

Drug Use, Drug-Use Attitudes, and the Authoritarianism-Rebellion Dimension*

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This article examines the relationships between drug use and drug-use attitudes on the one hand, and sociopolitical ideology on the other. The latter was assessed by the recently developed Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale (ARS). It was found that more rebellious respondents are generally more permissive about drugs and more likely to use drugs, notably marijuana, than their more authoritarian peers. Some theoretical, psychometric, and social-policy implications of these findings are discussed.

THERE are both empirical and theoretical reasons to suspect that drug use and drug-use attitudes may be related to overall sociopolitical ideology, notably attitudes in such spheres as authority, social differences, conventionality, social change, and social deviance. The hypothesis that attitudes toward the use of drugs, particularly marijuana, reflect "a basic underlying attitudinal syndrome, ideological in character" was stated lucidly by Goode (1959). He also suggested (Goode, 1969:92) that marijuana usage has become "a kind of symbol (to its opponents) for a complex of other positions, beliefs, and activities which are compatible with its use."

Along these lines, researchers have related drug use to positions on a variety of sociopolitical issues, including opposition to the Vietnam War and identification with the civil-rights movement (Keniston, 1968; MacInnes, 1966); a rejection or questioning of "the contemporary social establishment" (Norton, 1968); possible resistance to authority and youthful protest toward the parental generation (McAree et al., 1969); possible rebellion and nonconformity (Keeler, 1968); unconventionality in terms of orientation, social relationships, and achievements (Ahmed, 1968); blaming a purportedly bad and hypocritical society for one's problems (Welpton, 1968);

despair of achieving progressive social, political, and economic change (Keniston, 1968); and a general rejection of what drug users regard (MacInnes, 1966:24) as "an increasingly oppressive interference in their private lives by governments of all ideological complexions." Indeed, MacInnes (1966:25) has related the modern drug phenomenon to what he terms "an anti-authoritarian spirit, which, although a minority one, seems to be growing throughout the world." Others (Allen and West, 1968; West and Allen, 1968) refer to the hippie movement and its association with drugs as "the Green Rebellion," comparing it to the concurrent Red (New Left) and Black (Negro) Rebellions. Correspondingly, it has been suggested (Leary and Alpert, 1968) that drug use, notably of psychedelics, is a tremendous threat to "every branch of the Establishment," so that uncompromising opposition to drug use might reasonably be expected as a correlate of authoritarianism.

Surprisingly, however, hard evidence for a relationship between sociopolitical ideology on the one hand, and drug use and drug-use attitudes on the other, has been sparse, diffuse, and unsystematic. Zinberg (1969) reported that radical left-wing political preferences typified his sample of chronic marijuana users more than his non-naïve (but also nonchronic) subjects, and his naïve subjects (see also Zinberg and Weil, 1970). Furthermore, Zinberg (1969) also observed a high incidence of cannabis use among student political activists. Geber (1969a: 382) alluded to "ill-defined affiliations toward the left of the political spec-

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trum" among her sample of British nondependent drug users. McGlothlin et al. (undated) made several ideologically relevant comparisons among long-term, regular marijuana users, short-term (former) users, and nonusers. Regular users showed more opposition to restrictions on individual freedom and greater skepticism about the supposed impartiality of legal processes than the other groups. Furthermore, these characteristics were more marked in short-term users than in nonusers. Both user groups were more liberal on foreign-policy issues than the nonusers. The user groups also perceived themselves as more liberal and more different from other Americans than did the nonusers. Finally, regular users scored higher on measures of sociocultural alienation (but not personal alienation) than nonusers. In an unpublished study comparing users and nonusers of nonaddictive drugs, (Geber, 1969b) reported differences in questionnaire responses suggesting that users lean to the rebellious end and nonusers to the authoritarian end of any authoritarianism-rebellion dimension. A sample of the differentiating items is the following: "I spend my leisure time sticking to the rules/revolting against the rules"; "it is necessary that the police exert authority over us" vs. "criminals need treatment rather than punishment"; "prisons are too luxurious and comfortable these days" vs. "more money should be spent to make prisons more comfortable." In addition, the nonusers perceived themselves as more obedient, more neat and clean, and more law-abiding than did the users.

The most relevant studies on the relationship between drug use and sociopolitical ideology are those of Blum (1969) and Suchman (1968). Blum reported that, in comparison to their nonusing peers, students using illicit drugs were more in opposition to their parents, more left-wing politically, and more likely to perceive the political right-wing and middle-of-the-roads as dangerous to (American) national interests. Suchman found that drug use was related to behavior, attitudes, and self-images that constitute a "hang-loose ethic." In general, this is a pattern marked by irreverence, questioning, or rejection of conventional values, and opposition to the

traditional established order. Specific manifestations referred to by Suchman include the reading of underground newspapers; participation in mass protests and "happenings"; opposition to the Vietnam war and the draft; antagonism to the educational system; and a perception of oneself as "rebellious, cynical, anti-establishment, 'hippie,' and apathetic."

In summary, the claims of numerous experts plus a few hard findings suggest that drug use and attitudes toward drug use may be related to a left-right, rebellious-authoritarian dimension of sociopolitical ideology. The present study was designed to examine this relationship directly. To this end, respondents' positions on the authoritarianism-rebellion dimension were assessed through their responses to a thirty-item questionnaire, essentially a balanced version of the California F Scale with extremely left-wing, rebellious reversals to the original F-Scale items. Details on the rationale, development, and validation of the **Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale (ARS)** appear elsewhere (Kohn, 1970). Briefly, the measure shows satisfactory reliability, correlates predictably with measures of left vs. right opinionation (Rokeach, 1960), and discriminates successfully among "known groups" ranging from student Trotskyists to members of a student radical-right organization.

Method

A questionnaire entitled "Drugs at York" was prepared, consisting of two parts. The first part contained demographic questions (age, sex, year of study, religion, church attendance, annual family income, and size of community lived in for most of the respondent's life); items pertaining to the respondent's attitudes to drug use; questions about the kind and extent of drug use indulged in personally, if any; questions about such environmental factors as number of friends using drugs and ease of access to drugs; and questions about the respondent's motives for taking or not taking drugs. The attitude items concerned legalization of marijuana, approval of its use, approval of psychedelic use, approval of the use of amphetamines and barbiturates, and desire to take marijuana under the hypothetical

condition that its use were legal. The second part of the questionnaire was the Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale, described previously. Its reliability (odd-even, Spearman-Brown corrected) was .84 in the present sample ($N = 197$), and .81 and .78 in two other samples tested concurrently (N 's of 58 and 69, respectively).

The questionnaire was administered to 197 York University students, mostly undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts and Science, who responded anonymously. A good portion of the sample was recruited through courses, notably upper-level courses in psychology and sociology. Other subjects were approached individually through prearranged meetings. A few drug dealers ($N = 13$) and other users known to one of the authors were also recruited. Although the authors did not seek to ensure the representativeness of their sample in advance, they made a post hoc check on representativeness against the records of the York Admissions Office. The sample was serendipitously quite representative in terms of age ($p > .70$ by χ^2 for goodness of fit) and sex composition ($p > .50$), but not in terms of year of study ($p < .001$). The overrepresentation in the sample of students in the upper years reflects the over-recruiting of students in upper-level courses.

Results

Overall rate of drug use. The proportion of respondents admitting to any use of one or more illicit drugs was 49.75 per cent. It is believed that this somewhat overestimates the actual rate of illicit drug use at York University by virtue of sampling biases mentioned above. All but two students who had used any illicit drugs had used marijuana, and the vast majority (95.92 per cent) had adopted marijuana as their first or only drug. In most cases (67.50 per cent), students beginning with marijuana had not gone on to other drugs. The rate of use for other drugs was low: 17.77 per cent of the total sample for psychedelics; 10.66 per cent for amphetamines; 3.02 per cent for barbiturates; and 6.13 per cent for opiates. No other psychoactive substances (e.g., glue or solvents) were even mentioned.

It should be noted that much of the drug use described above was experimentation or infrequent indulgence. For example, 25.51 per cent of marijuana users had taken it less than ten times. The corresponding figures were 57.14 per cent for psychedelics; 45.45 per cent for amphetamines; and 71.43 per cent for opiates.

Overall distribution of drug attitudes. The majority of students (67.51 per cent) favored legalization of marijuana, with only 16.24 per cent opposed and 16.24 per cent uncertain. Fully 74.11 per cent approved marijuana use, while 13.20 per cent were opposed and 12.69 per cent uncertain. The rate of opposition to psychedelic use, however, was substantial: 54.82 per cent were opposed; 17.26 per cent uncertain; and 27.92 per cent favorable. Objection to the use of amphetamines and barbiturates was even more prevalent, with 75.63 per cent unfavorable as against 10.66 per cent favorable. Possibly, many of the students really believe the adage that "speed kills." On the other hand, 54.82 per cent of the respondents indicated that they would try it if it were legal, 30.96 per cent said they would not, and the rest were uncertain. Willingness to try marijuana under the hypothetical condition of future legality was, of course, related to previous drug use. Of nonusers, 20.20 per cent were willing, and 79.80 per cent uncertain or unwilling; the corresponding figures for users were 89.80 per cent and 10.20 per cent, respectively. This association between previous drug use and willingness to use marijuana if legal was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 96.80$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$).

Demographic factors in drug use. No significant association was found between drug use and sex (i.e., gender) ($\chi^2 = 1.45$, $df = 1$). Age also failed to differentiate users from nonusers. The former averaged 21.8 years, and the latter 21.7 years. There was however, a greater proportion of users in the later than in the earlier years of study ($\chi^2 = 11.77$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$). In addition, users more often professed atheism, agnosticism, or some unusual religious preference (e.g., Zen Buddhism) than Protestantism, Catholicism, or Judaism ($\chi^2 = 13.77$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Similarly, drug use increased as religious attendance

declined ($\chi^2 = 20.45$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$), with the highest rate of use among total nonattenders (63.37 per cent). The tendency for users to come from higher-income families than nonusers approached but did not reach a conventional level of statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 3.46$, $df = 1$, $p < .10$). Finally, no significant relationship appeared between drug use and the size of the community in which respondents had spent most of their lives ($\chi^2 = 6.69$, $df = 4$, NS).

Demographic correlates of attitudes to drug use. Responses to the drug-attitude items were combined to form an eleven-point permissiveness scale. Respondents' scores were divided into four frequency intervals, and then bivariate analyses were conducted for permissiveness against each demographic variable. Permissiveness showed no significant relationship to either sex ($\chi^2 = 4.75$, $df = 3$) or regional background ($\chi^2 < 1$, $df = 3$). On the other hand, permissiveness did relate positively to age ($\chi^2 = 13.59$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$); year of study ($\chi^2 = 9.33$, $df = 3$, $p < .02$); atheism, agnosticism, or unusual religious preference as against Protestantism, Catholicism, or Judaism ($\chi^2 = 36.52$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$); and nonattendance at religious services ($\chi^2 = 41.19$, $df = 6$, $p < .001$).

Drug attitudes and drug use. As demon-

strated by willingness to use marijuana if it were legalized, it would of course be expected that users and nonusers should differ in their attitudes toward drugs. In this connection, it was found that users more often than nonusers favored the legalization of marijuana ($\chi^2 = 34.25$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$); approved its use ($\chi^2 = 32.31$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$); and approved the use of psychedelics ($\chi^2 = 37.06$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). There was no reliable indication that the generally greater permissiveness of the users extended to amphetamines and barbiturates ($\chi^2 = 1.12$, $df = 1$, NS).

Drug use and authoritarianism-rebellion scores. The respondents were divided into quartiles on the basis of their ARS scores, and the bivariate analyses for ARS vs. drug use shown in Table 1 were conducted. The quartiles are numbered from 1 for most rebellious to 4 for most authoritarian. It can readily be seen that more rebellious subjects more often use illicit drugs than more authoritarian ones ($p < .001$). Furthermore, this generalization seems to apply to the specific instances of marijuana ($p < .001$) and psychedelics ($p < .02$), although apparently not to amphetamines (NS).

Drug-use attitudes and authoritarianism-rebellion scores. Bivariate analyses for each attitude item against quartiled ARS scores appear in Table 2, as well as a like analysis

TABLE 1. USE OF DRUGS IN RELATION TO AUTHORITARIANISM-REBELLION SCALE SCORES

	ARS Quartile				χ^2	p
	1 (low)	2	3	4 (high)		
Drug Use						
Nonusers	9	23	29	38		
Users	40	26	20	12		
					34.97	<.001
Marijuana						
Nonusers	9	24	29	93		
1-24 times	15	14	9	8		
> 25 times	25	11	11	3		
					41.74	<.001
Psychedelics						
Nonusers	34	41	40	47		
Users	15	8	9	3		
					10.35	<.02
Amphetamines						
Nonusers	43	44	41	48		
Users	6	5	8	2		
					4.12	NS

TABLE 2. PERMISSIVENESS OF DRUG-USE: ATTITUDES IN RELATION TO
AUTHORITARIANISM-REBELLION SCALE SCORES

	ARS Quartile				χ^2	p
	1 (low)	2	3	4 (high)		
Overall Permissiveness						
0-3	2	9	14	22		
4-5	5	12	12	12		
6-7	11	13	15	9		
8-10	31	15	8	7		
					47.48	< .001
Legalize Marijuana						
No	1	5	11	15		
Unsure	3	9	12	9		
Yes	46	35	26	26		
					29.37	< .001
Approve Marijuana Use						
No	1	3	9	13		
Unsure	1	8	8	8		
Yes	47	38	32	29		
					25.00	< .001
Approve Psychedelic Use						
No	12	26	30	40		
Unsure	10	9	10	5		
Yes	27	14	9	5		
					36.85	< .001
Approve Use of Amphetamines and Barbiturates						
No	29	38	39	43		
Unsure	10	6	7	4		
Yes	10	5	3	3		
					11.81	< .10
Try Marijuana If Legalized						
No	3	18	18	22		
Unsure	5	7	5	11		
Yes	41	24	26	17		
					28.53	< .001

for the overall drug-permissiveness score. In general, more rebellious respondents held more permissive attitudes about drugs than did their more authoritarian peers ($p < .001$). The more rebellious students were more likely to favor legalization of marijuana ($p < .001$), to approve its use ($p < .001$), to approve the use of psychedelics ($p < .001$), and to express willingness to try marijuana if it were legalized ($p < .001$). The trend for greater permissiveness by more rebellious students approached but did not reach a conventional level of statistical significance in the case of amphetamines and barbiturates ($\chi^2 = 11.81$, $df = 6$, $p < .10$).

Demographic controls. Demographic-

control analyses were run to parallel all the bivariate analyses shown in Tables 1 and 2. All the demographic variables were used in turn as controls. Generally, the relationships between ARS on the one hand, and drug use and permissiveness on the other, held up. The following were exceptions:

- (1) **The** relationships between ARS and approval of amphetamine and barbiturate use became nonsignificant when religious preference was controlled for.
- (2) The relationship between ARS and psychedelic use fell just short of statistical significance when **age** and year of study were controlled for ($p < .10$ in both cases, rather than $p < .02$ as in Table 1).

- (3) The relationship between ARS and willingness to try marijuana if it were legal fell just short of statistical significance when age was controlled for $\chi^2 = 5.71$, $df = 2$, $p < .10$).

Thus, all the significant relationships between ARS on the one hand, and drug use and permissiveness on the other, seem general over demographic variations, except those involving permissiveness toward the use of amphetamines and barbiturates, possibly the actual use of psychedelics, and possibly willingness to try marijuana if it were legal.

Discussion

The present data provide some clues as to who among North American college students is likely to develop permissive attitudes toward and indulge in illicit drug use. He, or perhaps no less likely she, is probably a student in the third or fourth year who professes atheism, agnosticism, or some atypical religious preference; does not attend organized religious services; and, most to the point here, has a markedly left-wing, rebellious sociopolitical outlook.

This last observation strongly reinforces previous findings (Suchman, 1968) and theorization (Goode, 1969) that link drug use and drug attitudes to general sociopolitical orientations. It also contributes to the construct-validation of the Authoritarianism-Rebellion Scale. Beyond this, it raises more questions than the present study with its correlational methodology can answer. Are rebelliousness, permissiveness about drugs, and drug-taking related in a causal sequence, or are they just correlated parts of a larger syndrome? If there is a causal sequence, what is the order of events? Do rebellious people choose to take drugs and then become 'permissive'? Are they rebellious and therefore permissive, and therefore choose to take drugs? Does the drug experience itself, including its social as well as psychopharmacological aspects, "radicalize" the user? Or are initially rebellious persons predisposed to take drugs with those who do, becoming even more rebellious? Regretably, the present data do not answer these questions. They do, however, demonstrate quite unequivocally

that drug use and drug-use attitudes relate not only to each other, but also to broader sociopolitical outlooks having no direct bearing on drugs.

In other words, drugs are a sociopolitical as well as a medico-legal issue. Intergenerational conflicts about drugs may well be perceived by the parties in much the same light as conflicts in the areas of civil liberties, censorship, poverty, the Vietnam War, and minority rights. Attempts to deal with the drug problem in a purely repressive way, especially with regard to marijuana, could therefore make drugs as much a polarizing force as the other issues. Furthermore, the fact that in our sample only ten respondents who expressed willingness to try marijuana if it were legalized had not already done so suggests that Canadian law as presently administered is not terribly effective.

When the authors speculate somewhat beyond the limits of their data, they also find themselves unimpressed with "educational" efforts for the social control of drugs. The rate of drug use among college students is high despite mass media exposure to the warnings of supposedly authoritative sources. At the same time, however, there are marked variations in the rate of use of different illicit drugs, and rate of use seems to vary directly as the controversy surrounding allegations of harmful effects. Marijuana is by far the most widely taken drug among drug users (97.96 per cent of users in the present sample), psychedelics substantially less (35.7 per cent), and amphetamines still less (21.43 per cent). The alleged harmfulness of marijuana is highly controversial both scientifically and publicly, that of the widely used psychedelics (notably LSD) less so, and that of amphetamines scarcely at all.

What this implies is that college students, at least those comparable to the present sample, may be self-educated about drugs and their effects. They do not necessarily accept the official line of the Establishment; nor do they necessarily reject it. How, then, do they arrive at their beliefs about the dangers or absence of danger attached to the use of various drugs? It seems unlikely that any appreciable proportion have much firsthand acquaintance with the scientific

literature on drugs. Probably firsthand observations of drug users and discussions about such observations are much more important. In this connection, about 74 per cent of the nonusers reported having at least a few drug-using friends

College students probably typify one kind of intergenerational credibility gap : selective belief and disbelief of establishment claims about drugs in line with direct observation and local hearsay. Possibly, a more dangerous kind of credibility gap sometimes occurs among less educated youth: uncritical rejection of all official claims because some of them (e.g., about marijuana) are not congruent with one's experiences or observations. Thus, it is speculated that social policy, notably in its educational aspect, may actually contribute to dangerous forms of drug abuse among less well-educated youth. If this is the case, then the best corrective may be to revise law, social policy, and [official information in line with the best current scientific knowledge about drugs and their effects. It may be more than a tautology to say that drug policy will be enforceable only when it has been made enforceable.

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