

Selected Studies for Social Norms and Alcohol and Greeks

Title: **Predicting drinking behavior and alcohol-related problems among fraternity and sorority members: examining the role of descriptive and injunctive norms.**

Authors: [Larimer, M.E.](#); [Turner, A.P.](#); [Mallett, K.A.](#); [Geisner, I.M.](#)

Source: [Psychology of Addictive Behaviors](#), 2004, 18, 3, 203-212

Abstract: The authors examined the relation between Greek students' perceptions of alcohol consumption in their pledge classes (descriptive norms) and acceptability of drinking (injunctive norms) and the ability of these normative influences to predict drinking behavior, alcohol-related negative consequences, and symptoms of alcohol dependence concurrently and prospectively over 1 year. Participants were 279 men and 303 women recruited from incoming pledge classes of 12 fraternities and 6 sororities, who completed measures of descriptive and injunctive norms, alcohol use, and consequences. Results revealed that descriptive norms significantly predicted concurrent drinking. After controlling for baseline drinking, injunctive norms significantly predicted drinking 1 year later and predicted alcohol-related consequences and dependency symptoms at baseline and follow-up. The potential to incorporate injunctive norms into preventive interventions is discussed.

Title: **Short- and long-term effects of fraternity and sorority membership on heavy drinking: a social norms perspective.**

Authors: [Sher, K.J.](#); [Bartholow, B.D.](#); [Nanda, S.](#)

Source: [Psychology of Addictive Behaviors](#), 2001, 15, 1, 42-51

Abstract: This study sought to determine whether the well-established relation between fraternity/sorority (Greek) membership and heavy alcohol use persists beyond the college years and whether some common third variables might account for the relation between Greek status and heavy drinking. During each of 4 years of college and 1 additional year, young adults (N = 319) completed measures of alcohol use, personality, alcohol expectancies, and environmental influences on drinking. Throughout the college years, Greeks consistently drank more heavily than non-Greeks. Statistically controlling for previous alcohol use did not eliminate this effect. However, Greek status did not predict postcollege heavy drinking levels. Also, perceived peer norms for heavy drinking mediated the relation between Greek affiliation and heavy alcohol use. Results are discussed in terms of situational determinants of heavy alcohol involvement in young adults.

Title: **Considerations for more effective social norms based alcohol education on campus: an analysis of different theoretical conceptualizations in predicting drinking among fraternity men.**

Authors: [Trochel,M.](#); [Williams,S.S.](#); [Reis,J.](#)

Source: [J.Stud.Alcohol](#), 2003, 64, 1, 50-59, United States

Abstract: OBJECTIVE: Recent alcohol education campaigns targeting college students have focused on correcting the erroneous perception students have of the amount of alcohol their peers consume. This strategy is based on assumptions that college students overestimate the amount of alcohol their peers consume and that correcting that misperception will lessen the pressure they feel to consume heavily. However, other theoretical constructs of normative influence may be as or more valuable in improving effectiveness of social norms based education for high-risk college students. This study evaluates the effects of three social normative influence factors on alcohol consumption among fraternity men. METHOD: Participants were 379 members of randomly selected chapters from two large student fraternity organizations. We used hierarchical linear models to analyze the predictive value of normative influence variables in explaining alcohol consumption differences, both across individuals within chapters and across chapters. RESULTS: Perceived consumption norms and perceived subjective norms were significant predictors of alcohol consumption levels. Both normative influence variables are significant in predicting differences in consumption within chapters and across chapters of fraternity men. General approval of alcohol use did not account for significant variance within chapters in consumption or any unique variance in consumption between chapters. CONCLUSIONS: Perceived subjective norms as defined by long-standing behavior theory may provide an alternative and potentially more promising intervention target for this high-risk student population than does the current focus on correcting students' errors in estimating the amount of alcohol their peers consume.

Title: **Understanding fraternity drinking: five recurring themes in the literature, 1980-1998**

Authors: [Borsari,BE](#); [Carey,Kate B.](#)

Source: [Journal of American College Health](#), 1999, 48, 1, 30-37

Abstract: In light of widespread concern about alcohol abuse on college campuses, the authors review the empirical literature concerning fraternity drinking published since 1980. The review is structured according to 5 themes that emerge from the literature: (a) the continuity between high school and college drinking, (b) the self-selection of heavy drinkers into environments that support heavy drinking, (c) the central role of alcohol in fraternity socialization, (d) the misperception of drinking norms, and (e) the enabling environment of the fraternity house. The literature is summarized for the benefit of those who wish to better understand the role of alcohol use in the fraternity system.

Title: **College drinking and the Greek system: Examining the role of perceived norms for high-risk behavior**

Authors: [Larimer, Mary E.](#); [Irvine, Daniel L.](#); [Kilmer, Jason R.](#); [Marlatt, G. Alan](#)

Source: [Journal of College Student Development](#), 1997, 38, 6, 587-598, ACPA Executive Office, US

Abstract: Participants were 376 members of Greek fraternity houses (157 men, 219 women) with reputations for high, average, and low drinking. The average participant was 19.75 years in age, and 88% of the sample was Caucasian. Participants were compared on measures of perceived house reputation (Organizational Perceptions Questionnaire), acceptability of high-risk drinking (House Acceptability Questionnaire), and alcohol norms (Drinking Norms Rating Form). Members of high-drinking houses viewed their social reputations more positively and heavy drinking as more acceptable than did members in houses with reputations for less drinking. Gender differences and implications for alcohol prevention are discussed.

Title: **Patterns and Importance of Self-Other Differences in College Drinking Norms**

Authors: [Carey, Kate B.](#); [Borsari, Brian](#); [Carey, Michael P.](#); [Maisto, Stephen A.](#)

Source: [Psychology of Addictive Behaviors](#), 2006, 20, 4, 385-393, American Psychological Assn

Abstract: College students overestimate other students' drinking behavior (descriptive norms) and attitudes (injunctive norms). This study explored the effects of demographics, norm type, and reference group on the magnitude of self- other differences (SODs). Participants (N = 1,611; 64% women) completed surveys assessing demographics, drinking patterns, and perceived norms. A subset of 122 students provided consumption data 1 month later to test predictors of changes in drinking. Overall, women and non-Greeks (Greek = member of fraternity or sorority) reported larger SODs for both norm types compared with men and Greeks. Heavier drinkers reported smaller SODs. Gender × Reference Group interactions revealed that women had larger SODs for reference groups increasingly distal to them; for men, the largest SODs occur for close friends versus more distal groups. Larger SODs for descriptive norms predicted increases in drinking, consistent with social norms theory.

Title: **Evaluating a brief alcohol intervention with fraternities.**

Authors: [Larimer, M.E.](#); [Turner, A.P.](#); [Anderson, B.K.](#); [Fader, J.S.](#); [Kilmer, J.R.](#); [Palmer, R.S.](#); [Cronce, J.M.](#)

Source: [J.Stud.Alcohol](#), 2001, 62, 3, 370-380, United States

Abstract: OBJECTIVE: The current study tested the efficacy of a brief intervention designed to reduce drinking and drinking-related consequences among first-year fraternity members. METHOD: Twelve fraternities were randomly

assigned to receive either a motivational enhancement intervention with individual and housewide feedback components (n = 6 houses) or a treatment-as-usual control condition (n = 6 houses). Individual feedback was delivered either by peer interviewers or professional research staff. Participants were assessed during their pledge (first) year of house membership and during a follow-up period 1 year later. **RESULTS:** Of the participants who completed follow-up (N = 120), fraternity members who received the brief intervention reported significant reductions in alcohol use (total average consumption) and typical peak blood alcohol concentrations when compared with fraternity members in the control condition. No differences in drinking-related consequences were observed. Fraternity members who received their individualized feedback from peer interviewers and professional members of the research staff reported similar outcomes. **CONCLUSIONS:** Results provide support for the efficacy of a brief motivational enhancement intervention in reducing drinking within this high-risk population. The cost-effective use of peer interviewers appears to be a promising strategy for delivering individualized prevention programming in college populations.

The following sites may also be of use to you:

- 1) **The University of Arizona's Sorority Social Norms Campaign:**
<http://www.socialnorms.campushealth.net/sorority-campaign.htm>
- 2) **The University of Virginia Center for Alcohol and Substance Education Social Norms Campaign with Fraternity and Sorority Members:**
<http://www.virginia.edu/case/education/fraternity-sorority.html>
- 3) **The University of Virginia's Alcohol Abuse Prevention, Education, and Intervention Programs:**
<http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/hp/norms/AddlAlcoholProg.pdf>