

The historical use of drugs medically and recreationally



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Drugs have been around for thousands of years. “ A drug is any chemical that produces a therapeutic or non-therapeutic effect in the body (Drugs and Teen Substance Abuse 2000.)” Most drugs were first used for medicinal purposes, such as marijuana. Active substances were not extracted into drugs until the 19th century. Newly discovered substances like morphine, laudanum, and cocaine were completely unregulated and prescribed freely by physicians for a wide variety of ailments. Wounded veterans returned home with their kits of morphine and hypodermic needles (History of Drug Abuse, n. d.) The use of illegal drugs is increasing, especially among young teens. The conflict theory of social problems states that, “ society is marked by conflict due to inequalities in class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and other divisions that produce conflicting ideas (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 7.)” Solutions to solve social problems include building stronger movements in conflicted groups and then possibly engaging in negotiations to reach accommodations. The functionalist approach to social problems, “ views society as a vast organism whose parts are interrelated (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 7.)” Functionalists believe that institutions produce patterns of deviance and they must be addressed through well-calculated social reformations. Solutions include engaging in research and interventions to improve these social institutions. There are many ideas between the conflict and functionalist perspectives on how to remedy the wide-spread social problem of drug abuse.

Substance abuse can simply be defined as, “ a pattern of harmful use of any substances for mood-altering purposes (What Is Substance Abuse, n. d.)” As culture and customs change, so do the major categories of illegal drugs. The

most commonly abused drugs today, in addition to alcohol, are marijuana, cocaine, opiates (including heroin and morphine), hallucinogens, amphetamines, and barbiturates. Some young people are again experimenting with psychedelic drugs like LSD and Ecstasy (Kornblum and Julian, 2004.) Teens use drugs for many reasons including curiosity, because it feels good, to reduce stress, to feel grown up or to fit in with their peers (Drugs and Teen Substance Abuse 2000.)

Many people view drug abuse and addiction as strictly a social problem. Drug abuse affects society in many ways. In the workplace it is costly in terms of lost work time and inefficiency. More than half the deaths in the United States involve alcohol, in some form, such as in homicides and suicides. Drug-related crimes can disrupt the neighborhoods due to violence among drug dealers, threats to residents, and the crimes of the addicts themselves. Also, a great majority of homeless people have either a drug or alcohol problem (NIDA InfoFacts: Understanding Drug Abuse and Addiction, 2005.)

Humans have used drugs of one sort or another for thousands of years. For the past last decades, crime and drugs have been called by some, the most important problems facing this country. The full economic cost of drug abuse in the United States is estimated at approximately \$70 billion annually. In so, America is actually losing money because of the use of drugs. Due to years of studies, it is proven that drug abuse costs the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (known as OECD) countries more than \$120 billion per year in drug enforcement, prosecutions, prisons, prevention programmers, treatment and health care costs, and financial losses incurred <https://assignbuster.com/the-historical-use-of-drugs-medically-and-recreationally/>

from drug-related crimes. This is very bad for the community as a whole because it also affects many people. In a present study, it was hypothesized that the likelihood of recent hard drug use would be higher among arrest. They have a slight disadvantage because of low income, widespread poverty, high employment rate, limited high school graduation, numerous female-headed household, high population density, and large African-American population.

The sociological Conflict Theory holds that there are higher numbers of chronic drug abusers found in lower social classes, disorganized neighborhoods, and relatively politically powerless places. The disappearance of decent paying manual work since the early 1970's leaves unskilled, uneducated individuals vulnerable to poverty. This is when selling drugs, an alternative to enduring grinding poverty, has been a common enough response as the income gap had widened. This has increased the violence and crime rate of society.

The Functionalist Perspective in sociology states that everyone in the society holds a position and in this position their status has a set of roles or certain behaviors that are required to perform the tasks at hand (Kornblum and Julian, 2004.) The roles consist of nurses at the medical institutions, lawyer's at international firms or just a blue collar worker at any type of factory. For the most part, each status' role is involved in an institution of some kind and is needed for the economy and society to function as a whole. " The Functionalist Perspective looks at the way major social institutions like the family, military, the health-care system, and the police and courts actually operate (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 6.)" This basically means that for these <https://assignbuster.com/the-historical-use-of-drugs-medically-and-recreationally/>

institutions that are needed to fulfill these roles and duties for the economy, the roles and behaviors of employees need to evolve as a whole so that the institution can function (Kornblum and Julian, 2004.) For example, a nurse needs to know certain things about her job like what medicine can treat a certain sickness or when and where CPR is needed for a victim or if moving that victim could paralyze that person. Sociologists say that, “ when all members of the group perform their roles correctly, the group is said to be functioning well (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 6.)” When society as a whole is said to be functioning as “ one” this means that “ there is general agreement about how roles are to be performed and the expectations are reinforced by the society’s basic values (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 6.)” The main question that is asked is, “ why do we have social problems if each institution has roles in the society? (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 6) ” Many say that the main reason that functionalists believe we as a society have social problems is because our society is always changing and the society is having to adapt to the changes and when the society fails than that is when social problems exist (Kornblum and Julian 2004.) When a society undergoes changes, for example going from pre-industrial where most of the economy was based on agricultural to the industrial era where many poverty stricken’ farmers became factory workers but of those workers do not adapt, it is said that such a change can lead to crime, such as drug abuse. The functionalist sociologist says that, “ all societies produce their own unique form of crime and how they respond to this change (Kornblum and Julian, 2004, 7.)”

In the past years we have been fighting a war against drugs. In the mid 1980’s, the United States adopted a series of aggressive law enforcement

strategies and criminal justice policies geared towards reducing and punishing drug abuse. Changes in the federal laws required that all sentenced federal offenders were to serve 87 percent of their court-imposed sentence. Many drug offenders are subjected to a mandatory sentence based upon the type and quantity of the drugs that were involved in their arrest. According to the Uniform Crime Report, 1, 532, 000 drugs arrests were made in 1999, up from 580, 900 in 1980. Some people think the increase in drug arrests is a good sign, but others think it denies drug users what they really need, which is treatment. No one seems to argue about the serious problem with drugs in the United States. According to a 2002 National Survey on drug use, 19. 5 million Americans ages 12 and older were current illicit drug users. 1 in every 13 adults is an alcoholic. The functionalist view is that society has norms and guidelines on alcohol and drug use. Social norms identify the appropriate use of drugs and alcohol. Prescription drugs are very functional in society because they can alleviate pain, reduce fever, and can curb infections. Even alcohol is accepted in moderation and can be consumed with meals and or celebrations. Sometimes there even health benefits, such as red wine being good for the heart. Society provides norms regarding the excessive use of drugs. Drug abuse can also occur when society is unable to provide guidelines for our behavior. Under certain situations that can be very stressful, people consume more alcohol and drugs. If people lack norms to control their behavior they are likely to pursue self-destructive behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse.

Drug abuse is one of the biggest issues in social problems. Many of the people who take drugs face a lot of problems. There are many similarities

and differences between the functionalist view and conflict view pertaining to drug abuse theory. From a functionalist perspective, drug abuse affects almost everyone in our society, directly or indirectly. Seventy million adult Americans have used illegal drugs at some time in their lives. The outcome from this shows that 450,000 Americans die from smoking each year. When some of the people abuse drugs, they get addicted to it and then they tend to abuse it more. Addiction is uncontrollable and lots of people face the terrible repercussions; for example, losing their job, family, friends, health and their wealth. Getting addicted to drugs gets worse because the data shows that, "97% of drug addicts never see treatment (NIDA InfoFacts: Understanding Drug Abuse and Addiction, 2005.)" Research has revealed how drug abuse causes both short-term and long-term changes in brain function. These long-term brain changes are visible to scientists who can see what is going on in the brain with new scanning techniques. These changes make it nearly impossible for someone addicted to drugs to stop using them on their own; they need to get treatment. On the conflict side, it shows that, "95 percent of untreated addicts die of their addiction (NIDA InfoFacts: Understanding Drug Abuse and Addiction, 2005.)" There is a separation of classes and some of the people in society think that making people quit using drugs is their own business; they don't have any concern for it. Some of the healthcare programs that have developed for the people who want to quit drugs show that, "for every dollar spent on addiction treatment, seven dollars are saved in costs to society in healthcare and criminal activity (NIDA InfoFacts: Understanding Drug Abuse and Addiction, 2005.)" Institutions have also been created to help people who want to quit. The National Institution of Drug Abuse (NIDA) stressed that researchers have shown that <https://assignbuster.com/the-historical-use-of-drugs-medically-and-recreationally/>

there are no effective treatments that can help people stop their addiction and prevent them from using it again. Basically, the conflict perspective views drug abuse as a problem of the classes, distinctly separated due to economic standing.

There are many roles that are played in the functionalist prospective, which has lead to some of the results on the conflict side of drug abuse. For example, the government plays a big role in why their country's population is in high or low percentage of using drug. Some countries like the United States strictly control the use of drugs by restricting access more and giving strict punishment, unlike Afghanistan, Columbia or some of the other countries. Most likely the government in these countries does not work hard on this issue because they are making profit off it or some of the big politicians are involved in it. In Afghanistan the government said that " no matter what we try to do to stop it, but it cannot be cured because drugs grow in almost 99% of the Afghanistan." Countries like these can only try to lower drug production and abuse to a certain point, but not as low as the United States has reduces the trafficking and use of drugs. Parents play the most important role of all. In some ways, they are responsible for why their child is on drugs, or they make it clear that drug use is unacceptable and harmful. For example, some of the parents do not care about their children and always have a negative response toward their children. This becomes stressful for the children and they start abusing drugs, thinking that it relives them but instead it makes the problems worse. They start abusing more drugs and end up in a very deep problem. On the other hand, some do not even bother to take the drugs because their parents make it clear to them

that drug use is never all right. In a recent study it shows that drug use is high among people who live in high degree of structural disadvantage, people who are less educated, low income, widespread poverty, high unemployment, high population density, low stability, and large African American population, which is why for some of the people using drugs is not a bad choice to them but it is almost like their medicine to remedy their social status.

Some of the people think that drinking alcohol is not taking a drug. It can be a drug if some is addicted to it. Data shows that, " fifty percent of the traffic deaths are alcohol related." Teenagers have the highest percentage of drinking age in the USA because teenagers tend to drink more than the people who are over the age of thirty. This is all because teenagers are more aggressive, more imitating, more macho, and have some parents or close friends who are willing to buy alcohol for them. Many teenagers believe that alcohol and drug use is safe and are unaware of the consequences to excessive use. The average 18 years old has seen 100, 000 television commercials encouraging them him or her to drink. According to the NIDA, that is why 90% of high school seniors have tried alcohol, 53% gets drunk at least once a month, 43% smoke marijuana, and about one third are smoking cigarettes. From the conflict perspective, a teenager who loses everything early in life or never had much to begin with, tends to drink or abuse more alcohol simply because they just think that it is helping them to forget everything. That leads to more problems and these children end up committing crimes and possibly could end up in jail. According to the conflict theory, people outside of this social class and situation are unwilling to help

integrate these individuals back into society. Some people don't realize that just because of their addiction, it can take them to the point where no one can help them. Today there are about 190 million drug users all around the world, all of whom need help battling their addiction. The way to help them, however, varies between the conflict and functionalist perspectives.

In conclusion, drug abuse presents a prevalent issue in today's society. The conflict theory of sociology states that society functions so that each individual participant and its group struggles to maximize their benefits, which inevitably contributes to social change (such as changes in politics and revolutions.) This theory attempts to refute the functionalist perspective of social problems, which considers that societies function so that each individual and group plays a specific role, like organs in the body. A conflict theorist would suggest solving the problem of drug abuse by accommodating the needs of people in the classes suffering from drug use and educating them on the effects of drugs. The functionalist theorist, on the other hand, would suggest becoming more actively involved by reforming institutions as a whole and helping to redefine the abusers' roles in society. Drug abuse is a very prevalent problem in the United States today and sociological theories provide for many different solutions.