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OPINIONS ON MARIJUANA: SEX DIFFERENCES AT A  
 WESTERN CANADIAN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT: Three hundred and seventy-two freshmen at the University of Victoria were surveyed to determine their opinions regarding the following four aspects concerning marijuana. 1. Whether marijuana is a beneficial or dangerous substance. 2. Types of legal controls that should be placed on the substance. 3. Each student's estimate of future use of marijuana and 4. The ease of obtaining the substance.

Chi-square analysis of the data showed that in the sample surveyed male students in all cases were ahead of female students in exploring the marijuana sub-culture. The data provides a basis for judging future trends in this controversial area of student life.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Male and Female Students Holding Different Opinions Regarding the Benefits or Dangers of Marijuana.

	Male	Female	Total
Based on what I have read or heard about marijuana, my present belief is best described as			
1. This is a beneficial substance, whose values outweigh any likely harmful effects.....	13	6	10
2. This is a fairly harmless substance with no marked positive value but with no very serious harmful effects either.....	46	38	42
3. This is a possibly harmful substance, whose dangers are important enough to outweigh possible beneficial effects.....	29	45	36
4. This is an extremely dangerous substance, with little or no beneficial effect.....	2	6	4
5. This may be an extremely dangerous substance, but the benefits more than offset the possible risks.....	2	1	2
6. I have no opinion as to possible benefits or dangers of this substance.....	8	4	6
	100.0	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2 = 17.50; df = 5; p < .01; N = 372$

Note:  $\chi^2$  was calculated from frequencies, not proportions, in Tables 1 through 4.

There is increasing pressure to relax the present laws regarding marijuana, particularly laws related to its possession. The pressure comes not from the overwhelming majority of the general population but mainly from selected groups of the under thirty generation. A recent poll conducted on various university campuses across Canada showed that a large section of students voted in favor of legalizing marijuana. However, in most instances, less than one third of the eligible students bothered to vote on the issue. In contrast, larger and more representative samples of the general population, both in Canada and the United States, have indicated a rejection of the idea of legalizing marijuana by between 75 to 85 percent of those sampled.

The present paper adds to the current research literature on marijuana by analyzing sex differences among university freshmen regarding marijuana in terms of the following areas:

1. Can marijuana be considered a beneficial or dangerous substance?
2. What type of legislative control should be placed on marijuana?
3. Do you expect to use marijuana in the future?
4. How easy is it to obtain marijuana?

The data were collected during the 1970 spring term at the University of Victoria as part of a larger study conducted to investigate the relationship between students' knowledge of and opinion of

TABLE 2

Percentage of Male and Female Students Holding Different Opinions Regarding the Legal Aspects of Marijuana.

	Male	Female	Total
I believe that legislation to control use of marijuana should provide primarily for			
1. prohibiting its use and possession by anyone.....	4	8	5
2. prohibiting its use and possession by anyone except individuals serving as subjects in bona fide research studies.....	17	19	18
3. prohibiting its use and possession by anyone under 21, except in a research setting.	9	9	9
4. prohibiting its use and possession by anyone under 18, except in a research setting.	20	8	15
5. prohibiting or controlling its sale and distribution, but without making its use or possession a legal offense in itself.....	40	46	43
6. no legal controls whatever with respect to marijuana.....	10	10	10
	100.0	100.0	100.0

$$\chi^2 = 11.49; df = 5; p < .05; N = 372$$

TABLE 3  
 Percentage of Male and Female Students  
 Predicting Future Use of Marijuana

	Male	Female	Total
How probable is it that you will use marijuana in the future ?			
1. Inconceivable.....	21	24	22
2. Unlikely.....	34	38	36
3. 50-50 chance.....	16	12	14
4. Very probable.....	13	10	12
5. Undoubtedly.....	16	16	16
	100.0	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2 = 2.44; df = 4; p < .70; N = 372.$

marijuana. A total of 208 men and 164 women answered the opinion questionnaire in 20 freshmen English classes. The total of 372 students represented approximately one fifth of the freshman population.

Table 1 reports the opinion of students regarding the benefits or dangers of marijuana. Six percent of the sample had no opinion on this aspect of the substance. Fifty-two percent of the total group felt that marijuana was not particularly dangerous. However a chi-square analysis shows a definite sex difference appearing in the data with men holding the more lenient attitude. Fifty-nine percent of the men compared with 44 percent of the women felt that marijuana was a beneficial substance or at least one that was fairly harmless.

Table 2 shows the percentage of students who held varying opinions regarding the legal aspects of marijuana. Combining the total percentages for responses 5 and 6 shows that 53 percent of the sample felt that the possession of marijuana should not constitute a legal offense. Male students again appeared to be more extreme in their views as shown by the data reporting opinions on total prohibition. Male students also were more willing to allow the younger age category of 18-20 year olds to take part in marijuana research studies.

Table 3 presents data related to students' possible future use of marijuana. Fifty-eight percent of the total group felt that they would not use the substance whereas only 28 percent expressed a positive prediction regarding their future use. Fourteen percent can be classified as being in the undecided category. No significant sex differences appear in Table 3 data.

Table 4 records the accessibility of marijuana as acknowledged by the freshman students. Eighty-three percent of the total sample felt that they could procure some marijuana. Only 10 percent stated that they had no idea as to a possible supply source. However, a definite sex difference occurred in that the female group had a larger percentage confessing ignorance of possible supply sources.

TABLE 4  
 Percentage of Male and Female Students Declaring  
 Knowledge of Supply Sources of Marijuana.

	Male	Female	Total
If you were to decide for some reason that you wanted to get some marijuana do you think you would know where to go to get it ?			
1. I'm sure I could get some.....	64	64	64
2. Probably could, but I'm not sure.....	21	17	19
3. I might, but it's doubtful.....	9	4	7
4. I have no idea where to try.....	6	15	10
	100.0	100.0	100.0
$\chi^2 = 10.84; df = 3; p < .05; N = 372.$			

DISCUSSION

This study shows that freshmen university students do have a wide range of opinions regarding marijuana. Chi-square analysis of the data reveals that there is a definite sex difference with regard to the beneficial effects and legal aspects as well as knowledge of supply sources of marijuana. Male students in all cases are ahead of female students in exploring the marijuana sub-culture.

It is hoped that studies such as this will supply students, faculty and administrators with data so that they will have a firmer basis for judging what their policies in this controversial area of young adult life should be. The data presented in this paper can also provide a base line upon which to judge opinion trends in the future.

**RESUME:** On a fait une enquête auprès de 372 étudiants de première année collégiale de l'Université de Victoria afin de déterminer leurs opinions concernant quatre aspects du phénomène marijuana: 1 — Marijuana: substance bénéfique ou nocive; 2 — Types de contrôle légal devant la régir; 3 — Estimation de la consommation personnelle future; 4 — Facilité à se procurer de la marijuana.

L'analyse des données par chi-carré montra que les étudiants semblent être plus avancés que les étudiantes dans l'exploration de cette sous-culture. Les données constituent une base permettant de juger des tendances futures dans ce domaine controversé de la vie étudiante.