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Crack Attack:
The Impact and Disparity Issues
Of Crack Cocaine in the United States of America

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Abstract

The impact and disparity issues of Crack Cocaine in the United States of America have created a bubble effect in society. This bubble effect is so distorted that many Americans actually believe that only certain drugs are abused by certain ethnic groups, thus, their concerns about the abuse of said drugs do not directly affect them or so they think in their flawed reasoning. This belief creates several fallacies of thought and only exacerbates the persistent problem of crack cocaine abuse in the United States. As the saying goes the greatest trick the devil ever pulled on the world was convincing the world that he did not exist. This trick is the same trick that cost so many crack addicts their lives, their families, and other peoples' lives and their sanity. The reality is that although there are differences amongst gender in how crack cocaine affects the body, for the most part all Americans are affected by the impact of crack cocaine. Crack cocaine's impact is like God in a way in that it has no favorites and it does not discriminate regardless of race, class, or gender. Yet as a whole America has very real disparities in how she views, punishes, and targets minorities while completely ignoring the majority abusers. Remaining in captive to ignorance sealed with a death sentence.



Crack Attack: The Impact and Disparity Issues of Crack Cocaine in the United States of America

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines impact as "to have a direct effect on" and defines disparity as "containing or made up of fundamentally differences and often incongruous elements". These definitions are important to note because the impact of crack cocaine on all members of the United States of America have far more reaching consequences than Congress would lead their constituents to believe. More importantly, the disparity that currently exists in how crack cocaine is treated in relations to other drugs only intensifies the fallacies perpetrated on the American public. The sole purpose of this paper is to focus both on the crack impact in relation to race, class, gender and the disparities it creates, specifically amongst minorities.

Crack Impact: Race

It is quite obvious from a quick review of data collected by the United States Sentencing Commission and the National Institute of Drug Abuse that there are major disparities in how society views crack cocaine in comparison to powder cocaine. Especially, in the way minorities make up less than forty percent of the entire drug use population in the United States and ninety-three percent of the incarcerated crack cocaine convicted abusers. For instance according to Chappell and Maggard:

Since *crack cocaine* first appeared on the streets of the United States, the criminal justice system has been overwhelmed with poor, *minority* drug offenders. This situation can be attributed in part to the existence of mandatory minimum sentences that treat violations associated with *crack cocaine* more harshly than those associated with powder *cocaine*. (2007)

These mandatory minimum sentences can be seen in a study conducted by the United States Sentencing Commission in 2003, which revealed some surprising and troubling facts. One of the facts is that the Commission focused on the total number of incarcerated drug addicts to crack cocaine and powder cocaine based on ethnicity in comparison to the actual number of these ethnicities utilization of the drug in the general population. The utilization of the two forms of the same drug was based on information from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). The study revealed that while only twenty-seven percent of African Americans utilized crack cocaine within the United States either population that the prison population attributed to crack cocaine abuse was made up of eighty-five percent of the African American population. On the other hand, Caucasians who make up sixty-five percent of crack cocaine use in the United States only make up six percent of the prison population of crack cocaine abusers. Surprisingly, the only ethnic group that appeared to be treated fairly in the study were Latinos who actually made up nine percent of both the prison population of crack cocaine abusers and of the general population.

Now in relations to powder cocaine, the results were slightly different. Whereas, African Americans in the general population that utilize powder cocaine according to the NIDA is six percent, yet thirty one percent are incarcerated for powder cocaine drug abuse. Unfortunately, not so surprisingly Caucasians who according to NIDA make up seventy-three percent of the general population make up only eighteen percent of the prison population behind bars due to powder cocaine abuse. Sadly, to make matters worse Latinos who make up only eighteen percent of the general population's powder cocaine use results in fifty-one percent of the prison population for powder cocaine use.

This data reveals several troubling trends that America needs to take heed on in viewing the long-term effects this will have on the future of our society. First, it is quite obvious that there is a greater penalty associated with drugs typically utilized by minorities than the majority. This disparity only further proves that as far as our criminal justice system is concerned we are still not a nation that lives up to our creed that 'all men are created equal'. If our laws continue to reflect such disparity it will only further divide our nation than unite it and as the United States of America one can only hope that our true goal is to be united and not divided.

Second, by allowing this blatant prejudice to continue we do our nation and our youth a great disservice, especially our caucasian youth and their parents, because if we have the popular belief that it only affects a certain group then we fail to focus on the prevention and education of the other at-risk groups including caucasian youth who would otherwise become productive citizens. According to Carlson, Draus, Falck, Siegal and Siegal in a study conducted in rural Ohio of 249 not-in-treatment, drug-using individuals living in small towns in rural Ohio revealed that:

White and younger people were more likely to be classified in the heavy user group of virtually all drug classes, specifically cocaine and crack cocaine. The results suggest that comprehensive substance abuse prevention and treatment programs are needed in rural communities. (2005)

However, if as a whole we failed to see the real problem we cannot address the underlining issues of the undiagnose problem. As a nation we must become colorblind and recognize that drugs and their abuse effect us all whether it be directly or indirectly.

It is always important to note that class plays a major role in the crack impact of the United States of America. For instance, in suburbs where middle to upper class Americans typically reside they have more income available to purchase illicit and better quality drugs. Most often the suburbs are not prone to the same level of “dirty drugs” as in inner city, because of their status in society and ability to pay top dollar usually costing between twenty and hundred dollars for the drugs they purchase. However, once the suburbs purchase powder cocaine they can then take the drug home and ‘cook’ the drug into crack cocaine also known as freebasing. Unfortunately, freebasing actually is not studied as is crack cocaine thus; real data is not available as to the true use of crack cocaine ‘cooked’ from powder cocaine.

Sadly, because drug dealers will do whatever they can to get more customers they took a rather expensive powder cocaine and converted it into an inexpensive crack cocaine that is more deadly due to the fact that is ‘cooked’ with ammonia. This fact in and of itself means that inner city crack cocaine users are at risk to severe and fatal health issues. For instance, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry:

Even fairly low airborne concentrations (50 ppm) of ammonia produce rapid onset of eye, nose, and throat irritation; coughing; and narrowing of the bronchi.

More severe clinical signs include immediate narrowing of the throat and swelling, causing upper airway obstruction and accumulation of fluid in the lungs.

This may result in low blood oxygen levels and an altered mental status. Mucosal burns to the tracheobronchial tree can also occur. (Unknown)

That stated, it is obvious that lower class and poverty stricken communities are at a greater risk of fatality in utilizing the same drug simply due to the cutting agent utilized in inner city communities.

Crack Impact: Gender

The crack impact on gender offers a complete divide on how it affects men versus women. To wit, the research should be of no surprise considering that men and women are physiologically, psychologically and emotionally different in how they view the world and themselves. However, both genders are subject to a greater risk of overdose due to how fast crack cocaine absorbs into the body at such high levels. Other health issues involved in continued crack cocaine usage is heart failure, respiratory problems, decreased lung function, and extreme mood swings. Many of these affect persist well after the discontinuation of the substance. Something that is extremely troubling is that chronic use can trigger a full-blown psychosis similar to paranoid schizophrenia right down to the delusions of grandeur or persecution.

Men

The ingestion of crack cocaine produces either a high euphoria or high dysphoria regardless of the method the drug is ingested. (2007) Other affects to men include intense increases in heart rate and blood pressure, which creates a greater risk of a coronary attack. Interesting to note is that men typically have a greater detection of crack cocaine in their bloodstream than their female counterparts even when both ingested the same amount of the drug. (Unknown) This effect of the drug also makes it less likely that men will become addicted, because they require less of the drug to receive optimum high.

Women

Women on the other hand have a very low sense of euphoria or dysphoria combined with an even lower sensitivity to the drug. Thus, women have to utilize greater amounts of the drug in order to feel the same high as their male counterparts. Unfortunately, by utilizing greater dosages women are often prone to become addicted faster than men even though their male counterparts are often the initiator in their trial of the illicit drug in the first place. According to Daniulaityte, Carlson, and Siegal, women who ingest the same amount of crack cocaine as their male counterparts have lower levels of the drug in their bloodstream. (2007)

Other differences include the fact that women are typically caretakers of the family and when they use the needs of the family are almost instantly second if not dead last. This can cause great strains on the children, especially if both parents are addicts. Severe use can result in the children becoming the parents forced to stave off addictive parents for harming younger siblings, selling assets, and/or notifying authorities of the neglect and abuse. A decision that can have everlasting effects on both the parents and children involved.

Resolve: The Crack Impact

The question that requires an answer is what can be done to resolve the crack impact on and in American society. There are several schools of thought on this very issue and one of the first is to become involved in the solution. Meaning listen up whenever the issues of crack cocaine abuse is raised by elected officials and ensure that they are working on solutions that include rehabilitation and not just retribution or punishment. Because filling prisons without educating addicts on the true dangers of

crack cocaine only create new addicts that must then be housed in a system designed to maintain the crack cocaine problem without resolving it. More importantly, if the issue is not being address by those elected write letters and remind them that if they fail to address the concerns of their constituents then their constituents will find someone who will.

Beyond becoming involved the best way to resolve the crack impact on American society is to never try it. This involved educating the youth on the not so glamorous side of crack cocaine use. Often times parents either mistakenly fears that bringing the issue of drug abuse up will start their children down that path while they fail to realize that someone else is already teaching their children the wrong philosophy about the real effects of crack cocaine use. We need to education not just children, but the rest of society on the real cost of crack cocaine use, which includes but is not limited to the potential of contracting a fatal disease, homelessness or loss of self.

By far, the best way to resolve the crack cocaine issues is to eliminate their ability to purchase the chemicals they need to manufacture crack cocaine. This can be achieved by regulating ammonia, bleach, and alcohol all of which are additives utilized by drug cartels to illegally manufacture crack cocaine. History has shown America that if ingredients needed to manufacture an illicit drug are eliminated then the both the distribution and the market are forced to close.

Overall, the crack cocaine impact in relation to race, class, gender and the disparities it creates, specifically amongst minorities is an issue that has yet been fully explored. Although there have been several studies that point out the different beliefs, treatments, drug-related prison sentences, and approaches to crack cocaine abuse

amongst minorities compared to the majority no one have taken this data and actually attempted to resolve the disparity. This continued blindness to the impact of crack cocaine in upper-class America only adds to its popularity and deadliness created by prejudicial ignorance. So it is important to see drug abuse as a United States of America problem and not just a minority problem if the United States truly hopes to resolve the crack impact. So it is resolved, the crack impact on the United States of America by treating it as a problem that affects *all* of America.

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You wrote a very good paper. You made some very interesting points in the paper.

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