

... a UNCC drug survey

very few individuals. About one-third of the individuals who have used amphetamines, marijuana, LSD, other psychedelics and heroin, etc. have done so before experiencing college. It can also be seen that a significant number of individual students are introduced to chemical substances by the use of pain-killers, tranquilizers, and barbiturates some time before their enrollment in the University. Students who used various substances were asked who had primarily suggested their use. For most substances an individual mentioned himself and suggested no outside influence. However, 79% of the 595 individuals who had used pain-killers and 61% of those who had used tranquilizers reported that use was primarily suggested by physicians.

The students perceived that to some extent their parents would disapprove their use of such substances as alcohol and cigarettes. Fifty percent of the individuals saw their parents as disapproving of alcohol and 54% reported that their parents would disapprove of their use of cigarettes. Examination of the remaining percentages in regard to the various substances demonstrates clearly that the individuals feel that their parents strongly reject the individual use of those substances. The information obtained from asking the individual students whether either parent had ever used any of the substances in this survey, suggested that parents make most frequent use of alcohol (72%) and cigarettes (64%), along with some moderate use of pain-killers (38%), and tranquilizers (34%). In a later section of this report, there will be some discussion of the contrast between parental attitude and behavior and individual student attitude and behavior.

The reason reported most frequently for abstaining from any of the various substances was that of a lack of interest or curiosity. Those who had abstained from these substances also demonstrated some reluctance to use the substances because of the various "risk" that they perceived as possible. Such risks were those of dependence upon the substance, being caught for legal violation, physical or mental dangers, and finally genetic damage to future children. From reasons for use of various substances given by abstainers and those who have experienced the substance, it appears that the most frequent motivations are such reasons as to satisfy curiosity, to feel good or get high, for "kicks", and because it is the "in thing" to do. However, it can also be seen that amphetamines were seen as somewhat helpful in improving the effectiveness of studying and as an aid in staying awake. Tranquilizers were seen as being used to relieve tensions or relax and as of assistance in easing depressions. Alcohol, to a lesser extent than tranquilizers, was seen as bringing some relief to tensions and aiding in relaxation and of more benefit in feeling good and getting "high". Anti-depressants received the most support of any of the substances for easing depressions.

Except for substances such as amphetamines and LSD and other psychedelics, excessive sleepiness or sluggishness was the effect most commonly reported by individuals who have experienced substances such as barbiturates, marijuana or hashish, alcohol, heroin, anti-depressants or tranquilizers. The next most frequent reported effect for all of these same substances with the exception of alcohol was the "inability to concentrate on studies"; the second most mentioned effect for alcohol was that of "poor physical condition". Amphetamines are often utilized by students during periods of academic stress in order to increase alertness and therefore, amphetamines were rarely reported as causes for ineffective study periods. However, individuals did report that the amphetamines major effects were "prolonged nervousness or anxiety", "insomnia", and feelings of "exceptional power". Hallucinatory experiences were reported as effects of marijuana or hashish and LSD and other psychedelics more than for other substances covered in the survey.

In order to obtain some measure of student attitudes toward the drug experience, a series of statements were presented and individuals were asked to record their extent of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Most students agreed to some extent that marijuana use should be an individual decision; however, the converse was true for such substances as LSD, amphetamines, barbiturates and heroin, suggesting that the individual should not be allowed to decide for himself the use of these substances and therefore, it appears that the responses implied that external sources should make such decisions for the individual. Although 64% of the students indicated some degree of agreement with letting the individual decide about marijuana use, some of these were reluctant to carry it to the extent of having marijuana use, some of these were reluctant to carry it to the extent of having marijuana legalized on the same basis as alcohol. On this statement, the students seemed to divide themselves quite evenly with about one-half favoring legalization and the other half opposing such a measure.

Some of the statements presented to the individuals responding to the questionnaire elicited stronger reaction in one direction or another than did other statement, for example, most students showed some agreement with the following statements: "The continued heavy use of drugs will impair academic performance." (80% agreement); "Since heroin is addictive, its possession should be controlled by law." (92% agreement); "When a college official finds evidence of illicit drug use on campus, he should report it to legal authorities." (68% agreement); "Apart from the legal issues involved, it is wrong for a student to profit from selling drugs to other students." (75% agreement); and finally, "A college administration should issue a clear statement of policy on the use of drugs on campus, including the disciplinary procedures (if any) for violations of this policy." (89% agreement).

Most students expressed some disagreement with statements such as the following: "Hardly a student goes through college these days without having tried LSD (76% disagreement), amphetamines (60% disagreement), barbiturates (67% disagreement), or heroin." (83% disagreement); "If a person is convinced a drug-control law is unjustified and repressive, he should challenge it by continuing to use or encouraging others to use drugs." (84% disagreement); and finally, 57% of the students responding disagreed that "most drug users in college are among the more independent, thoughtful, and creative students."

Two of the statements elicited responses which provided some information about the ethical responsibilities that individuals feel toward their peers in regard to the question of drugs. Fifty-six percent of the students showed some agreement that "apart from legal issues involved, it is wrong for a student to share his drug supply with another student", while even a higher percentage (75%) agree that "apart from legal issues involved, it is wrong for a student to profit from selling drugs to other students". As far as the future of drug use is concerned, 68% felt that "the number of college students using drugs is increasing and will continue to increase", while 16% disagreed with this prediction and the remaining 16% suggested that they had made no judgment at this point.

Discussion

The contrast between the information about substances "ever used" and "current use" seemed to indicate that for some students initial contact with the substances was "experimental" due to curiosity or because (in the case of anti-depressants or pain-killers) some personal crisis such as a depression had occurred or medication was prescribed for some physical or somatic concern. However, the change from "ever used" to "current use" for marijuana is not as great as it is for other substances such as amphetamines and barbiturates suggesting that there is a higher probability that when an individual tries marijuana he is more likely to continue to use it with more frequency than some of the other substances commonly judged to be part of the college drug experience.

It is interesting to note some of the differences that appear when comparing the information pertaining to student use and reported parental attitudes toward and the use of these substances included in the survey. It is significant that apparently a majority of both parents and students make use of either beer, wine or hard liquor and therefore, a look at the use of various substances by both groups would probably reflect its obvious presence. Marijuana, LSD and other psychedelics or hallucinogens when present are almost exclusively found in the students' milieu rather than the parents'. On the other hand, if one wanted to describe the "parent drug scene" it seemed likely that one would find that barbiturates, anti-depressants, tranquilizers and cigarettes are more part of the parents' life experiences than they are that of the students'. Finally, the students' perception of their parents' attitude toward use of the various substances implies that at times parents might be somewhat critical of the use of chemical substances by students, while their own actual behavior seems to contradict their expressed attitudes to some extent.

One often hears generalizations made that are intended to communicate that most individuals who have experienced various chemical substances initially came into contact with them after

entering the college environment. Such generalizations tend to lead to the conclusion that the probability was high that individuals would not be exposed to such experiences had they not ventured into the college and university experience. However, the data gathered in this study reinforces what was found in some of the other studies cited earlier; a significant number of individuals who use drugs which are prohibited by law have done so prior to entrance into their post-high school education. This phenomenon not only suggested that students are not naive when entering the university or that they need support and information in secondary school, but it also should impress upon the University community the need for educational programs which are directed toward an individual or individuals already somewhat sophisticated in the area of drug use. It may be true that for a large number their first exposure to the illicit and illegal use of drugs occurs when they enter into a college, but increasingly a large number of individuals enter our institutions of higher education with a growing degree of sophistication.

While reviewing the response patterns to the attitudinal statements presented to the individuals who completed the questionnaire, one response indicated a very strong support by students for an administrative statement regarding the University policy toward drug use and a clear statement of disciplinary procedures ("if any"). One interpretation of this might be that students felt that a concise statement from an administration regarding policy and procedure would increase the probability that students are made aware of the consequences of certain behavior and that this might insure the student of "due process" should he find himself in a situation where the use of drugs illegally is in question. One might go beyond the data somewhat and guess that both those students who use drugs and those who do not prefer to know exactly where a university administration stands on the issue, and what action will be taken against those individual students whose behavior does not conform to rules and regulations covering this matter. Presently, UNCC has a fairly clear statement as to the general university policy toward drug use, but no specific statement is made as to disciplinary procedures (if any); the student response in this present study might suggest that further thought be given to this area of concern.

The present writer plans to take a later look at the data from this survey, in order to make some discriminations between the motivations and personal-social attitudes of users of the substances in the survey as compared to non-users. There is a high probability that a hypothesis stating significant differences between these two groups would be confirmed. For the most part moderate to conservative attitudes seemed to be present among the students concerning the substances in this survey with the exception of alcohol, marijuana and cigarettes. However, there was some indication that "pot" is reaching the level of acceptance that alcohol and cigarettes has. Most studies of this sort present evidence strong enough to project that marijuana is probably becoming a permanent part of the college scene.

In conclusion, it should be stated that even with the satisfactory return, the question of whether those who returned the form are significantly different from those who did not return the form was and is important. The writer must concern himself with such questions as: "Are the non-users expressing no interest in this area?"; "Do students who are using drugs not respond to such a questionnaire or if they do it is less than an honest manner because of a fear of some kind of 'crackdown'?" In response to this, the data seems strong enough to be representative of users and non-users, sufficient enough to conclude that a larger sample would not significantly affect the results, and although one can hypothesize that there were individual attempts at distortion, the results reflect the most accurate picture obtainable on a large scale.



(A Final Note: The Journal has assigned a team of reporters to solicit reactions to the drug report and to do an analysis of the findings. What can we expect in the future in the way of campus discipline concerning drug use? What does the Counseling Center see as its role after the report: more seminars, more sessions with students?

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