Title Of Paper : Tobacco And Western Culture Essay, Research Paper

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Essay 1: Tobacco and Western Culture

The use of tobacco dates back to the 17th century. The primary reason for its beginning

was purely economic at first. It later became apparent to researchers over the decades that tobacco was

more than just a commodity to be traded for economic gain. It was actually a drug, nicotine, which

developed into physical dependency and had adverse side effects as people began to live longer. Further

research at the social level, revealed its social impact on the western culture.

It didn’t take long before early traders began to realize the economic benefits of trading

tobacco as a primary cash crop. Its known influences were completely overlooked to maintain the desired

income and trade benefits. In western culture, early settlers, saw tobacco as a primary source of support for

the family. It was entirely possible to grow tobacco and live a very good lifestyle. During the early years,

tobacco was not seen as a bad thing. Instead, it was actually a way of life. As time passed, govermental

agencies also began to see the economic benefits produced by the tobacco industry. Taxing the crop

became very lucrative and later resulted in subsidizing the farmers as needed to maintain taxation levels.

The advent of production cigarrettes soon opened doors for manufacturers which hadn’t existed before. A

cheap and easy method of providing tobacco users a manageable product soon led to widespread use in the

western world. This attitude soon began to chang!

e, however, as researchers began publishing reports on the ill effects of smoking and tobacco use.

Tobacco lost a lot of its social influence when people began to understand its physical

effects. Tobacco use was linked with birth defects in pregnant women. Lung cancer was directly linked to

smoking in 1950 by the Cancer Control Department in the New York State Health department. It became

very clear that the past opposition to smoking and tobacco use was substantiated. It had also become clear

that smokers were in a group alone from the rest of society. Just as other groups grew and shrank with the

times, so would the smokers. Nicotine had been discovered to be the dependency factor in tobacco and

soon ranked a classification with other social drugs like alcohol and caffeine. Its use was seen to be just as

severe as these and warranted just as much focus in the social arena. This didn’t stop people from using

tobacco. The reasons for tobacco use had already become more complex than just physically damaging.

Tobacco use had grown to be a social instrument. It can be easily proven that people

smoke for different reasons. Stress is now a large part of society and nictotine tends to reduce the stress

factor. There have also been reports of the soothing effects nicotine provides during times of prolonged

strain on the brain. This is typically due to long hours of reading or studying. The ability of nicotine to

soothe the mind allows the brain more concentration and thus the individual is able to more easily

comprehend the task at hand.

Despite the good and bad effects of tobacco use, it still continues today and I feel that it will be

some time before smoking is completely removed from society. Actually, it’s not half bad considering the

alternatives of the 21st century. Consider pulling up in your car next to someone at a stop light smoking a

cigarette and think about seeing someone smoking marijuana. Which would you prefer?

Essay 2: Birth Control

The main reason to limit the population in a given society is to insure that a balance

between the resources available and the number of people is not exceeded. It is fundamental to the survival

of a given society that everyone has enough food, housing, and work to maintain certain social standards.

This has been done in many ways throughout the centuries. Birth control methods range from religious

belief to medical fact to social superstition. In all cases the limiting of newborn has effectively kept people

out of anarchy.

In looking at the history of birth control, it is easy to imagine why the population must be

regulated. Even today the situation is being recorded and studied to determine where the breakover point

for population versus resources exists. If too many people are alive on the planet at the same time it

becomes a difficult issue to deal with only the basic fundamentals needed to survive. Food cycles require

time to be replenished before they can effectively meet the nutritional requirements otherwise they will be

extinguished. Housing can only be provided at a given rate and it becaomes a real problem when real

estate gets scarce. Another factor which comes into play is economics. There are only a given number of

jobs available at any given time, so people may become unemployed, thus worsening the issue. As we look

further down the road, social problems begin to arise as the fundamental needs fail to be met. Crime

become an issue. People’s basic instinct to survive will!

make them resort to theft and violence in order to meet the basic survival requirements. In order to prevent

this type of social anarchy society has decided that the resource limitations are fixed, so the only other

variable is the population.

Several methods of birth control have been used to control population. Early methods

were more ritualistic than today and played on the social image for birth control. It was a common practice

to make sexual intercourse unpopular by instituting social standards for when and where and by whom it

should take place. These constraints were followed by penalties which lowered the womans self-esteem

and dorve her away from the social group. Infanticide was also used as a form of birth control for those

cases that made it through conception. Several social groups believed that birth could be controlled by

magic or ritualistic ceremony. Not until later, when medicine became more advanced, did the abortion

process of today become popular. It was strictly a function of ignorance that caused early doctors and

midwives to use herbs, drugs, massaging, water pressure, and other severe methods to cause a miscarriage

in the woman. The evolution of pre-conceptive methods became the d!

esired birth control device and typically they were a result of preventing the sperm from ever entering the

uterus. Things like crocodile dung, honey and sodium carbonate, and different types gum would seal the

cervix completely during intercourse. The more common methods of today are based on the same idea, but

our advanced knowledge of manufacturing processes allow us to more effectively address the issue with

rubber, spermicidal gels, and oral contraceptives, which actually control the female release of hormones to

prevent pregnancy.

It is a necessity to control population even more so today than back then. Our current

social situation is by far a product of overpopulation and under control. It can only get worse as it has been

doing so far.

Essay 3: Consumer Culture

The original consumer culture suffered a tremendous change in the 20th century as a

result of consumers becoming fascinated by the idea that life is based on status and not reality. The

original consumer was created as a result of the need for people to express themselves through the purchase

of retail private items which accetuated their individualism. This culture evolved to meet the needs of

society during a period of time when ideas of individualism and private life were becoming commonplace.

During the initial rise in consumer buying, manufacturers were faced with a situation of unbalanced

demand versus supply. There were so many avenues to provide products that the consumer could not keep

up with the fast paced manufacturing process. Over time, the consumer did catch up and in fact surpassed

the supply versus demand barrier. Due to the overwhelming supply, however, the retail market was unable

to deal with the changing needs of the consumer and found themselves i!

n a situation where marketing would become a key factor in maintaining their business.

In the 20th century, manufacturers turned to their salespeople and begged for

advertisment to compete with the competition. This philosophical change in attitude resulted in the ruthless

disregard for consumer needs and the focus economic advantage to the manufacturer. Products were no

longer of the same quality as in the past. The only factor was marketability. The idea of planned

obsolescence became popular to future manufacturing goals. It was no longer about providing a needed

service or product to the consumer, but instead was driven by deception and falsehood to sell products. As

manufacturers realized the ability they had to control the consumers buying habits, they began to shift their

marketing strategies and attacked the basic social rules governing status, glamour, and prestige to sell

products. It soon followed with a change in consumer opinion. The consumer of the 20th century began to

believe the ads and bought products which they believed would increas!

e their social position. It was no longer about meeting fundamental needs, but more about the evolution of

self. People were becoming social animals who hunted for the fame and glamour associated with buying

certain products.

Consumers today have taken this idea of self to the utmost extent and it can be seen in

everything from clothes to food to transportation. It is not likely to stop until the social attitudes once again

change to curb the manufacturers ability to influence the social arena.

Essay 4: Sports

Sports have undergone many changes in the past, but none compared with the 19th

century. The early days of sports began as a form of recreation and social gathering. It had become

commonplace to get together and compete in sporting events by the Greeks long ago. There were different

reasons for competition including dominance, victory, and honor. Early competitions had no rules or

governing body controlling the events. It was assumed that competition may result in death of one or both

of the opponents. This evolved into a more recreational activity later and became more of a method for

entertainment as social views on violence emerged. It was still a very violent and unregulated method of

entertainment which raised controversy with the church and tended to separate the classes. Sports in the

19th century demanded change and this call was answered when fraternity organizations got together to

institute rules and organization.

The idea of an organized sports community became very popular in the 19th century.

Today it may seem odd to think that there were no rules in a sporting event, but the organizations in place

today were a novel concept back then. Sports evolved from mere informal entertainment to highly

organized events. Essentially, sports became big business. Formal rules were instituted at all levels of the

sport. There were regulations on types of ball, playing field, player interaction, and spectator intervention.

Promotional companies hired scouts to find the better players and insure that teams were able to compete at

the same and hopefully higher levels than expected. The sports industry became a social status which

brought with it fame and fortune for both players and management. Sports records were also being kept for

the first time, so it was possible to follow a players performance. Sports magazines became popular

methods of transferring information between players, owner!

s, and the spectators. Sports became popular to the rich for obvious economic reasons, but all economics

have a bad side and sports soon showed its ugly side.

Along with the good change in sports came a bad change. Since the players were

typically younger men who concentrated on pushing their physical abilities beyond that of the average man,

it could only stand to reason that they would require higher levels of relaxation to return to the normal

level. This resulted in a sub-culture surrounding sports which included drinking, gambling, swearing,

sexual activity, and a general loss of self-control. In essence, a new breed of man had emerged which only

sought to better his own ability at the expense of society. Instead of curbing this appetite, the sports

industry tended to overlook the social shortcomings and focus on the bigger economic gains to be realized

by a players performance.

Sports serve a good purpose in society and help to provide entertainment for the

spectators. This aspect can’t be overlooked when judging the sports industry because something will

always take its place it it is removed. It is much better to allow people the luxury of making their own

choices and hold them responsible within the legal limits. Our job as spectators is to maintain a good role

model for this industry and allow it to consume our society.

References

All refernces for these essays have been taken from class lecture tapes and the lecture notes published by

Dr Stephen Mintz on the WWW.

Side note:These essays appear to have one central theme:

Economics drive the social attitude and people tend to follow the trends set by this standard whether it is

beneficial,. . . or not.