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The following evaluation report on Minnesota's Drug Education Program has been prepared by the Evaluation Consortium of the University of Minnesota.

The information utilized in the preparation of this report is confined to program participants' responses to five questionnaire items. Implications and generalizations must be limited by this consideration.

Those readers wishing a summary of the report should proceed to the Section V Discussion.

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(4) Dp.

(2) An Evaluation of Minnesota's
Drug Education Program
for Minimal Possession
Marijuana Violators

chemical dependency

AN EVALUATION OF MINNESOTA'S DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM
FOR MINIMAL POSSESSION MARIJUANA VIOLATORS

I. Program Description

Minnesota's statewide drug education program was instituted in April of 1976, to serve primarily as a non-punitive and non-treatment alternative court disposition for "small amount" marijuana possession cases. The program is not based on interpersonal counseling or therapy, but rather on providing information in an honest, persuasive manner that will encourage participants to adopt more socially responsible behaviors that are compatible with lawful conduct and good health practices. The singular objective of the program is to persuade participants not to misuse non-alcoholic or alcoholic drugs in the future.

II. Study Procedure

Approximately 3,500 individuals, referred by Minnesota municipal and county courts for possession of marijuana, had attended the state's certified drug education program as of May 31, 1978. The last 1,650 of these participants completed anonymous questionnaires

designed to assess their impressions of the program, attitude change, and self-reported predictions of future behavior change. The instrument, consisting of five subjective questions, was administered at the conclusion of each class.

The questionnaire data for this evaluation study were collected over the 16 month period from February, 1977, through May, 1978. By dividing the participants into five chronological groups of equal size (330), their differential responses to the questionnaire could be used to assess changes in the program over time. Equal units of participants rather than equal units of time were chosen to assess program changes (inferred from the differential responses of the groups) because the number of classes held, their review, and subsequent adjustments were a function of the rate of referral from the courts and not of a standard time schedule. The approximate intervals of time that defined the five groupings of data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The approximate intervals of time that defined the five groupings of data.

<u>Group #</u>	<u>Group Size</u>	<u>Time of Processing</u>
1	330	Feb., 1977 - June, 1977
2	330	July, 1977 - Sept., 1977
3	330	Oct., 1977 - Nov., 1977
4	330	Dec., 1977 - Feb., 1978
5	330	March, 1978 - May, 1978

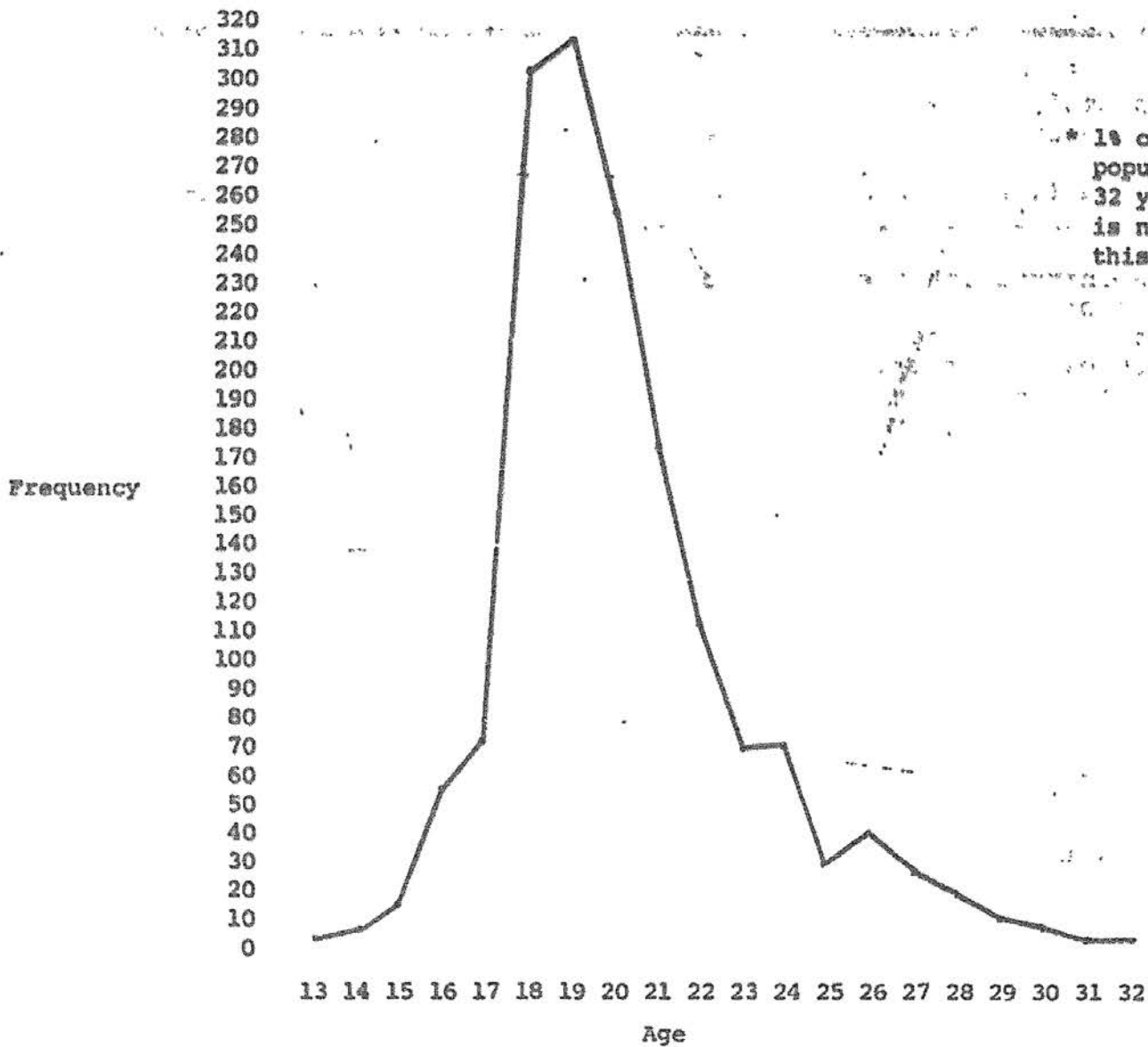
III. Descriptive Characteristics of the Classes and Class Participants

The classes were conducted by 43 similarly trained instructors, all having been initially selected for their communications skills and knowledge of alcohol/drugs. The average number of participants per instructor was 38.4, the individual numbers ranging from 2 to 295.

The average number of participants per class was 12.5, the individual sizes ranging from 1 to 30. Over two-thirds of the classes had between 6 and 18 participants.

The average age of the participants was 19.9 years, the individual ages ranging from 13 to 57 years. Ninety-nine percent of the participants were under 32 years of age. The average age of class participants has remained stable over time. Figure 1 illustrates the number of participants of each age.

Figure 1
The number of respondents
for each age group.*



IV. Questionnaire Results

The first item on the questionnaire asked:

What, during this four hour class, was most interesting to you?

Ninety-five percent of the participants provided a response to this question. Approximately one-third (31.9%) of the participants who answered this question reported that topical discussions were most interesting. This category included respondents who specifically cited as most interesting discussions in general (15.6%), discussions about attitudes relating to intoxication (10.2%), discussions about legal aspects (3.4%), and discussions leading to personal awareness (2.7%).

The information disseminated was designated as the most interesting category by the second largest group of respondents (22.6%). This category included respondents who specifically cited as most interesting information about psychotropic effects of drugs (18.0%) and information about marijuana (4.6%). All responses to this question are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant responses to the question:
"What, during this four hour class, was most interesting to you?"

1. Topical discussions....	N=500	31.9%
2. Information disseminated....	N=355	22.6%
3. Movies....	N=281	17.9%
4. Non-specific social discussions.	N=153	9.7%
5. Instructor's presentation....	N=150	9.5%
6. Everything....	N=61	3.9%
7. Nothing....	N=61	3.9%
8. Evaluations and tests....	N=10	0.6%
	1,571	100.0%

Two significant trends are presented by the data. The most recent participants (when compared to the earlier participants) evidenced less interest in non-specific discussions ($r=-.97, p<.01$), and more interest in obtaining clear information about the psychotropic hazards of specific drugs ($r=.86, p<.05$).

More specifically, the responses of successive group participants indicate a substantial escalating interest in information relating to potentially dangerous drugs, their effects, overdose treatment information, and legal implications. These trends are graphically illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, respectively.

Figure 2

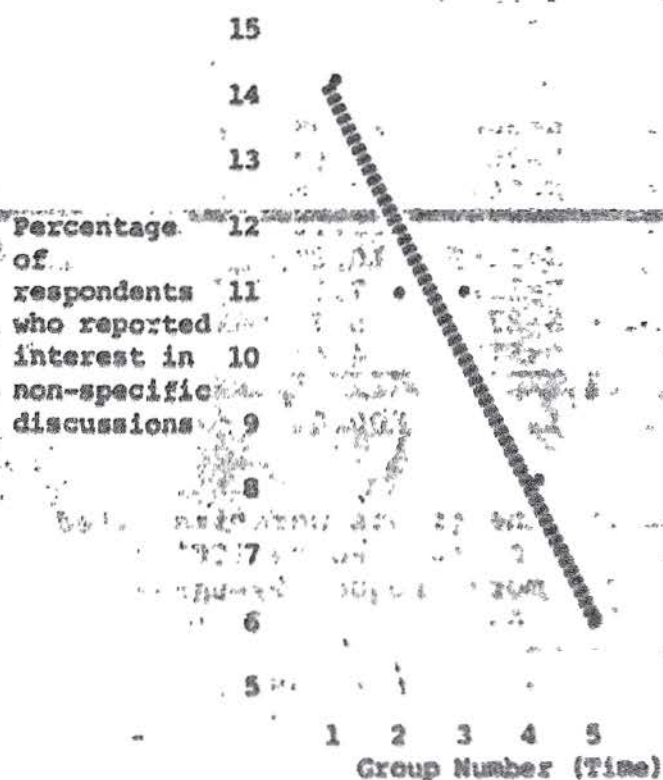
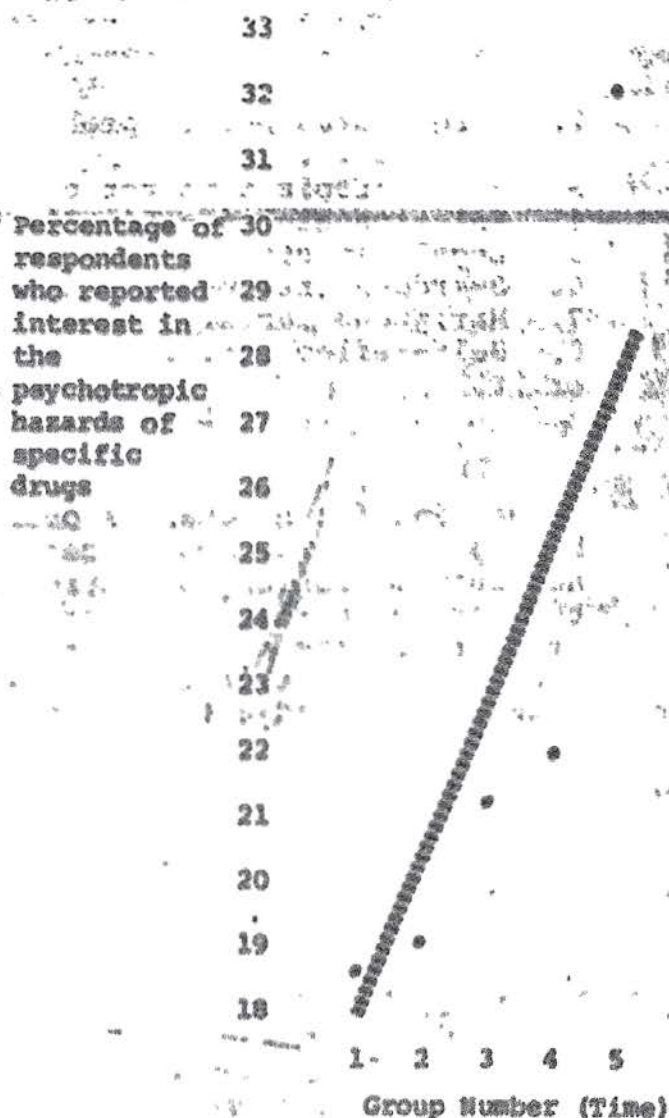


Figure 3



The second question asked:

What new information did you get out of this class?

Ninety-three percent of the participants provided a response to this question. A large majority of respondents (80.4%) indicated that they had learned something new. About one-fifth of the respondents (19.6%) stated specifically that they had not been presented with any new information.

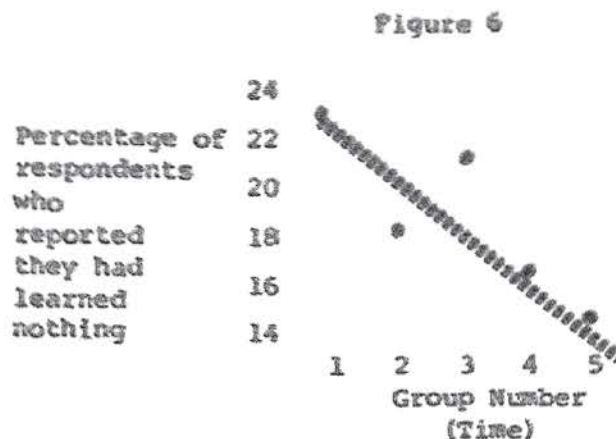
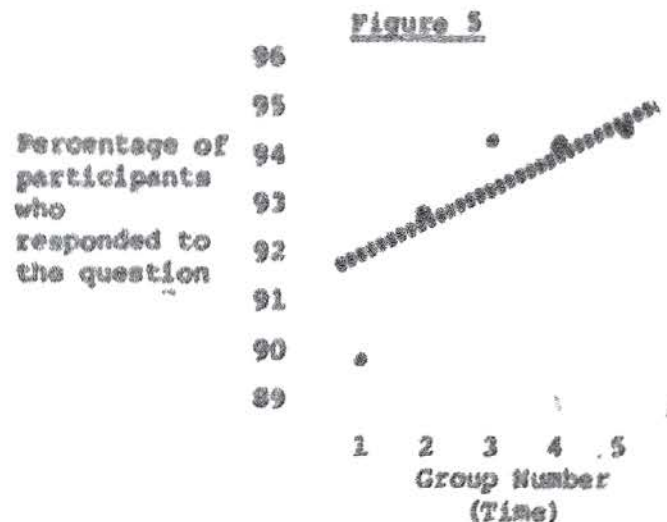
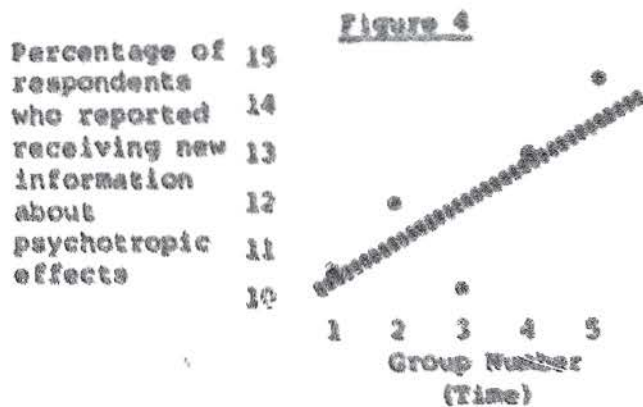
Table 3 illustrates the specific types of new information reported to have been learned by the participants.

Table 3

Participant responses to the question:
"What new information did you get out
of this class?"

1. Street drug purity problems....	N=306	20.0%
2. Nothing....	N=300	19.6%
3. Psychotropic & polydrug effects....	N=262	17.1%
4. Relationship of attitudes to use..	N=232	15.1%
5. Legal aspects....	N=166	10.8%
6. Overdose treatment info....	N=112	7.3%
7. Marijuana facts....	N=87	5.7%
8. Self-reflection....	N=67	4.4%
	1,532	100.0%

Three significant changes over time for the groups were indicated by the data. The most recent participants reported receiving new information on psychotropic effects more frequently than the earlier participants ($r=.81, p .05$). A greater percentage of participants responded to the question ($r=.87, p<.05$) and fewer reported that they had learned nothing ($r=.85, p<.05$). Figures 4, 5 and 6 illustrate these changes.



The third question asked:

What, for you, was a waste of time?

Eighty-seven percent of the participants provided a response to this question. About one-third (31.3%) of the respondents reported that nothing in the class was a waste of time. Almost an equivalent number (27.8%) indicated that the movies were a waste of time, and 13.8% said that everything was a waste of time. The remainder of the responses were directed to other specific components of the program or, irrelevant to the intent of the question, the participant's involvement with the criminal justice system.

Table 4 presents the number of responses in each response category.

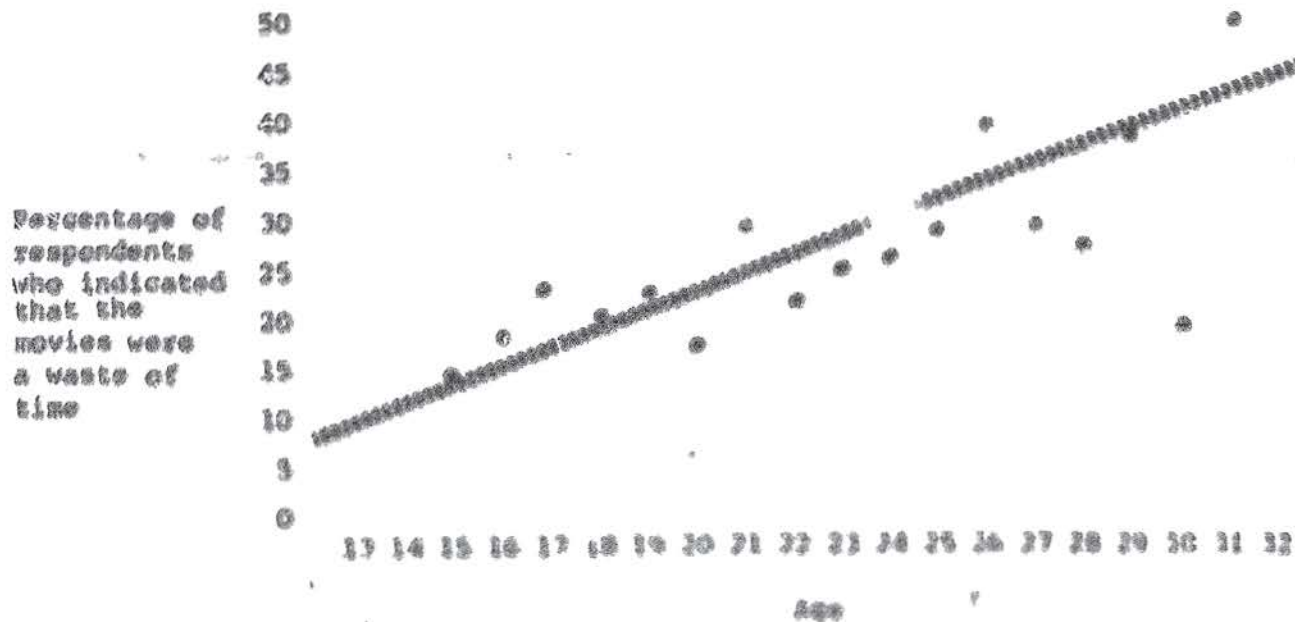
Table 4

Participant responses to the question:
"What, for you, was a waste of time?"

1. Nothing....	N=448	31.1%
2. Movies....	N=401	27.8%
3. Everything....	N=200	13.8%
4. Cost of the class....	N=119	8.3%
5. Discussions in general....	N=96	6.7%
6. Legal aspects....	N=87	6.0%
7. Discussions about marijuana....	N=36	2.5%
8. Filling out this questionnaire....	N=30	2.1%
9. Discussions about alcohol....	N=23	1.6%
	1,440	99.9%

A strong positive correlation was found between the respondents age and their dislike of the movies, the most highly criticized program component ($r=.73, p<.01$). Generally, older participants were more critical of the movies than younger participants. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7



Two important changes over time for the groups were indicated by the data. Each successive group of participants more frequently reported that nothing was a waste of time ($r=.91, p<.05$) and less frequently reported that everything was a waste of time ($r=-.95, p<.01$). These relationships are illustrated in Figures 8 and 9, respectively.

Figure 8

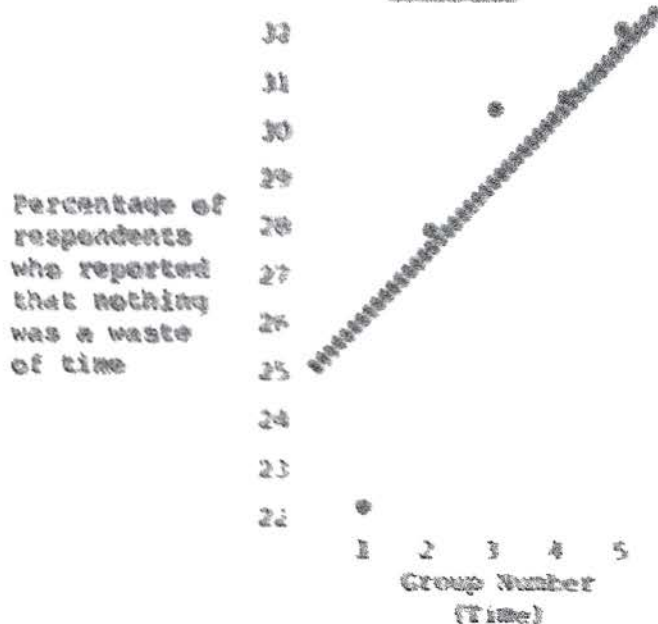
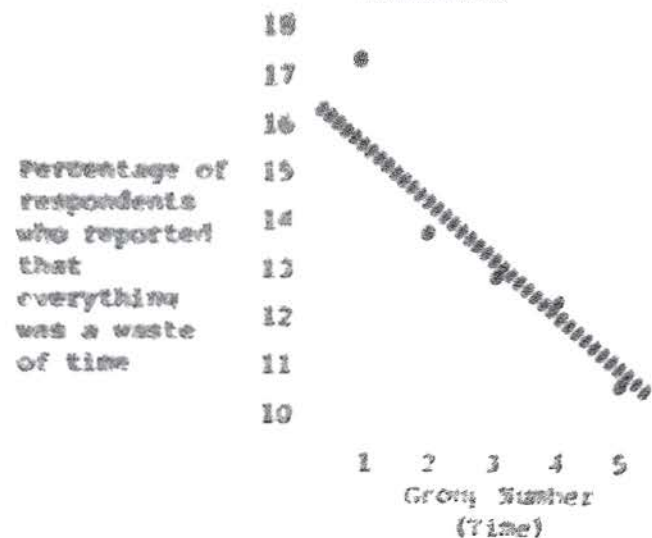


Figure 9



It has been of particular importance to attempt to assess if attending this class would influence the subsequent behavior of the participants, since this was the main expressed objective of the program. The fourth question asked:

In what way do you feel your day to day behavior may change as a result of this class?

Ninety percent of the participants provided a response to this question. It should be noted that the responses to this question reflect the participants' own perceptions concerning future behavioral changes subsequent to participation in the program.

Nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of the participants who answered this question indicated potential positive behavioral change as a direct result of having attended the program. The specific responses are categorized in Table 5. There were no respondents who reported that their behavior might change negatively relative to misusing intoxicants.

Table 5

Participant responses to the question:
"In what way do you feel your day to day behavior may change as a result of this class?"

1. No change....	N=316	34.8%
2. Think about responsible use....	N=374	25.2%
3. Be more cautious about use....	N=298	20.1%
4. Reduce use....	N=210	14.2%
5. More responsible use....	N=61	4.1%
6. Seek information....	N=23	1.6%
	1,482	99.9%

Two significant changes over time for the groups were indicated by the data. Each successive group of participants more frequently reported that they might reduce their drug use ($r=.91, p<.05$). The more recent participants were also less likely to say that they did not plan to change their behavior ($r=-.83, p<.05$). These relationships are illustrated in Figures 10 and 11, respectively.

Figure 10

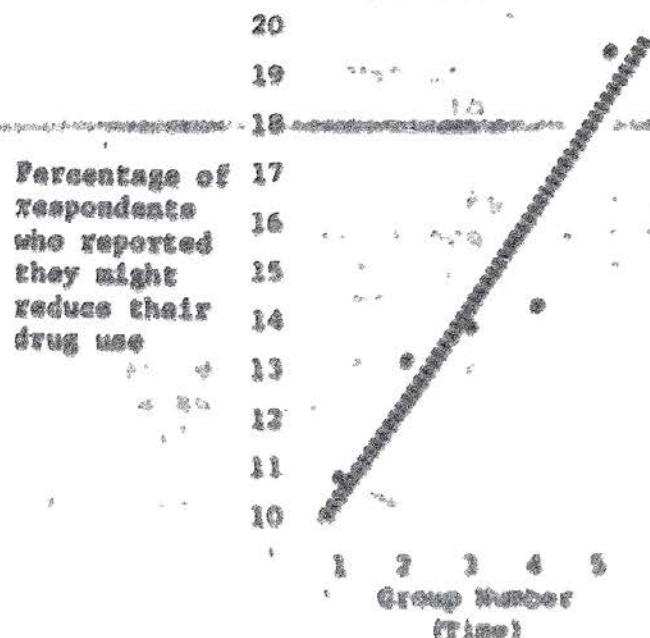
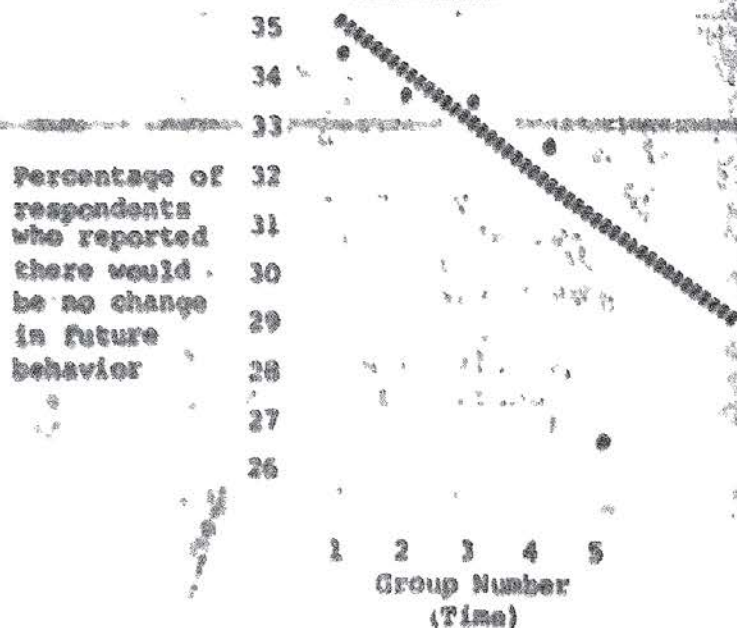


Figure 11



The participants were asked to comment on the programmatic content and procedures of the class. The fifth question asked:

What changes would you suggest to make this class more interesting/informative?

Ninety-two percent of the participants provided a response to this question. Two-thirds (66.6%) of the participants who answered this question cited at least one change they would recommend for the class. The remaining third (33.4%) stated that they felt the class was fine as it was and/or they could not think of any ways to improve upon it.

The most frequently suggested changes (17.7%) had to do with the movies. About three-fourths (73.4%) of those commenting on the movies said that they were dissatisfied with some or all of them. The other fourth (26.6%) wanted more movies. A recommendation to provide more written handout information on drugs was suggested by 12.6% of participants responding to this question. The responses to this question are categorized in Table 6.

Table 6

Participant responses to the question:
"What changes would you suggest to make
this class more interesting/informative?"

1. No changes....	N=509	33.4%
2. Eliminate, change, or add movies....	N=269	17.7%
3. Provide written handouts....	N=233	15.3%
4. Facilitate better discussion....	N=146	9.6%
5. Unrealistic response....	N=127	8.3%
6. Better lectures....	N=75	4.9%
7. Change length of class....	N=57	3.7%
8. Separate marijuana from other drugs..	N=28	1.8%
9. Use alternative format....	N=28	1.8%
10. Should be better organized....	N=24	1.6%
11. Change class setting....	N=21	1.4%
12. Lower the cost....	N=6	0.4%
	1,523	99.9%

Two significant changes over time for the groups were indicated by the data. The desire to receive written handouts on drugs increased with time ($r=.89, p<.05$). The number of unrealistic suggestions (i.e., hire dancing bears to do the class, etc.) decreased with time ($r=-.95, p<.01$). These trends are illustrated in Figures 12 and 13.

Figure 12

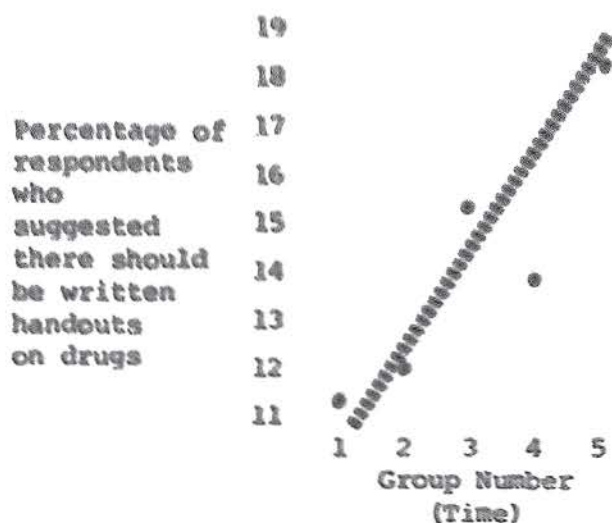
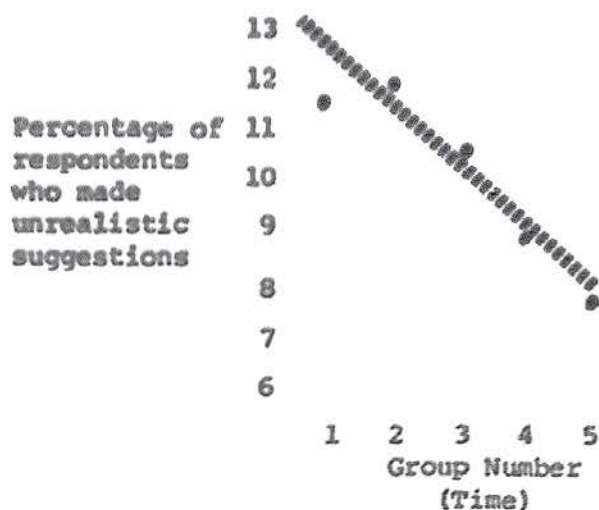


Figure 13



V. Discussion

The participant responses to the questionnaire lend support to a conclusion that the Drug Education Program is meeting its singular objective. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that in the future they would make positive changes relative to their use of alcohol and drugs.

It should be noted that the data comes from self-reports and additionally is based on future intent. We do not know what relationship there will be between self-reported intent and future behavior. It is these writers' opinion, however, that reasonable confidence can be placed in the veracity of the self-report, even if projected future behavior must be considered very speculative. Persons completing questionnaires for evaluators are subject to what has been termed a demand characteristic. That is, the respondent, knowingly or unknowingly, wishes to please the evaluators by telling them what they wish to hear. Because a substantial number of the participants felt free to criticize some aspect of the program, and fully one-third of the respondents indicated no anticipated behavioral changes, it seems reasonable to assume that any operating demand characteristic did not overwhelm the general results.

Nor does it appear likely that hostility toward the criminal justice structure and the mandatory attendance requirement of the program caused an overly critical reaction to the questionnaire items. The responses of the participants were generally favorable toward the program.

Participant responses to the questionnaire also lend support to a conclusion that the program is improving over time. Participant responses are increasingly more positive toward the program and the rates of response to questionnaire items are themselves increasing. These changes over time indicate increased participant satisfaction with the central elements of program content and decreased participant disinterest.

The respondents' critical response to the movies calls for an assessment of the appropriateness of their content and ultimately what part, if any, they should have in future programming.

The respondents' desire for written information regarding both the nature and potential for misuse of intoxicating substances and legal reviews of state law regarding drug use should be considered. It seems appropriate to these writers to recommend inclusion of an informational booklet that would comprehensively and systematically iterate the information presented in the program. From a learning perspective, this would allow the participants to more readily consolidate and retain the verbally conveyed information. Additionally, such a booklet would represent an effective response to the participants' desire to share program information with their friends.