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University Alcohol Prevention, Public Relations and Organizational Legitimacy from the Parental Perspective

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by John E. Brummette III entitled "University Alcohol Prevention, Public Relations and Organizational Legitimacy from the Parental Perspective." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication and Information.

Sally McMillan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Michael Palenchar, Lisa Fall, Jennifer Marrow

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEGITIMACY FROM THE PARENTAL
PERSPECTIVE**

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

John E. Brummette III
August 2008

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ABSTRACT

Developed from the public relations process model, the purpose of this study was to identify parental perceptions of university drinking norms and their relationship with parental perceptions of the organizational legitimacy of the university. This study used a web-based survey to assess an N = 173 parents of current university students at the University of Tennessee – Knoxville. The results of this study identified that parents have exaggerated misperceptions of college drinking that are related to their overall perceptions of the university in terms of organizational legitimacy. The study also found that parental awareness of university prevention efforts were strongly correlated with parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy. This study advocates the importance for universities to approach alcohol prevention from an issues management perspective that includes the use of two-way symmetrical communication with parents as well as the possible benefits of using social marketing as a public relations tool

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CHAPTER I

CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

Alcohol and Higher Education

Universities across the nation face the issue of high-risk drinking and its many negative effects on the health and safety of students. Longitudinal research conducted over an eight-year period revealed that 44% of college students engage in heavy episodic drinking (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002). *High-risk drinking* was defined as having four or more drinks in one sitting and *heavy episodic drinking* was defined as have four or more drinks in one sitting in a two week period prior to the dissemination of the prevalence survey (Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Rimm, 1995).

The reality that a majority of college students either abstain or drink below the high-risk drinking level is often concealed by the more severe negative consequences suffered by a sizeable minority of students partaking in heavy episodic consumption of alcohol. A large majority of students that experience negative consequences suffer hangovers, missing class, lower grades, physical confrontations and criminal liability while a small minority of the entire college student population suffers more serious negative consequences such as injury and death (Kapner, 2003; Wechsler, Austin, & DeJong, 1996). Hingson, Heeren, Zakocs, Kopstein and Wechsler (2002) found there were approximately 1,400 unintentional alcohol-related fatalities among the college student population across the United States. Research has also established that half of the violent episodes occurring on university and college campuses are alcohol-related (Roark, 1993). The more severe occurrences become topics that receive a great deal of public and media attention that results in public misperceptions. This cycle warrants a

tremendous need for improvements in university policy related to student health and safety and its external communication efforts.

High-risk drinking is a real issue that is amplified as a minority of students drinking at heavy episodic levels creates a damaging internal perception within that negatively influences the healthy majority. Internally, impressionable students are armed with a false perception that all of their peers are drinking at high levels on a frequent basis. The consequences result in students increasing their drinking levels to assimilate with this perceived majority (Perkins, 2002). This paper will attempt to point out that process is enacted further as this same minority helps to create a damaging false perception in the public forum. Externally, sensationalist media coverage of more severe alcohol-related incidents framed around blaming the university lead to parental misperceptions that universities are not concerned or capable of ensuring the health and safety of their students. A possible repercussion of these misperceptions is damage to the overall perceived legitimacy of the university in the public forum.

Parental disapproval of alcohol prevention in higher education leads to activism that causes increased legislative pressure and public policy as demonstrated with the establishment of the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989. This legislation expanded the proper and appropriate functions of an institute of higher education past the provision of an education to the difficult task of ensuring student health and safety. Legal professionals advised universities to accommodate these expectations by improving their alcohol and drug prevention programs to meet both legal and societal expectations (Bickel & Lake, 1999; Epstein, 1998).

Public perceptions of the appropriateness and quality of university operations and

outcomes can be conceptualized in terms of organizational legitimacy defined as a congruence between the social values associated or implied by organizational activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system” (Dowling & Pfeiffer, 1975, pg. 122). This congruence is established through strategic communication with relevant stakeholders and is necessary for organizational sustainability.

Since both alcohol prevention and public relations utilize effective and strategic communication to reach their objectives, an issues management approach to university alcohol prevention could utilize resources from both fields. Social marketing is an internal prevention resource that uses research-based, normative statements targeted towards college students to correct misperceptions regarding a particular health-related activity (Perkins, 2002). This strategy could be used in the prevention field as it is directed externally to modify damaging parental misperceptions of college drinking. The same strategy may have measureable capabilities as a public relations tool able of correct damaging public misperception of organizational operations and outputs.

The purpose of the current study is to identify parental perceptions of college drinking and parental awareness of prevention programs at their student’s university to identify any significant relationships with parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy. The significant contribution of this research is to identify how stakeholder perceptions of organizational legitimacy may be based on perceptions created from invalid information and a lack of awareness of organizational operations and outputs. The outcomes of this study also advocate further evaluation of social marketing to modify public perceptions in the realms of alcohol prevention and public relations.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

Issues Management

Chase (1982) formally defined issues management as “the capacity to understand, mobilize, coordinate and direct all strategic and policy functions, and all public affairs/public relations skills, toward achievement of one objective: meaningful participation in the creation of public policy that affects personal and institutional destiny” (p. 1). This definition of issues management asserts that public relations can be used to elevate public awareness and mutual understanding that ultimately affects the creation of public policy, which assists in the achievement of organizational goals. This definition contends that successful public relations is a critical element to organizational sustainability.

Jones and Chase (1979) developed issues management from the conception that issue responses consist of multiple steps including identification and analysis, followed by the formation of change and action strategies for effective implementation of the management strategy. The final step in this model included an overall evaluation allowing practitioners to modify and improve various elements of the program. The evaluation stage allows practitioners to omit substandard elements and incorporate exceptional components into future issues management plans.

The issues management approach evolved due to a shadow of imperviousness cast over larger organizations in our society caused by continually increasing corporate growth, status, and influence. Public awareness of corporate ability to impair the environment and jeopardize the safety of its stakeholders has produced a change in how

organizations engage external concerns. Many organizations that utilize an issues management approach seek favorability in the public forum.

Since the inception of issues management, academic research and professional application have created many varying theoretical perspectives for organizations seeking to achieve the overall goal of harmony with their social partners (Bridges, 2004). Grunig (2006) advocated the systems approach to public relations from a strategic management perspective that focuses on the creation of mutually beneficial relationships through the use of two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) first identified symmetrical communication in the public relations literature and coupled it with two-way communication as an ideal model of public relations. Two-way, symmetrical communication involves the initiation of ongoing organization/public interaction allowing careful analysis of public responses to organizational activities and the creation of mutual understanding of opposing viewpoints (Lauzen, 1997). During this two-way, symmetrical interaction, environmental subsystems share positions to identify any form of unrest or need for clarification. The role of the organization in this type of interaction is to conduct systematic research to detect negative stakeholder perceptions related to various organizational outputs. This assessment allows the creation of strategic messages and change strategies that seek collaborative resolution. Careful analysis of relevant stakeholder perceptions allows organizations to systematically determine the direction of strategic campaigns focused on creating favorable perceptions of organizational behaviors.

Another perspective of issues management rests around Sethi (1977) and his assertion that issues often begin where an organization's operations and outcomes fail to

match the expectations of the public. A gap in legitimacy stems from differences in fact, opinion, or policy and its width is determined by the strength of the disapproval from concerned publics (Kruckeberg & Stark, 1988). Issues requiring management can exist both internally and externally. Internal issues are confined in the organizational structure and are often easier to identify, while external issues evolve outside the organization in the public forum (Dutton & Ottensmeyer, 1987). External issues are often harder to detect and rely on more sophisticated environmental scanning techniques using quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. This study quantitatively assesses public perceptions to detect any potential issues about an organization's behaviors, policies and outputs related to alcohol prevention.

Strategic responses to various issues rely on careful attention to norms depicting what organizational behaviors and messages the public considers ethical and appropriate (Bowen, 2005). Public norms and expectations are often consistent with legal and judicial standards as well as morally acceptable guidelines existing in the perceptions of relevant publics (Bowen & Heath, 2003). These norms constitute what is functionally and morally correct, as well as what is considered legitimate in a particular market. Successful issues management strategies must utilize assessments of public perceptions regarding organizational operations and behaviors to determine their relationship with existing societal norms and values.

An issues management approach to alcohol prevention in higher education can work to identify negative effects caused by increasing parental concern and alarm regarding the health and safety of students. Negative effects such as activist pressure on legislative and judicial subsystems and the creation of unfavorable perceptions of

organizational legitimacy result in unapprised regulation rather than needed collaboration. Two-way, symmetrical communication allows all parties to voice their opinions in order to establish a public policy that has the best interests of all parties.

Organizational Legitimacy

Organizational legitimacy can be defined as “a congruence between the social values associated or implied by organizational activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system” (Dowling & Pfeiffer, 1975, pg. 122). Organizational legitimacy is highly contextual and suitability of organizational behaviors is heavily dependent on perceptions in a particular environment. While analyzing this phenomenon, researchers must expect changes in how legitimacy is established and defined within varying environments and populations. For example, community leaders may have more favorable perceptions of a university based on the community donations, research and jobs it provides for the area. Parents may have unfavorable perceptions of organizational legitimacy of the same university if they perceive it fails to value student health and safety.

The true conceptualization of legitimacy is often debated from the strategic and institutional perspectives. Legitimation attempts from the strategic perspective occur as organizations “instrumentally manipulate and deploy evocative symbols in order to garner societal support” (Suchman, 1995, p.572). Legitimation attempts in the institutional perspective involve the social construction of favorable meanings associated with organizational outputs and operations within various social and political environments. From the strategic perspective, accepted organizational behaviors are presented and evaluated according to existing societal values while institutional

perspective conceptualizes legitimation attempts as those that create favorable interpretations through cohering with existing conceptualizations of accepted societal institutions.

Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) first depicted the strategic dimension of organizational legitimacy from a systems perspective as actions operating in alignment with the goals prevalent in the larger supersystem. These researchers claimed that societal norms, beliefs, and values could be captured through assessments of existing communication prevalent in society. This study will take an empirical look at parents and their normative assessment of whether university prevention efforts are in alignment with these values and how this is related to their overall view of the university in terms of organizational legitimacy.

Within the strategic perspective, Suchman (1995) differentiated between two specific types of organizational legitimacy. The strategic perspective consists of pragmatic legitimacy or benevolent exchanges between an organization and its stakeholders and moral legitimacy defined as a “positive normative evaluation of the organization and its activities” (p. 579). Moral legitimacy exists as a generalized perception of an organization based on its perceived outputs, techniques, procedures, and their consequences on society (Scott & Meyer, 1991).

Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), using work from Parsons (1960), claimed that “disparities between value systems” often exist between subunits and the larger environmental system (p. 122). These disparities are similar to the work and research of Sethi (1977) and his conceptualization of legitimacy gaps. Both of these gaps or disparities are issues for organizational subunits that require systematic and strategic

communication that presents organizational behaviors as means to economical, legal, and legitimate ends (Dowling & Pfeiffer, 1975). These authors claimed that legal and regulative standards are often determined by social norms and standards of legitimacy. When used as legitimation strategies, issues management and two-way, symmetrical communication are actions capable of “affecting relevant norms and values taken by other groups and organizations” (p. 124).

When approaching organizational legitimacy as a multidimensional concept, it can be viewed by researchers from various ontological perspectives and scientific methods. Pragmatic legitimacy can be directly observed on the objective level by the senses as organizational acts or exchanges with relevant stakeholders. Organizational activities on the pragmatic level can be measured quantitatively by a simple count of legitimation activities or programs enacted by the organization. Similarly, moral legitimacy is related to the existence of measurable generalized perceptions within the larger environment. Since moral legitimacy deals with a generalized perception, it can be assessed through quantitative survey methods obtaining data on participant perceptions of organizational activities. Cognitive legitimacy is guided by Berger and Luckman (1966) and their concept of social construction and conceived on the subjective level where the effect or interpretation and meaningfulness of various organizational legitimation activities are constantly changing according to their coherence with existing elements of society. Cognitive legitimacy can be assessed by interaction in the natural setting of a particular environment seeking to reveal the underlying process of how legitimacy is established or created through communication.

The debate between the strategic and institutional perspectives of organizational

legitimacy corresponds with a shift prevalent in public relations marked by organizations communicating from a functionalist perspective characterized by a strict adherence to economic interests to a new co-creational perspective based on mutual relationship formation and collaboration (Botan & Taylor 2004). These changes mark a transfer of power from the sole possession of the organization to a change in how organizations communicate with the public by providing increased awareness of organizational activities.

The processes of manipulation and the use of evocative symbols stated in Suchman's definition of the strategic perspective are very similar to the concept of ethical persuasion inherent in the concept of two-way, symmetrical communication (Grunig, 2006). Ethical manipulation and suggestive symbolism are used in both concepts as attempts to establish mutually beneficial outcomes while achieving as much of the organization's goals as possible. The ethics inherent in these techniques are determined by whether the true intention or end goal of each party is revealed in the interaction.

From an issues management perspective, organizational legitimacy can also be achieved by the bargaining of a minimal amount of organizational change or public reaction needed to counterbalance public disregard for a specific activity to a tolerable limit. From the organization's point of view, this tolerable limit is the point where public disdain does not have a major effect on its successful and efficient operations. From the public view, the tolerable limit is the point where the public perceives that organizations are operating in alignment with societal values such as competence, goodness, honesty, moral decency. This assertion is related to the fundamental proposition of the strategic perspective of organizational legitimacy that claims "one of the elements of competition

and conflict among social organizations involve conflict between points of view (Pfeiffer, 1981, p.9). This conflict can become beneficial through the use of two-way, symmetrical communication that allows all parties to present points of view in a free and open manner.

Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) claimed that successful legitimacy management should not only focus on reactive or pragmatic attempts to gain favorable public perceptions but should also include environmental scanning for prospective legitimacy-damaging issues in the organization's environment followed by proactive and substantive corrective efforts. These efforts could include strategic demonstrations of quality and performance that can be accomplished on the normative level with issues management. Proactive legitimacy attempts can be accomplished on the cognitive level as organizational efforts to improve market and quality standards.

Strategic legitimation efforts are highly related to issues management and two-way, symmetrical communication as they involve an attempt to shorten the gap between organizational behaviors and public expectations (Sethi, 1977). Public perception can be analyzed through a lens of organizational legitimacy and issues management can be used to identify a problem and to implement legitimation efforts that increase favorability and acceptance of organizational outputs.

Institutional legitimation occurs as various organizations in similar markets are simultaneously coerced toward a particular organizational model. Institutional isomorphism is enacted through the communication between specialized networks that diffuse new norm-abiding models and approaches (Di'Maggio & Powell, 1983). Successful models deemed as legitimate are co-created and accepted by network

members. Guidelines for these models often remain within a particular market environment and external normative and regulative systems are not affected due to a lack of awareness and involvement with this process. Rueff and Scott (1998) claimed that “cognitive elements are more basic to the operation of social systems and provide frameworks on which normative and regulative systems are constructed” (p. 879). Organizations seeking to obtain favorable perceptions of moral legitimacy must operate according to these cognitive models and communicate their adherence to their relevant stakeholders.

The market standard for prevention strategies has been established within the field of alcohol prevention. Ignorance of these standards has resulted in a group of misinformed specialists implementing substandard prevention programs (NIAAA, 2002). The effect of this misinformation has spilled over into the relevant populations such as parents and community members who strongly doubt the existence of efficient strategies or an acceptable standard for alcohol prevention. This lack of knowledge has created an accumulation of confusion, misperceptions, and blame directed toward higher education and its concern for its students.

Market Standard for Alcohol Prevention in Higher Education

In 2001, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) recruited a task force of experienced alcohol prevention researchers to convene for several years to examine existing alcohol prevention research and techniques in higher education. This collection of scholars managed to establish a standard of market professionalism in regard to alcohol prevention in higher education. Those institutions regarded as credible and legitimate in their prevention efforts are in alignment with the

standards set forth by the NIAAA.

The NIAAA reviewed existing prevention techniques and research studies and categorized each into one of four tiers of effectiveness (NIAAA, 2002). Their findings created a movement to an overall improvement in the standards for alcohol prevention in higher education. Coercion toward these standards is now fueled by the dissemination of information in national conferences, strict grant requirements for prevention funding, expectations of published findings in peer reviewed journals, and administrative desires for proven, research-based efficiency of prevention programs.

Programs within the first tier are primarily implemented at the individual level toward high-risk students or those demonstrating the possibility of alcohol dependency. These strategies have been empirically proven to be successful among individual college students. Examples of tier one strategies are brief motivational interviewing (Neighbors, Larimer, & Lewis, 2004) and norms clarification, (Larimer & Cronce, 2002) which attempt to modify individual norms and perceptions related to alcohol consumption to lower drinking levels. The effectiveness of these strategies is due to their highly personalized nature allowing each student to relate to the material therefore increasing salience of the messages. Prevention specialists can conduct face-to-face interviews and provide feedback that is meaningful to each student. However, due to the vast size of many colleges and universities, the strategies are not feasible or cost efficient for reaching entire campus populations.

Programs within the second tier are labeled environmental management strategies that research demonstrates are successful at the general population level. These strategies target various elements in the environment surrounding high-risk drinkers by curtailing

alcohol accessibility, increasing enforcement of alcohol policies, as well as the providing training such as fake identification detection and responsible beverage service within the alcoholic beverage market surrounding a university or college.

Strategies falling within the third tier have logical and theoretical potential but lack empirical evaluation of their efficiency (NIAAA, 2002). The researchers claimed these strategies were used by many prevention program professionals and college administrators without an appropriate evaluation and assessment. Examples of tier three strategies include consistent education and enforcement of campus alcohol policies, use of safe rides for students who have consumed alcohol, and the provision of alcohol-free alternative events (NIAAA, 2002).

Tier three strategies provide great opportunities for prevention research and grant funding due to a need for their proper evaluation. Social marketing was presented as one of the strategies within this tier of effectiveness. Social marketing was identified as having potential due to its ability to change perceptions but was found to lack evidence of its ability to change actual consumption behaviors.

Strategies falling within the fourth tier of effectiveness are those classified as ineffective at reducing high risk drinking on university and college campuses. Strategies such as information-based and fear –based programs are popular throughout many universities and colleges despite a lack of research-based effectiveness. The NIAAA task force urged university administrators and prevention specialists to avoid the use of these approaches and move toward implementing strategies classified in the top three tiers of effectiveness.

An example of an information based campaign is the provision of information

regarding numerous reasons why high-risk drinking is unhealthy with a presumption that students will automatically change their behaviors with increased awareness that alcohol is unhealthy. Other information based strategies use stories or narratives of other college students who have suffered the extreme consequences of alcohol. These programs frequently feature guest speakers who have been disfigured while driving under the influence or mothers who have lost their own children due to alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related fatalities. An example of a fear-based strategy is the placement of a smashed up car that was previously involved in a drunk driving accident on a university campus. Even though these strategies are ceremonial displays of honorable attempts to solve the issue, their effectiveness is minimal.

Social Marketing

In the late 80's, social marketing gained popularity as a proficient university alcohol prevention approach due to a research finding claiming most university students increased alcohol consumption due to exaggerated perceptions of the drinking levels of their peers (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986). This finding pointed out the need for the correction of exaggerated perceptions of peer drinking and the illumination of a majority demographic of healthy students and their reserved drinking behaviors.

The attraction of social marketing was further fueled by one university experiencing a 44% reduction in its high-risk drinking rate as a result of a social marketing campaign on its campus (Fraunfelder, 2001). Since its inception, social marketing has provided an efficient solution for changing perceptions and it also holds promise at changing student behaviors in the field of alcohol prevention as well as many other health related areas such as tobacco use (Christensen & Haines, 2003); seat-belt use

(Linkenbach &, Perkins 2004); and sexual assault (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2003). The popularity of social norms approaches for alcohol prevention remains apparent today as over half of U.S. colleges and universities have adopted this technique in attempt to lower levels of high-risk drinking among students (Wechsler, Nelson, Lee, Seibring, Lewis, & Keeling, 2003).

The social marketing technique is based on the application of two theories from the field of social psychology that help explain how individual perceptions guide behaviors. Miller and McFarland (1987) claimed individuals are driven by pluralistic ignorance or an assumption that “the identical actions of the self and others reflect different internal states” (p. 298). In other words, this phenomenon occurs when members in a group believe their actions are contradictory to others despite their analogous nature. This concept is related to the second theory of false consensus that occurs when an individual falsely assumes that his or her peers are taking part in a behavior at the same frequency as he or she does on a regular basis (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977).

Relating these two theories to high-risk drinking, false consensus results in students who drink at high-risk levels, assuming their peers are drinking at the same levels, therefore validating their unhealthy actions as being part of the norm. Other healthy students operating under a sense of pluralistic ignorance believe they are part of a minority of individuals who refrain from consuming alcohol at high-risk level, when in reality they are part of a healthy majority. This false realization often undermines their attempts to feel like they “fit in” at a particular campus.

Norms guiding individual behavior are either injunctive or descriptive. Borsari and Carey (2003) defined injunctive norms as attitudes or beliefs based on a moral belief

system and descriptive norms as those based on perceptions of other behaviors related to a particular phenomenon. On a university or college campus, injunctive norms are high-risk activities perceived as being commonly approved of by a particular campus or demographic while descriptive norms are generalized perceptions about when and how often a typical student consumes alcohol on a habitual basis.

A typical university social marketing campaign begins with the implementation of a benchmarking survey to obtain data on respondents' drinking levels, perceptions of their peers' drinking levels, as well any negative consequences suffered from these activities. Using these findings, data reflecting student perceptions and reported drinking levels of the true drinking norm at the particular campus are identified thereby allowing for the detection of any existing misperceptions.

As mentioned earlier, research demonstrates that students who have exaggerated misperceptions of peer drinking levels will increase their alcohol consumption levels to fit into their new environment. Peer influence and a strong desire to coalesce with new social networks often results in an increase in unhealthy and atypical behaviors. This finding is demonstrated with each student's drinking behaviors matching the perceived level of peers.

After detecting the invalid descriptive and injunctive drinking norms at a particular campus, advertising pointing out the existing misperception and valid depictions of the current drinking norm are disseminated throughout the campus in all possible media venues. The venues often include table tents in the campus dining halls, advertisements in the school newspaper, university-related brochures, handouts, and various posters located around the campus. An example of normative messages found on

these items could read, “5 out of 8 students abstain from drinking alcohol,” or “1 out of 4 students have four drinks or less when they go out to party.” These statements are usually followed by a statement showing the total number of participants in the student sample and the fact that the data were obtained directly from that particular university’s campus.

The normative statements seek to lower the existence of pluralistic ignorance by increasing a healthy student’s awareness that he or she is not alone in abstaining from alcohol or drinking less than the high-risk level. Students who either abstain or drink less than the binge level are validated by their healthy behaviors. The incidence of false consensus is treated by informing a student taking part in high-risk drinking that his or her peers are actually drinking substantially less than he or she perceives. This revelation deters a healthy student from changing his or her behaviors to meet some false societal norm that maintains that most students are getting drunk on a regular basis while empowering a high-risk student to change his or her behaviors to become part of the healthy majority.

Salience of the normative messages is increased with campaign frequency. The systematic implementation of consistent messages establishes a new drinking norm demonstrating that most students at a particular university are healthy. Post-test surveys are implemented which seek to identify any change in perceptions or reductions in reported drinking level due to the social marketing campaign.

The Value of Social Marketing Campaigns

The Prevention Realm

Social marketing falls under the third tier of effectiveness prescribed by the NIAAA report as a potentially valuable prevention tool that lacks overwhelming empirical proof of its efficiency. The NIAAA recommended that social marketing be implemented at the population level to create consistent campus norms of an overwhelming healthy campus majority. Despite the increasing popularity of social marketing, evaluative research of the technique has been divided by advocates and critics. Lewis and Neighbors (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of social norms research to assess the effectiveness of various social marketing techniques. These researchers advocated the use of personalized normative feedback rather than mass, campus-wide disseminated social marketing techniques for the highest levels of behavioral change and efficiency. Personalized normative feedback relies on detecting respondent perceptions of peer alcohol consumption to compare them with the true norm existing on a specific campus. The prevention specialist can use this information to identify misperceptions for discussion with the students.

The personalized normative feedback technique differs from social marketing by conducting needs assessment and interventions in a more customized manner. Misperception feedback and prevention discussion is more relevant and personal to the student, therefore increasing salience of the messages. These strategies fall within the NIAAA first tier of effectiveness due to the research-based efficiency within the field of alcohol prevention.

The issue with this recommendation is the lack of capacity or reach of

individualized normative feedback among a campus population. The larger campuses need population level approaches capable of reaching thousands of students to establish an overall healthy campus-drinking norm. Many brief motivational interviewing and personalized normative feedback strategies are implemented among students who have been mandated for alcohol-related incidents. A population level approach should also empower the healthy to remain healthy while coercing the unhealthy to join the healthy majority.

Clapp, Lange, Russell, Shillington, and Voas (2003) used an experimental design to test the effects of a social norms intervention on a university residence hall. While determining the intervention effect on the experimental group, specific changes in student perceptions were revealed. However, the drinking levels of both the control and experimental groups increased during the time of the study. This finding pointed out that while social marketing interventions may not change behaviors in all situations, they are a practical tool for changing respondent perceptions.

Thombs, Dotterer, Olds, Sharp, and Raub (2004) conducted a pre-test, post-test, longitudinal evaluation of a social marketing intervention to test its effectiveness at changing perceptions and drinking behaviors. These researchers also conducted impact evaluations of the program to determine whether students were aware of the implementation of the program, whether they actually understood the purpose of a social marketing campaign and whether they believed the statistics used in the normative messages.

The findings of this study revealed the social marketing intervention did not significantly reduce student-drinking levels but did change student perceptions. The

impact evaluation data revealed the lack of behavioral change might have occurred due to student uncertainty about the purpose of the overall intervention and scrutiny toward the statistics used in the normative messages. These findings pointed out the importance for universities to adopt future programs that educate students about the purpose and function of a social marketing intervention program. Students and parents who are educated about the purpose and process used to create social norms messages may be less likely to exhibit less scrutiny toward the messages and statistics.

Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, and Griskevicius (2007) utilized an experimental design method in an attempt to discover how interventions using descriptive and injunctive norms, both separately and together, affected power usage among respondents who exhibited usage levels either above or below these norms. The findings of this study pointed out how households with usage levels above the norm were lowered after being subjected to social norms interventions using descriptive norms. Households subjected to interventions using injunctive norms, significantly increased their power usage. Taking this finding into account, the researchers suggested this increase in usage caused by injunctive norm interventions was moderated only by a combination of subjective and injunctive norm interventions.

While existing research demonstrates that misperceptions are related to behaviors, Campo, Brossard, Frazer, Marchell, Lewis, and Talbot (2003) attempted to identify any relationships between the direction of misperceptions above or below the actual norm, the size of the misperception or degree of difference from the actual norm, and reported drinking levels. These researchers found that students with larger misperceptions in either direction tended to drink below the reported drinking norm. This study pointed out that

the strength of the misperception acted as a moderating variable on alcohol consumption.

Even though research reveals social marketing efficiency varies depending on whether it is targeted on mass or individual mediated levels, the main point to be identified is both are capable of changing perceptions. Alcohol researchers and prevention specialists continually conduct evaluative research demonstrating the perception-modifying ability of social marketing. The significance of this finding is often reduced due to the strategy's lack of ability to meet the essential need of lowering student-drinking levels, which is the ideal outcome of all prevention programs and strategies. A potentially interesting application exists when shifting social marketing to an arena such as public relations where changing public perceptions is an ideal outcome.

The Public Relations Realm

While analyzing social marketing from an issues management perspective rather than from the prevention paradigm, its ability to change or alter perceptions makes it a possible beneficial public relations tool. This study seeks to determine if varying perceptions about an organization are related to stakeholder perceptions of organizational legitimacy. In this situation, social marketing may be capable of two-way, symmetrical communication as they are both strategic, research-based responses to stakeholders intended to increase favorable perceptions of an organization. Any social marketing campaign begins with an assessment of a population for data that can be used to create messages intended to persuade perception towards organizational favorability.

Theoretical Considerations

Attribution Theory

Weiner (1974) conducted a series of experimental design studies to assess

attributions or causes individuals construct about others' successes and failures at achieving specific tasks or responsibilities. His work led to the development of the attribution theory, which operates under the basic premise that individual interpretation of events are filtered through personal assessments related to one's own actions. According to attribution theory, attributions are made according to perceptions regarding existing norms, overall complexity, and amount of effort enacted by an individual to correct an issue. These attributions have an effect on the amount of favorable or unfavorable blame that individuals place on others. Attribution theory claims that individuals assign causes of success and failure of others' actions according to perceptions of their own ability to gain success in achieving the goal. In many circumstances, the difficulty and existence of an issue may have an effect on assumptions about its severity.

This study will attempt to apply attribution theory to parents and high-risk drinking by determining if parental misperceptions of the severity, prevalence, and nature of high risk drinking is related to their attributions of the university. Parental misperceptions may be related to misinformation about the actual definition of drinking at heavy episodic levels, perceived norms that all college students are drinking at heavy episodic levels, the idea that the issue exists only at their child's university, opinions that university prevention efforts are substandard, and beliefs that the university does not value student health and safety. Social norms and previous circumstances have an effect on causal attributions (Weiner, 1974).

Attributions related to task accomplishment are also made according to perceptions of the amount of effort enacted by the individual or entity. When relating this finding to organizational legitimacy and stakeholder relationships, universities attempting

to create favorable perceptions may communicate efforts and programs to relevant stakeholders (Brummette & Palenchar, 2007). These researchers found that many parents were unaware of the current prevention efforts at their child's university. Parental awareness of these programs was highly correlated with parental perceptions of trust in the university.

Weiner (1974) classified the causes of individual attributions into the two areas of locus of control and stability. Locus of control refers to attributions made according to the amount of influence an individual or entity has for an outcome. The locus of control varies according to whether an occurrence was controlled more by factors in the external or internal environment. Attributions made according to stability are related to whether the cause of success or failure remains constant or fluxuates over time. Attribution theory states that if individuals perceive another individual or entity had a greater level of control over the failure of a task, they assign higher levels of responsibility to that individual or entity.

According to attribution theory, parental attributions about the university and its prevention efforts may be based on evaluations according to existing norms. Existing norms can be conceptualized by normative legitimacy, or whether an organization and its outputs are in alignment with norms or larger societal values. At this point, universities are working diligently to establish a standard of cognitive legitimacy that is well needed, but is not the same evaluation standard used by external publics such as parents and community members. The multidimensionality of the concept of organizational legitimacy has the potential to cause a discrepancy that can be corrected through communication.

Public Relations Process Model

The outcomes and behaviors of a university have a direct affect on its internal and external stakeholders. This systems view characterizes universities as smaller subsystems interacting with other subsystems such as parents, community residents and officials, media, and other institutes of higher education joining to form a larger social, economic, and political environment. A focus within this environment is communication, specifically how a university interacts with its constituents in a manner that serves its overall goals and mission.

Hazleton and Long (1985) proposed the public relations process model as a systems theory approach to public relations conceptualizing organizations as open systems existing with other subsystems within an interrelated, multidimensional environment. The multidimensionality of this superordinate system subjects an organization to technological and competitive pressures to remain as a highly regarded and recognized organization within its market while adhering to legal, political, and social obligations on its operations and outputs.

Hazleton (2006) claimed that organizations operate to accomplish both instrumental and relational goals. Instrumental goals are related to an organization's bottom line and its intended service to a particular market. Relational goals are those that seek favorability in its external and internal environments. Both goals deserve attention due to their ability to ultimately affect the success and vitality of an organization.

Development of this theory has presented a definition of public relations as a continual process of interaction between organizations and other external subsystems consisting of inputs, transformation processes and outputs (Hazleton, 1992; Hazleton &

Long, 1985, 1988; Long & Hazleton, 1987). Organizations receive outputs or responses from external publics about the organization's own various behaviors and outputs to transform these messages into strategic responses with action strategies to be directed back to external publics.

Issues management and two-way, symmetrical communication are a function of this type of public relations. When combining the issues management model of Jones and Chase (1979) and the public relations process model, issues management consists of the identification of environmental outputs, followed by the transformation process where responses are analyzed for the creation of change and action strategies for effective implementation of the modified organizational output. The output and activities involved with this entire process can be defined as public relations. The outcome of successful public relations can be measured in generalized perceptions of organizational legitimacy.

Hazleton and Long (1988) asserted that organizations encode messages capable of carrying overt meaning or behavioral or psychological meanings that place significance on changing behaviors or perceptions. Messages or referents may be interpreted symbolically by relevant publics in a manner serving the goals of the organization. These organizational outputs are evaluated either positively or negatively according to their relevance to the communication systems and expectations of subsystems or relevant publics. The relevance and positive interpretation of the interaction is related to Grunig (2006) and his concept of two-way, symmetrical communication.

Within the public relations process model, public relations and organizational legitimization attempts exist on the pragmatic level as directly observed messages or exchanges with overt meanings. Public relations within this model is also related to

normative legitimacy as various messages are capable of carrying objective meanings based on whether the activities cohere with existing societal beliefs and value systems within the larger system. Hazleton and Dougall (2005) asserted organizational outputs have the ability to influence public cognition and perceptions resulting in a change in behaviors. An efficient public relations strategy must attempt to influence public beliefs, values, and opinions that combine to form the concept of organizational legitimacy.

Parent and Student Perceptions

Parental perceptions of the appropriateness of alcohol prevention efforts rely on their perceptions of the severity of high-risk drinking and how successful the university is in combating the issue. These perceptions are based on awareness, beliefs, and definitions related to the topic. Due to the often distant nature of the parent from his or her student and the university, he or she may have misperceptions about the reality of their child's university campus. Parental perceptions may vary substantially from the reality of student drinking which points to a need for university to align parental perceptions with actual student drinking behaviors. Parental perceptions of alcohol consumption, whether based in actual consumption or not, may have an effect on the behaviors of their children.

Austin and Chen (2003) conducted a quantitative evaluation of college students' perceptions of college drinking and mediated alcohol advertisements and their relationship to their high-risk drinking activities. Student variables identified in this study were frequency and amounts of alcohol consumption, desirability of alcohol portrayals in media advertisements, as well as perceptions of parental approval of alcohol-related media. The findings of this study exhibited that parental approval of media advertisements often result in less student skepticism toward high-risk drinking and more

positive expectancies toward alcohol consumption. Parental interpretations and attitudes toward alcohol have the potential to heighten or moderate young students' alcohol consumption.

While this study provided a meaningful interpretation of the effect of parental perceptions on student drinking behaviors, the data obtained was from adolescent *perceptions* of parental attitudes rather than data obtained directly from parents. Reliability issues emerge that can be partially alleviated by a direct assessment of the parental population for self report data about perceptions and behaviors.

Many researchers have countered this reliability issue by directly assessing parent-adolescent dyads in search of how parental attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs ultimately affect adolescent perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors related to high-risk drinking. This research remains at odds with some researchers claiming parents have a strong ability to affect their children's drinking behaviors in high-school and early into college (Ary, Tildesly, Hops, & Andrews, 1993; Lau, Quadrel, & Hartman, 1990; Mitric, 1990; Reifman, Barnes, Dintcheff, Farrell, & Uhteg, 1998), while other researchers claim parental influence over adolescents significantly diminishes after high school into the early college years (Deilman, Butchart, & Shope, 1993; Gerrard, Gibbons, Zhao, Russell, & Reis-Bergan, 1999; Windle, 2000). This perceived lack of parental influence can be attributed to student displacement from the home to residential dormitories resulting in a higher susceptibility to peer influence.

As students are subjected to new living and social environments, they often rely on newly found friendships to cope with these new life changes. Freshman students quickly assess their surrounding environments in an attempt to assimilate the newly

found order with goals of compatibility. Within the student environment, perceptions and newly formed peer networks define what college life is like in terms of the social scene. Parents often lose the typical influence they have had over their children in these situations, but they still have abilities to influence their children in different ways.

Lines of communication between the child and parent are altered. Precautions must be taken ensuring this does not lead to a decrease in the communication between parent and child. By ensuring a constant level of communication with their children, parents retain a spot in shaping their child's reality of college life and drinking. To serve this role adequately, parents must have an accurate perception of college drinking themselves.

Some research has attempted to test the effect of parental intervention on adolescent perceptions and behaviors related to high-risk drinking. Turrisi, Jaccard, Taki, Dunnam, and Grimes (2001) utilized a quasi experimental design method on parent-adolescent dyads to identify any significant changes caused by the alcohol-related, parental interventions. The findings of this research identified a moderating effect on positive adolescent perceptions of high-risk drinking caused by parental intervention and discussion.

Simons–Morton, Haynie, Crump, Eitel, and Saylor (2001) measured the relationship of direct and indirect peer influence as well as parental influence on adolescent students. In this study, direct influence was operationally defined as personal contact or interaction with other peers where an offer to consume alcohol was prevalent. Indirect influence was defined as adolescent affiliation with peers who consume alcohol establishing norms of acceptance for alcohol consumption. In this research, the survey

data revealed significant relationships between high-risk drinking behaviors and parental and peer influence. The findings revealed a positive correlation between increased peer pressure and levels of substance abuse in the adolescent sample. These substance abuse levels were moderated by parental involvement and expectations for healthy behaviors.

Booth-Butterfield and Sidelinger (1998) attempted to evaluate the communication between parent and child related to high-risk activities such as drug use and alcohol consumption. Specifically, these researchers sought to determine whether any relationships existed between assorted communication styles and adolescent perceptions regarding alcohol and high-risk drinking. This study found parental discussion of various alcohol-related issues was correlated with student displays of more responsible alcohol-related behaviors. Adolescent attitudes toward high-risk drinking were also strongly linked with their parents' attitudes. This finding demonstrated parental communication with children related to high-risk drinking and alcohol consumption can work to create a reality swaying adolescent behavior in a positive direction.

Wood, Read, Mitchell, and Brand (2004) investigated how parental monitoring, support and attitudes related to high-risk drinking. This longitudinal study on a sample of prematriculating college freshmen identified a negative relationship between parental monitoring and disapproval and adolescent high-risk drinking levels. This literature further corroborated the claim that parents' expression of negative attitudes toward high-risk drinking can result in lower high-risk drinking activities in their children. Parental attitudes and desire to communicate with their children about drinking are directly affected by their own perceptions. As the research demonstrates, parental perceptions are often mirrored by their children. Parent intervention can be a moderating factor to their

children's attitudes towards alcohol consumption but it depends on the quality of the intervention.

Because parental perceptions have an effect on student behaviors, the amount of awareness and validity of these perceptions are important. McDuffie and Bernt (1993) identified parents perceived information-based strategies as more effective while their children perceived those strategies as being ineffective. This finding pointed out the need for prevention programs to equip parents with more than mere generalized alcohol-related information. Successful parental intervention must begin with prevention programs that seek to comprise accurate perceptions of high-risk drinking norms. The correction of misperceptions of parents who either underestimate or exaggerate student drinking could possibly guide how appropriately and efficiently the university is combating this serious issue.

One of the findings of the NIAAA report claimed sole uses of information-based strategies were ineffective. McDuffie and Bernt (1993) identified the parental misperception that information-based strategies were effective. Communication with parents could afford opportunities to correct misperceptions about the efficiency of information-based strategies as well as provide information regarding how parents can become more involved in the prevention process.

McDuffie and Bernt (1993) evaluated parent and teen perceptions of alcohol usage and the effectiveness of various parental prevention strategies. This research recognized almost 79% of the adolescents in the range of 13 to 18 years of age reported consuming alcohol. Teens and parents were asked to reveal how much and how often they perceived students consumed alcohol. Results showed parental perceptions of the

severity of high-risk drinking and peer drug consumption levels and abuse were significantly lower than the adolescent sample.

Shutt, Oswalt, and Cooper (2006) attempted to assess the variance of parent and child perception differences with a comparative study. This study found parents underestimate the use of alcohol by their children, as well as the majority of students at their child's college or university. In this study, parental misperceptions could be a result of a parent's desire to disassociate his or her child with the perils of university high-risk drinking or a lack of communication with his or her child.

Some significant findings have been identified thus far. First, students subjected to peer influence to high-risk drinking acceptability exhibit more high-risk drinking behaviors. These individuals drink to "fit in" with their peers due to being subjected to a reality sanctioning the idea that increased occurrences of high-risk drinking are the norm. Secondly, consistent findings exist that demonstrate parents underestimate student drinking norms and intentions to take part in these activities. Research also shows parents are often misinformed about the prevalence of the issue and what efforts they can exert to become a moderating factor in correcting the problem. There is a necessity for a correction of parental perceptions of high-risk drinking at their child's university. For collaboration to occur between parents and university officials, parents must be accurately informed about the high-risk drinking and what strategies are used to effectively prevent it.

The existing research on parental influence on adolescent drinking paints a reality with a sense of needed optimism. Though a great deal of negative peer influence exists in a child's environment that can be detrimental to his or her health and safety, parents can

still work to deter these high-risk behaviors by actively talking to their children about high-risk drinking and setting expectations of healthy behaviors even while their child is away from home. Parents must understand the significance of this issue on their child's campus by being educated about the true drinking norm on their campus. While most students are drinking at less than the binge drinking level, longitudinal statistics typify most students are consuming alcohol in some fashion (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002).

Two-way, symmetrical communication would permit universities to form relationships with parents who are capable of assisting in alcohol prevention, as well as the creation of favorable public perceptions. This symmetrical exchange has the potential to affect parental perceptions of the university's legitimacy as well as their involvement with their children about the issue. Some students may inform their parents that most students do not take part in high-risk drinking to avoid increased parental monitoring and involvement in their own lives. This miscommunication can lead to decreased parental involvement due to the parent thinking the high-risk drinking does not affect his or her child. Parental recognition of high-risk drinking affecting their child may not come until a child faces university sanctions or suffers substandard grades, which have the potential to generate blame and negative perceptions shifted toward the university. This situation can be avoided through university communication and involvement with parents in a collaborative effort.

Social marketing and its use in the prevention realm can be extended to include campaigns directed toward parents of current university students. Social marketing can also be viewed as a form of strategic communication based on empirical research and

modification for its target audience. Social marketing messages seek to change perceptions of various organizational activities, behaviors, and norms prevalent in a specific population. This study seeks to advocate an amalgamation of the field of alcohol prevention and public relations by determining if parental misperceptions of college drinking are related with parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy.

Research Questions

Due to its perception-modification abilities, social marketing is most beneficial if damaging misperceptions are present within a population. Social marketing can help to address damaging misperceptions or validate accurate perceptions and even though both functions are important, correcting damaging misperceptions deserves precedence over the other. Damaging misperceptions must be corrected in a reactive manner to reach a sense of harmony while validation of accurate perceptions is more proactive and serves a maintenance function. It is a top priority to correct damaging misperceptions before utilizing the tool to enforce or validate accurate perceptions.

Parents are emotionally connected to these activities due to the level of the financial investment in their children's education, as well as their desires to ensure a safe and productive environment for their children. Parents provide an exceptional population to assess to determine current norms, values and expectations of the university. Even though existing research shows that parents frequently underestimate their children's drinking behaviors, this study will attempt to retest this assumption. Data reflecting parental perceptions of the overall drinking prevalence at their child's university will be compared with secondary data reflecting student reports of drinking frequencies and amounts making up a real depiction of the university drinking norm to search for existing

misperceptions. The first research question for this study asks:

RQ1: Do parents' have misperceptions of the prevalence of high-risk drinking at the University of Tennessee?

Parental perceptions of the drinking norm at their student's university may be related to their perceptions of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the university prevention efforts. The study will attempt to assess parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy related to the appropriateness and desirability of its prevention efforts to determine any correlation with parental perception of college drinking. The next research question asks:

RQ2: Is the degree of difference between parental misperceptions of college drinking related to parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy?

To provide university administrators and public relations practitioners with a starting point of how they can begin to work with parents to establish favorable perceptions of organizational legitimacy, this study seeks to assess if parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy are based on awareness of current prevention programs targeted toward students. With this assumption in mind, the next research question asks:

RQ3: Is there a relationship between parental awareness of university efforts to combat high-risk drinking and parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy?

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Primary Parent Data

The current study utilized a web-based survey that was administered during the Spring Semester of 2008. Access was granted to the parental population by the University of Tennessee Parents Association, a department that provides support and information to the parents or guardians of current UT students. Collaboration with this department was chosen because it serves the sole function of sustaining external communication with university parents and has the only compilation of university parent email addresses on the UT campus.

The University of Tennessee was chosen due to its use of prevention programs that are in direct alignment with the standards prescribed by the NIAAA and information obtained during a recent interview with the director of prevention programs on campus (D. Reilly, personal communication, January 20, 2008) who claimed that UT had recently experienced a double digit reduction in its heavy-episodic drinking level. Reilly also pointed out that despite reasonable prevention success, university administrators and prevention specialists were frequently required to defend their institution from public misperception caused by the media, rare events of severe negative alcohol-related consequences and a biased and unscientific Playboy magazine ranking of number one party school in the nation several years ago. The University of Tennessee provided the researcher with a great example of an institution that has been plagued with both the real and perceptual forms of high-risk drinking.

The Parents Association consists of parents of current freshman through senior

students at the University of Tennessee. The composition of the association is based on a higher number of freshman and sophomore parents and a lower number of junior and senior parents. This is due to a decrease in parental involvement with students who reach adulthood and maturity. Members of the association pay a yearly membership fee in exchange for a contractual agreement with the association that it will provide only meaningful and relevant information related to their student.

For the purposes of this study, parents were recruited through two solicitations placed in a weekly electronic newsletter that serves as the exclusive mode of communication with parent members. The solicitation asked parents to assist the university in its health and safety efforts and provided all participants with an opportunity to win one of four cash incentive prizes.

Secondary Student Data

The secondary data used in this study were obtained from the 2007 Fall Prevalence survey administered by the Safety, Environment and Education Center, a department in charge of assessment and implementation of health-related communication at the University of Tennessee. The prevalence survey is an annual survey administered to the UT campus that measures alcohol consumption levels and perceptions of peer consumption levels, as well as negative consequences associated with campus alcohol drinking. The SEE Center utilized web-based survey that was administered late in the Fall semester of 2007. The study randomly selected participants from current UT students ranging from freshman to senior grade classification.

Research Question Inquiry

Research question one was examined by asking parents to respond to six items taken from the CORE Alcohol and Drug Survey (Presley & Meilman, 1989) that were slightly modified to assess their perceptions of how much and how often the typical student at the University of Tennessee consumed alcohol. Each item allowed the researcher to assess whether parents perceived that the typical student at UT was consuming alcohol at the heavy episodic level defined as having four or more drinks in one sitting in a two week period prior to the dissemination of the prevalence survey (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002). The heavy episodic level was the main focus of this study because students who drink at this level are a top priority for prevention specialists and university administration.

In order to compare parental perceptions of drinking levels with self reported student drinking levels, the same six items used in the current survey were compared with data obtained from the same six items used in the Fall Prevalence Survey. These items assess whether students are consuming alcohol at the heavy episodic level defined as having four or more drinks in one sitting in a two week period prior to the dissemination of the prevalence survey (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002).

Research question two was examined by using data from research question one to create a score for each parent reflecting the variation or degree of difference of their perceptions of drinking at UT as compared to the student self-reported data. Survey items were used that assessed parental perceptions of the University of Tennessee in terms of organizational legitimacy in order to determine any significant relationships with each parents' degree of difference score. The items making up the organizational legitimacy

scale required respondents to evaluate the University of Tennessee as an entire organization in terms of existing societal values (Dowling & Pfeiffer, 1975).

The final research question was explored by assessing parental awareness of current UT prevention programs and any significant relationship between parental scores of legitimacy derived from the organizational legitimacy subscale. Parental awareness of UT prevention programs was assessed through the use of a six item subscale that measured responses according to a seven point Likert scale ranging from strongly aware to strongly unaware.

Pre-test and Questionnaire Development

The survey used in the current study was pre-tested on a sample of approximately 40 parents of current university students in March of 2008. The pre-test procedure obtained a sample of students in a public relations course at the University of Tennessee. The researcher attended a class lecture and requested that all students forward a survey link to their parent(s). In order to increase participation, the students were promised a pizza party at the end of the semester for a minimum of 30 parent responses by the next class meeting.

The students were provided with a sheet of paper that contained a short description of the study, the terms of the incentive agreement, and a link to provide to their parents. The study was described as being related to UT health and safety and the details of the survey instrument were not provided to the students. In order to increase the chance that parents were the actual respondents of the pilot study, questions were added to the instrument that asked open ended questions about any issues with the survey and parents were required to provide an email address for any needed follow-up or

clarification of existing issues from the researcher. Students were informed that email addresses provided by the parents would be checked to make sure they did not match student email addresses.

During the next two days, 31 parents responded to the survey solicitation. The majority of parents had no issues with the survey items. One parent stated that she had an issue with one of the items of the alcohol perceptions subscale, specifically the question that asked exactly how many drinks the typical student has on an average day throughout the year. The parent claimed that this question was confusing and difficult to answer because it requested an exact number of drinks rather than asking for a response of a range of drinks. Because the majority of parents did not have an issue with this response, the item was not removed or changed.

After conducting reliability tests from the pilot study, the parent perceptions subscale had a reliability of .836, the awareness subscale had a reliability of .974, and the organizational legitimacy subscale had a reliability of .610. Because the alpha for the organizational legitimacy subscale was well below the accepted range for reliability in the social sciences, the researcher rewrote some items and removed others in an attempt to create a more reliable and valid instrument from the existing research on organizational legitimacy.

In Table 1, the original subscale used in the pilot test is on the left and the new organizational legitimacy subscale developed by the researcher is on the right. Massey (2001) and his subscale, though relevant to his own study, did not have a high level of external validity to any organization. This lack of validity was most likely what led to the low alpha received on the pretest of this subscale.

Table 1. Comparison and Development of Organizational Legitimacy Subscale

(Massey, 2001)	New Scale
1. The E-mail and the News Release are consistent with one another.	-----
2. Pacific Airways is a safe organization.	1. UT meets my expectations.
3. Pacific Airways is a legitimate organization.	2. UT is a legitimate organization.
4. Pacific Airways is trying to cover something up.	3. UT is a suitable organization.
5. Pacific Airways is a credible organization.	4. UT is a credible organization.
6. Pacific Airways is being honest about the incident.	5. UT is a truthful organization.
7. Pacific Airways should be allowed to fly passengers.	6. UT is a competent organization.
8. The E-mail and the News Release are similar to one another.	-----
9. Pacific Airways is a good organization.	7. UT is a good organization.
10. Pacific Airways should be allowed to continue operations.	8. UT is a decent organization.
11. The E-mail and the News Release are alike.	-----
12. Pacific Airways is hiding something.	9. UT is a trustworthy organization.

Items one, eight, and eleven in the original scale were assessments of the similarity of an email and press release used after an organizational crisis situation. These three items are not relevant when attempting to assess the organizational legitimacy as a general concept for all organizations. These items were removed from the new subscale and reduced the overall scale size from twelve to only nine items.

In table 1, items three, five, and nine in the original subscale were appropriate for an attempt to measure organizational legitimacy through existing societal norms of legitimacy, credibility, and overall goodness so these items were included on the new subscale. For a more comprehensive and valid construct, item one of the new subscale was added that was related to moral legitimacy being based whether an organization meets the expectations of the participant and item two tested this further by assessing the suitability of the organization to each participant. Item six in the original subscale was related to an organization “being honest about a particular situation.” To increase the validity of the item for all organizations the item was reworded to assess whether the organization is truthful in general. Item seven of the original subscale assessed whether a particular organization “should be allowed to continue its operations.” A negative response for this item would coincide with a level of incompetence so this item was changed to assess the overall competence of the organization as a whole. Item twelve of the original subscale assessed whether an organization was hiding something. Due to the vagueness of this item, it was changed to assess the overall trustworthiness of an organization.

The new scale was heavily reliant on the work of Massey (2001) but its development was intended to create a construct of organizational legitimacy that is more

generalizable and applicable to a normative evaluation of any organization. The new organizational legitimacy subscale was pre-tested and received an alpha of .950

Data Collection from Parents

The final survey was fielded in May of 2008 using two solicitations in the Parents Association electronic newsletter over a two-week period. The first solicitation provided parents with a link to the survey instrument and the first wave of responses resulted in a sample of 73 parent participants. During the first wave, almost 90% of the responses came during the first four hours of the electronic dissemination of the newsletter. After five days, responses were few and the solicitation statement and its configuration in the newsletter were reviewed and modified by the researcher. Minor changes were made to the solicitation statement such as capitalization and coloring of text, as well as moving the statement to the beginning of the newsletter. The second request resulted in 156 respondents and a final sample of 229 parent responses. Because of changes in the Parents Association membership caused by graduation, student transfers, and a recent membership drive, data for the calculation of an exact return rate could not be provided by the Parents Association.

After the survey deadline passed, responses from entering freshman parents and incomplete responses were removed from the sample. Parents of entering freshman students (those who will begin studies at the university in fall of 2008) were not included in the data analysis. This rationale for this selection process was because many of the survey questions rely on previous knowledge of UT policies and drinking norms. Participants in this study needed to have previous experiences with UT throughout their son/daughter's years at UT. This selection process was also requested by the Parents

Association due to the fear that introducing freshman parents to survey research on high-risk drinking may cause unneeded alarm and concern that counters the reality that most students are healthy and do not take part in high-risk drinking. Freshman parents skipped all alcohol perceptions questions and were directed to the section of the survey that assesses parental awareness of UT policies. Freshman parents remained eligible to participate in the incentive process. After incomplete responses and parents of freshmen were removed from the analysis, both processes resulted in final parent sample of N = 173.

Participants were eligible for one of four \$50 incentive prizes. After participants completed the survey, the last item provided parents with a link to a separate, one-item survey. This allowed the researcher to ensure respondent anonymity by separating individual responses from specific contact information. This incentive survey item asked parents to provide either their email address or the email address of their son/daughter. Chosen winners of the four prizes were notified through email and provided with a specific code and special instructions for picking up the prizes.

Data Collection from Students

The secondary student data used in this current study was obtained by researchers at the Safety, Environment and Education Center at the University of Tennessee. Approximately 2000 current students at the University of Tennessee were randomly solicited to participate in the Fall Prevalence survey. This web-based survey has been implemented since 2005 at UT as it assesses student perceptions of peer drinking and drug use, self reports of drinking and drug usage, as well as any negative consequences suffered as a result of drinking and drug usage behaviors. The student participants were

recruited via a list of on-campus resident addresses and email addresses. The first solicitation was sent out in traditional mail format as a letter inviting the student to participate in the study by providing a link to the survey instrument. A finger nail file with the SEE Center logo was also included with each initial solicitation letter as an incentive to increase student participation.

After one week, the first wave of responses resulted in a return rate of approximately 25%. After the second week, the return rate increased to approximately 38%. After the first two weeks, three sets of emails were sent to all nonrespondents that requested their participation in the survey and provided the link to the survey instrument. The final return rate for the student data was 54% and an $n = 1089$ students. After incomplete responses were removed, this process resulted in an $n = 953$ students.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants

Parents

Respondents were asked to focus on a single student in their responses (this was particularly important for parents with more than one student studying at the University). The students about whom they were reporting were 47% male and 53% female students. Respondents were parents of 8% entering freshmen, 46% sophomores, 28% juniors, 18% seniors. Demographic analysis also revealed that 47 % of the sample reported having students who lived in residence halls, 32% in off-campus apartments, 8% in off-campus housing, and 10% in fraternity or sorority housing and 3% in other living arrangements. The smaller percentage of senior parent participants was most likely due to a pattern of lower involvement with parents as their students increase in age and maturity.

Students

A demographic analysis of the student sample revealed a make-up of 40% male and 59% female respondents and 1% who respond to the question about sex. Student respondents were 32% freshman, 22% sophomores, 22% juniors and 24% seniors. The largest number (40% lived in residence halls, 36% lived in apartments, and 20% lived in fraternity or sorority houses.

Variables and Measures

Measurements included in the survey instrument included assessments of parental perceptions of the university drinking norm, parental degree of difference score, parental awareness of university prevention efforts, and parental perceptions of organizational

legitimacy. Secondary data from student self reports of university drinking norms were used in order to test the relationship between parental perceptions compared to data reflecting actual student self-reported drinking levels.

Parental Perceptions of University Drinking Score

This variable was captured using a subscale from the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey (Presley & Meilman, 1989), a 23-item instrument developed to accurately assess the nature, scope, and consequences of alcohol and other drug use on college campuses. The Core Alcohol and Drug survey is frequently used for obtaining data to design campus social marketing campaigns due to its ability to assess participant perceptions of peer drinking behaviors and the overall drinking norm at any university. The 6-item parental perceptions scale had a reliability score of .673 and was well below the accepted range for reliability in the social sciences. After careful analysis of the individual survey items, two troublesome items were removed to increase reliability.

Table 2 shows the justification for this change due to the nature of the two items removed from the analysis and the overall focus of this study. In table 2, item five is an attempt to assess parental perceptions of how many drinks the typical student has on an average day, as compared to the other items that assessed how much the typical student consumed alcohol on an average week, two week, and monthly period.

By looking at the possible responses, the removed item proved troublesome for any parent to attempt to estimate exactly how many drinks the typical student consumes per day as compared to answers provided to the other questions that allowed parents to choose a various ranges of drinks such as “1 to 3” or “4 to 6”. In the student sample,

Table 2. Parental Perceptions Item Descriptions

Item Number	Item	Responses
Item One	Within the last year, how often do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I do not think the typical student consumed alcohol within the past year - Once during the last year - 6 times a year - Once a month - Twice a month - Once a week - 3 times a week - 5 times a week - Every day
Item Two	During the past month, how many days do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 1 - 2 day(s) 3 - 5 days 6 - 9 days 10 - 19 days 20 - 29 days All 30 days
Item Three	Over the past two weeks, how many times do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT had four or more alcoholic drinks in one sitting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 1 2 3 to 5 6 to 9 Over 10
Item Four	In a typical week during the school year, on how many days do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT has at least one drink containing alcohol?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (7 possible responses) 1 through 7 days
Item Five	How many alcoholic drinks do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumes on a typical day during the UT school year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (16 possible responses) 1 through 15 drinks Over 15
Item Six	Over the past two weeks, how many times do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT had five or more drinks in one sitting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (11 possible responses) 1 through 10 times Over 10

reliability issues did not come into play because each student has a better chance at determining how many drinks he or she has as compared to a parent who has to attempt to guess the exact number who reliability depends on their previous responses of a particular range.

A second reliability issue for parents is also a result of individual interpretations of “an average day” for a student. Questions come into play such as whether a typical day is one where students sit in the dorm room watching television and studying or a weekday when there is an athletic event with tailgating. Parents may perceive the typical student may not drink any alcohol on an average day but may drink heavily on the weekend.

In table 2, the sixth item asked parents how many times they perceived the typical student consumed five or more drinks in one sitting. This particular item was included in the Core Survey due to previous research that separated the high-risk definition based on gender. High-risk drinking is defined as four or more drinks in one sitting for a female and five more drinks in one sitting for males. Recent research has deviated from this gender-based definition of binge drinking. The term high risk drinking has been operationalized as having four or more drinks in one sitting for all respondents. The sixth item was removed and the item that corresponds to the current definition remained in our data analysis.

In table 3, the reliability analysis of all six items revealed that the removal of item five would result in an alpha of .773.

In table 4, the fifth item was removed and a reliability analysis of items 1 through 4 and item 6 revealed that reliability would increase substantially with the removal of

Table 3. Parental Perceptions Reliability Scores Items 1 - 6

Item Number	Item	Alpha if item deleted
Item One	Within the last year, how often do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor)?	.648
Item Two	During the past month, how many days do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)?	.644
Item Three	Over the past two weeks, how many times do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT had four or more alcoholic drinks in one sitting?	.605
Item Four	In a typical week during the school year, on how many days do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT has at least one drink containing alcohol?	.600
Item Five	How many alcoholic drinks do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumes on a typical day during the UT school year?	.773
Item Six	Over the past two weeks, how many times do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT had five or more drinks in one sitting?	.554

Table 4. Parents Perceptions Reliability Scores Items 1-4

Item Number	Item	Alpha if item deleted
Item One	Within the last year, how often do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor)?	.757
Item Two	During the past month, how many days do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)?	.728
Item Three	Over the past two weeks, how many times do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT had four or more alcoholic drinks in one sitting?	.701
Item Four	In a typical week during the school year, on how many days do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT has at least one drink containing alcohol?	.681
Item Six	Over the past two weeks, how many times do you think the TYPICAL STUDENT at UT had five or more drinks in one sitting?	.803

item 6. Item 6 was also removed and the four remaining items were tested and resulted in an overall alpha of .810. These four items were averaged to calculate a parental perception drinking variable.

Student reported drinking score

To examine research questions 1 and 2, data obtained from parental responses to the subscale of the Core Survey was compared with secondary data obtained from the same subscale administered to University of Tennessee students in the 2007 Fall Prevalence Survey. In order to match the parental perceptions scale, items 5 and 6 were removed from the student sample as well. This change resulted in 4-item scale with an increased in reliability from an alpha of .810 to an alpha of .871. These scores were averaged for the creation of a student reported drinking score.

Calculation and Interpretation of Drinking Scores

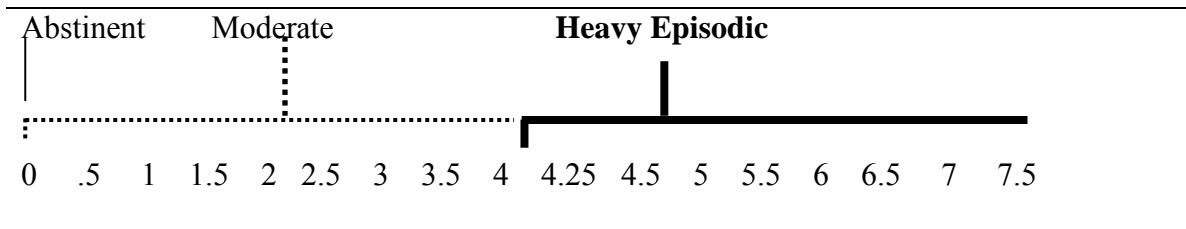
A drinking score and drinking perception score were calculated by averaging each parent and student's responses to the four items. Results from items one through four are reliable attempts to assess the drinking frequency or how many days student partake in the consumption of alcohol. This frequency alone must be compared with item three that represents high-risk and heavy episodic drinking. The higher the scores on items one, two and four represent how often students are drinking and item three represents what type of drinking these individuals are doing in terms of quantity and risk levels. By relying on the existing definitions of high-risk and heavy episodic drinking, the researcher was able to determine the exact point in each set of responses for each item that represents the high-risk level.

In table 5, when looking at the possible responses for item one, heavy episodic

Table 5. Drinking Level Range for Parent and Student Scores

Item	Response	Level	Code
Item One	- I do not think the typical student consumed alcohol within the past year	ABSTINENT	1
	- Once during the last year	MODERATE	2
	- 6 times a year	↓	3
	- Once a month	↓	4
	- Twice a month	↓	5
	- Once a week	↓	6
	- 3 times a week	HEAVY EPISODIC	7
	- 5 times a week	↓	8
	- Every day	↓	9
Item Two	1 - 2 day(s)	MODERATE	1
	3 - 5 days	↓	2
	6 - 9 days	HEAVY EPISODIC	3
	10 - 19 days	↓	4
	20 - 29 days	↓	5
	All 30 days	↓	6
Item Three	0	MODERATE	1
	1	↓	2
	2	HEAVY EPISODIC	3
	3	↓	4
	3 to 5	↓	5
	6 to 9	↓	6
	Over 10	↓	7
Item Four	1	MODERATE	1
	2	↓	2
	3	↓	3
	4	HEAVY EPISODIC	4
	5	↓	5
	6	↓	6
	7	↓	7

Table 6. Drinking Level Range for Parent and Student Scores



behavior was determined to begin at response 7 that represents a student drinking 3 times a week to daily. Therefore the range for high-risk level was 7 through 9. In item two, heavy episodic behavior was determined to begin at response 4 that represents a student drinking 6 to 9 days throughout the month. Therefore the range for high-risk level for this item was 4 through 7. In item three, heavy episodic behavior was determined to begin at response 2 that represents a student drinking at the heavy episodic level of four or more drinks in one sitting in a two week period prior to the dissemination of the prevalence survey (Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Rimm, 1995). Therefore the range of high-risk level is 2 through 6. In item four, heavy episodic behavior was determined to begin at response 4 that represents a student drinking 3 days during the week or more. Therefore the range for high-risk level for this item was 4 through 8.

Because the drinking score was calculated by averaging the parent and student responses, a range can be calculated that represents a range of high risk level by using these previously mentioned assumptions. In table 6, drinking scores ranging from 4.25 to 7.5 are considered to be at the high-risk level and scores 4 or lower are considered to be normal and below the high-risk level.

Parental Degree of Difference Score

In order to determine the degree of difference of the parental perceived drinking score from the true student drinking score, each parental drinking score was subtracted from the mean or average student drinking score of 3.17. This calculation provided the researcher with a numerical number representing the actual size of the parental misperception.

Parental awareness of university prevention efforts

This variable was captured using survey items used in a previous study by Brummette & Palenchar (2007), which assessed parental awareness of current prevention programs implemented at the University of Tennessee. The items in this subscale assessed parental awareness of training for residence staff on alcohol enforcement policies, campus health and safety advertising campaigns, classroom health and safety presentations, community relations with bars and restaurants to reduce irresponsible sales of alcohol and health and safety programs that meet the national standards of effectiveness. Each strategy was taken directly from the current prevention efforts in place at the University of Tennessee and all of the strategies used fit within the first three tiers of effectiveness prescribed by the NIAAA. This subscale had an alpha of .877 in the current study.

Parental Perceptions of Organizational Legitimacy

Parents' perceptions of organizational legitimacy were assessed using a 9-item scale developed from existing literature on organizational legitimacy provided by Dowling and Pfeiffer (1975) and Suchman (1995). The construct was created using items that assessed respondent perceptions of an organization through societal norms of

honesty, competence, openness, moral decency, and ethics. Items were also included that assessed perceptions of a university according to their suitability with each respondent. This use of this subscale attempted to develop and evaluate a new construct for organizational legitimacy. The legitimacy subscale received an alpha of .974 in the current study. An organizational legitimacy drinking score was calculated by averaging participant responses to the nine item scale.

Research Questions

The first research question in the current study investigated whether parents misperceive the frequency and amount of drinking at the University of Tennessee. To begin the analysis, the researcher calculated a student drinking score by computing an average of student responses to the 4-item subscale from the 2007 UT Fall Prevalence Survey. In order to accurately capture parental perceptions of college drinking, a perceived drinking score was calculated by taking an average of parent responses to the same 4-item subscale used in the Fall Prevalence Survey that was slightly modified in the current study to ask parents how much and how often they thought the typical student consumed alcohol at UT.

An independent samples *t* test was used to compare the means of perceived student drinking scores from the parent sample with the actual reported mean of student scores. The results determined that the parental mean score for perceived student drinking was 3.88 and was significantly higher than the student-reported drinking score mean of 3.17. The data used in this test were normally distributed but the variance between the two groups was unequal. As a result, the *equal variance not assumed* portion of the results were used that adjusts the degrees of freedom to account for the unequal variance.

Table 7 demonstrates the results of the *t* test that revealed the mean difference of parent score of .71 was significant at the $p < .001$ level. The results of this test suggest that parents have exaggerated misperceptions regarding college drinking at the University of Tennessee. However, even though parents have misperceptions, they do perceive students are drinking below the heavy episodic level represented by the drinking score of 4.25.

The second research question in the current study investigated whether the degree of difference between parental misperceptions of college drinking was related to their perceptions of organizational legitimacy. A Spearman's Rho correlation test was conducted to determine any significant association between each parental degree of difference score and the variable of organizational legitimacy. The Spearman's Rho correlation test was used because the data obtained from the organizational legitimacy subscale were not normally distributed. The test revealed a significant relationship between the two variables. ($r = -.251, p < .001$). This demonstrated that as a parent's misperceptions of college drinking increase, parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy decrease.

The third research question in the current study investigated whether any significant relationship exists between parental awareness of university efforts to combat

Table 7. Independent Samples T-test

	<i>T-test for Equality of Means</i>			
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig(2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Diff.</i>
<i>Equal variances not assumed</i>	<i>5.830</i>	<i>406.216</i>	<i>.000</i>	<i>.71430</i>

high-risk drinking and parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy? To answer this question, a parental awareness variable was calculated by taking an average of the scores obtained from the awareness subscale in order to test for any correlation between the variable of organizational legitimacy calculated in the analysis for the second research question. A Spearman's Rho was conducted between these two variables that revealed a significant positive relationship ($r = .454, p < .001$). These results demonstrated that favorable perceptions of organizational legitimacy increase as parental awareness of university prevention efforts increase.

Discussion

The first research question attempted to investigate the validity of existing research that claims parents underestimate young adult drinking behaviors. This investigation identified that parents actually exaggerate the drinking behaviors of their children as they enter their college years. The second research question focused on the premise of attribution theory that claims individual attributions are made about the success of an entity to combat a particular issue based on existing norms. In the context of this paper, the exaggerated misperceptions of the issue of high-risk drinking resulted in unfavorable evaluations based on existing norms. The current study conceptualized this evaluation of current norms through the construct of organizational legitimacy. Research question 3 was guided by the definition of public relations in the public relations process model as a continual, proactive process that seeks the achievement of mutual awareness between an organization and its publics. The results of this study sought to determine if a relationship exists between mutual awareness of organizational operations and favorable

perceptions of organizational legitimacy. Parental awareness of university prevention efforts was found to be positively correlated with favorable perceptions of organizational legitimacy.

Organizational Legitimacy as a Mark of Successful Alcohol Prevention

Organizational legitimacy can be defined on the normative level as “a congruence between the social values associated or implied by organizational activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system” (Dowling & Pfeiffer, 1975, pg. 122). Congruity implies a harmonization between perceived organizational outputs and societal values where the validity of these perceptions become vital to favorable outcomes that benefit the organization. According to this study, parental attributions of an organization and its dealings with an environmental issue based on misperception and exaggeration are related to negative public perception. Parents who believe that all students at their child’s university are drinking daily at dangerous levels attribute the blame for the problem toward the university.

Within the walls of university and college campuses, high-risk drinking is a measureable issue that exists as data reflecting the consumption rates and consequences of a significant minority of students. Existing research has revealed that this issue is amplified into an exaggerated perception that influences young adults to change their healthy lifestyles. The current study demonstrates that this exaggerated perception of high-risk drinking exists externally as it is related to parental perceptions of an organization and its adherence to social values such as honesty, decency and overall competency.

In an ideal world, prevention success would entail the guaranteed health and

safety of every student at a university who would be educated about the risks associated with high-risk drinking to the point of abstinence. Parents would be free from fear and skepticism as they sent their children off to become educated and productive members of society. However, as this study has demonstrated, reality is different from the ideal situation. As universities and colleges attempt to accommodate young adults in their educational endeavors, the size and nature of this task is guided by difficult public and governmental expectations regarding what constitutes successful outcomes. When gauging the overall success of colleges and universities, public evaluation is filtered through social values that often diverge from typical university objectives. As difficult as it may seem, success is an attainable and measurable objective that can be conceptualized as organizational legitimacy.

Existing research acknowledged legitimacy as a multidimensional construct that is defined differently within various environments or contexts. University prevention specialists define legitimacy as lowered drinking prevalence with minimal negative effects and diligent progress to improve prevention efforts. The results of this study showed that parents' definition of legitimacy is based on societal values such as honesty that allow an awareness of the true nature of health and safety issues on their student's campus and a genuine demonstration of competency and decency of university protection efforts. Overall success cannot be achieved without increased university involvement with parents that results in a mutual awareness and favorable public perception of university health and safety efforts.

Cognitive versus Moral Legitimacy

The multidimensionality of organizational legitimacy produces varying

interconnected conceptualizations. One form of legitimacy exists on the cognitive level as a socially constructed foundation for what constitutes acceptable components, procedures and meanings associated with a specific organizational structures and outcomes.

Legitimacy on the normative level exists as the congruity of these guiding principles with larger societal values (Suchman, 1995). As the existing research and current study pointed out, a university operating under high levels of cognitive legitimacy in the environment of university alcohol prevention may not be operating under high levels of normative legitimacy in its external environment.

Ruef and Scott (1998) stated that “cognitive elements are more basic to the operation of social systems and provide frameworks for the establishment of normative and regulative systems” (p. 879). The review of literature revealed that cognitive legitimacy is established and defined in higher education by a small group of prevention researchers such as the NIAAA and their interactions in networks, scholarly publications and national conferences. These individuals work to socially construct frameworks or systems of effective university alcohol prevention programs. This process establishes a standard of market professionalism that results in institutional isomorphism or a movement from other universities and colleges towards similarity and overall acceptance and adoption of these standards. This system advocates adherence through the dissemination of knowledge in scholarly publications and state and federal grant funding requirements. The university used in this study has prevention programs that are in strict alignment with the NIAAA standard and therefore operate under high levels of cognitive legitimacy in the prevention environment.

This study assessed legitimacy on the normative level as a generalized perception

based on awareness in a university's external environment (Ruef & Scott, 1998). High levels of normative legitimacy may be directly related to university adherence to NIAAA prevention standards established on the cognitive level. This study pointed out that parents who did not have valid knowledge of the true nature of college drinking or awareness of comprehensive and efficient university prevention programs make generalized perceptions based on an unfounded reality. Parents without this understanding are left with biased and sensationalist media accounts of alcohol related incidents across the nation to make attributions about their student's university. Kim, Carvalho, and Cooksey (2006) demonstrated that negative publicity had a negative influence on perceived reputation, trust and supportive university stakeholder behaviors. These negative outcomes demonstrate a need for public relations activities that could moderate these negative effects by establishing a mutual awareness and by empowering a collaborative effort to combat the issue by all relevant stakeholders.

The market standard for prevention efficiency established on the cognitive level by prevention specialists provides valid information regarding high-risk drinking and the quality of prevention efforts that could be disseminated to its external environment. This communication could help establish trust and demonstrate a genuine concern for its students. Parents are a population capable of influencing the vitality of any university or college due to their dedication and concern for the safety and well-being of their children. Universities must find ways to openly display this same concern for their students. Their operations must be guided by the instrumental goals that are related to their main function and bottom line while also achieving relational goals of creating harmony in its environment during this process. The outcomes and benefits of these legitimations

endeavors can render tangible or intangible benefits existing on various levels.

Parental Attributions as Organizational Legitimacy

Universities attempting to combat parental misperceptions must identify and analyze their causes. Possible reasons for parental misperceptions could be a lack of communication between the parent and child due to the troublesome nature of both parties discussing the issues of drinking alcohol and taking part in unsafe behaviors. A lack of communication can also be attributed to a drop in the quality and quantity of communication after the student leaves the home and moves into campus residence halls (Wood, Read, Brand, & Mitchell, 2004).

Another possible reason for parental misperceptions of college drinking could be a result of parents reflecting on their own past college experiences. As the literature shows, higher education has made considerable improvements due to intense regulation and pressure to develop its alcohol and other drug prevention efforts. Current colleges and universities are somewhat dissimilar to institutions in the past in how they handle student safety. While more improvements need to be made, there has been considerable change in a positive direction. Parents who have faded recollections of drunken “keggers” with little or no university involvement may be unaware of substantial improvements in university policy related to alcohol prevention.

A possible explanation for exaggerated parental misperceptions could be a result of the reality of college life that has been portrayed by popular media and entertainment. With movies such as “Van Wilder,” “Old School,” and “Animal House,” both students and parents are left with a perception of college life filled with numerous intoxicated and self-destructive antics. This is coupled with media coverage of alcohol-related university

incidents framed around university blame, a lack of university prevention efforts, and an ignorance the issue's relevance to the larger environmental issue of alcohol abuse and alcoholism.

This study was framed around an application of Weiner (1974) and his attribution theory. Further application of this theory may help to explain why parents make attributions of organizational legitimacy and provide directions for strategic communication strategies that provide information that affect this process. This study pointed out that parental perceptions of organizational legitimacy can be conceptualized as attributions based on perceived realities of high-risk drinking and awareness of the amount of university effort to correct an issue. Parental attributions may be based on perceptions regarding the amount of control or influence a university has over its occurrence.

When assessing the overall difficulty involved in preventing college students from drinking at high-risk levels, one cannot ignore the fact that high-risk drinking is a reflection of the larger issue of alcohol abuse and alcoholism that is highly prevalent in our society. Various organizational subsystems are faced with this issue and it would be unfair to claim that alcoholism begins in college. The existing literature reviewed in this study demonstrated that alcohol and substance abuse has the potential to begin early in the years of secondary education. Parents who make attributions about the university should realize the overall difficulty and complexity of stopping a problem that is way beyond the grasp of its prevention capabilities. Attributions based on this realization may be redirected to value the quality and quantity of efforts rather than expectations for an unrealistic end.

Parental attributions of organizational legitimacy could be based on their own capability to stop their child from taking part in unhealthy behaviors in the end of adolescence. Any parent can relate to the reality that definitive success is hard to define and rarely free from complexity. Public expectations of university efforts is expected and deserved but this effort should be met with collaboration, understanding that the issue of university high-risk drinking is part of a much larger issue of alcohol abuse and alcoholism in the larger environment.

Parental attributions of university outcomes may also be based on the success of other institutions within higher education at reducing high-risk drinking. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, universities have worked diligently with moderate success only to face the fact the national high-risk drinking rate has remained constant over the past ten years (Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002). According to attribution theory and the concept of pluralistic ignorance, individuals often think they are different from others when in reality they are the same. University parents may make attributions based on the belief their student's university is different from others and has a more severe problem which results in increased blame and negative perceptions of organizational legitimacy. Information may be provided to parents that presents the issue of a societal issue and not just one for higher education.

According to attribution theory, parental attributions of high risk drinking could be affected by their perceptions of whether high-risk drinking is actually prohibited within the external campus environment. This particular finding reveals a potential usage for issues management to bring university policies on alcohol consumption to the public forum to increase public awareness and provide opportunities for public feedback.

Parental involvement in university health policy will provide students with an advocate resting on the position of increased concern for the overall well-being of the students.

Administrative decisions made based on financial gain and the bottom line such as permitting the sale of alcohol at concerts on the university campus and tailgating during football season can have devastating implications on public perception. All university decisions must carefully consider their implications on the external environment.

Issues Management Approach to University Alcohol Prevention

High-risk drinking is a complicated issue that requires systematic research for a true understanding of its prevalence and negative effects. This study attempted to conduct research in a university's external environment in order to detect the negative effects of public perception caused by a lack of mutual understanding between a university and its parents. Universities must continue to conduct research in their external environment in order to strategically respond to the issue of high-risk drinking. Issue responses must consider varying viewpoints and expectations prevalent in its larger environment to foster and maintain harmonious relations with relevant stakeholders such as parents.

Heath and Cousino (1990) acknowledged successful issues management should recognize the relationship between profit-driven goals and outcomes, the creation of corporate social responsibility plans, and the encouragement of sustained two-way, collaborative communication with relevant publics. This conceptualization places a university issues management approach as both a reactive and proactive strategy capable of achieving long-term intangible and tangible resources. University administrators must understand that enrollment and their bottom line are directly related to the favorability of

parental perceptions and the interpretation of its outputs and operations.

Grunig (1992) asserted that the value of public relations can be determined by the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships through the use of two-way symmetrical communication. As universities and college attempt to combat high-risk drinking, two-way, symmetrical communication can be utilized to increase communication that leads to increased parental awareness. Critics of the two-way symmetrical model may challenge that this method is not followed by visible results in university structure or excuses for an unmanageable issue. The debate that certain legitimization attempts are corporate manipulation and uses unethical persuasion to hide inadequacy will most likely reemerge. The answer to this potential criticism is that a comprehensive issues management approach to alcohol prevention utilizes two-way, symmetrical communication to achieve the instrumental goals of defining its cognitive legitimization endeavors while accomplishing the relational goal of increasing legitimacy on the normative level. Astley and Van de Ven (1983) claimed that integration between the institutional and strategic perspectives “can present quite different pictures of the same organizational phenomenon without nullifying each other” (Pg. 246).

An issues management approach to university alcohol prevention in higher education can operate to reduce parental concern and alarm and the pressure it places on our legislative and judicial subsystems to chastise higher education. Responsibility for alcoholism and alcohol abuse is placed on higher education when it should be addressed by society as a whole. The outcome results in unapprised regulation rather than needed collaboration. Two-way, symmetrical communication allows all parties to voice their opinions in order to establish a solution that has the best interests of all parties in mind.

Social Marketing as Two-way symmetrical communication

Possible damage caused by stakeholder misperceptions and the need for strategic organizational outputs have been identified by this study. Issues management disseminates strategic, research-based outputs to an organization's external environment. This two-way, symmetrical process should follow the prescriptions of the public relations process model by assessing public perception as an output from the external environment in order to transform this information into strategic organizational outputs capable of ensuring the overall survival of the organization.

In the field of alcohol prevention, social marketing may not have the consistent ability to change behaviors, but it has been empirically proven to consistently change perceptions. In an issues management approach to alcohol prevention, social marketing may be used internally on students as well as externally with parents and other relevant stakeholders. As this study has demonstrated, misperceptions about a university can have a negative effect on stakeholder perceptions of organizational legitimacy. Social marketing strategies directed toward parents can provide a realistic representation of the issue of high-risk drinking to counter exaggerated misperceptions, as well as provide information about university prevention efforts and their adherence to market standards established on the cognitive level.

The public relations process model claims that organizational outputs are deterministic or adaptive to demands and expectations in the external environment. Social marketing research serves as a beneficial tool for issues management because of its ability to carefully assess environmental responses to organizational outputs through consistent interaction and evaluation for this adaptation. Critics challenge the reactive

nature of organization in the systems view by claiming that it violates the requirements of the two-way, symmetrical model due to refraining from making any actual changes on behalf of public request (Bartlett, 2007). A common requirement or expectation of the external environment is communication about organizational outputs in order to increase personal awareness. The open systems nature of the organization in its larger environment implies strategic and collaborative communication with relevant parties in the external environment. Social marketing messages could serve as two-way, symmetrical outputs because they consist of communication about the true and honest nature of a particular issue and they are responses from data obtained from its recipients. This characteristic is in alignment with Grunig and Grunig (1996) and their claim that symmetrical communication should involve a balance between social responsibility to serve the needs of the larger environment while openly displaying and communicating its intended outcome.

CHAPTER V IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Implications for Researchers

This study has a few implications for public relations researchers attempting to study organizational legitimacy. First, it has been demonstrated that organizational legitimacy is multidimensional in nature and exists in various forms depending on the environment. For example, in higher education, cognitive legitimacy for prevention programs is determined by a group of trained researchers that carefully evaluate and socially construct existing prevention standards or models. The normative legitimacy of a university is evaluated based on whether perceived operations and outputs are congruent with societal norms. Each of these processes deserves attention and requires varying methodological and ontological approaches. Further quantitative and qualitative analysis is needed to uncover what organizational legitimacy is and how it should be researched. Astley and Van de Ven (1983) claimed that integration between the institutional and strategic perspectives “can present quite different pictures of the same organizational phenomenon without nullifying each other” (pg. 246). Rather than using each method in an attempt to debunk the other, diversity in the use of methods can be used to establish a more comprehensive understanding of the concept.

Second, the organizational legitimacy scale used for this study had a consistently high reliability in pre-tests and the current study, but further testing and evaluation of this scale is needed. This study used a quantitative survey method and the organizational level of analysis used by Rueff and Scott (1998) and their study of organizational legitimacy and hospitals. Following the same justification of these researchers, the use of an

instrument that measures normative legitimacy is well suited for organizations such as hospitals and universities because both are guided by well-established cognitive models that most entities in their market follow and both are subjected to strong professional and regulative norms. Both studies attempted to provide a comprehensive assessment of moral legitimacy that results in a deeper understanding. Other scales and methods need to be developed and tested to assess all forms of legitimacy in various environments and different levels of analysis.

Further development is also needed for the current scale that assesses moral legitimacy on the normative level. The societal norms used to construct the organizational legitimacy scale used in this study may not be applicable to diverse entities and environments. For example, a normative evaluation of the legitimacy of the American penal system may not be guided by perceptions of whether its outcomes are congruent with societal values such as honesty, suitability, and goodness, whereas oil companies and government agencies may be due to their extensive ability to affect society.

Last, this study acknowledged a divergence from the existing literature regarding parental perceptions marked by underestimation. A majority of past studies were conducted on high-school aged adolescents. The finding of this study suggests that parents may change their perceptions regarding the behaviors of their student as they leave high school and enter their college journeys. This change produces fear and anxiety about the health and safety of their student that makes parents begin to feel helpless as their children move out of their home and into uncharted territory.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is the characteristic of the parental sample. First, the participants in the study represent a demographic of highly involved parents. A true, representative sample would include parents ranging from low to high university involvement. A future research direction could attempt to obtain a true representative sample of university parents, which may render different results. Future studies attempting to study parent/student dyads may attempt to schedule a university event where both parties are in the same place and in agreement to take part in a similar research study.

The nonrepresentative sample also led to a second limitation of the study. The organizational legitimacy scale had a high reliability but it provided nonparametric data which is not ideal for making statistical inferences. Membership with Parents Association most likely led to the previously mentioned limitation and resulted in a bias towards the inclusion of more involved aware parents who had relatively high levels of communication with the organization that led to skewed scores in the positive direction for organizational legitimacy. However, this limitation could also represent one of the major arguments in this paper that increased university involvement with parents leads to a better relationship between the two parties.

The Parents Association at this university is the main facilitator of communication between the university and its parents and was chosen due to having the only compilation of parents email addresses for the web-based survey method of this study. Even though other approaches could have taken to reach parents, the web-based, email method was the only direct route to the parents.

A future study could utilize a traditional mail survey or obtain parent email addresses from the students, but this would not ensure that the parents are the ones actually taking the survey. A lack of communication has been identified between parents and their college students, which may be attributed to the nature of subject of high-risk drinking. Some students may not want parents to become alarmed and increase their monitoring behaviors and therefore hinder parental involvement with the study.

Parents who pay for membership into the Parents Association agree to provide their contact information under a confidentiality agreement that their information will not be shared with any other individuals or entities. Membership also implies that parents will read the weekly newsletter for pertinent information from university administration. Unfortunately, doctoral research does not follow under the category of pertinent information. In order to adhere to the conditions of this agreement, the researcher was not allowed to gain access to the list of parent email addresses and this hindered the random selection of a sample from the Parents Association population.

Implications for Practitioners

The results of this study have implications for both university alcohol prevention and public relations practitioners. This study found that public perception and awareness of prevention strategies can have an overall effect on the vitality of a university or college as a whole. A university's image, reputation, donations, and enrollment may be based on how it handles issues of student safety and how it deals with its parents. Collaboration between the two university departments to implement a more comprehensive prevention model that counters damaging misperceptions both internally and externally should be considered.

For prevention practitioners, this study identified high-risk drinking as a damaging internal and external issue for prevention specialists. In the realm of alcohol prevention, a social marketing prevention strategy could be directed towards parents as well as students. A survey similar to the one used in the current study could assess parental perceptions of drinking at their student's institution. If a misperception is identified, social marketing strategies could be disseminated that read for example, "3 out of 4 parents have exaggerated perceptions of student alcohol consumption at UT." This statement could be followed with data depicting the true drinking norm at their student's university. This campaign would identify a misperception to the parent that is countered with valid and correcting information. This results in increased awareness and creates a needed ally for prevention specialists.

The study presented the concept of social marketing and argued its similarities with two-way, symmetrical communication and potential implications for the field of public relations. Further testing is needed to assess the ability of social marketing at changing public perceptions related to organizational legitimacy and the establishment of a norm of favorable public perception. If organizational research identifies a damaging public misperception, social marketing messages can be disseminated to identify the perception and counter it with valid and favorable information. Future studies need to be conducted to test the ability of social marketing to counter damage caused by sensationalist media accounts and negative publicity. The assessment and interaction needed for the implementation of social marketing campaigns can serve as the continual interaction required by the open systems nature of the public relations process model.

An example of a normative message in a public relations social marketing

campaign could be, “A total of 58% of (Company X) customers are unaware of our environmental protection efforts.” This information could be followed by an actual list of these efforts in order to potentially increase awareness and public favorability. Future research could implement these interventions and use experimental design methods to test their effects on random samples of relevant stakeholders.

Implications for Public Relations Education

This study also has implications for public relations education as it could be used in the classroom to explain how organizations exert control over the communication process and how this ultimately affects public perception. A main point to emphasize is how organizational communication is dependent on the organization’s approach to public relations. Some organizations such as universities limit their communication with relevant publics to hinder increasing alarm and vulnerability. If a university or organization operates under a reactive approach to public relations, communication that has potentially negative consequences such as the fact that most students are in fact drinking, but below high-risk levels, leads to increased skepticism. If an organization operates under a proactive approach where mutual awareness and trust are already established through ongoing communication, this type of communication does not lead to increase vulnerability and negative effects. Rather, the issue may be approached and owned in a collaborative manner that is free from blame.

These results of this study can also be used to demonstrate the need for public relations to serve a strategic management function where public relations practitioners need to be involved with every management decision. In higher education, administrative decisions about prevention programs have serious implications on external stakeholder

perception. This study provides an example where all executive decisions are susceptible to unfavorable public perception. Public relations research can allow universities to operate proactively by gauging public perception of organizational operations before they are implemented.

This study seeks to establish a research stream that further develops and incorporates the concepts of organizational legitimacy, Hazleton and Long (1985) and their public relations process model and Hazleton's (2006) concept of public relations competence. Hazleton (2006) claimed "competent public relations is conceptualized as effective and appropriate" (p. 203). Effective public relations is related to the achievement of financial goals and the bottom line while competent public relations is related to the achievement of relational goals or objectives with external stakeholders.

The concept of organizational legitimacy used in this study is highly related to Hazleton (2006) and his claims that competence is contextual, functional, and based on social impressions. Organizational legitimacy is also contextual and varies between environments and based on social impressions of an organization. This researcher asserted that context is reflected in the knowledge and perception of interactants. This study mirrored this assertion as it found that parents in the external environment have a specific knowledge and perception that is related to their perceptions of an organization.

Future studies need to test the generalized perception of various publics in an organizational environment through the construct of organizational legitimacy. After determining public perception and expectations, various legitimation strategies such as social marketing need to be tested to evaluate their competence at achieving high levels of organizational legitimacy.

Conclusion

The current study fits within the existing public relations literature as another example of the need for close organizational attention to public perception in all of its strategic and functional operations. The shift from the functional to the co-creational perspective prevalent in public relations is reflected in the findings of its academic and evaluative research. As organizations such as universities grow in power and ability to affect society, public demand and desire for control will follow.

The current study fits within the existing alcohol prevention literature as it identifies the importance for alcohol prevention strategies to include parents in its prevention education and campaigns. Due to the exaggerated nature of parental misperceptions identified in this study, the need for future testing of social marketing to correct these misperceptions has been identified. Social marketing has the potential combat the dual nature of high-risk drinking both internally on university campuses and externally in the public forum.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Dear UT Parent,

As an involved parent of a current UT student, you have been invited to participate in a study through the Safety, Environment, and Education (SEE) Center here at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville. This study will assess perceptions of college drinking at UT and university health and safety programs.

Your answers to the survey items will be treated confidentially and no identifying information will be requested. The questionnaire takes about 15 minutes to complete. You can refuse to answer any individual question at any time and you are free to discontinue the survey at any time.

Four participants will be randomly drawn to win \$50 ATM debit cards. Notification of winners will be announced on 6/30/08. Winners will be contacted by email and provided with instructions explaining how their student can claim the prize.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Brummette
Safety, Environment, and Education (SEE) Center
The University of Tennessee
jbrumme1@utk.edu
(865) 974-9565

To begin, click "next"

CONFIDENTIALITY Responses are confidential. Data will be stored securely and email addresses will not be matched with individual responses. **CONTACT** If you have questions about the study, please contact the Safety, Environment, and Education (SEE) Center at (865) 974-9565 or through email at see@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the UT Office of Research Compliance at (865) 974-3466 or through email at research@utk.edu.

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this research study.
 I do not wish to participate in this research study.

If you have more than one student attending UT, please answer the following question about your oldest student.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

As of the upcoming Fall 2008 semester, what will be your son/daughter's grade classification?

- Entering freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

What is your son/daughter's age?

Under 18

- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- Prefer not to respond

What is your son/daughter's gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to respond

Where does your son/daughter live while attending UT?

- Residence hall
- Apartment
- House
- Fraternity or sorority residence
- Other
- Prefer not to respond

PARENTS PERCEPTIONS

The following questions are intended to measure your PERCEPTIONS of the TYPICAL STUDENT at the University of Tennessee, NOT YOUR STUDENT. Please remember your responses are based solely on how much you THINK students are consuming alcohol and this may not reflect the true nature of drinking here at UT.

Within **the last year**, how often do you think the **TYPICAL STUDENT** at UT

consumed alcohol (beer, wine, or liquor)?

I do not think the typical student consumed alcohol within the past year

Once during the last year

6 times a year

Once a month

Twice a month

Once a week

3 times a week

5 times a week

Every day

I prefer not to respond

During **the past month**, how many days do you think the **TYPICAL STUDENT** at UT consumed alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)?

0

1 - 2 day(s)

3 - 5 days

6 - 9 days

10 - 19 days

20 - 29 days

All 30 days

I prefer not to respond

Over **the past two weeks**, how many times do you think the **TYPICAL STUDENT** at UT had **four or more** alcoholic drinks in one sitting?

0

1

2

3 - 5

6 - 9

10 or more

I prefer not to respond

In a **typical week** during the school year, on **how many days** do you think the **TYPICAL STUDENT** at UT has at least one drink containing alcohol?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

I prefer not to respond

How many alcoholic drinks do you think the **TYPICAL STUDENT** at UT consumes on a **typical day** during the school year?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

More than 15

I prefer not to respond

Over the **past two weeks**, how many times do you think the **TYPICAL STUDENT** at UT had **five or more** drinks in one sitting?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

10 or more

I prefer not to respond

ORGANIZATIONAL LEGITIMACY

DISCLAIMER The following questions are from the field of business research. They are intended to assess your perceptions of a typical organization. For the purposes of this

study, an organization will be defined as "an entity made up of connected and interdependent parts that make up a whole." Please note that this research study attempts to test the scale's ability to capture your perceptions of UT **AS A WHOLE** and not its individual units or departments such as the Parents Association.

UT is a decent organization.

UT is a legitimate organization.

UT is a credible organization.

UT is a suitable organization.

(7pt Likert: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)

UT is a truthful organization.

UT meets my expectations.

UT is a good organization.

UT is a trustworthy organization.

UT is a competent organization.

PARENTAL AWARENESS

Please answer the following questions according to your **CURRENT AWARENESS** of **UT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS**. The University of Tennessee currently has the following programs for its students:

(7pt Likert: Strongly Aware to Strongly Unaware)

Training for residence hall staff on alcohol enforcement policies

Campus advertising campaigns that promote health and safety awareness

Classroom health and safety presentations to First Year students

Community relations with bars and restaurants to reduce underage sales of alcohol

Health and safety programs that meet national standards for effectiveness

Thank you very much for your participation in this research study. To be considered for one of the four prepaid ATM cards, please click the link below to be directed to a separate database allowing you to enter your son/daughter's email address. Your participation in the incentive prize drawing is entirely voluntary and you can choose not to participate by simply closing the browser. The drawing for the prizes will take place on **JUNE 30th, 2008**. A code and instructions for picking up the prize will be sent to the email address provided. [Click here to participate in incentive drawing](#)

VITA

John Brummette is a doctoral candidate in communication and information at The University of Tennessee. He earned a B.A. in Communication and Rhetoric from the University of Pittsburgh and a M.S degree in Corporate and Professional Communication from Radford University in Radford, Virginia. During his graduate studies, he has worked as a research assistant and consultant in the fields of communication and alcohol prevention. His primary research interests are in public relations, issues management and crisis communication, as well as secondary research interests in interpersonal communication and high-risk drinking.