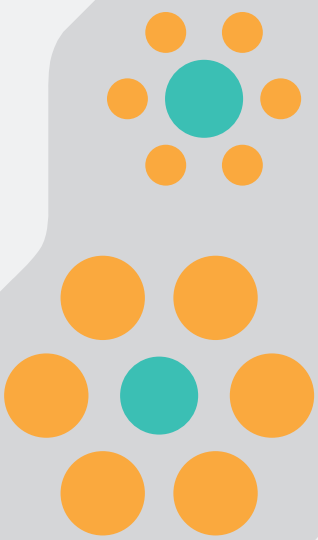


Can you see dots appearing in the intersections of this grid?



The center circles below are exactly the same size!



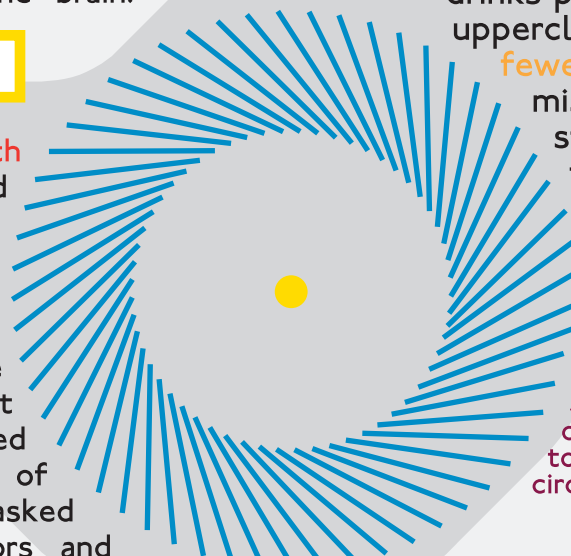
HOO knew?
 2 out of 3 (65%) first years have 0-5 drinks per week.*

WHERE DO MISPERCEPTIONS COME FROM?

The brain gets flooded with a ton of information every second. Two ways to help process info is to select important information and create short-cuts. Since the caveman days, human brains are wired to notice the difference in the pattern (it's a survival thing). Our brains do the same thing today. When we're at a party, we ignore the 50 people drinking responsibly and notice the one different person dancing on the table and yelling. Later we tell stories about the abnormal behavior instead of the actual norm. By focusing on the unusual behavior, it starts to look usual. In the filtering process, our brain also creates short-cuts which can mislead us into believing misperceptions. Don't believe it? Check out these illusions to see how easy it is to trick the brain!

THE STUDY

The University's Office of Health Promotion sent a web-based alcohol survey to a random sample of undergraduate U.Va. students during the spring of 2008. 2,098 students completed the survey which is a 39% response rate. Of these, 34% were first years. The sample reflected the gender and ethnic makeup of the University. The survey asked about different health behaviors and attitudes including questions to measure alcohol-related knowledge, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. To promote honesty and completeness in self-reporting, the survey was anonymous and participation was voluntary.

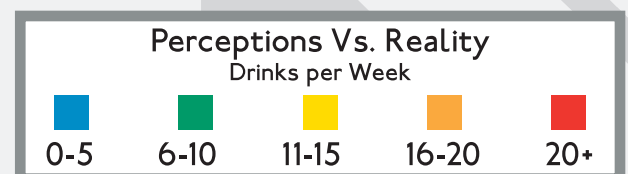
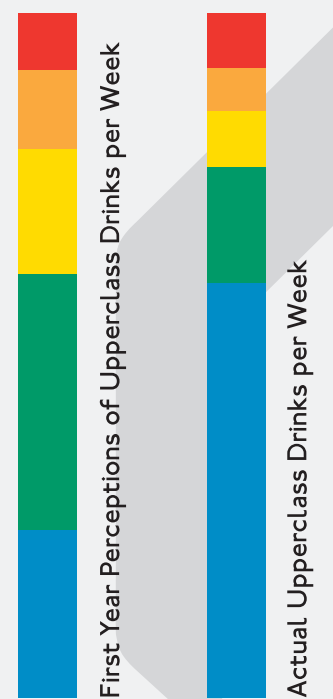
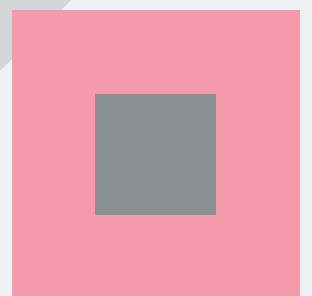
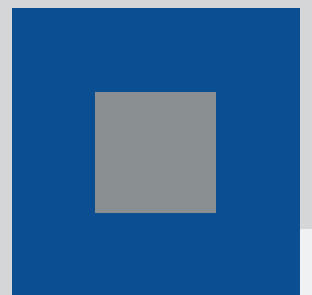


Stare at the yellow dot, and move your head toward and away from the circle. Do you see it move?

SOCIAL NORMS

As a population, we tend to overestimate unhealthy behaviors and underestimate positive, protective behaviors. The 2008 Health Promotion Survey uncovered the gap between U.Va. students' perceptions and their actual behaviors. Most U.Va. students engage in healthy, protective behaviors. In fact, 97% of U.Va. students who drank at all during the year used at least one protective behavior (eating before drinking, staying in a group, calling 911, etc.) usually or always when drinking. Believe it or not, the majority of U.Va. students (64%) drink 0-5 drinks per week. There's a misperception that U.Va. students drink more than they actually do (check out the Perception vs Reality graphs). First years believe that most upperclassmen drink 9 or more drinks per week, when really most upperclassmen (61%) drink 5 or fewer per week. By correcting misperceptions like these, students have the space to act on their own values. So next time you're out, mind the gap!

The grey boxes below are exactly the same shade! Their environments distort the way you perceive them.



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MIND THE GAP

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA OFFICE OF HEALTH PROMOTION, STUDENT HEALTH