This study was conducted at California State University San Marcos during the spring and summer of 2015. This project was a team effort: six undergraduate students worked together to create an intervention to reduce college students’ sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. Initially, we utilized several search engines (e.g., PsycInfo, Google Scholar, PubMed) from the CSUSM library resources to obtain empirical articles and books on health risks involving Social Norms Interventions and Self-Affirmation manipulations. If the literature was unavailable, we used the Interlibrary Loan service. Using knowledge of successful social norms interventions, culled during our literature search, we developed our own social norms intervention which entailed making participants aware of their own *perceptions* of their peers’ practices regarding SSBs (i.e. sugar-sweetened beverages) versus their peers’ *actual* SSB practices. We also discovered a standardized and validated self-affirmation task, the Directed Positive Thinking Task (Harris et al., 2007), using the CSUSM library databases. We further applied knowledge gleaned during our literature review to enhance the Directed Positive Thinking Task by creating a more relevant control task.

After obtaining an extensive list of peer-reviewed articles on various health risk interventions, we began planning the project intervention. Since Social Norms interventions and Self-Affirmation manipulations have been successfully employed to ameliorate a variety of unhealthy behaviors, we utilized methodological information from the existing body of knowledge to develop our intervention and implement it in an entirely new context, sugar-sweetened beverage consumption.
In addition to databases, we used other library resources such as the media center. For instance, one specific part of the intervention involved using the library’s media center for a photoshoot. During the photoshoot, lighting, cameras, and the studio were used to photograph sugary beverages (e.g., Sprite, Lipton tea, etc.) and packets of sugar, arranged to accentuate the underestimated health hazards of sugary beverages. A photograph from this photoshoot was added to an crucial element of our study, a laminated informational card with information about health risks and long-term effects of consuming sugary beverages.

After planning our project and receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, we recruited 143 participants from the Psychology Department Human Participant Pool (HPP). In this 2 (self-affirmation vs. control) x 3 (risks only vs. norms only vs. risks + norms) factorial experimental design, participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions. Data was collected during a period of 3 months. The initial session took 45 minutes to run each participant, and the follow-up at 2 weeks took another 30 minutes per participant. After data collection was complete, we coded, entered, and analyzed the data using SPSS.

This research experiment was innovative for several reasons. First, we applied what we learned from the literature on health risks (e.g., alcohol consumption, smoking) to a context in which many people underestimate health risks, sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. Second, we combined and applied two different social psychological theories (social norms and self-affirmation), which, to the best of our knowledge, had not been combined in any context previously (though, based on the results of this study, we would recommend that they should not be combined in practice because self-affirmation might weaken the efficacy of social norms interventions). Creating interventions that are aimed at reducing health risks is important to our society. If the intervention were found to be effective, it could help decrease a person’s sugar
intake, thereby improving their health. Currently, we are in the process of designing additional interventions that target behavioral change in an effort to decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption among college students.

Overall, we used the library resources to find empirical articles, books, and media to inform the planning and design of our intervention. Moreover, this knowledge aided us in designing an experiment to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention. As undergraduates, these resources are essential for our academic growth and development. Having full access to these resources, remotely and off-campus, is essential for our continued academic growth and success.