



*SOCIAL
SCIENCE.*



BRINGING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE TO NCAA FOOTBALL

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INTRODUCTION

This research examines restorative justice as well as current justice policies of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Through this qualitative study, I explore the extent to which restorative justice may be a beneficial form of due process for the NCAA football organization. Although the NCAA currently utilizes punitive sanctions, the data from this thesis suggests that through incorporation of restorative justice practices, the student-athletes will be better served. An in-depth review of the existing literature is presented to better understand the NCAA organization and to create a complete foundation for this research. The background of the NCAA, including an organizational breakdown is provided. Finally, a brief summary of the NCAA's policies and regulations is presented and the NCAA's most common sanction, ineligibility, is deciphered and analyzed. Once a clear understanding of the NCAA is established, the concept of restorative justice is defined and background information is given on this method of discipline. A brief history of The University of Colorado Restorative Justice is discussed, to help differentiate its program from other restorative justice organizations. In addition, the differences between restorative and punitive justice are laid out in order to assist the reader in creating a clear distinction. Opinions from professors at Bluffton University in Ohio are utilized to show real-world examples of the introduction of restorative justice. In addition, a parallel study conducted in New Zealand and North Carolina, is summarized to demonstrate restorative justice's effectiveness in youth sports. Interviews from two members of The University of Colorado Restorative Justice's faculty provide a necessary background on restorative justice, including what components must be considered by the NCAA. The faculty members provide insight on how the restorative justice process can be altered to best fit the NCAA football organization's needs. Interviews from eight University of Colorado football players and coaches depict the reality of the current NCAA policies and sanctions. The interviews dive deep into the sanction of ineligibility and demonstrate real-world opinions and feedback. The football players and coaches offer realistic advice on the implementation of restorative justice into their program. Analysis of these common interview responses is used to draw conclusions regarding

the ability of bringing restorative justice into NCAA football.

[...]

RESULTS

[...]

D. Ineligibility as a Sanction

Perhaps the most important question that was asked to both The University of Colorado football players and coaches, was their opinion on the current NCAA policies and regulations. The most common sanction, ineligibility, received negative feedback from every interviewee. From a coach's standpoint, ineligibility is negative because it often takes the strongest players and prevents them from competition. This obviously affects the team's performance, and can cause a team to lose a game that would not have otherwise been lost. A team's performance is arguably the most important factor of the sport as it affects everything from team ranking to the coaches' salary. From the players' point of view, ineligibility is unfavored for many reasons. The most standard reason is that the players are "unable to compete in the sport they love and are forced to watch their teammates practice and perform from the sidelines." Although this may seem like a "natural consequence" to their actions, all interviewees admitted that it rarely, if ever, has the intended effect on players. Rather than contemplating their actions and using their ineligibility as a time to self-reflect, interviewees agree they end up unable to channel their emotions in a positive way and end up in a downward spiral. For players who use football to stay clean from drugs or alcohol, this often results in substance abuse. For others who use football to be held accountable for school, ineligibility causes them to believe there is "no point" in going to class the next day. The University of Colorado football players admit that they "don't feel like going to classes, let alone doing any work if [they] can't compete on the football field". In addition, interviewees admitted that the inability to play with their team usually creates an environment of hostility and jealousy among players. Interviewees agree that the NCAA takes a punitive approach to justice and implements ineligibility as a scare factor for athletes. Further, they agree that the sanction ends up doing more harm than good and fails to meet its intended purpose.

E. Bringing Restorative Justice to NCAA Football

Although it was crucial to receive feedback on how restorative justice should be altered for NCAA football from restorative justice experts, it was equally as important to receive the same information from The University of Colorado football players and coaches. When questioned why NCAA football does not utilize a restorative justice process, interviewees agreed that there is either a lack of knowledge surrounding restorative justice or that the NCAA is merely “afraid” to try a new method of justice. Interviewees unanimously agreed that restorative justice would be a positive implementation for their program and that they would be willing to comply with the process, if given the opportunity. Once this agreement was established, I asked interviewees to expand on why they believe restorative justice would be beneficial, and what agreement items they believe would create an environment of equality.

Interviewees explained that while ineligibility can lead to unfair and negative consequences, it is unrealistic for the NCAA to agree to a method of justice that eliminates this sanction completely. This is because ineligibility is used as a scare factor that keeps players from violating regulations, according to The University of Colorado football coaches. Therefore, interviewed coaches suggested alternate sanctions could be included in addition to ineligibility in serious or repeat offense cases. For first time or minor violations, alternate sanctions would be the only necessary agreement item, and ineligibility would not occur. Interviewees suggested these alternate sanctions could consist of tasks such as completing online drug and alcohol awareness courses or community service hours. These sanctions would allow the responsible party to self-reflect on their actions and would turn the violation into a learning experience. In addition, this would force the NCAA to create a concrete rank order for policies that makes certain violations more punishable than others. Interviewees believe this would be an effective tool of deterrence for athletes and would serve to improve the players’ character.

By limiting ineligibility, coaches would not fear holding their players responsible for their actions. Without the possibility of missing the “next big game”, more players would be held accountable and there would be equal treatment among athletes of all skill level. When creating alternate agreement items in NCAA football restorative justice circles, it will be imperative that the items maintain alliance with the NCAA’s goals. Interviewees admit that the implementation will only be possible if the NCAA feels as though they are still a part of the sanctions and that the sanctions do not venture away from the NCAA’s overall vision. Overall, interviewees agree that this method of justice would benefit their program and team, by creating a unified platform for players to be held accountable.

[...]



WILL PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY HELP US EXPLAIN THE DEVELOPMENTS SURROUNDING COVID-19 AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY?

Adam Garfinkel

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ABSTRACT

This project is titled, “Will Punctuated Equilibrium Theory Help us Explain the Developments Surrounding COVID-19 and Environmental Policy?” As the title suggests, the research question will be regarding the effects of COVID-19 on the punctuated equilibrium theory, specifically relating to environmental policy in the United States of America. Punctuated equilibrium theory suggests that in both American and specific foreign governments, the policies that get created and passed tend to be rather steady and unchanging, until a major event occurs, which disrupts the normally homogeneous system in a large way. An example where we have seen this theory hold true in the past was in the aftermath of 9/11, when the United States Government passed a series of new laws regarding air flight safety and other anti-terrorism acts, something that the country had not seen in policy until that point. This project will test this theory in the modern context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and seek to understand whether or not environmental policy has experienced a large shift after the major event that is the COVID-19 pandemic.

[...]

CHAPTER 8: FOUR STATE DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following chapter will compare all four states that were selected for the two case studies to identify commonalities, larger lessons, and make conclusions regarding how various states have handled their environmental policy throughout the pandemic. This chapter will also include a broader discussion of environmental policy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, identify some limitations of the study, the next steps in research for future scholars, and conclude the project with a final statement. The discussion will begin with a reintroduction of the hypotheses, as the four-state discussion will be based upon them. The hypotheses are listed below for reference. Hypothesis 1: The factors that determined the differences between states’ environmental policies prior to COVID-19 are the reason we see a difference in how states are treating environmental policy through the pandemic, not because of differences that may be expected during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sub-Hypothesis 1a: The most prominent factor in determining how states handle their environmental policies through the COVID-19 pandemic is the ideology of the state’s legislature, including

the majority political party in power in the state, the margin of said majority, and the party of the governor.

Hypothesis 2: Although the main cause of the change in environmental policy specifically may not be due to the expected changes from the COVID-19 crisis, punctuated equilibrium is still occurring, especially in other areas of policy.

Sub-Hypothesis 2a: Punctuated equilibrium occurring in another area of policy will take attention and money away from environmental policy in all states.

Hypothesis 3: States did not increase environmental policy spending since the beginning of COVID-19.

In Reference to Hypothesis 1: Throughout all four states selected for a case study, this hypothesis had both evidence to support it, and evidence against it. The evidence to support it was that the states which were already environmentally friendly before the pandemic (Colorado and Virginia) were still the most effective at maintaining a relatively high level of environmental policy throughout the pandemic. Evidence that further supports this hypothesis is that at the state level, Colorado and Virginia are both Democratic trifectas, while Arizona and North Carolina lean Republican. State politics certainly count as a factor which influenced how states handled their environmental policy prior to the pandemic, which this hypothesis argues is the most important piece of determining how states handled their environmental policy through the COVID-19 crisis. The evidence against this hypothesis is that even Colorado and Virginia experienced an 88% and 20.2% drop off in environmental legislation respectively during the pandemic. Considering that these two states were in the upper-echelon of states in their environmental policy prior to the pandemic, it seems as though the differences that may have been expected due to a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic are truly the most influential factors in how states have handled their environmental policy between March 11, 2020, and December 31, 2020.

There is evidence to support the assertion that punctuated equilibrium has occurred in every state during the pandemic, including the four states chosen for case studies. In the case of the four states that were chosen, all four experienced a significant increase in the introduction of COVID-19 related legislation, while experiencing a decrease (in varying degrees) to their respective environmental policy introductions. Clearly state politics and other pre-existing

factors played a role in how extreme this drop off in environmental legislation was, but the overall lesson from the numbers discussed in chapter 5, as well as the case studies in chapters 6 and 7, is that punctuated equilibrium during the pandemic has been widespread throughout the United States.

In Reference to Sub-Hypothesis 1a: There is evidence to support this hypothesis in all four states included in the case studies. The two states which experienced the largest drop offs in state-level environmental policy through the pandemic were the Republican leaning states, Arizona (97% drop off) and North Carolina (98.18% drop off). Meanwhile the Democratic leaning states were much more resilient in their levels of introduction of environmental policies throughout the pandemic, experiencing significantly less drop off than their neighboring Republican states.

On a countrywide scale, questions still remain about the answer to this hypothesis. Generally, the numbers support the assertion that the largest percentage drop offs in environmental bill introduction occurred in Republican leaning states, but there are examples which support the opposite conclusion, depending on the comparison. Hawaii, a Democratic trifecta at the state level of government, had a 90.3% reduction in environmental policy introductions since the beginning of the pandemic, while Texas, a Republican trifecta, only experienced an 86.8% reduction in environmental policy introduced after the beginning of the pandemic. While this is further evidence to support the occurrence of punctuated equilibrium occurring in all 50 states during the pandemic, this also means that more case studies must be completed on this topic to truly understand if sub-hypothesis 1a is accurate or not. Pure numbers can give us an insight into the way states handled their environmental policy throughout the pandemic, but the best way to get insight into state agendas and recovery time (length of time until environmental policy is back to normal levels of introduction), is through case studies with interviews of specific legislators who have insight that numbers alone cannot tell us. Although on the surface Hawaii's environmental policy was seemingly more damaged than Texas' environmental policy, there is a good chance that Hawaii's environmental policy will be quicker to rebound than Texas' after the pandemic ends, just based on legislator agendas in the two states alone.

In Reference to Hypothesis 2: There is evidence which disproves the first statement in this hypothesis between the two case studies. All four states in the case studies experienced a decrease (varying in size) in the number of introductions of environmental policy since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, while increasing the total number of COVID-19 related policies during the same timeframe, showing evidence that the main cause of change in environmental policy since the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the pandemic itself. There is evidence, however,

to support the second half of the hypothesis, as punctuated equilibrium is almost certainly occurring in many areas of policy. The extreme increase in the introduction of COVID-19 related legislation combined with the wilting numbers of the amount of environmental legislation introduced between March 11, 2020 and December 31, 2020 points to this second part of the hypothesis being true.

In Reference to Sub-Hypothesis 2a: The evidence found in the four states selected for the case studies supports this hypothesis. All four states experienced losses of varying degrees in their environmental policy outputs (legislation introduced and passed) and inputs (budgetary considerations). While one of the limitations of this project is that not every state could be selected for a case study, the evidence from the existing case studies does show this rapid decrease in attention and money (information regarding environmental budgets was found through the interviews alone, as an applicable online database of state environmental budgets does not exist) from environmental policy since the beginning of the pandemic. While at face value this trend is true, it seems as though Republican-leaning states (at the state level of government) experienced the harshest decline in both attention and fund allocation towards environmental policy, while Democratic leaning states at the state level experienced less harsh declines. While all of this information points to the hypothesis itself being accurate, it should definitely be noted that the pandemic did not affect all states' environmental policies with the same level of potency.

In Reference to Hypothesis 3: The information gathered in the interviews points to this hypothesis being supported, but due to the lack of an applicable online database which contained all of the state-level environmental budgets before and after the pandemic, the possibility of this hypothesis being disproven remains. At least one interviewee in each state of the four selected for a case study stated that there was a financial decrease of some kind in the environmental budget. The states were handling these decreases differently, however. Some states were allocating environmental funds directly towards pandemic relief, while others were saving the environmentally distributed money for later dates, when they most likely will address environmental policy in greater depth. Some states were using federal funds for pandemic relief while cutting taxes and other money-making means for the state legislature, so the money that would have been allocated towards the state environmental budget in a normal budget cycle was not even collected during the unique pandemic budget cycle. Although this scenario did not appear in the four states selected for a case study, it is also likely that some states were already midway through their budgetary cycles when the pandemic first occurred, causing no immediate decrease in environmental spending, as this money may have already been spent. Another scenario that did not occur within the four states chosen for case

studies but is certainly possible is the scenario in which some states were never intending to allocate funds towards environmental issues prior to the pandemic beginning, so they were never planning on experiencing an increase in environmental policy spending, regardless of the introduction of the pandemic.

[...]



THEY LOOK AT ME LIKE I'M NUTS: EXPLORING CULTURAL IDIOMS OF DISTRESS AND OTHER FACTORS THAT LIMIT AND ENHANCE MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS' WORK WITH IRAQI REFUGEES

Nadyah Spahn

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ABSTRACT

There are approximately 80,000 Iraqi refugees in the United States, many of whom report severe mental illness but face barriers to treatment. Thus, to improve the mental health outcomes of Iraqi refugees, I interviewed mental health practitioners who work with this population. Based on a qualitative analysis of these interviews, I found two main themes in their responses. First, through a focus on cultural idioms of distress, I found that many practitioners misunderstood cultural phrases, while other practitioners demonstrated greater understanding due to their shared Iraqi background. Second, I found that practitioners that relied on the biomedical framework struggled to develop rapport, diagnose clients, and suggest interventions while the practitioners who utilized a holistic viewpoint were more effective in those domains. To address the limitations in cultural knowledge and clinical practices, I created a two-phase intervention based on the findings of this study which may help to make mental health services more accessible and sensitive to the needs of Iraqi refugees.

INTRODUCTION

Refugees are people fleeing conflict or persecution, and have been officially recognized by international law since 1951 (Refugees, n.d.). In 2019 alone, 30 million refugees were forced to flee their homes, and of those, 31,250 refugees were resettled in the US (Refugees in America | USA for UNHCR, n.d.). Around 80,000 of the refugees who are resettled in the US are from Iraq, where there have been numerous wars and periods of political violence. Iraq has experienced the Iran-Iraq War from 1979-1987, the invasion of Kuwait during the Gulf War in 1991, the US War on Terror in 2003, and the surge of sectarian violence after the 2006 bombing of the Al-Askariyya Mosque (Sassoon, 2011). At the same time, ISIS gained power in Iraq and carried out many terror attacks, which caused many Iraqis to flee. Three million Iraqis have been forced to flee the country as refugees since 2014, and of those, more than 50,000 have been resettled in the US (Iraq Refugee Crisis, n.d.). The violence experienced by Iraqi refugees has led to significant psychological distress.

There are an estimated 10,000 Iraqi refugees in Utah, which is a large percentage of the total 25,000 to 50,000 refugees that live in Utah, who are also from Burma, Bhutan, Somalia, Eritrea, the Congo, and Sudan (Mental Health Facts.Pdf, n.d.). Most of these refugees live in Salt Lake County, and many display symptoms of mental illness.

Refugee populations have high rates of mental illness. For example, Blackmore et al. found in a meta-analysis that 31.46% of refugees report post-traumatic stress disorder and 31.5% of refugees report depression (Blackmore et al., 2020). The rates of mental illness in refugee populations are higher than the general population, as only 6.8% of Americans report PTSD and 7.1% of Americans report depression (Epidemiology of PTSD - PTSD, n.d.; NIMH » Major Depression, n.d.). Despite high rates of pathology in refugee populations, there are many barriers to mental health treatment for refugees, such as cost, transportation, stigma, and lack of understanding about cultural idioms of distress, or the ways that different cultures understand and express mental illnesses (Shannon et al., 2015).

In many refugee populations there is a large stigma associated with mental illness, especially for refugees who lived in rural areas and were not exposed to Western conceptions of mental illness in their home countries. In Iraqi culture, the stigma around mental illness is mainly religious, as it is believed that faithful Muslims do not develop mental illness, so when someone has psychological distress, it is seen as the result of supernatural causes and is a source of shame for the family (Shoeb et al., 2007). Due to this stigma, mental illnesses are often conceptualized as physical illnesses in order to receive treatment. Even if refugees can overcome the barriers and seek treatment for their psychological distress, there are often issues with interpretation, cultural differences, and a lack of cultural or linguistic understanding by the provider, which can harm the therapeutic relationship and long-term success of treatment (Flaskerud, 2010). Thus, it is imperative that mental health practitioners have an understanding of their clients' culture, how it impacts their understanding and expression of distress, and the unique struggles that they face in their daily life.

Cultural idioms of distress are a valuable tool to ascertain how well practitioners understand their clients' culture, and how this knowledge can be leveraged to provide better mental health treatment for refugee populations. Accordingly, my research utilizes cultural idioms of distress as a way to understand what factors limit or enhance practitioners' work with Iraqi refugees in order to ascertain how to improve such work and its outcomes. Through semi-structured interviews with case management providers and mental health practitioners who work with Iraqi refugees in the Salt Lake City, Utah area, I asked practitioners about their beliefs about Iraqi refugees' mental health, about their challenges and successes with their clients,

and about their understanding of the cultural idioms of distress used by Iraqi refugees. These interviews provide insight into the ways that practitioners understand the cultural context and modes of expression of their clients.

[...]

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THE SPORTS CULTURE AND CLIMATE FOR LGBTQ ATHLETES AND MEMBERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER'S NCAA ATHLETIC PROGRAM

Nicholas Turco

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“For both men and women, the first step in getting power is to become visible to others, and then to put on an impressive show.... As women achieve power, the barriers will fall. As society sees what women can do, as women see what women can do, there will be more women out there doing things, and we'll all be better for it.”

—Sandra Day O'Connor

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, as the two legendary path makers they were, remind us that the power of visibility can change the world. That is the power of people being seen doing what they were told they could not do or being somewhere they were told they did not belong alters the minds and hearts of societies. You do not have to go far to understand that in many cultures across the globe, LGBT+ people have been historically underrepresented and excluded in sports, and thus invisible in the sports world. But that is changing. Across the nation and globe more LGBT+ people are coming out, living authentically, and being embraced for who they are. Sport has achieved an almost supernatural pedestal in our world. It is this pedestal that also allows the inclusion of LGBT+ individuals in this world, and a potent accelerator for change in many aspects of LGBT+ rights.

This analysis focuses on LGBT+ college student athletes. What is the culture within which LGBT+ student athletes are operating today? Spurred by decades of legal and social change, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) provides an inclusive policy framework and recommendations for LGBT+ athletes. Advocacy groups are paying attention as well, monitoring the adoption of these policies. Athlete Ally is one such organization created to measure how Power Five Schools are doing when it comes to the implementation of these policy recommendations. (Power Five Schools are those that compete in the five most competitive college football conferences.) There has also been an explosion of social activist campaigns in recent years which aim to further the rights and visibility of LGBT+ athletes. However, there remains a significant gap in case-by-case and in-depth understanding of the culture surrounding athletics for LGBT+ people at specific NCAA member institutions.

It remains that policy is not the same thing as culture or even implementation. My study aims to understand the culture of

University of Colorado (CU) Boulder Athletics for LGBT+ members in comparison to CU's Policy. CU Boulder scores 95/100 on the “Athletic Equality Index” as measured by Athlete Ally and is among the top of Pac 12 schools for their inclusive policies for LGBT+ athletes. To what extent is this policy being observed on the ground and among the various members of the CU athletic community—student athletes, coaches, and administrators? The specific question being asked in this study: What is the culture and climate like for members of the LGBT+ community in CU Boulder athletics?

[...]

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to understand what the culture of University of Colorado (CU) Boulder athletics are like for LGBT+ student athletes, coaches, and administrators. Legal protections have grown over time to address discrimination against members of the LGBT+ community. Inclusive policies have been adopted, and LGBT+ rights in sports are now written into collegiate athletic programs across the country. But policy is not the same as practice. Does the collegiate athletic culture reflect the policy commitment to fostering an inclusive culture? This study set out to examine how the culture is perceived by members of the athletic community at CU Boulder and to compare that to their inclusive policies.

In order to answer this question a Qualtrics survey with both qualitative and quantitative questions was administered to inquire about the culture of the sports climate for LGBT+ members at CU, along with an invitation to participate in a 30-minute Zoom interview doing the same. The survey and interview invitation was distributed to all 581 athletes, coaches, and administrators within CU's Athletic Department. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics in R Studio and through a close and in-depth analysis of the text entry survey and interview responses looking for key patterns.

The findings were complex and multifaceted. Some of them raised more questions than they answered. The key findings include:

1. CU departmental leadership and administration are outwardly inclusive.
2. The sports climate at CU for LGBT+ athletes appears to differ in inclusivity across sport and gender categories. Specifically, male revenue sports appear to be less inclusive.

3. CU athlete allies seem to be aware of privilege dynamics and use their voice to speak constructively and humbly about LGBT inclusion.

4. Being a student athlete at CU (and within a healthy athletic environment) helps some student athletes identify more, not less, with their athletic identity, and in healthy ways with their LGBT+ identity.

5. Some respondents agree on lower athletic identity feelings among LGBT+ athletes at CU but disagree on the cause. Specifically, some participants believe that this is because of a larger cultural social fabric, while others believe that it is because of lack of the department more directly addressing discrimination.

6. Coming out and being out and visible may help athletes at CU identify strongly as an athlete and in healthy ways as an athlete and a LGBT+ person.

7. Opinion on the ease of coming out within CU Athletics falls in a wide continuum trending toward being an easy and welcoming experience.

8. A vast majority (80%) of participants believe members within CU Athletics serve as active and outspoken allies of their LGBT+ members, while only 20% believe that this is not the case.

9. Nearly two-thirds (60%) of participants believe CU Athletics is an inclusive place for transgender student athletes, while 40% believe that it is not a supportive place for transgender student athletes.

10. While there are many signs of policy change in CU Athletics, most (71%) are unaware of the NCAA's LGBT+ Inclusive Initiative Framework and its comprehensive resource guide-Champions of Respect. Related to this, most CU Athletic members are not terribly aware of why they score so high among power five schools for their inclusiveness using national policy measurements.

[...]

From the results of this study, it appears that in key areas CU is excelling at providing a warm, outwardly inclusive and supportive environment for its LGBT+ members. In other ways, it seems that CU may have ways to grow so that it can take on a role as a national leader in combating complex cultural dynamics of transphobia and homophobia that have thwarted national sporting and non-sporting communities for generations. Perhaps the most important question that remains is, what better medium than sport to create these dramatic demonstrations of radical love and social acceptance across the world? This research is relevant in the canon of political science research because it discusses the implications of college athletics and their power to create widespread social acceptance and change for LGBT+ people.



PRISONS IN PARADISE OR PURGATORY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS AND RECIDIVISM RATES IN NORWAY AND THE UNITED STATES
Isabella Jones

For the full text, please see the QR code at the bottom of the page

ABSTRACT

This honors thesis is a comparative analysis of criminal justice and prison systems between Norway and the United States. Norway has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the world, because of their rehabilitative methods, while the United States has one of the highest recidivism rates in the world, because of their methods of punishment. The arguments presented here could help the United States in its efforts to decrease recidivism rates by working to rehabilitate and restore offenders, instead of punishing them. Providing resources like education and employment skills to offenders would help them assimilate to the outside world and keep them from recidivating. If the United States were to adopt a criminal justice system like Norway's and provide resources to offenders to better prepare them for reentry into the outside world, then sociologists would see a decrease in recidivism rates as a result of more humanistic prisons that focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment.



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE SUBJECTIVE EFFECTS OF CANNABIS

Carter Witt

For the full text, please see the QR code at the bottom of the page

INTRODUCTION

As cannabis becomes integrated in society, it is important to examine differentiating factors that may influence its effects on people, such as gender. Across two observational studies, we examined gender differences in the acute subjective effects of cannabis use, including euphoria, energy, tension, and paranoia. Study 1 included 108 flower users ($n = 44$ women, $n = 64$ men) and Study 2 included 35 edible users ($n = 21$ women, $n = 14$ men). Participants were assessed in a mobile pharmacology lab before and after ad libitum use of their assigned cannabis product. In Study 1, although men and women reported similar levels of subjective high, men reported significantly greater levels of positive effects (i.e., euphoria, energy) relative to women. In Study 2, men and women reported similar levels of high and positive effects. No gender differences in paranoia or tension emerged in either study. Future research should examine the mechanisms behind these differences, and factor gender into future studies exploring the effects of cannabis.

[...]

This study found significant gender differences in the positive subjective effects of cannabis, such that men experienced more euphoria and energy than women in Study 1. This study also found that when using flower, women ingested significantly less cannabis to feel the same amount of “high” as men. These findings are relevant primarily for cannabis users, researchers, and anyone else who is curious about the effects and uses of cannabis. For example, these data could have public health implications for why men are more likely to have CUD. The differences in subjective high could be due to biological differences in metabolism or the influence of psycho-social factors such as expectations. It is also important to analyze the absence of differences between women and men and the implications of this finding. For example, these findings indicate that cannabis may negatively affect the mood of men and women at a similar rate. This could mean that the presence of positive effects is more influential than negative

effects in determining someone’s likelihood to develop CUD.

It should be noted that these findings are different than those of Cooper and Haney (2014), who found that women reported more positive effects of “feel good” and “take again.” This study used different positive effects (energy and euphoria) but this difference indicates that positive effects cannot be generalized and men and women may experience different positive effects differently. Given the increasing accessibility and popularity of cannabis use, it is important to factor gender into foundational research. This study recognizes that correcting gender bias in research and medicine requires acknowledgment and commitment. We aim to ensure that the effects of cannabis are not over-generalized and presented to a population that does not experience cannabis’s effects equally. Given that women and men experience positive effects and some negative effects differently, future research should examine the mechanisms behind this difference, as well as factor these differences into future studies that aim to explore cannabis’s acute effects.

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