

A sociological perspective on the drug war



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Kelli Piperata

Introduction

The War on Drugs has been going on for many years. Drugs were never the target of this war, but racism was. Today, in the modern era of the drug war, it is not just a war on race, but also a war on the lower-social class societies. This essay will briefly give examples of the history in which some of the first laws against drugs were enacted and show the conflicting racial and social class issues that are raised as well as a sociological functional perspective.

Class Conflict and Racial Conflict

The modern era of the War on Drugs seems to target not only minorities, but also white lower-class citizens as well. The gap between the rich and poor is not getting smaller, but rather becoming larger. Many lower-class individuals want to gain upward mobility within society, but have limited resources to accomplish these means. These individuals may suffer from what sociologists call relative deprivation, the social or economic inequality for individuals that cannot achieve legitimate ways of success. These individuals seek out a means to achieve this social mobility by selling drugs, or cultivating drugs to make financial gain. Others may be a product of their environment and may be shaped in a certain fashion that leads them to crime. These lower-class societies are oppressed by capitalism. Most individuals seek out a better life and have the American Dream, but that dream is only a reality for very few within poorer communities.

From a historical view, looking at the War on Drugs, it has always been a racial divide. The War on Drugs has almost always been a war on race, not drugs. From the beginning of written drug laws that have been enforced, they have always targeted a race. For example, first the target was towards the Chinese immigrants in California with the opium ban in San Francisco in 1875. Moreover, after that the Hispanics from Mexico were targeted and blamed, hence came the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937. When the opium ban was enacted, white middle-class and upper-class men felt that white women belonging in these classes were being seduced by the opium dens. However, these opium dens were used by a small percentage of Oriental immigrants and white women of the upper-class did not frequent these establishments. White men created an outrage in the public eye and the first anti-opium legislation was passed. The opium legislation that was passed in 1937 can be directly attributed to racism, white conservative men were scared and felt threatened by the Chinese cultures and ways so they moved to alienate them as well as have them moved out of the United States territories.

Racism is still a key contributor to the War on Drugs, individuals such as Donald Trump made racism the backbone of his campaign. Trump focused on Mexico, claiming that they are rapists and drug dealers, calling them “bad hombres”. Additionally, the political platform was used to divide the United States and create a myth that minority immigrants, mostly consist of drug dealers and law breaking offenders. Statistical data shows differently, according to Philip Bump from the Washington Post:

[D]ata from the census and a wide range of other empirical studies show that for every ethnic group without exception, incarceration rates among

<https://assignbuster.com/a-sociological-perspective-on-the-drug-war/>

young men are lowest for immigrants, even those who are the least educated. This holds true especially for the Mexicans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans, who make up the bulk of the undocumented population. (Ruben Rumbaut, University of California, 2008. Published by the Police Foundation.)

Donald Trump's campaign directly targeted, discriminated, alienated, and generalized a whole group of individuals.

A Functional Perspective

The question needs to be asked, why does the United States continue the War on Drugs? Drugs contribute to the economy in numerous ways.

Prisoners within the correction departments help the private institutions with financial gain by producing products for around twenty-five cents an hour.

These prisoners are capitalist slaves; they do rigorous work at minimum costs for companies that make immense profits off of these products. In addition, another contributing factor of the drug war is the jobs it creates: police officers, judges, correctional officers, drug testing companies, etc.

Robert Merton's theory of structural function is seen within these institutions, the institutions serve a purpose of keeping offenders out of the public and in return the offenders do labor for business and are paid a subsistent wage.

The institutional workers (the quasi group) all fulfill their roles in society by performing the tasks and maintenance required within these institutions. The main purpose for the continuance of the drug war is the economic gain within society.

Conclusion

<https://assignbuster.com/a-sociological-perspective-on-the-drug-war/>

The War on Drugs has been going on for years, it may have started out racially directed but in the modern era it has shifted to target both racial minorities and the lower-class in society. This war has created social class conflict as well as racial conflict and these conflicts will continue well into the future, unless institutions are stopped from making a financial gain.

References

Bump, Philip. " Surprise! Donald Trump is Wrong about Immigrants and Crime." 2 July 2015. *The Washington Post*. Print. 2 February 2017.

George Ritzer, Jeffery Stepnisky. " Classical Theories, Emile Durkheim: From Mechanical to Organic Solidarity." George Ritzer, Jeffery Stepnisky. *Contemporary Sociological Theory and Its Classical Roots* . New York, Ny: McGraw-Hill, 2013. 15-19. Print.

George Ritzer, Jeffery Stepnisky. " Classical Theories: Karl Marx, From Capitalism to Communism." George Ritzer, Jeffery Stepnisky. *Contemporary Sociological Theories and Its Classical Roots* . New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2013. 21-30. Print.

George Ritzer, Jeffery Stepnisky. " Contemporary Grand Theories, Structural Functionalism." George Ritzer, Jeffery Stepnisky. *Contemporary Sociological Theories and Its Classical Roots* . New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2013. 72-88. Print.

Goode, Erich. " A History of Drug Control." Goode, Erich. *Drugs In American Society* . New York, Ny: McGraw-Hill, 2015. 40-47. Print.