# The Social Norms Approach to Reducing Alcohol Use among High School and College Students

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# Agenda

- DeJong
  - Results of the Social Norms Marketing Research Project
- Farnum
  - Challenges of using social norms marketing in the high school setting
- Discussion

# *Social Norms Marketing*

Use campus-based media to report accurate drinking norms

↓

Decrease in perceived normative expectations to drink

↓

Decrease in alcohol consumption
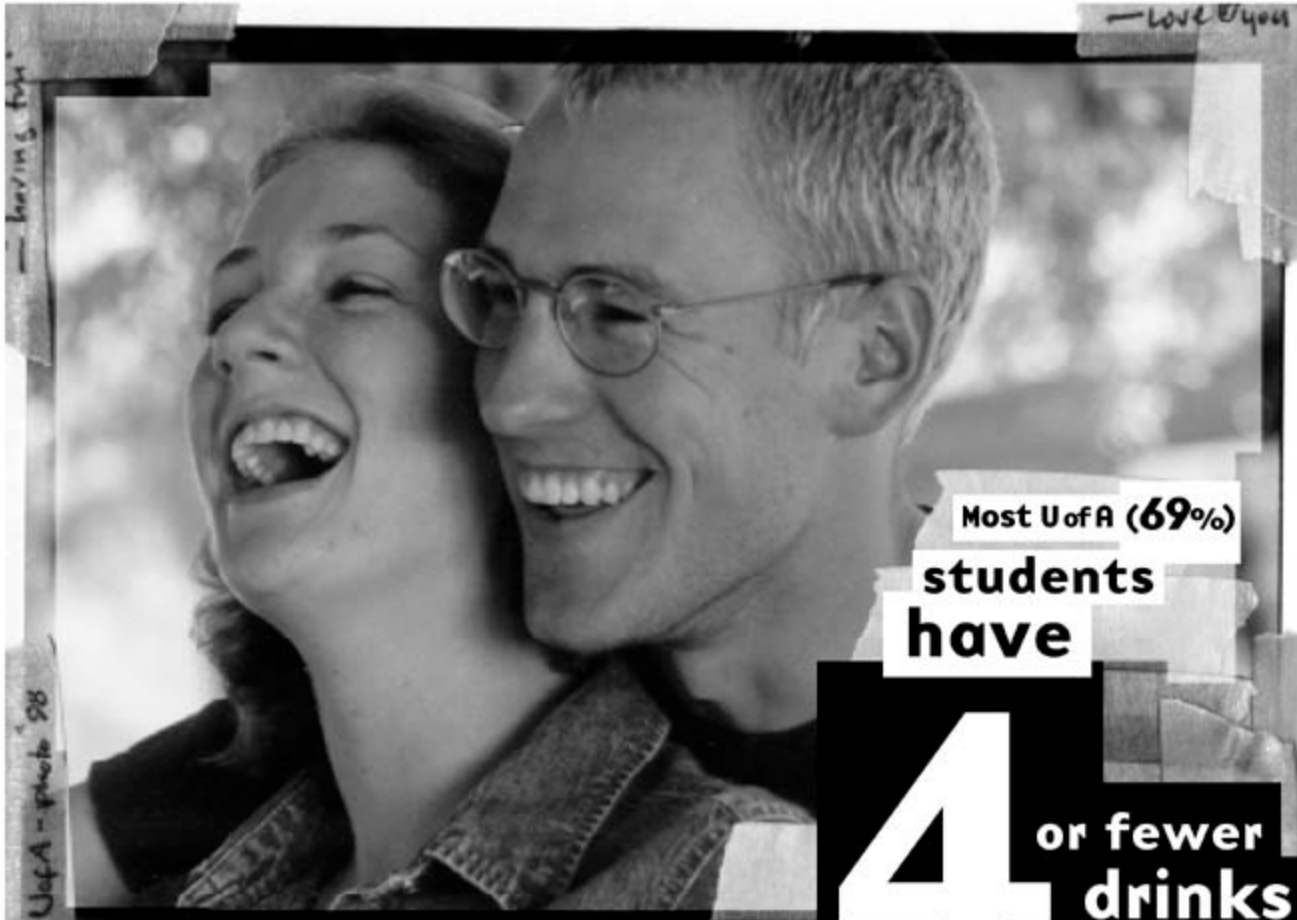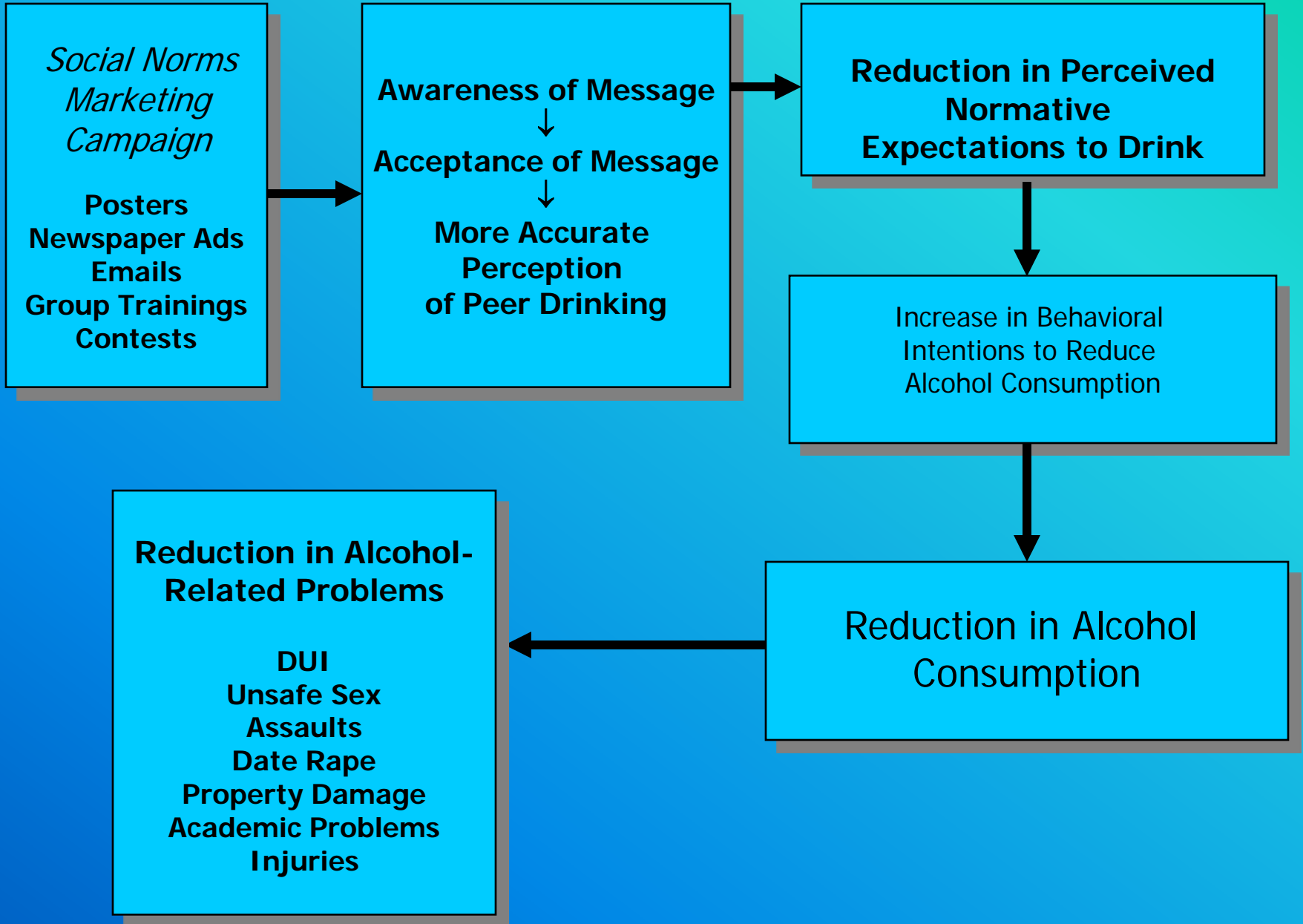
# *Early Case Studies*

## *Impact on Heavy Drinking Rates*

- *University of Arizona* **(3 years)**
  - **5+ drinks in one sitting in the past 2 weeks**
  - **40%** $\Rightarrow$ **31%**
  - **Message changed from 0—5 to 0—4 drinks**
- *Hobart and William Smith Colleges* **(3+ years)**
  - **Drinking 5+ in a row 3-plus times in the last 2 weeks**
  - **41%** $\Rightarrow$ **28%**

# *Social Norms Marketing Research Project*

## National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

## U.S. Department of Education

### *R01 AA 12471*

**William DeJong, PhD, Principal Investigator**

**Laura Gomberg Towvim, MSPH, Project Director**

**Shari Kessel Schneider, MSPH, Research Director**

**Emily E. Doerr, Research Assistant**

**Melissa J. Murphy, Research Assistant**

# *Social Norms Marketing Research Project*

## *Findings for Study 1*
### *Cohort A = 18 Colleges and Universities*
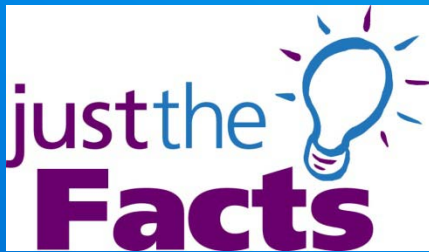
# *Selection of Participating Institutions*

- **AOD coordinators received open invitation**

- **Applicants completed questionnaire**
  - **Never had a social norms campaign**
  - **Willing to be in control group, if assigned**
  - **Demonstrated commitment to the project**

- **Secured IRB approval (Study 1 = 18 sites)**

- **Matched schools into pairs (based on region, size, governance, student demographics)**

- **Randomly assigned one school from each pair to the treatment group**

# *Study Timeline: Study 1*

| Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1999-00) | (2000-01) | (2001-02) | (2002-03) | (2003-05) |

**All Schools**

Survey of College Alcohol Norms and Behavior ⟶

Contextual data collection ⟶

**Treatment Group Schools (9)**

*Just the Facts*
Implementation ⟶

**Control Group Schools (9)**

*Just the Facts*
Implementation ⟶

# *SNM Message Guidelines*



**Campaign messages must:**

- ✓ **Be targeted to the entire undergraduate population**

- ✓ **Convey information about a behavior typical of a majority of students**

- ✓ **Correct an identified student misperception**

- ✓ **Be simple statements of fact (i.e., should not have a judgmental or moralistic tone)**

# *SNM Message Guidelines*
**(cont'd)**

- **Campaign materials must include:**
  - ✓ **Normative message**
  - ✓ **Campaign logo**
  - ✓ **Identification of the source of information (survey, date)**
  - ✓ **Drink equivalency line (i.e., "1 drink = 12 oz. beer = 4 oz. wine = 1 oz. liquor)**
- **Print advertisements should include an eye-catching photograph**

# Campaign Messages*

|  | Number of Schools |
|---|---|
| [NAME] students have 0-5 drinks when they party. | 1 |
| [NAME] students have 0-5 drinks a week. | 0 |
| | |
| [NAME] students have 0-4 drinks when they party. | 5 |
| [NAME] students have 0-4 drinks a week. | 1 |
| | |
| [NAME] students have 0-3 drinks when they party. | 1 |
| [NAME] students have 0-3 drinks a week. | 1 |

*Alternative wordings:
  [NAME] students have # or fewer drinks when they party.
  [NAME] students have # or fewer drinks a week.
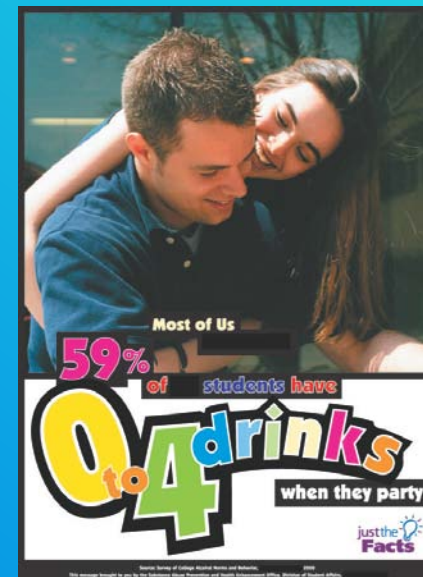
just the Facts
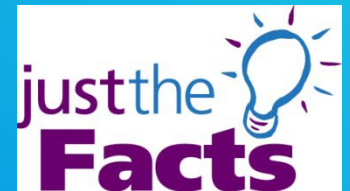
# *Media Channels*

- Newspaper Ads
- Radio and TV ads
- Flyers/Posters
- Billboards
- Table Tents
- Mailing Inserts
- Item Giveaways
- Talks/Presentations
- Student Orientation
- Email Messages

$2,000 per year (3 years)

$300-$1,650 per year supplements (2 years)



Most of Us

59% of students have

0 to 4 drinks when they party

just the Facts

# Limited Campaign Exposure

**55.4% of students reported seeing social norms information during the school year**

**Only 35.8% reported that this occurred a few times a month or more often**

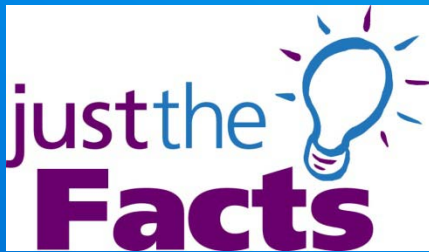| Findings | Treatment Group | | Control Group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2000** *n=1,515* M (SD) | **2003** *n=1,536* M (SD) | **2000** *n=1,406* M (SD) | **2003** *n=1,365* M (SD) |
| **Greatest number of drinks on one occasion in past two weeks** | **3.57** (4.57) | **3.95** (4.86) | **3.44** (4.39) | **4.30** (5.17) |
| **BAC for greatest number of drinks on one occasion in past two weeks** | **.0830** (.0979) | **.0859** (.1023) | **.0804** (.0911) | ▲ **.0945** (.1072) |
| **Drinks when students party** | **3.30** (3.34) | **3.57** (3.48) | **3.20** (3.26) | **3.85** (3.70) |
| **Drinks per week** | **4.67** (7.92) | **4.62** (8.00) | **4.61** (7.93) | **5.24** (8.43) |

# *Study 1: Summary*

- *Relative risk of alcohol consumption* was *lower* at schools with a *JTF* campaign
- Pattern:
  - Minor changes at treatment group schools
  - Heavier alcohol consumption at control schools
- Core Institute data suggest a national trend for increased heavy drinking between 2000 and 2003

# *Social Norms Marketing Research Project*

## *Findings for Study 2*
### *Cohort B = 14 Colleges and Universities*

| Findings | Treatment Group | | Control Group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2001** *n=1,117* M (SD) | **2004** *n=979* M (SD) | **2001** *n=1,199* M (SD) | **2004** *n=1,063* M (SD) |
| **Greatest number of drinks on one occasion in past two weeks** | **4.87** (5.00) | **5.12** (5.84) | **4.70** (4.91) | **4.78** (5.23) |
| **BAC for greatest number of drinks on one occasion in past two weeks** | **.1364** (.1003) | **.1420** (.1107) | **.1337** (.0970) | **.1296** (.0990) |
| **Drinks when students party** | **4.33** (3.63) | **4.35** (4.00) | **4.16** (3.55) | **4.37** (3.85) |
| **Drinks per week** | **6.07** (8.50) | **6.59** (10.37) | **6.24** (8.85) | **6.20** (9.16) |

# *Overall Summary*

***Study 1***

**Students attending an institution with a SNM campaign have a lower relative risk of heavy alcohol consumption**
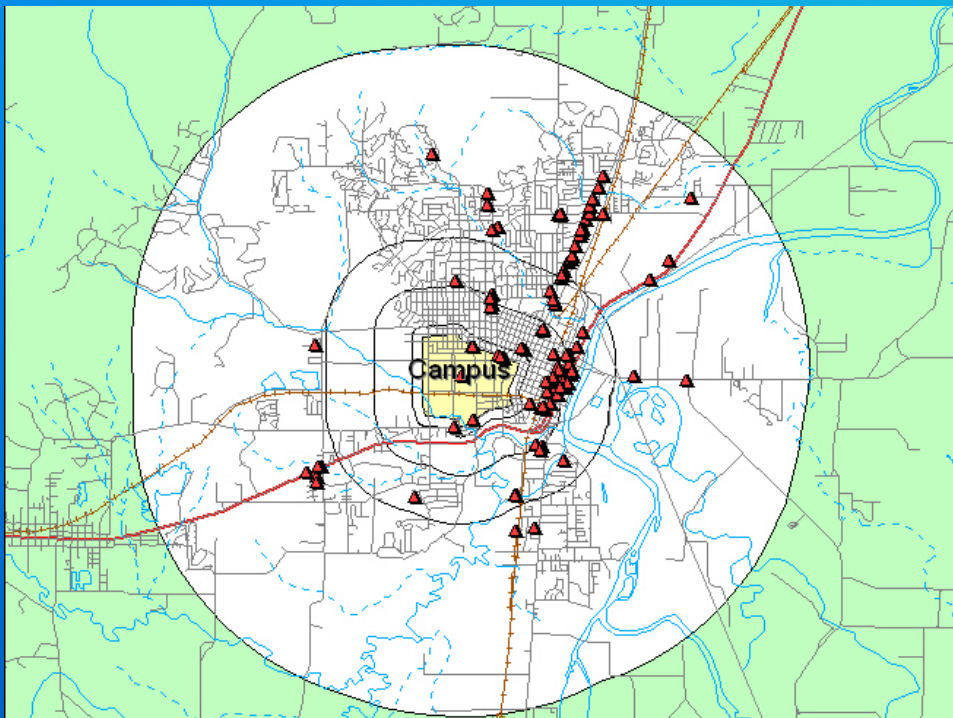
***Study 2***

**Replication failure**
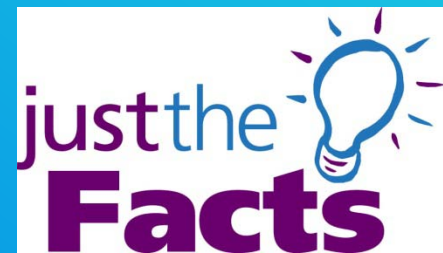
# Social norms marketing campaigns are less likely to work in campus communities with high alcohol outlet density.

– **Richard Scribner, LSU**

# *Alcohol Outlet Density*

Number of on-premise alcohol outlets within 3 miles of campus boundary, per 1,000 total students enrolled



Range = 2.3 to 128.0

Median = 10.78

High density = 10.78+ outlets per 1,000 enrolled

# *Summary*

- **Significant interaction between on-premise alcohol outlet density and the intervention effect**

  **Experimental Group x Time x Outlet Density**

    – **Number of drinks when partying**
    – **Recent maximum consumption**
    – **Composite drinking scale**

- **High density: no intervention effect**

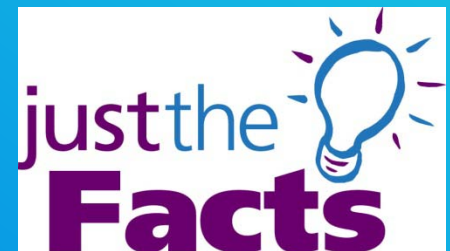- **Low density: intervention effect**

Mean Number of Drinks When Partying by Experimental Group & Alcohol Outlet Density
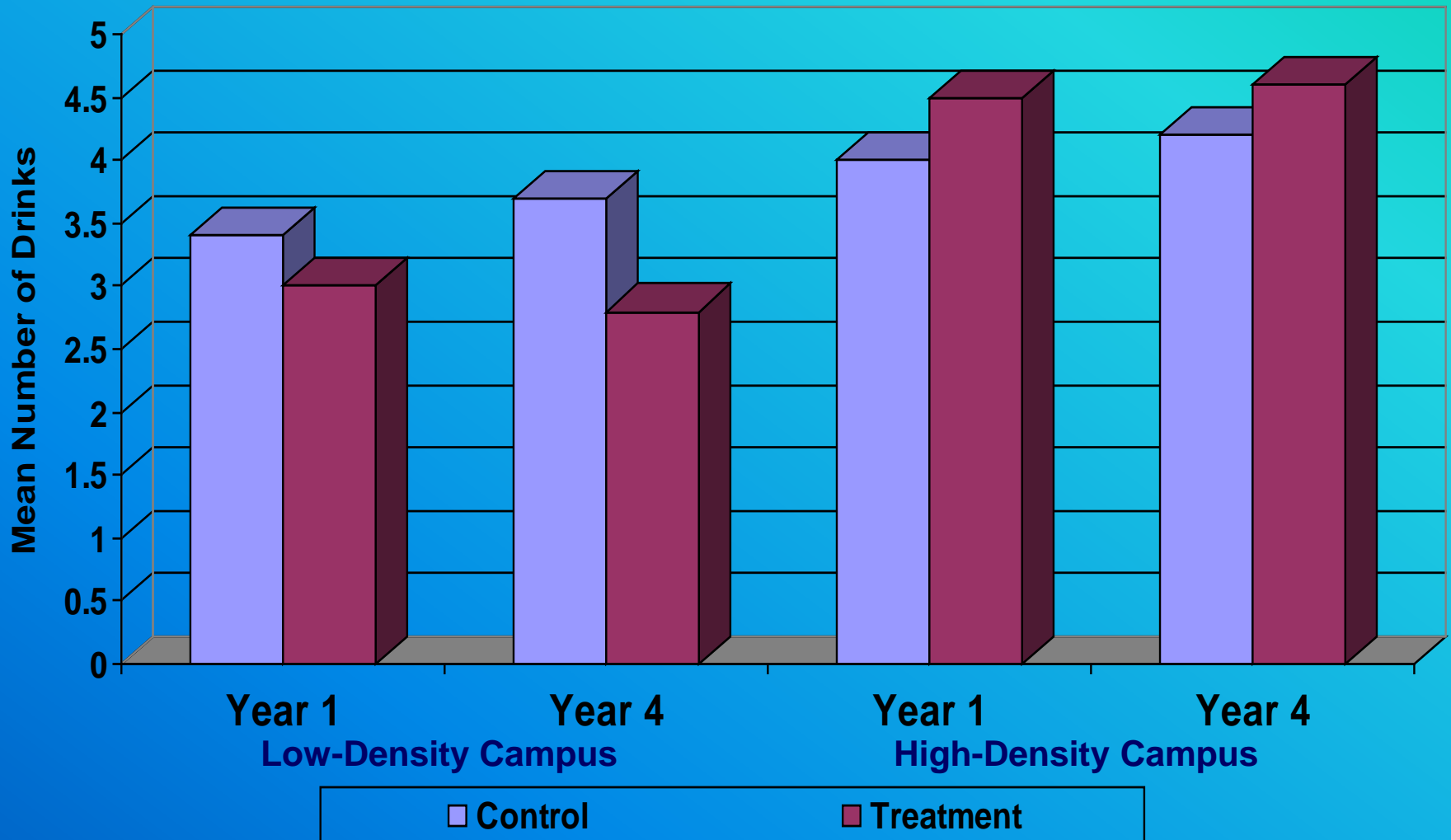
# *Alcohol Outlet Density*
## Explains Study 1 v. Study 2 Results

- *Study 1:*
  - 18 sites, 5 at or above the median
    - 3 treatment group sites
    - 2 control group sites

- *Study 2:*
  - 14 experimental sites, 11 at or above the median
    - 6 treatment group sites
    - 5 control group sites

# *Implications*

- **Social norms marketing can work to reduce student alcohol use**
- **But it did *not* work as well in alcohol-rich environments**
  - **Need an even more intensive social norms marketing campaign**
  - **Need to work to change the campus community's alcohol environment**

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