**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 20th 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