Gender Differences in Attitudes toward Smoking Marijuana

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Introduction

The Community Counseling and Mediation (CCM), founded in 1982, is a Brooklyn-based eight-site, multi-service agency offering 26 distinct and complementary social programs, including preventive education about substance abuse. Based on preliminary responses to our survey we noticed that some of CCM's adolescent clients are not educated or aware about the impact of marijuana. Results from our research project, *Gender Differences in Attitudes toward Smoking Marijuana* will help CCM tailor programming more individually to the adolescent boys and girls they serve.

In a 2007 report from U.S Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control Prevention National Center for Health Statistics, Adolescent Health in the United States in 2007, adolescents who used marijuana were more likely to experience memory loss, impaired short term verbal skills, and distorted perception. Our research explores a differential in knowledge between boys and girls on marijuana's impact, particularly on health and education. Results will help CCM become more aware of how young clients are using marijuana to help the organization educate adolescents on its impact more effectively before they reach adulthood.

Hypothesis

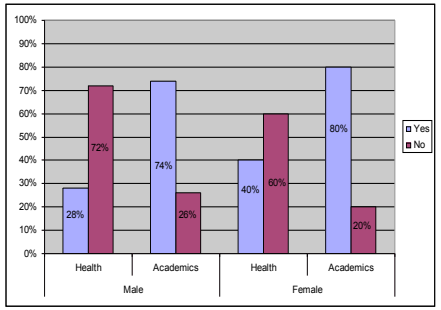
Based on our background research and preliminary results from our sample, we hypothesized that in Crown Heights, female adolescents are more aware of the negative effects of marijuana than males.

Methodology

Teenagers of Crown Heights who receive services from CCM are eligible to answer our research questions relating to marijuana usage. 50 males and 50 females from CCM's Summer Youth Employment Program completed the survey, which CCM staff developed and we, the student researchers, revised. The survey contained questions to capture responses from both teens who smoke and those who do not smoke marijuana.

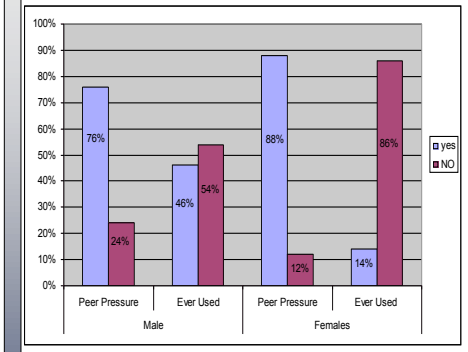
Results

Academics vs. Health



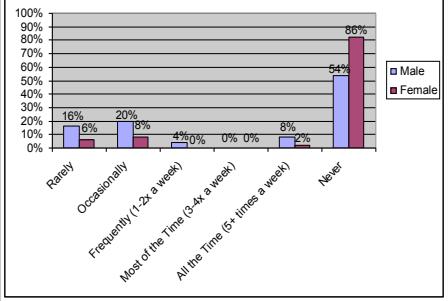
Girls in this sample were slightly more aware of the negative effects marijuana has on health. Both groups thought marijuana was a greater threat to academic progress than as a cause of cancer.

Peer Pressure Influence on Adolescents



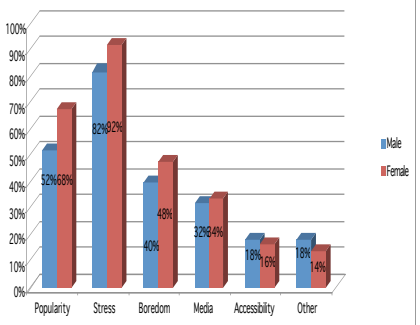
76 % of males interviewed and 88% of females identify peer pressure as a factor in whether or not to smoke marijuana, yet almost half (46%) of the males in the sample had smoked marijuana, while less than 15% of the females smoked.

Frequency



The majority of adolescents in this sample say that they are not users. 4% of the males in this sample are at critical risk of becoming marijuana addicts because of the frequency of their use. 20% of boys could be at risk in the near future.

What are Some Motivating Factors Marijuana?



According to this graph, popularity and stress were the two major factors that contributed to marijuana smoking.

Conclusion

According to our graph Peer Pressure Influence on Adolescents, males in our sample succumb to peer pressure more easily than the females. We speculate that young males are typically allowed more freedom than girls, based on both our experience and that of the CCM staff with their clients. In this analysis, males are therefore more likely to initiate risky behavior such as marijuana usage.

Our results suggests that special attention should be directed towards teen males. Special Programs are available to help individuals who are vulnerable to substance abuse from *The Chemical Dependency Program* located in Community Counseling and Mediation on Classon Avenue. A national program that may also be helpful is *Marijuana Anonymous*, with chapters located in New York, New York.

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