



Consideration of future consequences as a moderator of the willingness-behavior relationship for young adult marijuana use and consequences



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Behavioral willingness was positively related to marijuana use and related consequences.
- Consideration of future consequences moderated willingness-marijuana use association.
- Findings support the willingness-behavior association of the Prototype Willingness Model.
- Intervention and prevention implications are discussed.

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ABSTRACT

The Prototype Willingness Model is a dual-processing (i.e., intentional and socially reactive) health-risk behavior model. The socially reactive path includes behavioral willingness, descriptive normative perceptions, and favorable images of individuals who engage in health-risk behavior (prototype favorability) as important predictors of health behaviors. Individual differences (such as consideration of future consequences) may potentiate the effects of behavioral willingness on health-risk outcomes, such as marijuana use. Given limited research investigating marijuana use and the Prototype Willingness Model, the goals of the current study were: 1) examine consideration of future consequences and Prototype Willingness Model social reaction pathway variables in relation to behavioral willingness to use marijuana longitudinally; and 2) determine if consideration of future consequences moderated the behavioral willingness-marijuana use relation prospectively. Young adults (N = 769) from a larger longitudinal study completed baseline and 3 follow-up assessments (Months 3, 4, 5). Behavioral willingness was positively related to a higher likelihood of use, more days having used marijuana, and more consequences prospectively, over and above baseline use. Consideration of future consequences moderated the association between behavioral willingness and hours high in a typical week. These findings support the willingness-behavior association of the Prototype Willingness Model and preliminarily demonstrate consideration of future consequences' differential impact on behavioral willingness-future marijuana use relation. Intervention and prevention implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

In the United States, rates of marijuana use are higher during the early years of young adulthood than at any other point during the life course (Schulenberg et al., 2017). Among young adults in the United States, lifetime rates of marijuana use are at 59.9%, with rates of past 30-day use at 20.6% (Schulenberg et al., 2017). Marijuana is among the most frequently used illicit substances among late adolescents and young adults in the United States, which places them at high risk for a

number of acute and long-term negative consequences (e.g., Karila et al., 2014; Maggs et al., 2015; Schulenberg et al., 2017; Volkow, Baler, Compton, & Weiss, 2014). Frequent and long-term marijuana use leads to short-term consequences, including decreased cognitive functioning (Karila et al., 2014), as well as longer-term developmental consequences, including discontinuous college enrollment and unemployment (e.g., Arria et al., 2013; Maggs et al., 2015). Given that one of the major goals of Healthy People 2020 is to reduce the proportion of young adults who used any illicit substance, including marijuana, in the

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last 30 days, research is needed to determine when and why young adults use such substances.

1.1. The prototype willingness model

The Prototype Willingness Model (Gibbons, Gerrard, Blanton, & Russell, 1998; Gibbons, Gerrard, & Lane, 2003) is a modified dual-processing model designed to improve the predictive value of existing health behavior theories for health-risk behaviors. The Prototype Willingness Model was designed to address the social nature of adolescent or young adult risk behaviors by acknowledging that risk behaviors are often reactions to risk-conducive environments one may encounter rather than intentionally planned behaviors (Gibbons et al., 2003). The social reaction pathway of the Prototype Willingness Model pertains to unplanned behaviors, which are posited to follow directly from behavioral willingness (Blanton, Gibbons, Gerrard, Conger, & Smith, 1997; Gerrard, Gibbons, Houlihan, Stock, & Pomery, 2008; Lewis, King, Litt, Swanson, & Lee, 2016; Litt & Lewis, 2016; Litt & Stock, 2011; Pomery et al., 2005; Teunissen et al., 2014). The social reaction pathway relies on behavioral willingness, which varies as a function of perceived vulnerability, descriptive norms, and prototypes. Willingness to use marijuana reflects an openness to use marijuana in situations that are conducive to that behavior. Perceived vulnerability refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves to be vulnerable to the various risks associated with the behavior (Gerrard et al., 2008). Descriptive norms refer to the perceived quantity and frequency of peer marijuana behavior. Prototypes are images of the type of person who engages in specific risk behaviors, such as marijuana use.

Previous research on marijuana use under the framework of the Prototype Willingness Model is limited. Studies examining marijuana use and the Prototype Willingness Model have generally examined marijuana use as part of a composite score for health-risk, which often also included alcohol and sexual behavior (e.g., Pomery, Gibbons, Reis-Bergan, & Gerrard, 2009). Because health-risk behaviors are distinct with unique predictors, we aimed to examine behavioral willingness for marijuana as a predictor of future marijuana use independently rather than part of a composite score. Additional research on Prototype Willingness Model constructs and marijuana use has only focused on prototypes in relation to intention to use marijuana (Comello & Slater, 2010). Thus, little research has examined young adult marijuana use under the social reaction pathway of the Prototype Willingness Model.

1.2. Consideration of future consequences

The Prototype Willingness Model posits that with age, decision-making shifts from a more social reaction process to a more reasoned one (Gibbons et al., 2003). Age may play a critical role in decision-making (Steinberg, 2008) as the brain network that relates to planning and self-regulation gradually matures throughout adolescence and into young adulthood (Anderson, Anderson, Northam, Jacobs, & Catroppa, 2001), and the neural system that relates sensitivity to reward and social stimuli peaks in adolescence (Blakemore, 2008; Galvan et al., 2006). Moreover, research on judgement and decision making in teens suggests that in non-emotional contexts, adolescents exhibit much of their adult capacity by mid to late adolescence, but certain emotionally provoking contexts can produce riskier decision making than would be expected among adults (Reyna & Farley, 2006). This suggests that decision-making in adolescence may be particularly moderated by emotion and social factors, such as consideration of future consequences. Research has found that in general, the tendency to be less planful, having lower levels of premeditation, and thinking less about potential consequences is related to the extent to which individuals report being willing to use substances (Gerrard et al., 2008; Vaughn & King, 2016). Related to this notion, the consideration of future consequences is an individual difference generally defined as the extent to which

individuals consider the potential future outcomes (or consequences) of their current behavior and the extent to which they are influenced by the imagined outcomes (Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards, 1994). Individuals high in consideration of future consequences typically focus more on the future implications of their behavior and use these long-term possibilities as a guide for their current behaviors. Whereas those low in consideration of future consequences who tend to place less importance on future consequences and are more sensitive to immediate needs and concerns (Joireman, Strathman, & Balliet, 2006; Orbell & Kyriakaki, 2008). High levels of consideration of future consequences have been shown to be positively associated with personality traits related to self-control including conscientiousness and delay of gratification (Daugherty & Brase, 2010; Strathman et al., 1994) and negatively associated with impulsivity (Joireman, Anderson, & Strathman, 2003) and discounting future outcomes (Daly, Harmon, & Delaney, 2009; Joireman, Balliet, Spratt, Spangenberg, & Schultz, 2008).

Greater consideration of future consequences has been associated with less alcohol use, thus indicating its potential utility in health-promotion initiatives (Steiger, Stoddard, & Pierce, 2017); however, we are not aware of any studies that examine consideration of future consequences in relation to marijuana use specifically. Despite harmful consequences (Johnston, O'Malley, Miech, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2015; Karila et al., 2014; Maggs et al., 2015; Volkow et al., 2014), many individuals continue to use marijuana. One possible explanation of this is that individuals focus on the immediate beneficial consequences of marijuana use while disregarding or discounting the future harmful consequences (Volkow et al., 2016). Given that we know less of how consideration of consequences is related to greater willingness to engage in risk behavior, it is plausible that consideration of future consequences is an important individual difference that may be related to willingness to use marijuana and actual marijuana use among young adults.

1.3. The present research

The present research will expand the knowledge pertaining to the Prototype Willingness Model by examining the association between behavioral willingness to use marijuana, marijuana use, and negative consequences. This study will also examine whether consideration of future consequences moderates the behavioral willingness-behavior association. The current study may have relevant findings for young adult interventions focused on the social reactive pathway of the Prototype Willingness Model as these interventions may work best for those who have a stronger association between behavioral willingness and a health-risk behavior (i.e., those who do not consider future consequences). Based on the above considerations, the first study aim was to examine the longitudinal associations of consideration of future consequences as well as social reaction pathway variables of the Prototype Willingness Model with behavioral willingness to use marijuana. We expected consideration of future consequences to be negatively associated with behavioral willingness to use marijuana and, as predicted by the social reaction pathway of the Prototype Willingness Model, both perceived descriptive norms and prototype favorability to be positively associated with behavioral willingness to use marijuana. In addition to this aim, we sought to examine the prospective associations of consideration of future consequences and behavioral willingness to use marijuana with marijuana use outcomes and to examine consideration of future consequences as a moderator of the willingness-behavior association. We expected behavioral willingness to use marijuana to predict marijuana use (i.e., hours high per typical week, days used marijuana per typical week, negative consequences), and that this association would be stronger among those who were lower in consideration of future consequences.

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