

## **SOC 3290 Deviance**

### **Overheads Lecture 25: Drug Use I: Effects & Social Dimensions:**

\* Today we begin looking at drug use. We will consider:

- legal & illegal drugs & addiction
- the effects of various drugs
- the connection between drugs, AIDS & crime
- the extent of illegal drug use

#### **Drug use in perspective:**

\* Legal drugs are more prevalent & more harmful than illegal ones (e.g. alcohol & tobacco)

\* Prohibition of a drug does not necessarily show dangerousness, but mindset of the time & place

\* Common assumption that all who try illegal drugs will become addicted or compulsive users: most in fact do not

#### **Illegal Drugs: Their effects & users:**

\* Most drugs can be divided into 3 categories:

- (1) Stimulants (e.g. cocaine, crack, caffeine & nicotine)
- (2) Depressants (e.g. heroin, PCP, morphine, alcohol & aspirin)
- (3) Hallucinogens (e.g. LSD & ecstasy)

\* Aside from the drug itself, factors impacting its effects involve dosage, purity, mixing, mode of ingestion, & tolerance

- \* Marijuana:
  - most widely used illegal drug
  - in ancient times considered sacred/useful
  - demonized in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite evidence inhibits violence
  - some researchers claim health hazards / others deny
  - psychological dependence possible
  - impairment can impair judgement, short -term memory & motor skills
  - may be used for medical purposes (e.g. increasing appetite, controlling nausea)
  - not necessarily a “gateway” to harder drugs
  
- \* Heroin:
  - first produced in 1898 (a derivative of morphine/opium)
  - a powerful painkiller
  - ingested in various ways (e.g. smoking, mainlining)
  - new users learn to achieve sense of pleasure, despite initially unpleasant effects
  - extremely physically addictive/ terrible withdrawal
  - most addicts don't simply avoid withdrawal or seek euphoria, but use heroin to seek feelings of normalcy
  - surprisingly, most users don't become addicts
  - even addicts don't necessarily suffer severe health problems from continued use (street addicts health problems come from poverty, stresses & strain associated with the life)
  
- \* Cocaine:
  - before outlawed, commonly used as a local anesthetic, a stimulant to offset fatigue/depression, & for curing morphine addiction & stomach disorders
  - an early ingredient in Coca Cola & some wines
  - banned at turn of the century / became associated with stigmatized minorities using it for pleasure

- became a status drug in the 1970's, but again associated with the poor/minorities after crack introduced in 1980's
  - effect intensely stimulating, but very physically addictive (crack even more so)
  - can be very dangerous in large doses or used frequently for a long time
- \* Other drugs:
- speed making a comeback in Western US & Canada (cheap, easily manufactured, intense, & addictive)
  - rohypnol: “the date rape drug”
  - ecstasy: a synthetic hallucinogen causing brain damage

### **Social Dimensions of Drug Use**

- \* Drug use not an individual, but a social behavior
- \* Use of illegal drugs quite common (1 in 4 Canadians, especially young adults & teenagers).
- \* However, serious addictions & drug associated social problems largely confined to lower classes/ minorities
- \* Levels of drug use relatively constant in Canada: mostly involve cannabis

### **Moral Panic: Societal Reaction to Drug Use**

- \* Moral panics & inflammatory rhetoric often used in relation to drugs
- \* This is despite fact that most users use drugs responsibly, occasionally

or moderately

\* We shouldn't buy into hysteria, but educate kids with valid information about responsible use (such has been done re: drinking)

### **Drugs & AIDS:**

\* IV drug use can spread HIV & AIDS (e.g. sharing needles)

\* This relationship particularly strong in the US when compared to other countries (like Canada)

\* Slowing transmission of AIDS among gays not showing up among IV drug users (e.g. addict lifestyle all about taking risks / social distance between many gays & economically destitute addicts)

### **Drugs & Crime:**

\* Research shows a strong link between illegal drug use & crime.

\* Two theories:

(1) Drug enslavement theory: drug users forced into crime to pay for their expensive fix (more applicable to "deficit" vs. "leisure" users)

(2) General deviance syndrome: most users commit crimes before using drugs. Drug use part of broader tendency toward deviance, but may later intensify criminal tendencies/behaviors

## **Conclusion:**

\* Today we have reviewed:

- legal & illegal drugs & addiction
- the effects of various drugs
- the connection between drugs, AIDS & crime
- the extent of illegal drug use

\* Next class:

- characteristics of drug users
- becoming a drug user
- the so-called “war on drugs”
- theories of drug use