

Crack Cocaine, Crime, and Women

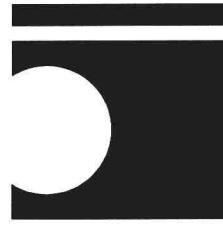
Legal, Social, and Treatment Issues

Sue Mahan

Drug Abuse and Social Policy Series
Vol. 1

Crack Cocaine, Crime, and Women

Legal, Social, and Treatment Issues



Sue Mahan

Drugs, Health, and Social Policy Series
Volume 4



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**Crack
Cocaine,
Crime,
and
Women**





Drugs, Health, and Social Policy Series

Edited by James A. Inciardi

University of Delaware

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The Sage **Drugs, Health, and Social Policy Series** provides students and professionals in the fields of substance abuse, AIDS, public health, and criminal justice access to current research, programs, and policy issues particular to their specialties. Each year, four new volumes will focus on a topic of national significance.

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In addition, we would like to offer appreciation to numerous “crack mothers” who participated in our study, not only those whose interviews are recorded in Part I but also many others. Without their assistance, this book would not have come to life.

Prologue

Work began on this book at the University of Central Florida—Daytona Beach in 1989. It has been a collaborative effort with many contributors, beginning with the initiative of Della Alice Prestwood. She gathered preliminary data in a community survey to establish the extent and nature of the local problem of crack mothers. The next study, in 1990, considered the issue of treatment and provided a case study of a program that had been developed for pregnant women addicted to cocaine. Also in 1990, Julie Howkins examined the legal issues concerning pregnancy and criminalization. Her work included a survey of state legislators. Throughout 1993, the author interviewed crack-addicted women about their lifestyles. In 1995, Valencia Gallon provided legal research to expand the analysis of the criminalization of pregnancy. Also in 1995 and in 1996, Andrea Holmes collected and organized the extensive bibliography for this book. From 1989 through 1996, when the book was completed, Jackie Connelly kept the project going with assistance and editing.

Our efforts are offered in the memory of Alice Prestwood, who planted the seed but did not live to see the fruit.

Introduction

This is a book about women addicted to crack cocaine. It describes lives in a subculture called Crackworld. It explains the legal issues that have developed because of women's involvement in addiction-related crime, including a gender-specific crime called fetal endangerment. It also explores treatment programs for addicted women who have children. A common street name for crack cocaine is "rock." "Rock stars" see the glamorous side of the crack market, with its money, power, and pleasure. "Rock stars," however, become "rock monsters" trapped in a lifestyle of degradation, criminality, and uncontrollable impulses.

Since 1989, when crack mothers first attracted public attention, until the present, the issue of "crack moms" has been examined from many perspectives. There is still no end to the controversy about the problem. It is the purpose of this book to bring together divergent views rather than contribute to the controversy. The approach is threefold: subcultural, legal, and treatment. The book is divided into three parts, with each part further subdivided into three sections. The first section covers the background concepts and issues that are important to review with

regard to each of the three approaches. The second section includes a systematic analysis of the way these issues affect persons, policies, and programs. The third section contains a case study that explores the concepts within a real-life situation.

The lifestyles of crack abusers in decaying neighborhoods is described in Part I as a subculture called Crackworld. The lifestyle can be found in large urban areas but also in smaller cities and elsewhere. The concepts and issues are socioeconomic. The combination of violence and degradation that is found in Crackworld is especially costly for women.

The applications of legal options of dealing with crack abusers are considered in Part II as they relate to the criminalization of pregnancy. The criminal alternatives in effect include charges of child abuse or neglect, manslaughter, or delivery of a controlled substance to a minor. Involuntary detention may be invoked as a criminal or a civil option. In some states, laws have been rewritten to apply particularly to fetal endangerment. Considering a fetus as a person goes beyond Supreme Court decisions and has not been upheld in appeals courts.

The development of treatment programs is the subject of Part III. Treatment for crack users must address two special patterns. First, the crack lifestyle includes compulsive dysfunctional sexuality that may be little understood and difficult to treat. Second, crack users are more likely than other substance abusers to have been victims of extreme violence. Despite these distinctions, much of what has been successful in treatment for other addictions has been applied to crack-abusing patients with overall positive outcomes. Unfortunately, even though the models are available and might be applied successfully in theory, in practice there are few or no programs available for those long-term, drug-abusing mothers who are most in need of them.

Explanations offered in this book about women who smoke crack come from a broad range of interests. The descriptions were developed over a long span of study. The overview is intended to be both informative and useful. The three different perspectives on the problem—subcultural, legal, and treatment—demonstrate the complexity of the issues. Social workers, criminal justice authorities, and treatment providers, all of whom must deal with cocaine-abusing mothers, have more in common than often appears.

More important, everyone in the United States has more in common with the problems faced by addicted mothers than we may possibly imagine. Our position in the future will depend on how we treat the infants and children of today. To most politicians and voters, treatment policies are not considered to be as important as legal policies, yet

without concern for how treatment is provided, we pay a high cost in crime and wasted resources. Often, programs meant to be preventive are considered expendable and likely to be the first cut when budgets are trimmed. Most significant of all, the obvious plight of those living in decaying, run-down neighborhoods is thought to be nobody's problem but their own.

The children of Crackworld are everybody's children, and their mothers are a humanistic concern. There are no easy answers to providing for their needs, but some things have become obvious. The problem of babies born to substance-abusing mothers cannot be solved by pitting the interests of mothers against those of infants. Policy and resources must provide for their common interests and mutual well-being.

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1. Crackworld

As the use of crack spread across the United States, women became involved in drug use as never before. Various academic and government studies showed higher rates of dependence for women than for men (Inciardi, Lockwood, & Pottieger, 1993; National Institute of Justice, 1990). During the 1980s, a picture of the lifestyle of crack addicts emerged from these and other studies. The image of a subculture surfaced, a microcosm that was part of the larger culture but within it. The customs, beliefs, and traditions of another world became common within that subculture. A large proportion of members are female, and sexual exchanges have a central role in the day-to-day lives of those in this subculture, which in this book is called Crackworld.

The Subculture: Concepts and Issues

The Crack Plague

The first mention of “crack” appeared in 1985 on a back page, in a largely unnoticed article of *The New York Times*. In the next 11 months, crack took on a life of its own. More than 1,000 stories in which crack figured prominently appeared in the major United States media. In 1986, both CBS and NBC produced prime time reports about crack. In these and other stories, the implication was clear: Crack led the user almost immediately into a nightmare world from which there was little likelihood of escape (Inciardi, 1992).

The nickname “crack” comes from the crackling sound the drug makes when it is smoked. In the most common method for making crack, cocaine hydrochloride powder is converted into crack by cooking it in a mixture of baking soda and water, then heat-drying. The hard substance that remains is broken into “rocks” and smoked (Abadinsky, 1989).

Crack is known by many names, such as “hard white” and “flavor.” There are “bricks,” “boulders,” and “eight-balls” (large rocks or slabs of crack), “doo-wap” (two rocks), and “crumbs,” “shake,” and “kibbles & bits” (for smaller pieces). There is the “dope man” or “bond man” who can deliver a “cookie” (large quantity), which he carries in his “bomb bag” to the “crack house.” The dope man may also deal or “juggle” his crack on the street (Inciardi, 1992).

In many crack houses, the drug may be displayed on boards, tables, or mirrors, whereas in the street, crack is packaged in small glass vials or plastic bags. In a few locales, these bags are sealed or stamped with a brand name, affording the illusion of quality control and giving the buyer a specific name for which to ask. In New York City, crack labels such as “White Cloud,” “Conan,” and “Hardball” were reported. In Miami, researchers found labels including “Cigarette” (from a type of speedboat), “Biscayne Babe” (for Biscayne Boulevard prostitutes), “Bogey” (of the movie *Key Largo*), and “Noriega’s Holiday” (for the former Panamanian dictator) (Inciardi, 1992).

Crack has been called the fast food variety of cocaine. It is cheap and easy to conceal, and it vaporizes with practically no odor. The gratification it brings is swift, an intense, almost sexual euphoria that lasts less than five minutes. Smoking cocaine, as opposed to snorting it, results in more immediate and direct absorption of the drug. It produces a quicker and more compelling high, sometimes called a “rush.”

By this method of ingestion, the drug vaporizes from the heat and is inhaled. The nature by which the drug is taken into the bloodstream is believed to increase both the abuse liability and dependence potential. There is a risk of acute toxic reactions to crack, including brain seizure, cardiac irregularities, respiratory paralysis, paranoid psychosis, and pulmonary dysfunction (Inciardi, 1992, p. 127).

Subculture

Although using crack never became popular in the general population, its appeal in the majority of the nation's inner cities has endured. There is little reason to expect change for the better (Inciardi, 1992, chap. 4), for in the decaying communities of the United States, a picture has emerged of a culture of powerlessness (Boyle & Anglin, 1993).

This culture is the epitome of poverty, ethnic segregation, and polarized gender relations. It is not an aberration of life in the United States but a reflection of it (Ouellet, Wiebel, Jimenez, & Johnson, 1993). The subculture of Crackworld shows the underside of the American dream. Our society sustains classist, racist, and sexist public policies that reflect the interests of those in power. For those facing the results of these policies, the lifestyle is dominated by unmet economic, social, and personal needs.

Crackworld is found in a community with problems, poverty, crime, child neglect, homelessness, and drug addiction being only the most obvious. These neighborhoods suffer from poor community health. The churches, the press, and the family have lost power. People here exist on the economic margins, more and more dependent on the will and decisions of outside forces.

Although there are crack users in glamour professions and the upper and middle classes, these users are not considered members of the Crackworld subculture. By the nature of their more affluent lifestyles, crack users with means made the cocaine industry prosper. Poor drug users and sellers have been the most visible, most often arrested, and most often filmed and written about (Williams, 1992).

Along with the media, academic and government researchers are also likely to study the lifestyles of crack users who are the poorest members of their communities. Many are homeless or have only temporary living arrangements. Few have marketable job skills or significant work experience (Koester & Schwartz, 1993). There are others who are less disabled by crack but whose lives are affected by using the drug. Those who use the drug less frequently and those whose resources keep them off the street are not likely to be included in stories about crack, either

in the media or in academic research, but their contribution to the subculture must be considered.

Although crack dealers commonly have regular, neighborhood customers, they cannot depend on them for the large sums of money involved in the crack trade. The crack market depends on drive-up customers who live outside Crackworld and go there to get drugs. The market also depends on proceeds from selling stolen goods, which crack addicts use to pay for the drug. The market for stolen goods is fed by those with means who want to buy luxury goods at low prices. These key players are not always visible in the subculture, but they are there.

Others who are key players in Crackworld are law enforcement agents and city and county authorities. Although it may appear that those in authority are merely passing through Crackworld because they do not reside there, their impact is immeasurable.

Both for those who use crack and for those who profit from it, one of the important characteristics of the crack subculture found by researchers is a lack of peer pressure to moderate drug use. The economics of crack houses encourage immoderate use. Dealers and those in charge of crack houses exploit desperate users. Interpersonal relations are often dominated by intimidation and fear (Zinberg, 1984). Crackworld portrays the classical cyclical pattern of crime financing use, use encouraging more use, and more use encouraging more crime (Inciardi et al., 1993, p. 131).

Outside cultural messages promote neediness and dissatisfaction among the members of Crackworld. Their lifestyles, being marginal to the rest of the economy, lead to a reality very different from the one they see on television or hear about in the news. Not only are their lives bleak, but they also are reminded at every turn that others do not suffer from the same fate. Their dissatisfaction may fester when all avenues to that envisioned reality are blocked and no opportunities for real economic change present themselves.

At the same time, street markets flourish as a result of massive importation of cocaine. Despite the most stringent measures to rid American society of the scourge of drug addiction, the quantity and quality of drugs available in street markets has increased. As law enforcement has developed more systematic methods to break up the crack market, drug traffickers have developed more sophisticated and effective methods of transporting and distributing their product. Some neighborhoods, through their own organized efforts, have managed to rid themselves of the crack market. Although that may save one community from annihilation, the market only moves on; it is not

destroyed. Often the market thrives by moving from one location to another whenever there are efforts at control. The same is true at the international level: When a supplier is wiped out in one location, another source opens up in another location and takes over the newly vacated position in the market.

The broader culture also maintains a well-paying marketplace for sexual services, making prostitution a likely source of money to buy crack. The drug market flourishes from the money that nonusers of crack pay to prostitutes who are addicted. Sometimes a prostitute may support, with her earnings, her own habit and those of others with whom she is involved.

Residents of Crackworld also have lost alternatives in the legal employment market because of structural changes in the economy. Throughout the 1980s, low-income, unskilled workers were displaced by changes in the economy and technological innovations. Large corporate enterprises that controlled the economy had no interest in poorly educated, ill-prepared workers in low-income communities. Intense competition for jobs was fueled by an influx of immigration from the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia.

Added to the community disorganization is the degradation of municipal services supporting health, housing, and education for the poor. Many community organizations now found in inner-city areas were initiated in the early 1970s. After more than 20 years, many of them have broken down under the strain of poverty and pathology. Departments of welfare are notoriously understaffed and overextended. Citizens who never visit and know nothing about Crackworld are unconcerned that so many social ills have been concentrated in isolated neighborhoods. Crack subcultures therefore continue to be found amid the ruins of American society (Zinberg, 1984).

Inner Cities

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics 1990 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, the prevalence of illegal drug use is higher in large than in small metropolitan areas and nonmetropolitan areas. Of respondents in large metropolitan areas, 15% admitted to illicit drug use in the past year, compared with 13% of respondents in small metropolitan areas and 11% of nonmetropolitan respondents. Marijuana and cocaine are more likely to be used in metropolitan areas. In rural areas, the most widely abused drug is alcohol. The prevalence of use of other drugs such as inhalants may be higher in rural areas than elsewhere (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992). Illicit drug users outside