

## Perceived Distance from Father and Its Relation to Drug Use in a Soldier Population

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**OBJECTIVES:** To determine if reported distant relations with one's father is associated with use of drugs, or if it is associated with general psychiatric problems including use of drugs.

Recent research conducted at the U.S. Army Hospital, Bangkok, has indicated that soldiers who are treated for drug use problems seem to have a markedly different perception of their relations with their parents (especially their father) than soldiers who have not been involved with drugs. Approximately 50 questions dealing with soldiers' relations to their parents had been asked of drug users and non-users in a recent study. As Kojak predicted, responses to these questions indicated that the user of drugs is more distant in his relations to his father than is the non-user. No such differences were discovered which related to "closeness" to their mothers. In psychiatric terms, this would probably be described as ambiguity in the individual's relations to his father or authority.

In the present study 17 of the questions described above (father distance scale) are being administered to four populations. These populations are made up of: 1) drug users, 2) suspected drug users ("experimenters"), 3) psychiatric patients who do not use drugs, and 4) non-users of drugs. It is anticipated that the drug user would be most different from the non-user, and would be relatively similar to the suspected drug user or "experimental" user.

In addition, the authors also feel that the person with behavioral or psychiatric disorders not involving drugs is likely to be similar to the user of drugs on a variety of measures including relations with his father. Thus, drug use is viewed as but one of several deviant behaviors which may arise at least in part from some of the same etiologic factors. The etiologic factor in this case is an abnormal development of relations with the father.

The purpose of this study is to further aid in the understanding of the drug user and the psychodynamics of drug use. It is expected that this will contribute to the most efficacious medical decision as to the treatment approach to be utilized for these patients. Specifically, how much time should be devoted to coping with the patient's apparent conflicts in his relations to his father or authority. It is also felt that the father distance scale might be used to identify patients who might be high risk for drug use. Thus, those who more closely resemble the drug dependent individual might be more closely followed, with extra urinalyses and psychiatric supervision. But, individuals who more closely represent non-users would be less a matter of current concern to the psychiatric facility.

### **METHODS:**

**Subjects:** A total of 100 subjects (through age 26 and rank E-6) divided into four equal groups will be utilized. The groups are as follows:

1) **Drug Users:** These are individuals who have used any drug besides marijuana or alcohol at least 30 times in the last 45 days, or who had been admitted to the hospital for the second time due to the use of some drug besides alcohol or marijuana at any level of use.

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2) Drug Risk: These are individuals who have received a positive urinalysis result but deny using any drug, or individuals who admit to drug use but whose total involvement excluding marijuana is 25 times or less. Alcohol will not be included. For these individuals there is no known continued and repeated involvement with drugs. Additional urine from these individuals is normally tested for presence of drugs.

3) Psychiatric Non--Users: These are individuals who report to the Department of Psychiatry for any psychiatric problem, but who have no involvement with any drug besides occasional marijuana (15 times or less total) or alcohol use.

4) Positive Controls: These are individuals who have a positive urine but who, according to documentation in their medical records, were taking the drug for which the positive occurred on medical advice. These are individuals who are normally considered to be completely free of any drug involvement and are not tested further.

*Procedure:* Each individual who receives a positive urine must report to the U.S. Army Hospital, Bangkok, as an out--patient for consultation with a physician to determine whether he has been involved with drugs. Every consecutive individual who so reports will be included in the study until the requisite number of subjects per group has been reached. A nurse will give each potential subject the questionnaire form to be filled out while he waits to see a physician. The form is self--explanatory, no special instructions are needed to complete it, and about five minutes are required for completion. The patient will turn the form in to the doctor who will check to see that the social security number has been included. Forms will be collected on a daily basis from the five physicians who work in the out--patient clinic.

*RESULTS:* A total score will be determined for each subject. Answers will be scored so that a score of 0 would obtain from a person who answers all questions like a non--user, and a score of 17 would obtain from a person who answers every question like a drug user. A one--factor analysis of variance will be used to determine if overall differences between group means exist. Individual T tests will be utilized to determine the exact location of these differences.

Findings will be interpreted to suggest maximum clinical utility as discussed above. Data collection has begun and it is anticipated that all data will have been collected by 15 June 1973.

*SUMMARY:* A study has been instituted which is designed to help determine whether the drug user is exhibiting deviant behavior similar to patients with other emotional or psychiatric problems, or whether drug use is a separate clinical entity with an etiology different than that of other emotional or behavioral problems.