

Rock Show Teen Smoking Study
Richmond & NOVA Virginia

RESEARCH REPORT

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Introduction

Rescue Social Change Group's nationwide research has shown that teens who identify with alternative rock music and its associated culture are significantly more likely to use tobacco. In fact, multiple studies have shown that amongst all investigated teen subcultures, the "alternative culture" is most at-risk for tobacco use. Qualitative research has documented that teens in this culture associate smoking with the rebellious, grungy, and anti-establishment lifestyle that the culture embodies. Despite anti-tobacco campaigns such as "truth" which have attempted to associate similar characteristics with the anti-tobacco movement, smoking remains a centerpiece of self-expression for alternative teens.

In Virginia, the SYKE brand was repositioned to target alternative rock teens after a qualitative study identified this culture to be at high-risk for tobacco use. The VA Rock Show Teen Smoking Study was designed to collect baseline data on alternative rock teens. Since the subculture is estimated to encompass only 12% - 25% of VA teens, varying from community to community, a general youth population study was determined to be too costly, requiring a large overall sample in order to achieve a suitable alternative culture sample. Instead, the study was designed to collect survey data at teen rock shows. In alternative culture, the rock show serves as the nucleus of cultural exchange and is a natural gathering place for a high concentration of teens who identify with this culture. The researchers determined that by surveying teens at existing rock shows in Virginia, a richer sample of the subculture would be investigated. While this approach would limit our ability to generalize the findings to all alternative teens in Virginia, it would provide rich data on teens that are most active in the culture and likely very influential to those alternative teens that this approach would miss.

This study was reviewed and approved by Independent Review Consulting, Inc. on September 11, 2009.

Methods

The Virginia Rock Show Teen Smoking Study focused on rock shows that were identified in Northern Virginia (NOVA) and the Richmond area. Shows were included in the study if they were believed to have an audience of at least 50% teens, as judged by an internal alternative culture advisory group. Two or three surveyors attended each selected show. Rock shows were attended between October 10, 2009 and March 19, 2010 as follows:

Table 1: Dates of Surveying

NOVA Shows		Richmond Shows	
Oct 10, 2009	Oct 30, 2009	Oct 16, 2009	Dec 1, 2009
Nov 17, 2009	Nov 23, 2009	Nov 19, 2009	Jan 17, 2010
Nov 28, 2009	Dec 12, 2009	Nov 10, 2009	
Dec 26, 2009	Mar 19, 2010		

During the survey period, more shows were available in NOVA resulting in a higher frequency of visits. Surveyors offered teens \$5 cash for completing the survey. A total of 464 surveys were collected across both cities. However, a higher than expected proportion of people 19 years and older were surveyed despite efforts to only survey people 18 years and younger. 323 surveys were collected from teens 18 years old and younger. Only those surveys were analyzed.

Findings

We found that 37.62% of teens who go to rock shows in Richmond and NOVA currently smoke. Males and older teens were significantly more likely to smoke than females and younger teens. In addition, teens in Richmond were significantly more likely to smoke than teens in NOVA, and alternative teens were most likely to be Caucasian. Teens who had graduated high school were more likely to smoke than current high school students, but this was likely because they are older and not because of their school status. All demographic and smoking rates for the sample are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Smoking Across All Demographic Variables

Variable	Smokers N	Within Group Smoker %	Total N	% of Total Sample
OVERALL				
Overall Sample	120	37.62%	323	100%
AGE				
12	0	0%	5	1.55%
13	0	0%	4	1.24%
14	3	27.27%	11	3.41%
15	6	17.14%	38	11.76%
16	21	29.58%	73	22.60%
17	36	35.29%	102	31.58%
18	53	58.89%	90	27.86%
GENDER				
Male	60	56.60%	112	35%
Female	58	28.16%	208	65%
RACE				
Black	8	47.06%	17	5.41%
Asian	2	8.33%	25	7.96%
White	92	40.89%	229	72.93%
Pacific Islander	0	0%	3	0.96%
Native American	1	25%	5	1.59%
Other	4	40%	10	3.18%
Hispanic	10	41.67%	25	7.96%
LOCATION				
Richmond	61	65.59%	101	30.79%
NOVA	59	26.11%	227	69.21%
HIGH SCHOOL STATUS				
Currently in High School	73	30.67%	238	75.31%
High School Graduates	38	56.72%	67	21.20%
High School Dropouts	9	81.82%	11	3.48%

Other Tobacco Products

In addition to cigarette smoking, Black & Mild smoking and chew tobacco use was also measured, as reported in the Table 3.

Table 3

	N	%
Black & Mild	69	21.63%
Chew Tobacco	22	6.90%

Non-Daily Smoking

Only about 1/3 of current smokers (11.6% of total sample) were daily smokers. More teens (12.6% of total sample) smoked less than 6 of the past 30 days, as reported in the Table 4.

Table 4

Smoking Days	Perceived Peer Smoking
0 Days	68.03%
1 – 5 Days	12.22%
6 – 10 Days	2.51%
11 – 20 Days	2.18%
21 – 29 Days	3.45%
30 Days	11.60%

Tobacco Attitudes

Participants were asked how much they agree with statements about the tobacco industry and smoking. Less than half of participants agree “a lot” or “a great deal” with all but one of the statements, suggesting a general pro-tobacco attitude in the culture.

Table 5

How much do you AGREE with the following statements?					
Statement	Not At All	A Little	A Moderate Amount	A Lot	A Great Deal
I would like to see cigarette companies go out of business	23.53%	21.05%	15.48%	9.91%	30.03%
I want to be involved with efforts to get rid of cigarette & Black & Mild smoking	29.10%	18.89%	16.72%	8.98%	26.32%
Taking a stand against smoking is important to me	30.65%	16.10%	16.72%	13%	23.53%
It is important to me to live a tobacco-free lifestyle	21.36%	13%	14.55%	15.79%	35.29%

Subcultures

In addition to general demographics, subculture affiliation and social concern were measured. While we can presume that most teens at rock shows identify with alternative culture, we used Rescue SCG’s proprietary Subcultural Influence Measure to confirm influence from alternative culture. Using a series of pictures of teens, respondents’ cultural influences can be measured without asking them to label themselves.

Respondents were provided scores for each subculture based on their responses. Any respondent with a positive score in a certain subculture was considered to be influenced by that subculture, allowing respondents to be categorized into more than one subculture. As shown in Table 6 on the following page, the alternative subculture was the largest, representing 56% of participants. However, the hip hop subculture was surprisingly large (30.18%) and was twice as likely to smoke as other groups.

Table 6: Smoking Across All Subcultures By City

Subculture	Cigarette Smokers N	Cigarette Smokers %	B&M Smokers N	B&M Smokers %	Chew Tobacco N	Chew Tobacco %	Total N	% of Total Sample
Hip Hop	72	77.42%	44	47.31%	12	12.90%	99	30.18%
Richmond	41	91.11%	24	53.33%	7	15.56%	45	
NOVA	31	64.58%	20	41.67%	5	10.42%	48	
Alternative	68	37.57%	34	18.78%	13	7.18%	185	56.40%
Richmond	37	66.07%	17	30.36%	8	14.29%	56	
NOVA	31	24.80%	17	13.60%	5	4%	125	
Preppy	33	33.67%	21	21.42%	4	4.08%	101	30.79%
Richmond	14	63.64%	8	36.36%	3	13.64%	22	
NOVA	19	25%	13	17.11%	1	1.32%	76	
Mainstream	21	30.88%	14	20.59%	5	7.35%	70	21.34%
Richmond	9	56.25%	5	31.25%	3	18.75%	16	
NOVA	12	23.08%	9	17.31%	2	3.85%	52	
Southern	7	28%	5	20%	2	8%	27	8.23%
Richmond	5	55.56%	3	33.33%	2	22.22%	9	
NOVA	2	12.50%	2	12.50%	0	0%	16	

Social Concern Score

In addition, we used Rescue SCG's Social Concern Index to measure how concerned respondents were about their social status. This index provides a score between 0 and 16, with 16 representing the highest level of social concern. Teens with higher levels of social concern are presumed to assign more value to certain behaviors that can define one's social identity, such as smoking, and believed to more quickly react to changes in the culture's accepted norms. This study revealed the social concern levels and tobacco use rates in Table 7.

Perceived Smoking

Study participants perceived an average tobacco use rate amongst their peers of 43.93%. Teens who identify with different subcultures perceive different tobacco use rates as shown in the table below. However, while hip hop teens perceive the highest peer smoking rate at 51.63%, this rate is significantly lower than the group's tobacco use rate of 77.42%. All other subcultures perceive more smoking than actually exists within their group.

Table 8

Subculture	Perceived Peer Smoking
Hip Hop	51.63%
Alternative	45.50%
Preppy	41.21%
Mainstream	44.57%
Southern	43.64%
Overall	43.93%

Table 7: Smoking by Social Concern Score

Social Concern Score	Smokers N	Within Group Smoker %	Total N	% of Total Sample
Scores 2-3	2	8.70%	24	7.36%
Scores 4-5	34	31.48%	111	34.05%
Scores 6-7	45	38.14%	120	36.81%
Scores 8-9	23	50%	47	14.42%
Scores 10-11	15	68.18%	22	6.75%
Scores 12-13	1	100%	3	0.62%

Syke Evaluation

At the time of this study, a pilot version of the SYKE campaign had already launched in NOVA with six anti-tobacco rock show events. This pilot was necessary in order to determine if the brand could be successfully used in the alternative subculture. Unfortunately, this study was not able to serve as a true baseline of the SYKE intervention for of this reason. However, the existence of the pilot allowed us to include questions to evaluate the progress of the campaign in NOVA in comparison to Richmond.

Brand Recognition

First, a general awareness question was asked with two real brands (one well-know, Vans, and one less well-known, Empyre), a made-up brand (Uncle Trunk), and SYKE. The made-up brand was used to approximate the error in responses, which, based on this test, was approximately 10%. 20% more NOVA teens had heard of SYKE than Richmond teens.

Table 9

Brand Name	Richmond	NOVA	Total N	Total
Vans	86.17%	97.17%	24	93.79%
SYKE	36.08%	56.13%	111	49.84%
Uncle Trunk	13.54%	7.55%	120	9.42%
Empyre	24.74%	21.13%	47	22.26%

Website & Show Attendance

Next, teens were asked about the SYKE Website and shows. Twice as many teens in Richmond reported they did not know what SYKE was than teens in NOVA. Approximately 38% of NOVA teens had visited the website at least once, compared to only 22% of Richmond teens. In addition, 37% of NOVA teens had been to at least one SYKE show, while only 15% of Richmond teens reported going to a SYKE show.

Table 10

SYKE Website	Richmond	NOVA	Total
Don't Know	13.68%	7.37%	9.29%
No	64.21%	54.84%	57.69%
Once	6.32%	14.75%	12.18%
More Than Once	15.79%	23.04%	20.83%

Table 11

SYKE Events	Richmond	NOVA	Total
Don't Know	21.51%	9.72%	13.27%
No	63.44%	52.78%	55.99%
Once	7.53%	11.57%	10.36%
Twice	5.38%	6.02%	5.83%
Three	2.15%	6.48%	5.18%
Four or More	0%	13.43%	9.39%

Feelings Towards Syke

Twice as many NOVA teens stated they liked or really liked SYKE when compared to Richmond teens. In addition, 43% of NOVA teens said they would probably or definitely go to a SYKE show, compared to only 28% of Richmond teens.

Table 12

Opinion of SYKE	Richmond	NOVA	Total
Don't Know What SYKE Is	43.88%	36.61%	38.82%
Really Don't Like It	2.04%	2.68%	2.48%
Don't Like It	7.14%	0.89%	2.80%
No Preference	28.57%	21.43%	23.60%
Like It	8.16%	18.75%	15.53%
Really Like It	10.20%	19.64%	16.77%

Table 13

Would Go To SYKE Event	Richmond	NOVA	Total
Don't Know What SYKE Is	40.82%	29.78%	33.13%
Definitely Not Go	1.02%	1.78%	1.55%
Probably Not Go	8.16%	4%	5.26%
No Preference	21.43%	20.89%	21.05%
Probably Go	21.43%	31.56%	28.48%
Definitely Go	7.14%	12%	10.53%

Syke's Purpose

Teens in NOVA were also significantly more aware of SYKE's purpose. 58% said that "supporting a smokefree scene" describes SYKE a lot or a great deal, compared to only 24% of Richmond teens. In addition, 53% said that "living tobacco-free" describes SYKE a lot or a great deal, compared to only 31% of Richmond teens.

Table 14

SYKE Promotes a Smokefree Scene	Richmond	NOVA	Total
Not At All	32.31%	8.96%	14.66%
A Little	18.46%	8.96%	11.28%
A Moderate Amount	24.62%	23.88%	24.06%
A Lot	10.77%	18.41%	16.54%
A Great Deal	13.85%	39.80%	33.46%

Table 15

SYKE Promotes Tobacco-free Life-styles	Richmond	NOVA	Total
Not At All	30.30%	11.94%	16.48%
A Little	16.67%	9.45%	11.24%
A Moderate Amount	21.21%	25.37%	24.34%
A Lot	7.58%	13.43%	11.99%
A Great Deal	24.24%	39.80%	35.96%

Discussion

In 2009, the Virginia statewide smoking rate for high school students was 19.7%. This study documented a smoking use rate amongst teens at rock shows of nearly twice the statewide prevalence. The data provide evidence that the alternative teen subculture is a higher-risk population in Virginia.

While the alternative rock culture was at higher-risk in both locations, the prevalence rate in Richmond was more than double the rate in NOVA. For various reasons, surveyors were not able to collect as many surveys in Richmond as they did in NOVA. This smaller sample size requires that we interpret results from Richmond with caution. In spite of this limitation, the drastic difference between the two locations suggests differences between the alternative rock culture in each city. Most notably, Richmond had a higher proportion of teens who identify with hip hop culture at rock shows. Based on the demographic data, these are Caucasian youth who go to these shows and are mixing the two cultures. Our qualitative research into this phenomenon points to bands with lead singers who rap and dress in hip hop style while technically being classified as alternative rock. Overarching cultures and demographics in both regions may also explain this difference. Teens in NOVA are more ethnically diverse and have higher family incomes than those in Richmond. Both of these demographic variables are associated with lower tobacco use rates. Understanding this phenomena will take more qualitative research and more quantitative survey data, both of which will hopefully be available this year. Regardless, these data suggest that SYKE should focus its resources in Richmond rather than NOVA in order to cause the most possible change.

The SYKE campaign in NOVA had been relatively small before and during this study, with shows ranging from just 100 to 300 youth. Despite this, these data show that the effort was reaching the target audience in a positive way. Teens in NOVA were not only significantly more likely to know what SYKE was and to have attended its shows, they were also more likely to like the campaign and understand its tobacco-free message. In fact only 3% of NOVA teens said they did not like SYKE compared to 30% who say they like it. With larger and more frequent rock shows, as well as other efforts to reach youth, it is reasonable to predict that SYKE could reach a larger portion of the alternative rock scene in a positive way.

Based on these findings, Rescue SCG recommends the following:

1. Shift SYKE Campaign resources from NOVA to Richmond. While NOVA still has an unacceptably high tobacco use rate, changing the alternative rock culture in Richmond would reach more youth who currently

smoke and possibly change other alternative rock cultures throughout Virginia, including NOVA, as it achieves success in Richmond.

2. Conduct qualitative research in Richmond to understand the mixture of hip hop and alternative rock cultures measured in this study. Teens who identify with both of these cultures could be some of the most at-risk teens in Virginia. It is important to understand this phenomenon and, if possible, host shows through SYKE that appeal to this culture.

3. Collect a larger survey sample in both regions. This study provided valuable information on alternative rock culture in both areas and demonstrated quantitatively that this is a high-risk culture. A larger data set would help interpret these data with greater confidence and create a campaign that can truly change the culture. In addition, if the prevalence rate in Richmond can be confirmed through a second wave, the disproportionate level of smoking could attract additional funding from national organizations that are concerned about disparate populations.

Contact

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