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The experience of time in habitual teenage marijuana smokers*

*Final results obtained in the framework of doctoral thesis research

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The research is qualitative; it studies the experience of time in young people who smoke marijuana in excess, given the high rate of smoking in the teenage years, a delicate stage regarding the planning of the future. Our objective is to see how the relationship between past and future plans is manifested in their biography, through goals and actions, in light of their ability to anticipate themselves. Our guiding principle is the ability to "anticipate oneself", proposed by Sutter, a phenomenological psychiatrist. The information was obtained from the analysis of autobiographies of young persons through the hermeneutical phenomenological method developed by Lindseth, based on Ricoeur. The results reveal that in the biographies the past temporal dimension is characterized by poor descriptions, the present is where they extend themselves most, describing tastes, how they visualize themselves, but showing a lack of clarity in their interests. In the future we see the absence of reference, giving the impression of no progression from the past, and without awareness of the fact that the future possibilities or lack thereof are heavily dependent on present actions.

Key words: Time, Hermeneutical phenomenological method, Anticipation, Projection capacity

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Vivencia de la temporalidad en adolescentes consumidores habituales de marihuana

La investigación es cualitativa, estudia la vivencia del tiempo en los jóvenes consumidores abusivos de marihuana, dado el alto consumo en la adolescencia, etapa delicada en relación con la planificación del proyecto futuro. Nuestro objetivo es ver cómo se evidencia en su biografía la relación entre el pasado y proyectos futuros, a través de metas y acciones, en relación a su capacidad de anticiparse. Nuestro concepto rector es la capacidad de "anticipación" desarrollado por Sutter, psiquiatra fenomenológico. La información se obtuvo del análisis de autobiografías de jóvenes a través del método fenomenológico hermenéutico desarrollado por Linseth, basado en Ricoeur. Los resultados revelan que en las biografías la dimensión temporal pasada se caracteriza por descripciones pobres, el presente es donde más se expresan, describiendo gustos, cómo se visualizan, pero mostrando falta de claridad en intereses. En el futuro vemos ausencia de referencia, dando la impresión que éste no estuviese ligado al pretérito, y sin conciencia sobre el hecho que las posibilidades que se abren o cierran del futuro son dependientes de lo que se hace en el presente.

Palabras claves: Temporalidad, Método fenomenológico hermenéutico, Anticipación, Capacidad proyección

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INTRODUCTION

Marijuana consumption is closely tied to cultural factors, and in turn, its use has been conditioned to the particularities of the respective Cosmo visions, which would determine the meaning assigned to it. These meanings define and delimit what is considered a social problem in a given society or time¹. Science, in turn, speaks to us of the damages, and also of the possible benefits of smoking this substance. Among the benefits, the reduction of chronic pain without any particular cause, alleviation of spasms, improvement of motion in multiple sclerosis, and reduction of nausea by chemotherapy or AIDS²⁻⁴. However, none of these benefits has any bearing on smoking in teenagers. As for damages, there are studies indicating that smoking before age 17 causes greater neurobiological changes than beginning after age 17^{5,6}. The results of these damages can be seen in school performance and even in early dropout⁷. According to DSM-IV-R of the American Psychiatric Association⁸, low motivation syndrome is pathognomonic of marijuana smokers and is characterized by a loss of energy and listlessness with a major drop in customary activities, which is related to ability to project oneself and to efficiently organize time in pursuit of a particular aim, taking into account that current western society allows youth more time than in the past to plan one's life.

We must add that in the last thirty years a change has emerged in the use of marijuana, because even though in the 60s smoking was relatively common in young university students who saw themselves as rebels or *avant-garde*, high school students did not use it. However, marijuana has now broken that barrier and become part of daily life of many young persons (World Report on Drugs⁹; National Institute on Drug Abuse¹⁰ and Conace¹¹). The National Study of Drugs in School Population (SENDA, Chile, 2011)¹², concluded there was a 4.4 percentage point increase in the last two years of recreational marijuana smoking among school students from Grade 8 to 12, from 15.6% in 2009 to 19.1% in 2011. The same report says that the lack of risk perception among students in frequent marijuana consumption (once or twice a week) increased 10.2 percentage points, that is, it went from 37.8% to 48%. These results are totally consistent with the findings of recent research, like the study of marijuana and learning disorders carried out in 2007, in which the perception of risk of smoking this drug was very low^{11,13}.

Apart from the above, adolescence is a critical period for making plans for the future, especially in our days, when society demands certain skills of young people to prepare them for a *par excellence* individualist and competitive world¹⁴. At this time matters of great importance for the future are defined, and the youngster takes on with awareness and determination projects to give meaning to his life. This self projection is what takes us back to the

temporal dimension as an existential category of the human being and consequently, critical in the life of the subject. When we speak of the temporal dimension we refer to the time experience which has the man from the phenomenological philosophical point of view, that is, the moving of man in time, articulating by means of memory, the past and the future through the present¹⁵: Thus, the being that evolves in time, does it in a synthesis of the past with the present and the future, the latter having preeminence, according to the phenomenological philosophical tendency (Heidegger, Ortega and Ricoeur). Ortega (O. C., VII, p. 434)¹⁶ even states that we live from the future, which materializes in our plans; and that the future makes us glean from the past what we need to carry them out.

In this study we were interested in knowing what the time experience in young habitual marijuana smokers is like, given the abuse that there is in the consumption by teenagers and the stage that is both delicate and critical as it relates to future plans. Although for our purpose what psychology says apropos of this was reviewed, our analysis is based strongly on philosophy, especially in phenomenology, since this gives us a very complete and deep reflection of time experience in the human being, underlining the preeminence of the future within the circle of time (past-present-future). Our guiding principle was "anticipation", developed by a psychiatrist strongly influenced by phenomenological anthropology, Jean Sutter¹⁷ who, based on Heidegger's ideas, also visualizes the future as decisive and studies its central element in depth, the ability to anticipate oneself, in different psychopathological syndromes, especially depression.

Anticipation as a fundamental aspect of time is defined by Sutter as that movement by which the man experiences his whole being, going through the present and heading into the future, whether near or distant, but which is essentially his future. He states that when the subject anticipates, his whole life, intellectual, affective, conscious and unconscious, psychological and biographical, acts towards his future. In anticipation the man commits entirely, not by parts, "to anticipate is to take control over his future, investing in this movement all the instances of his being, since, let's just say it, anticipation is free from everything that seeks to divide the experience" (Sutter, 1983, p. 19)¹⁸. In turn, he describes what would happen to the human being if that fundamental capacity were altered, and one had a feeling that the future was not calling one, where every action seems difficult or pointless, which increases the feeling of emptiness and solitude. The person would thus be trapped in the immediacy of the present moment and without the possibility either of projecting or of foreseeing and anticipating future developments; this is what occurs in depressions and serious behavioural disorders¹⁸. Along the lines of these findings, the idea of the present study was to find out how this ability to project would be manifested in those young persons who

habitually consume marijuana.

Within its study of adolescence, psychology has approached the idea that as a result of the acquisition of formal thinking the subject incorporates the future dimension through the project¹⁹⁻²⁴, however we find the study as such of time experience in philosophy, especially in the phenomenological tendency.

It is worth noting that although we did not find qualitative studies that discuss the topic of time experience in habitual marijuana adolescent consumers, we did find studies about the experience of time in young persons from a phenomenological point of view applied to social sciences, that is, social phenomenology. Thus, we see that in recent years several studies have appeared, most of them English, on the reconceptualization or transformation of time experience in young persons, associated with economic instability, changes of the present values, individualization, prolonged youth and late modernity²⁵⁻³⁰. There is more or less agreement among the authors, that in young people who are socially disadvantaged, or are particularly marginalized from the labor market, there is a tendency to remain trapped in an "extended present", having little ability to thinking about the future let alone to plan for it.

Thus, it can be observed how the different outlooks, philosophical with phenomenological, social sciences and psychological, underline the time dimension as a very critical element of a human being. For that reason we drew inspiration from the ideas of phenomenological philosophers, such as Heidegger, Ricoeur and Ortega. The latter with his idea of time as a critical phenomenon of existence, a topic he wrote about extensively, agrees with Ricoeur's statements on the topic. For his part, it is Ricoeur who gives us a proposal of how to look for a time experience in narration.

...everything which is recounted happens in time, takes roots in it, develops temporally; and what develops in time can be narrated. There even exists the possibility that every temporal process is only recognized as such in the measure that it can be narrated in one way or another" (Ricoeur 2000, p. 190)³¹.

For that reason we think that the right method of learning about the time experience of those habitual high school student marijuana smokers is narrative, developed and conceptualized from philosophy by Ricoeur, and from psychology by Jerome Bruner. Narrative is the medium through which the experience is integrated and the subject explains how he remains himself or changes in time^{32,33}. In turn, Bruner, based on a constructivist paradigm and inspired by Ricoeur, states that the temporal integration carried out by the subject can be manifested in the narrative construction of his biography, thus enabling us to study the experience of time³⁴. Thus, based on the narrative construction done by the young persons, an exploration of how the experience of

time was shown of the life project, specifically their ability to anticipate themselves.

Thus the narratives were analyzed with the hermeneutical phenomenological method developed by Lindseth and Norberg³⁵, which has been widely used in recent years³⁶. This method is based on the ideas of Ricoeur about the possibility of knowing the private experience of persons based on the interpretation of meaning of this through narrative.

METHODOLOGY

From the point of view of our study, what we are interested in finding out from the narratives of young persons is what, from their perceptions, feelings and actions, tells us of their capacity to anticipate themselves in the realization of their projects, which finally speaks to us of their way of experiencing time. Therefore, regarding the type of research, and to pursue the project objectives, we decided in favour of a qualitative type of methodology, which enabled us to go deeper into the experience of such a time dimension, describing and analysing the facts related with past experiences, their present and the projection of the future.

Sample: non probabilistic sample of intentional type was used³⁷; a total of fifteen persons were established, and the number was subject to variation in accordance to the level of saturation which was being obtained at the same time as the biographies were analyzed. These 15 subjects should be adolescent school students, men and women coming from different social contexts. The number fifteen was established as it was considered that in qualitative methodology it is enough to fulfil the criterion of sample saturation³⁸. In turn, the selected young persons should fulfil the following characteristics: 1. To be habitual consumers of marijuana and not of any other drug; 2. To be at least 16 and at most 19 years old, in other words late teenagers, which is a period characterized by search for reaffirmation of plans and active search to fit in to accomplish objectives^{22,23,39,40}; 3. To come from different types of educational establishments: public, subsidized private and private, so as to view peculiarities of each young person's social group. 4. They may not have development disorders, psychological problems like depression, attention deficit disorder or hyperactivity.

The students were selected based on what they answered in the anonymous questionnaire about smoking habits of young adolescents, created by CONACE⁴¹.

Data analysis: it was decided to select the method of Linseth and Norberg for the study of autobiographical narratives, since such proposal of analysis has the particularity of being based on the hermeneutical phenomenological philosophical tendency, as our key

concepts about time are too. That is, in general we have a basic concept of work and we search for a methodological process which enables us to report the concept.

In this case Ricoeur gives us the concept and the method, since his outlook on time is inspired by the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, and in turn the hermeneutic-phenomenological method of analysis developed by Linseth and Norberg for knowing the experiences through narratives, is based on Ricoeur. Linseth and Norberg focused especially on hermeneutical tradition, that is to say, on the interpretation of texts, since the essential objective of the method is to inquire more methodically in the implicit, for which they propose three stages, together constituting a dialectic movement between the whole and the parts of the text.

1. *Ingenuous Reading*, which consists of repeatedly reading the text with an open mind to be able to understand the meaning as a whole. This reading tells us the direction that *structural analysis* will take, the second stage, and it is the first approach to the meaning, which will be validated or invalidated by the subsequent structural analysis. This idea of making an ingenuous reading is taken by Linseth from Ricoeur⁴², who says that in this stage the researcher moves from a natural focus toward a pre theoretical phenomenological focus, what allows him to reflect on the meaning. We must add that the initial knee-jerk interpretation of the text is worded in phenomenological language.
2. *Structural Analysis*, which is the methodical part of the study. Here the researcher divides the text into *units of meaning*, trying to see the text as objectively as possible. One unit of meaning is a part of the text, of any length, which conveys one only meaning or aspect from which it is possible to study the experience. It is a way of searching and identifying and formulating themes. In turn, a theme is a thread of meaning which penetrates the parts of the text, be it in all or only in some. It is considered as something which carries an essential meaning of the lived experience. To grasp this meaning of the lived experience the themes are not formulated as abstract concepts, but as concise descriptions, in everyday English and in a way that reveals to us the meaning. There are different ways to carry out the thematic analysis, it is possible for example to ask of the text and to put together excerpts which answer these questions, or to read the whole text and to divide it into units of meaning. The latter method is what we did in this research. In each one of these units of meaning the temporal variables, past, present and future were analysed. For example, the text was divided into each one of these themes and one saw how much was related to past, how much to present and how much to future. Each one of these units of meaning was condensed in a verb, in a subordinate theme, which consisted in putting

in "being" the condensed idea, and finally in a theme, which was the meaning that such experience had for the subject. The themes which were selected to analyze the temporal dimension in each biography were: *family, relationship with peers, self image, interests, objectives and projects*. In each one of these areas its past-present-future dimension was observed (see table 1).

3. *Broad Understanding* is where a critical reading is carried out leading to the development of overall understanding. For this purpose, a prior understanding is first needed, which is the assumption with which one initiated the ingenuous reading. After this ingenuous reading come the themes and sub themes which were extracted from the structural analysis, to finally contrast these themes and sub themes with a pertinent bibliography.

Basically the author carries out first an individual interpretation of the text, and then he discusses that interpretation of the texts and the other readings performed, until he reaches an agreement about which interpretation is most believable or accurate.

We see how these three parts include a stage of understanding, explanation and interpretation, which goes from what the text says to what it really means, that is, it goes from the literal and evident content to the meaning it contains, the implicit. The essential meaning is something that human beings know through the practices of life, and this knowledge is expressed in our way of living, in the actions, in narratives and in reflection. For the authors, the research of the lived experience must be written in texts, which in turn need to be interpreted³⁴.

Results: carrying out an analysis of eleven of the fifteen cases we proposed to study, we think that it is already possible to see the sample being saturated, since the data began to repeat itself.

Following the methodology of Linseth and Norberg, which consists of three stages, we observe the following: in the first phase, *ingenuous reading*, in which every biography was read several times, allowing us to form our first impressions, which led to the thematic analysis; it was seen that the biographies were almost all rather brief; except in one case, all the rest tended to poor descriptions of *past situations*. In all of them what was noteworthy was the presence of experiences associated with losses (death of close relative), solitude, and particularly, a feeling of not being recognized by the paternal figure. As regards the *temporal dimension of the present*, we see that it is where they most manage to speak at length. The descriptions are richer in details, above all those related to present friendships, which give the impression of being a refuge, a hiding place. In general they describe their tastes, how they see themselves, the persons who they most or least trust, and how they

Table 1

MAIN TOPICS (meaning unit)	CONDENSATION (capture the idea with a verb)	SUB-THEME (subordinate topic)	THEME (meaning of experience)
1) relation with the family; 2) relation with his self image; 3) relation with his peers ; 4) relation with his interests ; 5) relation with his objectives and projects			
GOALS AND PLANS			
PAST	PAST	PAST	PAST
Case 2 ♀ (meaning unit) - <i>I liked football and wanted to be a personal trainer physical education teacher or any of those things but I changed my mind (p.9)</i>	Having changed his mind about his plans	Be changing his mind about his plans	Changes in his ideas about what to do
PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT	PRESENT
Case 2 ♀ (u.s) - <i>I changed my mind; now I like and want to be professional stylist</i>	Now has desire to be a stylist	Be a stylist	Change of interests
FUTURE	FUTURE	FUTURE	FUTURE
Case 2 ♀ (u.s) - <i>after I finish school I'll get into a university or institute</i>	start studying later on	Later on I'll be a student	Not knowing where he will study later on, vague about his plans and studies

believe others see them. Regarding interests, they show a lack of clarity and frequent changes. As for the *future dimension*, we see absence of reference in almost all the analysed areas (family, self image, interests, peers relationships, and objectives or projects). It seemed that the future did not depend on what they did in the present, as if the actions were not bound, that is to say, as if the future were not bound to the past. It was as if they did not see the clear bond existing, in the sense that the possibilities which are open or closed to me in the future depend on what is done in the present.

In the second phase of *structural analysis*, in which the biographies were methodically analysed, dividing them into units of meaning, that is, parts of the text the most independently possible, but which were long enough as to contain an essential meaning, the impression obtained in the *ingenuous reading* was confirmed. That is, in the *past dimension* analysed with respect to themes of family, peers, self image, interests, objectives and projects, all six cases confirmed the tendency to avoid referring to oneself much, certainly mentioning very plainly that in their past there were events of which they had no interest in talking about or remembering, what could be understood as an attempt to erase that past and focus on the present. And in four of the six reviewed cases it was confirmed that the paternal figures

were visualized as unreliable and unsupportive in important moments.

As regards the future dimension, the inability to visualize the future was surprising, especially in the areas related to family, peers, self image and interests. Regarding future objectives and projects, the six cases seen proved to be disperse and changing with respect to this subject. The most notorious thing about the perception of future was the tendency to avoid facing it, and rather to postpone it, as "not wanting to count their chickens before they're hatched", leave everything for later. As in the impression we had in the *ingenuous reading*, when methodically analysing the biographies there appears clearly and repeatedly a certain inability to see the link existing between my past, present and future, in the sense that future actions depend on what I carry out in my present.

... I liked football and wanted to be a personal trainer physical education teacher or any of those things but I changed my mind; now I like and want to be professional stylist applier of cosmetics to make manicure pedicure depilation to inject things into the face and all those things. Well I have done nothing to achieve it but later after I finish school I am going to enter a university or institute (case 2, woman, public school).

In the third phase of analysis, that is to say, *broad understanding*, the experience of time we had in the *ingenuous reading* and in the *structural analysis* was analysed, and it was related to the phenomenological conception of time, specifically with Sutter concept of anticipation. That is, we carried out a critical reading leading to the formulation of an overall understanding, the pre concepts with which we got to the ingenuous reading now being clear, so as to be able to contrast themes of structural analysis with themes of the pertinent bibliography. Finally, this enabled us to look at the text as a whole.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

If we go back to Aeneid (Book 2, chapter *The Flight*, by Virgil, 1992)⁴³, with the archetypal image of Aeneas who, when Troy is burnt takes his father Anchises on his shoulders -*et sublato patre mortem petivi*- which symbolizes putting history on his shoulders and walk toward the hill in search of the future, we see that the idea of the human being constituted from time and history does not just appear out of nowhere with Heidegger, although it is he who develops it in detail and gives it a form. Thus, the theme related to the temporal dimensions, in which the past (memory) are the pillars over which the future (project, promise) is sustained, which is reflected in the present praxis and in the ability to anticipate oneself, is a phenomenon of the experience itself of the human being which can certainly be analysed through the hermeneutic-phenomenological method devised by Linseth and Norberg. The fact that we are interested in seeing this phenomenon in young marijuana smokers is due to there being ignorance about just how important this time dimension is, above all in a period in which one is destined to the task of facing the future alone.

This way, from a global and holistic approach it is observed that the method employed allows us to fulfil the purpose of knowing about what the experience of time is like in these young persons, more focused on the here and now, without a more explicit connection between the past, desires for the future and the present praxis. There appears a clear coherence between the concepts about time with which we arrived at the ingenuous reading and what was found starting from the analysis carried out. It is surprising to observe in the analysis what was stated by Sutter and Ortega with respect to the concept of future and anticipation, since this possibility, which ought to be critical in achieving the proposed objectives, is what seems to be reduced. We should keep in mind that such authors point out that it is impossible not to have plans (they do), however, the way they anticipate their behaviour in pursuit of an objective is what is disrupted. We think this inability to anticipate stops them from getting through the present, remaining imprisoned in themselves, which is seen in tasks they don't

take on, decisions not yet taken with respect to what to study, whether to prepare themselves or not, etc.

As regards the matter of marijuana, although there is no discussion on the part of the scientific community with respect to the damages and benefits of its use, there is certainly confusion at the general population level, and a contradictory discourse between the socially internalized and the message transmitted by the political authorities or the scientific academic world. Marijuana is a complex and multifaceted issue, but the reading done by the population about it is simplified and dichotomic: good or bad, legal or illegal marijuana. The context is not considered, the age of initiation, in whom, how much, when. The classic example is the person with liberal values who had occasional experience with marijuana during his university time, and who constructs a favourable image of its use based on his own experience, and therefore adopts a permissive attitude with respect to its consumption in his teenage children. This inconsistency between the two outlooks leads to the fact that the young adolescent gives it the following meaning: "marijuana is not harmful, it is cool, natural, and our powerful role models are the ones who try to prohibit it, this is authoritarian". This contradiction is very real and it is clearly reflected in the arguments used by young people: why is the cigarette allowed, when it kills?, why is marijuana illegal? Finally, its prohibition is seen as pointless.

From a phenomenological intuition we had when we treated in therapy young abusers of marijuana, and considering what science tells us, that such substance affects the hippocampus with the memory and the prefrontal lobule responsible for planning, it stirs in us the question of what actually occurs with the elements that make up time, that is, the dimensions of past, future and present. This way we found, in the light of the analysis carried out with Linseth and Norberg's method, that the preliminary results show that in such young person's there would be no real connection between past and the future projections and possibilities. The past, which carries the subject towards his future and which determines the course of his actions, appears impoverished. Thus, we see unrealizable projects, empty possibilities, reasons why they easily change their minds, what tells us that they do not consider their "factuality" at the time of projecting themselves. It could be said that they are living in an inauthentic future, dealing irresponsibly with it, in which though they have objectives, they do not show commitment to their plans, they show a projection of unattainable and fantastical plans (being famous...). That is, the past and the future do not appear to be linked (of what I have been and what I will be), which does not allow there to exist a "from where" to project my future.

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