

Cocaine Lecture

I cocaine recreational or medicinal?

Like marijuana in ambiguity

1) Latin American peasants largely use coca in religious ceremonies & by chewing leaves or drinking in tea

– suppresses hunger & gives energy, euphoria

-- anesthetic

-- not so addictive

But through processes Morales describes, can be purified in process involving lime, sodium carbonate, sulfuric acid & kerosene

Then becomes powder to be snorted

If freebased or turned to crack, can be smoked

Weil warns purified substances more addictive, & snorting or smoking gives more powerful rush than eating

Relatively short duration of high also dangerous

Users get caught in seeking rush as good as first time

& in taking more to avoid depressing crash

It's ultimate binge drug

Rats will keep pressing lever & not eat til die

Humans will take til nose bleeds, til crash in exhaustion

Health hazards: heart attacks

Damages nose

Paranoia

Social isolation & depression

Addiction & ruin: very hard to treat

2) **Archaeological evidence** suggests coca used 2,000 years ago in Ecuador & Chile

Also used in Peru before Spanish as anesthetic before trepanning (drilling hole in skull)

3) **Spanish** didn't like coca, especially because offered to native deities. Saw it as pagan drug

But found it increased efficiency of silver-miners at high altitudes

So allowed its use out of colonial pragmatism

(Compare Pamela **Scully** on South African farmers using wine to control workers)

4) **European use:**

First reported 1570s by Spanish, but no interest in Europe

Interesting question: why wasn't it brought to Europe like tobacco, coffee, tea, sugar

Largely because leaf loses potency as travels.

1859 Fredrich Wohler (German chemist) figured out how to extract & purify cocaine from leaves

1870s Angelo Mariana developed coca wine tonic, soon imitated in US

- endorsed by popes Leo XIII & Pius V & Pres. McKinley

coca tonics popular at end of century

When Atlanta banned alcohol 1885, Pemberton's coca tonic (coca-cola) became very popular

- cocaine removed from coca-cola 1903

Karl Koller in 1880s = German ophthalmologist who realized cocaine could be anesthetic

American surgeon William Halsted had performed 2,000 operations with cocaine by 1887

- but became addicted!
- Had to be removed from operating theater cos of shaking hands
- Cured cocaine addiction by becoming addicted to morphine!

Cocaine is still used today as anesthetic in dentistry

1880s saw cocaine tooth drops, asthma cures & hemorrhoid remedies & cocaine bandaids

Faced with demand, American chemist **Henry Rusby** figured out how to make paste – easily transportable

2 Victorians really popularized:

Arthur Conan Doyle (a doctor) took it & had Sherlock Holmes use it

Freud wrote an essay celebrating it as a miracle drug

5) **You read Freud**

A few comments:

a) Scientific discourse: tried it on himself & noted effects

Like Leary in 60s, Shulgin in 80s

b) Frequent pattern: early enchantment → later disillusion

almost like cycle of a person's drug addiction

Freud represents early stage

Sees as miraculous source of energy (“cost savings”)

Weil: energy that is borrowed must be paid back:
euphoria will be followed by crash

c) Freud doesn't see addiction as problem – though evidence
that he was engaged in denial

even presents cocaine as cure for morphine addiction

Now our culture is at the opposite extreme: one puff of crack
& you're hooked

6) **Outlawing**

As cocaine tonics spread, so did toxic side effects

In midst of race scare (cocaine made blacks uncontrollable), 1914
Harrison Narcotic Act banned cocaine & opium, unless
prescribed by doctor

7) 1980s

Interesting question why US mass market for cocaine didn't emerge til 1980s

Crack/cocaine seized by DEA:¹

1983: 4000,000 lbs

1986 12,000,000 lbs

1987 24,000,000 lbs

1989 36,000,000 lbs

Increased migration of Latin Americans to US created human infrastructure for cocaine trade

Absorption of Latin America to global markets

That's supply end

On demand end, **Lenson** would argue emergence of certain kind of rampant shallow consumerism in the U.S. was also implicated

¹ Isabel Wilkerson, "Crack's Legacy of Guns and deaths lives on." NYT 12/13/94:A1).

Cocaine consumption as parody of Reaganism, consumerism

As cocaine became fashionable drug, social emulation kicked in
(as it had earlier in Europe for coffee and sugar)

8) By mid-80s: **crack epidemic**

epidemic of violence in ghetto

racial disparities in sentencing:

5-year mandatory minimum for 5 grams crack, 500
grams powder

110-1 sentencing disparity!!

Blacks = 88% crack users, 23% powder users

1986 law codified this disparity

1997 Supreme Court denied the law was racially biased
& upheld it.

9) **In Latin America, cocaine transformed economies**

Peru, Bolivia, Colombia

Roldan & Morales give sense:

Most profitable cash crop for peasants

Still most profitable, even with confiscations

Arguably did more for development in these countries than
IMF & World Bank

New elites Roldan describes

Often building schools & clinics

Using diaspora in US

But narco-states:

Concentration of wealth → assassinations of politicians

Corruption or assassination of judges

Corruption of military & police (Morales)

Insurgencies and paramilitaries fuelled by drug money

In fact Reagan rumored to have used to help Contras (See **Gary Webb's** controversial stories in the San Jose Mercury, as well as Alexander Cockburn, Whiteout)

9) **Eradication**

Plan Colombia, developed under second Clinton Administration

Funded at \$1.3 billion

smokescreen for counterinsurgency was under guise of war on drugs?

Toxicity of crop eradication agents?

Minimal effect on drug supply