



Marijuana Clinics: Critical Reading of Documents in Civic Decision-Making

Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to increase students' awareness of how data and information can be distorted and misinterpreted, and to improve the ability to detect flaws in arguments and use evidence to support conclusions and opinions.

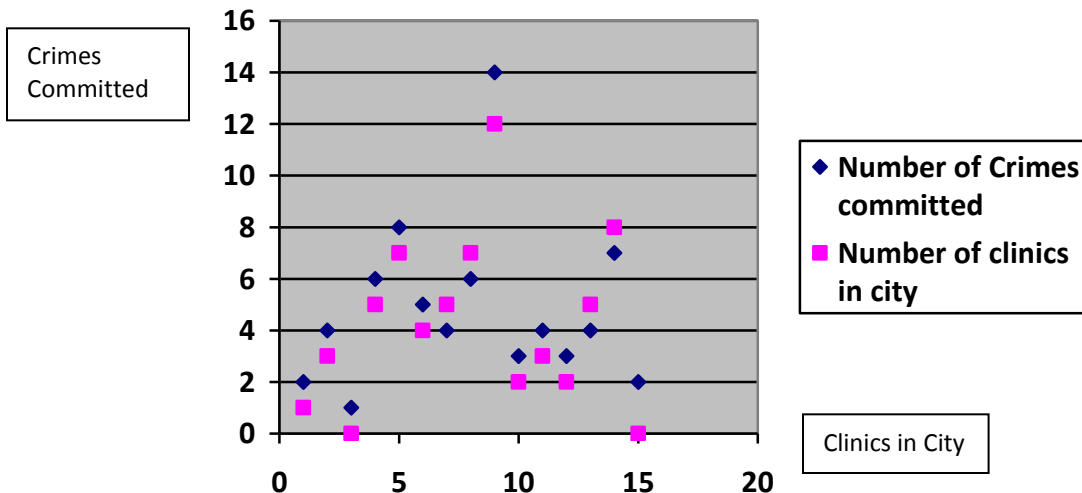
Outcomes: Students will...

1. Critically read mock documents and assess their credibility and value
2. Take a stand on a mock controversy and compose an essay of six to seven paragraphs that identifies the stand they take on the controversy and explains why they took that stand
3. Review their work with a rubric provided after they complete their essay

Part One: Role Play

You are a member of the Mayor's Committee on Public Health & Safety and must advise the executive on whether to renew Green Cross's license to operate a medical marijuana clinic in the Maple district of Normopolis. You will rely on several mock documents that will help you decide the matter.

Document A: Marijuana Clinics and Crime



Source: Hodges, R. B. "A Study of Marijuana Clinics and Crime in Fifteen Cities," *Journal of Civility*. 23 (4): 311-323. 2007.

Document B: Letter to the Newspaper Editor

Dear Editor

When is this society going to grow up? The paranoia surrounding the renewal of Green Crosses license is based on little more than medieval notions about personal morality. In case anyone has not noticed, this is the 21st century, and we are living in a republic that has legal traditions dedicated to the proposition that when given the freedom to exercise our own consciences, people will do what is right and reasonable. The fact that some clients smoke their pot on the streets is not Green Cross's fault. The fact that theft is a problem in neighborhood where Green Cross is located does not mean that Green Cross clients are committing the crimes. The real reason people do not want Green Cross in their neighborhood is because they are bigoted and ignorant. The stereotype of the hippie pot-head who is occupied with nothing other than getting high is as fixed as it was 40 years ago, and is doing nobody any good. If we really want to legislate against the evil of getting buzzed, close the bars. More people die every year as a result of alcohol-related diseases and drunk driving than they do from smoking weed. How about banning fast food? It isn't bad enough that kids are served fries and cokes for lunch every day, and their obesity and diabetes are out of control?! The issue is not public safety it is selective morality.

Terri Callahan

Document C: Political Action Committee Survey (PAC)

Residents of Maple district formed a committee to stop the clinic from opening at 12th Street. They circulated fliers asking citizens to write letters to their representatives and ask them to oppose the clinic. The PAC conducted a survey of people who live within a one mile radius of the proposed site for the clinic. The results appeared in a handout that was used to argue against renewing the clinic's license.

Question	Yes	No
I personally voted in favor of legalizing marijuana for medical use in Normopolis	38%	62%
I support the existence of marijuana clinics in the city, but not in this neighborhood	34%	64%
I have personally been the victim of a crime related to the distribution of marijuana	7%	93%
My kids have been pressured to buy drugs as a result of the existing marijuana clinics in the area	22%	68%

Document D: Abstracts from Three Professional Journals

Title: The Effects of Prolonged Cannabis Use and Cognition.

Author: Satvahan, P., M.D.

Source: *Psychological Inquiries and Education*; October 1998, Vol. 41 Issue 3, pp. 315-328.

Abstract:

The article offers a meta-analysis of 57 studies conducted on the cognitive effects of marijuana use. It suggests that several cognitive functions, including memory, organization of information, critical thinking, and articulation are adversely effected with prolonged use of marijuana in diverse populations and age groups. The study concludes that cannabis use is detrimental especially to those age 25 and younger as cerebral maturation is especially profound at this time.

Title: Migraine Headaches and Non-Western Medicine.

Author: Lu, David, M.D. et. al.

Source: *Traditional Medicine Quarterly*, August, 2006, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 166-75.

Abstract:

This research indicates that although marijuana does alleviate pain and nausea caused by migraine headaches, it does not reduce the risk of getting migraines. Further, the intensity of the migraine episode at its onset was not mitigated by previous marijuana use. While variables that affect the severity of symptoms, such as diet, exercise, stress, and alcohol intake are well documented, participants in this study indicated a low level of commitment to moderating behaviors in order to prevent migraines.

Title: The Benefits of Cannabis in the Clinical Setting

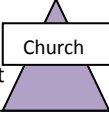



Author: Raisanovsky, A. M.D.

Source: *Medical Scholar*, June 2008, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 69-84.

Abstract:

Data from case studies indicate that the vast majority of patients who use marijuana as part of their medical regiment describe significant improvements in their overall sense of wellness and a decrease in the level of anxiety over their lives in general. The clinical setting had the apparent effect of soothing patients, and thus warrants further studies on the significance of the settings in which therapies are generally administered.

Document E: Map

Juniper Street	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th
Kiwi Street				John Adams School						Grocery
Larch Street					Grocery			June's Day Care		
Maple Street										
Nectarine Street			Grocery							
Oak Street	Grade School				Antique shop					
Pine Street	Grocery							Grocery	Church	
Quince Street										St. Ann's Elementary

Document F: Normopolis Crime Statistics 1995-2007

Number of Crimes Reported in City

Year	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Auto Theft	Arson
1997	28	317	1248	1438	2655	467	593	417
2002	20	284	11234	1902	2571	188	664	270
2007	13	229	1367	2014	2643	782	831	208

Number of Crimes Reported by Four Largest Municipal Districts: 2007

District	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Auto	Arson
Bryant	2/13	7/229	3/1367	41/2014	122/2643	45/782	118/831	12/208
Camden	0/13	1/229	4/1367	45/2014	103/2643	38/782	43/831	10/208
Maple	1/13	3/229	5/1367	88/2014	2099/2643	16/782	78/831	24/208
Riverside	10/13	16/229	43/1367	146/2014	475/2643	101/782	147/831	77/208

Document G: Reverend Tom's Speech to the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee

Good evening honorable members of the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee on Public Safety and all who are gathered.

Tonight we address a very important issue that put to the test our compassion for one another and our respect for the law. Tonight we must open our minds and our hearts to the needs of all of our community, and all of those who will be affected by the city's decision on whether to allow Green Cross to open a clinic in the Maple district.

It may surprise many of you here tonight that I voted in favor of legalizing marijuana for medical use. I did so with a clear conscience, believing that our Gracious Creator gifted humanity with many natural resources to sustain life and to help us maintain the quality of that life. Like all substances, marijuana can and has been abused. This abuse has caused many to suffer needlessly and in some cases, resulted in fatalities. The abuses of alcohol, junk food, and cigarettes are well known, and so far our society has approached these problems with reason. We are reasonable because we have faith that the educated citizen will strike a balance between the individual's right to self-indulgence and the society's right to be safe.

What does reason ask of us tonight? Let us consider some of the facts. First, Green Cross already has opened 14 clinics within our city limits. These clinics have served not only those who live in Normopolis, but many who travel here from surrounding cities to obtain cannabis. Second, we know from the data collected by city officials that crime has increased in the city since marijuana was legalized. Finally, Green Cross's clinic in the Maple district is within one mile of three schools, one day care center, and one senior hospice.

What do the facts mean? The facts ask us, as people who care for each other as God would have us, to think about the health, psychological wellness, and safety of each other. To establish a clinic so close to schools is not in our best interest. Residents of the Maple district have shared with me disturbing stories of how their children have been approached by older men and women who taunt them, invite them to try their pot, and frighten them when they are under its influence. Residents have indicated they have not only seen an increase in theft, but that robbery and assaults are now happening with more frequency in broad daylight. My community tells me that some who use the clinic re-sell their own prescriptions on the street for profit. While we have supported the distribution of marijuana to those who need the healing and relief cannabis provides, some have interpreted that as an invitation to indulge themselves at the public's expense.

I ask you here tonight, honorable members of the Mayor's Ad Hoc Committee, to consider the vulnerable when you make your decision. Think of the children who encounter the intoxicated in the parks, and on their way to school; think of the seniors who have little capacity to defend themselves when they are assaulted and robbed; think of the family businesses that are at risk when less responsible citizens rely on theft to support their drug habits. Increases in police surveillance have not eliminated the problems. Too many who use the clinics linger in the neighborhood after purchasing their medications and publically consume their rations; they loiter in the parks and congregate near grocery stores where liquor is sold. Medical cannabis should, at last, be distributed by pharmacies and hospitals under the strictest care and security as are all narcotics. To make an exception for this medicine, and to ignore the consequences it has had in our neighborhoods, is counter-productive to good will and good medicine.

Rubric for Assessing Proficiency with Documents in a Reading Exercise based on Civic Judgment

Document	Insufficient	Emerging	Excellent
A: Scatter Chart	Misreads data; confuses correlation with causation	Accurately reads and correctly interprets meaning of data	Accurately reads and correctly interprets meaning of data; offers insights to implications
B: Editorial	Misunderstands editorial; confuses passion with evidence	Demonstrates understanding of difference between emotional appeal and hard evidence to support conclusion	Provides highly detailed analysis of several assumptions and unsupported claims with insightful commentary
C: Survey	Takes survey at face value, but may misread data; does not question the credibility of opposition to the clinic based on survey	Acknowledges that opposing the clinic based on the survey might be flawed, but offers little specific analysis of why; focuses comments on content of answers with little regard for structure of questions	Illuminates potential flaws in structure of survey and results; notes that sample population (lots of crime victims) may have skewed results; poignant insights regarding relevance of questions and logic of claims
D: Journal Abstract	Took abstracts at face value; did not note problems with structure of research, sample populations; did not offer insights to how variables could impact conclusions; did not distinguish between subjects' perception of well-being and actual wellness	Offered thoughts on some problems with structure of research, sample populations; did not offer insights to how variables in a study could impact conclusions; did not distinguish between subjects' perception of well-being and actual wellness	Addressed multiple problems with structure of research, sample populations; did not offer insights to how variables in a study could impact conclusions; did not distinguish between subjects' perception of well-being and actual wellness; offered astute insights
E: Map	Does not grasp implications of physical proximity of things or acknowledge relevance of location	Grasps some implications of physical proximity of things and acknowledges relevance of location	Offers robust analysis of the relevance of location and the implications of proximity and their impact on judgment
F: Crime Statistics	Takes statistics at face value; does not grasp relationship between data and judgment; does not address need to explore variables impacting data	Takes statistics at face value; does not grasp relationship between data and judgment; does not address need to explore variables impacting data	Takes statistics at face value; does not grasp relationship between data and judgment; does not address need to explore variables impacting data
G: Sermon	Takes sermon at face value; does not question accuracy of assertions or abuse of emotional appeal	Acknowledges potential of sermon to sway people based on emotions and the authority of a faith-based institution; looks at some matters related to accuracy and assumptions	Analyzes emotions and the authority of a faith-based institution; looks at many matters related to accuracy and assumptions, and offers insights to persuasive elements of sermon
Overall	Essay fails to demonstrate competency with reading documents, critical thinking, and applying thinking to one's judgment	Essay demonstrates emerging competence with reading documents, critical thinking and applying one's thinking judgment	Demonstrates outstanding ability to interpret and critique documents, offer insights to issues and apply one's thinking to one's judgment

