

Priya Chainani

Paul D. Schreiber High School, Port Washington, NY

The Predictability of US Drug Deaths through State Level Income Inequality and Neuroticism

Category: Behavioral Science

### Research Plan

**RATIONALE:** The Opioid Epidemic in the United States is recognized as a national emergency. The prevalence of drug deaths has become a matter of urgency. In order for proper intervention and policymaking to combat this crisis, it is necessary to understand what areas of the country and what groups of individuals are most vulnerable to such outcomes. Factors that have been previously researched in relation to drug use and drug death include socioeconomic status and personality traits.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS/HYPOTHESES:** To further investigate such elements, this study will specifically analyze income inequality and the personality trait of neuroticism both in relation to one another as well as with drug deaths because of their common overlap with the concept of social comparison. The current study diverges from past literature which has greatly focused on one factor, by analyzing the interaction of multiple variables. The research questions that will be addressed include what factors predict drug use, can the interaction of multiple variables heighten risk of death by drug use, and what combination of situational and dispositional factors makes certain populations more vulnerable to drug death? The hypotheses are that income inequality and neuroticism will be separately and independently related to drug use and that neuroticism will serve as the moderator in the relationship between income inequality and drug deaths.

**PROCEDURES/RISKS:** Pre-existing data will be analyzed in this study, thereby eliminating potential risks. Drug death data will be collected from the CDC, income inequality data will be collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, and neuroticism correlates per state will be retrieved from Rentfrow et. al's study.

**DATA ANALYSIS:** Data analysis will be completed through SPSS.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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1. Human Participants research: Not applicable
2. Vertebrate animal research: Not applicable
3. Potentially hazardous biological agents research: Not applicable

4. Hazardous chemicals, activities & devices: Not applicable