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**Mothers Against Drunk Driving's Campaigns of Self-Directed Change  
to Prevent Underage Drinking in Society**

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**Report**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**August 2011**

## **Dedication**

To my mother and father:

Thank you for supporting me in everything I do. You taught me to stand for something and try to make a difference in this world. I am honored to have you as my parents.

To my sister:

You are my role model, and I dedicate this report to you. Your prior experience with MADD and other non-profit work inspires me every day. Thank you for showing me how I can make a difference.

## **Abstract**

### **Mothers Against Drunk Driving's Campaigns of Self-Directed Change to Prevent Underage Drinking in Society**

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The purpose of this research is to describe and analyze the public relations elements of Mothers Against Drunk Driving's campaign to prevent underage drinking. The focus will be Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and its current communication strategies and possible future initiatives. An analysis of underage drinking in the United States provides the necessary background for MADD's change in its prior mission statement and goals. The public relations strategies of MADD will be analyzed through the characteristics of organizational excellence, models of public relations and focus principally on the factors for self-directed change. After discussing the basic foundations of MADD's current campaign, an analysis of underage drinking on college campuses explains the need for a separate campaign for the college community. The results of MADD's public relations and campaign will be discussed in closing.

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## **Chapter I: MADD and Underage Drinking**

The history of underage drinking and its effects are slowly becoming more prominent in today's society. With teens choosing to consume alcohol as young as in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the issues of brain development come into play (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving). Although the legal drinking age was changed to a lower age before the 1980s, studies show that any age below the age of 21 that consumes alcohol can have serious consequences which include both health issues and an increase in driving accidents. The significance of this paper is to show how a few mothers created a grassroots organization that grew into a nationwide organization (including Puerto Rico and Guam) that has the ability and respect to work with legislation and create a significant decrease in statistics of underage drinking. It is a phenomenon to have something that started with only two women have such an impact in our society today.

### **History of MADD**

In May 1980, Candy Lightner received a disturbing call at her real estate office. Authorities had called to inform Candy that her 13-year-old daughter was involved in a hit-and-run while walking to a church carnival. Her daughter's body landed 125 feet away from her shoes. She died on impact. A few days later, it was discovered that the driver of the car was drunk. This led to the formation of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers on September 5, 1980 in Candy Lightner's home. In 1984, Mothers Against Drunk

Drivers changed to Mothers Against Drunk Driving when the organization realized they were not against people, but against actions.

The beginnings of MADD started with finding other victims of drunk driving through classified ads, mailing newsletters, gathering information and finding out how to work with the system (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving). In the early years, MADD and city officials knocked on legislators' doors trying to change the behavior and laws around drunk driving. Soon MADD chapters were forming quickly on the East Coast and West Coast with hope for what was to come in the future.

MADD's efforts contributed to many significant moments in America's history to fight to prevent drunk driving. In 1982, the Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving was announced by President Ronald Reagan because of MADD's efforts. That same year Congress passed a federal bill awarding highway funds to states with anti-drunk driving efforts to encourage states to pass bills involving anti-drunk driving laws. In 1983, One hundred and nine new anti-drunk driving laws passed. MADD's next campaign was focused on changing the legal drinking age. In 1984, the 21 Minimum Drinking Age Act was signed into law on July 17<sup>th</sup>. In 1992, MADD's mission statement was revised to include "support the victims of this violent crime" to include the efforts they were making for victims. In 1999, with the support of the government, corporations, educators, the media and public, MADD revised its mission statement once again to say "The mission of Mothers Against Drunk Driving is to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime and prevent underage drinking" (MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving).



MADD's goal for underage drinking "is to protect our country's youth from the dangers of underage drinking" (MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving). To accomplish this, MADD has focused on passing groundbreaking public health laws. MADD also knows that parents are the number one influence on their children's decisions about alcohol and created the *Power of Parents, It's Your Influence* in order to provide parents strategies to help keep their youth away from the dangers of underage drinking. Another strategy, to accomplish MADD's goal, is to create a positive community for youth to develop in by educating not only parents, but all adults above the legal drinking age about why they should prevent underage drinking. Through the work of education and legislative processes MADD has taken on the challenge of underage drinking prevention gracefully.

### **Underage Drinking Analysis**

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, underage drinking received more attention than ever before. Although overall there was a decrease in the rates of 12-year-olds and older alcohol consumption, the decrease was only a minuscule decline. Over the years underage drinking has always been a problem, but it became significantly more important as health, addiction and research studies on the quality of life were released to the public.

#### *Drinking Age History*

After the United States had gone through Prohibition, almost all of states made the legal drinking age 21 years of age. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, twenty nine states decided to activate their states' rights and changed the minimum drinking age to 18, 19

and 20. These states felt those ages were more appropriate because the voting age and military enlistment were both under the age of 21.

Shortly after the change in these states, studies showed that motor vehicle crashes increased significantly among teens (2002). As soon as this research was released, organizations such as MADD began to advocate that states restore the minimum legal drinking age back to 21 years of age. Some states after reviewing the research willingly raised their minimum legal drinking ages back to 21 years of age with others did not. Those who resisted said they feared consumers who were under 21 would only drive across state lines to drink and then drive back after consuming alcohol. These borders quickly became known as “blood border” because people would often crash resulting in extreme damages or fatalities (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

Based off of the research studies, crashes and fatalities, the President Commission on Drunk Driving recommended to President Reagan to establish 21 as the minimum drinking age. On July 17, 1984, the Uniform Drinking Age Act was signed into law and mandated that all states adopt 21 as their legal drinking age.

Since then, the legal drinking age has remained at 21. The National Traffic Highway Administration feels this law has kept 25,000 people alive today (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

#### *Information on Underage Drinking*

Statistics for underage drinking have always included adolescents as young as the age of 12. For several years studies have shown that most teens have had at least one drink by the time they are in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. According to MADD’s website, “one in three

8<sup>th</sup> graders drinks alcohol and teen alcohol use kills about 6,000 people each year” which is more deaths than any other illegal drug (MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving ).

In 2003, The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism structured its *Alcohol Alert* issue on underage drinking and the health challenge it was bringing. The statistics behind underage drinking are shattering. They found “approximately 20 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and almost 50 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders have consumed alcohol within the past 30 days” (Li, T., 2003). Within those statistics 30 percent of 12 graders reported drinking three or more times per month, which is now known as “binge” drinking.

#### *Medical Concerns*

One of the first medical concerns involved with alcohol consumption is impaired judgment and motor skills. Motor vehicle crashes are still the leading cause of death among youth (CDC-Fact Sheets-Underage Drinking-Alcohol). With adolescents already not having experience on the road, the impairments alcohol has on their motor skills doubles the dangers of being on the road. In 2003, the rate of alcohol-related fatal car crashes for 16 to 20 year old drivers was more than twice the rate for adults who were 21 and up (Li,T., 2003). Likewise, when under the influence of alcohol teens in situations with high-risk can fail to use a condom or have multiple sexual partners. This can lead to unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections. Sexual assault becomes more possible as well when under the influence of alcohol. When alcohol use interacts with conditions such as depression and stress a probable outcome has been suicide. Suicide is “the third leading cause of death among people between the ages of 14 and 25” (Li, T.,

2003). One study showed that “37 percent of eight grade females who drank heavily reported attempting suicide, compared with 11 percent who did not drink” (Li, T., 2003). The physical situations that can occur because of being under the influence are not the only concerns for teens that are drinking at a young age. The effect alcohol has on the brain has been a discussion of great interest. Researchers feel that teenagers who drink “may interrupt key processes of brain development, possibly leading to mild cognitive impairment as well as to further escalation of drinking” (Li, T., 2003). These interruptions could affect academic behavior and achievements, short-term memory and alcohol withdrawal symptoms. In general, research has shown that the hippocampus, the part of the brain in charge of learning and memory, is “smaller in alcohol-dependents” than people who are nondependent (Li, T., 2003).

These issues lead into early alcohol dependence becoming a lifelong problem for those who start drinking at a young age. According to a study, “people who begin drinking before age 15 are four time more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some time in their lives compared with those who have their first drink at age 20 or older” (Li, T., 2003). The consumption of alcohol at such an early age can lead to tendencies and dependence without a young teen knowing they are dependent on alcohol.

### *Binge Drinking*

Binge drinking can better be identified as “a pattern of drinking that brings a person’s blood alcohol concentration to .08 grams percent or above” (CDC - Fact Sheets- Binge Drinking - Alcohol). When determining the number of drinks to be considered a binge drinker it is five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women it in a

two hour time period. A national survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated that “92 percent of U.S. adults who drink excessively report binge drinking in the past 30 days” (CDC - Fact Sheets-Binge Drinking - Alcohol). The age group that is recorded to binge drink the most is 18 to 20 year olds with 51 percent of them binge drinking.

Problems that are associated with binge drinking include the same medical concerns addressed for underage drinking in general. A few other dangers are children born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, high blood pressure, stroke, other cardiovascular diseases, liver disease, sexual dysfunction and poor control of diabetes (CDC-Fact Sheets-Binge Drinking- Alcohol).

## **Chapter II: MADD's Campaign**

The research and studies produced that monitored the effects of underage drinking led many campaigns to prevent underage drinking. MADD was not the only organization, but did appear to have success which can be seen in its campaigns for drinking and driving alone.

The campaign for prevention of underage drinking developed because of safety reasons. Underage drinking put young adults and adolescents at risk for not only health reasons, but also their future in life.

### **Campaign Publics**

Over the years, MADD has worked with legislators as well as parents in its fight to end drinking and driving. The efforts for prevention of underage drinking added two new publics to address, colleges and teens themselves. MADD is lucky to have a majority of publics that are aware and active. Most of the organization's time is spent on active publics; however it does address aware publics as well. Grunig and Hunt identified three variables that led to communication behavior which are relevant to MADD's campaign: problem recognition, constraint recognition and level of involvement. Problem recognition can be defined as "the recognition that a person 'has a set of needs to be fulfill'" by Lovelock and Weinberg in 1984. Having a high problem recognition means there is motivation behind behaviors. Constraint recognition refers to "personal efficacy" and "discourages communication behavior" depending on if it is high or low (Grunig,

1989). Involvement is defined as “the common-sense interpretation that involvement is the degree of importance or concern that a product or behavior generates in different individuals” (Grunig, 1989). Each of these is determined to be high or low for each different classification of publics.

#### *Colleges and Under 21- Aware Publics*

Colleges and publics that are under 21 are both aware publics for MADD. According to the Situational Theory an aware public has high problem recognition, high constraint recognition and both high and low levels of involvement.

Colleges are an aware public for MADD because they hold high problem recognition of the effects and problem with underage drinking. A snapshot of excessive and underage drinking on college campus in 2009 showed the damages that all colleges were facing nationwide. In 2009, 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 died from alcohol related injuries (Research about Alcohol and College Drinking Prevention). Twenty five percent of college students had academic problems because of missing class, bad grades and missed class because of drinking. There were 3,360,000 students who drove under the influence between the ages of 18 and 24(Research about Alcohol and College Drinking Prevention). Property damage, vandalism and police involvement are other significant consequences that became a part of colleges’ worlds.

The challenge that colleges face is that they don’t feel they are doing enough. At the beginning of every school year colleges nationwide implement programs to educate freshman and returning students on the effects of alcohol. The focus is largely on binge drinking. Likewise, Greek Life also focuses on the effects of excessive and underage

drinking through its meetings and recruitments. However the fact remains, the tools college campuses have often used leave them feeling defeated and thus have high constraint recognition. MADD has created a section on its website called “college initiatives” to give tips and “engage college campuses and communities in the fight against alcohol misuse” ([MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#)). The website offers contact information for the local MADD affiliates, but there is much more MADD could do.

Publics that are under the age of 21 deal with peer pressure and wanting to fit in. Although they are becoming more educated on the facts and therefore have high problem recognition, they also have high constraint recognition, because many feel inadequate. The level of involvement for an underage drinker is significantly lower than colleges. There are very few organizations available to students to take a stand against underage drinking without feeling like an outcast. Even though sorority and fraternity bylaws prohibit underage drinking, it is more common to see new recruits consuming the most alcohol because they want to fit in (Research about Alcohol and College Drinking Prevention). Middle school has become a time of making impressions. With one in three 8<sup>th</sup> graders already having experience with alcohol it appears it is more difficult to say no more so now than ever (Li, T, 2003). MADD created the program Youth In Action “to prevent underage drinking by reducing the social and retail availability of alcohol for youth under the age of 21 and by supporting the enforcement of underage drinking laws” ([MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving](#)). MADD also created Protecting You/Protecting Me to start educating the risks of alcohol use during elementary school.



MADD feels instilling the skills to prevent peer pressure and educating on risks early on is the best way to be effective in preventing alcohol use by teenagers. It's strategies to address underage consumers is much more hands on and effective than its role with colleges.

#### *Parents and Legislatives- Active Publics*

Parents, legislators and law enforcement are all active publics for MADD. They have the highest problem recognition and low constraint recognition. These publics have the highest level of involvement in prevention of underage drinking. It is important to note there are latent and aware parents and legislators as well, but the majority of these groups are active and information seeking.

Parents are the key influencers for teens when making decisions about underage drinking. Parents were the first to recognize this problem as an issue and have not seen much change towards success. In fact, parents are instead realizing they need to take steps early on in their child's life. MADD offers programs, pamphlets, website links and other opportunities to make sure parents are prepared for any curve ball that might be thrown their way (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

Legislators and law enforcement are also active publics. Law enforcement directly interacts with underage drinking consequences whether it is arriving first to an accident or issuing citations. Legislators have the most recent facts and statistics of how underage drinking has changed across a city, a county, a state and the nation. Both have high problem recognition because of their daily involvement. Since they are influencers and protectors of the law, they are also low constraint recognition. Their duty is to serve

the community, so they believe they can make a difference. Underage drinking has provided many dangers to the community and they both want to change that. MADD is luckily to have the law on their side. It has brought a partnership that has helped in the world of drinking and driving and hopefully will in underage drinking as well.

### **Campaign Excellence**

Excellence in public relations can be separated into four levels each having its own characteristics of excellence. The four levels are the program level, the department level, the organizational level, and the economic level, according to Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002). MADD's public relations is on a organizational level, therefore its campaign to prevent underage drinking will be analyzed through the organizational level's characteristics of excellence.

#### *Characteristics of Organizational Excellence*

There are six different characteristics that provided excellence to a public relations program on the organizational level. They are as follows:

- Worldview for public relations in the organization reflects the two-way symmetrical model
- Public relations director has power in or with the dominant coalition
- Participative rather than authoritarian organizational culture
- Symmetrical system of internal communication
- Organic rather than mechanical organizational structure

- Turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups

The first characteristic is easily achieved by MADD because of its ongoing communication efforts with its publics. MADD encourages those who are interested in communicating with MADD or working with MADD to get in contact with them. MADD also has a National Communications office in which experts are available to the media for questions on all of MADD's initiatives. MADD releases public service announcements, press releases and emails to keep publics informed on MADD's progress (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving). MADD also joins the cause with government agencies and law enforcement on their initiatives such as the national *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* program that was organized by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the department MADD has partnered with before for raising the drinking age (MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

The members of MADD are no longer just mothers who are against drunk driving. The organization has expanded to contain members who hold power in each of their publics. Each of the publics previously identified are represented in the organization of MADD. MADD was able to accomplish a voice by being participative as an organization instead of authoritarian. Several members joined MADD because they were a victim, enjoyed the research or became a volunteer and were nurtured by MADD's staff and other volunteers. Its participative environment led to a more symmetrical system of internal communication and organic structure. Although MADD has grown into a large nationwide organization, its fundamental values are still focused around grassroots and

heart. MADD has received pressure at times for not doing enough and for doing too much like when they pushed to lower the blood alcohol content limit to .08.

### *A Two-way Model*

The applicability of the two- way symmetrical model for MADD in regards to the prevention of underage age drinking is easy to identify. The article “Symmetrical presuppositions as a framework for public relations theory” by Grunig (1989) discusses the presuppositions that come with two-way symmetrical approach. Equality, autonomy, innovation, decentralization of management, responsibility, conflict resolution and interest group liberalism all can be found within MADD’s campaigns and organization; however responsibility, autonomy and interest group liberalism are three presuppositions that are used most in MADD.

Responsibility and autonomy are two of the presuppositions it wants volunteers and members to uphold. MADD is concerned with the consequences its actions might bring. One step MADD took from the beginning to remain responsible was changing its name from drivers to driving in an effort to show it was actions and not people the organization was against. For underage drinking, MADD’s volunteers and members will need to stand by the steps of prevention in their lives outside of MADD as well. MADD’s structure provides autonomy to each of its publics and its members. The organization’s focus is about providing steps and training to prevent underage drinking. There are many different situations and the steps chosen allow someone to maximize their own potential. Autonomy in the organization also comes from the organic management structure and participative culture.

Interest group liberalism is at the front of MADD's two-way symmetrical model. Interest group liberalism "views the political system as a mechanism for open competition among interest or issue groups" (Grunig, 1989). It also looks to citizens to "champion interests of ordinary people against unresponsive government and corporate structures" (Boyte, 1980). MADD has developed several relationships with legislative bodies in its efforts for drunk driving as well as for underage drinking. It has played a key role in adjusting the behaviors of dominant coalitions. Instead of persuading, convincing and manipulating, MADD and legislators have been able to find equilibrium where both achieve a desired outcome.

It is important to note that legislators and MADD do not always have conflicting interests, just interests that are separate at times. A current example of the two-way symmetrical model by MADD was for *PowerTalk 21day*. *PowerTalk21* was created through the parent initiative program called Power of Parents. A Congressional Resolution was introduced by U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and David Vitter of Louisiana that formally proclaimed April 21, 2011 as the first *PowerTalk21day*. It gained a unanimous vote. MADD worked with Klobuchar and Vitter to work toward passing this resolution. Likewise, government officials have come to MADD to partner with the organization in other initiatives. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy contacted MADD for its new media campaign against underage drinking to be included in the public service component that was going to be released (Adweek, 1998). The relationship that has developed between MADD and legislators is a win-win

zone. Although direct interests are not always the same, the two are able to come to a common bond. In this scenario it was one day.

Communication is key when dealing with legislators to make sure laws or declarations are made fairly. This goes back to MADD and responsibility as one of their presuppositions. It is MADD's responsibility to remain in the win-win zone with legislative bodies. This relationship has allowed the organization to continue to be successful in its initiatives.

### **Other Models of Public Relations**

#### *Public Information Model*

Besides the two-way symmetrical model that MADD uses with legislators and law enforcement, MADD also uses the public information model for colleges, parents and teens in public relations. The public information model's purpose is "the dissemination of information, not necessarily with a persuasive intent" (Grunig, 1984).

MADD provides facts and information about its organization and the issues involved. It produces pamphlets, magazines, guidebooks, fact sheets, films and other materials that can inform college, parents and teens about underage drinking. Parents can receive the Parent Handbook to receive research-based materials on the best way to talk to their teenager about underage drinking. MADD's magazine *MADDvocate* highlights all of the latest issues for MADD to its subscribers. MADD also offer links to other websites that can be of assistance for more information.

#### *Two-way asymmetrical*

The purpose of the two-way asymmetrical model is to change the public's behavior to resolve the conflict of underage drinking. This model is also used by MADD because of the amount of research it conducts on the issue of underage drinking. MADD remains relevant on the statistics associated with underage drinking and new developments that can occur. MADD also believes that the public and society needs to change in order to resolve the conflict of underage drinking which is in line with the two-way asymmetrical model. The two-way asymmetrical model of public relations believes "that any change needed to resolve a conflict must come from the public and not from the organization" (Hunt, 1994). This two-way asymmetrical model is most used when communicating with underage consumers. Hunt (1994) believes that "even though members of a target public for a health campaign may resist changes in behavior to prevent a heart attack or AIDS, they do benefit from changes advocated by the campaign."

### **Analysis of Self-Directed Change**

In order for MADD to be successful in its current underage drinking campaign, a "widespread change in detrimental lifestyle practices" must occur which is known as self-directed change. The four components of self-directed change are information, skills, self-efficacy and social support.

#### *Informational Component*

The informational component of self-directed change is designed "to increase people's awareness and knowledge of health risks" (Bandura, 1990). For underage

drinking, publics need to be provided with the basic facts of underage drinking including the medical risks and impact on the quality of life for people under age. Getting this information to parents, college administrators and legislators is a much easier than making those who are underage aware of the risks and effects.

There are two main factors in the informational component of the model of self-directed change. They are “the informational content of the health communications and the mechanisms of social diffusion” (Bandura, 1990). MADD has incorporated both factors into its campaign to prevent underage drinking. After conducting copious amounts of research, MADD knows the health and social risks that plague underage consumers. MADD uses media outlets such as television, radio and print to get its information out. Public services announcements are one of the organization’s number one methods of diffusing information.

#### *Development of Self-Protective Skills and Controlling Self-Efficacy*

After building a foundation for the informational component, the next step is to guide people on how they can turn their concerns into successful actions. Campaigns alone about the risks and problems with underage drinking do not always make an effect especially on those that are underage drinkers. Bandura (1990) points out that “the ability to learn by social modeling provides a highly effective method for increasing human knowledge and skill.” Social modeling is providing models or examples that can help in interpersonal situations and guide someone through several circumstances by being adjustable. In most cases “people develop stronger belief in their capabilities and more



readily adopt modeled ways if they see models similar to themselves solve problems successfully with the modeled strategies” (Bandura, 1990).

MADD has chapters throughout the United States. Each chapter puts on events for parents, teens and the community to take part in the prevention of underage drinking. These events include speakers and panel sessions that allow groups to converse among each other in hopes of helping each other in the cause (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

#### *Enhancement of Social Proficiency and Resiliency of Self-Efficacy*

Once people have learned the skills and strategies to prevent underage drinking, people need opportunities to be able to practice these skills and strategies. Initially people are given these opportunities in a manipulated situation such as a role playing session. When people are able to exercise control over a social situations it allows self-efficacy to build. If people do not build self-efficacy, then when results take longer to achieve, or fail, they abandon all skills they learned prior.

This is similar to what MADD has done at some of its conferences. The greatest example of MADD’s efforts is through its *Strengthening Families Program*. The program is a part of the *Power of Parents* component and provides home-use DVDs with ten 30 minute lessons (MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving). The program is designed for the whole family to participate in role playing. Schools could also implement role playing and videos to help students in a peer pressure environment.

#### *Social Support*

Social support is the final component of self-directed change. There are social influences that youth, parents and communities face every day. Depending on your social status and influence the social support you receive could be different. A community that is well enforced is “a potentially powerful vehicle for promoting both personal and social change in several ways” (Bandura, 1990). These communities provide “an effective means for creating the motivational precondition of change” in habits and practices (Bandura, 1990). There needs to be self-sustaining structures in communities to foster self-directed change at the community level above the personal level. Success from a self-enabling organization will help promote this change as well.

MADD recognizes the need of a support system in the community. Underage drinking is not just a single family or person problem. Underage drinking affects the community as well and in turn the community should encourage the prevention of underage drinking. *Youth In Action* focuses on the prevention of underage drinking not only to youth, but to schools, liquor stores and law enforcement. MADD also encourages looking at advertising and remove advertising being advertised to underage drinkers. Suggestions on how to keep the community safe are also supplied by MADD through their website. The biggest factor is having a MADD Chapter in every state as well as Puerto Rico and Guam. All major cities have a MADD Chapter as well available for assistance at any time. Luckily for MADD, social support has come in large volumes and been easy to cultivate on underage drinking

## **Chapter III: A College Campaign Strategy**

MADD's efforts for self-directed change was successful for two of its publics overall, underage consumers and parents. When it comes to MADD's involvement with underage drinking on college campuses the campaign strategies are scarce.

### **What Comes Next?**

Previously mentioned were MADD's current strategies when addressing their college publics. Currently, MADD's website offers a link for college initiatives that leaves users with minimal tools for college campuses to prevent underage drinking. Unlike its efforts to talk with parents and teens, MADD offers only two resources for more information on what college campuses can do (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving). MADD also offers a few bullet point suggestions that recommend involving the community and mention to contact local offices for more information.

College students have a higher rate of heavy drinking than peers of the same age who do not attend college (Wechsler, H., Lee, J.E., Nelson, T.F. and Kuo, M., 2002). In 2001, college students spent about "5.5 billion dollars on alcohol," which was more than what they spent on books and other beverages combined (Shaer, M., 2001). Of the college students who drink on campus approximately half of them are underage students (Wechsler, H., Lee, J.E., Nelson, T.F. and Kuo, M., 2002). For these reasons, it would be wise for MADD to improve its campaign efforts to prevent underage drinking to reach college campuses. This section discusses the problems facing college campuses, old and

new strategies colleges are taking, and what MADD should focus on when developing its campaign.

### **The Underage and Binge Drinking Epidemic on College Campuses**

In 1989, the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act which required “that colleges and universities publish information about laws that regulate drug and alcohol use, including the MDLA; acquaint students with the consequences of breaking those laws; and periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the institution’s policy” was passed by Congress (Wechsler, H., Lee, J.E., Nelson, T.F. and Kuo, M., 2002). In the past 10 years, colleges and universities across the United States have been faced with the task of reducing underage and binge drinking on their campuses. In 2001, nearly 45 percent of underage students on college campuses were binge drinkers (Wechsler, H., Lee, J.E., Nelson, T.F. and Kuo, M., 2002). Results showed the primary factors that impact underage and binge drinking at the college level are: the use of false identification at bars or gas stations; living in controlled environments, such as substance-free residence halls or with parents (Wechsler, H., Lee, J.E., Nelson, T.F. and Kuo, M., 2002); and membership in a sorority or fraternity (Wechsler, H., Kuh, G. and Davenport, A.E., 2009).

As mentioned, binge drinking has become popular among many underage consumers. Binge drinking is a way for them “to get as drunk as possible, as quickly and cheaply as possible” (Listfield,E., 2011). Recently, several beverage companies have

provided an easier alternative to shots and keg stands for teens. They have created what is known as “black out” in a can (Listfield,E., 2011).

#### *Four Loko, Tilt and Blast*

Four Loko, Tilt and Blast are three of several new alcoholic beverages available at every gas station and corner store. The drinks come in a 23.5 ounce can that is covered in bright intricate designs like an energy drink. These cans took the traditional idea of vodka and Red Bull and created a new breed of an alcoholic beverage which amounted to four beers or 12 percent alcohol in one can (Listfield,E., 2011). These cans allow consumers to get “drunk twice as often and drink more per session than those who had alcohol without caffeine” (Listfield,E., 2011). They also provide a problem for the community. Since the cans are colorful and resemble energy drinks, “store owners often mistake Four Loko as a non-alcoholic energy drink and sell it to minors” (Eulitt, B., 2010). The absence of information at the community level on these products, encourages the undetected consumption of these products.

The health risks of combining alcohol and caffeine has been examined frequently because of the popularity of Red Bull. Four Loko, Tilt and Blast increase the concern of these health risks. These concerns became so high that colleges across the country banned alcoholic-energy drinks on their campus (2010, October 15). Unfortunately, these actions occurred after some students were hospitalized for days (2010, October 15). MADD’s response to Four Loko was only through its local websites and twitter pages after the FDA stepped in and required the companies to reformulate their beverages because of the

alcohol and caffeine mix (Listfield, E., 2011). MADD's actions are not the traditional approach the public views them in. Another area MADD has yet to approach is tailgating.

### *Tailgating*

For many smaller universities or colleges, tailgating does not pose as big of a threat as it does to larger universities with popular sports teams. Research has found that “colleges with a large percentage of students who are sports fans have been found to have higher levels of ‘heavy drinking’ among fans as well as students who were not sports fans” (Wechsler, H., Kuh, G. and Davenport, A.E., 2009). Several colleges have implemented strategies to control the underage drinking that occurs at these events. Their strategies fall under some of the traditional strategies colleges have been executing for many years.

### **Traditional College Strategies**

As mentioned, colleges are very aware of the underage drinking that occurs on their campuses. Unfortunately, some colleges have a difficult time in controlling the amount of underage drinking that occurs. This problem is slightly due to the binge drinking epidemic, which makes it more difficult to catch because it quickly induces a buzz. Some of the traditional strategies colleges have relied on to prevent underage drinking are police enforcement at events, educational programs during the first week of classes, and the three strike rule. Each of these strategies could use improvement based on results of research as well as by applying the concepts of self-directed change and self-efficacy.

### *Results for Strategies*

Although law enforcement at events does involve the community, the law has not always been successful as a scare tactic. For example, tailgating events are known for food and beer on most college campuses. The results of a survey conducted in 2010 revealed that checking IDs, prohibiting outside alcohol, limiting the amount of alcohol sold and limiting the time alcohol was sold all played a part in reducing binge and underage drinking (Nelson, T.F., Lenk, K.M, Xuan, Z., and Wechsler, H., 2010). When the University of Iowa Police tried to change the atmosphere of tailgating, complaints came not only from students, but also alumni and other fans of the university (Wright, A., 2011). Iowa also tried to use the law to change the minimum age for going to bars after 10:00 p.m. to 21. This decision only prompted bar owners to take advantage of “Friday After Class” and invite underage consumers to their bars right after class because it was before 10:00 p.m. (Wright, A., 2011). The law alone does not provide the education and self-efficacy needed to change behavior.

Educational programs have been effective on college campuses since the launch of AlcoholEdu by Brandon Busteed (Bates, K.G., 2007). The program has become known as a third option to universities who felt that their only choice was to ignore the problem of underage drinking or to punish students excessively. Many schools have decided to make AlcoholEdu mandatory for students when they enter college (Bates, K.G., 2007). Although this program is well planned and executed, it only last for the first week of school. It is also a program that interacts with the user as a computer based test (AlcoholEdu). There is no situational or role playing, or modeling of skills, that allows

students to feel comfortable using the tools that are taught, which is different from the videos MADD provides to parents and families.

The three-strike rule allows students to make three mistakes before a parent is notified of their misbehavior. This practice works relatively well; however, allowing three opportunities for mistakes may be condoning the behavior in students' minds or make them think of other ways to not get caught. A new strategy that seems more effective is notifying the parent of the first strike.

### **Innovative College Strategies**

Besides notifying parents of the first strike, other new approaches colleges have taken are relieving peer pressure ideals (Neff, M, 2011), substance-free dorms and not allowing alcohol to be consumed by anyone, if someone underage is present (2010, August 24).

#### *Results for Strategies*

Some believe that scare tactics are not effective when it comes to adults. However, college students do not want parents to know about their mistakes at school. Interviews conducted on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro campus found that students felt it was their responsibility now and would rather not have their parents involved (2010, August 24). The possibility to have their parents become involved made several of them re-evaluate if drinking underage was worth it.

Several studies have mentioned the misconception young adults have about how much their peers drink at college. Researchers have noted that “teens and college aged



people overestimate the actual amount that their peers drink, and that this misconception often leads to a culture where teens feel they must drink in order to keep up with their peer group” (Neff, M., 2011). Rectifying this situation would fall under the informational component of self-directed change. This information and knowledge would also help the transition to the other components of development and controlling self-efficacy.

Substance-free halls and not being allowed to drink in the presence of those who are under the legal drinking age both provide models of behavior that go against the believe that students are always drinking. They provide a more controlled environment where a consumer is being watched more closely. Again, these two situations have severe consequences if the rule is broken. At UNCG, if students are caught they will be suspended and possibly expelled from the university (2010, August 24). Studies have shown that within these controlled environments the number of students who drink underage is significantly lower than those who live outside of these environments.

### **Recommendations for MADD’s Campaign for the College Community**

Due to previous research, MADD’s campaign expansion to address its college publics should focus on the community and the environment around college campuses. The underage drinking problems that are occurring in the college community are more prominent off campus than on campus (Wechsler, H., Lee, J.E., Nelson, T.F. and Kuo, M., 2002). For this reason, MADD should create a campaign that can be effective in the community environment and not just on campus with fliers.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Education and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration created a brochure called “Safe Lanes on Campus.” This guide provides basic reasons for why there is an underage drinking problem on college campuses. The reasons focus on the lack of verifying a student’s age, appealing advertising for alcohol, watching peers do it and limited entertainment and recreational activities. The detailed information describes the best ways to combat underage drinking on college campuses and is a sturdy background for MADD to expand its campaign to reach its college public.

The traditional and innovative strategies previously discussed added with this brochure provide a backbone for what MADD should focus on when working within the college environment. Its current recommendations listed on its website address some of the points that are relevant to making a successful campaign to prevent underage drinking on college campuses.

Working with law enforcement, campus laws and policies, monitoring the court system and helping to prevent underage drinking are four strategies MADD currently focuses on to prevent underage drinking in college communities (MADD-Mothers Against Drunk Driving). Unfortunately, these strategies do not provide the tools for self-directed change to occur in the college community. Unlike MADD’s campaign that targets families and underage drinkers who are not in college, these initiatives place a lot of emphasis on the law, legal system and campus policies and not on individuals. In order for self-directed change to occur in this environment, a new campaign must be formed.

The four stages for self-directed change campaign are an informational component, the development of self-protective skills and controlling self-efficacy, the enhancement of social proficiency and resiliency of self-efficacy, and social support. For college publics, the final component of social support has become very important. Without the support of the community, underage consumers can drink more readily. This means that those selling alcohol need to be consistent in checking ids, peers, who are 21 and older, need to uphold the law, and the pressure and expectation to drink needs to be diminished in the community.

MADD can take their experience of education parents on how to talk with their children and implement some of those strategies to the community. The informational component of self-directed change is most important for this target in the community. Sellers need to know of the risks involved for them as well as the damage it does for students underage. The penalties for selling alcohol to minors generally include a criminal penalty which includes a fine and community service as well as an ABC penalty for which includes a fine, license suspension, or probation (Alameda County's Official Website). MADD creating a campaign to educate sellers on the impact of their decision to sell to minors is necessary in order for them to change their behavior. Reminding them of their right to refuse anyone is important to address as well.

Those who are 21 and older also need to be reminded of the penalties that could occur for providing alcohol to a minor as well. MADD also needs to focus on the second component of self-directed change when it comes to college student's peer groups. The programs currently provided do not involve any type of role playing or situational

strategies on how to tell someone under 21 no. Peers also need to be leaders on diminishing the myth of how much ever student drinks at college. Inviting a student to a pickup basketball game, movie or intramural sport instead of only inviting a student to a party at your fraternity house or friend's house can be the first step to showing there is more to college than drinking. Local MADD chapters can easily become involved by not creating alcohol education programs necessarily, but by researching upcoming events in the community and creating campaigns to involve doing something other than drinking. Overall, MADD needs to produce awareness campaigns on the results of how much college students drink and who is drinking. Since most underage consumers are drinking to fit in, learning that they are drinking much more than their upperclassmen may shed some light on the fact that drinking is not as essential to college life as they think. Each of these recommendations would address the community and touch on the underage consumer as well. It's a start to solving a problem that is consistent in colleges across the United States.

## **Chapter IV: MADD's Impact and the Future**

Underage drinking has always received attention in relation to drug abuse and drinking and driving. MADD's mission to prevent underage drinking has been a logical step in its nonprofit work and will require more attention to be truly successful. MADD has successfully reached families and high school and middle school students, but has had difficulty impacting underage drinking on college campuses. New initiatives and campaign efforts need to be created to better reach the college community since they play the biggest role on college campus underage drinking.

Through the passage of groundbreaking public health laws, MADD has currently saved 27,000 young lives (MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving). The underage drinking rates have continued to fall since 1991 because of its efforts. MADD is truly a phenomenal organization that continues to grow. With all of the milestones it's attributed for in regards to drunk driving, there will be several with its campaign to prevent underage drinking as well. A quote by Margaret Mead, which captures the organization's success, says "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." MADD is committed to impact the world for generations and it will be interesting to see what issue they will address next.

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## **Vita**

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