



Learning Limits: College Women, Drugs, and Relationships

Kimberly M. Williams

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Nearly all studies of drug use and abuse approach the questions quantitatively without listening to the experiences of individuals living in cultures where drug use is notoriously problematic. This study offers new insight into the drug problem on college campuses by hearing directly from the women who experience it. The notion of the individualized drug acceptability ranking is a new concept that has not been previously developed.

According to the findings of this study, college women do not typically use drugs simply for the sake of taking drugs. Drug use was viewed as a part of relationships, and for some of these women, a very important part. Within their relationships, these women socially constructed drugs in traditional (i.e., using discourses of morality, legality, and health/personal safety) ways. They also tended to arrange drugs hierarchically?they created what the author labels an individualized drug acceptability ranking that helped them determine their drug using limits.

This study suggests that the decisions to use drugs are more complicated than previous literature has suggested. Studies attempting to find correlations between college student drug use, personality traits of drug abusers, gender differences, racial differences, parental influences and educational influences continue to dominate the literature on college student drug use. This book provides a starting point and an invitation to listen to more voices to determine other factors that influence one's drug using decisions.



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