

Legalization



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The paper "The Failure of the Drug War" is a breathtaking example of a term paper on social science. America's war against recreational drugs is an example of good intentions gone terribly wrong. While this country squanders over billions of dollars annually on the efforts to stop illegal drugs, trafficking and use continue. It has been said that trying to stop drugs is like trying to stop the rain, still, the 'war' continues and was a prominent issue.

The results of the King/Mauer study indicated that at least half of the drug-related arrests taking place in the United States, at least half of them are made for marijuana possession by predominantly low-level users whose cases rarely result in a felony conviction. Clearly, the threat of imprisonment is not sufficient to keep citizens from partaking in the drug, nor is it effective in ensuring the drug is not available on the street. This complete lack of any kind of tolerance for the casual marijuana user and its effects on funding, relations with the populace and inability to accomplish its objective in the United States can be contrasted with the more relaxed legal structure adopted in other countries such as England and Holland. While marijuana remains illegal in the UK, it is no longer mandatory that casual users of the drug must be arrested when caught. Instead, an arrest can be detained until exacerbating circumstances arise, such as the use of the drug in the presence of minors. This move was made, according to Home Secretary David Blunkett, "to free up police resources to fight hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine." (King/Mauer, 2005)

As in alcohol laws, the line is drawn between adult and youth use. No one can deny that using illegal drugs can cause adverse effects to the user of

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any age but the effects to the teenager are especially damaging. Teenagers are in a much more vulnerable situation than are adults as they are still developing in every aspect of life. Drug use increases the chance that students will become pregnant, contract a communicable disease, perform poorly in school and attempt suicide. Unfortunately, it remains this group that has the most access to drugs as schools have become prolific drug outlets.

The hypocrisy of the drug war is apparent. All illegal drugs combined account for about 4,500 deaths in this country per year while tobacco is responsible for the deaths of 400,000 people annually and alcohol ends 80,000 people's lives every year. (Fu, 2006) Legislators will not ban smoking because they indicate regulation regarding what adults do in privacy including what they can put into their bodies is clearly unconstitutional and an infringement on personal liberties. Everyone can differentiate the distinction between a person that takes in an occasional alcoholic beverage and one who commits crimes while drunk. Why can't this simplistic reasoning be applied to drug users? Our code of law is founded upon a principle of presumptive rationality. Rational adults should be allowed to make personal choices as long as those actions cause no harm to others. The U. S. government is unequivocally unjustified in choosing this particular personal freedom to ignore at such colossal cost to society (Fu, 2006).

The costs of prohibition go far beyond the mere funding of legal authorities and transportation for search and seizures. Economists who are actively involved in the drug policy in some way found three key issues upon which a <https://assignbuster.com/legalization/>

very general consensus could be found. “ First, most economists found the current policy to be somewhat ineffective, very ineffective, or harmful. Second, most economists agree that the current policy should be changed. Third, most economists agree that the policy should be changed in the general direction of liberalization. Disagreement is generally based on the direction and degree of liberalization.” (Thornton, 2002) Other costs include additional ‘ drug-related’ crime that is the result of users attempting to gain enough money to fulfill their demand in response to artificially high prices thanks to the lack of supply. “ Public health problems like HIV and Hepatitis C are all exacerbated by zero-tolerance laws that restrict access to clean needles.” (Drug Policy Alliance, 2006).

People who are at most casual users of drugs are arrested and incarcerated for mere possession charges, actions that do not take more drugs off the streets or encourage more people to stop using the drugs. At the same time, arresting possessors of drugs creates an encumbrance on society as tax dollars go to support these people no longer free to hold a job outside prison walls and bringing more children into the welfare system, contributing to their subsequent failure and dependence on society. Initial conceptions of the drug-crime relationship were drawn from studies of criminality that involved alcoholics and those addicted to narcotics. These studies substantiated the perception that violent crimes are associated more so with alcohol use, whereas another drug use is associated with crimes involving property in order to secure money for drugs. Many studies that include drug-related crime do not give weight to the fact that “ a substantial proportion of inmates convicted of property crimes were under the influence of alcohol (in <https://assignbuster.com/legalization/>

addition to another drug) at the time of the offense.” (White/Gorman, 2000)

These and other issues demonstrate the lack of complete and uniform definitions regarding drug-related crime.

The statistics regarding the numbers of individuals currently using drugs at least as a recreational activity remain stable even as drug busts and numbers of people incarcerated for drug possession continue to rise, indicating greater quantities of drugs being smuggled into the country and greater degrees of organization within the crime syndicates that accomplish this. Rather than dissolving the demand for these substances, the attempted block on supplies not only fails to adequately block trafficking, but it leads to greater degrees of violence and corruption by ensuring this industry remains in the hands of criminals.