

PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING AND DRIVING

Strategic Exploratory: A partnership of the Ad Council,
NHTSA and Merkle & Partners

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METHODOLOGY

- ✦ On September 6th through September 12th, 2013 KUDZU conducted (15) 90-minute focus group discussions with the underage targets in three key markets (Cincinnati, OH, Los Angeles, CA and Dallas, TX) as well as parents of driving-age teens.
- ✦ Kudzu focused on assembling teens who are of the same age/grade to create a more realistic scenario to allow better observation of the social dynamic. In addition, “friendship pairs” or groups of teens who knew one another were recruited wherever possible to create an open space to share safely and honestly on this sensitive topic.
 - ✦ (3) groups younger High School students, ages 14-15
 - ✦ (2) group older High School students, ages 16-18
 - ✦ (3) group post-High School, ages 18-20, mix of college/non-college
- ✦ Given the potentially influential role parents may play in UDD, Kudzu also conducted 6 groups of parents of High School students breaking out the groups between (3) more “Tolerant” parents of underage drinking, while the other (3) groups consisted of more “Intolerant” parents. “Tolerant” parents were distinguished from “Intolerant” parents in the screening process by their acknowledgment that their their children were allowed to stay out past midnight on weekends, recognition that trying alcohol was an “inevitable part of being a teenager” and “not enforcing strict consequences” on their child for underage drinking.



Executive Summary

- ✦ Some teens related that there had been little discussion at home about drinking and driving, and when there was a conversation, it often didn't occur until they began to drive at age 16. The teens were in strong agreement that the message must begin much earlier, preferably at the end of Middle School or at the very beginning of 9th grade. In addition, parents sometimes assume that the message is being delivered from other sources, such as school assemblies, health classes or driver's education.
- ✦ "Buzzed Driving" is a behavior steeped in American culture, including parents on either side of the "Tolerant" vs. "Intolerant" continuum. It is little wonder that teens don't always acknowledge that "one is one too many" when it comes to drinking and driving. Furthermore, the criteria for how both parents and teens determine fitness to drive is highly subjective, with only a minority of respondents establishing a Zero Tolerance Policy.
- ✦ This potentially represents an opportunity to deliver separate and tailored messages to teens as well as to parents, including stronger *action messages*, such as revitalizing the concept of the "Designated Driver", establishing a Zero Tolerance Policy and communicating specific tools to navigate drinking and driving situations. "Buzzed Driving" alone is simply a *platitude*, a "So what, now what?" message unless it includes a tangible consequence or prescriptive action step.



Executive Summary Cont.

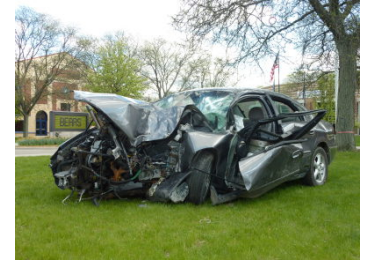
- ✦ The focus groups revealed a fundamental truth about adolescence and early adulthood; that *it unfolds through experience and learning the consequences of ones' actions*. Showing the various “pathways” of what could happen in a critical “moment of choice” is potentially the most effective, realistic and compelling approach when it comes to addressing drinking and driving behavior. Teens are trying to learn how to navigate the world without being talked down to or lectured.
- ✦ To this end, a much wider range of consequences of drinking and driving behavior could be effectively communicated. Teens, at the height of their immortality and invincibility, do not readily acknowledge the “Death and Grim Reaper” approach, while more tactical and on-the-ground consequences seemed to be more resonant, especially among younger teens.
- ✦ The communication messaging could potentially be more multi-dimensional, including lost academic, athletic and job opportunities, financial and legal consequences, as well as the social stigma and disappointment of friends and family.



KEY INSIGHTS - TEENS



Key Insights



Expand the Consequences

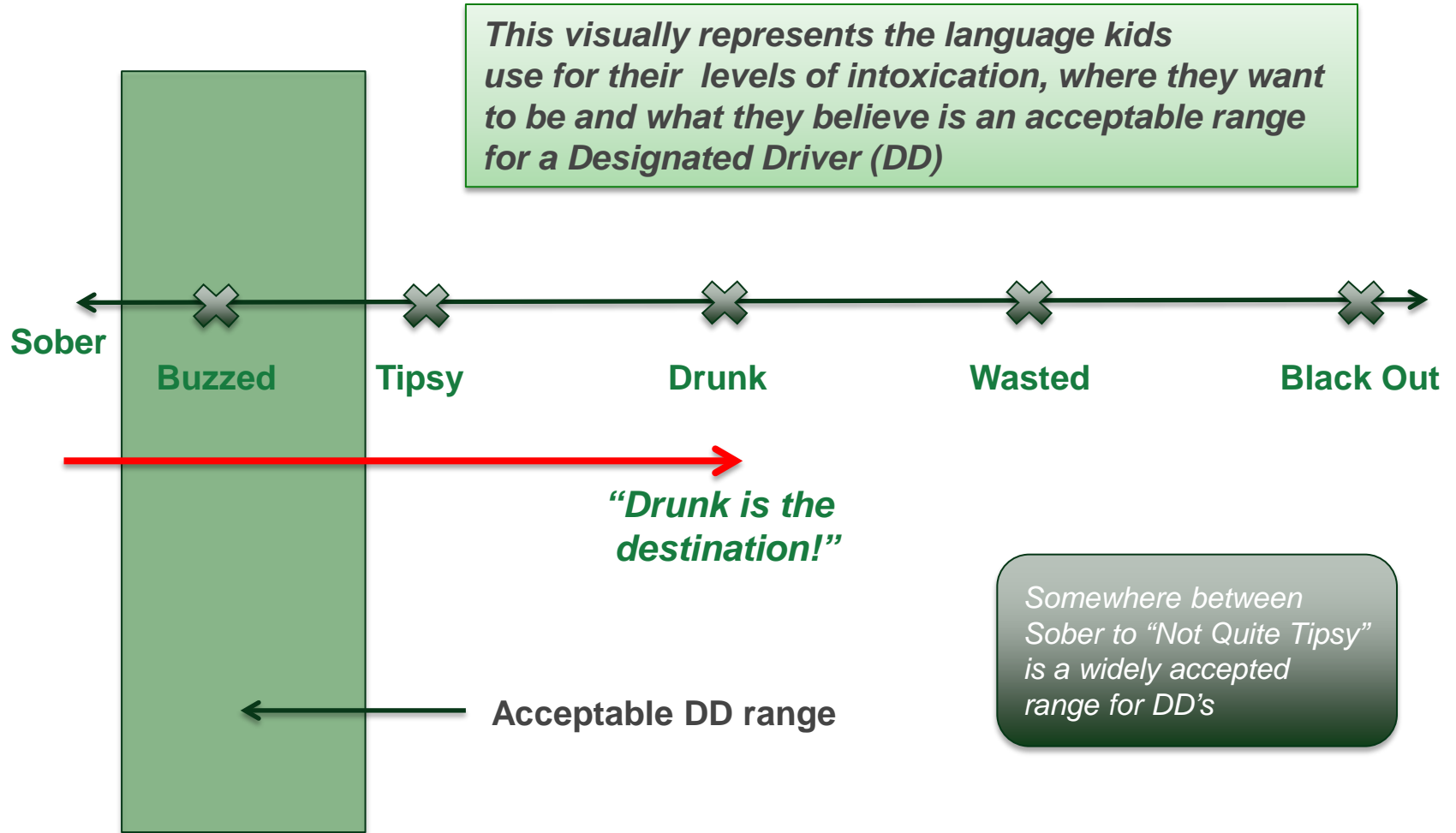
- ✦ Many teens expressed that a broader range of consequences was more motivating to them than the typical “Death and Grim Reaper” scare tactics deployed by their schools and PSA’s. These include the possibility of hurting someone else, DUI’s, fines, court, permanent records, loss of scholarships, being kicked off teams and school activities by violating “non-drinking oaths,” financial ruin, and “destroying the best years of your life,” etc.
- ✦ Since most teens didn’t readily acknowledge the possibility that they could be killed in an accident, more tangible consequences seemed to have a stronger impact.
- ✦ The concept of consequences and the implications of one’s actions was more evolved for the 19-20 year old groups than it was for younger teens, demonstrating just how much judgment development, maturity and life experience happens within five short years. Older teens were more likely to recognize the lifelong guilt and pain of killing someone or dealing with a DUI, while the younger kids appeared to connect with more on-the-ground consequences, such as avoiding parental disappointment, maintaining privileges and participation in school activities.

“A DUI cost my friend 30 G’s; you put others in danger and your pocket in danger.”

– Josh, 19 LA College



50 Shades of Intoxicated



Key Insights

50 Shades of Intoxicated

- ✦ “Buzzed Driving” remains a necessary message to communicate, as most young people don’t actually believe that “one is one too many” when it comes to drunk driving. While teens overwhelmingly recognize the danger of *drunk driving*, as well as getting into a car with a drunk person, they have highly subjective criteria to determine if someone is actually appropriate to be the “DD.”
- ✦ Teens claim to “know their friends really well” so they believe they can discern physical tells to see if they are impaired, such as slurring, giggling, tripping or belligerence. It doesn’t occur to them that *a driver could be impaired without demonstrating any outward drunken behavior*.
- ✦ “One drink is ok”, “a few drinks early in the night with a couple of hits of pot” or even “a few shots” were cited as appropriate drinking and driving behavior. Only a few kids had a Zero Tolerance Policy for the Designated Driver. Even if it might be preferred, it simply wasn’t considered a realistic expectation.
- ✦ As teens seem to have no real information about what constitutes impairment from either a legal, blood-alcohol, or physical impairment perspective, they were just trusting their own judgment and the judgment of the driver. The “Buzzed Driving” communication needs to be taken further with a tangible action step, such as establishing the “DD” early in the night, a Zero Tolerance Expectation or putting other tools in place.

“It just depends on the person driving and how far you are going.”

Shannon, 14 LA



Key Insights

The Designated Driver

- ✦ For the most part, the concept of the Designated Driver is alive and well. While still primarily called the DD, it often goes by other names, including “The Man”, “Sober Sister”, “PASS” (Person Assigned to Stay Sober) and “My Homie.”
- ✦ However, this concept requires refreshment in that the DD is not always established early in the night but follows a “it always works out somehow” approach. In addition, while complete sobriety is preferable it isn’t considered a realistic or standard procedure.
- ✦ Most of all, the job of the DD is considered less than optimal, as in addition to driving that person is often baby sitter, vomit cleaner and somehow perceived as lower on the social totem pole than the drinking party.
- ✦ Refreshing the language, as well as the heroic and selfless acts of the DD, as well as seeding ideas to identify the person before going out, rotate the job fairly and appreciate the role, would all be helpful reminders in reinforcing this behavior.

“I’m usually the Sober Sister. Sometimes it’s just a bore!” Leydi, 19 LA



Key Insights

“There is ALWAYS another option”

- ✦ The conversation about one’s ability or willingness to call a parent sparked a spirited conversation about the tools that kids do possess. Older kids cited family members they could call, public transportation, free anti-drinking and driving services, cabs or even staying over at the party.
- ✦ Calling a parent was clearly considered a very last resort because of the perceived ramifications, or simply the fear of disappointing them. However, most kids readily shared a handful of options they wouldn’t hesitate to use instead of riding with a drunk person. Interestingly, they didn’t express a lot of social pressure about rejecting a ride.
- ✦ Older kids in particular were very strident about the idea that “there is always another option” and “it’s just not worth taking the risk.” This message could potentially be seeded among younger teens, so that in the critical moment of choice, they would feel more empowered to explore other solutions, even if it was calling their parents as a last resort.
- ✦ The biggest challenge here, and one that respondents didn’t really acknowledge, is - *If the teen is himself or herself impaired, how can they effectively discern the appropriateness of the driver? Should something this important simply be a matter of trust?*

“No one is going to judge you for trying to protect your life.” Nate, 16 LA



Key Insights

Tool Kit

- ✦ Kids often simply don't know what they don't know. One Mom expressed it this way, "With all I've taught my daughter, she didn't know that there was a lot of sugar in ice cream!"
- ✦ Too often it seems that parents and society tell young people that something is wrong but not what to do about it when the challenging moment arises. One of the key insights of this research is that the kids expressed the need for tactical, on-the-ground, "What do I do now??" messaging which is perceived as infinitely more helpful and less judgmental than platitudes of "Friends don't let friends drive drunk" or "Buzzed driving is drunk driving."
- ✦ As part of the "There's always another option" approach, tactical tools, helpful tips and sound reminders are considered useful and welcome. These could include:
 - ✦ Select the DD in the beginning of the night, with a Zero Tolerance agreement
 - ✦ Rotate DD's so no one feels taken advantage of or socially marginalized
 - ✦ Take a cab
 - ✦ Have a number of a cab and cab fare ready when you go out
 - ✦ Arrange for a parent, relative, sibling or friend to be "on stand by" in case you need a ride home later in the night
 - ✦ Stay at a friend
 - ✦ Stay at the party
 - ✦ Public transportation
 - ✦ Etc.

"You always have options, whether you use them is up to you." Arian, 19 LA College



Key Insights

Parental Influence

- ★ Most kids agreed that there had been some dialog about the topic of drinking with their parents but that it had been largely initiated when driving began and agree that it should start much earlier, generally at the start of High School (age 14) when experimentation with alcohol begins.
- ★ While parents wholeheartedly believe they have an open dialog with their children and have made themselves available to be contacted in the event of any drinking and driving situation, teens overwhelmingly said that contacting a parent would be the very last option based on the punishment, shame and disappointment it would cause. This fear of ramifications creates a certain level of distance, secrecy and dishonesty on the topic of drinking;
 - ★ *"If she even does know that I am at the party, I would not call my mom."* Erin, 16
 - ★ *"I'd be dead! Dead! Dead! Dead!"* Marli, 16
 - ★ *"My physical condition would play the biggest role in calling my parents."* Thaddeus, 19
- ★ Encouraging a more open and safe environment for discussion at an earlier age appears to be a worthy message to communicate to both parents and teens based on the fact that the teens who shared the most mature perspective on the topic seemed to have the following commonalities;
 - ★ Drinking and driving was an ongoing conversation at an earlier age, not just "a talk" at 16
 - ★ They shared the values of their *family*, not simply those of their peers
 - ★ They didn't seem as vulnerable to peer pressure

"I could not ask my parents for help at all. They would be super disappointed, I would be scared. I would try to find another solution. Calling my family would be the very last option." Mauricio, 19 Dallas



Key Insights

Parental Influence Cont.

- ★ Teens seem to have a difficult time understanding or accepting the inherent “Just say no!” message of “Buzzed Driving” because they don’t see their own parents adhering to it. They are constantly hearing mixed messages that they shouldn’t drink, let alone drink and drive, but everywhere they turn their role models are doing it;
 - ★ *“I have parties at my house and booze is available. I don’t tell my kids no, no, no, but I try to reinforce the consequences as much as possible.” - LA Tolerant Parent*
 - ★ *“We might go to a Mexican restaurant and you have to have a margarita. But I wait before I drive home with the kids.” Dallas Tolerant Parent*
- ★ The teens also shared a wide range of parenting styles, from the “My mom’s super chill” and “She’s my best friend” parent to those who were either very strict or simply naïve, “We never sat down and had a talk, my kids just know what’s expected.” Either way, tools to help facilitate ongoing productive dialog, teachable moments and a platform for two-way conversation appears necessary.
- ★ From challenging parents to reflect on their *own* behavior to discussing preventative strategies for teens to deploy in drinking and driving situations are necessary and welcome.

“My dad would drink sometimes and drive us home after having more than just one drink. He never really drove poorly.”

Daniel, 15 Dallas



KEY INSIGHTS - PARENTS



Key Insights

Social Culture - Parents are “Buzzed Driving”

- ✦ One of the key insights to emerge in the groups is that “Buzzed Driving” is deeply embedded in American culture, and widely prevalent and acceptable among parents, even among the “Intolerant” parents who do not condone drinking of any kind with their teens. Having a few drinks and then driving is rationalized by;
 - ✦ *“I just know from experience what I can handle.” Dallas Tolerant Parent*
 - ✦ *“If we are at a barbecue or something I might have a couple of drinks early on. By the time I drive, it has worn off.” Cincinnati Intolerant Parent*
- ✦ The parents mostly position their behavior by claiming to *know themselves* and their adult experience with alcohol to know what they can and cannot handle. It is no surprise then that their kids, intimate with their own peer group, also believe they know and trust the small circle of friends they go to “kick-backs” and house parties with, and that they can easily tell when someone is or isn’t up to the task.
- ✦ Information and awareness campaigns seem necessary for both kids and parents about the effects of even one drink. Kids are simply mirroring these *highly subjective judgment calls* to determine their own or someone else's impairment.

“If my husband and I are having too much, one of us will stop if we are going to have to drive”
- Cincinnati Intolerant Parent



Key Insights

“Just call me!”

- ✦ A disconnect exists between what parents think they know about their kids and what their kids are actually doing. Most parents insist that they have discussed alcohol and driving with their children, including making themselves available as a ride in a drunk driving situation. Meanwhile, the vast majority of kids indicate that calling their parents would be the *very* last alternative they would explore.
- ✦ A fundamental conflict exists between parents, who seem to fall into two primary camps. Some parents believe it is better to acknowledge that underage drinking exists and be an available resource, any time, no matter what, with no questions asked. Other parents, however, are uncomfortable with this approach, believing that “no questions asked” implies that they condone illegal behavior that they are fundamentally against.
- ✦ The essential conflict appears to be, “Do I acknowledge the drinking and provide tools to help keep them safe?” versus “If I don’t, will they make a bad decision that could have been avoided?” This is a strong conflict that initiated debate among parents in both the “Tolerant” and “Intolerant” groups.

“I tell them, ‘You can call us and we’ll pick you up, but we are going to have a conversation about the situation. I want to know more about how they got into that situation’. If I find out that they were instigators, then they will be in more trouble.”

– Dallas Intolerant Parent



Key Insights

“Early and Often”

- ✦ Some teens related that there had been little discussion at home about drinking and driving. Parents sometimes assume that the kids “simply know” that it is serious or assume that the message is being delivered from other sources, such as school assemblies, health classes or driver’s education.
- ✦ Parents most often delivered “the talk” on drinking and driving messaging around the time their child started driving, meanwhile most kids shared that they had engaged in some drinking in 9th grade or 10th grade, with some kids starting as early as middle school.
- ✦ Linking the feedback from the teens with the typical approach of parents strongly suggests that the **messaging needs to begin much earlier**, most kids agree that it should start before high school begins with ongoing and frequent “teaching moments.” These include sharing news stories, discussing examples of people in their community, as well as from the parents own life experiences, which are considered more valuable than a formal “talk” at age 16.
- ✦ Most importantly, the teens who exhibited the most emotional maturity and perspective about this topic were kids who claimed to have engaged parents who openly discussed drinking and driving with them openly, honestly and over the course of time.

“Right before he got his license we had ‘the talk’. I told him driving was a privilege and I would take his car away if he was caught drinking and driving.” - LA Tolerant Parent



Key Insights

The Importance of Shared Values

- ✦ An interesting thread emerged across the groups between kids and parents who appeared to share the following common values;
 - ✦ The parents had some life experience themselves as a teen/young adult and could therefore approach their children realistically and not from a place of denial or naiveté.
 - ✦ The parents were engaged with their children, involved in their lives and had an ongoing dialog with their teen about drinking and driving early and often.
 - ✦ The kids reflected being in greater alignment with their parent's/family's values than those of their social/peer group.
 - ✦ The kids trusted their parents, and while they didn't want to let them down, they expressed that they could rely on their Mom and Dad in any situation.
 - ✦ The kids had some freedom but within contained boundaries; rules, curfews, expectations and a slight fear or reprisal.
 - ✦ Interestingly, it was quite easy to identify the kids who had this foundation and those who didn't. Food for thought.

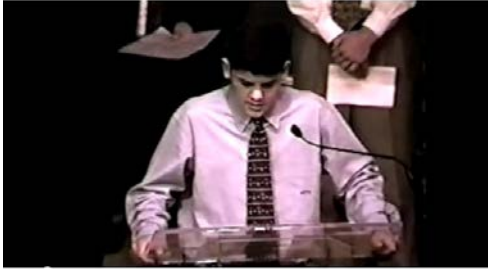
"I think kids just follow your lead. If you set the bar, they will follow." – Dallas Intolerant Parent



PSA'S – CONVERSATION STARTERS



PSA's - Conversation Starters



- ✦ Three PSA's were included in the research to provide teens with a tangible message to respond to and to use as a springboard for conversation about the types of messages that would resonate best. "Jeff", "Carissa" and "House Party" showed a range of approaches, from emotional to humorous, to initiate dialog with teens and parents.



“Carissa”



- ★ Respondents strongly connected with this spot and found it engaging and effective, mostly because it had an *authenticity* that Carissa was a “real person” and not an actor, “I feel for her because she was real” and “She could’ve been a girl in my school.”
 - ★ *“It touches me because the home footage made it real, not scripted or acted.”*
 - ★ *“It makes you think of your own best friend. I got goose bumps.”*
- ★ On the other hand, some felt that because Carissa had done nothing wrong, yet was killed, the message was that this could happen to anyone and that these outcomes are tragic and random versus consequence driven.
- ★ There was also some confusion about this spot, stemming from the fact that respondents were unclear as to whether or not Carissa had been drinking and driving or had she simply been an innocent victim?
 - ★ *“It was unclear if she drove drunk or was killed by a drunk!”*

“It just seems tragic and random.” Erin, 17 Dallas



“Jeff”



- ✦ Jeff was consistently a favorite among respondents, as it effectively exemplifies the “collateral damage” and “ripple effect” that can result from drinking and driving situations in a very real, human and authentic way. The raw emotion of Jeff and his vulnerability, resonated with people and drew them in. “The worst feeling would be to let a friend down and having to live with that.”
- ✦ Many of the teens connected with this spot as it touched the core of their attachment to their own friends and the deep responsibility they feel to protect their friends through a highly valued “buddy system.”
 - ✦ *“It really resonated with me because I know people who have died from drinking.”*
 - ✦ *“Even after all the wreckage; people are still affected by what happened. You don’t want to be the person who was responsible for that.”*
 - ✦ *“You’d live with that for the rest of your life.”*
- ✦ The empathy and human approach of “Jeff” was seen as a refreshing change from the “shock angle” that many PSA’s are perceived to employ and older teens in particular resonate with the idea that the people directly involved are not the only ones whose lives are destroyed by such a tragedy.
- ✦ As in all three spots, there was some confusion here. “Was that boy the one who killed Jeff?”

“It’s beautiful that the kid had the strength to stand up and speak.” Keana, 15 LA



“House Party”



- ✦ “House party” was the least favorite of the spots, considered confusing in that respondents did not understand that the focus of the ad was not on the two drunken girls, but on the “buzzed girl” at the very end of the spot.
 - ✦ *“I thought it was a Bud Light commercial.”*
 - ✦ *“If the House Party commercial had taken a serious turn it would have been more impactful.”*
 - ✦ *“What happened to the girl at the end?”*
- ✦ While a few found it humorous, especially among the 14 year old girls in LA, most teens and parents thought the humor was in completely bad taste for this topic.
- ✦ The most important insight was that “We don’t see what happens to the girl at the end,” again indicating the potential consequences of choices. What was considered most relevant to the teens was “What happened to “buzzed girl” once she left the party?” What happened next?
- ✦ The responses to this spot indicates that teens want to know “What do I do? What are my options? What would be the best way to handle it?” as opposed to the message that buzzed driving is simply wrong.



The Question of Humor



- ✦ The group feedback, from both parents and teens was essentially that because of the tragic nature of drinking and driving, there was no place for humor in communication.
- ✦ However, our investigation concluded that this was based on the “House Party” spot, where the humor was ineffective and inappropriate. The spot was highly confusing, the drunken girl breaking her teeth was perceived as implausible and there were no meaningful consequences to the outcome.
- ✦ Based on the feedback we heard from teens in the groups, it may be possible to use humor effectively if delivered with a relevant voice and tone, such as the authentic and realistic execution, so well received in the other two spots.
- ✦ The attached spot from New Zealand effectively incorporates humor into an approach that focuses on evaluating consequences and making the right decision in the moment of choice. Here, humor is used to grab one’s attention but delivers consequences and a very compelling message. [Link](#)



Big Graphics vs. Big Emotions



- ✦ The groups indicated that teen girls were especially responsive to the emotional sensitivity of both “Jeff” and Carissa” and that parents agreed that these spots would be compelling to their own daughters.
- ✦ Especially as this is a time when girls have tremendous allegiance to their best friends, the emotional loss of a close friend garnered a strong response. However, it could have been made even stronger with a more tangible consequence; such as Carissa’s funeral, the bereaved family, her heartbroken friends, or “her empty desk at school.”
- ✦ Younger boys, on the other hand, often referenced the highly graphic nature of YouTube videos on the drinking and driving topic, such as the “[Mirrors](#)” spot from the UK, and seeing more graphic consequences. An anti-smoking example often mentioned was the extremely disturbing consequences of the “[Terrie](#)” spot.
- ✦ The older male groups, however, indicated that they had been “desensitized” to death and violence, and that their own life experiences gave them all the motivation they needed. “Everyone’s been to a funeral at this point.” The feedback on the graphical, death-oriented imagery suggested that, while memorable, it might not be the most effective approach.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES



Key Opportunities

Overview

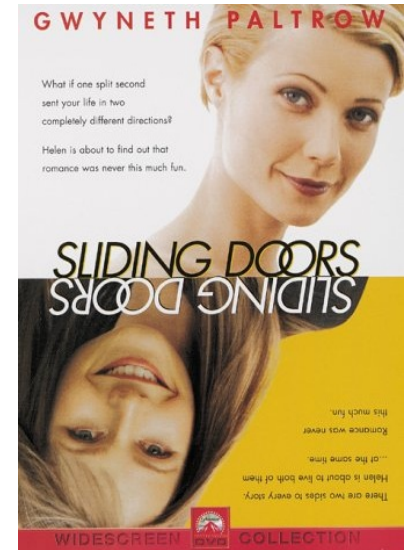
- ✦ The following five opportunities are a framework for further discussion based on the research findings. While not intended to be final recommendations, they are encapsulated platforms based on the insights, designed to initiate further dialog.
- ✦ From demonstrating possible consequences in the critical moment of choice in *Sliding Doors*, to encouraging parents and teens to start the conversation in *Talk to Me*, these key opportunities attempt to contextualize the research to facilitate ongoing development.



Opportunity #1

Sliding Doors

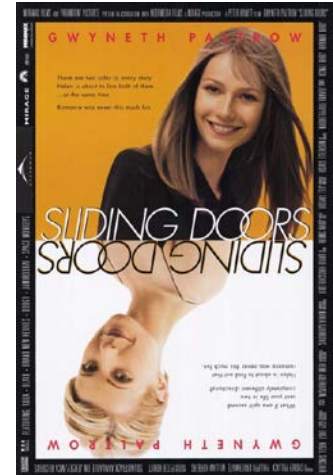
- ✦ As understanding the concept of consequences is so essential to becoming an adult, and something that clearly demarcated the 18-19 year olds from many of the younger teens, one possible strategic approach would be to show the possible consequences in the “critical moment of decision.”
- ✦ Similar to the premise of the movie, *Sliding Doors*, what happens if one choice is made, such as calling a cab, sleeping over or some other choice, versus deciding to drive or to ride with a drunk driver? How can one moment be so profoundly defining?
- ✦ Especially as one of the primary criticisms of the “House Party” spot was that we don’t see what actually happens to the “buzzed girl” after she leaves the party, this platform seeds the magnitude of the important choices we make throughout our lives.



Opportunity #1

Sliding Doors Cont.

- ✦ Another benefit of this strategic approach is that it provides an opportunity to focus on *choices* that the teen can make, versus many PSA's that are considered “preachy,” focusing on death and other outcomes that teens don’t perceive as plausible or realistic.
- ✦ The Consequence Strategy helps seed these critical moments of choice that older teens are more likely to recognize, “You can’t take them back” or “They can change the course of your life.” The 18-19 year olds were more likely than the 14-17 year olds to know someone, or at least of someone, who had died in a drunken driving scenario. They were also much more likely to outline the long-term consequences of a DUI.
- ✦ While nothing can replace experience, this approach provides an opportunity to highlight possible outcomes, encouraging the teen to consider their own options carefully. Attached is a New Zealand commercial that approaches the idea of various scenarios in an interesting and humorous way; [Legend](#)



Opportunity #2

Truth and Consequences

- ✦ One of the insights about the 'Carissa' and 'Jeff' spots was the fact that while most teens could feel tremendous empathy for these people, especially the pain of losing one's best friend, it didn't feel particularly relevant to them.
- ✦ The younger the teen, the more likely they were to mention more tactical consequences ranging from being kicked-off an important team or activity, parental disappointment, losing privileges, such as their phone, or some other implication. As the constant onslaught of crushed cars, death-oriented PSA's and Prom Week scare tactics, including visits from the Grim Reaper, many teens find the whole thing heavy-handed.
- ✦ PSA's that focus on the full range of implications gets across the message that "you don't have to be killed in a wreck for this to be a really bad idea." Especially now that kids are signing oaths, committing to not drink at all, school activities and scholarships are among the many assets kids are motivated to protect in addition to their lives and the lives of others.



Opportunity #2

Truth and Consequences Cont.

- ✦ This communication approach provides the opportunity to take a fresh look at *all* there is to lose, from the profound legal and financial consequences of a DUI to the range of complications for even being an intoxicated passenger. This could be an reinvigorated approach that reaches the kid who typically thinks, “Well, that will never happen to me!”
- ✦ In addition, many of the groups talked about ***unintended consequences***, often initiated by the pain of Jeff’s best friend in the spot, but expanding on that to include, “You’ll never get a job in law enforcement”, “You can’t go into law school”, “You’ll never forgive yourself for the hurt you caused that person’s loved ones”, “You could kiss your scholarship good-bye!”
- ✦ As many kids have personal stories of drunk driving tragedies from either their school or community, they “don’t want to be a story.” This might represent another approach to communicating this platform. One insightful teen described it as a “ripple effect,” where one action has so many consequences, you would never be able to anticipate them all.
- ✦ Communicating some of the seen, as well as unseen dimensions could broaden the relevance of the message.



Opportunity #3



Teach a man to fish

- ✦ While “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk” and “Buzzed driving is drunk driving” represent the **WHAT**, teens are interested in understanding the **HOW**.
- ✦ Beyond the strategic messages of the dangers and potential consequences of drunk driving, is the very real need for tactical messages, reminding kids that “There are always options” and outlining exactly what those options are; cabs and cab fare, parents, public transportation staying over, walking home, planning ahead with a DD driver, etc.
- ✦ While this message could potentially be problematic as it may infer condoning underage drinking behavior, it could be smartly positioned *as simply avoiding taking a ride with an impaired driver even when the passenger has not engaged in any drinking activity*.
- ✦ Teens acknowledged that they don’t know how to do everything and “seeing it done” plants seeds for them to access and navigate in their own critical moments of choice.



Opportunity #4



Reinvigorate the DD

- ✦ While the concept of the Designated Driver is alive and well, the *brand personality* of the “DD” requires an overhaul.
- ✦ Reinvigorating the role and refreshing the language of the DD is a strong and compelling messaging opportunity. From the the heroic and selfless acts of the DD to establishing more contemporary monikers, such as “Sober Sister” and “My Man,” the Designated Driver could be reinvigorated and contemporized.
- ✦ Too often, the respondent who emerged in the groups as a frequent DD was perceived as the “straight kid,” “goody-goody” or on some unspoken level, a hanger on, somewhat outside the inner-circle. In a few of the older groups, it was a role that was simply rotated and therefore more democratic.
- ✦ Generating ways to reinvigorate the respect, coolness-factor and leadership image of the DD could be a compelling message to bring the concept of the DD into the 21st century.



Opportunity #5



Talk to Me

- ✦ Encouraging parents and teens to “start the conversation” earlier and with greater frequency, appears to be a significant messaging opportunity. Too often, parents assume that their kids “just know” what is expected of them. Conversely, kids assume that they can’t reach out to their parents for support and need to keep drinking a highly guarded secret, creating a divide that could be more effectively bridged.
- ✦ This approach could potentially connect to a range of audiences. For parents, it could provide awareness that the conversation does need to occur and significantly earlier than they might expect. It could also focus on tools such as ongoing teaching moments and how to talk about the issue.
- ✦ Another potential offshoot of this opportunity is the “Who ya’ gonna call?” approach, which could get out into the open the when, how and if a teen can call their parent in a drinking and driving situation. The groups underscored that very often, parents believe they have firmly positioned themselves as a ride in any circumstance, while teens expressed that their parents would be their very last resort. Addressing this, potentially through a tone that communicates warmth, humor and authenticity, might be one way to bridge the generational divide.



KEY MARKET DIFFERENCES



LOS ANGELES

- ✦ LA teens had considerable more comfort and experience with alcohol at a young age. Our youngest LA group talked candidly about heavy drinking being commonplace, easily deceiving parents about their activities and drinking and drugs being introduced in middle school.
- ✦ The local geography of LA is unique. Parties mostly occur in neighborhoods familiar to the teens, allowing them to jump from house to house to avoid parents and police and continue partying.
- ✦ The relative congestion of LA does give this group more options to get home. They are able to walk in most cases, take public transportation or find a nearby friend to drive.
- ✦ Parents in LA were strong enablers for teen drinking compared to other tested markets. Teen respondents estimated that about half the parents they know were either complacent in allowing drinking and parties in their home or were just oblivious.
- ✦ Additionally, LA parents did the least communicating about drinking and drinking and driving. They trusted that their kids were getting the information from other sources and did not discuss the topic nearly enough with their kids.



DALLAS

- ✦ The younger kids in this market were relatively inexperienced with alcohol. They had not yet entered high school which may play a role in their experiences, but for now their moral compass was very much in line with what a parent would ideally desire.
- ✦ All teen in this market were light drinkers. They had fewer stories related to parties and drinking and seemed to be less interested in alcohol than other markets. While the older groups did drink, it was more controlled and not quite on the level of consumption we saw in other markets.
- ✦ Interestingly, most of the kids in Dallas did not respond to the term buzzed. They do not use it to describe light intoxication, instead preferring the term tipsy. Tipsy did emerge in all markets, however the awareness of buzzed in Dallas was extremely low.
- ✦ Many parents spoke about religion relating to alcohol. This adherence to religious principles could partially account for some of the relatively low level of intoxication we saw in the teen groups.



CINCINNATI

- ✦ Young kids in Cincinnati expressed a greater willingness to call their parents in a questionable situation, and a few had actually exercised this option. This was in stark contrast to other markets where calling home is the very last option considered.
- ✦ Parents in this market made more of an effort to be involved with their kids. They were fairly consistently delivering a strong drinking and driving message and taking advantage of teachable moments when possible. Many parents in this group talked about being close with the parents of their kids friends, giving them a bit more insight into their children's activities.
- ✦ Several parents in Cincinnati had initiated communication about drinking and driving with their child at an extremely young age relative to other markets. One parent stated she had begun having "the talk" at age 8 or 9.



MARKET FIELD NOTES



CINCINNATI FIELD NOTES



- ★ Kids in this group still rely on their parents to get around. They make plans with friends using group chats and social media and hang out on the weekends. There has been a large social change from 8th grade to freshmen year. While before, the social situations had mostly consisted of small get-togethers, high school has introduced larger house parties to the mix.
- ★ Sneaking out of the house to meet up with the opposite sex has become appealing. Kids will convene at a parent-sanctioned sleepover and wait for the adults to fall asleep.
- ★ While these teens have tried alcohol, they are still inexperienced. They will sometimes acquire alcohol from older peers, steal it from their parents and in other cases, “It just appears.” They commented that drinking occurred “in the woods or walking around” because they have no place to safely consume alcohol away from parents.
- ★ Despite their inexperience, they were resolute in not driving drunk or getting into a car with an intoxicated peer. All had heard stories about alcohol related driving deaths, and some even had personal stories. Several felt comfortable calling a parent to avoid a drinking and driving situation.
- ★ The messages from parents had been focused on drinking while neglecting the driving aspect. While this group was a bit young to have a license, it was noteworthy that parents had ignored a strong driving message to marry with their drinking message.



Cincinnati College Aged Girls

- ✦ It is common in this age group for kids to have a good deal of experience with drinking.
- ✦ They have their first taste of independence and are eager to exercise it, having left the nest in most situations. Most have jobs or attend college. It is less likely that their parents would be a viable option for avoiding a possible drunk driving situation.
- ✦ Although they are underage, they and their peers are able to obtain alcohol easily. Alcohol consumption is commonplace and expected in most social situations.
- ✦ Concern is shown for drinking and driving and they take steps to prevent the situation. Most talked about being able to get a ride from a sober friend or sleeping it off at the location they were drinking.
- ✦ The immortality attitude is pervasive. There is a propensity for making poor decisions. While they give lip service against drinking and driving, most have ended up in a car with a drunk person, or have been unable to prevent a friend from driving drunk. Many times the driving was rationalized by those involved "We are just going right down the street." "I just hoped for the best. Once we got there I realized how dumb it was." The weight of the decision is lost in the fog of intoxication.
- ✦ This group thought that age 13 to 16 would be prime time for the anti drunk driving message. The message loses its effectiveness if the kids have been exposed to drinking and driving without experiencing the negative consequences. "How can it be effective if I've been doing it for three years."
- ✦ Vivid imagery (gory anti-drunk driving videos) seems to stick with this group. Many recalled a wrecked car brought to their school the week of prom, providing a stark example of the negative ramifications of a poor decision.



Cincinnati – Parents Tolerant and Intolerant

- ★ Most parents do drink in front of their kids on weekends or special occasions, but not when the family is dining at a restaurant. Some will mask a drink at home by pouring it into alternative “vessels” so as not to encourage drinking. They do go out and drink with their friends, but claim to have a designated driver (or they stop drinking an hour before they leave)
- ★ Parents believe they’re doing the best they can, infusing day-to-day life with teachable moments often inspired by the news, YouTube video’s, recent personal experiences (universally, someone they know has gone through an experience related to drinking and driving) or warnings about the ramifications
- ★ They often use language that encourages their kids to “do the right thing” and warn about the “dangers of losing control”. They do not, however, sit their children and have “the talk”. They feel that lecturing their children only creates resistance and possibly rebellious behavior.
- ★ They also weigh in on their kids’ friends, where they go, who is driving, stay up and wait for them... and feel this (combined with the above) is about all they can do to surround their kids’ life and keep an eye on their behavior. They do not trust that other parents are doing the same
- ★ The result, they hope, is they have raised conscious, self-preserving, “good” kids who will make the right choice in the wrong situation... to not get in the car, get the keys, or call them
- ★ Adults responded positively to “Buzzed driving is Drunk Driving”. It teaches their children about the dangerous gray area that comes from having just a few drinks, where a loss of control is possible. It puts the brakes on progressing too quickly (to drunk), by raising awareness of the earlier stages of intoxication



DALLAS FIELD NOTES



Dallas 14-15 Boys

- ✦ The 4 boys in the Dallas group were all 14 years old and just beginning their high school journey (9th grade). Although they referenced kids around them, even as early as Middle School, experimenting with alcohol, they seemed fairly resolved that alcohol “didn’t do anything for them” from not enjoying the taste of it to articulating the adverse effects on ones’ behavior and health.
- ✦ Kids seemed to be in fairly consistent and ongoing dialog with their parents about the topic, citing “teachable moments” from news stories of drunk driving deaths to discussing relatives on vacation having had too much to drink. While their parents had not had an “official talk” about alcohol at this point, it is an open topic of conversation. Further, the boys agreed that 13-14 was the right age for parents to start talking about drinking and driving with their kids.
- ✦ They hang out at friends houses, are driven by parents and often stay overnight. They had very little experience with parties and had not had any experience with riding with older friends in cars.
- ✦ The question seemed to be how well these bright and articulate boys would fare once they had experienced a year or two in high school. Would their resolve be challenged or eroded by peer pressure? Would their values be challenged in this new environment? One boy shared that his mother told him that “even good people can be impacted by the company they keep.”
- ✦ Across all the groups, there was confusion about each of the spots. While the message of each was clear, the situation was confusing, such as in Jeff, “Did he kill his friend?”



Dallas 14-15 Boys cont.

- ✦ In the scene work, the boys focused on the available options to getting into a car with a drunk friend, including staying overnight at the party, calling a cab or even calling a parent. Their message was, “there’s always another alternative”. They seemed to have a close enough relationship with their parents that this would be a viable option, although the last one considered.
- ✦ The social pressure of high school or teen “coolness factor” had not set in yet, and these kids were still more closely aligned with their parents values than their schoolmates. They explained, “who cares if you’re a wuss or a party pooper?” when it came to taking someone’s keys, getting another ride or simply staying over. A messaging opportunity would be to reinforce the variety of choices, communicated with their unwavering confidence.
- ✦ They were aware of messaging campaigns, especially some of the more violent and graphic messages on YouTube, [Link](#)
- ✦ Among the three spots, they responded to “Carissa” and “Jeff” in particular because these two spots were more “personal and human,” “She was just hanging out with her friends, that could be a girl I go to school with.” Although they struggled to articulate it, it seemed the collateral damage of innocent victims and “losing your best friend” was more impactful to them than violent outcomes.
- ✦ The use of humor in the “House Party” spot was perceived as highly inappropriate given the nature of the message.



Dallas 16-17 Girls

- ✦ Drinking in this age group has permeated the school setting. The group related several stories about peers being intoxicated during school.
- ✦ While some related that they had first been exposed to alcohol in high school, a few in the group shared that they had witnessed some heavy drinking and drug use as early as middle school.
- ✦ No formal “Drinking and Driving Talk” had been presented to these respondents. No parents had discussed alcohol consumption before high school years. Most of the discussions had occurred organically as a result of a news story or an event that was widely known in the community. Kids said their parents used these opportunities to discuss the dangers of drinking and driving.
- ✦ Several girls in this group had been strongly influenced by “gory” videos shown in health class depicting results of accidents involving alcohol. These images had clearly gone long way in influencing these young ladies to take action to avoid potential drinking and driving situations.
- ✦ This group associated Buzzed more with smoking pot. The term Tipsy was seen as a more contemporary and relevant vernacular describing the feeling of slight intoxication.



Dallas 16-17 Girls cont.

- ★ Alcohol has become a fixture and is expected at house parties. The group felt that it was important to gain experience in social situations involving alcohol before attending college.
- ★ The group relayed that they did not feel direct peer pressure to consume alcohol. Pressure from peers was something that was easily overcome if they did not feel like partaking in alcohol consumption.
- ★ Several members of the group said that they would not be comfortable calling their parents for a ride while intoxicated even though their parents had told them they could call them for a ride home without negative consequences.
- ★ If it was unclear who the designated driver might be in a situation, they stressed the need to keep their intoxication level low enough to make a proper decision when confronted with a driving situation at the end of the night.
- ★ This group unanimously picked the Jeff spot as their favorite. They saw it as an effective alternative to “scare tactic” or “shock factor” approaches to the topic. They were able to relate to the emotion of the young man at the podium. Group was passionate in articulating that humor should not be an approach used to broach this topic (House party).



Dallas – College age Men and Women

- ✦ Kids focused on the importance of knowing the people you hang out with very well. They were more likely to hang out in intimate settings; friend's apartments, small dorm parties, etc. as opposed to clubs and house parties.
- ✦ This group had unusually close relationships with their parents.
- ✦ They talked as if they were immune to social pressure and described situations where they would have no problem saying no to a ride or forcibly taking keys from a peer. They said that they didn't mind playing the role of "party pooper" if it meant their friends would not get behind the wheel.
- ✦ This group related to the "Jeff" spot. Their life experiences allowed them to connect to this spot on a deeper emotional level than the younger groups. "Everybody has been to a funeral and can relate to that situation." They resonated with the unintended consequences of drinking and driving shown in these two spots where innocent people are killed or tragedy alters their lives forever.
- ✦ The Carissa and Jeff spots also seem to underscore for them the concept of "unintended consequences" related to drinking and driving beyond physical damage. These ads sparked a broader dialogue about tickets, DUI's, possible court dates, fines, inability to get jobs and the basic idea that drinking and driving could alter the course of your life.



Dallas – Parents Tolerant and Intolerant

- ✦ Intolerant parents had a perception that there was less support from a messaging point of view coming from other sources. More of a feeling that they “are on their own.” Felt that the responsibility was more on them to deliver the message, in contrast to Tolerant who believed that there was a wealth of information and support available to them, that they were not alone.
- ✦ Tolerant parents seemed more likely to have their kids call them if they needed a ride because they reinforce the fact that there will no consequences for calling for a ride. The issue of “consequences” for reaching out for parental support is a major disconnect between parents and kids, one that provides a strategic opportunity.
- ✦ Parent groups approach prevention differently. The Tolerant parents were more likely to approach it on difference, Academic consequences, scholarships, future jobs, being kicked off teams, and the Intolerant parents focused more on traditional “shock value” messages of death, tragic loss etc.
- ✦ Tolerant parents tended to have more experience at a younger age with drinking. This experience helped frame more realistic expectations about their kids’ drinking. Perhaps this experience leads to a more effective approach with their kids. Their expectations were that there would be “some drinking” and seemed to be more grounded in reality as a result.



LA FIELD NOTES



LA Kids 14-15

- ★ The youngest group in LA had far more experience with alcohol than other markets. They relayed that alcohol was usually supplied by upper classmen and is an expected feature at social gatherings.
- ★ Get-togethers range from small “kickbacks” to large house parties. Kickbacks can happen on the beach, in a park or at a house. Many times, a small kickback will turn into a large house party when news that parents are absent is spread through social media. This often occurs without the consent of the person who lives in the house. “Wait, I’m throwing a party?”
- ★ Parties will grow exponentially through social media and smartphone use. The party will grow until it is “rolled” by police or the parents return, causing a mass dispersal of all the kids. At this point, the kids will find a new place to congregate.
- ★ Parties move from place to place throughout the course of the night, leading to many more drinking and driving situations. Kids coordinate their next party location through social media and smartphone use.
- ★ Teens thought about half of parents enable the teen drinking. They either allow it outright or are oblivious to it. Complacent parents figure that the kids are going to drink anyway, so they try to provide a safe environment for it. “Always go to a friends house who’s parents do not care if you are drunk.”



LA Kids 14-15 cont.

- ★ The level of intoxication achieved differs in various situations. The presence of drinking games like beer pong will increase consumption. Teens look to their peers for cues on how much drinking is appropriate.
- ★ There was less planning around the concept of DD and did not use this term. “Sober sister” or “babysitter” were the terms used to describe the traditional DD.
- ★ Kids said they would usually find a safe route home, but the planning for this eventuality beforehand was not present. They take busses, walk, skateboard or find a ride with a peer or older sibling. Parents are a last resort. The group displayed concern about getting into a car with an intoxicated person.
- ★ There seemed to be no qualms around refusing a ride or preventing others from driving. This attitude had been driven in through presentations at school, advertising and personal stories. “No one is going to judge you for trying to protect your life.”
- ★ “The talk” has not been serious or has been completely absent. A few kids relayed that their parents “trusted me to know my limits”. While others stated that “the talk” had been a series of brief discussions.
- ★ “Shock tactics” employed by schools do seem to resonate and remain. The school reenacted a fatal accident and brought a smashed car to the school the week of prom. While teens certainly remember these presentations, they felt that the school went “overboard” delivering the message. “They make it too dramatic.”
- ★ Top-of-mind consequences of drinking and driving for this group ranged from killing yourself or someone else, to the social stigma and negative peer response to a DUI.



LA Kids 16-17

- ★ Parties range from small “kickbacks” to much larger parties. Most of the large parties are house parties, while some occur in rented warehouses.
- ★ Alcohol became a fixture freshmen and sophomore years while pot came into the picture in 7th or 8th grade. Pot is perceived to be easier to obtain. The alcohol is provided by kids with fake IDs, older kids or “is just there.”
- ★ News of a “chill house” spreads exponentially and parties grow out of control until the police or parents arrive. Kids will scatter and the party will move to another location through coordination on social media and smartphones. The moving from place to place is often in cars leading to many drunk driving situations.
- ★ The DD term was relevant to this group. These kids took time to plan a DD for the night while some even preferred to be the DD. “I feel safer when I am the DD.” The DD message had been driven home from school programs and health class.
- ★ However, many said that their designated drivers would not follow through in many situations and would themselves be intoxicated. In these situations, the group was adamant that there are “always other options” that one can use. (Call a cab, walk, call a friend, find another DD, Safe Ride program) While most parents said that they were available for a ride, this option was perceived as a last resort.
- ★ The perception was that a lot of their peers get behind the wheel while intoxicated. “A lot of high schoolers drink and drive.” “I have friends who drink and drive, but they drink moderately if they are going to drive.”



LA Kids 16-17 cont.

- ★ Some thought driving was ok after one or two beers, while others thought that one was too much if you planned on driving. They recognized the fact that a underage driver will incur a DUI with any trace of alcohol in their blood. The attitude on driving while stoned was much more relaxed.
- ★ Peer pressure to drink was a major factor in this group. Most other groups had stated that peer pressure had a limited effect them, however it was an obvious issue for this group. "Why don't you ever drink? Its senior year!" They agreed that the peer pressure started to kick in junior year.
- ★ "The talk" was nearly nonexistent in this group. Only one respondent stated that his parents had had any conversations about drinking and driving. Most parents seemed to stay out of their teen's business as long as they maintained good grades and stayed out of trouble. "My parents don't ask me questions as long as I stay out of trouble." Other parents allowed drinking in their home either directly, or were unaware of it.
- ★ Parents in this group set a poor example for their kids when it came to buzzed driving. "I might drive with a buzzed driver because my parents would be ok driving in that situation." Teens had witnessed parents drive after consuming alcohol on many occasions and did not see anything wrong with it.
- ★ The top-of-mind consequences in this group revolved around some of the secondary consequences beyond death and destruction "Suspended license, it will limit my career options, \$10,000 fine, your reputation is negatively impacted."
- ★ Losing a car and losing money was perceived as the largest deterrent when it comes to buzzed driving.



LA Kids College Age

- ✦ This group will shift locations throughout the night. They do use a DD, however this term was not relevant to them. They referred to the DD as “the driver, the homie or the man”. The DD was taken seriously and was a respected position.
- ✦ They agreed that ideally the DD should stay completely sober, however, in reality they stated that it would be ok for the DD to have a “couple of drinks” and smoke a bit of pot.
- ✦ Many times the DD will become intoxicated. In these situations, the group related that “something gets worked out”. They will call a cab, find another driver for the car or find another ride.
- ✦ The insistence on the DD had been instilled through parents, experiences and stories they had heard. “It cost my friend \$30,000. You put others in danger and you put your pocket in danger.” Parents had universally failed to drive home a anti-drinking and driving message in this group. Instead, the overwhelming message was “be careful not to make drinking a habit.”
- ✦ Parents had relayed that they would be available as an option if they needed it. They promise no consequences, but few members of the group had exercised this option. It was described as a last resort.
- ✦ Drinking is expected in most social situations. This age group has moved beyond just drinking to get drunk and will adjust their target intoxication depending on the situation they are in.



LA Kids College Age cont.

- ✦ There had been social pressure against stopping someone from drinking and driving when they were younger, but at this age, they did not feel any pressure taking a stand.
- ✦ Strategies were murky when asked how they would evaluate the state of the DD when they themselves were heavily intoxicated. “I would give myself time to pull it together and then make the decision.”
- ✦ Most admitted to having ridden in a car with a person who was overly intoxicated. They said that the DD had lied about their state, or had simply made a poor choice: “Sometimes, it’s like whatever man, let’s go to taco bell.”
- ✦ Concern was shown for dire drinking and driving consequences as well as many secondary consequences: Parents will kill me, I am concerned for the welfare of others, It will change my entire life (no law school), killing someone else is worse than killing yourself.
- ✦ Several members of the group related personal stories of peers who had been killed in drunk driving incidents. It was clear that these incidents had a immense effect on them. “Experience is the best lesson, but you don’t want that experience.”



LA Parents Tolerant and Intolerant

- ✦ Most of the tolerant parents had relatively early experiences with alcohol in high school while many of the intolerant parents had not indulged until college or later.
- ✦ Parents feel that they are much more involved and in touch with their kids than their parents had been. “My mom was around but not informed.” This may provide them with a false sense of security. They think they are in tune with what their kids are doing, when they are actually in the dark about most activities.
- ✦ Parents in both groups expressed a desire to give their kids some experience with parties and drinking to avoid them “going crazy” once they were on their own in college.
- ✦ Both groups stated that they felt their children would call them for help in a dangerous situation. While many said that there would be no consequences, several in the intolerant group stated that there would be consequences for their behavior.
- ✦ The messages delivered to the kids about alcohol were diverse. Some thought leading by example was the most important approach. “This is how we lead our lives, we expect you to do the same.” Others assumed that their kids simply knew that drinking and driving was not ok and had not had any direct communication on this front. A few parents talked about taking advantage of “teachable moments” when they arise. Any parents who had talked about drinking and driving had waited until their child had a drivers license to do so.
- ✦ Parents in both of these groups did relatively little talking with their kids about drinking and driving. Any discussion about it came too late. Their assumptions about what their kids know the decisions they would make went too far.



Thank You!

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