

Selected Studies for Social Norms Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

- Title: **Using focus group interviews to identify salient issues concerning college students' alcohol abuse**
- Authors: [Emery, Eileen M.](#); [Ritter-Randolph, Gwendolyn P.](#); [Strozier, Anne L.](#)
- Source: [Journal of American College Health](#), 1993, 41, 195-198
- Abstract: Despite extensive efforts to decrease alcohol abuse among college students, prevention approaches have had limited success. This study attempted to clarify reasons for this limited success and to identify directions for future interventions by directly interviewing college students on this topic. Five issues were discussed in the focus group interviews: (1) reasons for drinking alcohol, (2) reasons for not drinking alcohol, (3) circumstances surrounding overconsumption of alcohol, (4) topics and methods for prevention, and (5) gender differences in drinking patterns. The focus group interviews were found to be a valid tool for elucidating sensitive aspects of these issues and the relative importance of these issues to each other. The students revealed how susceptible they are to societal pressures to drink alcohol and how the limitations of their intrapersonal skills affect their alcohol consumption, most notably regarding sexuality issues. The authors contend that improving intrapersonal skills should be a major focus of programs to prevent alcohol abuse.
- Title: **Challenging the collegiate rite of passage: a campus-wide social marketing media campaign to reduce binge drinking**
- Authors: [Glider, Peggy](#); [Midyett, Stephen J.](#); [Mills-Novoa, Beverly](#); [Johannessen, Koreen](#); and [Collins, Carolyn](#)
- Source: *Journal of Drug Education*, 2001, 31, 207-220
- Abstract: A social marketing media campaign, based on a normative social influence model and focused on normative messages regarding binge drinking, on a large, southwestern university campus has yielded positive preliminary results of an overall 29.2 percent decrease in binge drinking rates over a three-year period. The *Core Alcohol and Drug Survey* and the *Health Enhancement Survey* provided information on student knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors regarding alcohol and binge drinking. This study represents the first in-depth research on the impact of a media approach, based on a normative social influence model, to reduce binge drinking on a large university campus and has yielded promising initial results.

Title: **Preventing alcohol-related problems at the University of Arizona's homecoming: an environmental management case study.**

Authors: [Johannessen,K.](#); [Glider,P.](#); [Collins,C.](#); [Hueston,H.](#); [DeJong,W.](#)

Source: [Am.J Drug Alcohol Abuse](#), 2001, 27, 3, 587-597, United States

Abstract: In 1995, the University of Arizona installed and publicized new policies to provide better alcohol control during its annual homecoming event. Systematic observation at pregame tents revealed that, compared to 1994, these policies led to a lower percentage of tents selling alcohol, elimination of beer kegs, greater availability of food and nonalcoholic beverages, the presence of hired bartenders to serve alcohol, and systems for identification checks. These changes were still in evidence through 1998. In 1995, campus police also saw a downward shift in the number of neighborhood calls for complaints related to homecoming activities, which was maintained through 1998. Statistics on law enforcement actions were inconsistent. There was a sharp drop in 1995, but 1996 and 1998 saw enforcement levels similar to what was seen prior to the new policies. This case study underscores the importance of environmental management strategies for campus-based alcohol and other drug prevention.

Title: **Misperceptions of College Student Marijuana Use: Implications for Prevention**

Authors: [Kilmer,Jason R.](#); [Walker,Denise D.](#); [Lee,Christine M.](#); [Palmer,Rebekka S.](#); [Mallett,Kimberly A.](#); [Fabiano,Patricia](#); [Larimer,Mary E.](#)

Source: [J.Stud.Alcohol](#), 2006, 67, 2, 277-281, Alcohol Research Documentation, US

Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between marijuana use, perceived norms of use by friends and students in general, and negative experiences or problems from alcohol and drug use. It was hypothesized that students would overestimate the marijuana use of students in general and that perceptions about the prevalence of marijuana use would be related to drug-related consequences. Method: In this study, 5,990 participants provided information on the perceptions and consequences of drug use via an online survey or via a paper-based survey. Results: Although two thirds of participants reported no marijuana use, 98% of respondents incorrectly predicted that students in general use marijuana at least once per year. Perceptions of use by friends and students in general accounted for variance in drug use and related problems or experiences. Conclusions: Given the relationship between norm misperception and behavior with marijuana use, future research could explore the impact of targeting misperceived norms through prevention and intervention efforts.

Title: **Comparing electronic-keypad responses to paper-and-pencil questionnaires in group assessments of alcohol consumption and related attitudes**

Authors: [LaBrie,Joseph](#); [Earleywine,Mitch](#); [Lamb,Toby](#); [Shelesky,Kristin](#)

Source: [Addictive Behaviors](#), 2006, 31, 12, 2334-2338

Abstract: Electronic versions of questionnaires have the potential to improve research and interventions in the addictions. Administering questionnaires electronically to groups, however, has proven difficult without a multitude of computers, but gathering data electronically from a group could make for easy assessment and quick feedback. Using a sample of 107 college students, we examined the validity of wireless keypad survey responses by comparing them to traditional paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The two formats led to almost identical responses that did not differ significantly from each other (all effect sizes less than $g = .15$) and high correlations between formats. The wireless, handheld keypad procedure appears to generate data that are as valid as questionnaire responses and permit rapid feedback to groups, as well as easy, human error-free data entry for analysis.

Title: **Relations between normative beliefs and initiation intentions toward cigarette, alcohol and marijuana.**

Authors: [Olds,R.S.](#); [Thombs,D.L.](#); [Tomasek,J.R.](#)

Source: [Journal of Adolescent Health](#), 2005, 37, 1, 75

Abstract: **PURPOSE:** To examine the relations between normative beliefs and intentions to initiate cigarette, alcohol, and marijuana use among adolescents reporting no prior use. **METHODS:** An anonymous questionnaire was administered to 6,594 seventh- to twelfth-grade students in northeast Ohio. Separate analyses were conducted on sub-samples of respondents reporting no prior use of each substance. Within each of these 3 sub-samples, respondents were classified as holding high-risk intentions if they reported that they intended to begin using that particular substance within the next 6 months or were "not sure" of their intentions. Those reporting that they did not intend to start using a substance were classified as holding low-risk intentions. Multivariate logistic regression analyses examined the relations between normative beliefs and intention status (low- vs. high-risk), while accounting for socio-demographic characteristics. **RESULTS:** Across all 3 substances, normative beliefs were stronger predictors of intention status than socio-demographic variables. Higher levels of perceived acceptability and perceived prevalence were associated with holding high-risk intentions. Normative belief measures assessing close friend and sibling reference groups were much more important in explaining intention status than those assessing other reference groups (e.g., same age peers). **CONCLUSIONS:** Among adolescents with no prior use, normative beliefs concerning close friends and siblings may play an important role in the catalysis and support of intentions to initiate substance use. These findings challenge the utility of primary prevention strategies that provide normative

Title: **An Evaluation of the Small Group Norms Challenging Model: Changing Substance Use Misperceptions in Five Urban High Schools**

Authors: [Ott,Carol H.](#); [Doyle,Lynn H.](#)

Source: [The High School Journal](#), 2005, 88, 3, 45-55, Univ of North Carolina Press, US

Abstract: According to social norms theory, when high school students overestimate the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) by their peers, they tend to use more themselves. The purpose of this study was to determine whether these over estimations (misperceptions) could be corrected through a similar age peer-to-peer interactive social norms approach based on the Small Groups Social Norms-Challenging Model. The sample included 414 adolescents in health classes in five urban high schools. Baseline data were retrieved from the school district's Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS). Perception change was measured with items adapted from the YRBS. Results indicate a significant decrease in misperceptions from pretest to posttest. Student responses to open-ended questions indicate increased awareness of ATOD issues, positive plans for behavioral change, and positive program evaluation. Implications for use of the social norms approach is presented for high school teachers and administrators.

URL: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2005-01791-005&site=ehost-live>

Title: **A successful social norms campaign to reduce alcohol misuse among college student-athletes.**

Authors: [Perkins,H. W.](#); [Craig,D.W.](#)

Source: [J.Stud.Alcohol](#), 2006, 67, 6, 880-889

Abstract: OBJECTIVE: This study examines the impact of a social norms intervention to reduce alcohol misuse among student-athletes. The intervention was designed to reduce harmful misperceptions of peer norms and, in turn, reduce personal risk. METHOD: A comprehensive set of interventions communicating accurate local norms regarding alcohol use targeted student-athletes at an undergraduate college. An anonymous survey of all student-athletes was conducted annually for 3 years (2001: n = 414, 86% response; 2002: n = 373, 85% response; and 2003: n = 353, 79% response). A pre/post comparison of student-athletes was conducted separately for new and ongoing athletes at each time point to isolate any general time period effects from intervention effects. A cross-sectional analysis of student-athletes with varying degrees of program exposure was also performed. RESULTS: The intervention substantially reduced misperceptions of frequent alcohol consumption and high-quantity social drinking as the norm among student-athlete peers. During this same time period, frequent personal consumption, high-quantity consumption, high estimated peak blood alcohol concentrations during social drinking, and negative consequences all declined by 30% or more among ongoing student-athletes after program exposure. In contrast, no significant differences across time were seen for new student-athletes each year with low program exposure. Among student-athletes with the highest level of program exposure, indications of personal misuse were at

least 50% less likely on each measure when compared with student-athletes with the lowest level of program exposure. CONCLUSIONS: This social norms intervention was highly effective in reducing alcohol misuse in this high-risk collegiate subpopulation by intensively delivering data-based messages about actual peer norms through multiple communication venues.

Title: **The use of focus group methodology- with selected examples from sexual health research**

Authors: [Robinson, Nicola](#)

Source: [Journal of Advanced Nursing](#), 2001, 29, 4, 905-913

Abstract: This paper describes in detail the use of the focus group approach in research. The following issues are discussed: when, why and how focus group methods are used, their advantages and disadvantages and how data are analyzed. Selected examples from four research studies on sexual health using this methodology are reported together with some of the problems experienced with their use. The importance of using focus groups in qualitative research is addressed and an argument is suggested for their more general use.

Title: **Assessing alcohol consumption: developments from qualitative research methods**

Authors: [Strunin, Lee](#)

Source: [Social Science & Medicine](#), 2001, 53, 2, 215-226

Abstract: This paper examines some shortcomings of self-report questionnaires used to assess alcohol use quantity and frequency and demonstrates the advantages of qualitative interviews to more accurately capture drinking patterns among adolescents. The paper considers alcohol use among two ethnic groups of Black adolescents and discusses variations in rates of alcohol consumption. Qualitative interview data collected from African-American and Haitian adolescents suggest higher rates of alcohol consumption than indicated in previous studies of Black adolescents. Furthermore, qualitative interview data demonstrate greater differences across groups in drinking patterns, including amount and type of alcohol consumed in different cultural contexts than have quantitative-based studies. Strategies are suggested for improving the methodology used to assess drinking patterns among adolescents.

Title: **Outcomes of a Technology-Based Social Norms Intervention to Deter Alcohol Use in Freshman Residence Halls**

Authors: [Thombs, Dennis L.](#); [Olds, R. Scott](#); [Osborn, Cynthia J.](#)

Source: [Journal of American College Health](#), 2007, 55, 6, 325-332

Abstract: The authors tested a prototype intervention designed to deter alcohol use in residence halls. Participants: Approximately 384 freshmen participated in the study over a 2-year period. Methods: The authors devised a feedback method

that assessed residents' blood alcohol concentration (BAC) at night and allowed the readings to be retrieved the next day via the Web. Residents in an intervention hall received their BAC readings as well as normative feedback. In a comparison hall, residents could retrieve only the BAC readings. Results: The authors found statistically significant hall differences, but they were small in size and not meaningful. Conclusions: Qualitative findings suggest the intervention had an overall positive impact, but the actions of a subgroup of rebellious drinkers might have obscured the effect. Social norms interventions could provoke some episodes of excessive drinking in students who find these messages objectionable. More research is needed to evaluate delayed BAC feedback.

The following sites may also be of use to you:

1) **The National Social Norms Institute- Research with Focus Groups**

This page describes focus group methodology and provides several references and guidebooks that describe how to properly plan for, conduct, and analyze the results of focus groups.

Retrieved from: <http://socialnorms.org/Research/FocusGroups.php>

2) **The National Social Norms Institute- Data and Instruments**

This page showcases a number of resources that are helpful in matters of data collection and analysis, including survey instruments and databases.

Retrieved from: <http://socialnorms.org/Resources/data.php>

3) **A Guide to Marketing Social Norms for Health Promotion in Schools and Communities**

Written by Michael P. Haines, H. Wesley Perkins, Richard M. Rice, and Gregory Barker, this comprehensive National Social Norms Resource Center publication discusses different kinds of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods.

Retrieved from: <http://www.socialnormsresources.org/pdf/Guidebook.pdf>

4) **A Social Norms Approach to Preventing Binge Drinking at Colleges and Universities**

Written by Michael P. Haines, this publication of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention describes an effort to change perceptions of social norms and the effect of this change on binge drinking and alcohol-related problems at Northern Illinois University. The publication describes the methods used to implement the NIU program and includes examples of survey, mass media, and focus group results.

Retrieved from: <http://www.socialnorms.org/pdf/socnormapproach.pdf>

5) **The Mall Intercept: A Social Norms Marketing Research Tool**

Written by Richard Rice and Linda Hancock, this publication from the National Social Norms Resource Center describes the qualitative and quantitative research collection methodology of the mall intercept and application at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Retrieved from: <http://socialnorm.org/pdf/MallIntercept.pdf>

6) **A Practical Guide to Alcohol Abuse Prevention: A Campus Case Study
Implementing Social Norms and Environmental Management Approaches**

Written by Koreen Johannessen, Carolyn Collins, Beverly Mills-Novoa, and Peggy Glider, this publication examines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and outcomes used in four year social norms project at the University of Arizona.

Retrieved from: <http://www.socialnorms.org/pdf/arizonaguidetoalcoholprevention.pdf>

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