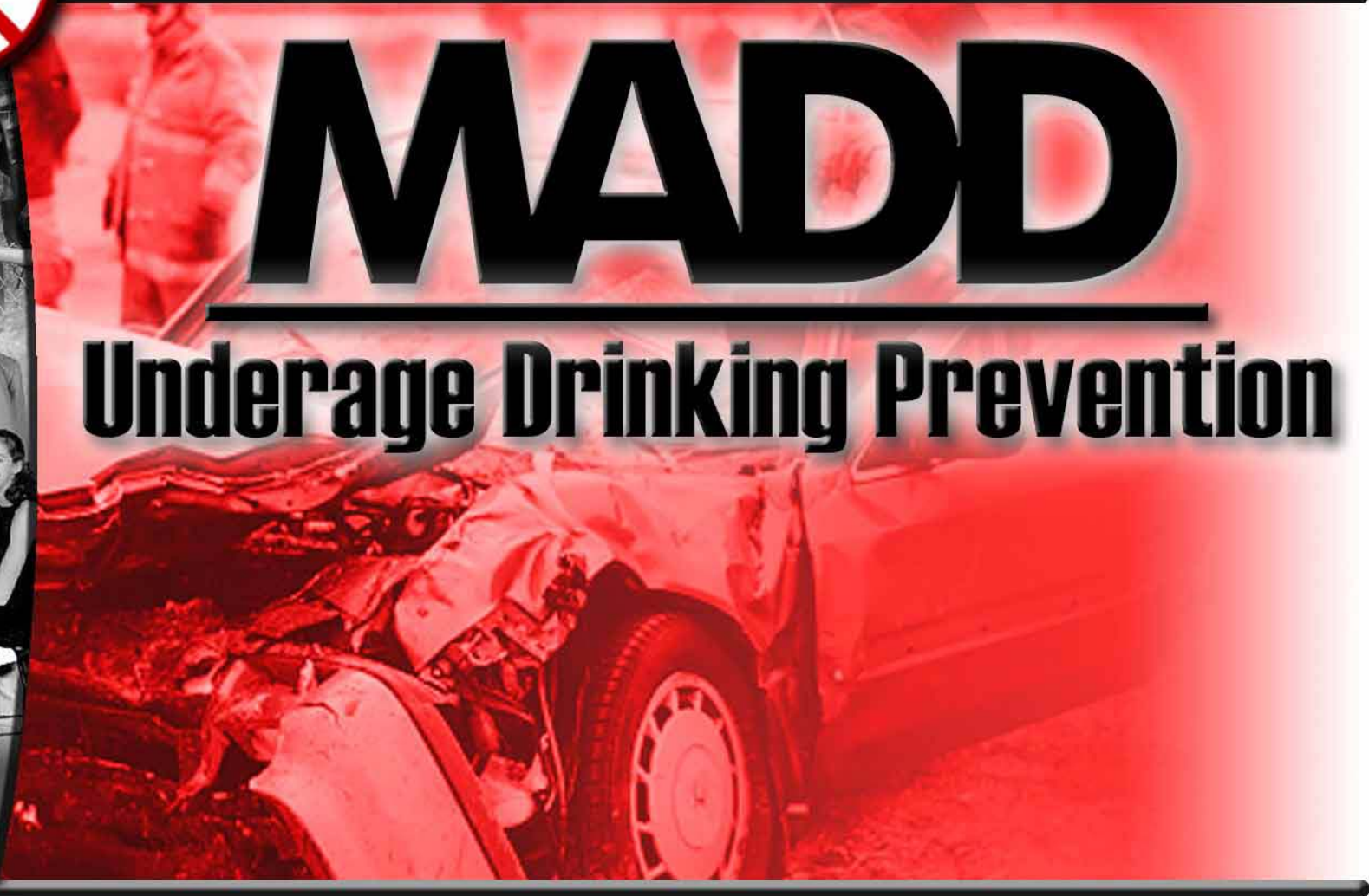




MADD

Underage Drinking Prevention



September 2001



Project Overview



Objectives

The overall objective of this research is to aid in the understanding of underage drinking and develop hypotheses concerning appropriate messaging with the target audience.

Specific objectives are to:

- Assess attitudes and the mythology around underage drinking.
- Understand key areas of access to alcohol for teens.
- Assess their understanding of various youth 'messaging' campaigns.
- Gauge reactions to various messaging ideas and key barriers.



Where and how

- Sixteen discussion groups were conducted -- 4 each in Chicago, New York, Dallas and Los Angeles
- Group breakout:
 - ✓ Chicago
 - Boys 14-17
 - Girls 9-13
 - Girls 18-21
 - Parents
 - ✓ New York
 - Boys 9-13
 - Boys 18-21
 - Girls 14-17
 - Parents



Where and how - continued

➔ Group breakout - continued:

✓ Dallas

- Boys 9-13
- Boys 18-21
- Girls 14-17
- Parents

✓ Los Angeles

- Boys 14-17
- Girls 9-13
- Girls 18-21
- Parents



Respondents

Respondent profile:

✓ Youth

- Mix of interests
- Mix of ages within group range
- Standard Market Research Exclusions

✓ Parents

- Mix of Male and Female
- Mix of Incomes
- Have at least one child living at home within specified age ranges
- Standard Market Research Exclusions



Research Limitations

- Group discussions are essentially idea-generating and hypothesis-forming vehicles.
- Qualitative research utilizes non-randomly selected respondents and as such cannot be projected to a specific population, cohort or universe.
- Collected information may be used to form hypotheses about what attitudes exist, but not the extent to which they represent defined populations.



Findings

Student Groups



Ages 9-13

Perceptual Mapping



Most have recently been exposed to the D.A.R.E. program and are opposed to the use of alcohol and/or drugs;

➔ They believe:

- ➔ Alcohol will cause addiction and possibly even death
- ➔ Alcohol and drugs are thought to be equally addictive
- ➔ Alcohol is seen as a gateway drug

“You can’t control what you do when you drink. If you get drunk you may end up doing something dumb like running into the street and getting hit by a car.”

Ages 9-13

Perceptual Mapping



Alcohol is thought to lack any redeeming qualities and most are fearful of the consequences of consuming alcohol

- Though many have parents who “may have a glass of wine with dinner,” their word associations to alcohol are all negative
- Although negative consequences may not be immediate, eventually lives will be ruined by alcohol
- Alcohol consumption is associated with extreme cases of alcoholism



Ages 9-13

Perceptual Mapping



Most are confident they will not fall prey to peer pressure

- ➔ **They believe in their ability to “Just say no” as demonstrated through the D.A.R..E program**
- ➔ **They do believe teen experimentation with alcohol is a result of peer pressure but many think: “If my friends don’t like me because I won’t drink, then they aren’t really my friends”**





Ages 9-13

Perceptual Mapping

There is a double standard for this age group — it is okay for boys, but not for girls

- ➔ Girls in this age group say it is much more probable (as well as acceptable) for boys to drink than it is for girls
- ➔ Girls say they will *never* consume alcohol
- ➔ Boys say they will not use alcohol prior to turning 21 or 22 and will then only drink on occasion



Ages 9-13

Views on Alcohol



Educational programs that demonstrate the dangers of alcohol consumption are thought to be the most hard-hitting

- Programs such as D.A.R.E. have been very effective in communicating with this age group
- Many believe a program directed toward older teens would help them to resist the pressure to drink alcohol
- Programs that educate are imagined to be the most effective
- Many believe the most effective tool for communicating this message is either peers of the same age or a little older
 - Message should be negative consequences that happened to them personally or to a loved one





Ages 14-17

Perceptual Mapping

have already had it

only for grown-ups

first drink at 16

weekends

parties where people want to get loaded

if you don't drink too much you will have a good time

addictive

date rape

will drink in mid 20's

getting caught by parents

bad liver

ALCOHOL

makes you feel good

it's easy to get

makes you say stupid things

makes you make bad decisions

giving in to peer pressure

makes you feel different

makes trouble go away

you act stupid

hangover

everyone seems to do it

others are doing it so i want to try it

it's expensive

makes you feel happy

just chillin'



Ages 14-17

Views on Alcohol



In their mid-teens kids become more open to the regular consumption of alcohol. However, they are still leery of illegal drugs

- ➔ Teenagers begin to experiment with alcohol around 14-15
- ➔ Alcohol consumption becomes a more regular activity at about 16-17
- ➔ Illicit drugs are often thought to be more dangerous than alcohol
 - ➔ The exception to this is marijuana – some respondents believe there is less harm in using pot than alcohol



Ages 14-17 Views on Alcohol



The opinions of teens are shaped by what they are witness to in their daily lives. They see others drinking alcohol -- so why shouldn't they?

- ➔ The “Just say no” message when related to alcohol has not been heard, nor is it considered credible
- ➔ Many know adults who consume alcohol and have not suffered an ill fate
 - ➔ “How bad/dangerous can it really be if it is legal and many adults in our lives are drinking it?”



Ages 14-17 Views on Alcohol



Teen concerns around alcohol are based on how they may be perceived by their friends and peers while intoxicated

- ➔ What most fear is “losing control” or drinking so much that they embarrass themselves in front of their friends
- ➔ Memory loss as a result of alcohol consumption is also a concern
- ➔ The solution is to drink in *moderation*. As one respondent says, “You just have to know your own limit and be sure not to go past it”



Ages 14-17 Views on Alcohol



Girls are afraid of losing control of their inhibitions and of not being able to fend off sexual advances made by boys

- ➔ For girls, a main concern is being taken advantage of by boys when they are drunk
- ➔ Pregnancy is a concern;
 - ➔ Some are afraid they will be too drunk to refuse sex
 - ➔ Others are afraid of being raped if they are to become too intoxicated.



Ages 14-17

Views on Alcohol



Girls do not like to be approached by boys who are drunk, however, they accept it as “normal” boy behavior

- ➔ Girls say they are “turned-off” by boys who drink too much or who approach them while drunk
- ➔ However, they believe it is more acceptable for boys to drink than girls
- ➔ Girls who drink too much can be ridiculed by both their female and male peers
- ➔ Boys are less likely than girls to be scorned by their peers for being too drunk



Ages 14-17

Views on Alcohol



Although public service campaigns directed toward teens are viewed as “cheesy,” they have the potential to be effective if the message, and the person delivering it, is not over-the-top, is realistic and believable

- ➔ Most mentioned is the egg and frying pan, “This is your brain, this is your brain on drugs” campaign
- ➔ Ads depicting kids their age telling realistic stories of what they have been through as a negative result of alcohol consumption are thought to be the most effective
- ➔ Some mention the D.A.R.E. program they were in when they were younger and wonder why this is not repeated for children their age
- ➔ Many say they would not believe a campaign with celebrities telling them the pitfalls of alcohol



Ages 18-21

Perceptual Mapping



DUI

risking your life

makes you feel good

been around for forever

never should be done to extreme

passing out

calming and recreational

give you an excuse to do *anything*

drunk co-eds

relaxing

hangovers

Saturday nights

ALCOHOL

free spirit - more outgoing

vomiting from drinking too much

abuse

taken advantage of

inhibitions removed

happy-hyper

just feels good

bad for someone who doesn't know how to handle it

makes you look goofy

sometimes do things you regret



Ages 18-21

Views on Alcohol

Peer pressure is a determining factor in one's decision to consume alcohol or not. Many will go along with the crowd because they do not see the harm in doing so

- Most are open to both occasional and frequent use of alcohol
- Those who do not use alcohol express concern for their own health and safety, as well as the safety of others
 - Many are aware of negative physical effects of alcohol
- The peer group plays a large role in one's decision to consume alcohol or to abstain

Ages 18-21

Views on Alcohol



Many say the illegality of alcohol for those under the age of 21 is what makes it more attractive and glamorous

- They do not buy into a simple “Just say no” message when it comes to alcohol
- They do not see 21 as a credible age for it to suddenly become acceptable to consume it
- To say that alcohol is okay for adults to consume but is not for those under 21 generates a mystique
 - The “Just say no” message linked to drugs is more credible and accepted in that drugs are illegal for everyone

Ages 18-21 Views on Alcohol



It is often *more* fun to drink alcohol because it is illegal and they know it is something they shouldn't be doing

- ➔ The perceived level of risk is a key motivator — it's fun to do things they have to hide from adults
- ➔ They do not associate this risk with danger to their lives
- ➔ Many have grown-up watching family members consume alcohol
- ➔ They have first-hand accounts of consumption with minor consequences such as a hangover in the morning



Ages 18-21

Views on Alcohol



The message “Don’t drink and drive” has been heard loud and clear, but it doesn’t mean to not drink at all

- Many feel it is alright to consume alcohol prior to the legal age of 21 as long as they are not driving while intoxicated
 - This message is also supported by parents
 - Many believe that 18 is a more logical drinking age
- As a result, “knowing your limits” is the key to acceptable drinking behavior. One respondent explains, “As long as you can control yourself and not do anything stupid, then it can be a lot of fun.”

Ages 18-21 Views on Alcohol



Drinking to the point of extreme intoxication is often the intent and is considered acceptable behavior

- ➔ Many feel that it is completely acceptable for people their age to drink and get drunk
- ➔ They consider drinking to the point of extreme intoxication a normal activity for their age group
- ➔ The amount of alcohol consumed is irrelevant, as long as no one is driving
- ➔ However, girls express concern about someone slipping a date rape drug into their drink





Findings

Parent Groups





Parents Views on Alcohol



have been educated about the negatives

not appealing

moderation

I've found beer in my 17 year old's room

parties and celebrations

when will he experiment?

can't drink only one

part of teen culture

mixed messages

hard to hide

ALCOHOL

too much is bad

margaritas are ok

surprised at such a young age

none while driving

easy to obtain

well-educated by d.a.r.e.

leads to sexual activity

see parents drinking

concerned their friends may drink and drive

can't buy it unless you are an adult

ruins judgment



Parents Views on Alcohol

Many expect that their kids will experiment with alcohol when they are teenagers but assume it will not become a regular activity

- Many guess that 17 or 18 is the average age for kids to begin experimentation with alcohol
- Some imagine that college is an appropriate time to begin worrying about their children drinking alcohol
- Rather than stand firm on what they consider to be a losing issue they instead try to impart the message “Drink responsibly.”
- In the words of one parent, “I am sure that my kids will try alcohol, I know I just need to be available to talk with them about the dangers of it.”



Parents Views on Alcohol

For many parents, responsible drinking means:

- ➔ to not drink to a point of being incoherent
- ➔ to not drink so much that they lose all inhibitions
- ➔ to not drink and drive or get in the car with someone who has been drinking
- ➔ to not endanger themselves or others while drinking





Parents Views on Alcohol

- Many express concern for other activities they believe alcohol will lead to
 - One parent explains, “Alcohol is a slippery slope I guess. You may start with that but because your judgment is already impaired with alcohol you may try other things: drugs or sex. You may lose the ability to say no or even the desire to say no.”





Parents Views on Alcohol

- Some parents are more concerned with drug use than with alcohol use because they:
 - believe that alcohol use is easier to detect than drug use
 - have heard many tragic stories relating to the use of ecstasy (and similar drugs) among teenagers
 - used alcohol themselves when they were teenagers and ultimately believe that “if their kids are smart/responsible about it” then they will also be okay
 - some believe that drugs are easier to get than alcohol





Implications and Recommendations





Implications and Recommendations

Implications

1. When younger, the messages from parents as well as programs such as D.A.R.E. are very effective in shaping children's attitudes against alcohol.
 - ➔ The D.A.R.E program is offered in school to 4th-6th graders. Programs promoting alcohol prevention are usually not in place for older students.
2. As children age they begin to form their own opinions and begin to rely on peer opinions as to what is "cool." Their attitudes towards alcohol shift, and many decide it is acceptable to consume it.





Implications and Recommendations

Implications - continued

3. Teenagers are drawn to what is forbidden -- especially to what is acceptable for some but not for themselves.
 - ➔ They rebel against the message, “It’s okay for me but not for you” from adults. They watch adults consume alcohol and become interested in finding out what the mystique is all about.
4. A side effect of the “Don’t drink and drive” message has been that “It is okay to drink; just don’t drive.”
5. Teenagers perceive from their parents that drinking alcohol is not in itself a punishable offense but rather to doing so “irresponsibly” will bring punishment.



Implications and Recommendations

Implications - continued

6. Messages from older authority-type figures are a turn-off and are considered less effective and less believable. These are looked upon as just one more adult telling children what to do/not do.

7. The use of celebrities in alcohol prevention messages are not credible. The common belief is that they do not “practice what they preach.”
 - ➔ Celebrities are thought to have hidden alcohol problems. They are not trusted and may do more harm (“They do it. Why can’t I?”) in the long run. Celebrities mentioned include A.J. McLean of the Backstreet Boys, Ben Affleck and Robert Downey, Jr.



Implications and Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Consider developing a program to reach older children with positive alcohol messages who are just beginning to be confronted by peers.
 - ➔ Pre to early high school years may be most effective.
2. Resources may be most effective and best directed toward those who have not yet started using alcohol -- prior to the development of value systems allowing that alcohol use is okay.



Implications and Recommendations

Recommendations - continued

3. Use peer-to-peer messaging rather than adult-to-peer.
 - Communication from someone teens can relate to is more effective and many find believable “negative consequence” messages have more impact.
 - Consider using real people with real stories. Messages of this type make a stronger and longer lasting impression.

4. If celebrities *are* used in campaigns, consider celebrities who have previously had alcohol problems and who have been to rehab.
 - They are viewed as more credible sources.



Implications and Recommendations

Recommendations - continued

5. **Ensure that messages are consistent across age groups.**
 - **9-13 year olds internalize alcohol prevention messages as “Anyone who consumes alcohol will be hurt or possibly die.” As they age they realize this is not always the case.**
 - **Conflicting messages increase the likelihood of future messaging being viewed as not credible -- or as obvious lies.**

6. **Recognize that children see and hear seemingly hypocritical messages relating to alcohol. Clearly address mixed messaging and give straightforward reasons why it makes sense and why it is okay for those over 21 and not for those who are under 21.**



Implications and Recommendations

Recommendations - continued

7. If funds are limited, consider focusing budgets to those who are under 17.
 - When 16 and younger there is still opportunity to communicate the message of alcohol abstinence.
 - Those who are over the age of 17 are less likely to buy into alcohol abstinence messaging.



Implications and Recommendations

Recommendations - continued

8. Also direct some messages toward the parents of teenagers.
 - Raising awareness, educating and changing the attitudes at home may be the most direct way to change attitudes of the children when they are outside the home.

9. Consider helping parents develop techniques to communicate with their children regarding alcohol. Educate parents as to how the messages they give their children regarding alcohol are internalized by their children. Keep educational campaign strategies of parents consistent with campaign strategies directed toward children.



Goldfarb Consultants