

Goode: Chapters 1-5

Chapter 1: Drug Use: A Sociological Perspective

What is a drug?

- Drugs is a concept that is defined both *materially*, with respect to drugs essential or physically real properties, and *socially*, as a construct that is both in our minds 0 in the way we picture or represent the world- and in institutions we have built to deal with certain substances.
- Can be defined by what they *are* and what they *do*, and in a pharmacological sense, what they are *thought to do*
- Definition of drugs:
 - o 1st- definition delineates the “objective,” or **essentialist**, reality of drugs
 - o 2nd –delineates the “subjective,” or **constructionist**, reality of drugs
- Three relevant contexts for drugs:
 - o Medical utility
 - o Psychoactivity
 - o Illegality
- Medical utility- regards a drug as a substance used by physicians to treat the body or mind.
- Psychoactivity- regards a drug as a substance that influences the working of the brain or mind, that has an impact on cognitive and emotional processes
- Illegality- regards as a drug any substance whose possession and sale are against the law.

Medical Utility

- a **drug** can be defined as a *substance that is used to treat or heal the body or mind*.
 - o Used to return the user to a state of normalcy or “ordinariness”
 - o Used to remove that which is pathological, abnormal, or unnatural (the disease or medical condition).
- “socially constructed” medical definition of how drugs are defined.
 - o Ex: heroin used as pain killer in UK but not US so in UK it is a drug according to the definition but not in the US because we do not use it as a medical drug.
- Medical definitions may *determine* substances legal status, if *not* recognized as a medicine by the gov., its possession and sale is a crime.
- Medical definition not useful in our quest to understand the cause, consequences, and implications of drug use

Illegality

- A **drugs** defined by a substances *legal status* – whether the possession and sale of a given substance are legal or illegal.
 - o According to definition, law and law enforcement define what a drug is.
- “socially constructed” definition: when a drug law is enacted, a category of illegal substances is created. Though it is a social construct it is hypothetically based on their physical (or essentialist) properties.

- Possession and sale of certain drugs result from their physical or material properties: they are *considered* harmful because, presumably, they are harmful and are a, as a consequence, prohibited by law. .

Psychoactivity

- **Pharmacology** is the study of the effect of drugs on biological organisms; the scientist who study the effects of drugs are called “pharmacologists,” and **psychopharmacology** is the study the effect of drugs specifically on the brain, that is, on the mind.
- A **drug** is any *substance that is psychoactive, that has an effect on the mind.*
- **Psychoactivity** is an extremely important property of chemical substances.
 - o Psychoactive substance is one that affects the workings of the central nervous system. (brain & spinal column)
 - Influences: thinking, mood, feeling, sensation, perception, emotion, behavior
- The pharmacological definition – what a drug does the brain, and therefore the mind – is based *entirely* on the materially real or essential properties of substances.
- Have the opposite definition of medical utility
 - o Medical- bring normalcy back Psychoactive- take the mind out of normalcy
- *Recreational drugs*- taken for purpose of getting high
- Alcohol is psychoactive! So alcohol is a drug!

Defining Drugs: A Summary

- Psychoactivity- based entirely on an essentialist or (presumably) materially real property
- Illegality- is partly a socially constructed property and partly a consequence of the effects of certain substances.
- Medical definition less useful for criminologist

Drug Use and Drug Abuse

- Drug use- act of ingesting a given substance or set of substances in any quantity with any frequency over any period of time
- Drug abuse- specific subset or type of use

Types of Drug Use

Dimensions of Drug Use: An Introduction

- **Illegal instrumental use:** users are taking the drug not because they enjoy the effects they experience when they take it but to achieve more effectively a goal of which most member of the society approve: working a job, pursuing an education, or advancing in a career.
 - o Goals are approved
 - o Means by which it is attained are considered unacceptable to most Americans.
- Combining two dimensions – legal status and goal – yields four different types of drug use
 - o 1. Legal instrumental use [ex: taking ambien via prescription to sleep]
 - o 2. Illegal instrumental use [ex: using amphetamine to study all night]

- o 3. Legal recreational use [ex: drinking alcohol to feel pleasant]
- o 4. Illegal recreational use [ex: taking LSD to get high]

Legal Instrumental Use

- 2 principle forms of legal instrumental drug use:
 - o 1. **Over – the – counter**: purchased to public
 - o 2. **Prescription drug**: manufactured, bought, sold, and used legally, for medical purposes.

Legal Recreational Use

- Refers to use of alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine products
 - o Psychoactive substance consumed for mental or psychic state.
- Alcohol is the most popular legal recreational drug
- 2nd is tobacco (but used by more individuals than all illegal drugs combined)

Illegal Instrumental Use

- Taking drugs without prescription for some purpose which society approves, such as driving a truck, studying for an exam, working at an all night job, falling asleep, achieving athletic excellence, or calming feelings of anxiety to cope with events of a day.
- Do not seek intoxication or high off the drug, rather to achieve a goal

Illegal Recreational Use

- Two major annual surveys to ask about drug use

Three Eras of Drug Use: Technological and Socioeconomic Change

The Natural Era

- 1st era- dawn of prehistory: **natural era**
 - o Religious and ceremonial context or as medicine
- Innovation that yielded psychoactive substances considerably more potent than their natural plant form: the distillation of alcoholic beverages
 - o Distillation=high alcohol content

The Transformative Era

- Began early 19th century with discoveries and innovations that produced substances that are more potent than natural plant products.
 - o Chemical extraction=increased potency of drug
 - o New means of taking drugs for higher potency
 - IVs, syringe

The Synthetic Era

- 20th century: scientist made drugs from chemicals not found in nature
 - o First barbiturate drug