

Sociology

Health & Medicine, Alcoholism



In 2005, 19.7 million Americans over the age of 12 reported they were current illicit drug users. Nearly 18 million Americans are alcoholics. Globally, more than 76 million individuals have diagnosable drinking problems and about 15 million people have drug use disorders. Drug and alcohol abuse affects not only the user, but also his or her family and friends, workplace, school, neighbors and community. In chapter 12 of "Social Problems, Community, Policy and Social Actions," by Anna —Leon Guerrero, the topic of drug and alcohol abuse is discussed. Both biological and psychological theorists attempt to explain why drug abuse is blamed on the individual. They both assume that there really is no escape from it because it's inherited or genetically encoded in the user's DNA. Functionalists argue that society provides us with norms and guidelines on alcohol and drug use. For example, behavior that is violent is identified with alcohol consumption in different parts of the world, while drinking behavior is described as "peaceful and harmonious" in the Mediterranean and South African countries. Also they feel that a set of social norms identifies the appropriate use of drug and alcohol. Prescription drugs, prescribed by a doctor, are acceptable behavior; they reduce pain, fever and cure infections. While alcohol in moderation is routinely consumed with meals, for celebration, or health benefits. It is said that a single glass of red wine a day can reduce the risk for heart disease. Emile Durkheim's theory of anomie is used to explain drug abuse. Durkheim believed that under conditions of rapid cultural change, there would be an absence of common social norms and controls, which is a state he called "anomie". If people lack norms to control their behavior, they are likely to pursue self-destructive behavior such as alcohol abuse. For example, when

people are moving to a new neighborhood, experiencing divorce, or starting a new job or school year, they may experience anxiety or high levels of stress, which can lead to " deviant behavior, " including drug and alcohol abuse. Conflict theorist argue that intentional decisions have been made over which drugs are illegal and which one are not. Powerful political and business interest groups are able to manipulate our images of drugs and their users. Drugs such as heroin, opium, and marijuana (weed) were considered legal in the 18th and early 19th centuries but public opinion and laws changed when their use was linked to ethnic minorities and crime. For example, opium consumption was associated with the Chinese immigrants working on the railroad systems, and once the systems were completed, they became the subject of intense anti-drug efforts. All the while the anti-drugs efforts were going on, the oral consumption of opium by Whites, were not considered problematic. Interactionist theorist, argue that deviance behavior is learned from others. Edwin Sutherland purposed the theory of " differential association. It explained how we learn specific behaviors and norms from the group we have contact with. For example, nobody becomes a user without learning how to smoke to produce beneficial results, learning to recognize the effects and connect them with drug use and learning to enjoy the sensation he or she perceives. Drug abuse is described as the use of any drug or medication for a reason of other than the one it was intended to serve or in a manner or in quantities other than directed, which can lead to clinically significant impairment or distress. Drug addiction is the physical and psychological dependence on the drug or medication. All drugs can be used for addiction. The 5 main ones are alcohol, nicotine (tobacco),

marijuana (weed), methamphetamine, and cocaine (crack). Alcohol problems can be both a cause and an excuse for intimate partner violence and child abuse. Alcohol is more suspected in a crime than any other drug. Binge drinking among college students is considered a major health problem. Thousands of students each year are injured or die from alcohol- related driving or injuries.