Videos Unplugged
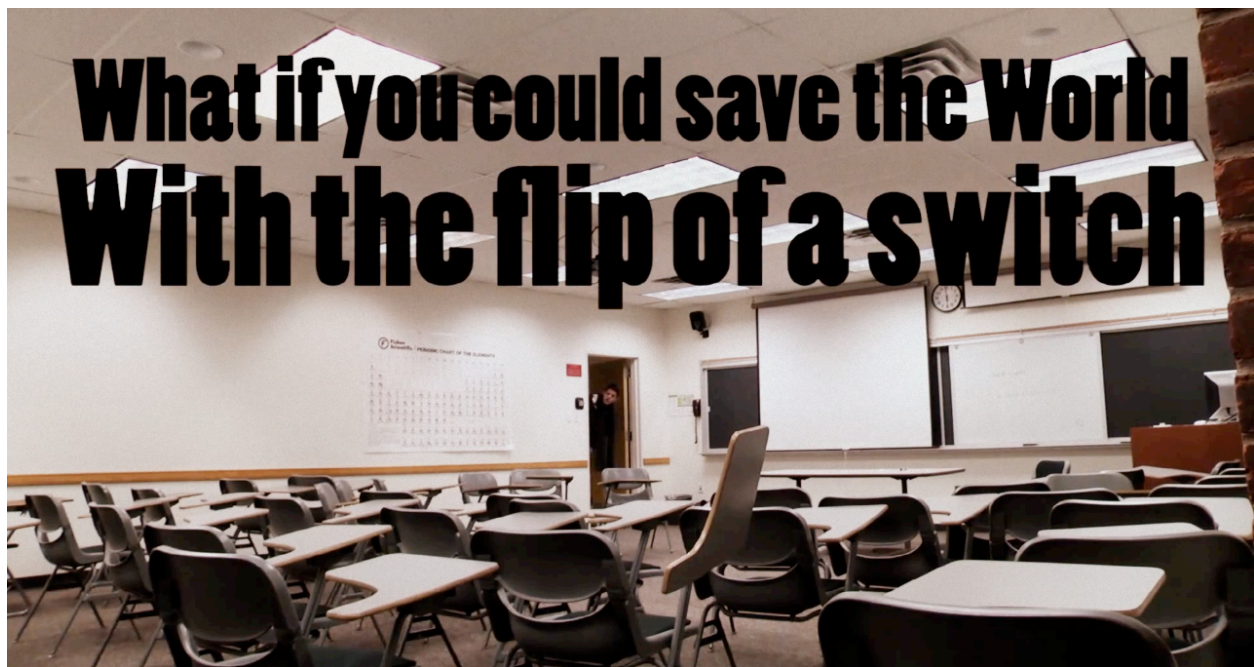## Combining Comedy with Consequence

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Abstract

What does it take to make an effective video PSA for the Skidmore Unplugged energy saving campaign? We surveyed students about their usage of electrical devices to identify the sources of energy consumption and key behaviors to target. We made ten videos exploring the

themes of humor, social influence and environmental concern. Focus group discussions showed that a combination of these themes would be most effective for the college audience. Other key aspects were brevity, shock value, personal relevancy and specificity of both target behavior and audience.

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Introduction

A movement is only as strong as its message. In the past decade environmentalism has been criticized as a "dying" movement. Its messages have become redundant, reaching a limited and already environmentally conscious community. Although many environmental issues and potential solutions have been identified, the support of the majority of our population is necessary to implement real change. In order for the movement to prosper once again it is necessary to tap into a broader audience to bolster support.

The real challenge is crafting a message that will not only change the opinion of a new audience but also change their behavior. It is consumer behavior that will instigate sustainable policies and shift the free market. Just because one claims to support the environment does not mean they are making behavioral changes in their everyday life. Academic studies have acknowledged this disconnect, distinguishing environmentalism as political vs. behavioral, and behavior as low-cost vs. high-cost. From the consumer's point of view, all changes in political behavior, other than supporting carbon tax legislation, are considered low-cost. People are more readily disposed to support environmental legislation and technical solutions than make changes in their personal consumption. Within behavioral change, altering consumption in terms of buying green or sacrificing comfort (e.g. turning down the thermostat) is considered low-cost but changing travel behavior is considered high-cost. It was also found that certain demographics affected how people perceive cost. For example republicans view supporting environmental policy as a high-cost and behavioral change as a low-cost. Also younger people consider changing their mobility a higher cost than people over 50 (Tobler et al, 2012).

When thinking about how to secure the future of our environment it is important to target those demographics that will be responsible for future decisions: the younger generations. It is much harder to alter an older person's habits since they have been ingrained in them for a longer period of time. Young people are not so set in their ways, making them more susceptible to change. As students ourselves we feel that college students are important to target because of the immediacy of their influence, their level of maturity and open mindedness. When people go to college it is often the first time that they truly consider their potential to contribute to society. The college years are the time when students gain the right to vote and further establish themselves as independent individuals. After school, many students will hold influential jobs that give them political power. College is a time when people reflect on who they are and the weight of their actions, causing their understanding of personal identity to be in flux. Their world is also broadened by their academic courses and their exposure to other students from different backgrounds. As such a fluid and influential time in a person's life it is a perfect opportunity to educate them about the environment and instill them with environmentally conscious behaviors.

As centers of learning, colleges and universities all over the world strive to be innovators of sustainable practice, creating an ideal setting to increase college students' awareness of environmental issues. The commitment of many universities can be seen through agendas like the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, and the College Sustainability Report Card. In this respect universities lead by example and promote sustainable practices to future leaders and intellectuals. They have a unique responsibility as "role models for their communities and in training the people who will develop the social, economic and technological solutions to reverse global warming" (Emanuel et al, 2012).

While these institutions promote sustainability, their success rate in changing student

behavior and practices is not well studied. Current findings suggest that college students are well aware of on-campus sustainability initiatives and agree on the importance of sustainability initiatives. However it is also suggested that while the knowledge gap is small, the commitment gap is relatively high (Emanuel et al, 2012). The question then, is how to get college students to make lifestyle changes based on their pre-existing knowledge of sustainability and environmental issues.

As such, the purpose of this research was to explore this issue within the Skidmore College student population. Sustainable Skidmore, a department dedicated to environmental responsibility, holds an annual event called Skidmore Unplugged. It is an energy saving competition between the dorms that after four years has grown to be the department's most successful event. We decided to create a video campaign for the event in order to discover which methods of framing within a message are most successful at reaching the college audience and inspiring pro-environmental behavior regarding energy consumption.

We chose to use video because of the current YouTube and viral video culture that has consumed our generation. Our current digital age creates a perfect opportunity for widespread outreach in the form of media. Fellow students spend hours watching videos and sharing them with their friends on Facebook and other social platforms. Creating a viral video would be the best way to reach our audience and ensure its rapid spread through social spheres.

Video was also selected as a medium because film and visual media have always been a successful medium of general communication. It is much easier for people to understand information when they can see and hear it (Stokes, 2001). Images are also far more memorable (James, 2010). Studies have shown that film is also a successful medium for environmental education specifically and has the capability to change college student's perspective. "Narrative

films/movies presenting environmental issues are capable of contributing to the environmental education of the public in the promotion of environmental conservation and sustainability" (Bahk, 2011).

Historically Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in the form of video have been a successful tool to raise awareness, change opinion and educate the public about important issues. Environmental based PSAs can span many genres in terms of message, narrative structure, and emotion. They can be animated, fictitious or fact based. Some have celebrity spokespeople while others have scientists. Most utilize specific taglines so viewers can easily remember the message. Although PSAs vary they can generally be placed under one of two categories. The first is videos that focus on negative imagery meant to make the viewer feel guilty, upset, and establish a sense of urgency. The second is videos that have uplifting messages, meant to inspire hope and empower the viewer to change their ways.

Public service announcements and many other forms of advertising have been proven to be effective based on their sensation seeking levels. Sensation seeking is the psychological tendency to pursue sensory pleasure and excitement. People exist at all spectrums of sensation seeking from the low sensation seekers, who prefer more structured tasks involving order and routine, to the high sensation seekers, who prefer adventurous activities. PSAs with HSV (High Sensation Value) have been shown to be more effective in changing outlook and behavior for high sensation seeking people, while PSAs with LSV (Low Sensation Value) have been proven to be effective for low sensation seeking people (Everett, 1995). Therefore it is important when testing the effectiveness of PSAs to attempt to create a wide spectrum of videos that cover different proven methods and archetypes, in order to find which of these themes work best and for whom they are most successful.

When creating PSAs focused on changing people's actions it is essential to identify the factors that motivate that behavior. The motivations behind energy saving behavior are complex and intertwined. One would assume that environmental concern would be the primary incentive, but although a positive correlation has been found between climate change consciousness and energy saving there appear to be many other factors influencing this behavior (Han Ben et al, 2013). One of the most prominent of these influences is the cost of the energy bill. People are motivated to save energy when the consequences are monetary (Paco et al, 2010). Yet further studies show that even this relationship is not that simple. Researchers found a positive correlation between income and pro-environmental action (Han Ben et al, 2013). This is due to the fact that pro-environmental behavior can be broken down into habitual changes and purchasing changes. A person with lower income is more likely to make a habitual change like turning off the lights while a person of higher income is more likely to make a purchasing change like installing solar power (Barr et al, 2005).

Although monetary cost is a primary incentive, personal cost, as mentioned previously, is also a significant factor. When a person makes a decision they weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. The process of making an environmentally friendly decision is the same. People are more willing to make changes if they feel that the change is actually benefiting the environment and the perceived cost of that change is not very high (Tobler et al, 2012). A person will not change their behavior if they believe that their personal sacrifice is not truly making a difference.

Community interactions and the concept of "Herd Mentality" also heavily influence behavior (Han Ben et al, 2013). Humans crave acceptance from their community so they often mimic behaviors they see the masses perform and avoid social stigmas. Normative beliefs (e.g. the belief that climate change has to be dealt with and everyone needs to do something about it)

have a positive effect on the intention to adopt environmental behavior. That intention leads to normative behavior, which causes influence on behavior to increase exponentially (Gadenne et al, 2011). These social influences also relate to the concept of self-presentation. People will be more likely to do pro-environmental things if they think it makes them look good (Barr et al, 2005). Other influences that have been identified are moral obligation, moral beliefs, social responsibility, ease of adoption, and personal relevance (Gadenne et al, 2011).

Scholars have tried to identify common characteristics of an energy saver. There is a positive correlation between knowledge and action (Han Ben et al, 2013). However, education level is not a significant determinant of pro-environmental behavior. Women have been found to more frequently partake in pro-environmental behavior than men (Paco et al, 2010). Also the tendency to be an environmentalist increases with age due to an increased sense of responsibility. Energy savers are characterized as pro-social, ecocentric, environmentally concerned, morally motivated, believe in the efficacy of their actions, value the environment more than price, and are willing to sacrifice their comfort. Non-energy savers are characterized as pro-self, materialistic, technocentirc, anthropocentric, morally unconcerned, skeptical of the efficacy of their behavior, they stereotype environmentalists, and are unwilling to sacrifice their comfort (Barr et al, 2005).

One of the biggest hurdles to changing a person's beliefs and behaviors is the disconnect between intention and action. This phenomenon has been coined the "value-action gap". This gap occurs when pro-environmental behavior is inconsistent with one's personal agenda and comfort. The more inconvenient a person considers an action the greater likelihood that the value-action gap will occur (Han Ben et al, 2013). People are not willing to sacrifice their comfort (Nisiforou et al, 2012). If they determine that the personal cost of the action is not worth the benefit it won't happen (Lopes et al, 2012).

Another hurdle that environmentalists face when trying to change behavior is the challenge of forming and breaking habits. No matter how "good" one's intentions are, once a habit is formed it is extremely hard to break. Not only does one need to form a new acting habit of energy saving they also have to break their non-acting habit of not energy saving. For example a person can have the habit of not turning off the light switch, a non-acting habit. The literature shows that acting and non-acting habits are equally difficult to break and intention may not always be enough (de Vries et al, 2011).

Researchers' suggestions for how to affect behavior are broken down into two categories: antecedent interventions and consequence strategies. Antecedant interventions consist of things like making a pledge, setting a goal and educating the public. Consequence strategies refer to measures like feedback on energy bills and rewards (Lopes et al, 2012). The literature states that it is important to make smaller specific task related goals rather than bigger ambiguous open ended goals so that there will be a greater chance of follow through. For example instead of pledging that one will be an environmentalist they should pledge that they will save energy by turning off the lights (McCalley et al, 2011).

Keeping all these behavioral motivations in mind is important but there are also just general elements of a message that determine its success. In order to have an effective environmental message, one need's to attract attention. A message won't work if it is boring or inaccessible. The content of the message needs to be attention grabbing and memorable. It has been recommended to use the element of surprise to breakdown schemas or mental structures based on their previous experiences. This can also be done by creating mystery while crafting an elaborate story or asking a lot of questions. It is important to target the emotional side as well as the rational. Emotional cues are more likely to illicit action. People respond to individual's

stories. Use stories that will uplift, motivate, energize and inspire. (James, 2010) We attempted to apply these recommendations and the themes that influence energy saving behavior in several PSAs targeted at the Skidmore College audience.

Research Questions:

1.What is the average students energy consumption? What appliances use the most energy?

2.What message is most effective in reaching the college audience and potentially influencing them to change their energy consumption?

3.What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Skidmore Unplugged Campaign? How can it be improved?

Methods

In order to get a rough evaluation of student's behaviors in regards to energy consumption a preliminary survey was conducted online using SurveyMonkey and dispersed through Facebook. Sixty students participated in the survey. Results showed that females are more likely to turn off the lights while males are more likely to turn off appliances, but these results were not statistically significant. Participants were also asked what elements make a good commercial. The most frequent recommendation was humor, followed by music, aesthetics, content and briefness.

This information was taken into account when creating the videos. Since humor was the top recommendation it was added as a frame along with other two influences on behavior stated in the literature, societal influences (herd mentality and social stigmas) and environmental concern/responsibility. The influence of cost was not used as a frame since we hypothesized that it would not be effective for an audience that does not pay for their energy use, however, it was

included in the study.

After researching and watching over 30 PSAs we determined common themes and filming/editing techniques. Using this as inspiration we scripted and filmed ten videos, four humorous (Video Games 1 & 2, Left Turned On, and Sustainable Steve), three environmental concern/responsibility (Phantom Charges, Flip of a Switch Music & Clock) and three social influences (Because, We Do it in the Dark and Stand Up). The videos were kept under two minutes since briefness was a top recommendation. We appeared as actors in the videos along with members of the theater department, friends, and random students.

Once the videos were complete they were posted on YouTube and Vimeo. Links to these videos were posted on Facebook several times throughout the competition on our personal profiles as well as the Skidmore Unplugged page and pages of various student groups. They were shared through the sustainability representatives' weekly emails and posted on Skidmore Unofficial. They were run several times daily on the announcement screens in Case Center and the Atrium. They were also shown on the big screen inside the Dining Hall twice during the lunch rush and twice during the dinner rush.
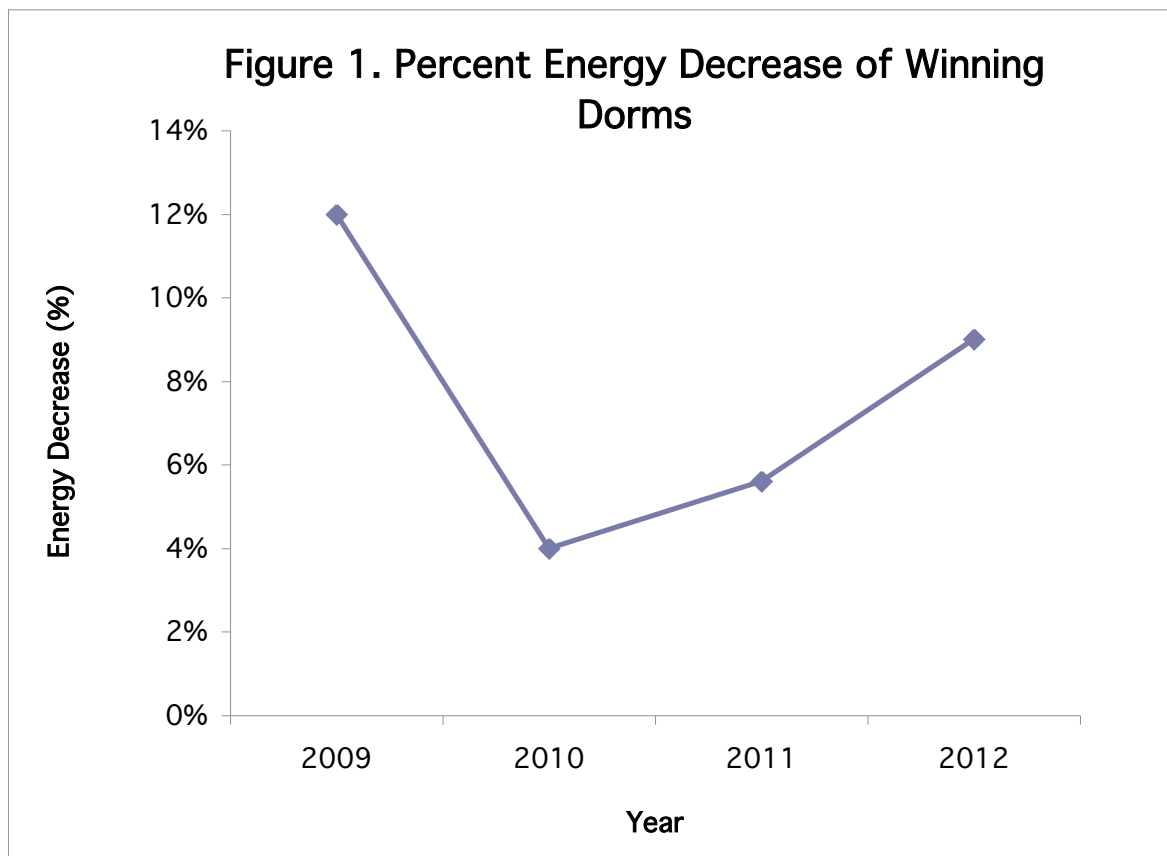
The effectiveness of the videos was determined using the focus group method. In a focus group the researcher interviews a group of participants, studying their reactions to a subject and their interactions between each other. It is a technique that is used primarily in private industry when trying to determine the psychological motives behind behavior in order to then influence it (Folch-Lyon et al, 1981). The focus groups were advertised through the weekly announcements, email, Facebook, and posters. Participants were offered free pizza as an incentive. Ten focus groups were held with a total of 53 participants.

In order to more accurately evaluate student's energy consumption another more in

depth survey was conducted using Surveymonkey. The survey was offered online through Facebook and also conducted during the focus groups. Adding up the surveys from both methods, a total of 75 students participated. The surveys were analyzed using SPSS software.

The head of Sustainable Skidmore, Riley Neugebauer, was also interviewed in order to better understand Skidmore Unplugged's history, goals and campaign strategy. Considering the data from that interview, the surveys and the focus groups recommendations were made on how they could improve the campaign.

Sustainable Skidmore Interview Results

Figure 1. Percent Energy Decrease of Winning Dorms

The goal of Skidmore Unplugged is to create campus wide awareness about saving energy. Unlike their small focused initiatives such as EAC or the Sustainability Representatives,

Skidmore Unplugged is a campus wide outreach campaign. They want to reach a large group of students to educate them about the link between energy and climate change. They also want to raise awareness about the behavioral changes they can make to conserve energy. They have no quantitative goal for energy decrease, just that energy consumption decreases rather than increases during the competition. The prize for the winning dorm is a Chipotle Burrito party.

They judge the effectiveness of the campaign through a voluntary post survey conducted online, usually with some kind of small incentive to encourage participation. The survey questions students about when they adopted habits in order to discern whether the campaign has any affect on behavior (Figure 2.). Someone may adopt a new behavior during the competition while others already practiced these behaviors beforehand. It is most difficult to get someone who adopted a behavior to continue it after the competition is through. They aren't concerned about data not being statistically significant because it is difficult to get students to fill out the survey. They also consider the campaign successful if it raises student's awareness about other Sustainable Skidmore initiatives.

Sustainable Skidmore itself has only been active for the past five years, starting Skidmore Unplugged their second year. "Skidmore Unplugged" was their only official slogan until the competition got rescheduled to the spring in its third year. Since the first weekend of the competition coincided with Valentine's Day, Sustainable Skidmore teamed up with Skidmore's Center for Sex and Gender Relations spawning a new slogan "Do it in the dark," which was sent out as valentines with a condom. Some other advertising techniques have been taking advantage of the big green scream as an advertising outlet, as well as Facebook, posting weekly trivia questions about the competition with a Chipotle burrito prize. They have had some additions in these past two years that have really benefitted the campaign. Last year Skidmore joined the

Campus Conservation Nationals, an inter-collegiate energy saving competition, placing third in our bracket. That also gave them access to a much more sophisticated and user-friendly web platform. This year they took a very innovative approach to the campaign. It was run by Rachel Willis and she focused on collaborating with other student run groups and organizations on campus. They held events like Lively Lucy's in the dark and Awkward Kids Talking in the dark.

For Sustainable Skidmore the next step to improving their campaign would be to further integrate Residential Life. It would be helpful to have more people advertising the campaign and educating students. They also want to continue collaborating with student groups and academic departments, perhaps finding a way to include the competition in the curriculum.

10. What Do You Personally Do to Save Energy On Campus And When Did You Start Doing Those Things?

	I Did This Before Skidmore Unplugged & Will Continue	I Started Doing This For Skidmore Unplugged & Will Continue	I Did This During Skidmore Unplugged Only	I Couldn't Do This	I Didn't Do This But Might Start Later	I Didn't Do This Before & Won't Be Starting	Response Count
Turn Lights Off In Room When Not Needed	89.8% (150)	8.4% (14)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.2% (2)	0.6% (1)	167
Turn Lights Off in Public Rooms When Not Needed	74.7% (124)	19.3% (32)	1.2% (2)	1.2% (2)	2.4% (4)	1.2% (2)	166
Turn Off Computer When Not Needed	45.1% (74)	16.5% (27)	4.3% (7)	14.0% (23)	15.9% (26)	4.3% (7)	164
Turn Off Other Electronics When Not Needed	60.6% (100)	17.6% (29)	6.7% (11)	0.6% (1)	12.7% (21)	1.8% (3)	165
Use a Power Strip to Power Down Multiple Items Completely	40.9% (67)	14.6% (24)	4.9% (8)	10.4% (17)	20.1% (33)	9.1% (15)	164
Get Rid of Extra Appliances/Lights/Electronics	43.0% (71)	15.8% (26)	6.1% (10)	10.3% (17)	13.9% (23)	10.9% (18)	165
Take Stairs Instead of Elevator	76.5% (127)	7.2% (12)	4.2% (7)	6.0% (10)	3.0% (5)	3.0% (5)	166

Figure 2. Example question from 2012 Skidmore Unplugged Post Survey

Survey Results

Participants were questioned about what kinds of appliances they own, how often they use them and with what frequency they turn them off. The survey was analyzed using SPSS software. The gender breakdown of the participants was 47% male and 52% female. The class breakdown was 19% freshman, 37% sophomore, 19% junior, and 24% senior. For the participants living situation 52% lived in dorms, 13% in Hillside, 9% in Scribner, 20% in North Woods and 16% off campus. Out of the total participants 65% considered themselves energy savers. Of the 8% that didn't 67% gave the reason that they were too lazy, 16% that they don't pay and 16% were unaware that they should.

Male vs. Female

When examining how gender influences energy saving behavior it was found that females were more likely to consider themselves energy savers than men (p-value 0.011). Some other differences in behavior were that males were more likely to use a desk light longer (p-value 0.035) and wash more loads of laundry (p-value 0.018) while females were more likely to turn off the TV (p-value 0.010). Gender also influenced the kinds of devices students owned. Males were more likely to own a TV (p-value 0.041) and a fan (p-value 0.005). Females were more likely to own hairdryers (p-value 0.009).

Upperclassmen vs. Underclassmen

Differences between underclassmen and upperclassmen were analyzed. Underclassmen were more likely to have a mini fridge (p-value 0.015). They were more likely to turn off Christmas lights (p-value 0.035), coffee makers (p-value 0.033) and fans (p-value 0.002). They were also more likely to wash more loads of laundry (p-value 0.043).
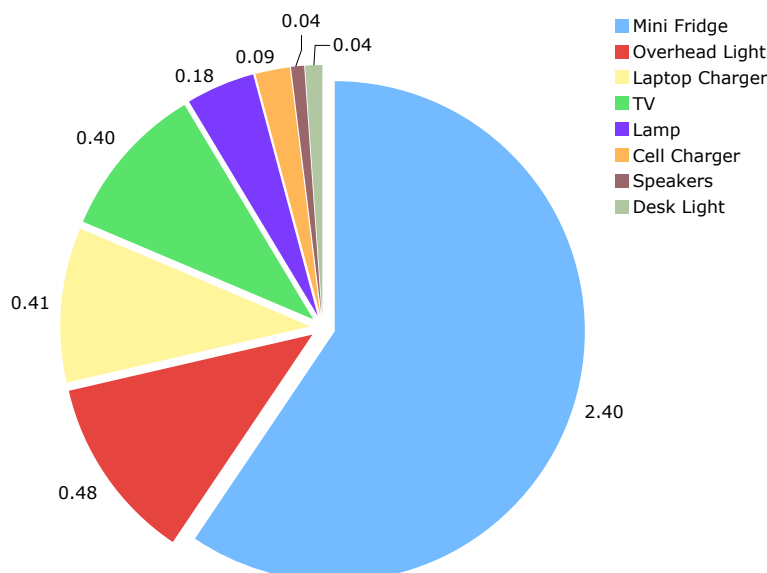
Off-campus vs. On-campus

Students living on campus and off campus were compared as well. The survey showed that students living on campus were more likely to have mini fridges (p-value 0.002) while students living off campus were more likely to have hairdryers (p-value 0.038). Students on campus were more likely to use the printer (p-value 0.032) and Christmas lights (p-value 0.007) longer. Students living off campus were more likely to turn off the printer (p-value 0.002) and coffee maker (p-value 0.048), dry less loads of laundry (p-value 0.012) and consider themselves energy savers (p-value 0.013).

Energy Savers vs. Non-Energy Savers

Those that considered themselves energy savers did differ slightly when it came to some behaviors. Energy savers were more likely to

Figure 3. Average Student's Daily Energy Consumption (kWh)

- Mini Fridge
- Overhead Light
- Laptop Charger
- TV
- Lamp
- Cell Charger
- Speakers
- Desk Light

0.04
0.04
0.09
0.18
0.40
0.41
0.48
2.40

turn off lamps (p-value 0.032) and overhead lights (p-value 0.031) however they were more likely to watch TV longer (p-value 0.029). Non-energy savers were more likely to own a lamp (p-value 0.002).

Figure 3 represents the appliances that were most frequently owned by students. The average time use from the survey data and standard power of each appliance were used to calculate the average power consumption in kWh of each student per appliance. It was found that the average daily energy consumption for each student was 4 kWh. The appliance that accounted for the most energy use was the mini fridge followed by the overhead light, computer charger and TV.

Survey Discussion

Male vs. Female

When looking at gender our survey results concurred with the academic literature in that females were more likely to consider themselves energy savers than males. However there were few statistically significant behavioral differences between the sexes. Males are generally more active than females therefore it isn't surprising that they do more laundry. Males used the desk light longer which was statistically significant, however it seems to be a very random behavioral difference that could just be caused by the participants misrepresenting their desk light use. Females had a greater tendency to turn off the TV, which was the only unexpected behavioral difference. The tendency of males to be more likely to have a TV was as expected since males are more likely to play video games and therefore own a TV. The same goes with females owning hairdryers since they generally have longer hair and more complicated grooming rituals. The male tendency to own a fan could be attributed to their level of activeness as stated before.

Overall gender is not a very differentiating factor on behavior and future campaigns should target both equally.

Upperclassmen vs. Underclassmen

There was not much differentiation between upper and under classmen either. The tendency of lower classmen to have a mini fridge is logical since the upperclassmen's apartments have refrigerators. The presence of the mini fridge, however, does make a huge difference since as seen in Figure 3 it is responsible for the majority of a students energy consumption. The other behavioral differences do not seem to have any logical explanation so they may be a true representation of the student community or human error in the survey. Future campaigns should target underclassmen's mini fridge use since that is where there is the greatest potential for energy decrease.

Off-campus vs. On-campus

When comparing off-campus to on-campus it was expected to see drastically different energy behaviors since the element of financial cost is added. Once again on-campus students were more likely to have a mini fridge since off-campus houses have refrigerators. Students off-campus were more likely use a few appliances less as well as turn them off and do less laundry. Although the differences were not astronomical there were no cases where off-campus students used something more or were less likely to turn something off than students on-campus. Our hypothesis was also further supported by the tendency of off-campus students to be more likely to consider themselves energy savers. Although Skidmore Unplugged does not target off-campus students this information supports the literature in that monetary cost is an important incentive but ineffective for this campaign since students on-campus do not pay for or even see their

energy bill.

Energy Savers vs. Non-Energy Savers

Since it is a personal distinction it was unclear whether considering oneself an energy saver would be reflected in behavior. The results show they were more likely to turn off lights and less likely to have a lamp yet they were more likely to watch TV. It is therefore unclear if a person's self-perception in regards to this topic is accurate. The fact that there isn't much of a difference between those who consider themselves energy savers and those who don't speaks to concept of herd mentality and self-presentation discussed in the literature. Students could have been influenced by a need to feel accepted and appear a certain way so they answered the question positively even though it wasn't necessarily true.

The average student's daily energy consumption as depicted in Figure 1 shows how the bulk of energy consumed is from mini fridges. This data suggests that mini-fridges should be a specific target of the Unplugged campaign since that is where there is the most potential to decrease student energy use. The other main energy consumers (ie overhead lights, computer chargers and TVs) are also important targets to decrease energy consumption.

As mentioned earlier all of this data is subject to human error. We could not go door-to-door to do energy audits or measure students actual individual consumption so the data is dependent on students realistically depicting their energy consumption behaviors. They were asked about hours of use for appliances on a daily basis and since schedules change day to day it is difficult to give totally accurate information.

Focus Group Results

Participants were asked a series of preliminary questions before being shown the videos. They were then shown the different PSAs and asked about their perceptions, likes and dislikes, as well as the effectiveness of the message and themes. After, they were asked a series of follow up questions about general messaging techniques.

Have you seen the videos before?

About 20% of participants cited having seen one or more videos prior to the focus group. The primary source of viewing was the announcement screen in Case Center but a few participants stated seeing them in emails and Facebook.

If so, what do you remember about them?

The majority remembered "Left Turned On" and it's overt sexual theme. One subject cited remembering a PSA about video games. One remembered the crowd of people judging the non-recycler. Another person remembered a man in a green outfit attacking people. Many cited how they appreciated the PSA's briefness. Others agreed on the importance of attention grabbing visuals and specifically remembered the image of a mountainside explosion.

Have you heard of Skidmore Unplugged? If so, have you participated and how?

The majority of participants knew Skidmore Unplugged. Those that were currently living in the dorms were very aware of the dates and the focus of the campaign. Those that lived in the apartments and off campus knew the competition from when they lived in the dorms

although they weren't aware when it was going on this year. About 25% of the participants said

they participated, performing behaviors such as unplugging their laptop charger. However the

majority of these people said that the behaviors they displayed during competition were regular

habits.

Did you feel there was enough of an incentive to participate?

Many said the competition between dorms was enough incentive, making statements

like "I just wanted to win" and "I got a sense of pride and accomplishment from my dorm

winning." Several students talked about the importance of small informational posters reminding

students of good energy saving habits and the key role of the Sustainability Representative in

encouraging participation. Other students argued that there was not enough incentive, suggesting

alternatives such as:

"Free coffee or tea at Burgess"

"First in line at d-hall"

"A dorm wide activity"

"Getting the money that they save"

"An incentive that reflects the values of Sustainable Skidmore"

How has living off-campus affected the way you think about energy?

Most participants referred to their increase in energy saving habits in order to save

money in statements such as:

"I never realized how much it cost until I lived off campus."

"It was terrifying to see our first energy bill."

"My housemates were fighting about who used too much energy."

Others student's living on campus expressed the decrease in their energy habits when arriving at Skidmore, "I do it more at home because my mom always shouts at me for wasting electricity but here at Skidmore I know I'm not paying the bill so I've become more relaxed about it."

Which appliance would you be most willing to cut back on?

Around 50% of respondents cited they would increase efforts to unplug their laptop chargers, 30% said they would turn off lights more often and 20% said they would use the TV less. Several on-campus students agreed that they could consider not using a mini-fridge, stating, "I rarely have it completely stocked and I have a full meal plan."

Phantom Charges

This video played off the spooky name given to this energy waste phenomena. A cell phone charger was shown in a horror film style, ending with the final message that appliances still use power if they are plugged in. Positive responses for this first video included statements such as:

"It's clever."

"It's funny."

"It's creepy."

"It makes wasting energy ominous."

"I will remember it."

"The fear aspect is effective."

Negative responses included:

"It's too short."

"it made me indignant because it was supposed to be so scary."

"It's too silly, it doesn't give any real reason why someone should unplug their charger."

"Many people wouldn't understand why wasting energy is scary."

"It hasn't shown potential impacts, I want to know statistics or facts."

Some student suggested including an actual storyline to keep viewers interested and to give real numbers in reference to Skidmore's energy usage.

We Do It In The Dark

This PSA featured several groups of students with a mix of gender and race saying the campaign slogan, "We do it in the dark." Positive responses included:

"It's fitting for a college setting."

"Everyone can relate to the slogan."

"It's cute and funny."

"It shows how it would be an easy and fun thing to do since so many people do it."

Negative responses included:

"Legendary slogan, what's the point though."

"It has no concrete message."

"What are you saying, are you bragging about your sex life?"

"People will get too hung up on the sexual innuendo."

Students suggested that if the message is supposed to be conveyed based on sexual innuendos a successful video should exploit the opportunity for raunchy humor.

Stand Up

This video demonstrated a student failing to recycle a plastic bottle. In response a group of students who witnessed the action stand silently and watch him until he returns to the garbage can and properly recycles it. The end message reminds people that their actions don't go unseen and encourages people to stand up for the behavior they believe is right. The critique was more positive than negative. Positive comments included:

"This was very effective, social stigma is a great strategy."

"The concept is good, you may not think other people notice your actions but they do."

"The drama grabs people's attention."

"It was humorous."

Negative comments included:

"It was too long."

"It was overdramatic."

Students suggested that the message would have been clearer if it was shorter. They commented on the filming style saying it would be better candid. They also recommended creating a series based on this concept.

Flip Of A Switch: Music vs. Clock

In this video, several empty rooms were shown with the lights left on interspersed with clips of mountaintop mining and coal processing. At the end someone enters the classroom and turns off the light prompting the audience, "If you could save the world with a Flip of a switch would you do it?" then showing a mountaintop explosion in reverse. When asked to evaluate Flip of a switch the groups were shown two different versions, one with a musical score and the other

with the ticking of a clock as its score. When comparing the two videos the one with the musical score was preferred by the majority, with such explanations as "the music made the mood of the video" and "the music made me understand that it was related to electricity." However it was stated that the clock might reach people on another level, "it gives a sense of urgency because we are trying to beat the clock at this point so it will give more of an incentive." The clock was generally disliked because of tempo issues, "It was so fast that the cuts were too quick to register what was happening." Positive comments on the theme of the video included:

"It was effective because it appeals to someone's emotions and moral conscious."

"The person turning off the lights at the end really gets the message across."

"The questions were really powerful."

"It debunks the norm that it's ok to leave the lights on."

"This one is more likely to change behavior."

Negative comments included:

"I don't like the pieces being put back together."

"I didn't understand the correlation between mountains exploding and electricity."

"For someone who didn't know that this was about energy saving it might be confusing."

Participants suggested explaining the direct link between mining and energy use or using another visual to demonstrate energy use impacts on the environment.

Because

This PSA was done in an interview style where students were asked why they save energy. The responses ranged from environmental responsibility to financial incentive. The final prompt let the audience know there are several reasons to save energy and asked for theirs. This

video was met with far more negative criticism. The few positive comments included:

"It involves the viewer on a more intellectual level and makes you consider why this is an important cause."

"It was clear, it gave different perspectives on why to save energy."

"It sticks in my mind."

The main criticism was the credibility of the answers:

"I like hearing from people but it's not as powerful because anyone can answer that question but is it really what they think?"

"It's hard for me to believe them because I know a lot of them and I know they don't really think that way."

"It's generic and fake, they say what you want to hear."

"The students didn't seem serious and that doesn't make me want to take it seriously."

Participants suggested following one student and showing their lifestyle or presenting the information on a poster instead.

Left Turned On

In this video a male student, after leaving several lights and appliances on in his room, is depicted with priapism and is forced to go through several embarrassing encounters in his daily routine. At the end of the video he returns home and turns off the devices and the audience is prompted "How would you like to be left turned on all day?" along with a visual of someone turning off the lights. This video was very well received. Positive comments included:

"It caters to the college audience."

"This grabs people's attention because of our age range and he is going around doing

things that we all do, making it relatable."

"It will be on my mind, I will turn off my lights because I wouldn't want to be left turned on either."

"It had a great punch at the end"

"It told more of a story than some of the others."

Negative comments included:

"It raises awareness but it wouldn't necessarily get me to change my behavior."

"It wasn't effective, it caught my attention but I was more concerned about how he was going to overcome the embarrassment than saving energy."

Some participants suggested that more emphasis be put on the message at the end while others wanted to see more awkward situations with females.

Video Games: 1 vs. 2

This video showed what happens when gamers leave their consoles on through the existential crisis of Halo characters. When the participants were evaluating the video they were shown two versions, one with a single character who tries to kill time until his player returns but just ends up killing himself and another depicting a conversation between two characters that ends in them deciding to go take a nap until the players return. The first video was favored by the majority for its comedic content. Students stated, "this one is funnier because of script" and "it has more entertaining actions." However the second one was thought to be more effective because it showed the player walking away from the Xbox, leaving it and the TV turned on. The success of the theme was evident in the comments "it's an effective message for turning off Xbox" and "it's effective because it targets a specific group that others don't normally reach."

Negative comments included, "It needs a clearer connection between what happened in the video game and turning off the Xbox, there was no consequence." Participants suggested making a hybrid video with the jokes from the first video but showing the player walking away in the beginning like the second one.

Sustainable Steve

This PSA showed a sustainability mascot/super hero who followed a student around pointing out his unsustainable habits. This was a very well liked video. Positive comments included:

"It kept me entertained and made me laugh."

"This video got the message across the best because it used all of the examples that most people do i.e. driving to the gym or long showers."

"It was really relevant and specific to Skidmore."

"It brings awareness to different types of energy waste."

"It touches on the things that skidmore people do on a daily basis, I'm sure everyone is going to relate at least one or two of those things, next time I do one of them I will stop and think."

Negative comments included:

"It seemed like it was making fun of environmentalists."

"It's unrealistic."

Some elements of the film like the theme song and batman voice done by the main character were well liked by some and hated by others. Participants suggested that the character be used in a series of videos and that a logo and slogan be created.

Which video was most memorable?

The majority said they would remember "Left Turned On" because of the raunchy humor. The second most memorable was tied between "Video Games" and "Sustainable Steve" because of their humor and specificity. A few said they would remember "Flip of a Switch" and "Stand Up" because of their more serious content.

Which video would inspire you to change your behavior?

The majority said "Sustainable Steve" would get them to change their behavior because it clearly depicted several small behaviors around campus that could be easily corrected. "Flip of a Switch" was considered the next most likely to change behavior because it actually showed the negative environmental consequences of energy consumption, incentivizing behavioral change. "Stand Up" and "Video Games" were also considered to change behavior, the first because of the strong emphasis on social stigma and the second because of the specific targeted behavior. When asked what the least effective video was participants chose "Because" and "Phantom Charges" saying that "Because" had no credibility and "Phantom Charges" didn't have a clear message or show the consequences of inaction.

Is video an effective way to reach the college audience?

Participants seemed to enjoy the video format but there were concerns about distribution, "video is an effective way to reach people but I don't know how you would reach everyone, on YouTube you would get the most views if it was funny."

How did it feel to see students you knew on screen? Are you influenced by societal pressures?

Most participants agreed that seeing people they know made them more likely to watch the video. Comments included:

"Seeing other students helps grab people's attention even if they aren't committed to the cause because they'll be like "I know that person!" and pay attention."

"It adds to the message to see places you know and people you know."

"It makes the video more memorable when you see people you know."

For some they felt that seeing students detracted from the message, saying "Sometimes it pulled me away, especially if I know them," and "it didn't make me want to change my behavior." Participants stressed that if students are shown that we be sure we are not enforcing stereotypes.

When commenting about societal pressure's influence on behavior the majority thought it was a very effective message for students. Comments included:

"Seeing Skidmore students involved made it seem like something everyone was doing. If you make people feel like they need to do it to fit in it will be very effective."

"Peer pressure will make people care."

"I don't want anyone to see me being a bad person."

One student expressed the opposite, saying "if there are a lot of people participating I feel as if my individual contribution doesn't make a difference and I am less likely to participate."

Do you prefer humor or guilt focused messaging?

In comparing these two messaging frames participants highlighted the benefits of

humor in their responses. Comments included:

"The great thing about the humor is that it will start a conversation like, "OMG did you

see that video?" It raises awareness."

"Something funny makes it relatable."

"Humor keeps it running in your head because you might remember it as a joke but on

some level you will remember it as an energy saving message."

Participants stressed its essential role in a video going viral, saying "Having a video that goes

viral will be more effective than the message and humor is much more popular." Some were

more skeptical about humor stating that the humor may overshadow the message. A participant

said "The funny ones will be remembered more for the joke than the message." Although some

expressed their dislike of negative messaging the majority stressed its importance in actually

altering behavior. Participants agreed that seeing environmental consequences and feeling

morally responsible was much more likely to change their behavior.

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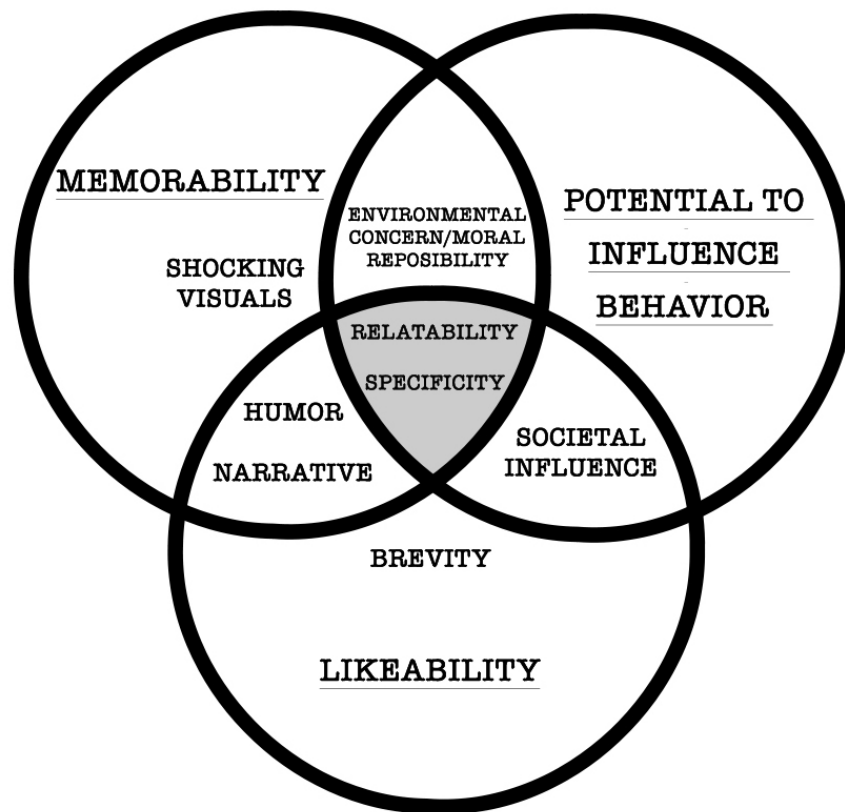**What is the importance of shocking visuals and narrative?**

Participants highlighted the importance of these techniques in creating a memorable

video, saying "I think shock value is important because I'm trying to remember what the other

videos were about besides the boner, explosions and the scary face and I can't, that's what sticks

out in my mind" and "the messages that grab my attention the whole time and have a punch at

the end are the ones that stick out to me."

Focus Group Discussion

The effectiveness of a PSA was determined by three criteria: likeability, memorability

and its potential to influence behavior. Each frame and messaging technique identified in the focus group was analyzed to see which criteria it fulfilled. This is visualized in the Venn diagram in Figure 4. First focusing on the three main frames that were studied, it is demonstrated that no frame satisfies all three criteria. To truly be effective there needs to be a blend of at least two of the frames but preferably all three.

FIGURE 4. THE SPHERES OF EFFECTIVENESS

Looking more closely at the different themes adopted from the literature it was found that societal influence was effective in terms of its potential to influence behavior and make the video likeable. Out of the three videos based around this theme, the most effective was "Stand

Up," which had the strongest message of social stigma. Participants found the message of this video very powerful. They expressed that their fear of being judged by their peers for performing unsustainable actions could be great enough to alter their behavior. The social atmosphere defines the college experience. Every student longs to fit in and be liked, and that longing can affect the way they behave. It is advantageous to exploit the fear of being an outsider in these Unplugged PSAs in order to instill energy saving habits.

Taking advantage of societal influence can also be done in a more positive way by simply having Skidmore students in the PSAs. Through the affects of herd mentality, seeing students exhibit energy saving behaviors makes the viewer more likely to exhibit those behaviors. By making it seem like everyone has these behaviors, like it's the "cool" thing to do, a norm is created that viewers respond to. They will think that the masses are doing these actions so they should too. We Do It In The Dark was effective in that way. Focus group participants mentioned how it looked like many people were doing it and that it was a fun thing to do, which made them want to do it as well.

Having student's in the videos also made them more likeable. The majority of participants stated that they enjoyed seeing friends and familiar faces in the videos. It made the PSA more relatable and relevant to their life. There is, however, a very fine line between positive and negative affects. Like in the case of "Because," the message was rendered completely ineffective if the participants thought the students weren't genuine. Participants also did not respond positively if they felt the students shown embodied a stereotype. Therefore selecting the appropriate students to appear in the PSA is crucial.

Societal influence did not make the PSAs necessarily memorable. The videos with the societal influence frame were not the first to be mentioned when the participants were questioned

about memorability For the viewer, seeing a friend in a PSA may make it memorable, but for those who don't intimately know the person it doesn't really stick in their minds.

The frame of environmental concern and moral responsibility was effective in terms of changing behavior and making the video memorable. This relates to the idea of personal cost in the literature. Viewers need to feel that the benefit of their action is greater than the cost (Tobler et al, 2012). Showing the viewer the consequences of their actions justifies the sacrifice of changing their behavior. Participants frequently criticized the videos for not having enough facts or data demonstrating why this is an important issue. They wanted to see the consequences of their inaction otherwise they felt no reason to alter their behavior. "Flip of a Switch" was the only video that really showed environmental degradation and it was the second most likely to change behavior. It is necessary for a PSA to create concern in order to motivate change.

Inspiring environmental concern also made a video memorable. If the viewer truly becomes worried about a topic that will cause it to stick in their mind. Also images of environmental degradation are normally shocking to the viewer and therefore memorable.

Environmental concern was not successful in making a video likeable. Dealing with the harsh reality of our environmental problems is uncomfortable. Although it is necessary to confront, it is in no way pleasant or fun for the viewer. Participants didn't like the more serious theme but they considered its role in influencing behavior crucial.

The frame of humor was effective in making a video likeable and memorable. "Left Turned On," which participants considered the most memorable video, is a perfect example. The humorous content kept the viewers amused and engaged even though it was one of the longest videos. It was extremely well liked because it was funny, and as the participants stated, the type of humor was well suited to the audience. Humor is essential in ensuring the distribution of

videos. College students are more likely to pass on a funny video to their friends, creating more of potential for it to go viral.

Humor is also pivotal in getting a college student to remember a video. As previously mentioned the participants considered the humorous videos particularly memorable. If a video makes a viewer laugh it sticks in their mind. However, in the case of "Left Turned On" it is important to attribute some of that memorability to the shocking image of the erection.

Humor is not effective in influencing behavior. The fact that "Sustainable Steve" was considered the video most likely to change behavior can be attributed to its specificity in displaying behaviors that were relatable for Skidmore students. In that case the humor complimented the message, increasing its likeability and making it memorable. Yet there is a thin line between complimenting and overpowering the message. This was demonstrated once again in "Left Turned On." Participants who had seen the videos before the focus group remembered the erection but they didn't remember the underlying message to turn off the lights.

Considering cost, another frame from the literature, it was found, as expected, that this is not a relevant frame for the Unplugged campaign. In our conversations with off campus students it was clear that cost did influence their habits since they were paying for their energy. However, for students living on campus cost is not a thought. In fact, participants stated that their energy saving behavior declined when they arrived to campus. With no pressure from the parents and the knowledge that the college pays the bills students begin to become lazy with their habits and overindulge. These examples therefore support the literature that cost is a primary influence on energy saving behavior, but this influence is not relevant to this campaign.

These focus group discussions revealed several key techniques, outside of the literature frames, that are important to creating an effective message. First there is the technique of

shocking imagery. Several participants expressed the direct connection between shocking visuals and the memorability of the videos. For example the video that participants remembered from before the focus groups and considered the most memorable during the focus groups was "Left Turned On," which has several images of a male with an erection. Another video that was especially memorable for participants was "Flip of a Switch" because of the mountaintop explosions. Participants shared that these visuals got them to stop and watch the videos when they were shown in Case. This conclusion supports the ideas expressed in the literature. In order to have an effective message the content needs to be attention grabbing and memorable (James, 2010).

Shocking visuals when paired with a frame have the potential to make a video likable or increase its potential to influence behavior. This was demonstrated in "Left Turned On" and "Flip Of A Switch." The shocking and humorous visual of the erection made it well liked while the shocking and concerning visuals of mountaintop mining made the viewers want to change their behavior. However one needs to be sure that the shocking and attention grabbing visuals are supported by a strong and clear message otherwise the content of the video gets lost. For example out of the participants who had seen the videos beforehand, all mentioned remembering the shocking visuals of different videos yet none stated remembering the message behind them.

The duration of the video was another important characteristic that influenced likeability. None of the videos were longer than two minutes yet many participants still complained about some of the videos being too long. The preferred amount of time seemed to be under a minute, but that also was dependent on the content. Like in the case of our longest and well liked video "Sustainable Steve," participants didn't care how long it was if they were entertained. Duration did not influence the potential to change behavior or memorability.

As previously mentioned the preferred duration of a video is dependent on the narrative of the video. The only video that was criticized as being too short was "Phantom Charges." Participants expressed there not being enough time for a narrative to develop in the video. Having a story told in each video was very important to the participants. If that narrative was engaging than the length of the video didn't matter so much. "Left Turned On" was another one our longest videos yet it was very well liked because it followed one man's journey and presented a personal conflict. This finding concurs with the literature, which stated that an effective message tells a story (James, 2010). An ideal message should be just long enough to present a strong narrative, but it's always safer to go shorter rather than longer.

A strong narrative makes a video likeable and memorable. As previously stated participants liked the videos like "Left Turned On" that had a storyline because it provides them with relatable character. Narratives also connect the events in the video, giving the viewer something to remember.

A narrative imbedded with societal influence or environmental concern has the potential to change behavior. For example "Stand Up," whose strong narrative of social stigma made participants take into consideration the judgments of others before acting. "Flip of A Switch" also influenced behavior because of its narrative of environmental concern, although for some participants the storyline wasn't clear enough.

Out of all the elements only two fell under all three spheres of effectiveness, specificity and relatability. The specificity of the target audience and behavior in videos made them extremely successful. "Video Games" was a great example. Participants responded well because the video was tailored to a specific social group: video gamers. It used iconic characters and a medium that is specific to video game culture, attempting to speak to gamers in their own

language. Those elements made it likeable and memorable. This video was also effective because it targeted a specific behavior: turning off the Xbox. Bringing attention to a specific behavior gives the audience a goal to work towards. All the videos that targeted a specific behavior were much more effective than the videos that just ambiguously told people to save energy like "Because" and "We Do It In The Dark." Targeting one specific behavior makes it easier to remember and more likely to influence behavior because the change seems simple.

Specificity goes hand in hand with relatability. Participants like to see images and behaviors that are specific to their life because they are relatable. That is why "Sustainable Steve" was so effective. Not only was it filmed in several familiar locations on campus, it also addressed behaviors that students directly exhibit themselves or see other students perform on a daily basis. Those elements made the video much more relevant to their life and therefore more effective. The relevance of the video content to a student's life made it likeable and memorable. Relatablility also builds personal relevancy. Students are more likely to make a change when they see how it relevant to the their life. Feelings of personal relevancy give motivation to change.

Taking all of these elements into consideration, the ideal message for the unplugged campaign would be a blend of visually shocking images from the three frames, rooted in a strong narrative focused on specificity and relatability. The humor will get people to watch the video and share it with others. The environmental concern and societal influence will actually get them to change their behavior. The visuals and the narrative will make it memorable. Finally specificity and relatability will amplify the message in all three spheres.

When evaluating effectiveness it is important to remember that the measure of potential to influence behavior was theoretical and left up to interpretation by the participants. There was

no way of actually measuring behavioral change, nor a way to find a direct correlation between behavioral change and the videos.

Skidmore Unplugged Recommendations

After considering the results of our survey and focus groups we have several recommendations about how to improve the Skidmore Unplugged campaign. One of the strengths of Skidmore Unplugged is that it meets its goal of raising awareness about energy conservation on campus. The vast majority of students know the campaign and what it stands for. This includes students outside of the environmental studies sphere. In that sense the campaign is very successful because it reaches a broader audience and informs them about the issue.

This year, the campaign was also very successful at collaborating with other groups on campus. That is an excellent strategy that has a lot of potential. Reaching out to groups who are not traditionally associated with the environmental movement is the best way to tap into new audiences. Also holding events increases participation and awareness. Definitely continue to develop this innovative tactic.

Where the campaign experiences problems is getting students, other than those that already exhibit energy saving behavior, to participate. In terms of actually decreasing energy consumption the campaign does very little. Dorms decrease their energy consumption by only a small percentage (Figure 1). The lack of participation is definitely influenced by the lack of proper incentive. Though a burrito party is great many students expressed their disinterest in that prize. It is obviously difficult to find an incentive that pleases everyone so maybe it would be beneficial to leave it among the winning dorm to decide. Perhaps they could have the money that they saved the college on energy expenses and vote on what they want to do with it. Or, if the

amount of money wouldn't be very much they could just win a fixed amount. The freedom to decide their own prize could provide more incentive and better address the desires of the winners. (See Focus Group Results pg. 14 for more suggestions)

Another change in the campaign that could increase participation would be to create a quantitative goal for energy reduction during the campaign. As of right now Skidmore Unplugged's only goal is to raise awareness, which it does quite well, but the amount of energy they want people to save is very ambiguous. The literature states that having a goal will make people more likely to follow through with their commitment and give them something to work toward. (Lopes et al, 2012) It will also make the act of accomplishing that goal much more satisfying.

In order to decrease energy consumption it is also important to create educational and advertising campaigns focused on specific behaviors. From our survey we were able to pinpoint the behaviors that use the most energy. The campaign should focus on creating videos and pamphlets or holding educational talks targeted at those specific behaviors in order to significantly reduce energy consumption. Participants also stressed the importance of the Sustainability Representative in getting the dorm to participate so be sure they are very active during the campaign.

They should also create several niche advertising strategies targeting different audiences. "Do it in the dark" is memorable because of its sexual connotation, but if you think about it literally, people turning off the lights when they have sex would not amount to much. It definitely functions as a decent wide breadth slogan since most students are having sex or at least understand the innuendo. Yet for it to really be effective one needs to tap into the shock factor of the subject with raunchy humor, which would probably be considered inappropriate for an

institutional department like Sustainable Skidmore. Therefore, since our study showed that specificity is key in creating an effective message, we suggest that the campaign pursue other slogans and advertising tools that target specific audiences. Advertising, like "Video Games," that targets a specific audience and behavior is really effective, but be sure that several different messages are made so that all of the sectors of the Skidmore Community are reached. Our focus group results showed that a blend of humor, consequences, and social stigma presented through specific and relatable narrative comprised of shocking images creates the ideal message. Skidmore Unplugged would have the most success using those elements to create several messages that target different social groups on campus.

It is recommended to continue using video as a medium to communicate because it seemed to engage the college audience, however it is important to find a better way to distribute the videos. The announcement screens were effective but they lack audio, which diminishes the clarity of the video's message. Showing the videos in the Dining Hall seemed to be effective but given that we only got permission to do it at the very end of the competition it didn't make a huge impact on outreach. We recommend showing them on the big screen during the food rushes, if not every day at least 4 times a week when the competition is going on. We also recommend having a video contest for the campaign since it would be a fun way to get people involved and raise awareness.

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