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SOCL19066 – Community Analysis

Assessment 1 – Literature Review
40%

Due Date: 3rd April 2009 ✓

Word Count: 1484 words

~~Program Overview/Introduction~~

A series of studies conducted between 2000 and 2004 found that more than 40% of males and females aged between 15 and 17 years had consumed alcohol at a risky level on their last drinking occasion. (White & Hayman 2006, p. 3) ✓

The purpose of this literature review is to establish feasibility for the funding of an alcohol prevention program for Bundaberg high schools. The following literature review will discuss the various findings already available on the topic of alcohol prevention amongst teens. 'The basic intention of a literature review is to give a comprehensive review of previous works on the general and specific topics considered in the report' (Berg 2009, p. 388). This review will commence with an overview of the Bundaberg area, including statistics of the proposed audience of the alcohol prevention program. A review of other alcohol prevention programs will follow. Finally, this review will conclude with a general outline of the proposed alcohol prevention program for Bundaberg high schools. *Great introduction!*

~~The Community~~

Information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that as at the 2006 census, the population of the local government area of Bundaberg was 48 525 people, with 15.2% being in the 15-24 year age group (ABS 2008b). The high schools in the area ^{that will} participate in the alcohol prevention program include Bundaberg State High School, North Bundaberg State High School, Kepnock High School, Shalom College, Bundaberg Christian College and St Luke's Anglican School. The ABS classifies the population of Australia into five classifications; major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote (ABS 2008a). Bundaberg is not a major city, so for the purpose of this paper, it is classified as rural. ✓
 'Research indicates that youth in rural areas consume alcohol at higher levels than their metropolitan counterparts' (Hughes et al. 2008, p. 26). ✓

~~Literature Search~~

A search was done through the CQUniversity library homepage using EBSCOhost database. As the proposed program is based on the social norms theory, search strings included "social norms" and "alcohol", providing 62 results. When "youth" was added to this search, the results reduced to ten. Another search was made in an effort to find other alcohol intervention programs using other theories, so "alcohol prevention" and "youth" was tried, resulting in

seventeen articles. The following discussion is based upon some of the articles from the above searches. ✓

Findings

The social norms theory states ‘that behaviors [sic] are influenced by incorrect perceptions of how members in a social group think and act’ (Ramos & Perkins 2006, p. 60). The article by Hughes et al. (2008) provides extensive information regarding the social norms analysis project (SNAP), conducted with rural high school students in Tasmania. It is also the only article found that uses the social norms theory in an Australian setting. The article commences with an overview of alcohol prevention programs already in use in schools and outlines the fact that many programs focus on an individual approach, and state that ‘[a]n anomaly exists between the highly social nature of drinking on the one hand, and the predominantly individual focus of efforts to prevent alcohol misuse on the other’ (Hughes et al. 2008, p. 27). ✓ *Good work.*

Granfield (2005) provides information regarding a social norms alcohol prevention campaign implemented at a university in the United States (US). This study researched the effects of the campaign one and two years after the implementation and found ‘that while the intervention had a significant effect on reducing student misperceptions of alcohol use on campus, no significant changes in consumption rates occurred’ (Granfield 2005, p. 281). The literature review of this paper also found that previous studies had indicated significant reductions in the perception of both heavy drinking and the consumption of alcohol amongst college students (Granfield 2005). The results of this study indicated that ‘most students misperceive the amount of drinking among their peers’ (Granfield 2005, p. 286). Therefore, whilst results did not conclude a reduction in alcohol consumption, changing misconceptions about peer drinking habits was successful. Granfield (2005) ~~continues on to say~~ ^{indicates/suggests} that the results of the program may lie in the negative impact the social norms messages had. Keeping this in mind then for the Bundaberg program, utilisation of student involvement in the development of the program may provide the added benefit of the social norms messages having better impact. ✓

A further study that concurs with the results of Granfield was conducted by Thombs et al. (2004), and concluded that ‘they do point to the need to develop more effective applications

of the [social norms] model' (Thombs et al. 2004, p. 66). Some reasons behind the poor impact of this particular program included students not understanding the intended purpose of the campaign or disbelieving the campaign messages (Thombs et al. 2004). This can further assist in development of the Bundaberg program, ensuring that the intended audience understands the campaign purpose, and by using direct input from the target audience to ensure genuine acceptance of the program messages.

Holder (2006) and Stafstrom et al. (2006) discuss the Trelleborg project in southern Sweden. Trelleborg is a city of Sweden, similar in population size to Bundaberg. This alcohol prevention program was based on a community systems approach, and in addition to the school alcohol prevention program, there was a community policy and action plan on alcohol and drugs, a parent program, news coverage and increased police inspections of liquor stores (Holder 2006). Over a four year period, data were obtained with regards to youth alcohol consumption, and it was noted that the Trelleborg community experienced an almost 20% reduction of alcohol consumers. In comparison, the whole of Sweden, during the same period experienced only a 5% reduction (Stafstrom et al. 2006). The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that a combination of programs can increase the effectiveness of a school based alcohol prevention program.

Ramos and Perkins (2006) investigated the Pennsylvania State University's Alcohol Intervention Program Level 2 (AIP2) to determine the underlying theories. They found the health belief model, social norms theory, social learning theory and the transtheoretical model of change are all elements of AIP2 (Ramos & Perkins 2006). 'AIP2 is an educational intervention program designed to help students make appropriate decisions regarding the use of alcohol and other drugs' (Ramos & Perkins 2006, p. 58). Currently a three session program, after identifying the underlying theories and the effectiveness of the program, Ramos and Perkins (2006) identify further sessions that could make the program more effective. They have not discounted the use of any of the theories they discovered underlie the program, further confirming the use of a variety of methods and theories to create the most effective school based alcohol prevention program.

Research conducted by Piane and Safer (2008), whilst not about an alcohol prevention program already in use, was based on interviews with a number of college students to

determine their drinking behaviours. Based on their results, they concluded that 'programs should seek to lower perception of social norms and positive expectancies regarding alcohol' (Piane & Safer 2008, p. 67). Their own literature review found 35 articles around college drinking behaviour, of which eleven involved social norms and six were around expectancies and attitudes in their explanations of college drinking (Piane & Safer 2008). 'The social norms and influence theories contend that perceived drinking norms on campus can explain and predict drinking behavior [sic]' (Piane & Safer 2008, p. 70). This research further supports introduction of an alcohol prevention program based on the social norms theory, combined with other models for Bundaberg high schools.

The international study by Ahlstrom and Osterberg (2005), whilst not providing any further insight to alcohol prevention programs already in operation, did present some valuable information with regards to the nature of alcohol consumption. The downfall is that whilst it is presented as an international study, the results were limited to the US and Europe. Their study concluded that in almost all cultures, males abstained less frequently and drank more often and in higher quantities than their female counterparts. Amongst youth, these gender differences did not occur as frequently, if at all (Ahlstrom & Osterberg 2005). This information is relevant for the Bundaberg program, as it indicates the program will not necessarily need to be gender specific.

~~Alcohol prevention program for Bundaberg high schools/Conclusion~~

The proposed program for Bundaberg high schools will have the social norms theory underpinning it. The literature review has shown that this theory has the potential to work effectively in alcohol prevention programs. The limitations, however, have been taken into account and it is proposed that the program be developed with student involvement. This will include the creation of a youth forum, containing representatives from each school. Furthermore, as studies have shown that programs involving a variety of theories work well, some features from the Trelleborg project will be included, resulting in a systems approach. This will include a parent information session to be delivered as part of the program. Additionally, a community forum will be established to further explore ways of involving the Bundaberg community in the youth alcohol prevention program. Efforts will also be made to include the local police and media in the program.

Excellent work!

References

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✓ Great reference list.

Assignment criteria sheet for essays

The codes used are as follows:

O—Outstanding, VG—Very Good, G—Good, F—Fair, P—Poor

Introduction

	O	VG	G	F	P
Presentation of main argument/approach to answering the question	✓				

Clarification of your use of terms/concepts used in discussion (Do not simply list definitions)	✓				
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Discussion

Use of key sociological concepts relevant to topic	✓				
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Breadth of reading	✓				
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Integration of reading	✓				
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Correct in-text referencing	✓				
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Analysis of major findings	✓				
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Conclusion

Highlights most interesting points	✓				
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Coming to a final position on the topic	✓				
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Answered the set questions/tasks	✓				
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Presentation

Legibility: line spacing, font, margins, etc.	✓				
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Spelling	✓				
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Grammar, including paragraph structure	✓				
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Word length (within 10% of word limit)	✓				
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References and appendix (where appropriate)	✓				
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Submitted on time (5% per day penalty)	✓				
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