

# The Report on Social Norms

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## Recent Presentations on Social Norms at Annual Meetings of Professional Associations: 2002-2003

### Editor's Note

This Working Paper features nine conference abstracts from four national meetings held in the last year. It provides a rich snapshot of the range and variety of programs currently being offered on social norms at meetings of professional associations. Each of the authors has updated and revised the abstract to ensure that it is current and conforms to what was presented at the conference.

Some of these studies expand our knowledge about the "who" and "what" of social norms—i.e., which groups report misperceptions and for what issues. Thus, Teresa Laird and Riley Venable have found misperceptions of alcohol and marijuana use at a Historically Black College while confirming previous findings that African-American students drink less and with fewer negative consequences than other students. Jared Gove and Michael Berg provide additional support for research documenting misperceptions with respect to smoking and report that a norms-based educational video is more effective in correcting misperceptions than a traditional, anti-smoking video. In another study, Charee Boulter and her colleagues reveal misperceptions regarding students' willingness to intervene to help a drunk person in need of medical attention and incorporate this information into a workshop designed to foster protective behaviors and reduce bystander behavior. Misperceptions of drinking norms among male high school students are documented by Dan Segrist and Kevin Corcoran who report that, in their sample, misperceptions of drinking quantity may have a greater effect on drinking than misperceptions of drinking frequency. Finally, in a targeted social norms campaign directed at athletes, Wes Perkins and David Craig report success in impacting athlete drinking using a variety of media and resources.

Recently, there has been considerable interest in reducing high-risk drinking on 21st birthdays with mailed birthday cards that include normative information. Kelly Mosher and her colleagues report on one of these studies, finding that students in an experimental group receiving messages with normative feedback drank more safely on their 21st birthdays than students in a control group who received a birthday note without such information.

The remaining studies address the "how" aspect of social norms and provide suggestions for effective implementation of theory and research. These studies highlight some of the challenges and difficulties in designing effective social norms interventions. For instance, Dennis Thombs and his colleagues note that students routinely disbelieve and question the validity and accuracy of social norms data. To counter this credibility issue they designed a late-night BAC study to collect objective data that could be used to support data presented in social norms marketing posters and found that the BAC evidence was remarkably consistent with data from surveys thus replicating work conducted by Robert Foss at the University of North Carolina. David Jones and Nancy Harper provide a different strategy for reinforcing normative messages and growing healthy behavior in their account of a residential living program for first year students that combines peer mentoring with an environment that supports non-use and responsible use. In doing so they created a group of moderate and non-using students whose high visibility reinforced healthy drinking norms and countered the tendency for first year students to increase their drinking upon arrival at college. Finally, Jannette Berkley-Patton and her colleagues report on an extensive, but unsuccessful, social norms marketing campaign. Their study reminds us of the importance of finding the right dosing of messages and provides one of the first examples of an audience that may have tuned-out a campaign due to an oversaturation of media and/or messages that may not have been adequately tailored to the culture of the campus. The authors suggest that the campaign may have been more effective if linked with other environmental strategies and/or normative campaigns on issues in addition to alcohol.

The goal of publishing these abstracts is to provide readers of *The Report* with an up-to-date picture of what is happening in the field. However, *The Report* has not attempted to evaluate the quality of the research conducted or the fidelity of interventions to the model. The reader is therefore encouraged to look at them with a critical eye in order to evaluate their usefulness, replicability, and faithfulness to the theory.

With this issue the website of *The Report on Social Norms*, [www.socialnormslink.com](http://www.socialnormslink.com) is now active. Please take a look to see if it is a helpful resource and let us know if there is anything that we can do to improve it.

Sincerely,

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***U.S. Department of Education 16th Annual Meeting on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention in Higher Education. Seattle, WA November 21-24, 2002.***

**A Theoretical View of Social Norms with Campus Drinking at a Historically Black University.**

*Teresa Laird (University of Houston Clear Lake) and Riley Venable (Texas Southern University).*

The authors surveyed 239 volunteer participants at a Historically Black University (HBCU) to determine if the overestimation (or misperception) of alcohol and drug usage rates were similar to the described rates at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs).

Ages ranged from 18 to 35 years ( $M = 26.6$ ) with 54.8% of the sample located in the typical college age range of 18 to 22. The predominate ethnic origin reported was 81.0% Black and 9.5% White (non-Hispanic). The majority was single (68.8%) and female (59.7%), mirroring overall student demographics.

Analyses of the alcohol use variables "high-risk drinking" (i.e. the 5/4 measure) and "average number of drinks per week" produced scores that are significantly lower than national averages, consistent with other research suggesting lower rates of drinking among students of color in comparison with Caucasian students. For example, students on our campus averaged 2.66 drinks per week compared to a national average of 5.97, and 22.4% engaged

in high-risk drinking compared with 46.8% of students nationally (significant at  $p < .05$ ).

When student perceptions of peer use were compared to actual student use, students were found to overestimate alcohol and marijuana use by their peers and underestimate the number of abstainers. For example, 39% of our students had used alcohol in the last 30 days, but the perception was that 85% had. For marijuana, actual use in the last 30 days was 12% but the perception was that 76% had used in the last 30 days. Finally, 31% of our students abstain from alcohol use but only 8% are perceived to be abstainers (all comparisons significant at  $p < .05$ ).

Thus, the results of this study support previous findings that alcohol and drug use rates at HBCUs are lower than rates at PWIs. The Core Institute has consistently reported this finding for HBCUs since the 1990s. The present study also indicates a wide disparity between the actual alcohol consumption and drug usage by students at HBCUs and the perceptions these students hold of their peers' usage. The findings are consistent with numerous studies of PWIs. Given these findings it appears that social norms approaches to alcohol and other drug prevention might be useful at HBCUs.

An ancillary finding is that negative consequences of use reported by these students were also significantly lower than national averages.

*(Contact Teresa Laird: Laird@cl.uh.edu)*

**Enhancing the Credibility of Normative Feedback Using Late-Night Breath Test Data.**

*Dennis Thombs, R Scott Olds, and Scott Dotterer (Kent State University).*

It is common during social norms interventions for students to challenge the validity of self-report surveys of alcohol use. A common observation is: "everybody lies on those surveys" with some students contending that surveys grossly underestimate the amount of drinking done by their fellow students. Thus, social norms messages can be perceived to misrepresent the drinking environment on campus.

In order to enhance the credibility of messages used in a social norms intervention we collected late-night BAC and interview data from residence hall students. During the 15 weeks of the 2002 Spring Semester, project staff used an area sampling procedure to intercept students as they returned to their residence halls between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. on Wednesday through Saturday nights. The procedure covered all 29 residence halls each night. The survey schedule was rotated so that students could not anticipate when project personnel would collect data at any given residence hall.

Project staff intercepted students about 10 yards from the entrance doors of their residence halls, greeting students in a friendly tone. An interviewer recited a brief statement describing the study, emphasizing that participation was anonymous, and then began to ask questions (unless the individual objected or walked away). If the person declined to participate, the interviewer would thank them and record the event as a "refusal."

After a set of screening questions determined that they were residents of the building and that they did not intend to drink more that night, students were interviewed and provided a breath sample. After breath testing, students were given their disposable mouthpiece (if they wanted it) and a wallet-sized card that included information about the project. The entire procedure took approximately three minutes. Students were not given their BAC reading because of concerns that providing it might prompt some students to resume drinking that night or motivate some to drink heavily to achieve a higher BAC at a subsequent intercept.

A total of 1,976 intercepts were made during the assessment semester. At the initial point of interception outside residence halls, 641 individuals (or 32.4%) immediately declined to participate in the study. Most of these individuals were reluctant to stop and talk before entering their residence hall, so it was not possible to systematically assess their reasons for declining to be interviewed. Occasional comments and reactions suggested that the reasons for non-participation were varied and most commonly included inclement weather and being "in a hurry." Project staff did not observe any attempts by obviously intoxicated students to avoid the data collection procedure.

Of the 1,020 students who were screened and provided self-report and BAC data, 55.8% were men. A majority were freshmen (56.4%), followed by sophomores (34.6%), juniors (7.0%), seniors (1.7%), and graduate students (0.4%). Most of the screened students (71%) had not

#### Late-Night BACs of Residence Hall Students: Spring Semester, 2002 at Kent State University

BAC Range (g/dl)	Wednesdays n = 227	Thursdays n = 380	Fridays n = 229	Saturdays n = 184
.00	71 %	38 %	40 %	30 %
.01 - .049	13 %	18 %	15 %	16 %
.05 - .079	6 %	16 %	17 %	22 %
.08 - .099	5 %	9 %	11 %	10 %
> .10	5 %	19 %	17 %	21 %

*Notes. BAC refers to the number of grams of alcohol found in 1 deciliter (dl) of blood. Breath samples were collected four nights a week, from 10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., during the 15 weeks of Spring Semester, 2002 at Kent State University. In the sample, 52.6% of the students provided data on two or more nights.*

been drinking on Wednesday nights. In contrast, smaller proportions had not been drinking on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights (30% to 40%). However, on these three nights, an additional 43% to 48% of the students had BACs below .10.

Thus, a substantial majority of students was returning home (regardless of the night of the week) either without drinking or not being highly intoxicated. On Wednesday nights, 95% of the students had BACs less than .10, compared to 83% on Friday nights, 81% on Thursday nights, and 79% on Saturday nights.

The findings support one of the basic propositions of social norms theory—that a substantial majority of college students either abstain or drink without becoming highly intoxicated. These objective data corroborate the findings from self-report surveys reporting that the actual norm for alcohol consumption is often much more conservative than it is perceived to be by many students. The project also demonstrated that late-night breath-testing is a viable data collection option for developing normative feedback mes-

sages for the campus community.

(Contact Dennis Thombs:  
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#### Six Pack of Common Sense: An Innovative Peer Education Program.

*Charee Boulter, Ashley Clipson and  
Melanie Maynes (University of Puget  
Sound).*

This peer education program focuses on the positive norms of moderate alcohol consumption and altruistic attitudes about helping peers with potential alcohol poisoning. It is run during new student orientation as a component of a comprehensive program addressing alcohol abuse on campus. Students are led through an exploration of cultural myths about alcohol use, take a brief survey and discuss the results. This provides an opportunity to learn about the misperceptions of alcohol use within their own group and how they compare to the general campus norms. The participants also learn about the willingness of other students to intervene in cases of alcohol poisoning. They are empowered to assist in such cases by learning the signs of alcohol poisoning and the appropriate steps to take along with

**Perceived and actual drinking norms from 6 Pack**

	<i>Perceived # of drinks when partying</i>	<i>Actual # of drinks when partying</i>
2000	4.1	2.3
2001	3.9	2.6
2002	3.8	1.6

**Perceived and actual altruistic beliefs from 6 Pack**

	<i>Perceived willingness to call for medical attention</i>	<i>Actual reported willingness to call for medical attention</i>
2000	17%	52%
2001	25.7%	74.9%
2002	27.2%	82.2%

the fact that most of their peers would call for help. The program concludes with six suggestions to enhance safety while partying that focus on altruism and drinking moderately (if choosing to drink), and distribution of a handout containing the six suggestions along with state laws and university policy regarding alcohol and other drug consumption.

Program evaluations have been positive. Students report that receiving information about campus norms is enlightening and reassuring. They report feeling empowered to act based on their own values of moderate consumption and appreciate the honesty of the program, as it is acknowledged that some students abstain and that others drink. They also appreciate the knowledge gained regarding signs of alcohol poisoning and how to respond. Results demonstrate a consistent pattern of overestimating alcohol use norms and underestimating altruistic attitudes.

Discussing alcohol poisoning (a relatively rare event) may appear contradictory to the social norms focus of the 6 Pack program. However, due to the bystander effect and the misperception that other stu-

dents' fears of punishment or social repercussions would stop them from calling for help, this information on the positive norm of willingness to assist is a crucial component of our comprehensive approach to addressing the issues of alcohol misuse and the fostering of protective norms.

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### **Using a 21st Birthday Card to Reduce Harmful 21st Birthday Drinking among College Students.**

*Kelly Mosher, Jannette Y. Berkley-Patton, Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett and Carrie Towns (University of Kansas).*

Increasing attention has focused on high-risk drinking at 21st birthday celebrations. This study evaluated the effects of a 21st birthday card on reducing celebratory drinking and related harm among University of Kansas (KU) students. All KU students turning 21 over a two-month period (N = 588) were randomly assigned to receive a birthday card with alcohol information (experimental group) or a happy-birthday note card without alcohol informa-

tion (control group). Cards were mailed to students in the last week of the month prior to their 21st birthdays. Birthday cards included information about alcohol poisoning, steps to help an intoxicated friend, behavioral targets for safe drinking, and a normative message about students' drinking—"Most KU students act responsibly and drink moderately or not at all (zero to five drinks) when they party." The normative message included in the birthday card pertained to the usual drinking behavior of KU students when they party because data regarding the campus norm for 21st birthday celebratory drinking was not available prior to this study.

Forty-two percent of the students turning 21 reported their 21st birthday celebration experiences via an Internet survey. Students receiving the birthday card drank significantly fewer drinks than control group students did. They also drank less than they expected, while control group students drank more. Both control and experimental groups overestimated the average number of drinks consumed by KU students during the 21st birthday celebration.

Consistent with social norms theory, significantly more students who received the birthday card reported drinking in the normative range (zero to five drinks) than control group students (50% v. 36%, respectively). Furthermore, without receiving information regarding the true norm for 21st birthday celebratory drinking, both groups overestimated the number of drinks consumed by the average KU student when celebrating the 21st birthday (M = 7.01) by more than two drinks. This research was conducted as part

of the University of Kansas Social Norms Media Project, funded by the Kansas Health Foundation.

(Contact Project Director Jannette Berkley-Patton: [jbpatt@ku.edu](mailto:jbpatt@ku.edu))

### **Alcohol Prevention that Works: The Interaction of Social Norms and Peer Mentoring.**

David E. Jones and Nancy L. Harper  
(Grand Valley State University).

Dissemination of actual norms presented in the context of an environmental management approach to prevention has led to significant reductions in alcohol use and increases in abstinence at Grand Valley State University. The program, administered by ALERT LABS, conducted focus groups and administered a survey to a random sample of students in 1998. Among the findings were that 92% of new freshmen believed that current students consumed alcohol at least once a week. In fact, the truth at that time was that only about 37% consumed alcohol once a week or more.

By correcting this misperception through a variety of communication strategies over the past four years, the ALERT staff was able to reduce underage and excessive drinking among freshmen and other GVSU students from 46% to 40%. As of April 2002, nearly 80% of GVSU students averaged 1.8 drinks when they went to parties or to bars. They had 0, 1, or 2 alcoholic drinks per occasion. Also, most students (70%) drank only once a month or less often, including 30% who did not drink at all.

One of the most successful prevention strategies of the ALERT

Labs is the Passport Program. It combines a social mentoring program for first year students with a residential support system that both encourages and rewards healthy life styles. The expressed mission of the Passport Program is to support freshmen in their choice not to make alcohol a central part of their college experience. Like most of our programs, it is student run. This reflects our belief that students know better what students want to do, what will get them to events, and how to construct a message that will be believed and internalized by their fellow students. There are typically about 400 freshmen that choose to participate in this program every year; with between 70 to 90 upper class students volunteering to be mentors. Of these students, approximately 300 live in one of the Passport Living Centers. Students living in these centers sign a contract saying they will not use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs in the Center, nor will they return under the influence of such substances. With nearly 500 students visibly participating in the program annually at a centralized living center, Passport students have become a powerful force on campus that visibly reinforces the campus social norms campaign.

As with any social norms campaign information, the true norms need to be believed in order to have an effect on campus culture. Students in the Passport program help to add validity and believability to the norming statistics by providing a visual representation of the numbers presented through our media efforts. The Passport students additionally are drawn from a wide demographic base, from Greeks to athletes and other campus leaders.

Thus, this numerically large and socially strong group of students provides a demonstration of the 30 percent of our population that abstains from alcohol. In addition to the impact of the physical presence of the Passport Students as agents of social norms, each program that Passport plans is done with a special focus on social norms. This approach directly challenges the party culture perception by making sobriety and moderation an attractive option for entering students.

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### **Most Valuable Players: Using Social Norms to Target Athletes as a High-Risk Subpopulation.**

H. Wesley Perkins, David W. Craig, and David Diana (Hobart and William Smith Colleges).

Nationwide survey data have revealed significantly higher rates of heavy drinking among intercollegiate athletes than among other undergraduates, a pattern that has also been documented on our campus. In addition, athletes and other students hold exaggerated perceptions of athlete drinking norms, just as AOD norms are misperceived in general. To address athlete drinking, strategies were designed to identify and reduce harmful misperceptions about student-athlete alcohol norms, including the promotion of more accurate perceptions of positive social behaviors (such as participation in various forms of community service and academic involvement). Strategies included: 1) a rapid and inexpensive protocol to anonymously survey an entire college sub-population (athletes) using a web-based instrument, 2) print and electronic

media communication strategies promoting positive norms about athletes for the entire campus, 3) print and electronic media strategies to more directly reach the target student-athlete and athletic staff sub-populations, and 4) student-athlete peer educators delivering targeted messages. Preliminary survey results after the first year demonstrated substantial student-athlete exposure to print and electronic media and peer workshops. Statistically significant reductions were also found after one year in the percentage of male and female student-athletes drinking two or more days per week, and in several negative consequences due to drinking including poor academic work (all student-athletes), injuries to self and others and memory impairment (females), and unintended sexual activity (males). See <http://alcohol.hws.edu/mvp> for a detailed description of the program along with social norms campaign examples.

***American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, November 15-19, San Francisco.***

**Seeing is Not Believing for College Students: A Report on a Four-year Social Norms Media Project to Reduce Alcohol Use.**

*Jannette Y. Berkley-Patton, Kathleen McCluskey-Fawcett, Kelly Mosher and Carrie Towns (University of Kansas).*

University of Kansas (KU) Social Norms Media Project (SNMP) was funded by the Kansas Health Foundation in Spring 1999 to

replicate the highly successful social norms projects at Northern Illinois University (NIU) and the University of Arizona (U of A). The Foundation project also included three other state universities.

KU is a large state university (enrollment 26,000; 57% females) located in northeastern Kansas with a student population comprised of 70% Kansas residents, 3,500 Greek-affiliated students, and 6,000 students living on campus.

The purpose of the SNMP was to broadcast accurate, normative media messages to students about peer alcohol consumption. To accomplish the project's mission on such a large campus, the KU SNMP was funded for four years for a total of \$450,000 to: 1) assess student drinking behaviors with a campus-wide alcohol survey, 2) develop Fall and Spring media campaigns, 3) conduct ongoing market testing on acceptance of the campaign design and messages, and 4) disseminate what was learned to relevant audiences on an annual basis.

The campaign messages were developed and modified annually

after review of frequency data from the spring alcohol surveys. Alcohol surveys were administered in classrooms that were selected through a stratified sampling program. Each spring, 15 to 31 KU classes were administered surveys to achieve a base sample of about 2500 students. Approximately 70% of students enrolled in these classes completed surveys with final survey participants ranging from 1349 to 1621 students annually. Representative samples were achieved each year with participants closely matching KU's student demographics based on gender, class level, major area of study, and ethnicity, with the exception being an under-representation of freshmen students in 2001.

First-year results indicated that 66% of KU students drank five or fewer drinks when partying. The subsequent primary media message developed was "Most KU students drink moderately (0-5 drinks) or not at all when they party" along with other secondary messages, such as students use designated drivers and pace themselves to one drink per hour. Media materials included: print materials to new students and par-

**The Report on Social Norms is pleased to announce the launch of [www.socialnormslink.com](http://www.socialnormslink.com).**

*The site features:*

- information about The Report on Social Norms
- links to other important websites
- online ordering options
- background information about social norms

Plus, an up-to-date calendar of social norms events and conferences is available. Check back regularly to see who is talking about social norms at national conferences and meetings.

ents attending summer orientation, two to three quarter-page campus newspaper ads per week, posters to all students living on campus offering five dollars if the poster was on display when campaign representatives came by, informational cups with five dollar incentives to all students in Greek houses, ads in several Greek publications, and informational table tents in residence halls' dining areas. Also, ads were placed on the outside and inside of university buses and on parking signs in residence hall parking lots. All campaign advertisements were market tested with student focus groups and campus intercepts, and with classroom surveys and discussions. Four to six original media pieces were created annually. Also, normative messages were changed regularly to reflect the most recent survey results and interests of students.

Overall, four-year results of the KU SNMP found students' drinking behaviors worsened somewhat and perceptions remained virtually unchanged. Students reported a mean of 4.5, 4.9, 5.5 and 5.3 drinks when partying for each year of the project, beginning in 1999. Perceptions of other KU students' drinks when partying were 6.5, 6.8, 6.6 and 6.6 drinks. Additionally, measures on protective behaviors and negative consequences were virtually unchanged. For example, most students consistently reported using a designated driver (78%), hanging out with friends they know and trust (97%), and drinking in safe environments (85%). Also, key measures of negative consequences indicated most students did not fail or drop a class project (3%), damage property (16%), require medical attention (4%), or get in trouble with school

authorities (4%) due to their drinking.

Several limitations of the project and survey data exist. First, true replication of the NIU and U of A projects was debatable. The KU SNMP was developed as an autonomous project, which worked in collaboration with other departments to generate normative, responsible alcohol messages only. Contrarily, the NIU and U of A campaigns were based in their highly respected health centers and used comprehensive strategies to reduce heavy drinking and harm to students. For instance, in addition to alcohol prevention, NIU's SNMP also focused on other student health behaviors (e.g., sexual health, colds and flu). Also, U of A had an active campus/community coalition and a sorority-focused social norms project. Second, the Kansas SNMPS have been some of the highest funded social norms projects in the country. With KU's large advertising, ad creation, and market research budget of \$30,000 to \$45,000 annually, it is possible that students were oversaturated with campaign messages. Although this supposition is contrary to commercial marketing, students repeatedly stated that they had "heard and seen the message enough already" in repeated anecdotal reports. This possibly suggests that students can perceive continuous campus saturation of responsible drinking messages as too preachy and redundant, and subsequently, the messages lose their effect.

Third, students did not change their misperceptions of other students' drinking. Students repeatedly reported that they saw other students drinking more than five drinks, although this was not consistent with

survey results. Fourth, use of the word "party" was adopted from replication of the NIU and U of A campaigns and survey terminology, which caused much confusion among KU students. Questions of "how is 'party' defined?" were regularly fielded from students during survey administration. Subsequent analysis of KU student focus group data indicated that, to students, "party" powerfully connoted heavy drinking with lots of people. These connotations may have prejudiced students' self-reported behaviors and perceptions of others' drinking as well as their eventual negative reaction to campaign messages. Finally, it was difficult to achieve reductions in harm to self and others. KU students were consistently found to be practicing safe, protective behaviors and experiencing few negative consequences at high rates related to their alcohol use, which ultimately was the overall goal of the project.

*(Contact Project Director Jannette Berkley-Patton: jbpatt@ku.edu)*

### ***Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, Illinois, August 22-25, 2002***

#### **Yeah I Drink.... But Not as Much as Norm.**

*Dan Segrist (Southwestern Illinois College) and Kevin Corcoran (University of Cincinnati).*

In a survey of two hundred and nine male high school students, participants estimated that their peers drank more frequently and in greater quantities than they themselves did. Drinking frequency correlated positively with estimates of the frequen-

cy and maximum quantity of peers' drinking, while participants' maximum quantity consumed in the past month correlated positively with estimates of maximum quantity consumed by peers. Perceptions of peer quantity consumed accounted for 30% of the variance in predicting the participants' own maximum quantity consumed. Perceptions of maximum quantity consumed by peers seem to be particularly important as it also predicted both the frequency and maximum quantity of participants' self-reported alcohol consumption.

On average, participants consumed alcohol 1.5 times per month, while mean perceived frequency of alcohol use was 3.4 times per month. Participants also reported, on average, consuming a maximum quantity of 4.5 drinks in one sitting within the past month, while perceptions of

peer maximum quantity in the past month had a mean of 7.4 drinks.

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### ***National Conference on Tobacco and Health, November 19-21, 2002, San Francisco***

#### **An Exploration of Pluralistic Ignorance and a Subsequent Intervention to Correct It: Implications for Smoking on College Campuses.**

*Jared Gove and Michael Berg (Wheaton College).*

Two studies examined the relationship between students' own attitudes toward smoking on campus and their estimated attitudes of their peers. In the first, the existence of pluralistic ignorance was examined in first-year students' attitudes towards smoking. Students responded to five questions assessing their attitudes towards smoking, their smoking behavior, and their perception of "typical" students' attitudes towards campus smoking. A repeated-measures t-test indicated that the student's perception of the student norm (the average of perceived attitudes of typical students) was significantly

greater than the true norm (the average of student own attitudes). That is, individually everyone believed smoking is more accepted on campus than it truly is.

The second study tested whether or not an intervention could reduce pluralistic ignorance of students' beliefs about the norm of smoking behavior and attitudes on campus. Two video tapes, a traditional "smoking is bad for you" model and a pluralistic ignorance model explaining the concept of pluralistic ignorance and its existence on campus, were shown to ten first year seminar classes. Students in the five classes shown the pluralistic ignorance intervention had reduced misconceptions about student attitudinal and behavioral norms compared to those students shown the traditional model video at the one month follow-up assessment. Thus, exposing students to pluralistic ignorance was a more effective intervention in changing smoking attitudes and perceived norms than the traditional intervention targeting the health effects of smoking. Future studies will examine other interventions to reduce pluralistic ignorance and the effectiveness of these interventions on reducing smoking behavior.

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### **The Sixth Annual National Conference on the Social Norms Model • July 16-18, 2003**

**Hyatt Harborside — Boston, Mass.**

For more information, go to [www.socialnorm.org](http://www.socialnorm.org) and [www.bacchusgamma.org](http://www.bacchusgamma.org)

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