

Undergraduate Psychology Research Methods Journal

Volume 1 | Issue 2

Article 16

5-2003

Research Proposal: Marijuana and the Sociability Factor

Jennifer Ip
Lindenwood University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/psych_journals



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ip, Jennifer (2003) "Research Proposal: Marijuana and the Sociability Factor," *Undergraduate Psychology Research Methods Journal*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/psych_journals/vol1/iss2/16

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Psychology, Sociology, and Public Health Department at Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Psychology Research Methods Journal by an authorized editor of Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. For more information, please contact phuffman@lindenwood.edu.

Marijuana and the Sociability Factor

Jennifer Ip

Lindenwood University

This present study is designed for the purpose of determining whether smoking marijuana increases a person's sociability. I chose to research this topic because from personal experience (through friends and acquaintances, not myself personally), it seems that people who smoke pot are more sociable than those who do not.

As a whole, society generally views substance use as deviant and taboo. However, for many high school and college students, the use of marijuana is considered normal and simply a part of life. Despite the fact that the smoking of marijuana is illegal, many young people engage in this activity for various reasons such as relaxation, peer pressure, social reasons, among others.

In a study conducted on a group of male North Queensland students, it was found that students usually started smoking marijuana simply because they were curious about the substance. However, after the students made the decision to engage in the activity, the peer group became an important factor in continuing in such behavior (Davey, 1990). Peers act as reference points for acceptable and controlled substance use (Davey, 1990).

Researchers have found that association with drug using friends is a consistently significant predictor of substance use, particularly among adolescents and young adults (Curran, White & Hansell, 2000). Like seeks like, and drug users choose other drug users to be their friends, rather than friendships causing drug use (Curran, White & Hansell, 2000).

Contrary to popular belief, the social effect of drug use is not necessarily negative. Studies have shown that peers and acquaintances play a role in the initiation of substance use. However, the same evidence also supports that ties with others, especially those with similar characteristics correlate with better mental health (Ford, 2001). According to Ford (2001), by regulating behaviors and attitudes through the creation and exercise of constraints, or by providing individuals with a belief that life has meaning and purpose, social integration may not only promote mental health, but physical health as well. Some studies have found that marijuana use is associated with a short-term positive self-concept, and positive effects on self-acceptance (Ford, 2001). When marijuana is not used as a coping mechanism, it has been found to decrease depression. Generally, the social aspect of substance use is a positive factor, as membership in such a group and the perceived support that it provides has salutary effects on mental health.

Extensive research has shown that group activity has a positive effect on mental health. Based upon such research I expect to find that the smoking of marijuana does increase one's sociability.

Method

Participants

There will be 200 participants, 100 male and 100 female, all of whom are between the ages of 18 and 25. One hundred of these students will be marijuana users (50 female and 50 male), while the other 100 (50 female and 50 male) will not be. They will be recruited from the undergraduate student population of Lindenwood University, Washington University and St. Charles Community College. A female researcher will conduct the experimental sessions.

Materials

There will be a standardized survey containing questions designed to obtain information about the participant's social life (including friends, and social pastimes), as well as marijuana use. Some sample questions include: If you use marijuana, how many times a day (in a 24-hour period) do you use it? When you use marijuana, do you do so with other people around? If so, how many other people? Are you friends with people who use marijuana? How long do you have to know somebody before you consider him/her to be your friend?

Some of the equipment that will be required for this experiment includes desks and chairs for the participants, computers where the survey will be taken, informed consent forms, copies of the debriefing, as well as participant receipts. The study will be conducted in a classroom setting in Young Hall, Room 104 at Lindenwood University.

Procedure

There will be two groups of students being tested: non-marijuana users and marijuana users. Non-marijuana students are defined to be somebody who has not engaged in marijuana use more than two times in the past year. During the study, the students will be seated in a classroom where they will be given two informed consent forms to fill out. The student will keep one of the forms for themselves, and the experimenter will keep the other form. The students will then be randomly seated in front of a computer where they will proceed to complete the survey electronically to ensure complete anonymity. The random seating is another measure to ensure that the participants will remain anonymous. They will proceed to fill out the survey to the best

of their knowledge in regards to their social life and marijuana use. After the survey is completed, each student is given a debriefing, explaining the purpose of the study and giving the student information about people to contact if they have any questions or concerns.

While taking the survey, the students will be told to be as honest as possible when answering the questions. This is a between-subjects design because the non-marijuana users and the marijuana users are being compared to each other. The participants will be using computers to complete the survey so that each person's survey is in the same form. While the participants are completing the survey, there will be at least one researcher or a researcher's assistant available to answer any questions the participants might have about the survey. The students will all be tested in a classroom setting at 1:00 pm on a Wednesday, and lunch will be supplied to each student prior to completing the survey.

Implications

If my hypothesis were supported, then the results of the study would show that marijuana users are more sociable than non-marijuana users. The marijuana users will answer 'yes' more often than non-marijuana users to questions that pertain to having an open mind, not being shy when meeting new people, and the enjoyment of engaging in group activities. If my hypothesis were not supported, then the results of the study will show that non-marijuana users are more sociable or equally as sociable as marijuana users and they will answer 'yes' more often or equally as marijuana users to the same types of questions.

I would use a t-test to analyze the data statistically because I am making a comparison between two groups of students.

In relation to society, the results of my study could be applied to people who are anti-social. It is a completely far-fetched idea, but if the results of my experiment support my hypothesis, then marijuana usage may be the solution to the problems faced by people who have trouble making friends. These friendless people could take up smoking marijuana in order to become more sociable and meet new people. In the grand scheme of things, the results supporting my hypothesis could provide an explanation as to why this activity is so popular amongst the younger generation.

If the results of my experiment did not support my hypothesis, then further research should be done to find out why high school and college aged students choose to partake in this activity.

References

- Curran, G. M., White, H. R. & Hansell, S. (2000). Personality, environment, and problem drug use. *Journal of Drug Issues, 30*, 375-406.
- Davey, Jeremy (1990). High times at high school. *Youth Studies, 9*, 43-47.
- Ford, Julie (2001). Substance use and self-reported mental health: the moderating effect of acquaintance use behavior among adults. *Journal of Drug Issues, 31*, 565-591.