

ENGLISH 312 AUDIENCE STATEMENT AND ENTHYMEME COVER SHEET**Audience Statement**

My audience is CON decriminalizing drug use

Who is your audience? Why do they find your claim initially unacceptable?

- Partner in class- drugs use should be criminalized
- Criminalizing drugs creates a stigma that makes drugs appear acceptable to children
- Wants to live in a clean community/have drug use stay in the underbelly of the society. Drug use is a potential pollution of public space and decriminalizing drugs may increase that.
- Unsure on what will be effective in keeping people from doing drugs (especially youth).

What does your audience value the most?

- Making a genuine difference in society.
- Pushing the human race forward.
- Making a difference in the quality of the world and at least doing so with his own children
- Appearance of society (clean society produces clean and productive citizens)
- Religious principles – don't want to see people chained down by their addictions.
- There should be progressive consequences for actions of some sort that acts as a learning experience and helps drug users become productive citizens.
- Giving people the resources to succeed. But minimal hand holding.
- Education
- Democracy

What does your audience fear the most?

- Not making society better.
- Government involvement.
- Seeing other people not live up to their potential.
- Living in sketchy places with sketchy people.
- One's person's irresponsible actions having a negative effect on a responsible person.

Audience Counterarguments:

- Criminalizing drugs keeps drugs off the streets and encourages addicts to change
- There could be unintended consequences
- Decriminalizing drugs us will teach society and our children that drugs are acceptable
- Decriminalizing drugs will teach society and especially youth and children that drugs are acceptable
- Decriminalizing drug use will increase drug use, contaminate once clean neighborhoods, etc.
- Decriminalizing drug use will increase drug use and hinder progression of society

Enthymeme

What Are the Consequences of decriminalizing drug use on the overall condition of society?

Claim: Decriminalizing drug use will improve the overall condition of society

Because it cleans up individuals/improves the condition of individuals lives

Implicit Assumption (Whatever V2 C also V1 B): Whatever improved the condition of individuals, improves the overall condition of society.

Contract Question: What is the effect of decriminalizing drugs on the overall condition of society?

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English 312

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War and Peace: Finding a Solution to Drug Problems in America

Throughout history, recreational drugs have weaved their way through cultures and the history of our great nation is no exception. Looking back, the 1960s stick out as one of the most impactful eras in regards the effect of drugs on our society. From hippies to the civil rights movement and the race to space, it was a time of change. At the same time, recreational drugs became a symbol of “youthful rebellion, social upheaval, and political dissent” (Drug Policy Alliance). America needed a solution to the drug crisis and soon after the decade of “Peace, not War,” the federal government declared a “War on Drugs” (Drug Policy Alliance). Federal and state agencies began cracking down on drugs from all angles, prosecuting anyone and any organization that involved themselves in use or distribution. With small changes here and there, the war on drugs is still in effect today. However, more recently, there have been pushes in the U.S. and other countries to move away from this tactic and to decriminalize the use of drugs without legalizing drugs themselves; this tactic would still penalize the distribution of drugs but not the user.

We all agree that targeting the drug problem in the U.S. is an issue that we need to take seriously. We want to make sure that our neighborhoods are clean and safe. We want our children to be safe from their influence and to have a bright future. We want our country and society as a whole to progress, yet, recreational drugs have the power to hinder that progress and even cause regression. We know what we want to accomplish, but finding the right way to get there is a topic of great debate. The idea behind the movement to decriminalize drugs is that it will provide opportunity for society to progress as resources can be allocated to targeting distributors and as

those who are addicted to drugs are provided with more progressive options to get treatment. Opponents of this movement feel that it would do just the opposite and send our society into regression as policies send the message to society that drugs are now acceptable; they feel that keeping drug use as a criminal offense is more effective and beneficial to society. Being a relatively new idea that takes such a different approach than we are used to on the drug problem, how would the decriminalization of drug use impact the state and progression of our society?

When posed with this question, some may feel that it is an unnecessary question to ask, answering in return, “What is wrong with the current system in the first place?” If we want to progress, we need to do all we can to keep drugs off the streets and the most logical way to do so is to keep anyone using or distributing drugs off the street. In addition, many feel that legal punishment will encourage drug addicts to get help and change. Logically, this makes sense and is likely why we have maintained such a system for so long, but a closer look at the effect of the war on drugs tells a different story. First of all, there is no statistical evidence that imprisoning drug users has any influence on their willingness to quit (Weatherburn 177). The theory of Applied Behavioral Analysis and Self-Efficacy Theory, two accepted and well backed models in behavioral psychology explain this well; they respectively teach that coercion is not effective in changing behavior and individuals are less likely to change their behavior when they are put into a stressful or emotionally charged state (West; Sharma and Romas 79). Both statistical and psychological evidence show that locking people up does not decrease drug prevalence.

However, the evidence does suggest that imprisonment severely damages an individual’s ability to obtain employment or a stable income. Without jobs, these individuals who have the potential to contribute to our economy cannot do so and become burdens upon society. We are further burdened by the war on drugs because it sends our society into a never-ending loop of more crime and losing taxpayer money. The prohibition of drug use raises the cost of drugs, which often

drives addicts to resort to additional crimes to fund their drug purchases (Weatherburn 177). Federal and state governments now spend billions of dollars a year just to keep drug users locked up; with all that money being wasted on programs that do not promote progress, the current system is clearly not the answer. If we end the current war on drugs, the government will be less involved and we will save billions of dollars of taxpayer money (Dennis 129). From there we can start to see progress towards a better America.

So moving forward and looking into actually decriminalizing drugs, an obvious initial concern is regarding the unintended consequences that new policies could impose. Historical examples, such as the introduction of communism are perfect evidence that just because something sounds good in theory, it may not produce good results. However, we would not be walking into this venture blindly. Other countries such as Portugal and Holland have already instituted different forms of this decriminalization movement (Hughes and Stevens 999; Leuw 229). Portugal's policies have been in place since 2001 and Holland's since 1976. These and other countries have basically acted as testing grounds for us; we can look at what they have done and learn from what has worked and what hasn't. It is true that no matter how much preparation and thought that we put into this, there will still be variables that we won't be able to account for, but fortunately all sales are not final. As with any new law or policy, our democratic system allows for laws to be reviewed and changes to be made as needed. With our government processes and the examples of other countries to learn from, we can be well prepared to make these changes.

One may argue however, that the pure nature of decriminalizing drugs will have unavoidable and clearly expected negative consequences. It seems logical that decriminalizing drugs will teach our children and our society as a whole that recreational drugs are acceptable and drug use will rise substantially. If we take a look at Portugal and how rates of drug use have changed since its decriminalization we can gain a lot of insight into the accuracy of this logic. A study published in

2010 that compared rates within Portugal since its decriminalization of drug use as well as compared rates with those of neighboring countries over that same period of time concluded there were no significant increases in drug use (Hughes and Stevens 999). If we use neighboring countries as a quasi-control, we see that any small increases in drug use were congruent with increases in neighboring countries that still criminalized drug use and in most cases increases in drug use were significantly higher in the other countries (Hughes and Stevens 1006). Additionally, Problem Drug Use, defined as “injecting drug use or long duration / regular use of opioids, cocaine and/or amphetamines,” decreased significantly as did adolescent drug use (EMCDDA; Hughes and Stevens 1017). Just because the law does not punish a practice, does not mean that society and our youth will accept or partake in it; in fact, research shows the opposite in this case.

Lastly, many may worry that as we decriminalize drugs use, it will come out of the woodwork and into the public sphere, degrading the appearance of our neighborhoods and the condition of our society. Images of dirty addicts passed out on the sidewalk may even come to mind. However, decriminalization of drugs has the potential to clean up the world we live in and create a happier, healthier society. If you walk down the streets of Holland, the before mentioned imagery is not something that you will find; take a stroll into back alleys or run down neighborhoods, you will likely not find it there either. Holland has erected and maintained sanitary drug use facilities that contain drug use and make it safe (Russell Brand). Safety for drug use is important; it is well known that drug use is associated with infectious diseases such as hepatitis and HIV. The war on drugs has made it difficult to obtain clean syringes and has pushed drugs use to dirty back alleys, thus increasing the risk of these disease (Drug Policy Alliance). In countries where drug use has been decriminalized, rates of these infectious diseases such as HIV have decreased by as much as 300% (Hughes and Stevens 1015). The concept of “Herd Immunity” teaches us that as infection rates go down and as the health of drug users increases, our own health and the health of our entire society

increases. Decriminalizing of drugs has also increased the number of treatment facilities as well as the number of people who seek treatment to recover from their addictions (Hughes and Stevens 1017). Decriminalizing drugs in a society can make it a cleaner and healthier society that helps those who want to get out of the grasp of addiction and into recovery.

In all the examples and evidence we have examined, we have been able to compare the current system in our country to a new and potential solution – decriminalizing drugs. Furthermore, we have scrutinized the potential pros and cons of decriminalizing drugs in our country. The findings have been clear that despite the many logical fears we may have about such policies, the decriminalization of drugs will improve the overall condition of our society. It will provide a better future for our children and for those trapped in addiction who need help. Now, as Americans who care, we need to actively advocate for these policies. If we don't, we will remain in this regressive state.

Works Cited

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