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DOPE FIENDS AND DEGENERATES: THE GENDERING OF ADDICTION IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

By Mara L. Keire

As historian David Courtwright describes in Dark Paradise: Opiate Addiction in America Before 1940, the typical addict of the late nineteenth century was an older middle-class woman who first started taking drugs for medical reasons, while the typical twentieth-century addict was a young man of the urban lower classes who had originally experimented with drugs for pleasure. This demographic shift was dramatic, and Courtwright convincingly argues that the contrast between the ailing matron and the hustling junkie was significant in shaping our national narcotics policy. But in the face of these undeniable demographic differences, important cultural continuities remained. These cultural continuities bridged the demographic shift and connected the medical addicts of the 1880s and 1890s to the dope fiends of the 1910s and 1920s.

The most important cultural continuity was the perceived femininity of addiction. Starting in the 1870s, doctors injected women with morphine to numb the pain of “female troubles,” or to turn the willful hysterical into a manageable invalid. Up through the turn of the century, morphine was a literal prescription for bourgeois femininity. Thus, by the 1890s, when the first drug epidemic peaked, approximately two-thirds of the medical addicts were women, making women medical addicts almost half of all addicts in the United States. As a result of this thirty-year association of women with addiction, both users and observers saw drug addiction as something feminine as late as the 1930s, long after men had become the majority of users.

To show how the femininity of addiction connected the older medical addicts to the nascent urban drug culture of the early twentieth century, this article will focus on drug use among the sporting class in the urban red-light district. I have two reasons for analyzing drugs in the vice district. First, the urban tenderloin was the location of cities’ disreputable leisure, and as such it was the site of the new addiction. Second, the new addicts either came from the sporting class, which was comprised of prostitutes, pimps, thieves, gamblers, gangsters, entertainers, fairies, and johns; or, they were youths who admired the sporting men and women. In their efforts to join the ranks of the sporting class, the new addicts emulated the sporting class’s manners and mores—including their drug use. By focusing on drug use by prostitutes, pimps, and the gay men known as fairies, I will demonstrate how the continued cultural association of addiction with femininity shaped the perception of addiction throughout society, and influenced the decision of men to incorporate drug use into their rejection of conventional male gender roles.

This article is divided into four parts, including a theoretical intermission. The first section is a brief description of drugs in the vice district. In the second section, I focus on opiate use by pimps and prostitutes, paying particular attention
to reformers' interpretations of the meaning of underworld addiction. After the section on pimps and prostitutes, I halt the historical narrative in order to discuss subcultures and subcultural style. When I re-engage the narrative, I conclude by analyzing cocaine use among fairies as exemplary of how the nineteenth-century feminization of drugs shaped twentieth-century male drug use.

Drugs in the District

Although never as prevalent as drinking, drug taking was an integral part of life in the urban vice districts. At the turn of the century, the members of the sporting class who took drugs mostly smoked opium. They bought their opium at Chinese restaurants, laundries, and opium dens, but the drug was also readily available in brothels. Indeed, a 1905 study on prostitution found it just as noteworthy when opium was absent as when it was present. By the early teens, both the urban vice districts, and drug use within them, had become more diverse. No longer just saloons, parlor houses, and cribs, the vice districts included dance halls, pool rooms, cabarets, gambling dens, movie theaters, and cigar shops. Concurrent with this diversification of services, there was a diversification in drug use. Anti-vice investigators were as likely to hear about people using morphine, heroin, and cocaine as smoking opium. While brothels and Chinese establishments continued as mainstays to the drug trade, saloons, dance halls, and disreputable pharmacies became increasingly important sites of supply. These circumstances changed dramatically during World War I, when the war fervor enabled reformers to close the red-light districts and Federal officials to strengthen the enforcement of narcotics laws.

As drug use diversified between 1910 and 1920, different cliques within the sporting world distinguished themselves through the types of drugs they used. As the price of opium rose, opium smoking, once so ubiquitous, became associated with the upper echelons of the sporting world—actors and actresses, high-rolling gamblers, and wealthy slummers. Prostitutes and their pimps continued to consume opiates, although it became more likely that they were taking cheaper drugs like morphine than that they were smoking opium. Meanwhile, reformers observed with growing alarm the gangs of boys who were adding cocaine and heroin use to their delinquent activities. It was in the face of these continuities—opium smoking by prostitutes, gamblers, and entertainers—and changes—heroin and cocaine use within the growing youth culture—that members of the sporting class and outside observers interpreted the new patterns of drug use. They did so by drawing on, but altering, an older cultural reference: the femininity of drug use.

Prostitutes and Pimps

With prostitutes, the association of addiction with women was literal and direct. Prostitutes were women and prostitutes took drugs. In his 1880 study of Chicago opiate addicts, Charles W. Earle observed that nearly three quarters of the addicts were women, and that fully a third of these women were prostitutes. Thus the cultural continuity in the early twentieth century was twofold. Prostiti-
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Institutions had taken drugs in the earlier period and women had taken drugs for medical reasons. Like nineteenth-century matrons, prostitutes took drugs to treat a whole range of problems euphemistically called “female troubles.” These ailments included dysmenorrhea, injuries from childbirth, ovarian cysts, uterine cancer, and venereal diseases. The Chicago Vice Commissioners believed that a high percentage of prostitutes became addicts, either as a result of self-medication or a doctor’s prescription, because their work increased their vulnerability to venereal diseases.

In addition to the medical explanation, there was a moral explanation for prostitutes’ addiction that also drew on “common sense” assumptions about women’s nature. Like most of their contemporaries, anti-vice reformers believed that women were inherently modest and sexually unaggressive. For women to act so contrary to their natures—to submit to sex with countless strangers—something must have undermined their essential purity. Anti-vice reformers found the cause in drugs, alcohol, and the imperatives of addiction—but not always the culprits. Many reformers asserted that prostitutes had had no choice in either their addiction or their work: “white slavers” used intoxicants to trick young women into prostitution, and then they forced their prostitutes to continue drinking or taking drugs so that they would not resist their sexual servitude. Anti-vice reformers interpreted prostitutes’ dependence on drugs and alcohol as proof that prostitutes found their work distasteful. They believed that prostitutes’ addiction was a sign of the extremes to which the agents of vice had to go to overcome women’s innate morality.

While the medical and moral explanations had a logical coherence, prostitutes’ behavior challenged reformers’ image of them as passive victims. The occasional report of a prostitute helpless within a brothel, stupefied by “a deadly drug,” and covered with abscesses, reinforced reformers’ conception of the world. More often than not, however, the stories from the street called into question the morality tales that reformers sought to tell. For example, in a 1908 report to the United States delegation of the International Opium Convention, a “newspaper detective” described the daily routine of a Baltimore streetwalker. She solicited until two or three in the morning, at which time she took her earnings, bought the night’s supply of opium, returned home to her pimp, and together they smoked for the next few hours. She then slept until six or seven in the evening, took a shot of morphine, and went back out on the street to earn more money so that she and her pimp could have more opium. This story was shocking in part because of its role inversion—it was the woman who was leaving the house, earning the money, and providing for the man. Yet, despite the role inversion, this story had a domestic inevitability that the detective did not find as horrifying as what a different investigator witnessed six years later in New York City. In a saloon at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Thirteenth Street, an investigator watched two women crush tablets of heroin and snort them with no self-consciousness about the other patrons. That these women took drugs in a public place, not a private room, was part of what the investigator found so repugnant. The difference between the private opium smoking in 1908 and the public heroin consumption in 1914 challenged reformers’ explanations of prostitutes’ addiction. The more active and public role that prostitutes displayed...
in acquiring and taking their drugs in the 1910s called the prostitutes' assumed powerlessness into question.

Evidence that prostitutes introduced young men to drugs was even more damaging to their image as passive victims than the agency they exhibited in acquiring their drugs. One of the most scandalous discoveries made by the Chicago Vice Commissioners was that messenger boys working in the Levee, Chicago's red-light district, were learning drug use from prostitutes.24 The messenger boys' stories probably resembled the one that an addict told sociologist Bingham Dai in the early 1930s. In his youth, the man had worked as a messenger boy in Butte, Montana's restricted district. There he attracted the attention of several prostitutes who were looking for pimps. At first he was bashful, but eventually the messenger boy raised his courage to talk to one of them. After confirming with a fellow messenger that the prostitute was a good money-maker, he agreed to be her pimp, and started living with her. In the course of their relationship, she slept with him, gave him money, and taught him to smoke opium.25 It was stories like these that led researchers to sum up the causes of the new addicts' habits with phrases like "bad associates" and "tenderloin life."26

While the investigative reports gradually undermined the progressive-era portrayal of prostitutes, urban reformers generally remained sympathetic to prostitutes, even addicted prostitutes, but reviled their pimps. Reports of the pimps' addiction only increased this antipathy. With pimps and prostitutes alike, their drug use was a sign of how far they had fallen, but for prostitutes it reinforced a victimization that was consistent with gender roles in mainstream society. Women were supposed to be helpless, ailing, and even addicted—after all, it is likely that some reformers had older female relatives who were themselves addicts.27 The pimps' addiction, however, was an affront to American masculinity, for as Surgeon General H. S. Cumming asserted in 1925, "opium makes a man effeminate."28

If the dominant nineteenth-century image of a female addict was the ailing middle-class matron, the stereotyped male addict of that period was the pigtailed Chinese coolie or perhaps an aesthete inspired by Thomas De Quincey or Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Either image implied an orientalized decadence at odds with middle-class masculinity.29 In the early twentieth century, these images translated into a feminization of male addicts, including pimps. Exhibiting their biases about the nature of men and addicts, contemporary commentators did not believe that boys became addicts because they aspired to be pimps, but rather that they became pimps because drug use made them unfit for any kind of active work. According to public health official Lawrence Kolb, "the ultimate effect [of opiates] is to create a state of idleness and dependency which naturally enhances the desire to live at the expense of others and by anti-social means."30 In other words, addiction made men less manly.

The pimp's addiction represented just one aspect of his deviation from mainstream male gender roles. Pimps lived off the earnings of "immoral women"—and the more money that their prostitutes earned, the better they could dress, the more drinks they could buy for their fellows, and the higher the stakes at which they could gamble.31 The flamboyance of the pimp's life had a direct correlation with how much money his prostitutes were earning. As such, the pimp's rela-
relationship to prostitutes resembled an inversion of the bourgeois gender relations that Thorstein Veblen described. Women's work supported men's conspicuous consumption. Thus, the pimp did not just deviate from the bourgeois masculine ideal: he lived its inverse.

Nevertheless, as historian Natalie Zemon Davis reminds us in her 1975 essay, "Women on Top," inversions are rarely simple and they "undermine as well as reinforce" hierarchies of power. The pimp threatened conventional gender roles because he offered a masculine model that linked male domination to supposedly feminine patterns of consumption and idleness. The pimp inverted middle-class conventions, but he was not an invert in the emerging medical sense of the term—he was a heterosexual male. The pimp retained his masculinity because he retained his power over women. Although the pimp transgressed bourgeois gender roles, his gender relations were consistent with patriarchal ideals: the domination of women was at the foundation of the pimp's identity. Thus, even though middle-class reformers portrayed the pimp as a feminized villain, within the sporting class, pimps were the height of suave masculinity.

Middle-class reformers recognized this conundrum and feared that pimps provided a viable, although perverse, alternative for working-class youths. They believed that young men in the ghetto would eschew the bourgeois values of hard work and restraint and embrace the sporting class's leisure and free-spending conviviality. Some observers, including sociologist Frederic M. Thrasher, warned that the increasing drug use among boys in urban gangs was an indication that they were choosing to emulate the sporting class. Like the messenger boy in Butte, Montana, urban youths were trying drugs because they were "part and parcel of the rôle of a successful pimp." By the early 1920s, the majority of new drug users were urban youths who imitated the lifestyle of the sporting class. These young men took drugs despite their long-standing association with femininity, because ironically that association was an integral part of the pimp's heightened masculinity.

Theoretical Intermission

Up to this point, I have interpreted the femininity of drug use from the perspective of middle-class observers. I will now switch perspectives and address how a particular group within the sporting class—fairies—used cocaine as a way to signal their social and sexual identity. In order to do so, I must discuss at greater length subcultures and the transmission of cultural style.

The sporting class was a distinct urban subculture. Although contemporaries defined the people associated with the urban vice district as a separate class, values and style, not income or family, defined membership. The elements that set the sporting class apart from respectable society were not only how they spent their time, but also their clothing and public presentation. The members of the sporting class, like those of other subcultures, adopted distinctive clothes and body language in order to announce their participation in that subculture. These stylistic elements were their signifiers. Signifiers were not only physical objects—for example, a prostitute's ankle-flashing short skirt—they were also
cultural messages: at the turn of the century, a short skirt equaled sexual availability. Thus a pimp’s flashy clothing and jewelry were signifiers of his group identity, his wealth, the quality of his prostitutes, and his rejection of the work ethic of respectable men.

The sporting class, however, also had distinct divisions. The most notable distinction was between those who worked in the district and those who played in it. For prostitutes, their revealing dress and cosmetics were literal advertisements of who they were and what they were selling. Thus the adoption of the prostitute’s distinctive trademarks of short skirts, cigarettes, a slow saunter, and bold eye contact, were “professional” signifiers. Other members in the sporting class—the consumers—had choices in their identification. The gang members, fairies, and charity girls (sexually-active young women who were not prostitutes) adopted certain types of dress and gestures to signal what were usually leisure-time identities. This distinction is crucial. Although the sporting class consisted of both consumers and producers, these two groups had vastly different reasons for adopting their cultural signifiers. Producers used signifiers to make their living, consumers used them to express their identity.

The people who set the tone and offered the cultural models within the tenderloin were the madams, pimps, and prostitutes—the people who worked in the district. The prostitutes provided, while pimps and madams enabled, the sexual commerce that was the foundation upon which all other activities in the district were built. As a result of their centrality, the successful madams, pimps, and prostitutes had the highest status within the district and established the cultural styles. Charity girls, fairies, and other groups who were socializing in the district by choice rather than financial necessity looked up to the sporting-class elite. In forming their own group identities, gang members, fairies, and charity girls often appropriated elements of the sporting elite’s style as signifiers of their own subcultural identity.

Fairies

The keynote of fairies’ subcultural identity was their effeminacy. In Gay New York, historian George Chauncey has ably described fairies and their subcultural style. He argues that fairies, who socialized in the urban tenderloin and the most transgressive commercial dance halls, self-consciously rejected masculine gender roles by selectively adopting “feminine” signifiers. As he observes, “In the right context, appropriating even a single feminine—or at least unconventional—style or article of clothing might signify a man’s identity as a fairy.” These cultural cues could be suede shoes or a red tie, plucked eyebrows or bleached hair, and most stereotypically an exaggerated walk, a limp wrist, or arms akimbo. Cocaine was another signifier that some fairies adopted to distinguish themselves from conventional society. These fairies chose cocaine because, like their contemporaries, they associated drug use with femininity.

Fairies took prostitutes as their model of femininity. Chauncey argues that fairies purposely adopted prostitute’s style and slang. An important element of prostitutes’ style was drug use, which fairies copied as well. New York Police
Commissioner Theodore A. Bingham described this cultural transmission when he wrote to public health reformer Hamilton Wright that,

the classes of the community most addicted to the habitual use of cocaine are the parites [sic] who live on the earnings of prostitutes, prostitutes of the lowest order, and young degenerates who acquire the habit at an early age through their connection with prostitutes and parites [sic]. 44

While fairies may have taken prostitutes as their feminine model, these "degenerates" reinterpreted that femininity in the process of making it their own. Like all cultural transfers, there was an alteration in the process. Prostitutes used a range of drugs, but they were best known as opiate addicts. Fairies, on the other hand, were most closely associated with cocaine.

There are two possible explanations for why fairies incorporated cocaine, instead of the opiates, into their subcultural style. The first is functional, cocaine provided an excuse for "trade," conventionally masculine men who were sexually interested in fairies, to approach fairies. As an anti-drug reformer noted, "the practice of sniffing also leads to more social contagion, since the offer of a pinch of cocaine may be as simple a gesture as to offer a cigarette." In saloons and dance halls, cocaine functioned in much the same way as cigarettes did when men were picking up each other. 45 Other drugs, which involved more paraphernalia, could not function in this simple fashion. 46 The second reason for fairies' choice of cocaine was its physical effects. Prostitutes may have taken opiates to anesthetize themselves to their work, but fairies' identities were tied to their leisure, not to their work. One of the keynotes of their leisure identity was a bright flamboyance which suggests why fairies favored cocaine over the opiates. Cocaine could produce a brittle effervescence that made it more attractive to fairies than the effects of opiates, which suggested a laid-back "hipness" inconsistent with fairies' cultural style. 47 These functional and physical explanations of fairies' cocaine use explain why fairies chose cocaine over other drugs, but not why they incorporated drug use into their cultural style. Fairies made cocaine part of their subculture because it was a feminine signifier.

One of the best examples of the association of a fairy with cocaine use was in the story of Daisy, a regular at Martin's Saloon in Brooklyn. At Martin's, Daisy flirted with the patrons, borrowed a powder puff from investigator Natalie Sonnichsen, sang a dirty song, and performed a dance imitating sodomy with Elsie, another fairy. In order to confirm the disreputable goings-on, the general secretary of the Committee of Fourteen, an anti-vice association, sent out a male investigator, S. M. Auerbach, to determine whether the fairies were soliciting. When Auerbach approached Daisy, he began the conversation by asking Daisy whether he was a "cocaine fiend," and if he had any "coc" to spare. Although Daisy was all out, he readily admitted that he was a "fiend." While Auerbach did not use this exchange as the first step to setting up a date, Daisy let Natalie know that he "had designs on Mr. A." 48 Daisy's story illustrates the subcultural style that fairies adopted. Daisy signaled that he was a fairy by using feminine gestures such as borrowing Natalie Sonnichsen's powder puff. Daisy's style was not, however, a demure femininity—his outrageous antics were more playful versions of prostitutes' public sexuality. Moreover, Daisy's frenetic sociability suggested to Auerbach that Daisy was a "cocaine fiend" which gave Auerbach,
who was quintessentially “trade,” an excuse to approach Daisy. In other words, for Daisy, cocaine was one of a range of feminine signifiers that he adopted in order to communicate his identity as a fairy.  

Fairies’ adoption of cocaine as a signifier meant that cocaine eventually became a general gay signifier, and with that shift the association of drugs and femininity became increasingly tenuous. By the 1920s, the association of drugs with homosexuality had spread beyond the urban vice district. When the Hollywood Scandals of the early twenties revealed that movie stars were using drugs, the media began speculating about the sexual orientation of leading actors and directors. It was the association of drugs with fairies that informed John Dos Passos’ characterization of Tony Garrido in *The Big Money*, the final book of his *U.S.A.* trilogy. Tony was an attractive Cuban expatriate, but it was his addiction as much as his “mincing walk” that confirmed his homosexuality to his wife Margo Dowling. Whether they were playing off of these associations or informing them, members of wealthy gay artistic circles continued using cocaine into the 1930s.  

Although the connection between drug use and homosexuality became increasingly tenuous after World War II, drugs continued to appeal to people disaffected with conventional society, including gay men like William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg. Even though the hustling junkie now seems more masculine than feminine, William Burroughs was “queer,” and it was through his infamous addiction, as well as his sexual preference, that he communicated his rejection of mainstream masculinity. The Beats were a long way from the ailing matrons of the nineteenth century, but the fairy and the pimp—alternative masculine models from the progressive-era vice districts—provide the genealogical link that spans the seemingly unbridgeable demographic difference between nineteenth- and twentieth-century addicts.

Concluding

Since the 1970s, historians have argued that the demographic differences between the ailing matrons of the late nineteenth century and the dope fiends of the early twentieth century powerfully influenced Federal enactment of anti-drug laws. Historians have not, however, recognized how the femininity of addiction—the cultural continuity that connected the old and new addicts—shaped the early enforcement of narcotics laws. The perception in the 1920s that addicts were unmanly—weak, untrustworthy, and constitutionally flawed—informed how agents enforced, judges interpreted, and the public supported narcotics laws as ad hoc responses hardened into long-term Federal policy. The “deviant” gendering of drug addicts tipped the balance from uneasy toleration to unquestioned prohibition. David Musto has argued that the passage of narcotics laws and their stringent enforcement required a reviled “other” in order to create an anti-drug consensus. These “others” have included the “caine-crazed” Southern black man at the turn of the century, the marijuana-smoking Mexican migrant of the late 1930s, and, most recently, the pregnant crack whore. In each of these cases, however, race and class alone were not enough to create public consensus—it was their alternative, and often threatening, sexual roles that decisively alienated drug users from the mainstream. This process of “other-
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ing" was necessarily multivalenced, and the allegations of deviant sexuality and the transgression of conventional gender roles critically reinforced other, more obvious, racial and class antipathies toward drug users.

Ironically, this process of "othering" often strengthened the cultural appeal of drug use. Media representation made casual drug use within subcultures an emblematic signifier of those cultures. Criminal prosecution turned drug users into romantic outlaws, while labeling simplified complicated subcultural rituals into easily imitated affectations. As a result, people who felt disaffected with conventional society could express their alienation by taking drugs and—however tenuous their connection—signal their affinity for the reviled others. Thus, the association of drugs with transgressive subcultures has meant that although the particular cultural connotations have changed, the overriding reason for drug experimentation in the twentieth century has been rebellion against the restrictions of conventional society. The gendering of addiction at the turn of the century continues to haunt reform efforts, for the recurring tension between othering and embracing the other remains the central conundrum of America's ongoinng "war on drugs."

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ENDNOTES

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4. David Courtwright argues that during the "first wave" of American drug use, 1870–1940, the peak of opiate addiction was in the mid-1890s. At that point, he estimates that in the United States there could have been no more than 313,000 addicts or 4.59 per thousand. Within the addict population, almost half were women medical addicts from the middle class. After the effective prohibition of narcotics in the late 1910s, and the creation of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, the available numbers become so politically loaded and statistically unreliable, that Courtwright, even after an exhaustive search, was not able to produce equivalent numbers for the later period. He does posit, however, that in 1920 there could have been no more than 210,000 addicts, or approximately 2 addicts per thousand. Moreover, the number of addicts kept declining through World War II. From contemporary observations, it is clear that from 1900 onwards, there were progressively fewer medical addicts and that there were proportionally more recreational addicts—most of whom were young men from the city. Courtwright, Dark Paradise, 28, 36, 34, 113–115.


7. I use the term "fairies" deliberately. Historian George Chauncey has convincingly argued that in the early decades of this century, people did not see sexuality as a binary heterosexual/homosexual split. Instead, he argues, it was not just sexual preference, but also style that determined sexual labels. Fairies—a self-description—were flamboyantly effeminate men who took the "woman's role." There was also a class dimension to this category. Fairies were usually from the working class, while "queers," who were less overt in their sexual display, were from the middle class. See George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940 (New York, 1994), 12–23.


15. Male prostitution was a barely recognized phenomenon during the Progressive era.

16. Charles W. Earle, “The Opium Habit: A Statistical and Clinical Lecture,” *Chicago Medical Review* 2 (1880): 442–46 in *Yesterday’s Addicts*, 53. In Earle’s sample of 235 addicts, 169 were women. Earle wrote that a third of these women were prostitutes, which would mean that approximately 56 women were addicts—making prostitutes approximately a quarter of all drug users in the sample.


18. Vice Commission of Chicago, *The Social Evil in Chicago: A Study of Existing Conditions, with Recommendations* (Chicago, 1911), 84–87, 289. See also Ruth Rosen, “Introduction” in *The Mae-mie Papers*, ed. by Ruth Rosen and Sue Davidson (Old Westbury, 1977), xiv, xli n5. Interestingly, at the municipal maintenance clinic in Shreveport, Louisiana, which was open from 1919 to 1923, the most frequently given explanation for opiate addiction was venereal disease. Of the 449 patients, 28.5 percent (121 men, 8 women) said they had started taking opiates because of “venereal disease” or “gonorrhea.” When “blood poisoning” and “french fever,” both of which were euphemisms for sexually transmitted diseases, are added to the tally the percentage increases to 30.0 percent (127 men, 8 women), History Sheets, Narcotics Division, Louisiana State Board of Health, Willis Butler Papers, Department of Archives and Special Collections, Noel Memorial Library, Louisiana State University in Shreveport.


20. *The Social Evil in Chicago*, 285; Sara Graham-Mulhall, “Experiences in Narcotic Drug Control in the State of New York,” *New York Medical Journal* 113 (1921): 106–11 in *Yesterday's Addicts*, 211; The Vice Commission of Philadelphia, *A Report on Existing Conditions with Recommendations to the Honorable Rudolph Blankenburg, Mayor of Philadelphia* (n.p., 1913), 34; George J. Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York, 1917; reprint Montclair, N.J., 1969), 15–16. This explanation also had a racist version in which authors asserted that opium smoking was the only way that white prostitutes could endure having sex with Chinese men; for a typical example, see I. L.


23. “135 Fourth Avenue—Saloon Hangout—Drugs,” box 28, Committee of Fourteen Papers, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library. See also “317 West 41st Street—Black and Tan Saloon—Drugs,” box 28, Committee of Fourteen.

24. The Social Evil in Chicago, 242–244. Although he did not state whether they were messenger boys, L. L. Stanley found in a study of 100 prisoners in San Quentin that 15 had learned drug use from prostitutes; Stanley, “Morphinism and Crime,” in Yesterday’s Addicts, 80–83. This pattern continued into the 1940s; see Teddy’s interview in Courtwright et al., Addicts Who Survived, 51.


28. H. S. Cumming, “Control of Drug Addiction Mainly a Police Problem,” The American City Magazine (November 1925), file 126, box 3, sub-series 1, series III, Bureau of Social Hygiene; John S. Haller, Jr. and Robin M. Haller, The Physician and Sexuality in Victorian America (Carbondale, IL., 1974), 302. One of the physical effects of opiate addiction is male impotence. Knowledge of this side effect may be one reason that people associated addiction with effeminacy; see Kane, Drugs That Enslave, 45; W. M. Kraus, “An Analysis of the Action of Morphine upon the Vegetative Nervous System of Man,” Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases 48 (1918) in The Opium Problem, 461; and W. Hale White, Materia Medica, Pharmacy, Pharmacology and Therapeutics (1924) in The Opium Problem, 462; Morgan, Drugs in America, 189 n56.


35. “The White Slavery Films: A Review,” *The Outlook* 106 (1914): 345–50; James Bronson Reynolds to Frederick H. Whittin, 24 October 1914, box 3, Committee of Fourteen. Bruce Raeburn of the William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University has observed that jazz great Jelly Roll Morton’s boast that he was a pimp exemplifies the pimp’s prestige in the early twentieth century.

36. Frederic M. Thrasher, “Drug Addiction and Adolescent Behavior (Study Completed July 5, 1929)” (typescript), 15, 28, file 128, box 3, sub-series 1, series III, Bureau of Social Hygiene. Although John Devon was not a pimp, the things that Leroy Street admired about him—his leisure, his dress, and his worldliness—were the kinds of things that urban youths admired in pimps. It was a result of this type of hero worship the Leroy Street and others picked up their idols’ drug habits; Leroy Street in collaboration with David Loth, *I Was a Drug Addict* (New York, 1953), 11–13.


44. Chauncey, Gay New York, 60–61, 69, 286; Theo. A. Bingham to Hamilton Wright, 23 June 1909, file: “United States Data, New York,” box 1, entry 47, NARG 43. See also the story of a fairy who started taking morphine on the advice of prostitutes in Dai, Opium Addiction in Chicago, 163. It is important to note that although “degenerate” had a variety of meanings in the medical literature, in common parlance it generally denoted homosexuality; Charles Johnston, alias Hattie Ross, to Robert S. Bickerd, 29 July 1910, box 1, Committee of Fourteen.

45. The quotation is from page 9 of an unidentified report in file 51, box 7, Bureau of Social Hygiene, Rockefeller Boards, Record Group 2, Rockefeller Family Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center; Chauncey, Gay New York, 64, 188. See also, The Social Evil in Chicago, 290.

46. Courtwright et al., Addicts Who Survived, 97.

47. The term “hip” was originally associated with opium smoking which occurred “on the hip;” see Jonnes, Hep-Cats, Narcs, and Pipe Dreams, 125.


49. There are a number of examples of cocaine functioning as a gay signifier in German and Swiss medical literature. For an overview of this literature, see Oriana Josseau Kalant, ed. and trans., Maier’s Cocaine Addiction (Der Kokainismus) (1926; reprint, Toronto, 1987), 43, 50–54, 160–162, 167, 182–185.


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