

## Student Research Seminars

**FRIDAY 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006**  
**11:00 – 12:00**

**SEERC Seminar Room**  
**SEERC Bldg**

### "Youth Smoking in Greece: A Focus on Normative Processes"

By  
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#### **ABSTRACT**

Smoking is a major public health concern accounting for millions of deaths each year. Unless preventive action is taken, the smoking-related death toll will increase even more in the future. Current trends in public health and disease prevention require that smoking prevention strategies are focused on the prevention or delay of smoking onset, and based on clear evidence regarding the psychosocial processes that underlie smoking initiation. Since most smoking experiences occur in adolescence, youth smoking has been the main target of such prevention initiatives. Research on the antecedents of youth smoking has been ongoing and fruitful, yet is limited in societies where social norms against smoking are very strong, and tobacco use tends to become minority behaviour. In Greece, smoking is prevalent, and social norms against tobacco use are far weaker than in most countries of Northern Europe and North America. Additionally, research on youth smoking in Greece has been scarce and relatively unconnected with prevention interventions in schools.

The present thesis aims to explore the role of social norms on youth smoking in Greece, using a theory-driven approach deriving from research in social psychology and communication studies. Specific research questions concern: a) differences in perceptions and beliefs about smoking among smokers and non-smokers, and b) the potential relationship between normative processes, self-perception, and motivation to smoke. These questions will be addressed by three consecutive studies. Studies 1 and 2 employ survey research, and target adolescents ( $N = 4000$ ,  $Mage = 12.7$  years), and young adults ( $N > 400$ , ages 18-23 years). Study 3 will use experimental methods, and target adolescents ( $N > 150$ , ages 13-18 years). Findings are expected to advance current understanding of youth smoking, and of the role of social norms in the process underlying smoking initiation. In terms of policy-making, findings may provide input to subsequent tobacco control policies aimed at primary prevention in Greece.

**The seminar series is open to all members of staff and students of CITY and to any externals that wish to attend.**