Chapter 1

Drug Use: An Overview

“The Drug Problem”
Talking About Drug Use
To evaluate the extent of the drug problem and propose possible solutions, it helps to ask basic journalism questions:

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?
- How much?

Talking About Drug Use

- Who is taking the drug?
- What drug are they taking?
- When and where is the drug being used?
Talking About Drug Use

- **Why** is the drug being used?
  - Vicodin prescribed for pain relief vs. Vicodin used for pleasurable feelings

- **How** is the drug being taken?
  - Chewing coca leaves vs. snorting cocaine

- **How much** of the drug is being used?
  - Two beers vs. ten shots of tequila

Four Principles of Psychoactive Drugs

- Drugs, per se, are not good or bad
- Every drug has multiple effects
  - Both the size and the quality of a drug's effect depend on the amount the individual has taken
  - The effects of any psychoactive drug depend on the individual's history and expectations

Key Concepts and Definitions

- **Drug**
  - Any substance, natural or artificial, other than food, that by its chemical nature alters structure or function in a living organism

- **Psychoactive drug**
  - A drug that specifically affects thoughts, emotions, or behavior

- **Illicit drug**
  - A drug that is unlawful to possess or use
Key Concepts and Definitions

- **Deviant drug use**
  - Drug use that is not common within a social group and is disapproved of by the majority

- **Drug misuse**
  - Use of drugs or chemicals in greater amounts than prescribed by a doctor, or for purposes other than those intended by the manufacturer

- **Drug abuse**
  - Substance use in a manner, an amount, or in situations such that it causes social, occupational, psychological, or physical problems

- **Drug dependence**
  - A more precise term than addiction
  - A state in which an individual uses a drug so frequently or consistently that it would be difficult for the person to stop
  - May be physiological and/or psychological

As long as humans have been around, some have used, misused, or abused drugs
Humans and Drugs Throughout History

- Enhancing spiritual experiences
- Major economic roles in societies past
- Development of legal pharmaceuticals
- Beginnings of the "war on drugs"
- Today’s economic impact of psychoactive drugs

Extent of Drug Use

- Not easy to get accurate information on
  - Number of drug users
  - How much is imported and sold
  - Usage of even alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs

How We Get Information

- Survey questionnaires
  - Easy to use— inexpensive, efficient
  - Drawbacks
    - Bias in student population (e.g., dropouts not counted)
    - Potential inaccuracy of self-reports (among both users and non-users)
Trends in Drug Use

- Monitoring the Future Project
  - Prevalence of use
  - Perceived risk and availability

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

- Face-to-face, computer-assisted interviews
- 68,000 individuals; carefully sampled households across the United States
- Broken down into different age groups
- Results published annually

Marijuana: Trends in perceived availability, perceived risk of regular use, and prevalence of use in the past 30 days for 12th graders (Monitoring the Future Project)
Marijuana use among persons ages 12-25, by age group:
1971-2006 (National Survey on Drug Use and Health)

In 2008 the percentage use for the age groups of 18-25 and 12-17 remained the same as they were in 2005; 16.5% and 6.7% respectively.

Trends in reported drug use within the past 30 days for young adults ages 18 to 25
(National Survey on Drug Use and Health)

Finding similar patterns in two different studies, using different sampling techniques, is a stronger indication that these trends are real and reflect broad changes in American society over time
Correlates of Drug Use

- Correlate = a variable that is statistically related to another variable, such as drug use
  - IMPORTANT: Correlates are not causes
- Socioeconomic status does not correlate well with drug use
- Personality problems are poor predictors of drug use

Risk factors include:
- Community, parental, and peer attitudes and behaviors
- Antisocial/problem behaviors
- Poor school performance

Protective factors include:
- Involvement in religious activities
- Perceived risk of drug use

Limitations of Correlation Studies

- Does smoking marijuana cause the user to get lower grades? Or is it the kids who are already getting low grades who are more likely to smoke marijuana?
Antecedents of Drug Use

- Antecedent = a factor that occurs before an event such as the initiation of drug use
- Still not labeled “causes”
- Examples of antecedents
  - Aggressiveness
  - Conduct problems
  - Poor academic performance
  - Attachment to a drug-using peer group
  - Parental and community norms that support drug use

Gateway Substances

- Alcohol and tobacco are sometimes considered gateways to the use of illicit drugs
- Gateway substances are perhaps best thought of as early indicators of a basic pattern of deviant behavior resulting from a variety of risk factors

Motives for Drug Use

- We all do things that we know, logically, we should not do
  - Eating too much
  - Driving too fast
  - Drinking too much
- Identification with a deviant subculture is a key factor
- Fads and cultural trends influence what drugs are used
Motives for Drug Use

- Characteristics of drugs can reinforce their use
  - Altered states of consciousness
- Societal, community, and family factors play an important role in whether an individual tries a drug
- Drug factors play an important role in whether an individual continues to use a drug

Influences on Drug Use