

Selected Studies for Social Norms and Substance Abuse

Title: **Students' estimates of the prevalence of drug use: Evidence for a false consensus effect**

Authors: [Wolfson, Sandy](#)

Source: [Psychology of Addictive Behaviors](#), 2000, 14, 3, 295-298, Educational Publishing Foundation

Abstract: False consensus, or the tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share one's own attitudes and behaviors, was investigated in a study of 348 university students classified as non-drug users, cannabis-only users, or amphetamine and cannabis users. Participants estimated the prevalence of cannabis and amphetamine use among students. Cannabis and amphetamine users made significantly higher estimates of cannabis use among students than did nonusers, whereas amphetamine users gave significantly higher estimates of amphetamine use than nonusers and cannabis-only users. Correlations between estimates of use among friends and other students were significantly positive for both drugs. The results suggest that students are motivated to overestimate the commonality of their own position on drug use and that their estimates may also be influenced by selective exposure.

URL: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=adb-14-3-295&site=ehost-live>

Title: **Beliefs and social norms about ephedra onset and perceived addiction among college male and female athletes**

Authors: [Peters, R.J., Jr.](#); [Adams, L.F.](#); [Barnes, J.B.](#); [Hines, L.A.](#); [Jones, D.E.](#); [Krebs, K.M.](#); [Kelder, S.H.](#)

Source: [Subst. Use Misuse](#), 2005, 40, 1, 125-135

Abstract: In Spring 2003, a qualitative approach was used to investigate relevant beliefs and norms associated with ephedra initiation and perceived addiction to the drug among 43 primarily minority athletes, attending a historically Black university in the southwestern region of the United States, who self-identified as past users. In general, participants stated that their second ephedra use event occurred on the same day as or the day after initiation. The majority of participants perceived that addiction was established by routine and eccentric behavior. Male athletes stated they used ephedra for improved athletic performance while females stated they used the drug for weight loss. Male participants stated it is difficult to quit ephedra use because of the resulting decrease in athletic performance, sickness, and weight gain. Female athletes

were more concerned with their appearance. These findings are important in determining the early extent to which addiction is self-identified.

- 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: **"But Others Do It!": Do Misperceptions of Schoolmate Alcohol and Marijuana Use Predict Subsequent Drug Use Among Young Adolescents?**
- Authors: [Juvonen,Jaana](#); [Martino,Steven C.](#); [Ellickson,Phyllis L.](#); [Longshore,Douglas](#)
- Source: [J.Appl.Soc.Psychol.](#), 2007, 37, 4, 740-758
- Abstract: We examined the effects of perceived prevalence of drug use among same-age peers on adolescents' subsequent drug use. In 7th grade, participants estimated prevalence of alcohol and marijuana use among 7th-grade students in their school, reported own use of these drugs, receipt of offers to use these drugs, and frequency of contact with peers who use these drugs. In 8th grade, participants reported their frequency of alcohol and marijuana use. Although perceived prevalence of drug use predicted subsequent alcohol and marijuana use when controlling for actual prevalence, these effects disappeared once participants' prior levels of drug use and proximal peer contacts were considered. Implications of findings for intervention programs aiming solely to increase accuracy of perceived prevalence estimates are discussed.
- URL: <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2007.00183.x>

- Title: **Preventing alcohol, marijuana, and cigarette use among adolescents: peer**

pressure resistance training versus establishing conservative norms.

Authors: [Hansen,W.B.](#); [Graham,J.W.](#)

Source: [Prev.Med.](#), 1991, 20, 3, 414-430, UNITED STATES

Abstract: BACKGROUND. Two strategies for preventing the onset of alcohol abuse, and marijuana and cigarette use were tested in junior high schools in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, California. The first strategy taught skills to refuse substance use offers. The second strategy corrected erroneous normative perceptions about prevalence and acceptability of use among peers and established conservative groups norms regarding use. METHODS. Four experimental conditions were created by randomly assigning schools to receive (a) neither of the experimental curricula (placebo comparison), (b) resistance skill training alone, (c) normative education alone, or (d) both resistance skill training and normative education. Students were pretested prior to the program and post-tested 1 year following delivery of the program. RESULTS. There were main effects of normative education for summary measures of alcohol ($P = 0.0011$), marijuana ($P = 0.0096$), and cigarette smoking ($P = 0.0311$). All individual dichotomous measures of alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco use indicated significant reductions in onset attributable to normative education. There were no significant main effects of resistance skill training. CONCLUSION. These results suggest that establishing conservative norms is an effective strategy for preventing

Title: **Differences Between Actual and Perceived Student Norms: An Examination of Alcohol Use, Drug Use, and Sexual Behavior**

Authors: [Martens,Matthew P.](#); [Page,Jennifer C.](#); [Mowry,Emily S.](#)

Source: [Journal of American College Health](#), 2006, 54, 5, 295-300

Abstract: Researchers in the social norms area have previously focused primarily on alcohol consumption, paying comparatively less attention to drug use and sexual behavior. The major purposes of this study were to (1) compare perceptions of peer norms in the areas of alcohol use, drug use, and sexual behavior with actual behavior and (2) determine if a relationship existed between a student's perceptions of normative behavior and a student's actual behavior. Participants were 833 college students at a large, public university in the Northeast. Study participants overestimated alcohol use, drug use, and sexual behavior among their peers. There was also a positive relationship between actual behavior and perceived peer norms, although the effect sizes for all behaviors were small to moderate. The authors provide further support for the tenets of social norms theory and suggest that social norms interventions are appropriate both campus-wide and to targeted high-risk groups.

Title: **Development and evaluation of an interactive CD-ROM refusal skills program to prevent youth substance use: "refuse to use".**

Authors: [Duncan,T.E.](#); [Duncan,S.C.](#); [Beauchamp,N.](#); [Wells,J.](#); [Ary,D.V.](#)

Source: [J.Behav.Med.](#), 2000, 23, 1, 59-72

Abstract: An interactive CD-ROM program designed to reduce adolescent substance use was developed and evaluated. The program uses video vignettes to teach refusal skills and socially acceptable responses to substance use situations, specifically offers of marijuana. In a randomized pretest-to-posttest experiment with 74 public school students from six classes in three high schools, significant changes were observed at posttest on (1) the adolescent's personal efficacy to refuse the offer of marijuana, (2) the adolescent's intention to refuse marijuana if offered, and (3) the adolescent's perceptions of the social norms associated with substance use and the importance of respecting another's decision to refuse a drug offer. In addition, adolescents in the treatment condition were able to recall approximately 50% of the portrayed refusal strategies. Findings are discussed with regard to the potential benefits of an interactive multimedia approach for conducting substance use interventions.

The following sites may also be of some use to you:

1) **Project Northland:** The project focuses on trying to delay the age when young people begin drinking, reduce alcohol among young people who have already tried it and limit the number of drug related problems. Project Northland incorporates evidence-based strategies such as correcting misperceptions of norms, increasing perception of personal risk, life-skills training, and promoting pro-social norms. The organization also teaches youth decision-making skills, assists in strengthening parenting skills, teaches youth interpersonal skills and provides information on substance abuse.

<http://www.hazelden.org/web/go/projectnorthland>

2) **National Household Survey:** SAMHSA's national survey on drug abuse

<http://www.health.org/govstudy/bkd376/>

3) **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA):** This page includes statistics on drug abuse, drug profiles, and special population issues.

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/infobox/infoboxindex.html>

4) Multiple studies in H. W. Perkins (ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A Handbook for Educators, Counselors, and Clinicians*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.