

Defending girlfriends, buddies and oneself: injunctive norms and male barroom aggression

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Abstract

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Objective Research has demonstrated that young adults tend to overestimate their peers' approval of risky behaviors (i.e., injunctive norms) and that perceived peer approval is associated with actual behavior; however, no empirical studies have assessed injunctive norms in relation to male barroom aggression. The objectives of the present study were to compare young men's own approval of male barroom aggression with their perceptions of approval by male and female peers and to determine the extent that perceived peer approval of male barroom aggression was associated with self-reported physical aggression at a bar, controlling for own approval and heavy episodic drinking.
Method 525 young adult male university and community college students who reported drinking and going to a bar, club or pub rated their own approval and perceptions of peers' approval of bar aggression on items reflecting four domains of approval: (1) general approval, (2) defend self, (3) defend friend and (4) protect girlfriend.
Results For all four domains, participants attributed greater approval to male peers than to themselves. Aggression was positively associated with own approval for all domains and with perceived male peer approval for general approval, defend self and defend friend, controlling for heavy episodic drinking and own approval of aggression. Perceived approval by female peers was not associated with increased likelihood of aggression.
Conclusion The findings suggest that both perceived male peer approval and personal approval are factors associated with male barroom aggression and that addressing approval of barroom aggression is a critical direction for prevention programming.
Research Highlights

- Perceived male peer approval of bar aggression was rated higher than own approval.
- Approval of barroom aggression was associated with a greater likelihood of barroom aggression.
- Perceived male peer approval was associated with a greater likelihood of barroom aggression.
- Addressing approval of barroom aggression is a critical direction for prevention programming.

Web link

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21216108>

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