

Chapter 7

Alcohol and Other Drugs

1. Drug Use in History

- Discuss the presence of drugs in ancient times.
- Summarize the use of drugs in the United States during the nineteenth century.
- Explain the racial basis for decisions to ban opium, cocaine, and marijuana in the United States.

Section Outline

- **Drug Use in U.S. History:** Drug use has been part of the American culture ever since the nation began. If past is prologue, it should come as no surprise that drugs remain part of the American culture today, and it should also come as no surprise that efforts to reduce or eliminate drug use often meet with much resistance and little success. As the United States continues to try to deal with drug use, these basic facts must not be forgotten.

Key Takeaways

- Drug use has been common since ancient times.
- Alcohol was widely drunk in colonial America. During the latter nineteenth century, opium, marijuana, and cocaine were legal drugs that were also widely used.
- Racial prejudice played an important role in decisions during the late nineteenth century and early nineteenth century to ban opium, marijuana, and cocaine.

For Your Review

1. Were you surprised to read that mind-altering drug use has been common since ancient times? Why or why not?
2. Were you surprised to read that racial prejudice helped lead to bans on opium, marijuana, and cocaine? Why or why not?

2. Drugs and Drug Use Today

- Summarize the different types of drugs.
- Explain the various harms caused by alcohol and tobacco.
- Understand the effects of marijuana, cocaine, and other illegal drugs.
 - A drug may be defined as any substance other than food that, when taken into the body, affects the structure and/or functioning of the body. Defined this way, many common substances contain drugs or are drugs

Section Outline

- **Types of Drugs:** Because some drugs are much more potent than other drugs, there is much variation within each category. Partly because many drugs have multiple effects, many different classifications of drugs exist. A common classification includes the following categories: depressants, hallucinogens, marijuana, narcotics, and stimulants.
- **Legal Drugs:** Alcohol and tobacco (nicotine) are two legal drugs that are very common and that together kill hundreds of thousands of Americans annually. According to national survey, most people 12 and older have tried alcohol, and over half the public drinks currently (defined as having had at least one drink in the past month). While many people have tried

tobacco, only slightly more than one-fourth of the public uses it currently (at least once during the past month).

- **Illegal Drugs:** Forty-seven percent of all Americans ages 12 and older have used an illegal drug at least once in their lifetimes. This percentage translates to almost 120 million people. In terms of lifetime use, the single most popular illegal drug is easily marijuana, but 30 percent of Americans, or 76 million people, have used an illegal drug other than marijuana. These percentages and the numbers of people associated with them all indicate that lifetime illegal drug use in the United States is widespread.

Key Takeaways

- The distinction between legal drugs and illegal drugs has no logical basis; legal drugs cause much more harm than illegal drugs.
- Alcohol and tobacco kill more than 500,000 Americans annually. Binge drinking on campuses results in accidents and assaults involving several hundred thousand-college students annually.
- Marijuana is by far the most commonly used illegal drug. The low prevalence of other illegal drugs still amounts to millions of people using these drugs annually.

For Your Review

1. Do you agree or disagree that the distinction between legal drugs and illegal drugs is not logical? Explain your answer.
2. Do you agree that binge drinking is a problem that campuses should address, or do you think that it's a relatively harmless

activity that lets students have some fun? Explain your answer.

Key Terms

- **Drug** -Any substance other than food that, when taken into the body, affects the structure and/or functioning of the body.
- **Depressants** - Drugs that slow down the activity of the central nervous system; depending on the specific drug, they help induce drowsiness and relaxation, and they can reduce anxiety and pain.
- **Hallucinogens** -Mind-altering drugs that cause delusions or hallucinations.
- **Narcotics** -Drugs derived from opium that slow down the central nervous system, relieve pain, and induce drowsiness, euphoria, and relaxation.
- **Stimulants** -Drugs that speed up the central nervous system and increase alertness and energy and possibly produce euphoria or anxiety.
- **Binge Drinking** -Five or more drinks on the same occasion—within two hours of each other—on at least one day in the past month.
- **Heavy Drinking** -Binge drinking on at least five days in the past month.

3. Social Patterning of Drug Use

- Outline the nature of gender differences in drug use.
- Understand whether racial and ethnic differences in drug use exist.
- Explain whether education and religiosity are related to drug use.

Section Outline

- **Gender:** men are more likely than women to use alcohol, tobacco, and

illegal drugs. In related data, men are also more than twice as likely as women to engage in binge drinking

- **Race and Ethnicity:** For alcohol use, whites have the highest rate of drinking, and Native Americans, despite the popular image that they have alcohol problems, have the lowest rate. For tobacco use, Native Americans have the highest rate of use, and Asians have the lowest rate. For illegal drugs, Native Americans again have the highest rate of use, and Hispanics have the lowest rate.
- **Education:** For alcohol, higher levels of education are associated with a higher likelihood of drinking. For tobacco, higher levels of education are associated with lower levels of tobacco use.
- **Region of Country:** The regional differences are not large, but the South has lowest rate of alcohol use. The South and Midwest have the highest rates of tobacco use, while the West has the lowest rate.
- **Religiosity:** The more religious people are, the lower their drug use; conversely, the less religious they are, the higher their drug use.

Key Takeaways

- **Drug use is socially patterned:** Aspects of our socio-demographic backgrounds affect our likelihood of using various drugs.
- Perhaps the clearest social pattern involves gender, with males more likely than females to use and abuse alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.
- Despite common beliefs, the rate of illegal drug use is lower for African

Americans than for whites.

For Your Review

1. The text discusses five social patterns of drug use: gender, race/ethnicity, education, region of country, and religiosity. Taking into account these five sets of patterns, write a short essay in which you use this information to understand your own level of use (or nonuse) of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs.
2. Did it surprise you to read that illegal drug use is lower among African Americans than among whites? Why or why not?

Key Term

- **Religiosity** -How religious someone is, in terms of how often the person attends religious service, prays, and reads scripture.

4. Explaining Drug Use

- Understand the possible biological origins of drug addiction.
- Explain why longitudinal research on personality traits and drug use is important.
- Outline the aspects of the social environment that may influence drug use.

Section Outline

- **Biological Explanations:** Biology focuses on two related major questions. First, how and why do drugs affect a person's behavior, mood, perception, and other qualities? Second, what biological factors explain why some people are more likely than others to use drugs?
- **Psychological Explanations:** Some popular psychological explanations

center on personality differences between drug users and nonusers. These explanations assume that users have personality traits that predispose them to drug use. These traits include low self-esteem and low self-confidence, low trust in others, and a need for thrills and stimulation. In effect, drug users have inadequate personalities, or personality defects, that make them prone to drug use, and once they start using drugs, their personality problems multiply.

- **Sociological Explanations:** Sociological explanations emphasize the importance of certain aspects of the social environment—social structure, social bonds to family and school, social interaction, and culture—or drug use, depending on the type of drug.

Key Takeaways

- Biological theories assume that some people are especially vulnerable to drug addiction for genetic reasons.
- A popular set of psychological theories assumes that drug addiction results from certain personality traits and problems.
- Sociological theories attribute drug use to various aspects of the social environment, including peer influences, weak social bonds, and the larger drug culture.

For Your Review

1. When you think about the reasons for drug use and addiction, do you think biological factors play the most important role, psychological factors, or the social environment? Explain your

answer.

2. Write a brief essay in which you discuss a time when your friends influenced you, or someone else you know, to use a legal or illegal drug.

5. Drug Policy and the War on Illegal Drugs

- Explain whether the DARE program is effective.
- Outline the goals and examples of a harm reduction approach to drug use.
- List the problems arising from the current legal war on illegal drugs.

Section Outline

- **Treatment:** Treatment programs are intended for people who already are using drugs, perceive they have a drug problem, and want to reduce or eliminate their drug use. Treatment programs often involve a group setting, but many drug users also receive individual treatment from a psychiatrist, psychologist, or drug counselor. Perhaps the most famous treatment program is Alcoholics Anonymous. Other group settings are residential settings, sometimes called *detox units*.
- **Prevention:** The major prevention strategies involve drug education or drug testing. Many education-based prevention programs focus on children and adolescents. This focus reflects the fact that use of most drugs begins during adolescence, and that if adolescents do not begin using drugs during this period of their lives, they are much less likely to do so when they become adults.
- **Harm Reduction:** This strategy attempts to minimize the harm caused by

drugs. It recognizes that many people will use drugs despite efforts to prevent or persuade them from doing so and despite any punishment they might receive for using illegal drugs. Our nation is currently using a harm reduction approach with regard to alcohol and tobacco. It recognizes that tens of millions of people use these products, and designated-driving programs and other efforts try to minimize the considerable harm these two drugs cause. A specific harm reduction strategy with regard to illegal drugs is the provision of clean, sterile needles for people who inject themselves with heroin, cocaine/crack, or other drugs. Many of these users share needles, and this sharing spreads HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases.

- **The War on Illegal Drugs:** The most controversial drug strategy involves the criminalization of many drugs and the use of the police and the rest of the criminal justice system to apprehend and punish the users, manufacturers, and sellers of illegal drugs. The United States has banned certain drugs since the late nineteenth century, and it accelerated this effort during the 1970s and 1980s as concern grew about heroin, crack, and other drugs.

Key Takeaways

- To deal with drugs, the United States has used several strategies, including treatment, prevention, harm reduction, and the legal war on illegal drugs.
- According to its critics, the war on illegal drugs has done much more harm than good and in this respect is repeating the example of Prohibition.

For Your Review

1. Do you think the United States should make sterile needles and syringes freely available to people who are addicted to drugs that are injected? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree or disagree that the war on illegal drugs is doing more harm than good? Explain your answer.

Key Terms

- **Harm Reduction** -A strategy that attempts to minimize the harm caused by drugs; an example includes the provision of sterile needles to heroin users.
- **Drug Courts**- Courts in which drug offenders who have been arrested and found guilty are sentenced to drug treatment and counseling rather than to jail or prison.

6. Addressing the Drug Problem and Reducing Drug Use

- Explain the problems associated with arresting hundreds of thousands of people for drug possession.
- List any three specific measures that may help deal with the drug problem.

Section Outline

- This chapter will not end with an optimistic assessment for addressing the drug problem. The reason for this lack of optimism is that what's past is prologue: People have enthusiastically used drugs since prehistoric times and show no signs of reducing their drug use. Many and perhaps most scholars think the legal war on drugs has had little, if any, impact on drug use and many scholars recognize that this war brought with it the many disadvantages cited in the previous section.

Key Takeaways

- Critics of the war on drugs say that people who use illegal drugs should be treated, not arrested, just as people who use alcohol and tobacco are treated, if they seek treatment, rather than arrested.
- Specific measures that could help address the drug problem include providing legally prescribed heroin or substitute opiates for heroin addicts and raising the alcohol tax.

For Your Review

1. Do you think that alcohol taxes should be raised? Why or why not?
2. Do you favor decriminalization of marijuana? Explain your answer.