

Young marrieds cut drug use

Young people really do "settle down" after they get married.

They drink less and use less marijuana or other illicit drugs, according to a University of Michigan study.

But those who continue to live with parents do not show such moderation in their use of drugs. Researchers also found above-average drug use among young people cohabiting with a person of the opposite sex.

These findings are based on a long-term nationwide study by the U-M Institute for Social Research (ISR), in which high school seniors are surveyed each year and their experiences after graduation studied through mail questionnaires.

AS HIGH school seniors, about half of the males and 30 percent of the females reported having five or more drinks in a row at least once during the

two weeks prior to the survey.

But among those who had married one to three years after graduation, 12 percent fewer were drinking that much. Use of marijuana and of other illicit drugs also showed a clear drop among those who had married.

Young people who continued to live with their parents showed little overall change. Those in that other living arrangements were likely to show some increase in heavy drinking, and in the use of marijuana and other illicit drugs.

The findings were reported by ISR social psychologists Jerald G. Bachman, Patrick M. O'Malley, and Lloyd D. Johnston in a recent issue of the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, published by the American Psychological Association.

THEIR REPORT is based on data

from more than 7,000 graduates of high school classes of 1975 through 1979. It examines drug use during the first three years after high school, usually a period of important transitions in living arrangements, education and occupational status.

A valuable feature of the study, Bachman explained, is that it surveyed young people both before and after they left high school.

"When they were seniors," he pointed out, "there was little difference, on average, between those who soon would marry, those who would continue to live with their parents, and those who would choose other living arrange-

ments. The shifts in drug use became evident only after the changes in marital status and living arrangements.

One important exception to the pattern involves the relatively small number of graduates who were living with a partner of the opposite sex.

"Unlike the marrieds," the researchers reported, "those who were cohabiting did not show an overall drop in drug use. Even while they were high school seniors, these individuals were far above average in their use of alcohol and illicit drugs, and after they became cohabitants, their levels of use remained quite high."

BACHMAN, O'MALLEY and Johnston also examined patterns of cigarette smoking.

They found that most who smoked regularly during high school continued to smoke afterward, although many said they wished they could stop. Unlike the findings for alcohol and marijuana, there was no evidence that changes in living arrangements led to any changes smoking.

The U-M researchers suggest that this is because cigarette smoking is a particularly addictive form of drug use. Those who continue to smoke by the end of high school do so because they are "hooked."

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