink alone, that's abusing alcohol?

**JUSTIN:** Yah, you have an addiction. A lot of times, like it's socially acceptable to like drink socially.

I don't see as big a problem with that, because it's just like the way things are. You can't do anything about that.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. What are some of the dangers of drinking alcohol?

**DANIEL:** You lose self-control.

**MODERATOR:** I've heard that a couple of times, but why do you really say that.

**DANIEL:** Well because, uh, what am I trying to say...because when you're drunk, you don't really know what's going on. You just kind of lose it.

**JESSE:** When you're drunk, you lose all sight of perception. And that's why sometimes it causes people who are driving after they've been drinking...and that's what causes most of the drunk driving deaths...and accidents.

**MODERATOR:** What are some of the effects of alcohol?

**JESSE:** Well, it's like a depressant, so it slows down your body. People are always drinking when they're depressed to get over their problems, but it really just makes you

more depressed.

**MODERATOR:** Do your peers seem to influence people to drink and abuse alcohol? You're shaking your head "yes", Adam, how come?

**ADAM:** I don't know...like some people at a party drink a lot. Cause I know every party in that age...I don't know...If it has to do with...I don't know..I just know that every party that's going to happen...

**DANIEL:** Some of those people aren't really socially stable..they have low self-esteem, they'll do anything just to have friends. Like, if my friends started to try to get me to drink, I'd just say, "what you doing, and I'd smack 'em around a little bit, and that' be it.

**MODERATOR:** Apparently Daniel's the friend to have.

**DANIEL:** Yah, but other people'll just do anything their friends say...

**MODERATOR:** Jason have you ever seen anyone try to push you to drink? Or do you see that happening...peers pushing their friends?

**JASON:** Nobodies every really pushed me to do it. I've never even really seen it anywhere.  
Nobody every pushing anybody else.

**MODERATOR:** You're lucky. Have any of you actually seen that...Justin, perhaps on the football team?

**JUSTIN:** I didn't hang out with most of them because it's bad. But, I've hard stories.

**MODERATOR:** Thanks. How much does family influence a teens desire to drink and abuse alcohol?

**ADAM:** A lot.

**MODERATOR:** Adam, why did you say "a lot"?

**ADAM:** It goes back to the parents drinking. Because if the parents drink, it gives the kids a sense of, "oh, it's ok because my parents do it". And so if they want to do it, then, the parents...the same people who should say you shouldn't drink will be like, "ok". But if they don't drink it'll probably be like some kind of standard that they have in their family...so they just won't do it.

**MODERATOR:** We'll talk about that...we're just about through, and after, I'll share what I have found. Daniel you had a comment?

**DANIEL:** I was going to say that people with large families are pretty close and they help each other out. So most of the time they wouldn't be going out and getting drunk.

**MODERATOR:** We touched on this next question...Does the media influence teens to drink and abuse alcohol? What's your thought?  
You're saying "no" Daniel?

**DANIEL:** I don't think so, because most of the time people have already decided whether they're going to drink or not, and a little tv commercial isn't going to change it no matter how funny it is.

**JUSTIN:** I don't think the tv commercials influence it, but like the tv shows and the programs, like the movies that they see. Because you can't watch a tv show or a movie that doesn't include alcohol. And people just drink...they make it look like fun more realistically than they might on a commercial.

**DANIEL:** It slowly degrades your....uh...

**JESSE:** Life expectancy?

**DANIEL:** No, I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about...watching the show slowly degrades your...

**JASON:** Moral values.

**DANIEL:** Yah.

**MODERATOR:** Your ability to stand up against it. Thank you.  
Should others try to convince you as a group that alcohol is good or bad for you?

**DANIEL:** All my friends they know what I do and don't do, so if somebody tries to get me to do one of those things, they'll like stick up for me. All you have to do is say "no" and then everybody else will help.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you. Adam you had a comment, and I only heard part of it.

**ADAM:** Well, you said friends, so if they're your friends, I don't think they should..they shouldn't tell you what to do.

**MODERATOR:** If you had a friend abusing alcohol, Adam, how would you handle it?

**ADAM:** I would just like be an example to them, and just keep trying to...



**MODERATOR:** Interesting. Any other thoughts?  
If you had a friend who was abusing alcohol, Jessie, what would you do?

**JESSE:** I'd probably show that friend what are some of the problems with abusing alcohol. For instance the um...crashes with people being drunk and driving.

**MODERATOR:** That's an interesting though. I hate those drivers ed movies. I think we're going to stop there.

## **APPENDIX VII**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

- 1. IT IS RIGHT FOR TEENS TO DRINK ALCOHOL EVEN THOUGH THE LAW EXPRESSLY FORBIDS IT?**
- 2. ARE THE CURRENT LAW REGARDING CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL, APPROPRIATE? WHY? OR WHY NOT?**
- 3. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE “ALCOHOL ABUSE” BY A TEEN? HOW MUCH ALCOHOL IS TOO MUCH IN ANY ONE SETTING?**
- 4. DO THERE TEND TO BE GROUPS AT SCHOOL WHO SEEM TO DRINK MORE THAN OTHER GROUPS AT SCHOOL (SCHOLARS, ATHLETES, MUSICIANS, ETC;) ? WHY IS THIS?**
- 5. DO YOU SEE STUDENTS FROM SPECIFIC BACKGROUNDS WHO TEND TO ABUSE ALCOHOL? (AVOID ETHNIC GROUPS)! THOSE WHO HAVE A CAR? THOSE WHO COME FROM LARGE OR SMALL FAMILIES.**
- 6. DOES ACCESS TO MONEY HAVE ANY IMPACT ON THE ABUSE OF ALCOHOL WITH TEENS?**
- 7. HAVE YOU HEARD OF ANY THINGS (INDICATORS) THAT MIGHT BE MEAN YOU HAVE A TENDENCY AND COULD BECOME AN ALCOHOL ABUSER? WHAT?**
- 8. DO YOU BELIEVE THOSE THINGS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- 9. WHERE DID YOU HEAR ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS BEING INDICATORS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE?**
- 10. DO YOU TRUST THOSE WHO HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT THE INDICATORS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- 11. WHAT SORTS OF PEOPLE DO YOU TRUST WHEN LEARNING OF SUBJECTS LIKE ALCOHOL ABUSE?**
- 12. DO YOU SEE A LOT OF ADVERTISING DEALING WITH ALCOHOL?**
- 13. WHAT DO THESE ADVERTISEMENTS TELL YOU? WHY?**

14. HAVE YOU BEEN IN PROGRAMS AT SCHOOL, HOME OR CHURCH THAT HAVE TAUGHT YOU ABOUT ALCOHOL ABUSE, AND THE THINGS TO BE CAREFUL OF? WHERE? WHEN?
15. IS IT MORALLY RIGHT TO DRINK ALCOHOL AS A TEEN? HOW ABOUT AS AN ADULT? WHY OR WHY NOT?
16. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE DANGERS OF DRINKING ALCOHOL? WHY TO YOU BELIEVE THESE THINGS.
17. DO YOUR PEERS SEEM TO INFLUENCE OTHERS TO DRINK AND ABUSE ALCOHOL? WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
18. HOW MUCH DOES "FAMILY" INFLUENCE A TEENS DESIRE TO DRINK AND ABUSE ALCOHOL? WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
19. DOES THE MEDIA INFLUENCE TEENS TO DRINK AND ABUSE ALCOHOL? HOW?
20. SHOULD OTHERS TRY TO CONVINCE YOU (AS A GROUP) THAT ALCOHOL IS GOOD OR BAD FOR YOU? WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
21. IF YOU HAD TO STOP A FRIEND FROM ABUSING ALCOHOL, HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?

## **APPENDIX VIII**

### **D.A.R.E. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**



## **Elementary Curriculum**

**The elementary curriculum is delivered by a D.A.R.E. officer to fifth and sixth grade students and includes one lesson per week for 17 consecutive weeks. The D.A.R.E. Program requires that a certified teacher be present and help supplement classroom activities. A wide range of teaching techniques are used, including question and answer, group discussion, role-play, and workbook exercises.**

**In addition to presenting the elementary curriculum, D.A.R.E. officers visit the kindergarden through fourth grade classes at the schools. These visits focus on child safety and prevention issues. Students are alerted to the potential dangers in the misuse of drugs, medicine, and other substances. There is a recognition of the need to help students at this level develop an awareness that alcohol and tobacco are also drugs. Four D.A.R.E. sessions are held for grades K-2 and five sessions are held in 3rd and 4th grades.**

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## **D.A.R.E. Junior High Curriculum**

**The following outlines the D.A.R.E. Junior High Curriculum**

### **1. RECONNECTING WITH D.A.R.E.**

**Concept:** Learning to recognize and resist pro-social influences that promote drug use and violence is an important goal for students in the D.A.R.E. program.

**Purpose:** To recognize students with the goals of the D.A.R.E. program and to provide reinforcement of skills and understandings to help them in recognizing and resisting pro-social influences that promote drug use and violence.

**Objective:** Students will become acquainted with the D.A.R.E. officer assigned to the school and will be able to define their roles and responsibilities as D.A.R.E. students.

### **2. BELIEFS ABOUT DRUGS**

**Concept:** The use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by young people is illegal and can have negative short and long-term consequences that can harm their lives.

**Purpose:** To help students clarify their beliefs and opinions concerning the negative risks of illegal drug use.

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify the possible negative consequences of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

### **3. DRUGS, VIOLENCE, AND VICTIMS**

**Concept:** Laws and school behavior codes regarding possession of substances and acts of violence have been established to protect the rights and safety of all persons.

**Purpose:** To inform students about laws, school behavior codes, regarding possession of substances (alcohol, tobacco, and other dangerous drugs) and acts of violence.

**Objective:** Students will demonstrate awareness of the need of laws and behavior codes, such as possessing substances or bringing weapons to school.

#### **4. RESISTING INFLUENCES ASSERTIVELY**

**Concept:** Assertiveness is a way of resisting influences that pressure people to modify their beliefs and behaviors to conform or fit with those acceptable to certain group norms or belief patterns and behaviors.

**Purpose:** To make students aware of the various pressures that influence or persuade young people to use drugs and to teach assertiveness as a way for resisting these pressures.

**Objective:** Students will recognize the various influences that may pressure a young person to consider using substances and will demonstrate how to resist these influences assertively using both verbal communication and body language.

#### **5. FORMING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

**Concept:** Respecting and appreciating the diversity of others enable people to interact with and form positive relationships with one another without stereotyping or other unfair treatment.

**Purpose:** To help students recognize the importance of showing respect and appreciation for the diversity of others to develop positive relationships with many different people to fulfill students' needs for affection (being liked), belonging, respect, and feelings of self-worth.

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify ways to show respect and appreciation for the diversity of others and to form positive relationships with many different people in order to fulfill students needs for affection (being liked), belonging, respect, and feelings of self-worth.

#### **6. RESOLVING CONFLICTS WITHOUT VIOLENCE**

**Concept:** Choices other than violence should be utilized as ways to resolve differences.

**Purpose:** To help students to explore ways of dealing with anger and conflicts without resorting to acts of violence.

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify and demonstrate non-violent ways to deal with anger and conflict.



## **7. AVOIDING VIOLENT AND GANG-ORIENTED RELATIONSHIPS**

**Concept:** Battering and other forms of physical, verbal, and emotional violence are learned ways of behaving that should not be accepted nor condoned.

**Purpose:** To make students aware of the extent of violence impacting people of all ages and all cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic groups in our communities and to help them consider options for avoiding violent relationships.

## **8. MAKING OUR ENVIRONMENT DRUG-FREE, VIOLENCE-FREE, AND SAFE**

**Concept:** Good citizenship and pride in self, family, school, and community contribute to making our environment drug-free, violence free, and safe.

**Purpose:** Help students explore universally accepted standards of behavior or ideals of what is appropriate, or right, in the way one lives his or her own life and the way in which he or she treats others.

**Objective:** Students will be able to identify and clarify what is appropriate, or right, from that which is inappropriate, or wrong, in developing lifelong guides to having good self-esteem and being good citizens.

## **9. D.A.R.E. SQUARES REVIEW**

The officer will provide an opportunity for students to review and strengthen what they learned from participating in D.A.R.E..

## **10. D.A.R.E. INFOACTIONS AND CULMINATION**

The officer will help students understand the risks of involvement with drugs and violence related behaviors.



## **Senior High Curriculum**

**D.A.R.E. is a cooperative program in which law enforcement and the school district join together to educate students about the personal and social consequences of substance abuse. The D.A.R.E. lessons and follow-up activities also focus on strategies for anger management and violence prevention. The concepts and skills emphasized in the D.A.R.E. program are sequentially developed to extend from kindergarten through junior and senior high school.**

**The aim of the senior high school D.A.R.E. project is to extend the information and reinforce the skills students need to enable them (1) to act in their own best interest when facing high-risk, low-gain choices and (2) to resist peer pressure and other influences in making their personal choices. Equal emphasis is placed on helping students to recognize and cope with feelings of anger without causing harm to themselves or others and without resorting to violence or the use of alcohol and drugs.**

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