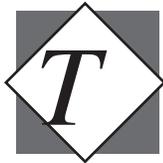


## Selected Abstracts from the 2004 National Conference on the Social Norms Model

### Editors Note:



*his issue of the Report on Social Norms (Working Paper #14) features selected abstracts from the 2003 National Conference on the Social Norms Model and supplements Rich Rice's excellent conference overview that was published in December 2003 as Working Paper #13. These abstracts provide evidence for the expansion of the social norms*

*“These abstracts provide evidence for the expansion of the social norms approach to a number of new populations and topics. This includes interventions in college populations, middle schools, high-schools, and with young adults out of college plus applications to topics as diverse as sexual assault prevention, prevention of teenage pregnancy, smoking prevention, increasing seatbelt use, and reducing driving while intoxicated.”*

*approach to a number of new populations and topics. This includes interventions in college populations, middle schools, high-schools, and with young adults out of college plus applications to topics as diverse as sexual assault prevention, prevention of teenage pregnancy, smoking prevention, increasing seatbelt use, and reducing driving while intoxicated. A number of these interventions have very good outcome data and/or control groups. In addition, the traditional social norms focus on providing normative feedback about quantity and/or frequency of alcohol use has been greatly expanded to include documentation of norms for protection, strategies to reduce celebratory drinking, and the use of BAC measures to assess drinking behavior. Finally, two case studies provide examples of the successful application of the social norms approach to special populations – sororities and athletes.*

*The Working Paper begins with an abstract of a conference presentation by William Hansen. Dr Hansen has contributed immensely to both the theory and research on normative feedback for over twenty years. His important and seminal work is not nearly as well known and appreciated among social norms advocates in higher education as it deserves to be.*

### Norm Setting: Twenty Years of Progress

*William B. Hansen (Tanglewood Research)*

Norm setting began as a strategy to establish conventional norms within groups by providing feedback to group members about actual practices and beliefs about acceptability. Young people were known to have expectations about the normative use of alcohol and other drugs that were exaggerated. In the past twenty years of examining this issue, we have learned a lot.

First, over-estimation of prevalence and acceptability are highly influenced by extreme scores. When non-users are segregated from light and heavy users, it becomes clear that non-users often have a very accurate perception of the norm. The over-estimation that is observed is almost always due to exaggerated perceptions of users, with those who use more heavily exaggerating more.

Second, normative beliefs do not stand alone. Specifically, normative beliefs are highly correlated with at least three other variables: personal commitments to avoid

drug use, beliefs about social and personal (not health) consequences of using drugs, and the perception that drug use does not fit with one's desired lifestyle. This suggests that while changing norms alone is necessary, it may not be sufficient.

Finally, there is programmatic evidence that changing norms can be embedded into other content areas, including content areas not directly related to norm setting. Further, when this occurs, a larger change effect can be observed. For example, we embedded normative messages into goal setting, decision making and resistance skills training exercises and found an increased effect on students' normative beliefs.

For additional information, contact William Hansen at [billhansen@tanglewood.net](mailto:billhansen@tanglewood.net)

## Communities Use a Social Norms Approach to Reduce Teen Alcohol and Tobacco Use: Two Case Studies

Sara Christensen (Peer Services, Inc) and Michael Haines (National Social Norms Resource Center)

A social norms marketing campaign (DCP/Safe) that was used to reduce teen smoking and alcohol use by over 30% at two Midwestern high schools is the first documented success in a high school setting that has been replicated in a large urban high school (Evanston Township High School), reducing student alcohol use by 11% and student tobacco use by 25% over a two-year period.

The target populations in the campaigns are students, parents and school staff. Strategies used to reduce student alcohol and tobacco use include: a yearly survey of students to determine levels of alcohol and tobacco use, perceived use, sources of information, media habits, message believability issues, and protective behaviors; a yearly survey of

**"A social norms marketing campaign that was used to reduce teen smoking and alcohol use by over 30% at two Midwestern high schools is the first documented success in a high school setting."**

school staff and parents to determine perceptions of student substance use levels, levels of reinforcement of healthy behavior, sources of information, and media habits; periodic focus groups with students, parents and teachers to develop and test marketing messages and campaign strategies; and social norms marketing intervention and media strategies.

Evanston is a suburb directly north of Chicago, Illinois, comprised of a diverse mix of neighborhoods, races, religions and levels of income. The high school has a population of approximately 3,000 students. Fifty percent of the student body is White, thirty-eight percent is Black and seven percent is Latino. The social norms marketing campaign at Evanston Township High School, called *Strength in Numbers*, began in November 2001 and still continues. It is sponsored by the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention Council (ESAPC), which is instrumental in providing direction for the campaign and providing a broader base from which to inform the entire community of the campaign message. The strength of coalition support is its ability to keep the campaign both community and school focused, recognizing that the message must be stated to and repeated from all sources of information, such as parents, faith-based institutions, media outlets, youth serving agencies, health care professionals, businesses, etc. in order to be most effective.

The average yearly budget for the campaign is \$30,000. Using royalty-free photography to depict community demo-

graphics, marketing materials such as posters, postcards, flyers, and newspaper advertisements are constantly changing in order to maintain audience interest and effectively promote the message that most high school students in our community choose not to use alcohol and tobacco. The Center for Prevention Research and Development at the University of Illinois developed the survey instrument that is administered to the entire student body every spring, and provides data analysis.

For additional information, contact Sara Christensen at [schristensen@peerservices.org](mailto:schristensen@peerservices.org) or go to [www.peerservices.org/strengthinnumbers.asp](http://www.peerservices.org/strengthinnumbers.asp) or [www.dcpsafe.org/social-norms.htm](http://www.dcpsafe.org/social-norms.htm)

## Social Norms Program Reduces Measured and Self-Reported Drinking at UNC-CH

Robert Foss, Shane Diekman, Chris Bartley and Arthur Goodman (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Previous social norms marketing programs have shown beneficial effects on several campuses, but these findings have been based only on self-reports of drinking. Although self-reports are generally considered to be reliable, they tend to be somewhat crude measures. Hence, we adapted procedures that have been used to study the prevalence of drinking drivers by randomly sampling and directly measuring the presence of alcohol (blood alcohol concentration or BAC) to evaluate the effects of a social norms program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

During the fall of 1997 a field survey was conducted to randomly sample, interview, and obtain a breath measurement from students as they returned home between the hours of 10 p.m. and 3 a.m. on all nights of the week, though

the traditional “party nights”—Thursday, Friday and Saturday—were oversampled. Based on the findings of this survey, a social norms program was developed around the primary message that even on these party nights a large proportion of students had consumed little or no alcohol. This became known as the “2 out of 3” program since the main message was: “*Whether it’s Thursday, Friday, or Saturday night, 2 out of 3 UNC students return home with a .00 blood alcohol concentration.*”

Both the content of the message and the details of its wording were extensively tested with students to ensure that they understood it to mean that drinking is far less common than assumed and that, consequently, one does not have to drink frequently, heavily or at all to “fit in” on campus. Several efforts were undertaken to integrate this message into the routine functioning of the entire

campus. These included multimedia, interactive presentations at first-year student orientation sessions, dissemination of print materials, incentive campaigns to encourage students to display the “2 out of 3” posters and other materials, some curriculum infusion, coordination

**“The decreases observed in both self-report and direct measures of student drinking suggest that social norms marketing programs can affect actual drinking behavior and not merely self-reports of drinking.”**

with the university’s general alcohol program to reduce the prevalence of conflicting messages and maintenance of a “2 out of 3” web site to distribute more information about the BAC survey. The program began with student orientation sessions in the summer of 1999.

Additional field survey data were obtained during the fall semesters of

**“Among those drinking on the night of the interview, the mean number of self-reported drinks consumed decreased from 5.1 to 4.3...the percentage of respondents who could be classified as heavy drinkers on the night of the interview decreased from 14% to 10%... (and) among respondents who were drinking on the night of the interview, the proportion with a BAC above .05% decreased from 60% to 52%.”**

1999 and 2002. Analyses examined data for 6,352 undergraduate students interviewed during 1997, 1999 or 2002. A BAC was obtained for 6,108 (96%) of these individuals.

#### *Primary Findings*

**Awareness** of the “2 out of 3” fact/program increased from 72% in 1999 to 91% by 2002. In 1999, 35% of respondents who had heard of—and understood—the message believed it accurately represented student drinking, with an increase to 45% by 2002. A number of changes in student drinking were observed over the course of the study. Some of the most noteworthy changes from 1997 to 2002 include the following:

**General Alcohol Use.** Any alcohol use on the night of the interview—determined by both self-report and direct BAC measurement—decreased from 1997 to 2002. Among those drinking on the night of the interview, the mean number of self-reported drinks consumed decreased from 5.1 to 4.3.

**Heavier Drinking.** The percentage of respondents who could be classified as heavy drinkers on the night of the interview decreased from 14% to 10%. Among respondents who were drinking on the night of the interview, the proportion with a BAC above .05% decreased from 60% to 52%. Using the traditional

self-report criterion for heavy drinking (five or more drinks on at least one occasion in the past two weeks), the overall proportion of heavy drinkers decreased from 50% to 45%. Self-reported frequent heavy drinking (5 or more drinks on 3 or more occasions in the past two weeks) decreased from 24% to 20%.

#### *Conclusion*

The decreases observed in both self-report and direct measures of student drinking suggest that social norms marketing programs can affect actual drinking behavior and not merely self-reports of drinking. One limitation of this study was the lack of a control group, which would have helped rule out alternate explanations for our findings. However, evidence from national surveys indicating stable or increased drinking among students while we saw notable decreases at UNC provides reason to believe that the decrease is not simply the reflection of a general downward trend in college student drinking.

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### **Most Valuable Players – Using Social Norms to Target Athletes as a High-Risk Sub-Population**

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

Nationwide survey data have revealed significantly higher rates of heavy drinking among intercollegiate student-athletes than among other undergraduates, a pattern that has been documented in data collected on our campus. In addition, athletes and the student body at large hold exaggerated perceptions of athlete drinking norms. To address athlete alcohol use we designed strategies to identify and reduce harmful misperceptions about

“...statistically significant reductions were found in student-athletes’ misperceptions of the frequency of peer drinking and the permissiveness of peer attitudes. Significant reductions were also found in the percentage of male and female student-athletes personally drinking two or more days per week and in several negative consequences due to drinking...”

results after the first year of implementation demonstrated substantial student-athlete exposure to print and electronic media as well as peer workshops, along with statistically significant reductions that were found in student-athletes’ misperceptions of the frequency of peer drinking and the permissiveness of peer attitudes. Significant reductions were also found in the percentage of male and female student-athletes personally 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

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 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. Survey

(females), and unintended sexual activity (males). Mandatory workshop referrals for alcohol violations also dropped after the first year of the project intervention.

*For additional information, contact H. Wesley Perkins at [perkins@hws.edu](mailto:perkins@hws.edu) or go to <http://alcohol.hws.edu/mvp> for a detailed description of the program along with social norms campaign examples.*

## Reducing High-Risk Drinking in Sorority Women Using a Social Norms Approach

*Koreen Johannessen  
(University of Arizona)*

A three-year gender- and population-specific social norms project has reduced heavy and high-risk drinking in college sorority women at a large public university but not among sorority women at two comparison institutions exposed to a general campus-wide social norms campaign over the same time frame.

Posters, fliers and alcohol facts delivered to chapter residences on the intervention campus exposed sorority members to a consistently high dosage of sorority-specific alcohol use norms, attitudinal norms and protective behaviors using social marketing techniques. The campaign included a combination of six large posters, six bedroom posters and six half-page fliers. Weekly fun factoid and health “snippet” memos provided additional alcohol and health norms and were announced by chapter leadership at weekly chapter meetings. Poster, flier, and “snippet” messages included norms for: 1) protective behaviors before, during and after drinking; 2) frequency and amount of consumption; 3) prevalence of negative consequences; and 4) information about tobacco and other drug use.

Over a three-year period, heavy and high-risk drinking was significantly reduced among sorority women at the intervention campus. Significant decreases were found for heavy drinking (percent who had 5 or more drinks in a sit-

“Over a three-year period, heavy and high-risk drinking was significantly reduced among sorority women at the intervention campus. Significant decreases were found for heavy drinking (percent who had 5 or more drinks in a sitting in the past two weeks); mean number of drinks last time they drank; and mean BAC.”

ting in the past two weeks); mean number of drinks last time they drank; and mean BAC. Significant increases were found for those who had 0-4 drinks last time they drank. Other changes in protective behaviors and negative consequences also changed favorably for the intervention school.

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## Specialized Social Norm Message Strategies Focusing on Celebratory Drinking

*Charles Atkin, Dennis Martell, Sandi Smith, and Jasmine Greenamyer  
(Michigan State University)*

Michigan State University has a recent history of significant alcohol-related disturbances. In response a series of intensive media campaigns and environmental initiatives were undertaken resulting in a decrease in high-risk drinking rates from 52% in 2000 to 44% in 2002. To build on this progress, our team undertook a prevention project focusing on “celebratory” drinking in 2001-02, implementing campaigns targeting alcohol consumption on 21st birthdays, holidays, and football game-days.

As part of this project, a field experiment was conducted by sending birthday messages to 1,731 students turning age 21. In a follow-up survey,

those who were sent a birthday card with a safe celebration message were less likely to drink large amounts, get drunk, and do shots than a control group receiving no card; they were more likely to report stopping when they “had enough” and to have someone watching out for them during the celebration.

In a separate media campaign, five sets of print messages (newspaper ads, posters, flyers) were disseminated to promote responsible drinking during celebratory occasions. The campaign was based on formative evaluation findings from a survey of 1,162 students, showing relatively more prevalent high-risk drinking when celebrating special events such as welcome week, football games, and Halloween, and a prominent role for peers on these drinking occasions and a widespread inclination to help friends avoid drinking problems.

Assessment of reactions to the media campaign was performed within a survey of N=500 students. The campaign reached 78% of undergrads, who typically reported a total of four exposures. On average, the messages were regarded as believable by 87% of readers (but just one-quarter said they learned new information), and 54% said the messages were effective in influencing them to drink responsibly or to intervene with excessive-drinking

*“These projects demonstrate the importance of focusing prevention efforts on special occasions characterized by high-risk drinking with peers, and supplementing generalized social norm strategies with specialized messages targeting celebratory occasions, social identity segments, and protective behaviors.”*

friends. The most positively rated message was *How to Party Without Getting Busted*, which described laws and penalties for house parties. Also receiving high effectiveness ratings were a pair of *Help A Friend* newspaper ads featuring the key line “82% say they would help a friend who has been drinking too much” and student quotes about how they prevent peers from getting drunk or experiencing harm. Other messages emphasizing normative data on *Healthy Choices* (“66% of MSU students drink moderately or not at all”) and drinking practices during football game-days and welcome week (“Most MSU students feel that getting wasted is NOT an important part of Welcome Week”) were rated as highly believable but only moderately informative and effective.

In addition to the above, MSU is undertaking a new project. Traditionally, messages designed to change drinking misperceptions feature *global* norms (e.g., proportion of all students who generally consume responsibly). Our research team is testing specialized messages that focus on distinctive celebration occasions when the perceived normative climate encourages relatively larger numbers of students to drink and get drunk. Survey data (N=1,162) show above-average prevalence of drinking and drunkenness on certain occasions: welcome week (40% & 29%), spring break (48% & 30%), football game-days (37% & 18%), Halloween (32% & 18%), and St. Patrick’s Day (26% & 15%). Because the general drinking norm may not be applicable to these special occasions, event-specific messages will be disseminated to demonstrate that larger-than-expected proportions of students drink moderately or not at all (e.g., 82% on Halloween), in order to dial down drinking excesses due to inflated misperceptions.

To supplement the global social norms messages, this project is developing specialized messages using the Who-What-When-Where-Why-How

framework. The WHEN portion focuses on various types of special occasions (e.g., 85% of MSU students drink moderately or not at all on St. Patrick’s Day). WHO refers to social identity segments (e.g., moderate or non-drinking by 74% of freshmen, 84% of females, and 88% of high GPA students). WHAT refers to drinking behaviors: Quantity of drinks, Frequency of drinking and Rate per hour. WHERE emphasizes underwhelming norms at specific locales of drinking, such as house parties, road trips, and bars. WHY focuses on prevalence of relaxation, fun or socializing rather than drunkenness as the prime motivation for drinking. HOW presents norms for prevention/protection practices such as keeping track of how many drinks are consumed, arranging for a designated driver, staying with the same group of friends all evening, and calling 911 for a friend who has passed out from drinking

These projects demonstrate the importance of focusing prevention efforts on special occasions characterized by high-risk drinking with peers, and supplementing generalized social norm strategies with specialized messages targeting celebratory occasions, social identity segments, and protective behaviors.

*For additional information, contact Charles Atkin at [atkin@msu.edu](mailto:atkin@msu.edu)*

## **The Personal Protective Behaviors of College Student Drinkers: Evidence of Indigence Protective Norms**

*Gregory Barker  
(Northern Illinois University) and  
Richard Rice  
(National Social Norms Resource Center)*

Numerous studies indicate that while a clear majority of college students regularly consume alcohol, few experience alcohol-related harm. The present research focused on the strate-

gies that college student drinkers employ to minimize their risk for alcohol-related harm when drinking. An analysis of the item response data from the Spring 2002 National College Health Assessment aggregate data set identified six personal protective behaviors that, when regularly used by college students, reduced the likelihood of alcohol-related harm. These six behaviors were: determining in advance not to exceed a set number of drinks, choosing not to drink alcohol, keeping track of how many drinks you were having, pacing your drinks to 1 or fewer per hour, avoiding drinking games, and drinking an alcohol look-alike. As the number of these behaviors employed by student drinkers increased, alcohol-related harm decreased. We also identified subgroups within the sample that used a greater number of the protective behaviors more frequently and experienced less alcohol-related harm than their complements within the sample. Specifically, female students, older students, non-fraternity/sorority students, and students with lower BAC used more protective behaviors and reported less alcohol-related harm than their complements within the sample. The data further indicated that the use of these behaviors is normative as nearly three-quarters (73%) of student drinkers in the sample regularly employed at least one protective behavior, and well over half (64%) of the students who used protective behaviors routinely employed two or more.

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## State of Minnesota Department of Public Safety Project: The Prevention Collaborative's Positive Social Norming Campaign

David Hellstrom  
(BACCHUS/GAMMA)

The Prevention Collaborative is a group of seven campuses in the Twin

*"The seven schools registered an average 13% drop in the number of students who drove a car after drinking. Some of the seven campuses saw even larger reductions, with one campus reporting a 40% drop in their drinking and driving rates."*

Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul that came together to work on preventing impaired driving. The Collaborative consisted of four small private schools and three public and largely commuter schools. A three-year grant of \$130,000 was awarded to the Collaborative from 1999-2002.

### *What The Collaborative Did.*

During the first year, the Collaborative focused on collecting baseline data as well as spending considerable time building stakeholder support at each of the seven campuses. Core Survey data revealed similarities at each of the seven campuses, with a rate of DWI among students of approximately 33%. In addition, a huge gap existed between the perceptions and the reality of the frequency of impaired driving. Thus, the vast majority of students were already making healthy decisions about drinking and driving, but they felt they were the exception rather than the rule.

During the first year of message distribution, students received messages promoting accurate, healthy norms for drinking, non-use and impaired driving from multiple sources. The Collaborative decided upon the message "Most Students Prevent DWI" and then individualized the message for each campus. The text of the items distributed indicated that most students didn't drive a car after drinking, along with other positive messages about how most students also didn't drink in an excessive fashion. In the first year positive social

norming (PSN) materials were distributed in the following mediums: posters, coffee cups, table-tents, water bottles and stickers.

In the second year we continued marketing the campuses with PSN materials, and added two components. Several campuses worked with stakeholders to incorporate the PSN messages into campus trainings of new students at orientation, residence hall programs, staff development workshops, and even a parent training. In the second year alone, more than 2,000 students participated directly in alcohol education programs. The Collaborative also created a website with PSN information.

In the third year the Collaborative altered the PSN messages slightly, showing the improvement each campus had made on the issue as shown in the gathering of their latest data. An individual campus poster might now have a sub-heading "That's an 18% improvement! Way to go, NHCC!" The posters also started listing the methods students indicated they were using to prevent DWI including not drinking, using a designated driver, walking home, calling a cab or friend, etc.

Random surveying of the student body revealed that 9 of 10 students recognized the "most" message and could accurately state the "real" drinking and driving norm.

**Project Evaluation.** The Project showed encouraging results after the three-year period, including:

- The seven schools registered an average 13% drop in the number of students who drove a car after drinking. Some of the seven campuses saw even larger reductions, with one campus reporting a 40% drop in their drinking and driving rates.
- Excessive, high risk drinking decreased by 20% over a three-year period, dropping from 36% to 29%.
- Both annual prevalence and 30-day

prevalence of drinking declined during the grant period. Annual prevalence dropped 4% from 86% to 82%, while the 30-day prevalence rate dropped even more (6%) from 72% to 66%.

"the vast majority of students were already making healthy decisions about drinking and driving, but they felt they were the exception rather than the rule."

- The average number of drinks per week was reduced from 3.9 drinks to 3.1 drinks over the three-year grant period.
- Negative consequences resulting from alcohol consumption decreased dramatically, (32%). In the baseline data at the start of the grant, 43% of students reported some form of public misconduct, such as trouble with police or campus safety, or harm to themselves or others. The number at the end of the grant period dropped from the original 43% to 29% who reported these same consequences.

In contrast to the success experienced by the campuses in the Prevention Collaborative, national data indicated that college campuses, in general, have not experienced decreases in alcohol related risks. Over the same period of the grant, the national college high-risk drinking rate increased by 17.5% while the impaired driving rate remained essentially unchanged (33%).

For additional information, contact David Hellstrom at [david@bacchus-gamma.org](mailto:david@bacchus-gamma.org)

## MOST of Us Wear Seatbelts: The Process and Outcomes of a Three-Year Statewide Adult Seatbelt Campaign in Montana.

*H. Wesley Perkins (Hobart and William Smith Colleges) and Jeff Linkenbach (Montana State University).*

In 2000 the MOST of US campaign at Montana State University was contracted by the Montana Department of Transportation to research the potential of the social norms approach for increasing seatbelt usage across the statewide population of adults ages 18-80. Outcome data from 2000-2003 indicated that increased reported seatbelt use was highly correlated with recall of the MOST OF US Wear Seatbelts message.

As a result of the campaign, accurate perceptions of the majority of Montana adults wearing seatbelts increased and were statistically significant for the year 2000 to 2001. For example, in 2000, 54% of Montanans accurately perceived that the majority of adults had worn their seatbelt, whereas this figure rose to 66% in 2001. Other measures reported similar increases in accurate perceptions of majority seatbelt use behavior. Additionally, when the normative message decreased due to a reduced media budget and increased exposure to non-normative seatbelt messages, further gains in seatbelt use were not achieved.

Many challenges were encountered with operating this statewide social norms intervention which required creative solutions. Examples include controlling the campaign environment amidst competing messages and maintaining adequate funding and support with changing funding agency personnel.

For additional information, contact Jeff Linkenbach at [jwl@montana.edu](mailto:jwl@montana.edu) or go to [www.mostofus.org](http://www.mostofus.org)

## A Social Norms Approach to Reducing Sexual Risk-Taking Among Urban Middle Schoolers

*William Bacon & Tracy Smith (Planned Parenthood of New York City)*

While many traditional sex education and teen pregnancy prevention programs have been successful in helping young people to delay sexual debut, most have had very modest effects. New models are needed. The social norms approach appears to be well suited to the area of sexual risk-taking behavior for a number of reasons.

First, sexual behavior is especially prone to the kinds of cognitive and social distortions that are thought to underlie misperceptions of norms. In addition, there is evidence that misperceptions exist in this domain and that

such misperceptions are related to subsequent sexual risk-taking behavior. In our own background research with a middle school population, we have found misperceptions of both attitudinal and behavioral norms associated with sexual debut as well as norms related to teasing and sexual harassment. For example, in surveys of middle school students, we found that while a solid majority believed that sexual intercourse was only appropriate for adults, equally strong majorities thought that their peers held much more permissive attitudes—

"...in surveys of middle school students, we found that while a solid majority believed that sexual intercourse was only appropriate for adults, equally strong majorities thought that their peers held much more permissive attitudes—e.g., believing that sex was OK for people their age."

e.g., believing that sex was OK for people their age.

In response, Planned Parenthood of New York City (PPNYC) launched an initiative to incorporate a social norms approach into its school-based pregnancy prevention programming for the 2002-2003 academic year. Working with 6-8th graders in two schools in predominantly Latino and African-American communities, PPNYC developed and implemented a new 15-part sexuality education curriculum that integrates social norms messages aimed at supporting young teens in delaying sexual debut. Classroom lessons include presentations of the young people's actual reported attitudes and discussions of how misperceptions might occur and why they might be harmful.

In addition, in one of our partner schools we created and implemented a social norms poster campaign focusing on the same misperception of peers' attitudes about teen sex. Four versions of the posters were displayed throughout school hallways and classrooms for two weeks at a time. The messages in the four posters were identical: "Think Again. The truth is, most PS140 6th-8th graders think sex is for adults." Small print gave details of the survey results and identified the origins of the data.

Year-end surveys asking about student's understanding of and reactions to the poster campaigns indicated that the campaign messages were well understood, moderately credible, and considered important by the students. In addition,

we assessed perceptions of norms along with actual attitudes and behaviors through a computer-based survey of a large sample of the target population in each school. Preliminary findings suggest that the program is having a positive influence on young people's sexuality-related attitudes and behavior.

For additional information, contact William Bacon at [William.Bacon@ppnyc.org](mailto:William.Bacon@ppnyc.org)

## Engaging Men as Social Justice Allies in Ending Violence Against Women: Evidence for a Social Norms Approach

*Patricia Fabiano (Western Washington University), H. Wesley Perkins (Hobart & William Smith Colleges), Alan Berkowitz (Trumansburg, NY), Jeffrey Linkenbach (Montana State University), and Christopher Stark (Western Washington University)*

The field of sexual assault prevention is shifting attention to address the role of men in ending violence against women. This shift includes educational interventions that address men's socialization, capacity for victim empathy, understanding of consent, and belief in rape myths. Recent studies have documented the importance of the often-misperceived norms men hold about other men's endorsement of rape-supportive attitudes and behaviors. This study pro-

"...men underestimate the importance that most men and women place on consent in sexual activity and the willingness of most men to intervene against sexual violence."

vides further evidence supporting the design of population-based social norms interventions to prevent sexual assault, with our data suggesting that men underestimate the importance that most men and women place on consent in sexual activity and the willingness of most men to intervene against sexual violence. In addition, men's personal adherence to only consensual activity and their willingness to act as women's allies in the face of sexual violence are strongly influenced by their perceptions of other men's and women's norms. Thus, these findings support the proposition that accurate normative data, which counters the misperception of rape-supportive environments, can be a critical part of a comprehensive campus effort to catalyze and support men's development as women's social justice allies in preventing sexual violence against women.

For additional information, contact Patricia Fabiano at [Pat.Fabiano@wwu.edu](mailto:Pat.Fabiano@wwu.edu) or go to [www.alanberkowitz.com](http://www.alanberkowitz.com) to download an article based on this study, which is in the Nov./Dec. 2003 issue of *Journal of American College Health*.

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