

## Selected Studies for Social Norms and Sexual Consent

Title: **Engaging men as social justice allies in ending violence against women: evidence for a social norms approach.**

Authors: [Fabiano,P.M.](#); [Perkins,H.W.](#); [Berkowitz,A.](#); [Linkenbach,J.](#); [Stark,C.](#)

Source: [J.Am.Coll.Health](#), 2003, 52, 3, 105-112, United States

Abstract: The field of sexual assault prevention is shifting attention to educational interventions that address the role of men in ending violence against women. Recent studies document the often-misperceived norms men hold about other men's endorsement of rape-supportive attitudes and behaviors. The authors provide further evidence supporting the design of population-based social norms interventions to prevent sexual assault. Data from this study suggest that men underestimate the importance that most men and women place on consent and 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 are strongly influenced by their perceptions of other men's and women's norms. These findings support the proposition that accurate normative data, which counters the misperception of rape-supportive environments, can be a critical part of comprehensive campus efforts to catalyze and support men's development as women's social justice allies in preventing sexual violence against women.

Title: **Social norms and beliefs regarding sexual risk and pregnancy involvement among adolescent males treated for dating violence perpetration.**

Authors: [Silverman,J.G.](#); [Decker,M.R.](#); [Reed,E.](#); [Rothman,E.F.](#); [Hathaway,J.E.](#); [Raj,A.](#); [Miller,E.](#)

Source: [J.Urban Health](#), 2006, 83, 4, 723-735, United States

Abstract: The present study explored perceived sexual norms and behaviors related to sexual risk and pregnancy involvement among adolescent males (ages 13 to 20) participating in programs for perpetrators of dating violence. The purpose of this study was to generate hypotheses regarding the contexts and mechanisms underlying the intersection of adolescent dating violence, sexual risk and pregnancy. Six focus groups were conducted (N = 34 participants). A number of major themes emerged: 1) male norm of multiple partnering, 2) perceived gain of male social status from claims of sexual activity, 3) perception that rape is uncommon combined with belief that girls claiming to be raped are liars, 4) perception that men rationalize rapes to avoid responsibility, 5) condom non-use in the context of rape and sex involving

substance use, 6) beliefs that girls lie and manipulate boys in order to become pregnant and trap them into relationships, and 7) male avoidance of responsibility and negative responses to pregnancy. The combination of peer-supported norms of male multiple partnering and adversarial sexual beliefs appear to support increased male sexual risk, lack of accountability for sexual risk, and rationalization of rape and negative responses to pregnancy. Further research focused on the context of male sexual risk and abusive relationship behaviors is needed to inform intervention with young men to promote sexual health and prevent rape, dating violence, and adolescent pregnancy.

Title: **Evaluation of a Sexual Assault Prevention Program for College Men: Effects on Self-Reported Sexually Aggressive Behavior, Social Perceptions, and Attitudes**

Authors: [Lobo, Tracy R.](#)

Source: [Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering](#), Vol. 66(1-B), 2005. pp. 562

Abstract: There is a growing body of research on the effectiveness of male-targeted sexual assault prevention programs. Most of these studies have demonstrated short-term improvements in rape supportive attitudes. However, these improvements have generally not been maintained over longer follow-up periods, and few researchers have investigated the effects of prevention programming on sexually aggressive behavior. The purpose of the current study was to examine the effects of a male-targeted sexual assault prevention program on behavior, attitudes, social perceptions, and judgments of consent. Social norms theory served as a theoretical basis for program evaluated in this study. The participants were 342 college men who were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups. Self-reported sexually aggressive behavior, rape-supportive attitudes, perceptions of other men's attitudes about sexual aggression, and judgments of consent were assessed at pre-test, and at 3-month and 7-month follow-ups. Participants in the experimental group reported that they found the program content to be valuable, accurate, and personally relevant. However, compared to participants in the control group, they did not demonstrate any differences in rates of sexually aggressive behavior over the course of the study. In addition, group membership did not have a significant effect on changes in attitudes or social perceptions over the course of the study. At the 3-month follow-up, the experimental group participants, in comparison to the control group, demonstrated greater accuracy in their judgments of a sexually aggressive scenario, but these improvements were not maintained at the 7-month follow-up. The lack of evidence supporting the effectiveness of this intervention, and other interventions, suggests that brief, one-session prevention programs may not be sufficient to produce substantial change. Programs that utilize multiple exposures to information over time may be more likely to be effective. Other implications for future research on sexual assault prevention are also discussed.

Title: **Beliefs about the effects of alcohol on involvement in coercive and consenting sexual activities**

Authors: [Fromme, Kim](#); [Wendel, Julie](#)

Source: [J.Appl.Soc.Psychol.](#), 1995, 25, 23, 2099-2117, Blackwell Publishing, United Kingdom

Abstract: This study examined how an alcohol instructional set (intoxicated or sober) and gender affected subjects' beliefs about the negative and positive consequences of engaging in coercive and consenting sexual behaviors, as well as subjects' expressed likelihood of involvement in these activities. Participants who responded to an intoxicated set believed they were more likely to be involved in coercive sexual behaviors than those who responded to sober instructions. Males with an intoxicated set also expected fewer negative and more positive consequences from coercive sex than did other participants. For consenting sexual activities, males (regardless of set) rated negative consequences lower, positive consequences higher, and expressed a stronger likelihood of involvement than did females. Efforts to prevent sexual coercion might be enhanced by including a focus on how beliefs about alcohol may affect the expected consequences and occurrence of these acts.

Title: **Injunctive social norms of adults regarding teen dating violence**

Authors: [Taylor, C.A.](#); [Sorenson, S.B.](#)

Source: [Journal of Adolescent Health](#), 2004, 34, 6, 468-479

Abstract: PURPOSE: To assess applied injunctive social norms of adults regarding teen dating violence (TDV) and compare them with those regarding adult domestic violence (ADV). METHODS: A total of 3679 California adults from six ethnic groups (roughly equal numbers of African-American, Hispanic, Korean-American, Vietnamese-American, other Asian-American, and white respondents) participated in a 27-minute interview. An experimental vignette design was used to test for associations among contextual (i.e., victim, assailant, and situational) characteristics of TDV and ADV, respondent demographic characteristics, and injunctive social norms (i.e., whether adults thought the behavior was wrong, illegal, or should be illegal, police should be called, or a restraining order issued). Data were analyzed using multivariate logistic regression, controlling for vignette variables (i.e., contextual characteristics) and respondent characteristics. Interactions were examined to test for differences in responses to TDV and ADV. RESULTS: Nearly all adults report that most forms of TDV are wrong (97%) and should be illegal (81%), and a majority support interventions for TDV such as calling police and issuing a restraining order. TDV involving sexual assault, physical assault, or weapons received the greatest levels of support for societal intervention. Differences in respondent judgments regarding TDV and ADV were evident when the victim had been raped. Respondent characteristics generally were not associated with responses. CONCLUSIONS: Findings suggest that there is general public support for prevention and intervention strategies aimed at

reducing and responding to TDV, and may inform efforts to alter social norms and expectations regarding TDV.

Title: **Social norms and the likelihood of raping: Perceived rape myth acceptance of others affects men's rape proclivity.**

Authors: [Bohner,G.](#); [Siebler,F.](#); [Schmelcher,J.](#)

Source: [Pers.Soc.Psychol.Bull.](#), 2006, 32, 3, 286-297, United States

Abstract: Research showing that rape myth acceptance (RMA) causally affects rape proclivity (RP) was extended by examining the impact of RMA-related norms on RP. Male students (total N = 264) received feedback about the alleged responses of other students to RMA items either before (Experiment 1) or after (Experiment 2) they reported their own RMA, and then their RP was assessed using acquaintance-rape scenarios. The level of RMA feedback was varied. Results showed that higher norms led to higher RP. In Experiment 1, this effect was mediated via self-reported RMA. Experiment 2 yielded main effects of both RMA feedback and self-reported RMA and an interaction effect showing that RMA feedback was particularly influential at higher levels of own RMA. Theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

#### **The following studies may also be of interest to you:**

##### **1) James Madison University's "A Man..." Sexual Assault Prevention Campaign**

<http://www.socialnormsresources.org/CaseStudies/sexassaultprev.php>

In a project funded by the Virginia Department of Health, James Madison University's "A Man..." Project used three approaches to address male sexual assault prevention: a social norms marketing campaign, intentional educational programs, and male peer-to-peer education. Year One of this project was completed in the 1999-2000 academic year and involved a quasi-experimental design. In a 1992 article, Berkowitz suggested that, since most of the factors that facilitate male sexual coercion are learned in all male groups, prevention programs should be delivered by men to all-male groups. Therefore, four all-male student groups were recruited, but received no specific interventions for use as a comparison group. Four additional all-male organizations were recruited to serve as treatment groups. These groups posted social norms marketing flyers in their living and working areas and attended two educational programs: Dr. Christopher Kilmartin's play, Crimes Against Nature, which addresses male socialization issues, and a presentation by a male peer education group.

Year-one comparison of the 10 behavioral items on the pre and post-test surveys indicated positive behavioral change among members of the treatment group and negative behavioral change among members of the comparison group. Specifically, there was a reported decrease in the percentage of men believing that the average James Madison University (JMU) male 1) has sex when intoxicated; 2) won't stop sexual activity when asked to if he is already aroused; and 3) makes out in remotely parked cars. There also was an increase in the percentage of men who indicated that they stop the first time their date says 'no' to sexual activity.

In year two the project was expanded to include the entire campus. Significant all-campus changes at the end of year two include decreases in the percentage of men who believe that the average JMU male: 1) has sex when his partner is intoxicated; 2) won't stop sexual activity when asked to if he is already sexually aroused. Decreases were also found in the percentage of men who indicated that 1) they believe talking about sex destroys the romance of the moment; and 2) they think it is okay to pressure a date to drink alcohol in order to improve one's chances of getting one's date to have sex (Bruce, 2002).

**See Also:** Bruce S. The “A Man” campaign: Marketing social norms to men to prevent sexual assault. Garfield, NJ: PaperClip Communications; 2002. *The Report on Social Norms, Working Paper, No. 5.*

2) Kilmartin C, Conway A, Friedberg A, McQuoid T, Tschan T, Norbet T. **Using the social norms model to encourage male college students to challenge rape-supportive attitudes in male peers.** Paper presented at: Virginia Psychological Association Spring Convention; April 1999; Virginia Beach, VA.

3) **Alan Berkowitz’s Social Norms Approach to Violence Prevention** examines social norms and males’ attitudes and behaviors towards sex, including 1) men’s misperceptions of other men’s sexual activity, 2) incorrect beliefs about other men’s support of rape myths, and/or 3) false assumptions about other men’s comfort with degrading language towards women.

[www.alanberkowitz.com/articles/BPI.pdf](http://www.alanberkowitz.com/articles/BPI.pdf) and

<http://www.alanberkowitz.com/Preventing%20Sexual%20Violence%20Chapter.pdf>