

College Student Marijuana Use and Societal Alienation

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'This study examines the relationship between four levels of marijuana use and two forms of alienation (personal and societal). Marijuana use was significantly related to societal alienation but not to personal alienation. It was also found that heavy marijuana users perceived themselves to be more open to legal and societal harassment. Finally it was found that value hierarchies differed as a function of marijuana use.'

THE 1972 and 1973 published reports of the [National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse, indicated among youth a strong relationship between marijuana use and social values, (attitudes, and life styles expressing opposition to authority; the 'Commission characterized that opposition less as an assault on adult authority and values than as an adolescent type rebellion against rules and concluded that young adult users' general image of themselves and society is not radically different from that of their non-marijuana-using peers.

But related research suggests more profound attitudinal and ideological differences between marijuana users and non-users with greater social ramifications than implied by the Commission. For example, Messer (1969) reported greater pessimism and cynicism about American society among users. Suchman (1968) concluded that the users' operational framework of a "hang loose" ethic varied sharply from widely accepted social norms. Kohn and Mercer (1971) reported a markedly left wing, rebellious sociopolitical outlook among users, and Blum's (1969) users more often identified persons in right wing and <middle-of-the-road political spectrums as those most dangerous to national interests. Particularly relevant to this discussion is the study by McGlothlin et al. (forthcoming) comparing alienation between long term users (adults about 40 years of age initiated to marijuana prior to 1961, who used it '2 or more times weekly for at least 2 years), short term users (adults

about 40 years of age who tried marijuana irregularly prior to 1961), and middle age non-users. Their long-term users were more alienated socioculturally (e.g., "I don't want to have to 'fit in' with American Society the way it is today") but *not* significantly different from short-term or non-users in a personal sense (e.g. feelings of worthlessness). Researchers have found marijuana users more hostile toward generally accepted values and established order than non-users, but the McGlothlin et al. results showing no differentiation in self-perception between users and non-users are especially interesting. They suggest the presence of relationships between marijuana and social-alienation, but not between marijuana and feelings of personal alienation. The user rejects society as presently structured, but not himself. However, as McGlothlin et al. recognize, their highly selective sample was not representative of contemporary youthful marijuana users.

The present study was designed to examine the extent to which young adult marijuana usage is related to personal and societal alienation. The degree of societal alienation [marked primarily by a rejection of reigning goals and standards (Seeman, 1959)] and of personal alienation [defined as feelings of cynicism, distrust, and apathy (Gould, 1969; Keniston, 1965)] were assessed and related to four levels of marijuana involvement. Items bearing on the marijuana subculture (e.g., perceived police harassment and number of friends involved in drug related arrests) were also included.

Methodology

Subjects. The present sample contained 168 undergraduates, 87 females and 81 males, enrolled in seven classes (two lower division and two upper division psychology, one lower division political science, and two upper #division sociology classes) at a large state college. No attempts were made to balance the sample by major field of study. Upon examination it was found that social sciences majors and females were overrepresented in this sample.

Procedure. Subjects were asked to complete the questionnaire during one of their regular class periods set aside by the instructors for this purpose. Respondents were only told that they were "participating in a survey on attitudes that would be used for research purposes." They were purposefully kept naive so that their responses to attitude and belief items would not be affected by knowing that the survey concerned marijuana use. Completion of the lo-page survey took from 35 to 45 minutes. Great care was exercised to explain both in verbal and in written form that: (1) the questionnaire was completely anonymous, (2) it would be used for research purposes only, (3) the researcher was in no way affiliated with any law enforcement agency, and (4) subjects were encouraged to contact the experimenter at a later date when he would be pleased to discuss the theoretical considerations and results of the survey. Finally, subjects were told that if they still felt that for any reason they would not be able to answer the questionnaire with complete candor (e.g., fear of arrest, self-incrimination) they should destroy the questionnaire rather than submit inaccurate responses. To the knowledge of the researcher only two individuals chose this option.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire contained items measuring demographic characteristics, social-political attitudes and involvement, personal values, systemic alienation, personal alienation, and marijuana (and other drug) usage.

Demographic variables measured were: age, sex, year in school, academic major, parents income, interrupted education, and grade-point average. Social-political atti-

tudes were measured by items pertaining to political orientation, number of 'years that political orientation had been held, participation in mass political protests, and reading of underground newspapers.

Value hierarchies were measured by rankings of the importance of eight values: comfortable life, meaningful life, equality, freedom, maturity, true friendship, and new experiences (cf. Rokeach, 1968).

Alienation was measured by a variety of items. Cantril's (1962) self-anchoring scale was used to measure fears and operations about "self" and "U.S.A.," measures of personal and societal alienation, respectively. Societal alienation, defined as alienation from the institutions, ethics, and mores of society, was further subdivided into six #categories each measured by two items: governmental alienation (items from Olson, 1969 and Bonjean, 1967), mass culture (Bonjean, 1967; Middleton, 1963), work ethic (Suchman, 1968; plus one item constructed for this scale), marriage (Bonjean, 1967; Suchman, 1968), and law and justice (measured by two items constructed for this study).

Personal alienation was also measured by questions drawn from previously published scales. Measures of "self-to-other alienation" found to be related to suicide attempts (Srole, 1956) were included, along with items measuring perceived hostility of the environment (Dean, 1961).

Marijuana and drug usage was assessed by questions concerning present frequency of use, years of use, years of use at present frequency, percentage of friends who use marijuana at various frequencies, and whether or not the subject kept and bought his own marijuana, sold marijuana, Earried marijuana for friends, and used other drugs. Perceived probability of arrest for usage was also measured.

The final section of the questionnaire included questions concerning police harassment and degree of personal drug use, perceived parental feelings about marijuana, perceived opinion of the mass public about legalization of marijuana (estimate of poll), and perceived rationale of those opposed to legalization.

Analyses. The survey respondents were divided into four groups on the basis of

reported marijuana usage: Non-users (never tried marijuana), Experimenters (tried marijuana only once or twice), Recreational Users (use marijuana regularly, but less than 4 days per week), and Heads (use marijuana 4 or more days per week). One-way unweighted means analyses of variance across usage groups were calculated for each interval scale variable. The Kruskal-Wallis one-way analyses for ranked data were used for each value across usage categories. Interval scale variables were then reanalyzed using a factor analysis.

Results

Table 1 presents the number of subjects in each of the four usage categories. The proportion of respondents admitting to any drug use was 64.3 per cent and those admitting to use on a regular basis was 51.2 per cent. As can be seen from Table 1, a slightly larger proportion of females to males comprised the Non-use category, whereas a larger proportion of males to females made up the Head category, while the distribution of males and females in the Experimenter and Recreational User categories were equivalent. A chi square analysis indicated, however, that the distribution of males and females across usage categories did not differ significantly ($\chi^2=5.12$, $df=3$, NS). There were no significant differences between usage categories and grade-point average ($F=1.35$, NS) and interruption in education ($F=.58$, NS).

The mean responses for items assessing the extent of involvement in marijuana and drug use across usage categories are presented in Table 2. These data suggest that as the college student increases his use he further immerses himself in the drug culture. Increasing usage entails a greater reliance on keeping one's own supply rather

than relying on friends. There was also a progression in purchasing their own marijuana, with Heads indicating that they usually bought their own. Increases in involvement were also evident in "carrying as a favor for friends." Although there is a progression in "selling for profit," the differences obtained between groups are not very dramatic; the mean response for Heads represented selling marijuana "on rare occasions."

Personal Alienation. The upper row of Table 3 presents the average personal alienation score for each of the usage categories. These means did not differ across usage groups ($F=.67$, NS). Thus personal alienation appears to be unrelated to marijuana use. This was further supported by the responses to Cantril's self-anchoring scale (shown in Table 3). Respondents' perspectives of "self" in relation to a personal ideal for each of the three time periods (past, present, and future) did not differ as a function of marijuana use. Students felt that their lives were good in the past, better at present, and promising in the future regardless of the extent of marijuana use.

Societal Alienation. Mean personal alienation scores for each of the usage categories are also shown in Table 3. In contrast to personal alienation, there was a significant relationship between societal alienation and marijuana usage; societal alienation increases as drug usage increased. Heads were found to differ significantly from the other three categories by Duncan's Multiple Range Test.

Analyses of the Cantril scales, which measured the individual's hopes or fears for the United States in relation to a personally defined ideal, are consistent with the preceding findings on societal alienation. Heads rated the U.S.A. as farther from the ideal in the present than did Non-users (significant by Duncan's Multi-

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF MALE AND FEMALE SUBJECTS IN EACH USAGE CATEGORY

	Non Users	Experimenters	Recreational Users	Heads	Total
Females	58.3% (35)	50.0% (11)	52.9% (36)	27.8% (5)	51.8% (87)
Males	41.7% (25)	50.0% (11)	47.1% (32)	72.2% (13)	48.2% (81)
Percentage of Total Supply	35.7%	13.1%	40.5%	10.7%	100.0%

TABLE 2. MEANS AND F VALUES FOR DRUG INVOLVEMENT ITEMS ACROSS USAGE CATEGORIES

	Non Users	Experi- menters	Recrea- tional Users	Heads	F
Years since first use	0.00a	1.29b	2.67c	3.19c	59.27**
Years used at present frequency	0.00a	0.00a	1.49b	1.64b	59.68**
Keep own supply marijuana	0.00a	1.14b	2.68c	4.94d	171.43**
Purchase own marijuana	0.00a	1.14b	2.56c	5.00d	131.46**
Carry marijuana for friends	1.07a	1.14a	2.32b	4.00c	50.80**
Sell marijuana for profit	1.00a	1.00a	1.26a	2.50b	22.77**
% friends never use	60.30a	24.73b	15.85b	4.83b	31.04**
% friends use 6-7 weeks	1.02a	4.64a	3.91a	31.00b	22.24**
Psychedelic	0.00a	0.09a	0.53b	2.28c	57.02**
Amphetamines	0.15	0.36	1.09	2.33	28.20**
Barbiturates	0.00	0.05	0.44	1.22	16.26**

Note: Entries having the same subscripts are not significantly different from one another, F values based on 3,164 df.

** $p < .001$.

ple Range Test). Moreover, Heads were more pessimistic about the future of the United States. Examination of the mean ratings for present land future indicates that Heads are the only group that sees the U.S.A. as deteriorating rather than improving in the next five years.

Perception of Police Harassment. Mean responses to the harassment items are presented in Table 4. Heads reported experiencing more encounters with the police while intoxicated or holding drugs, having more friends arrested on narcotic charges,

and reporting a higher probability of being arrested.

Political Orientation. As expected those individuals who reported being more involved in marijuana use held more liberal or leftist political orientations. There was no difference among the use categories in the number of years an orientation had been held. In line with the more leftist orientation of heavy marijuana users it was found that they were more active in political protests and reported reading underground newspapers to a greater extent

TABLE 3. MEANS AND F VALUES FOR PERSONAL AND SOCIETAL ALIENATION

	Non Users	Experimenters	Recrea- tional Users	Heads	F
Personal Alienation	3.75	3.61	3.71	3.46	.67
Societal Alienation	3.30a	3.53a	3.78b	4.27c	13.99**
Self-Anchoring Scale					
(Present)	6.02	6.36	6.37	7.00	2.08
(Past)	4.55	5.27	4.76	5.23	.99
(Future)	8.03	8.32	8.28	8.67	1.16
U.S.A.					
(Present)	5.35	4.73	4.38	4.11	5.02*
(Past)	5.83	4.64	5.31	4.78	3.35*
(Future)	5.52	5.05	4.63	3.78	3.69*

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4. MEANS AND F VALUES FOR HARASSMENT ITEMS

	Non Users	Experimenters	Recreational Users	Heads	F
Encounters with police while intoxicated or holding	0.02a	0.09a	1.58b	3.67c	17.47**
Number of friends arrested	1.90a	2.57a	3.54a	5.89b	3.73*
Perceived probability of arrest	.148a	.150a	.319b	.450c	49.11**

* $p < .05$.** $p < .001$.

than did persons in the other three groups.

Factor Analysis. The 46 items in the questionnaire which lent themselves to correlational analysis were factor analyzed. Marijuana usage items were omitted to avoid biasing later comparisons. A plot of the eigenvalues derived from the unrotated factor analysis revealed a noticeable break after the first three factors. The three factors, accounting for 27.2 per cent of the variance, were rotated to the varimax criterion. A factor loading of .35 or greater was required for inclusion for interpretation. The three factors with item loadings are presented in Table 5.

The first rotated factor was labelled "Societal Alienation," as seven of the 12 items in that scale were represented by this factor. In addition, items reflecting a more liberal political view and a more pessimistic or negative view of the past, present, and future of the U.S.A. loaded on this factor.

Factor II was labelled "Personal Alienation." All six personal alienation items loaded on this factor along with variables reflecting a negative self-evaluation in the present and future and the belief that education is a waste of time.

Factor III may be viewed as an "Age-Naivete" factor. Age, years in school, interruption in education, and non-use of marijuana by friends all loaded negatively while parents' income and estimates of the number of voters who would support legalization of marijuana loaded positively. A young person who had never dropped out of school, had marijuana smoking friends, and overestimated the likelihood of marijuana legalization would score high on this factor.

Factor scores for the individuals on the three rotated factors were computed. Three unweighted means analyses of variance were performed, comparing these factor scores across usage groups. The results were clearcut (Table 6). Societal alienation increased with usage. Each usage group differed significantly from all others. No significant differences were obtained on either of the two remaining factors.

Value Hierarchy. A number of values were chosen for study that might indicate possible motivating factors underlying marijuana use. Subjects were asked to rank seven values in order of their importance to the subjects' own life. The interpolated median scores for three of the values are presented in Table 7. As can be seen Heads are radically different from the other groups showing extremely high rankings for Freedom and low rankings for Maturity. New experiences showed a consistent rise in importance with increasing marijuana usage.

Discussion

The present data provide some insights into marijuana use in a college population. Frequency of use was closely related to involvement in a drug sub-culture. Involvement with owning, carrying, selling marijuana, and using other drugs increased, as one would expect, with the amount of use. Furthermore, peer group associations tended to match the individual's use of marijuana.

The findings that bear on the relationship of marijuana use to personal and societal alienation were of particular interest. Personal alienation was not related to rate of use: basic trust in human beings,

TABLE 5. FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THREE ROTATED FACTORS

Factor I : Societal Alienation	Loadings	Factor II : Personal Alienation	Loadings	Factor III : Age-Naivete	Loadings
Political orientation (1-extreme conservative, 6-extreme liberal)	.71	Person doesn't really know whom he can trust	.67	Age	— .73
Perception of U.S.A. at present (Cantril)	— .67	Most people don't care what happens to others	.66	Interruption in education	— .64
Laws of the country are not fair	.65	People are not friendly and helpful	.51	Years in school	— .60
Police do not protect personal freedoms	.62	World is not basically a friendly place	.51	Percentage of voting population who would support legalization of marijuana	.57
Existing government incapable of dealing with crucial problems	.58	What is learned in school is a waste of time	.49	Percentage of friends who never use marijuana	— .48
Perception of U.S.A. in the past (Cantril)	— .55	Perception of self in future (Cantril)	— .46	Parents' income	.36
Read underground newspapers	.52	Perception of self at present (Cantril)	— .43		
Most married people live trapped lives	.51	Wonder if anything is worthwhile	.43		
Perception of U.S.A. in the future (Cantril)	— .48	Sometimes feel alone in the world	.42		
Percentage of friends who never use marijuana	— .47				
Better to accept hand-outs than to accept distasteful job	.46				
Public education system is in sorry shape	.44				
Single life would be more satisfying	.43				
Likelihood of being arrested	.42				
Participation in political protests	.39				

TABLE 6. MEAN FACTOR SCORES ACROSS USAGE CATEGORIES

	Non Users	Experimenters	Recreational Users	Heads	F
Societal Alienation	-0.615a	0.144b	0.347c	0.563d	15.58"
Personal Alienation	0.250	-0.228	-0.073	-0.277	2.26
Age-Naivete	-0.192	-0.085	0.182	0.054	1.57

** $p < .001$.

hopelessness, and cynicism appear to have little to do with the use of drugs among college students. Further support for this finding was manifested by the pattern of responses on Cantril's self-anchoring scale, which revealed that students from all four usage categories viewed their personal status in positive terms. The absence of any relationship between usage and academic variables such as grade-point 'average or interrupted education lends further support to the conclusion that general image of self does not differ as a function of marijuana usage.

Societal alienation, on the other hand, appeared to be strongly related to marijuana use. Disaffection with the institutions of law, government, marriage, and work ethic was most pronounced at the highest levels of marijuana use and decreased with usage. In addition, subjects who reported higher marijuana use regarded the United States less positively as measured by the Cantril scale.

The results of the factor analysis support the division of alienation into separate societal and personal components. Two distinct factors were necessary to account for these two sets of items. The first rotated factor contained societal alienation items and assessments of the United States for different time periods. Also loading on this 'factor were the responses to political orientation, political participation, and perceived

probability of (arrest-variables related to social discontent.

The second factor accounted for all of the personal alienation items and the present and future scales of the Cantril self-anchoring scales. These two forms of alienation differ not only in terms of the pattern of mean for cases and across usage groups but also in their conceptual significance.

The present findings are in accord with and expand upon those obtained by McGlothlin et al. (forthcoming). This is of particular interest since the sample studied by McGlothlin and his colleagues consisted of individuals who first tried marijuana in adolescence some 20 years ago, and subsequently used it on a regular basis for a minimum of two years. McGlothlin et al. point to this as a serious limitation of their study. They state: "It is even more hazardous to generalize to the population of persons introduced to marijuana during the last few years, since they come from a much wider spectrum than do the highly selective groups who were exposed to marijuana two decades ago" (McGlothlin et al., forthcoming).

The differences in value hierarchies that were obtained across usage categories further illustrate the point that marijuana users hold attitudes and values that are at variance with the generally accepted norms of the social system. The value of "freedom" stands out as the singularly most important value for Heads. The significance of "maturity" diminished with increasing rate of use and the importance of "new experiences" increased. The value configuration for Heads suggests that individuality and personal 'expression are highly prized whereas maturity is anathemized and possibly regarded as a form of conformity to social norms that have been called into question.

The positive relationship between societal alienation and marijuana usage is not

TABLE 7. INTERPOLATED MEDIAN RANKS FOR THREE VALUES ACROSS USAGE CATEGORIES

	Non Users	Experimental Users	Recreational Users	Heads
Freedom	2.2	2.5	1.6	.8
New Experiences	5.3	4.7	4.6	3.7
Maturity	4.7	3.7	4.8	6.0

surprising in view of the responses to items dealing with possibility of arrest and estimates of number of friends arrested. The prospect of arrest is obviously a serious affair and very likely linked to heavy marijuana usage. It is not surprising, therefore, that the greater political radicalization is related to greater marijuana use.

In summary, those who use marijuana do not differ from their non-using peers in terms of personal alienation. They do, however, reject the present social system to a greater extent. The implication of these findings is that marijuana usage is a socio-political issue that is a polarizing force in society.

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