

# Does Perceived Drug Use Play a Role in Choosing Romantic Partners?

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## Summary

The study aimed to measure the influence of perceived drug use (e.g., Marijuana, Opioid, and Cocaine) on social desirability and attractiveness. Recent research has shown that negative personality information harms ratings of physical attractiveness, more strongly impacting how individuals rate men than women (Magda & Goodwin, 2008; Gonzalez-Alvarez, 2017). We were interested in measuring attitudes towards users of various drugs for two reasons: drug use is highly stigmatized in most cultures and due to the recent legalization of marijuana. This research will elucidate which kinds of drugs are more stigmatized and whether specific types of drugs impact social desirability. Based on preliminary research conducted during Fall 2018 in Research Methods and Data Analysis class, we hypothesized that drug conditions will be favored in the following order: control, marijuana, opioid, then cocaine. SPSS software was used to conduct analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. The ANOVAs for attractiveness, the likelihood of dating, trustworthiness, responsibility, and intelligence were all significant, and post-analysis confirmed our hypothesis. Future analyses will examine the role of target ethnicity.

## Methods

- Participants were recruited via the Psychology Subject Pool and through convenience sampling.
- Participants reported gender they were attracted to.

Gender	N	Age	Gender Attracted To
Female	155	$M = 19.63$ years, $SD = 2.64$	74.8% attracted to Males 6.5% attracted to Females 18.7% attracted to Both
Male	46	$M = 20.48$ years, $SD = 2.61$	13.0% attracted to Males 82.6% attracted to Females 4.3% attracted to Both
Other	1	$M = 19$ years	100% attracted to Male

## Procedure

- Depending on the gender participants reported being attracted to (either female, male, or both), they were presented with 4 target photographs in one of four trial orders.
- Each photograph was accompanied by a brief, fictional biography from one of four drug conditions (No drug use/control, Marijuana, Opioid, or Cocaine). The biography included hobbies, academics, and drug-use.
- Each drug condition was crossed with one of four ethnicities (White, Black, Asian, or Latinx).
- A Latin squares design was used to counterbalance drug conditions and target ethnicities.

## Photographs and Biographies for Experimental Conditions

### Female Target Photographs



### Male Target Photographs



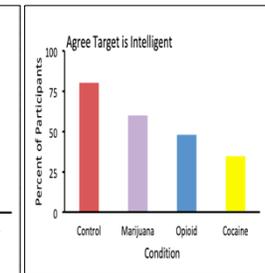
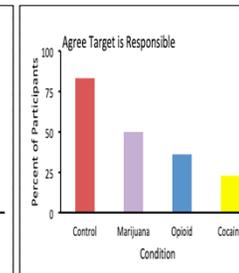
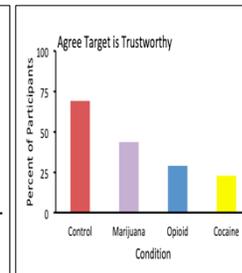
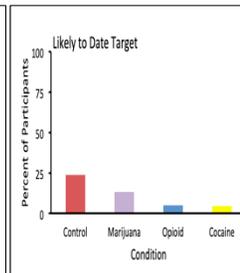
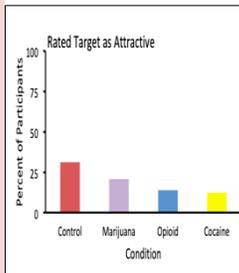
- Participants received 4 trials total, each ethnicity was crossed with each drug condition biography
- Using a 5-point Likert scale, participants rated their level of agreement for:
  - ♦ How attractive is this person? ♦ How likely are you to date this person?
  - ♦ I believe this person is trustworthy ♦ I believe this person is responsible
  - ♦ I believe this person is intelligent

### Biographies for Each Drug Condition

- **No Drug Use/Control Condition**  
John/Jennifer is a college junior studying economics. He/She likes reading, skiing, and playing the guitar. He/She works as a waiter at a local restaurant and will be completing a 1-year internship at a hospital over the next month. John/Jennifer enjoys going out with friends 2 or 3 times a week to relax and have a good time, but only when he/she has no obligations scheduled for the next day.
- **Marijuana Condition**  
James/Mary is a college junior studying accounting. He/She likes fishing, hiking, and being outdoors in general. He/She works as a bartender at a local bar and is president of the Future Business Leaders of America on campus. After school and work, he/she likes to smoke marijuana with his/her friends to relax. James/Mary uses marijuana recreationally 3 times a week and is careful not to let it interfere with his/her schoolwork or job.
- **Opioid Condition**  
Michael/Olivia is a college junior studying biology. He/She enjoys kayaking, golfing, and going to the gym. He/She is an active member of the student government association and volunteers at a local animal shelter twice a week. After an injury sustained in the gym, Michael/Olivia was given a prescription for opioid painkillers. He/She now takes these drugs 3 times a week to relax with friends and is careful not to let it interfere with other aspects of his/her life.
- **Cocaine Condition**  
Chris/Emily is a college junior studying psychology. He/She enjoys kayaking, playing piano, and going camping. He/She is an active member of the law and society club. For work he/she tutors children in mathematics and volunteers at a local homeless shelter whenever he/she has the time. Chris/Emily enjoys going out to clubs with friends 3 times a week and doing cocaine. He/She is careful not to let this interfere with his/her school or work life.

## Results Confirm Hypotheses:

### Participants rated most variables Control > Marijuana > Opioid > Cocaine



- A repeated measures ANOVA on mean attractiveness ratings was significant,  $F(3,603) = 20.14$ ,  $p < .0001$ .
- Post-hoc analyses revealed no significant difference between opioid and cocaine conditions,  $p = .12$
- A repeated measures ANOVA on mean ratings for likelihood of dating target was significant,  $F(3,603) = 45.46$ ,  $p < .0001$ .
- Post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences between all conditions, all  $ps < .001$ .
- A repeated measures ANOVA on mean trustworthiness ratings was significant,  $F(3,588) = 55.48$ ,  $p < .0001$ .
- Post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences between all conditions, all  $ps < .004$ .
- A repeated measures ANOVA on mean ratings of level of responsibility was significant,  $F(3,603) = 99.31$ ,  $p < .0001$ .
- Post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences between all conditions, all  $ps < .0001$ .
- A repeated measures ANOVA on mean intelligence ratings was significant,  $F(3,603) = 43.32$ ,  $p < .0001$ .
- Post-hoc analyses revealed no significant difference between marijuana and opioid conditions,  $p = .12$

## References

- Magda, L. A., & Goodwin, K. A. (2008). Consequences of negative information on perceptions of facial attractiveness. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 106, 508–516.
- González-Alvarez J. (2017). Men dissociate sexual attraction from moral judgement more than women. *International Journal of Psychology : Journal International de Psychologie*, 52, 381–388.