

Drug Use Within Vietnam-era Student Protest: Central or Coincidental?

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With regards to members of the Student Protest Movement of the sixties and early seventies, there is one stereotype that prevails, one common conception that trumps all others. This is the conception of the “sex, drugs and rock-n-roll” activist, of the dirty, dope-smoking hippie, of the devil-may-care acid-propelled student engaged in a battle, often without rhyme or reason, against the Man. These are the colloquialisms that commonly crop up when twenty-first century people, whether or not they lived through the pertinent times, discuss those who engaged in student protest during that era. Not everyone, obviously, thinks of student protest within such narrow conceptual constraints, but enough do to make important questioning the role of drug use in Vietnam-era student protest. How exactly did drugs play a part? Did one have to use drugs in order to engage in student protest? Most would answer probably not. But did those who protested usually engage in illicit drug use? Most would answer probably. So, with an eye to the true relationship between the two poster children of the collegiate sixties, this paper will examine the infiltration of the drug culture into college life and American awareness, how student protest operated on college campuses during this time, the types of students involved in both protest and drug use, and the contrasting views that drugs are indelibly linked to protest and that they are linked by circumstance. Finally, in light of all this, this paper will conclude with an assessment of how drug use and the Student Protest Movement actually coincided on American college campuses in the sixties and very early seventies.

Prior to the era of student movements, American ideas and values had already been experiencing change. Post WWII America saw itself noble in the wake of injustice’s defeat overseas; “injustice” in the American mind was both a foreign problem

and a problem that went largely unexpressed. The generation following WWII, to quote President David Frohnmeyer, was the “Silent Generation,” characterized by political timidity and widespread acquiescence to the status quo.¹ Soon, however, the nation began to discover that injustice was a domestic problem as well, as issues of racism, gender, and self-expression began to come to the fore. This awareness gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement in the early sixties, with its sit-ins and student involvement, to sexual liberation, and with it the revolutionary “pill,” and to the widespread expression of the importance of *self*. We can see these advancements cropping up everywhere in America at the time, the emphases on antiestablishment, justice and self typified by the music of the Beatles, by Freedom Summer², and by that very famous linchpin of the youth movement, UC Berkeley:

The boldness of unlettered heroes was part of the spirit that summer volunteers like Savio and Jack Weinberg brought back to the Berkeley campus that fall – along with a respect for the power of civil disobedience, a fierce moralism, a lived love for racial equality, a distaste for bureaucratic highhandedness and euphemism, a taste for relentless talk at intense mass meetings on the way toward consensus... On October 1, 1964, Jack Weinberg sat down at his “unauthorized” recruitment table in Sproul Plaza, violating campus rules, and was arrested; the police put him

¹ President David Frohnmeyer, January 10, 2005. University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

² An effort, aided largely by college students from across the nation, to register black citizens to vote in a still unwilling South. Freedom Summer, or at least the ideas garnered from its experience by those involved, was largely responsible for the galvanization of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, led by Mario Savio and Jack Weinberg, the following year.

in the back of their car; Savio among others spoke from its roof; and the Free Speech Movement...was born.³

From what was still a “Silent Generation” in 1962, college youth had become vociferous opponents of injustice and complacency, and in but a few years American student activism arose.⁴ But perhaps I am getting ahead of myself, for before a discussion of the drug-protest collision can ensue, it is important to understand the contexts in which drug use and student protest operated as individual phenomena. As this understanding is necessary to an understanding of the broader implications of both, I have chosen to include in my paper overviews of how both developed and operated in America at the time.

Drugs, prior to their rapid infiltration of the campus scene in the mid-sixties, were almost, if not completely, unheard of by college students. For the most part, they were unfamiliar to the national population as a whole. To use a colloquialism, they were quite simply not on America’s radar. It is important to note at this point that the same cannot be said of the idea of an altered state or consciousness. Alcohol use had been present, if not common to the degree it is today, on college campuses throughout the fifties and sixties⁵ – altering the body to excite the mind was not an unfamiliar concept. But then, alcohol has been on the collective cultural “radar” for centuries (if not longer), whereas drugs had not. Granted, drugs have manifested themselves in various ways throughout human civilization, but it is nonetheless true that the sixties marked their emergence onto the American cultural scene.

³ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 164.

⁴ Frohnmeyer.

⁵ Lynn Enyart, 3/11, contacted by phone: 345-3610. Lynn Enyart is a retired FBI officer who was assigned to the University of Oregon during the protest era, and is very familiar with the patterns of contemporaneous illegal activity and drug use, the latter in which this paper is mainly interested.

This emergence in America, though it did not necessarily begin on campus, certainly entered into the public view via the higher education system. Many college students in the mid-sixties were fast forming an awareness of and an objection to the traditional values of the preceding generation. This idea is discussed at length by John H. Weakland in his article “Hippies: What the Scene Means.” While Weakland lumps most who experimented with drugs at this time in the “hippie” category, which initially seems unsound, his reasons for doing so are both revealing and academically acceptable:

The hippies represent the full flowering of the drug movement, and here, as elsewhere, the study of extremes or concentrated forms is likely to be especially illuminating about significant things to observe in more “everyday” examples, where they are less vivid and visible. As parallel examples, we may recall the value of studying psychopathology for psychology generally, and the value of studying ceremonies in anthropology as clues to everyday patterns of roles and ideas.⁶

Thus, any successive conclusions he might draw are applicable (to varying degrees, of course) to members of the drug movement who are not necessarily members of the more specific “hippie” movement, where these conclusions are most strongly evidenced.

This counterculture movement, Weakland goes on to argue, both is defined by outside observers and defines itself in terms of what it is not: “the movement in large measure carries on its tasks of self-definition in much the same way as the straight world – that is, in terms of opposition to and contrast with the values and activities of ordinary

⁶ John H. Weakland, “Hippies: What the Scene Means” in Richard H. Blum, *Society and Drugs* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1969), 346.

American society.”⁷ Defining aspects include *not* being representative of traditional values, *not* conforming to society’s majority wishes, and *not* aimed towards social acquiescence but rather towards rebellion. How the movement defines itself positively is slightly harder to pin down, which may speak to the use of *via negativa* in self-definition, but that is outside the scope of this paper.

As with the introduction of any idea or practice that is against the establishment, the propagation of drugs on college campuses came in stages. On the average college campus in 1965, the drug scene was only just beginning to surface. Between 1965 and 1966, marijuana started to make its appearance nationwide; by 1967 and 1968, heavier drugs (such as LSD and to a lesser extent psilocybin) were gaining student interest, and by 1969 LSD was incredibly pervasive, symbolizing almost in itself the drug culture.⁸

Here Freedom Summer becomes interesting in another light: in 1964 marijuana use was already widespread in Mississippi, though as yet unassociated with universities, and LSD was the “just-spreading drug that promised to unleash the spirit even more than a mass meeting in the Delta swelling with ‘We Shall Overcome.’”⁹ It is important to note that while middle-class college students ultimately circumscribed a huge membership of the drug culture,¹⁰ drug use was not limited to college students. The drug movement captivated those from all walks of life, and did not *begin* on college campuses so much as it widely evidenced itself there and through student subscription gained national attention.

⁷ *Ibid*, 352.

⁸ Chuck Hunt, March 9, 2005. University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

⁹ Gitlin, 168.

¹⁰ Weakland, 361.

The University of Oregon well illustrates the prevalence that drug use and sale had achieved by 1970, the peak of student activism, as well as the point made above. A news release from April of 1970 states, “The volume of arrest activity, according to the district attorney’s office, has amounted to at least 125 arrests for drug violations in Lane County since the University’s fall term started last September. A large number of these arrests are non-students found in the University area.”¹¹ This view is bolstered by a letter from N. Ray Hawk, the Dean of Administration at the time, to Circuit Judge Roland Rodman of the Lane County Court House in which Dean Hawk claims,

It is our intention of continuing an intensive educational program which hopefully will assist the entire community, but more and more we realize that a considerable amount of the drug traffic is being conducted by non-students who frequent the campus, particularly the Erb Memorial Union. In addition to the drug traffic concerns, we are aware of a growing number of behavior problems having their roots in drug abuse by non-students... In short, involvement on campus by non-students in drug abuse and in providing drugs is a problem with which we need assistance.¹²

Drug use, though undeniably centered around the college campus, was obviously not limited to those specifically who attended the University. Rather, the University campus

¹¹ News release, “Drugs,” regarding the prevalence of drugs and arrests relating to at the University of Oregon and in wider Lane County. April 13, 1970. Drugs; Series 1: “1969-1970”; Office of the President Records, coll. UA16, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97034.

¹² Letter, no title, first line reads: “As you well know, the abuse of drugs...” regarding student and non-student drug use on the University of Oregon campus during the Vietnam-era. November 19, 1969. Drugs; Series 1: “1969-1970”; Office of the President Records, coll. UA16, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97034.

became a locale largely representative of the emergent permissive culture, drawing a varied assemblage of subscribers thereto.

I believe it is now necessary to qualify a statement earlier made – that drugs were, prior to this grand emergence, quite simply not on America’s radar. This statement deserves qualification in two respects: firstly, that the term “drug” as it is used in this paper refers to a substance that is used purely to expand consciousness (to borrow another colloquialism), and secondly, that it is specifically *this* type of drug which was both new and objectionable to most of American society. With that said, a further statement of Weakland’s becomes quite illuminating:

In American society drugs are acceptable and approved essentially when used to relieve some kind of pain, illness or disability or, more generally, to help bring a person from some negative state toward or up to a condition seen as “normal”... for drug use to be acceptable in cases of disability, the disability should be involuntary – that is, “not the person’s own fault.” Also, though the principles are the same, the rules are applied with more leeway in the case of drugs which are not culturally defined as drugs – tobacco and alcohol being the prime examples.¹³

This helps explain why a society not unfamiliar with chemically altering oneself reacted so strongly to this new use of drugs (or alternatively and equally true, this use of new drugs), and why contemporaneous members of the movement and we as retrospective onlookers deem the drug movement (with no deeper connotations intended) antiestablishment, infiltrative and foreign. This last statement is illustrated perfectly in “The Diary of a

¹³ Weakland, 359.

Freshman Coed”¹⁴: “I found as I observed them that they had a unique reason for smoking dope, one that I had not grasped before. They smoke for entertainment. Strange. Turn on your body to entertain your mind.”¹⁵ This statement is quite telling. Not only is using for fun a new idea (even within America, described by Weakland as “very much a drug-using society”¹⁶), but it still seems to be a new idea to some as late as 1970. Granted, Riki is only a freshman when she makes this statement, one who grew up, moreover, in a small rural town, but the fact that these drugs preserve some novelty even in 1970 speaks to a society still struggling with their emergence, still struggling with what to many is a very new idea.



New ideas, however, found themselves quite at home in the sixties and early seventies. This era saw the flowering, mainly among America’s youth but also evidenced in less privileged populations around the country, of multitudinous public movements geared toward equality and social justice:

Foremost among these is unquestionably the Civil Rights Movement, which began early in the 1960s, and more specifically, a social effort...which has come to be known as “Freedom Summer.” The summer of 1964 saw the inception of this movement, an effort to register African Americans in the South to vote in which many students from universities around the country (especially, for our purposes, universities in the Pacific Northwest) participated, and to which they often

¹⁴ Riki, “The Diary of a Freshman Coed,” *Old Oregon* 49-50 (Jan/Feb 1971). Riki (a pseudonym) was a freshman during the academic year 1969-1970. As she kept a journal all year, and eventually became involved in the student radical group, as well as a documented (by herself) drug experimenter, her observations and insights are both unique and extremely valuable. The publication of her diary is accredited to Ken Metzler, editor of *Old Oregon* at the time, who asked several students to keep diaries and let him publish them. She was the only one who came through..

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 27.

¹⁶ Weakland, 359.

recommitted themselves summer after summer. Out of the Civil Rights Movement, and of Freedom Summer in particular, grew a movement equal in its importance as well as its recognition by the national community: the Free Speech Movement. Though the University of California Berkeley (henceforward “Berkeley”) is commonly recognized as the spark that lit the fuse, so to speak, the Free Speech Movement had been gathering momentum and devotees throughout the sixties, and, though unnamed until Mario Savio’s “seditious” speech at Berkeley in 1969, would very likely have coalesced in much the same way.

This is certainly not to say, however, that the words of Savio did not have an electric impact on the nation as a whole and the collegiate community in particular – no doubt few could have declared this cause so candidly and succinctly. In his 1964 speech “An End to History,” Savio quite clearly outlines what he saw as the major issues to be dealt with:

“The two battlefields [Mississippi and Berkeley] may seem quite different to some observers, but this is not the case. The same rights are at stake in both places – the right to participate as citizens in democratic society and the right to due process of law. Further, it is a struggle against the same enemy. In Mississippi an autocratic and powerful minority rules, through organized violence, to suppress the vast, virtually powerless majority. In California, the privileged minority manipulates the university bureaucracy to suppress the students' political expression.”¹⁷

Mario Savio’s terms became the unofficial mission statement of many a

¹⁷ Savio, Mario. 1964. “An End to History.” https://blackboard.uoregon.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=180457_1. (accessed January 20, 2005).

radical collegiate across the nation in the late sixties, spurring local activation of national activist organizations.¹⁸

Students for a Democratic Society, otherwise known as SDS, ranks high among these organizations. While there are minor exceptions, for the most part any campus engaged in liberal activity at this time boasted a representation of SDS. SDS was a metamorphosis of the youth branch of a Socialist organization known as the League for Industrial Democracy, and defined its political manifesto, the Port Huron Statement, in the early sixties. Despite this, and despite its early activity at the more markedly liberal universities around the country (Berkeley, for instance), SDS did not really become a driving force until later in the sixties, especially after the inception of Operation Rolling Thunder, which is widely associated with the “start” of the Vietnam War.¹⁹ Here it is important to note that while objections to the war comprised a large portion of activist sentiment, and while student protest is most often coupled with antiwar rhetoric, the Student Movement (SDS in particular) did not restrict its focus to antiwar issues, but rather concentrated on a wide array of contemporary social issues.

As it is impossible within the confines of this paper to provide a description of all events that occurred within the American system of higher education during the Vietnam era, I have chosen to provide a brief overview of the way in which student protest played itself out at the University of Oregon, which I believe well exemplifies the pattern of events occurring all over the nation at this time. Charles T. Duncan, the Dean of Faculties at the University of Oregon between 1965 and 1971, corroborates this belief in a memorandum to President Clark from 1970 regarding an “attempt by the Board [of

¹⁸ See Cheri Bryans, Camas Chapman-Graves, Courtney Flowers and Sarah Freeland, “Student Leaders at the University of Oregon 1968-1970,” February 14.

¹⁹ Maddex

Higher Education] to survey, recapitulate, and analyze the general state of unrest of the several campuses...of the State System of Higher Education”²⁰:

As to the “forces, influences, and conditions which give rise to student unrest on the local campus,” it is my view that they are substantially the same – with variations as to intensity, scope and form of reaction, depending on local circumstances such as timing, weather, relationship to other events, etc. – as those affecting campuses all over the country. I can add nothing to the uncounted millions of words of analysis and commentary that have poured forth from a thousand sources in recent months and years except to say that I agree with the view that basically this is a protest against contemporary society in general and, more specifically, against many aspects of government policy.²¹

As such, though admittedly an overview of only U of O comprises but a tiny segment of national higher education, the reactions exuded by U of O students, and their methods of making their attitudes more widely known, shed a lot of light on the larger cultural and political phenomena taking place all over the country. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, U of O boasted many protest leaders that became involved in the protest scene nationally (such as John Froines, who was involved in the Chicago Seven trials²²) as well as many events that were typical of protest around the country at the time. Secondly, student protest across the nation gained national media attention, which effectively reflected events back to other campuses, which often emulated the actions of their fellow



²⁰ Memorandum, “Memorandum to President Clark” regarding the general state of student (and sometimes faculty) unrest on Oregon’s campuses at the time. May 22, 1970. Drugs; Series 1: “1969-1970”; Office of the President Records, coll. UA16, Division of Special Collections and University Archives; University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97034.

²¹ “Memorandum to President Clark.”

²² Ben Nussbaum, “Berkeley of the Northwest? Not quite”

<http://www.google.com/univ/uoregon?pg=q&fmt=.&Search+UO.x=0&Search+UO.y=0&q=john+froines>. (accessed March 14, 2005).

universities. Lastly, SDS, while it was engaged locally in the campus scene of many politically active universities (if not most), was a national organization.

SDS began to make a noticeable emergence onto the campus scene in the mid-sixties. As I mentioned above, protest at this point did not confine itself to or define itself by exclusive interest in antiwar issues. In its early stages, especially the 1966/1967 academic year, SDS “was almost exclusively concerned with cultural matters like sex and drugs.”²³ In fact, SDS during this year was jokingly referred to as the “hippie fraternity,”²⁴ concentrating its forces mainly on bringing broader cultural issues, and to a slightly lesser extent broader political issues, to the forefront of community awareness. Buttons displaying slogans such as “Burn pot, not people,” “Do it if it feels good,” “Be creative: Invent your own perversion,” “**Liberate Spiritual Discovery**,” and “Sterilize LBJ: no more ugly babies” were common.²⁵ While amusing, these buttons also convey a deeper concern with the liberation of sex and recreational drugs, as well as an active needling of the political regime. References to the “banana peel high”²⁶ were common. A “social experiment” that remains with particular clarity in the mind of Jack Maddex, professor of history at the University of Oregon, which I find particularly amusing as well as illustrative of the “in-your-face” attitude of the times, involved the distribution of dill²⁷ from the EMU to passersby in order to examine the response elicited from policemen.

²³ Jack Maddex, March 9, 2005. University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Jack Maddex is a professor of history at the University of Oregon, and has worked here since the time period being discussed. As such, he is very knowledgeable and a valuable resource for the times. Professor Maddex can be reached via email at jmaddex@darkwing.uoregon.edu.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Maddex. A belief (alternately a joke) that a substance in the peel of a banana could get one high. This has no basis in scientific fact.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Urban legend also associated dill with psychedelic properties. Unfortunately, this also has no basis in scientific fact.

To be sure, antiwar sentiment was not absent from the rhetoric of protestors; it just was not given the emphasis that it attained later in the sixties. Even by 1969, protest at the University still centered on many other issues, though by this time “the burden of political protest [had] shifted to focus primarily on antiwar issues.”²⁸ Nonetheless, other issues were still prevalent. Ken Metzler’s *Confrontation* recalls a “battle-of-the-sexes in the Emerald letters column”²⁹ in which

The boys indicted the girls for lack of “femininity,” and the girls complained of the limited choices for dates: uncouth fraternity men, pony-tailed hippies, and opaque intellectuals long on conversation but short on action.³⁰

Metzler then comments wryly, “Some things would never change.”³¹ Some things, however, did: the public repartee between boys and girls via a publication was probably a relatively recent development. Other issues, such as sex, drugs and racism, were still relevant as well, though indeed, much of student protest ideology had shifted its focus to the war and to the presence of legal authority, which many objected to equally. A short description of a confrontation between Acting President Johnson and protestors well illustrates this point:

When a crowd of 300 gathered in front of the administration building to protest militarism, police states, American fascism, and assorted ills, Johnson emerged from his office to talk of intellectual values and free expression. But the radicals among the audience were impatient, seeming to be more interested in the politics of confrontation than in truth and falsehood grappling on the open forum. Was

²⁸ Jack Maddex, February 2, 2005. University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

²⁹ Ken Metzler. *Confrontation: The Destruction of a College President* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1993), 151.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

the president aware, they asked, that the pigs were on campus? The pigs, the f---ing pigs – did he know they were snooping, harassing and making arrests? Did he approve? How could he justify this blatant repression against our black brothers and our white brothers?³²

This passage demonstrates perfectly the shifting of focus, but demonstrates also issues unrelated to the war with which students were still struggling. The general political construct of society was an obvious issue, as was police presence (which mounted as the ferocity of protest mounted). Moreover, the last sentence exemplifies a residual awareness of the issue of racial inequality – were things “equal,” an emphasis on “black” and “white” would be unnecessary, and would be replaced with simply “brothers.”

Nonetheless, protest at U of O in 1969 was definitely becoming geared more toward the

war.



Not only were the student demands and demonstrations changing in ideology, they were changing in forcefulness – escalating. Referring to the tragic death of University of Oregon Acting President Charles Johnson, Metzler says,

At the very least it was possible to say that he was a casualty of the times. The times had taken the life of another college president, Courtney Smith of Swarthmore who, in January 1969, collapsed and died of a heart attack in the middle of a crisis over demands from black students. And the times had caused other presidents to quite their jobs, their sudden resignation often accompanied by petulant remarks about the sheer impossibility and that “savage demands” (as one phrased it) of their work.³³

³² Metzler, 152.

³³ Metzler, 4.

Following Johnson's collapse, "On September 25, Robert D. Clark was welcomed to Oregon by 150 protestors carrying torches, marching on his front lawn, and demanding an end to the ROTC program." President Clark (with no judgment intended) was luckily better equipped to handle the protests which continued throughout the academic year until what is generally recognized as their peak later that spring. The Student Movement by this time had truly become a force to be reckoned with. Again I will reiterate that while it is unfair to claim that U of O represents exactly the campuses around America, I believe the pattern of ideology change and escalation embodied in the University's struggle speaks well to the patterns developing all over the country. While activism may have peaked at different times and in different ways around the country, the larger picture was the same: beginning with a general emphasis on a more permissive culture which centered on ideas of drug and sexual freedom and social and racial love and equality, students increasingly reacted to the dominant political paradigms of the time, among them the war.

Having analyzed the major characteristics of both drugs and student protest, one thing becomes immediately clear: student protest, for the most part, was a very public occupation, whereas drug use (which should not be confused either with drug-related propaganda or with pure discussion of its use) was a very private one.³⁴ This point will become very important to the discussion of the way the two interacted during this time, and the concluding analysis of the actual relationship between the two. Before I proceed to this, however, it is necessary to explore the "types" of students who were involved in either occupation. Are the stereotypes that define protestors as pot-smoking hippies and

³⁴ In this case, I am not using the word "private" to refer specifically to the private sphere, but rather to the clandestine nature of drug use – that is, though it may have technically occurred in the public sphere, it was not *advertised* in the way student protest was, but rather hidden.

drug users as loudmouthed subversives true, or is there more to the story?

When I asked Professor Jack Maddex to describe, if he could, the everyday run-of-the-mill protestor, he responded fervently that many then, as now, believed “they could tell someone’s political background by looking at them from a mile and a half away,”³⁵ and objected moreover to the idea that any group of people could be neatly condensed into a single category. First, he explained, one had to distinguish between “counterculture” and “radical” – while the former encompasses a cultural movement that was, in various, not necessarily political, ways, “against the machine” but lacked any sort of “plan to supercede,” the latter refers to politicians, people who were actively involved in an attempt to subvert the dominant paradigm.³⁶ The former class was associated with the “hippies,” and was often apolitical, but didn’t have to be, while the latter held definite political views and was most often involved in protest.³⁷ Having said that, though, it is difficult to delineate a “type” of person who was involved in protest. As much of student protest ideology centered on the idea of a “generation gap,” it was often an activity in which the young engaged – hence the participation of college students. They were not, however, the sole group to engage, nor could they be classified into a single type. Those engaged in protest typically ranged in age from younger than college age to the very elderly; the college campus provided a forum for anyone who didn’t agree with the dominant political or cultural trends. Moreover, as student protest focused on a range of issues, a variety of people, their beliefs comprising a broad spectrum, were involved.

So much for that, but what about those who were engaged in drug use? Do they comprise a stereotype? As one might imagine, the answer to this question is rather

³⁵ Maddex, 3/9/05.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*



similar to the answer above: no one personality type or political agenda can be linked to the use of drugs. People engaging in this type of activity came from and represented all walks of life. Beyond that, however, two things are fairly clear. Firstly, that there was a specific type of person involved in heavy drug use, although the reasons for this might seem rather counterintuitive. Very simply, extreme use of drugs created a stereotype of heavy drug users. It is important to understand that this does not mean a specific type engaged in heavy drug use, but rather that when one did, one began to conform to a specific type. Second, protest organizers were not heavy drug users for the most part, for the simple reason that heavy drug use leaves one “physically and mentally incapable of elevating oneself to a position of leadership.”³⁸ While this is illuminating, it leaves us still with the questions of why, if drugs were not a significant part of the lives of those in leadership positions, are they associated so strongly with protest as a whole?



There are several reasons this stereotype remains. One of these is expressed rather nicely in a passage from “The Diary of a Freshman Coed”:

Since that night [the April 15 riot at University of Oregon] all kinds of things have been going on, and I have taken part in many of them. I wasn't around for the Johnson Hall gassing, but I spent most of the night there before it. The trouble is, I don't support the cause, but it's so much like a party. M--- was there, and wanted me to stay with him. There was no harm, I thought, in just sitting around talking, and it was such a party atmosphere that I wasn't even afraid of the group. I did leave, however, when they started smoking dope. I wasn't going to get busted just for a few kicks.³⁹

³⁸ Enyart.

³⁹ “The Diary of a Freshman Coed,” 27.

The group with which Riki is spending her time is obviously not in a leadership position.⁴⁰ Just as obviously, however, the group is engaging in the use of drugs – clandestinely, granted – in a student protest context. That student activism was seen as a party opportunity is not only illustrated here, but in several other passages from Riki’s diary as well: she mentions at one point that many students involved in the protests seem to be “out on a lark,”⁴¹ and as regards the February 16 ROTC fire, she says, “The mood of the crowd was festive, as it had been from the beginning. I overheard one guy say ‘This is the biggest social event of the year.’”⁴² Obviously fun (drugs being a main component of “fun” for many in this era) was for many associated strongly with protest. Jack Maddex corroborates this belief, for while many of the more serious political activists abstained, at meetings “there was often a lighted joint passed from hand to hand all around, but that didn’t mean everyone would take a puff.”⁴³ It is becoming more and more clear that drug use did often exist within the realm of protest, but that does not indicate that the two were necessarily linked, only that they often coexisted.

Now my earlier statement regarding the public voice of protest versus the private use of drugs becomes important. Drug use was generally private, for its use was not legally acceptable. Even if it was kept secret, however, using, possessing or selling within the context of student protest (and they all occurred within this context) was bound to publicize it more. As such, protestors were not necessarily more likely to engage than anyone else, but *protest* was an outlet to the public through which drugs often escaped.

Lynn Enyart argues that while protest and drug use are not necessarily linked by nature,

⁴⁰ If this is not made obvious through this quote, it becomes very obvious when reading “The Diary of a Freshman Coed,” in which Riki repeatedly describes this group as party- rather than politically-minded.

⁴¹ “The Diary of a Freshman Coed,” 24

⁴² *Ibid*, 23.

⁴³ Maddex.

there are several reasons that they might be closely associated. First of all, when such a heightened state of activity exists (such as student protest and demonstration), there is bound to be an enhanced police presence, which would naturally lead to a greater awareness of other illegal activity⁴⁴; after all, “when you expose yourself to police surveillance, the likelihood of them detecting illegal drug use or possession increases.”⁴⁵



Thus, even if many people from various backgrounds engaged in various activities were using drugs, people who were using drugs *and* protesting were more likely to get caught. Indeed, it was for this very reason that many who were serious about political activism stayed away from drugs – using, selling, possessing, or even being near them – entirely. In the words of Chuck Hunt, drugs were dangerous in more than a purely physical way: “Drugs were a lever that could be used by local police or FBI to compromise your integrity.”⁴⁶ Lynn Enyart entirely agrees with this statement, adding that the use of a drug charge to extract information pertaining to a larger offense was both effective and not uncommon.⁴⁷ Thus, leaders of student protest who were serious about it (as most leaders were) not only weren’t heavy users, they actively avoided drugs, and found channels for their ideas other than the popular scene.

In conclusion, there are several valid reasons that student activism and drug use have come to be associated in our nation’s collective mind. The underground reality of both – in other words, the fact that both strongly diverged from normal political and cultural paradigms – attracted similar types of people to similar spheres of activity. The aspect of protest that is seen as a “party” speaks strongly to this idea; the

⁴⁴ Enyart.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

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⁴⁷ Enyart.

antiestablishment political setting provided a fun arena for some who were looking for a different kind of outlet. Then there is the fact that engaging in high profile activity, or being present at a locale that boasts high profile activity, is much likelier to expose other illegal activity. And lastly, there is the fact that student activists were less often purely against militarism and the Vietnam War, and more often against the establishment as a whole, and in favor of sex and drug liberation and generally a more permissive culture. The war, recall, was more peripheral until the late sixties, when it became the most prominent issue. I see this, however, as hugely important, because our most common interpretation *now* is that protest always focused mainly on the war. Thus, the concern with drug liberation as a *political* issue has transformed in many minds into the belief that protestors simply used drugs, which is an unfounded belief. Drugs were a political issue, and while many engaged in their use, many did not, especially those we might define as the most politically active. With this in mind, it is fair to say that while drug use and student activism attracted many of the same kinds of people peripherally, fundamentally drug use and protest were not linked – clearly demonstrated by the fact that heavy drug users were not in political positions and political leaders did not generally use drugs heavily. While the stereotype has clear origins and speaks in some ways to the modes of thought operating on the nation's campuses during the Vietnam era, it is in many ways a false stereotype.