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in

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September 1976
It is difficult to make a distinction between the “problematic” and “non-problematic” use of psychoactive drugs which will be broadly accepted, but it is evident that such a distinction must be made when policy considerations are at issue. For many, if not most observers, it is not the “use” of such substances which presents a social problem, but their “abuse” “misuse” or “addictive” use. There is an ancient and widespread tendency, in dealing with behavior in a “social problem” context, to treat as mutually-exclusive forms of behavior which can usefully be viewed, in other contexts, as a continuum or finely-grade series. Examples may be found in the fields of mental health (sane-insane), medicine (sick-well), criminology (criminal-law abiding), religion (virtue-sin), and sociology (deviant-conform-ing).

A major difficulty of this type of conceptualization is that it tends to isolate designated populations (the insane, the criminal, the sick, the sinful, the deviant) from the larger social and cultural contexts of their behavior, to restrict consideration to factors most commonly manifested within the boundaries of these populations, and to devote insufficient consideration to the intimate linkages between “pathological” and “normal” forms of behavior. For example, focussing on classes of individuals such as prostitutes, rapists, or homosexuals without at the same time considering the relationship of their sexual behavior to the full range of sexual practices manifested by the non-“deviant” adult population produces a narrow and distorted view of the character of the “problematic” forms of behavior. Most forms of behavior which are perceived as “problematic” (e.g., theft, alcoholism, assault) bear a close and intimate relation to forms which are not so perceived (buying-selling, “social drinking”, athletics). The kinds of motives which animate the former kinds of behavior overlap substantially with those that animate the latter.

From this perspective, the “problematic” or “pathological” use of drugs, in many of its forms, is rooted in, and bears a close relation to, the use of drugs as an ancient, world wide, “normal” and customary form of behavior. The purpose of the present paper is to illustrate aspects of this relationship by discussing briefly the use of experience-enhancing substances as a “customary” behavioral practice of one major sector of the population of one major country — adolescents in the United States.[1]

Subcultures, Status-classes, and Customary Behavior:

The article by Professor Lejins which serves in effect as the position paper for the present conference,[2] quotes a 1972 study by Irving Lukoff et al., which specifies the social “location” of heroin use, viewed as a behavioral practice.[3] Lukoff’s data corresponded with those of other studies in indicating that the majority of addicts in New York and certain other cities shared the following characteristics: they were predominantly male (approximately 75%), young (approximately 70% under thirty), of lower educational and occupational status, and members of “minority” ethnic groups (mostly black and Hispanic). The fact that in the 1970’s one would expect to find far less serious drug use in populations that were predominantly female, older, of higher social status, and members of “majority” ethnic groups carries far more than incidental significance.[4]

The major focus of the present paper is drug use by one specific category of persons—adolescents. However, the analysis utilizes a particular perspective—the “cultural” or “subcultural” frame of reference. It is thus necessary, before turning to our primary concern, to discuss briefly this mode of analysis, and to show how the delineation of specific population categories may serve to facilitate understanding of the reasons behind the use of drugs as well as serving to locate the practice in particular sectors of the society.

Such a discussion is important because the concept of “culture” and its derivative “subculture” are generally used imprecisely and inconsistently. The author has developed a relatively complex system for utilizing the concept of subculture to analyze customary behavior—a system which cannot be presented in this brief paper.[5] However,
it will be possible to present and define a few of its basic terms as an antecedent to the discussion of adolescent drug use.

Three key concepts in this analytic approach are those of "behavioral practice," "status class," and "subculture." A behavioral practice is any form of behavior practiced by human beings which is susceptible to observation and recording. A major distinction is made between behavioral practices which may readily be designated as "customary," and those which may not. For the population of the United States as a whole, such practices as watching television, dressing after sleeping, and purchasing goods from stores are "customary" for the vast majority of adults. Such practices as sexual intimacy with one's parents or children, eating snakes or insects, or participating in dances in order to induce rain are not customary for the vast majority of citizens. Obviously a practice may be customary for one category of persons and not for another. Examples are wearing eye makeup and earrings (women, not men), participating in and/or following athletic contests (youthful males, not elderly females), reading the Sunday New York Times (higher social status persons, not lower). In all of these examples, it is important to note that no claim is made that everyone in the category at issue pursues or refrains from the cited practice but rather that exceptions are very rare (e.g., some adults engage in incest or rain dances, some elderly females follow baseball, male actors may wear eye makeup, some lower status persons read the New York Times).

The second major concept is that of status class. A status class is defined as a category of persons who share socially-recognized status characteristics which differentiate them from other population categories, and which serve as a basis for identification and allegiance. Examples of such status characteristics are age (the elderly), sex (males), residence locale (urbanites), physical characteristics (left-handers), vocation (bricklayers), avocation (skiers), religion (Protestants) and education (college graduates). The present method of analysis delineates 16 such bases for status classes, based on six categorization principles.[6]

The concept subculture in the present context refers to a set of conceptions of appropriate behavioral practice maintained by persons by virtue of their identification with a particular status class. Several characteristics of this definition should be noted. First, the only kind of entity to which the term subculture may be applied is the status class. This means that the common practice of selecting a particular form of behavior - often one of which the writer disapproves - and appending the term "subculture" to it, does not accord with the present approach. Thus, notions such as the culture or subculture of "poverty," of "violence," of "deprivation," of "delinquency," of "alienation," and the like, are seen essentially as ad hoc characterizations unrelated in any systematic fashion to one another or to any larger conceptual system. Second, the phrase "set of conceptions" indicates that subculture is used as a concept on the "cognitive" level — a set of notions in peoples' minds — roughly analogous to such concepts as "cognitive map" or "definition of the situation."

It is obvious that these three concepts — behavioral practice, status class, and subculture — are not conceptually independent, but may overlap considerably both theoretically and methodologically. It is quite feasible, however, to minimize the degree of overlap by bearing in mind that the three concepts refer to entities which are quite readily distinguishable; "status class" refers to a category of persons; "behavioral practice" to things people do; and "subculture" to notions that people have as to appropriate ways of behaving.

Two additional sets of distinctions figure importantly in the present approach — the distinction between "prime" and "non-prime," and between "elemental" and "compound" status classes and subcultures. Five of the sixteen bases of status-class categorization are designated as prime on the basis of several criteria, one of which is the fact that everyone in a society is affiliated with a prime class, whereas not everyone is affiliated with a non-prime class. The five prime status class categories are age, sex, region, residence locale, and ranked social position. Everyone can be categorized, for example, as male or female, older or younger, and as an urban, suburban, or rural resident, while there are persons who are not readily categorizable according to such non-prime classes as avocation, religion, or special-cause adherence.

An elemental status class is one based on a single status characteristic such as age ("the elderly"), a double compound on two characteristics (elderly females), a triple on three (elderly rural females) and so on. It is clear that the more one "compounds" status classes, the smaller becomes the number of persons affiliated with each class, and the more precisely one is enabled to specify the social "location" of particular practices. For example, the quadruple status class "urban, lower-status, adolescent male" is of strategic importance in the consideration of a variety of current social problems.

The "compounding" process which enables one to delineate increasingly smaller and more precisely specified subcategories of the population serves not only as a method of refining description, but also plays an important part in the basic explanatory dynamic of the present approach. This dynamic is called "subcultural conjunction;" in brief, it conceives specified patterns of behavior as a resultant of combined influences (incentives, disincentives) derived simultaneously from a variety of status-class subcultures. The larger the number of subcultures seen as providing salient motivational inputs, the more adequate is the "explanation" of the behavioral practice at issue.

For example, in seeking to understand the practice "armed robbery," it is important to look at the basic prescriptions and proscriptions of the subcultures of males, of adolescents and young adults, and of lower-status persons. For the practice "shoplifting," by contrast, subcultures of males and females, higher and lower status persons, and adults as well as youth provide inputs to underlying motivations. Armed robbery may be analyzed in

terms of a relatively limited number of most "salient" subcultural inputs; explanations of shoplifting must take into account a larger and more complexly conjoined set of subcultural influences. This means that a larger sector of the total population is "at risk" for a practice of this kind, and that the underlying subcultural influences affect a larger number of individuals, and thus show more affinities with the general character of a society-wide "national culture" than do the more restricted subcultural inputs to armed robbery.

These considerations point up certain differences between more common applications of the subculture concept to drug use and the present approach. There is clearly some utility in the notion of a "subculture" of drug users. Many of the customary practices of those heavily involved in the nonmedical use of drugs are clearly governed by a set of conceptions of appropriate behavioral practice (e.g., techniques of heroin injection, ritualistic practices accompanying marijuana use) maintained by persons by virtue of their identification with a particular status class (e.g., habitual heroin users, habitual marijuana users) — and thus accord with the definition of "subculture" presented earlier. Status classes and subcultures of this type fall into the category of "habitual pursuit" classes — a subcategory of "occupational" classes in the present scheme. But habitual pursuit classes, of which other examples are skiers, card-players, horse race bettors, organic gardeners, are classified as "non-prime" — which means in part that they generally have less salience with respect to one's total behavior pattern than do prime classes. The female subculture has a very extensive and pervasive influence on the total life pattern of those who are, among other things, females; the skiing subculture, while exerting an important influence on some behaviors of those who are, among other things, skiers, varies greatly in the degree to which it affects persons with different degrees of affiliation with the status class, and except for a small minority, has far less influence on total life patterns than do prime subcultures.

This illustration suggests some of the problems of using the concept of a "subculture of drug users" or even of "drug abusers" in attempting to understand usage patterns. One who approaches drug use on the basis of this kind of conceptualization is at once struck by the enormous differences in saliency of "subcultural" influences between, for example, an upper-middle class, week-end marijuana user, and a heavily-addicted, heroin-using, "street person." The basic life-pattern of the former is only slightly affected by subcultural influences relating to drug use; for the latter, the "world" of drug use and its associated subculture may come close to constituting the totality of his primary life-orbit.

In this example, rather than starting with the notion of a drug subculture and trying to taxonomize and account for its myriad variations and varying degrees of influence (e.g., subcultures of cocaine users, daily cocoa-leaf chwers, occasional marijuana users, pre-adolescent pill-poppers, etc.), a more productive starting point would be the prime status class identity of the majority of different kinds of drug users, and an attempt to delineate as fully as possible the influence of these prime subcultures before moving to consider the impact of the non-prime, habitual-practice subcultures of drug use.

For example, are those who use heroin additively, predominantly male or female? urban or rural? of higher or lower social status? youth or adults? The same questions can be applied to those who currently smoke marijuana occasionally or frequently; sniff cocaine occasionally or frequently; ingest beer, or whiskey, or amphetamines, or barbiturates, or peyote, or snuff, or hashish, and so on. This approach — that of looking for the generative influences of drug use in the subcultures of prime status classes rather than in particular and poorly defined "drug-use" subcultures, accords with the principle articulated earlier of seeking the roots of "problematic" behavior in closely-related forms of "non-problematic" behavior rather than in special categories of behavior collectively labelled as "deviant."

Lukoff, in the passage referred to earlier, cited four status classes in "locating" contemporary populations engaged in the more serious forms of heroin use. These status classes are males, youth, "minorities," and persons in lower educational, occupational, and income categories. In terms of the present approach, three of these status classes, designated "male," "adolescent," and, "low-skilled laboring class" are "prime," and one, designated "national origin categories" (racial-ethnic) are "non-prime." Since Lukoff's study populations are mostly residents of large cities, the prime status class "urban" is not cited as a separate "locator" characteristic. However, other data indicate that the status class "urban" should be added to the other three prime classes (male, adolescent, laboring class) to better locate the population at issue, and to include consideration of urban subculture as a major influence on serious drug use.

A comprehensive analysis conducted according to the principles outlined above would involve an examination of the relation of each of these five subcultures to drug use, and include an analysis of their combined or "synergistic" impact. Such an examination falls well beyond the limited compass of this paper. What the paper will essay, instead, is a brief examination of the relation of drug use and only one of the subcultures noted above — that of youth, or adolescence.

This examination thus serves in part as an example of the kind of approach seen as necessary to a more comprehensive analysis of a larger topic — the nature of subcultural influences on drug use. But it also serves to illustrate a major tenet of this type of analysis — many "problematic" behavioral practices may be engendered in large part by processes which are not in themselves problematic. The forthcoming analysis does not utilize such "abnormal"-centered concepts as deviance, sickness, pathology, anomie, alienation, disorganization, dysfunction, disjunctive processes, and the like. Instead, drug use is represented as a "natural" or acceptable concomitant of the customary life conditions and concerns of a socially essential and "normal" population category — adolescents.

**Focal Concerns of Adolescent Subculture**

In describing the subculture of any particular status class it is important to designate as precisely
as possible the defining criteria of the class. The present scheme distinguishes five major age classes — childhood, adolescence or youth, younger adulthood, older adulthood, and old age. Because age is a continuous variable, exact "cutting points" between the several age classes cannot be precisely designated, and it is possible as well to make finer distinctions than those just cited. The delineation of adolescence as a specific age stage involves both biological and social criteria; neither are constant over time, among individuals, or among societies. In the United States, it is useful for many purposes to regard the average age of puberty as the start of adolescence, and the average age of initial parenthood as its close. Clearly there is considerable variation in both of these "marking" events; there is a three or four year spread in the age of puberty; and initial parenthood tends to occur earlier at lower social status levels than higher; for many adults this may occur much later than the average age or not at all.

Despite such variability in the upper and lower boundaries of the age class, for most practical purposes the "adolescent" class may be defined as comprising all persons between the ages of 12 and 21, with a possible "give" of a few years at each end. For some the term "youth" better characterizes the age-class at issue, and this term is essentially interchangeable with "adolescent" in the present treatment. The category "juvenile," widely used for criminal justice purposes, is not used here.

Subcultures of particular status classes, defined as "sets of conceptions of appropriate practice," may be immensely rich and diversified, and the task of describing them a formidable one — especially in the case of prime classes. The present approach utilizes the concept of the "focal concern" as its major basis of description. A focal concern is defined as an "area or issue which commands widespread and consistent attention and a high degree of emotional involvement" by members of a status class.[7] This concept provides a basis for representing in a highly condensed and schematic fashion, the enormous complexity of subcultural content.

With respect to the male subculture, for example, Competitive Engagement is a focal concern for males of all ages, social positions, ethnic backgrounds and residence locales. While it may be manifested quite differently among males of different status classes (e.g., age, social position, occupation, residence locale), it runs as a common thread through the male subculture; almost all males are involved in one or more of its diverse forms — athletic competition, warfare, business competition, political rivalry, competitive gambling, and many others. Such enterprises have the capacity to engage male interests intensely and on a continuing basis; they have a high satiation threshold; along with other focal concerns, Competitive Engagement gives direction, form and meaning to the lives of males in a manner that does not apply to their companion class, females.[8]

Similarly, Mothering is a focal concern for females of all status classes — manifested by children through interest in dolls, by the elderly through grandparenthood, by the prevalence of female involvement in occupations such as teaching and nursing, by its prominence as a central theme in fiction and drama produced primarily for female audiences. It is also manifested in a variety of indirect forms (e.g., care of household plants and animals). As a major focal concern, Mothering as an enterprise entails a myriad of intensely-held attitudes and highly detailed conceptions as to proper and improper techniques, procedures, and strategies with respect to the actual care, rearing and socialization of children. Males may also manifest high interest in these enterprises and/or be involved in it through occupational specialization, (e.g., pediatricians, maternity clothes manufacturers); similarly, some females may evince little overt interest in Mothering. However, for the great mass of males the Mothering focal concern simply lacks the degree of intensity, saliency, and centrality that it commands for the bulk of females.

The focal concerns of adolescent subcultures, in common with those of other subcultures, both arise out of and serve to facilitate a set of "tasks," enterprises, or life conditions which involve members of this status class. Many of these are related to a fundamental circumstance of human developmental processes; the life conditions of childhood differ in highly significant respects from those of adulthood; the adolescent age period, from one perspective, may be viewed as a bridge between two major age stages — and thus requires both that one relinquish a set of behavioral forms appropriate to childhood, and adopt new forms appropriate to adulthood. From another perspective, adolescence may be viewed as an age period in its own right, with its own specialized endeavors and own unique quality.[9]


[8] Seven focal concerns of male subcultures have been delineated as follows: Prowess, Competitive Engagement, Coordination, Honor, Sexual Access, Production, Transaction. Miller, W.B., Male Subculture, in preparation.

[9] The present paper does not include a developed discussion of the "origins" of the adolescent focal concerns discussed here. The larger subcultural community from which the present discussion derives analyzes the origins of subcultural content: all status classes according to the same principle. That is: The character or substance of the subcultures of designated status classes derive primarily from the enterprises customarily pursued by members of that class, and/or and/or the set of life conditions they customarily experience. The analysis thus requires a specification of these enterprises and conditions in order to account for the origins of subcultures. Such a discussion is included within the compass of the present paper. In a few instances forthcoming discussions of focal concerns cite or allude to the "tasks" or enterprises to which they are related (e.g., Autonomy: achieving independence from family), but the subject is not systematically treated. One available discussion which resembles the present approach is that of R.L. Havighurst, who uses the term "tasks" to refer to what are here termed "enterprises and conditions." In Developmental Tasks and Educational Preparation (New York, 1952), Havighurst delineates 10 Tasks of adolescence; in the 1972 edition of the same work he presents a revised version which includes eight tasks. H. Thorberg (Development in Adolescence, Monterey, 1975), adds a ninth task to Havighurst's 1972 list, and these nine, along with the intra-adolescent age periods during which they are most salient, appear in chart form on page 8 of Thornberg, 1975.
Seven focal concerns are used here to characterize the subculture or subcultures of adolescents in the United States. These are: Mating, Excitement, Exploration, Fashion, Placement, Congregation, and Autonomy. Clearly this set does not encompass the totality of adolescent subculture, but brief consideration of these seven provides a sense of its general character or quality. A brief discussion of each follows.

Mating: The bulk of adolescents enter this age period without having established an intimate relationship with a mating partner and leave it with one or more such relationships having been established. 'Mating' in this context refers to the enormously complicated process of planning, seeking out, attracting, courting, selecting, rejecting, trying out, consulting about, worrying over, partners with whom one establishes that special relationship which in our society serves as the basis of biological and/or social parenthood. Parenthood, however, is by no means perceived by most adolescents as the ultimate outcome or major objective of this taxing and gratifying enterprise; rather it is perceived in terms of a personal quest for social and sensual gratification which appears to impel one's behavior toward its own powerful and self-generating motive force. Adolescents are extraordinarily sensitive to the mating potential of almost any mixed-sex situation in which they find themselves — the orbits of education, recreation, employment, worship, and so on. Adolescents appear to be equipped with psychic radar antennae which constantly scan the social environment, seeking out its mating potential — boys on the street whistling at passing girls; girls inspecting and evaluating their male classmates for mating suitability. The intensity of emotional investment in this concern often appears excessive to adults; the screaming and fainting fans of popular music idols (Crosby, Sinatra, Presley, the Beatles, Elton John) manifest reactions toward symbolic mating objects which reveal a depth of inner passion that is seldom displayed toward their actual mating partners.

Excitement: Most adolescents seek from life a degree of eventfulness, sensory stimulation and excitement which significantly exceeds that customarily sought by other age classes. Key terms are "fun," "thrill," "high," "kicks," "turn-on." Adolescents in general evince a low tolerance for what they perceive as the unrewarding tedium of everyday life; the chronic complaint, "Nothing ever happens around here!" is the recurrent question "Where's the action?" While the forms, circumstances and intensity of excitement sought by adolescents may vary considerably by status class differences, youth of all social classes, intra-class age levels, localities, regions, and ethnic categories periodically seek out and/or create situations which will enable them to transcend the confines of ordinary existence and reach out for the stirring and stimulating states of specially enhanced experience.

For males such events often involve elements of risk and courage-demonstration (drag-racing, athletic competition, fights between individuals or groups). For females, mating encounters and their concomitant events frequently play a central role. Females also may share the excitement of predominantly male contests as spectators, partisans, rooters. Many forms of collective events discussed under the Congregation focal concern generate excitement — either as a quality of the event itself, or in connection with planned or unplanned activities accompanying them (spectator fights at sports events; altercations at parties, concerts, rallies, often fueled by alcohol/drugs).

In large-scale popular music concerts, indoor or outdoor, a major "product" which performers strive deliberately to deliver to adolescent consumers is Excitement — produced by driving, high-volume music, stimulating costumes, and frequent attempts to involve the audiences in clapping, stamping, and other types of quasi-participation. The "party," in its many forms, is a major vehicle for engendering excitement, and the potentially secondary elements of alcohol, drugs, mixed-sex interaction, rivalries, mates, rousing music, possible confrontations with the police, are found in a variety of collective celebrations such as college "festival" week-ends, rock concerts, houseparties, beachparties, and others.

The likelihood that such events will evoke police action is not adventitious. The dimension of illegality plays a role in connection with both the Excitement and Autonomy focal concerns by providing elements of risk, flouting with danger, defiance of authorities, laws, and moral standards. These elements play a larger role in the customary endeavors of adolescents than any other age class, and contribute to the disproportionate involvement of this age class in violent and predatory crimes.

For younger adolescents, and to a lesser degree older; amusement parks and carnivals provide a variety of excitement-producing activities — frightening rides, gambling games, competitive contests. Many youth deliberately subject themselves to the stomach-turning gyrations of the Tornado, Cyclone, Crack-the-Whip, and other rides — screaming with excitement during their course, expressing relief at their termination, and repeating the experience. Ritualized statements by adolescents that they seek out excitement to counteract the boring character of everyday life must be interpreted with some caution; the appetite for excitement during this age period is probably unique in intensity compared with that of other age classes.

Placement: Adult subcultures are much more highly differentiated than subcultures of children. Particularly in societies where "achieved" statuses are more prevalent relative to "ascribed" statuses (one's niche in life is not directly "assigned" according to one's family, social class, religion, or similar characteristics), adolescents face a wide range of choices as to where they will "fit," as an adult, into an extraordinarily complex set of roles and social positions.

Placement concerns of adolescents center on questions such as "Where do I belong in the social worlds of my peers?" "Where will I fit into the adult world?" "How does my world relate to others?". The quest for placement is accommodated, for many adolescents, through the medium of social "placing" devices, which serve to locate them, at least provisionally, within the potentially vast expanse of social space. A variety of such devices are delineated within adolescent subcultures; these enable individuals to place themselves within specifically identifiable and bounded social orbits. One set of devices is the proliferation of cliques, groups, as-
sociations and clubs, formal or informal, among adolescents. Another is the development of sets of identifiably categories or "types" of persons with which one may identify himself. Terms for these categories vary throughout time, among societies, and within societies, but within the past decades in the United States some of the more common ones have been "Hippies," "Jocks," "Heads," "Freaks," "Greasers," "Stragglers," "Motorheads," and "Teen-y-boppers." Within local communities distinctions may be made between "druggies" and "beeries." In England in the 1960's the "Mods," "Rockers," and "Skinheads," were widely recognized categories. Each category denotes a particular life style — styles often related to higher or lower social class statuses.

These different types of bounded social orbits — many of which can be conceived as subcultures within subcultures — provide both temporary identity havens for adolescents, and an opportunity to test out their "fit" with a variety of possible lifestyle styles. Some pursue in later life modes of existence presaged by their adolescent affiliations; others try one after another, perhaps choosing one, or rejecting all, before moving toward a more specific choice of occupation, and/or adult life style.

**Exploration:** Closely related to the "Placement" focal concern is that of Exploration. The life perspectives of most children are bounded by the social, cultural, and geographical locations of their immediate families. Although television provides contemporary children with a wider exposure to aspects of the outside world that was the case in the past, such exposure is essentially mediated experience, and adolescence remains the period of life during which one moves out from the world of one's family to experience oneself the nature of the wider world.

Adolescents scrutinize, probe, investigate, a variety of different worlds — the subjective world of one's inner self; the social world of peers, other age groups, other kinds of people; the geographical world of different places; the cultural world of different lifestyles; the world of accumulated knowledge, formal and informal. As in the case of other focal concerns, the character of such exploration varies according to different status characteristics. For younger slum adolescents geographical exploration often involves trips to other parts of one's own city; for rural adolescents, trips to other communities, and to the city; older middle class adolescents are increasingly using the whole world as an arena of exploration through backpacking or hosteling expeditions which may last for months and include a variety of foreign countries.

Inner exploration involves the classic introspection of adolescence. What kind of person am I? What kind of "personality" do I have? Am I brave or fearful? Sensitive or unflappable? A loner or gregarious? The exploration of one's inner self may be facilitated by various methods which increase one's capacity to focus on inner states and processes. Included among these are periods of solitude, exchanging inner experiences with peers, and the use of substances which increase one's introspective capacity.

Exploration of the social worlds of mating, friendship groups, cliques, associations — often require one to face and overcome fears of potentially threatening encounters, and here again there are sub-culturally-delineated devices to help adolescents cope with such fears. One such device is that of confronting the unfamiliar in a collective context — utilizing the kinds of associational units which figure in the Placement and Congregation focal concerns. Another is the use of substances which may aid in coping with anxiety.

**Autonomy.** As a child, one depends largely on adults to provide those resources necessary to sustain life and assure one's welfare, and a substantial proportion of one's behavior is subject to control by adults; as an adult, one must be prepared to assume responsibility for assuring one's own welfare, to direct the behavior of others, and often to be responsible for their welfare. Thus, one of the most important and demanding tasks of adolescence is that of making the transition from being largely dependent on and an object of control, to being largely independent and a potential author of control.

Children are characteristically granted increased degrees of personal responsibility as they grow older, although there is wide variation by status characteristics both in rates of permitted behavioral freedom and the forms of behavior at issue (e.g., urban versus rural, Protestant versus Jewish), with social class differences being particularly important. Despite such variation, all adolescents in the United States face problems of coping with increased degrees of personal responsibility and freedom of action. To most adolescents, however, this process is perceived less as a "task" and more as a circumstance which is ardently desired and sought after. As adolescence proceeds, most youth press actively for increased autonomy of action, and what they perceive as the right to direct their own affairs.

This pressing toward the prerogatives of adulthood provides the basis of much of the conflict between parents and children, authorities and youth. The age at which one is allowed to go out alone or with peers; how late at night one is permitted to stay out; the age when one may drive, vote, smoke, drink, "date," marry, and so on all become issues of potential contention between youth and adults. By and large, particularly in the middle classes, parents press for later participation in such activities, and adolescents for earlier. The age when particular kinds of mating behavior are condoned or permitted by parents and other adults is a particularly charged issue, since Mating is a major adolescent focal concern. For female adolescents conflicts centering around this issue are particularly common and often quite intense, with daughters generally pressing for maximum freedom in mating activities and parents espousing more limited involvement.

Adolescents often express support for and/or adopt practices known to be disapproved of by their parents and other adults. Such behavior involves both the Autonomy and Fashion focal concerns. The practices at issue often represent "latest-fashion" developments in language, music, dance, dress, mating, or alcohol/drug use — a topic to be discussed shortly. Adoption of these latest-vogue practices serves at the same time to distinguish significant aspects of one's behavior from that of the adult generation (Autonomy), and to demon-
strate one's awareness of and adherence to the most recent fashions affecting the relevant behavioral practices (Fashion).

For many centuries, adult observers have noted what appears to be a peculiar ambivalence by adolescents toward Autonomy — particularly during the early and middle phases of the age period. On the one hand, youths press for increased autonomy and independence; on the other, they often appear to seek out and fall back into dependency states resembling those of childhood. These independence-dependence conflicts often have a particular poignance; while one part of the self strives to achieve what are seen as the delights of adult freedom, another part mourns the loss of childhood, when most needs were provided by others, and most responsibility assumed by others.

In part reflecting this ambivalence, adolescents often adopt what appears to adults as a pose of bravado — assuming a stance of self-assurance and insouciance which to them connotes adult status — a pose which does not correspond to inner feelings of insecurity. As in the case of the Autonomy concern in Lower-class subcultures,[10] the adolescent demands “Let me alone to do what I please” and “Don’t control me,” often mean, in reality, “Please take care of me,” and “Please put limits on my behavior.”

Congregation: Although a few adolescents tend to be “loners,” the great majority of youths relish periodic congregation with others of their age class. Congregation facilitates the achievement of objectives related to all of the focal concerns cited thus far; it provides an arena and selection reservoir for mating; a generator of excitement; an opportunity for placing oneself and symbolizing identity; a basis for exploring the worlds of peer interaction and other social orbits; a supportive context for testing out and demonstrating autonomy.

Adolescent congregation takes a wide variety of forms — formal and informal, small scale and large scale, regularly recurrent and sporadic, with many gradations and combinations of these. Congregation practices range from the recurrent get-togethers of small friendship cliques to the massive assemblages of popular music concerts or athletic contests. Parties, as noted earlier, play a special role in the lives of adolescents; they take many forms and serve many different purposes; the all-female slumber party, the large-scale formalized graduation party, the medium-sized mixed-sex music, drinking and/or drug party; the college “festival” week-end party.

The past decade has seen a growth and partial decline of enormous gatherings (sometimes called “festivals”) of youths — in tens or even hundreds of thousands — centered on a form or forms of popular music — jazz, rock, folk — with individual or collective performers, having achieved the status of folk heroes primarily through recordings, providing the major focus of attention. These gatherings, sometimes lasting several days, generate enormous excitement, with audiences frequently enhancing the quality of the mass-congregation-performance experience through widespread use of drugs and alcohol, in various combinations. Such events, as noted in connection with Excitation, often involve violence or other forms of illegal behavior which engage the concern of law-enforcement agencies.

Less frequently, political issues rather than music provide a major focus for such assemblages; this type of issue-oriented demonstration or gathering is currently less prevalent than in the recent past. Team athletic contests in huge stadiums also provide similar elements of massive congregation, spectacle, excitement, and display, with band music, cheering sections, symbols, colors, and the passions of partisanship producing high levels of excitement and intense involvement. Like the rock concert and political rally, mass-audience athletic contests frequently involve violence; the saying “Lose the game, win the fight,” suggests one motive for such violence.

A central manifestation of adolescent subcultures in the United States is the practice of periodic informal congregation by youth groups of various sizes. The forms and circumstances of congregation of such groups vary tremendously by age, sex, region, locality, social status, and other status-class characteristics. Social class status exerts a particularly important influence on the character of congregating groups; by and large, as one moves downward in the social scale, such congregating groups are found to be larger, more “structured,” to serve as the staging base for a wider range of customary activities, and to play a more significant role in the total life pattern of their members relative to other associational forms.

The term “hanging out” is widely used among working and laboring-class populations to refer to adolescent congregation practices; this term is less likely to be applied, for example, to the classic post-school-hours drug store group in higher status suburbs, towns, and small cities. In such communities one is also more likely to find wider participation in formally-organized youth groups such as the Scouts, Campfire Girls, Four H, Church-sponsored or religion-based groups, and the like.

Fashion: Most adolescents are acutely sensitive to fashion. While conceptions of which forms and practices are currently acceptable and which are not affect all status classes (e.g., females’ styles in dress, hair, makeup; advertising professionals, styles in layout, typefaces, television commercials), the predilection to conform to what is “in,” and reject what is “out,” is probably more intense and affects larger proportions of subcultural content for adolescents than for any other prime status class.

It is not only the intensity of adherence to the latest fad that is so pronounced in adolescent subcultures, but also the intensity of rejection of, and hostility toward, fads which have recently become passe. Aspects of adolescent subculture which are particularly susceptible to fashion are language (vogue words, phrases), music (structural forms, types and identities of performers), dance (types of bodily movement, physical distance between partners), dress (hairstyles, skirt lengths, colors, materials, modes), and mass entertainment prefer-

ences (favored movie actors/actresses, television shows and performers).

Fashion affects linguistic practices primarily in the area of vocabulary; each generation of adolescents learns and utilizes sets of words and phrases which distinguish its usage both from that of the previous adolescent generation and from conventional adult usage. A central role is played by adjectives; there is usually one most-favored adjective to denote approval; it functions to place the imprimatur of subcultural approval on currently favored forms and practices. Examples of approving adjectives used during the past several decades are "solid," "crazy," "wild," "neat," "cool," "groovy," "outasight," "tough," "far out," "righteous," "heavy," "dynamite." Many of these terms originate in subcultures of lower-class blacks and are transmitted to non-black, non-low-class adolescents directly or indirectly (e.g., via disc jockeys) via the subculture of popular musicians. Since these terms diffuse rapidly throughout the general adolescent population, black adolescents are pressed to keep ahead of current usage by producing new terms, and thus may utilize terms which are not yet current among others, or perhaps do not become current (e.g., "boss;"); approbative "bad" or "terrible" (viz., "good"). There are also usages more specific of characteristic localities and/or status class categories (e.g., "marve," "neato," "wicked").

Popular music plays a central role in adolescent subcultures and certain aspects of music (both rock in particular) are particularly susceptible to fashion shifts. During the past 35 years adolescents have ardently espoused, and then as ardenty rejected, approximately five major musical genres. These are ragtime, pre-swing jazz, (e.g., Charleston), swing, rhythm and blues, and rock (a genre developed between swing and rock, "progressive" jazz, never attained much currency among adolescents). Each of these genres has numerous subtypes (e.g., rock and roll, hard rock, acid rock, country rock, etc.) and characteristic performance contexts (e.g., swing; big bands, featured vocalists, unamplified wind instruments; rock; small instrumentalist-vocalist groups, amplified string instruments).

Trends in music in adolescent life illustrate several fundamental processes affecting fashions and subcultures. The first is that of stability-within-change, or change-within-stability. While many aspects of music are highly susceptible to change (harmonic and rhythmic forms, instrumental combinations, organization of performers), others show a high degree of stability. The general substantive content of lyrics, and large, has changed very little during the past half-century; the vast majority of lyrics deal with a topic — Mating — a principal adolescent focal concern. With a few exceptions (some lyrics communicate political messages, some philosophical, some other themes) the hundreds and thousands of songs popular with adolescents explore, re-explore, and explore once again the endless ramifications of male-female romantic relations — falling in love, love-making, parting, jealousy, infidelity, elation, love-loss, and so on, in every possible context and variation.

The second process relates to the acceptability of superseeded forms. A genre which has just become passe, as already mentioned, is regarded by most with great contempt and antagonism; however, after the passage of an appropriate period of time (sometimes a decade or more) the rejected form may be re-introduced as a revival and become not only acceptable but quite fashionable, if only to a limited degree. Examples are the revival of the Charleston (introduced in the late '20s; minor revival early '30's) and rock and roll (introduced early '50's; minor revival early '70's). Similar processes affect forms of dress, mass entertainment preferences, and other fashion-susceptible aspects of adolescent subcultures.

Adolescent Subculture and Experience-enhancing Substances

The citation and discussion of seven focal concerns of adolescent subculture provide a general albeit selective impression of the character of adolescent life in the United States. This characterization provides a basis for addressing the question "What role is played by experience-enhancing substances in general, and drug-use in particular, in the lives of adolescents?"[11] The most direct answer to this question is that the use of experience-enhancing substances serves to facilitate the conduct of a variety of activities and enterprises related to the focal concerns of adolescent subculture. This is the case at present, and has been the case in the past.

Before discussing the nature of such facilitation, it is necessary to address briefly the drug-alcohol issue. For some purposes it is clearly useful to distinguish between drug and alcohol use. A consideration of the role played by experience-enhancing substances in the lives of skid-row winos, for example, would be quite different from a similar consideration of hard-core junkies. But when one's focus is the status-class "adolescent", it is of little use to maintain an analytic separation between "dope" and "booze."

One reason is that for adolescents, in contrast to some other population categories, both kinds of substances are used in similar ways to achieve basically similar purposes. Related to this is the empirical fact that at present, as in the past, the substance-repertoire of most adolescents tends to

[11] There is little uniformity in the terminology used to refer to the kinds of substances at issue. Terms used in the present symposium and in other writing include "psychoactive," "psychotherapeutic," "mind-altering," "consciousness altering," "substance abuse," and "narcotic." Each of these terms focuses on somewhat different kinds of effects, so that the use of one or another by different authors represents a choice on their part as to how they wish to conceive the nature or effects of these substances. There are also differences as to whether alcohol and drugs should be categorized separately or together, and whether the term "dope," or "narcotic," and other terminological/conceptual issues. The present paper uses the term "experiement-enhancing" substances as its generic reference term and chooses to include both alcoholic and narcotic substances under this rubric.
comprise a "mix" of alcoholic and narcotic substances. One prevalent mix for many contemporary adolescents is beer and marijuana. While stylistic factors of course affect the kinds and proportions of substances that comprise the mix at different times, for most adolescents the major criteria of choice are psychoactive. Three are of particular importance — cost, availability, and potency.

Since the financial resources of most adolescents are limited, they prefer substances which are not too costly. Beer and marijuana fit this criterion better than, say, champagne and heroin. Related to cost is availability. Since alcoholic beverages are sold widely through legitimate outlets, beer and wine, in general, are relatively easy for most adolescents to obtain. The availability of illegal substances varies greatly from time to time and place to place. In some communities amphetamines and/or barbiturates may be easy to obtain at some times and not others; the availability of marijuana has increased greatly in recent years, but supplies and sources may vary substantially over time and in different places.

The third criterion is potency. Compared to many addicts users of drugs and alcohol for whom the substance-induced state comes close to being an end in itself, adolescents are much more likely to use these substances as means to other ends. If you get too high you are out of it, and cannot participate effectively in congregation, outings, mating activity and other characteristic adolescent activities. The more potent substances such as 100 proof whiskey or heroin are more likely to produce incapacitation than the less potent forms. Combining these selection criteria, substances generally preferred by adolescents are those which are relatively inexpensive, readily available, and will rather readily get you high, but not too high.

In examining the relationship of experience-enhancing substances to adolescent focal concerns, their use appears to be most directly related to Excitement, Exploration, and Fashion, and less directly but still significantly related to Autonomy, Mating, Placement, and Congregation.  

Perhaps the most obvious use of drugs and/or alcohol is in connection with Excitement. Such substances serve the purpose of Excitement in at least two ways: through direct experience-enhancement, and as an intensifier of the Excitement potential of other activities. Given the desire by many adolescents for the enhancement of ordinary experience, it is not surprising that they seek out and utilize substances that can produce a "high," "kicks," a sense of thrill, and special states of being. Traditionally, in the United States, these purposes have been served primarily by various forms of alcohol (particularly beer, wine and liquor), but during the past decade certain drugs — (particularly marijuana) — have been added to the repertoire of experience-enhancing substances customarily used by adolescents, with chemical agents such as amphetamines and methadone ("speed") serving most directly to induce feelings of excitement. While there are some "ioners," adolescent drinking and drug use tends to be collective, so that the additional excitement-producing potential of Congregation is added to that of the ingested substances. It is no accident that parties are often characterized by the identity of the primary psychoactive substance used to induce and enhance excitement — the beer party, the drinking party, the pot/grass/dope/smoking party. However, as noted, however the party is characterized, alcoholic and narcotic substances tend to be used in combination.

It is important to note here that the widespread use of drugs and alcohol to induce or enhance Excitement does not accord with a notion that narcotic substances are used, primarily for purposes of escape or "retreatism" — to enable individuals to withdraw from a direct confrontation with the external world into an inner and private self. It is undoubtedly true that some drugs used by some adolescents are conducive to withdrawal and an inward focus, but for the great majority of adolescents and under most circumstances these substances are used for quite the opposite purpose — to intensify one's experiencing of the exciting worlds of mating, congregation, exploration and their constituent activities. Alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs used at football games, rock concerts, parties, dances, outings, and the like, provide an additional dimension to the experience already inherent in such activities and in some instances produce excitement in activities where this element appears to be lacking.

Since in the United States either the use per se or circumstances of use of many experience-enhancing substances are illegal, (e.g., use of marijuana, cocaine; use of amphetamines or barbiturates without prescription; under-age purchase of alcohol; drinking while driving), the excitement potential of the use of such substances is, for many, greatly enhanced by the elements of risk, danger, and defiance accompanying illegal activity.

Thus, for many, the legal proscriptions applying to experience-enhancing substances, by enhancing their Excitement potential, provide additional incentives for their use. The impact of such incentives, however, varies widely by status class. Illegal practices become part of the repertoire of customary behavior of particular status classes when subculturally-defined incentives for engaging in such behavior outweigh incentives for refraining from engagement. The "illegality" component of alcohol/drug use has some salience for all categories of adolescents; however, its incentive force is probably greatest for "tough" ghetto youth, and least for "straight" higher-status youth. For many in the latter category, the inhibitive influence of the proscriptions outweigh their incentive influence and thus lower the likelihood of illegal usage.

Experience-enhancing substances also serve the purposes of Exploration. As noted earlier, the process of moving out to experience new social orbits, mating relations, unfamiliar places, often entails

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[12] A more comprehensive analysis of subcultural inputs to customary alcohol/drug use would utilize the notion of subcultural conjunctures to examine the combined impact of the focal concerns of three prime subcultural parties — Male (Protest, Competitive Engagement, Coordination, Honor, Sexual Access, Production, Transaction); Laboring-class (Toughness, Toughness, Smartness, Excitement, Fate, Autonomy), and Urban (Life space, Solidary relations, Behavioral control, Congregation, Transit)—as well as the inputs of relevant non-prime subcultures.
considerable anxiety — particularly during the earlier years of adolescence. For many youth such anxiety is alleviated by the use of narcotic or alcoholic substances. One classic example is that of males fortifying themselves with beer, wine, liquor or "pills" to get up their nerve to approach a female for a date or dance. Females are more likely to fortify themselves through the companionship of peers in essaying initial contacts with males, but may also avail themselves of anxiety-reducing substances. Exploration combined with the male focal concern of Competitive Engagement often leads to fighting with other males, and here again combatants frequently rely on pre-fight ingestion of drugs or alcohol to provide "Dutch courage." Less common is the use of introspection-aiding drugs to increase one's awareness of inner states. Such usage, when it occurs, is more common among higher status youth; "inner-experience-enhancing" drugs such as mescaline and LSD are rarely found among lower status adolescents.

The use of psychoactive substances bears a direct relationship to the Fashion concern. During the last half-century, as noted earlier, adolescents have utilized both alcoholic and narcotic substances, in a variety of combinations, in connection with subcultural focal concerns. The extremely wide variety of alcoholic and narcotic substances provides an abundant cafeteria for a virtually inexhaustible series of fads — in their "innovational" or "revivalistic" forms, or both. In the alcohol category are beer, wine, hard liquor, and others, in a wide variety of types. In the drug category are amphetamines and barbiturates, marijuana and/or hashish, a variety of opium derivatives, cactus derivatives, cocoa derivatives, and many others.

This vast array of experience-enhancing substances permits successive generations of adolescents to select particular substances and combinations of substances as "in" and to reject others as "out," thus satisfying both Exploration and Fashion. Favorable forms vary widely over time and by region, locale, social class, and other bases of status class differentiation. During the 1960's, the general proportion of drugs to alcohol in the drug-alcohol mix increased dramatically for many adolescents, thus serving those aspects of Autonomy through which maximum differentiation from adult practice is sought.

Sometimes the succession of drug-alcohol fads is quite rapid; in some circles a shift from marijuana to wine to "downers" as favored forms occurred within a five year period. In the 1960's the fact that most older adolescents had had some experience with marijuana while most adults had not, produced the appearance of a "generation gap," with some adolescents perceiving freer use of drugs as a major element differentiating them from primarily-alcohol-using adults. At present, stylistic change appears to have altered this situation. The use of marijuana among adults, especially in the avant garde, upper-middle class circles, has increased, while wine has become popular among many adolescents. Recent evidence also points to a renewed popularity of hard liquor in some adolescent circles.

Throughout the succession of fashions, some usage patterns have remained relatively constant. Beer, for example, has remained highly popular among male adolescents (as well as their seniors) in the working class, even as the availability of non-alcoholic substances has increased. Also, ever since the increased availability of marijuana in the early 1960's, it has been the drug of choice for the majority of youth; no other form (e.g., "speed," cocaine, heroin, LSD), has even approached its popularity for the mass of adolescents.

Experience-enhancing substances also play a role with respect to Autonomy, Placement, Mating, and Congregation. As just noted, the use of substances disapproved of by one's parental generation indicates one's adoption of a different and independent course of action. Getting "stoned" on drugs or alcohol may also be used by adolescents to test the dependability of support by their peers. It is not uncommon for adolescents to become sufficiently incapacitated by drugs or liquor in the company of their friends so that they must in some way be protected or nurtured (driven home, bedded down, sobered up, protected from arrest). Evidence that one's friends will assume responsibility when one is too stoned to do so oneself enables individuals to test the limits of their capacity while being shielded from undue risk, and reassures them of the reliability of their friends.

The kinds of drugs, alcohol, or drug-alcohol mixes utilized by different adolescent peer associations often serve as one criterion for identifying one's group (e.g., marijuana-using "hippies"), and in some cases constitute a major criterion ("druggies" and "beeries" as clique designations were noted earlier), thus serving the purposes of Placement, Placement and Exploration are served by the use of drugs for "inner-exploration," as noted earlier. The anxiety-alleviating capacity of drugs and alcohol also figures in their use for those Exploration ventures which involve confrontation with unfamiliar and possibly anxiety-arousing situations. Included among these, also as noted earlier, are Matin encounters where contacting and relating to members of the opposite sex may evoke fears of being rejected, behaving inappropriately, making a poor impression, and the like. Adolescents use experience-enhancing substances, as do adults, as a lubricant for social interaction in many of the Congregation activities characteristic of the subculture. Drugs and alcohol, as already noted, may also serve the purposes of Congregation by enhancing its Excitement potential.

Despite a high level of stylistic variation in the actual forms through which the focal concerns of adolescence are realized, the concerns themselves show a high degree of stability over time. Clearly all of the cited concerns can be pursued without the use of drugs and/or alcohol (e.g., religious revival meetings generate Excitement; most Congregation occurs without alcohol or drugs). However, given the obvious utility of experience-enhancing substances in facilitating the realization of adolescent focal concerns, singly and in combination, and given also the high degree of stability of these concerns, it would appear that the use of experience-enhancing substances will remain a continuing and predictable feature of adolescent subcultures in the United States for the foreseeable future.
CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion has characterized major features of the subculture of adolescents in the United States by designating and describing a set of adolescent "focal concerns," suggesting their relationship to major objectives of adolescent life, and citing examples of activities conducted in the pursuit of these objectives. One such activity is the use of experience-enhancing substances — narcotic and alcoholic. The use of such substances is represented as "normal," in that the major concerns of adolescent life are seen as related directly to socially-beneficial objectives, along with other kinds of behavioral practices, to facilitate achievement of these objectives. Objectives include the achievement of societal placement; the alleviation of anxiety attendant on mating, exploration and other adolescent pursuits; the learning of attributes and skills necessary to personal autonomy; the improvement of competence in social interaction and relationships, and others.

Viewed from this perspective, the use of drugs and alcohol by adolescents does not constitute a "social problem," in the conventional meaning of this term. It may well be perceived as problematic by adults who regard any use of drugs or alcohol by adolescents as damaging or otherwise undesirable, and from this perspective usages here characterized as "normal" may be differently perceived. But it is equally evident that there are modes of drug and alcohol use — both by adolescents and others — which may quite legitimately be characterized as "abuse" or "misuse" or "excessive use" — on the ground that they result in a degree of damage to individuals and/or to society for which evidence is palpably more "objective" than the kinds of subjective perceptions just noted.

Under what circumstances, and for what reasons, does the "normal" or facilitative use of experience-enhancing substances move over into "abnormal" usage — in "addiction" or "abuse" or "misuse?" The present discussion merely develops the analysis up to the point where this question — drug and/or alcohol use as a social problem — may be posed, but goes no further in the essential task of specifying the processes whereby "problematic" or "abnormal" use develops.

Clearly the issue of "limits" is involved. The limited and controlled consumption of foodstuffs is conducive to health and well-being; excessive consumption produces obesity, an unhealthful state which, under extreme circumstances, may lead to death. The limited and controlled usage of experience-enhancing substances by adolescents is conducive to the achievement of desirable states and objectives; excessive usage leads to addiction, an unhealthful state which, under extreme circumstances, may lead to death. Most usage by most adolescents is "controlled;" occasional instances of excessive usage in the lives of many generally represent experimental probing of the limits of one's capacity.

But recurrent and persistent overuse by a small minority of youth obviously represents a different situation. This paper contends that there is a highly significant overlap between the incentives underlying "excessive" usage and those underlying "normal" usage — just as the incentives for overeating overlap substantially with incentives for normal eating. The present treatment of the circumstances, motives and consequences of normal usage provide a baseline against which the character of abnormal usage may be gauged and proposes that the quest for basic motives behind the problems of alcoholism and drug addiction may be facilitated by a better understanding of the motives behind customary usage by normal populations.