toward a preliminary macro theory of drug addiction

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Currently, the drug addiction literature is replete with micro-level theories of addiction that offer important insights into individual and small-group processes leading to addiction. However, few offer much consideration of macro-level matters (e.g., social structural and cultural). Macro theories of addiction are even more scarce. This inattention to macro-level factors may ultimately impede the ability to reduce addiction and related social problems. The purpose of this article is to offer preliminary formulations for a macro theory of drug addiction. A critique of leading micro-oriented theories, coupled with Hall and Jefferson's (1976) Cultural Studies school, helps facilitate this effort. The discussion centers on drug subcultures instead of individual addicts and brings macro-level matters (e.g., economic and social inequality and cultural norms, ant: values) to the center of the debate. Furthermore, the new theoretical formulations offer important insights into rates of addiction among population subgroups and their potentially diverse etiologies. The article conclude, with a call for theoretical refinement and empirical assessment.

The voluminous literature on drug abuse reveals a micro-level ideological hegemony that structures debate on one of the worst social

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important element. A basic premise is that cultures of the more economically powerful classes carry greater influence in society than cultures of the less economically powerful classes (i.e., subordinate cultures or subcultures). Thus, class-based societies will always experience some level of cultural conflict, or dissonance. Consensus is possible, however, whenever the dominant culture can bring subordinate cultures in line with their ideology. Such times are called ideological hegemony. According to Clarke et al. (1976), cultural conflict and consensus vary over time, given historical change and economic and social fluctuations. Clarke et al. claimed that these fluctuations help produce subcultures, including drug subcultures (Hebdige, 1979).

**Temperance, Self-Control, and Moralistic Models of Drug Addiction**

The current micro-orientation in addiction theories dates from the Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 and can be described as an outcome of ideological hegemony. The dominant culture’s ideology, which characterized the temperance era, was individualistic, focusing on self-control and personal moderation or abstinence as the key to individual freedom and societal good will (Ben-Yehuda 1990; Alasuutari 1992). It viewed intoxication of any sort as sinful, hedonistic, antisocial, antireligious, and deviant. Widespread social acceptance of this microclimate soon followed (item-Yehuda 1990; Alasuutari 1992).

Individual moral and value-oriented themes have reappeared in the sociological literature on drug addiction as an attempt to counter the influential disease model of addiction (Peele 1984, 1985, 1988a, 1988b). Currently, microsociological models of addiction-namely social learning theory, social control theory, and the adaptive model of addiction-offer important insights into such individual or small group factors as loss of self-control, lack of conformity and social maturity, and depraved values. These themes are similar to Temperance Era moralistic models of addiction and alcoholism and are further elaborated below. It is worth mentioning here, however, that recent work by Denzin (1987), Levine and Reinarman (1991), and Reinarman (1993) challenges moralistic or value models of any time period.

Much research has shown that the value system underlying drug addiction and alcoholism is consistent with the dominant culture, not contrary to it, as moralistic models often contend. For instance, Denzin (1987) asserted that persons with alcoholism drink to regain control and power over 11 themselves and their world and to locate themselves in the status on her what “ohol consumption is part of being a “normal” America. Reinarman (1993) added that the dominant culture’s promotion of mass consumption exacerbates problems of self-control in various dimensions of life, including the consumption of drugs. Thus, it would appear that the ideology of the dominant culture influences rates of alcoholism and addiction while simultaneously condemning their existence—a cultural contradiction.

**Social Pathology and Disease Models of Drug Addiction**

IO’ele (1984) claimed that moralistic models of addiction were replaced by pathological, or disease, models of addiction following the repeal of Prohibition. He stated, “The disease theory became transmuted at this time 119331 to the view that chronic drunkenness was not an inescapable property of alcohol but was rather a characteristic of a small group of people with an inbred susceptibility to alcoholism” (p. 1338). It·Ilinek (1960) formalized the disease model in alcoholism, when as Dole and Nyswander’s (1980) metabolic imbalance theory of addiction and the creation of methadone maintenance clinics produced the same for drug addiction by the late 1960s (Ben-Yehuda 1990). The disease model of addiction still dominates the drugs and alcohol debate today. It focuses on the individual’s consumption of mood-altering substances, distinguishes between normal and abnormal drinkers or drinking, and centers on individual genetic predisposition (Denzin 1987; Alasuutari 1992).

Conrad and Schneider (1980) and Ben-Yehuda (1990) are among the many scholars who have revealed the hegemonic desires of dominant groups to gain widespread social acceptance of the disease model. Theories of drug addiction are defined by those in power (Ben-Yehuda 1990). Relevant hegemonic institutions, operating under the micro-oriented ideologies of individualism, pathology, and disease models of addiction, endorse and fund micro-level

Valiант’s (1963) work also addays the widespread acceptance of the disease model.

Alasuutari (1992) likened the disease model to an “alcoholism frame,” which focuses on individuals and their drinking habits or styles, distinguishes between normal and abnormal drinkers or drinking, and views alcoholism as a weakness of the will and heavy drinking as a longstanding problem that can be managed and handled, but not cured.
on this literature by further elaborating the usefulness of the 
subculture concept in explaining rates of addiction and etiological 
matters. According to Clarke et al. (1976), any analysis of subcultures must 
first be understood in relation to the parent cultures of which they are a 
subset. Second, they must be analyzed in terms of their relation 
to the dominant culture and its overall power in society. Micro-level 
matters can then be explored, as individuals interact within 
(subcultural)
ubcultures are loosely or rigidly defined groups of individuals 
who share distinctive activities and focal concerns (Clarke et al. 1976).
Stephens (1991) indicated that street-level (i.e., lower class) 
brug subcultures are tightly defined entities. Whether all subcultural 
roups are so bounded is currently unknown. Such subcultural 
roups represent attempts 
Thus, different subcultural 
groups emerge at specific historical moments following certain social, economic, and cultural events or changes, which may consequently affect 
ates of addiction among various groups.
One would expect, then, studies of drug abuse among diverse social 
class and racial or ethnic groups to produce different etiological 
models, for two basic reasons. First, as Kohn (1992) has noted in England, 
macro-level factors may differentially affect the growth and persistence of 
diverse subcultural groups and consequently facilitate fluctuations in 
rates of addiction. Second, Clarke et al. (1976) contended that the 
ocal concerns of each subcultural group also vary, which may 
sequently affect the etiology of drug addiction.
The paragraphs below demonstrate support for these premises. To 
begin, the literature reveals at least eight distinct drug subcultural groups 
since the turn of the century. These include the following: (a) the lower class Chinese opium smokers during the mid-1800s and 
early 1900s (Morgan 1978); (b) the middle-class, White female opiate 
addicts at the turn of the century (Musto 1987); (c) the lower 
class Hispanic marijuana smokers from Mexico and southern 
United States before the Marijuana Tax Reform Act of 1937 (Musto 1987); 
(d) the largely lower class African American marijuana and cocaine 
subculture of Harlem musicians and entertainers of the 1940s and 
1950s (Musto 1987); (e) the middle-class White marijuana, psychedelic, 
and amphetamine users of the 1960s and 1970s (Sloman 1979); (f) the 
largely lower class African American heroin 
jectors of the 1960s and 1970s (Stephens and McBride 1975; Stephens and 
Smith 1976); (g) the middle- and upper class White cocaine snorters 
during the late 1970s and 1980s (Gold 1984); and 

the lower class Black crack cocaine smokers of the 1980s and 1990s 
(Lusane 1991).
Hall and Jefferson (1976) would contend that these eight subcultural 
groups are historically situated and are stratified by race, ethnicity, class, 
and gender. Their formation likely followed from social, economic, and 
cultural factors, which may have affected rates of addiction and 
etiological matters.

MACRO-LEVEL FACTORS AND DRUG SUBCULTURAL GROUPS
According to Clarke et al. (1976), macro-level factors that might 
fluence the growth of drug subcultural groups and, subsequently, 
rates of addiction include (a) the dominant culture's tearing down of 
working-class action, resistance, and economic prosperity; (b) 
educational changes that negatively affect lower class opportunities amid 
the promotion of the meritocratic ideology; (c) the disruptive effects of 
military action on families and individuals; and (d) the arrival and 
appeal of trends in popular culture (e.g., dress, music, and drugs) to the 
young. The paragraphs below discuss macro-level changes and drug 
subcultural groups during the Reagan and Bush era to illustrate these 
contentions.

Economic Decline and the Working Class
Clarke et al. (1976) claimed that the dominant culture's tearing down of 
working-class action, resistance, and economic prosperity was 
located at the material center of subcultural growth. Etzioni and Zinn (1994) 
noted at least three relevant macro-level factors that support Clarke et al.'s 
first premise. First, Reagan's and Bush's outright assault on unions through 
federal legislation and pro-business political appointees reduced 
working-class opportunities to realize economic well-being. Currently, 
union membership and power are at an all-time low (Hartmann and 
Spalter-Roth 1990). Second, this decline was aided by changes in 
working-class attitudes. The hegemonic power of the dominant culture's 
pro-business/anti-union and capitalist ideology "trickled down" to the 
lower classes, resulting in their decreased support of unions. Third, the 
1980s market transformation from manufacturing to service-sector jobs 
brought about an additional decline in unions, real losses in wages and
for the relationship between U.S. militarism, violence, and family disruption, on the one hand, and drug subcultural groups and increased rates of addiction, on the other. However, Kohn (1992) recently found support for this premise in her historical analysis of drug subcultures in England, and sociologists studying other social problems have similarly found such support (Straus 1991). The literature has also revealed consistent support for the relationship between structurally induced family disruptions and the increased prevalence of addiction. For instance, Newman (1988) recently noted that downward mobility patterns, like those of the 1980s, may be particularly stressful for working parents and that increased rates of suicide, depression, physical brutality, and alcoholism are to be expected in such circumstances. Thus, the lower class decline in economic well-being and the increased dissolution of the family during the 1980s may also help to explain the current existence of drug subcultural groups (Query 1985; Linksey et al. 1985; Heien and Pompelli 1987).

**Style and the Younger Generation**

Hall and Jefferson (1976) and Hebdige (1979) pointed out that subcultures can be identified by their possessions and objects (i.e., their styles). These styles represent a subcultural group's identity, giving them social meaning. Like other subcultural phenomena, variations in style result from economic or social trends and represent a group’s efforts at resolving the cultural contradictions it confronts. A subculture's style is extremely important and symbolizes its central values.

The considerable literature on the drug lifestyle (e.g., Biernacki 1986; Inciardi 1992; Stephens 1992) has indicated that the styles of drug subcultures may offer important insights into the macro-level factors related to addiction. Trends in the popularity of drugs (Golub and Johnson 1993) and methods of administration may reflect the growth of drug subcultural groups over time, as well as increased rates of addiction. For instance, the renewed popularity of cocaine in the mid-1970s to 1980s was aided by the drug's consistency with the dominant culture's ideology (Gold 1984; Anderson 1991; Reinarman 1993). As a powerful stimulant, it had great symbolic value that was shared by many in American society (Denzin 1992). It extended the work day or social escapade. Users felt in control when

on it and depressed and vulnerable when not (Gold 1984). The high expense of the drug defined it socially as a status symbol.

Cocaine’s consistency with the dominant culture’s ideology at a time (Republican periods of increased materialism, immediate gratification, and capitalism; see Reinarman 1993) of hegemonic control over other,

stibo’ dinate cultures (e.g, the 1980s; see above) can explain its popularity across population subgroups (by class and race or ethnicity) and diverse subcultural formations. Both the middle- and upper class, largely White cocaine powder subcultural group and the lower class, largely African American crack subcultural group of the 1980s embraced the symbolic meaning of cocaine. Their separation centered on the privileges or penalties of class. The economically advantaged subculture was able to sell, purchase, and consume the more expensive and socially valued powder cocaine, whereas the economically disadvantaged subculture used the less expensive and socially stigmatized crack derivative.

**INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL GROUPS IN THE LARGER MACRO ORDER**

The dilemma faced by youth of the 1980s constitutes a cultural contradiction. The presence of ideological hegemony in society means that young people are socialized to identify more with the dominant culture than with the cultures of their parents, a fact that may produce the three micro factors (see above) that the social learning theory, social control theory, and the adaptive model of addiction share. The macro-level factors mentioned above (i.e., economic decline of the working class, family disruption, societal violence, and decreased educational opportunity) most affected the lower class racial and ethnic minority youth during the 1980s. Their attempts to resolve such cultural contradictions and improve their social and material class position may have influenced the creation of various subcultures, including drug subcultures, or alternative, deviant identifications (Waldorf et al. 1983; Biernacki 1986; Anderson 1993, 1994). Thus, the micro-level factors that researchers have found to explain lower class drug problems may be logical outcomes of an individual’s attempt to resolve the class contradictions facing him or her in society. The following paragraphs summarize these preliminary formulations for a macro theory of drug addiction.


