

MARIJUANA, MEXICO AND THE MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

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Prohibition movements have many common threads. Very often these movements follow an economic downturn. Furthermore, the group most often targeted by these movements is a displaced immigrant labor force. Alcohol prohibition suppressed Irish and German immigrants who came to the country to work in the factories. Early opium regulations were aimed at Chinese immigrants who entered the country to build the railroads. Similarly, marijuana prohibition targeted Mexican immigrants working in agriculture. For each of these prohibition movements, the media has provided a powerful vehicle for political rhetoric construction and reproduction.

This thesis documents contemporary anti-drug policy, politics and rhetoric within the context of historical prohibition movement patterns. To develop a theoretical framework I synthesized historical and sociological accounts of five prohibition movements: alcohol, opium, cocaine, marijuana and the war on drugs. I applied this framework to an analysis of current media accounts of marijuana related crime. Using content analysis, I analyzed 75 news articles published between 2009-2011 about marijuana related crime from the four most popular U.S. newspapers, by readership. I found evidence to suggest that historical patterns are still being reproduced in contemporary media accounts of drug related crimes.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the United States there have been many prohibition movements. While the stated or primary goal of these movements has typically been to control a substance or use of a substance, a secondary or underlying result has often been the oppression of a minority population. Beginning with the earliest prohibition movements, anti-drug and alcohol policy, politics and rhetoric have been used to oppress minority populations. This phenomenon is sometimes manifested through biased policies that target specific segments of the population and also through biased enforcement of a policy.

The U.S. government has long placed restrictions on the consumption of certain substances (Musto 1973). From alcohol prohibition to the war on drugs, local, state and national efforts have been aimed at controlling substances and their users (Goode 2005). Some regulations have been brought about through great public support and some have been created by small groups of politicians (Blocker 1989). As long as there have been anti-drug and alcohol laws they have been used to suppress racial minorities (Helmer 1975).

The ways that drug laws have been used as a tool of racial oppression have varied. Sometimes racial oppression was accomplished through Jim Crow style laws that only applied to certain people. Sometimes the laws only targeted methods of consumption

avored by specific racial groups. Sometimes the laws applied to everyone but were only enforced to suppress minorities (Bretcher 1972). Whatever the case prohibition movements have historically been employed as a tool of racial oppression (Gusfield 1969). This thesis is an attempt to identify that pattern, isolate it and analyze if it is still in effect today through a critical race lens.

This thesis begins with a historical overview of racially motivated prohibition movements. I synthesize the literature on past prohibition movements that document prohibition as a tool of racial oppression. The literature review chapter begins with a look at alcohol prohibition, then moves on to opium and cocaine prohibition, then looks at marijuana prohibition and finally examines the war on drugs and contemporary literature relevant to race and media. While examining these sources I identify common elements across prohibition movements. These common elements form a pattern or process that remains relatively constant across movements. This pattern, once identified, becomes the theoretical framework in which this research is grounded. The theoretical framework chapter begins by presenting this framework. Next the framework is explained and the variables are defined. Finally several hypotheses are presented based on the framework. This theoretical framework includes economic, social and political variables. When these variables are all present, the outcome is usually the same; discriminative policies arise or policies are discriminately enforced to suppress racial minorities.

The variables identified in the theoretical framework include: the economy, politicians, the media, minority populations and policy outcomes. Typically the media and politicians play a key role in associating a minority population with a drug problem.

Once this process of association has taken place, policies are created or enforced to suppress the minority population. Historically, the minority populations targeted have been immigrant labor forces that become displaced after an economic downturn.

Using the theoretical framework identified in the literature review, this thesis analyzes contemporary data using non-intrusive methods. The methods chapter begins with a short discussion about the purpose of this research, next is a discussion of sampling and data analysis, following this examination is a discussion of content analysis as a methodology and finally the coding themes are defined. Data was selected and analyzed based on the theoretical framework identified in the literature review. The data for this study was drawn from printed news media.

The findings chapter discusses patterns identified in the historical literature review still manifested in current prohibition movements. By establishing a reoccurrence in this racialized pattern, this thesis contributes to the existing body of social scientific work on race and drug policy. It also provides a framework that can be used to explain other discriminate prohibition movements. Finally, the work also raises awareness that may assist with avoiding drug policy directed at racial minorities. The conclusion discusses limitations, contributions and future directions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the time of this writing, California's economy is near an all time low, marijuana remains illegal within the state and the country, anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise and minorities disproportionately bear the brunt of the nation's drug laws (Levine et al. 2010). Historically, this situation is not unusual; rather, it mirrors a pattern in which minority populations, often immigrants, are controlled through anti-drug and alcohol rhetoric, politics and policy. This literature review demonstrates and explains the pervasiveness of that pattern.

Although this literature review is largely historical, it is an attempt to interpret history through a specific lens, not add to it by the presentation of new historical data. That being said, this is also not a comprehensive history of U.S. domestic drug policy¹. The reason for this being that U.S. domestic drug policy is imbedded in broader social systems and presumably not every facet was motivated or influenced by racism. This literature review emphasizes the components of U.S. domestic drug policy that are linked to systemic racism. Systemic racism may be understood as “a diverse assortment of racist practices: the unjustly gained political and economic power of whites; the continuing resource inequalities; the rationalizing white racist frame; and the major institutions created to preserve white advantage and power” (Feagin 2010: 9).

¹ For such a history see Musto (1990, 2002).

This literature review is organized by substance and the associated prohibition movements. Specific populations have long been associated with the use of specific substances (Belenko 2000). I discuss how each of these associations has influenced rhetoric, politics and policy separately. There is some overlap in the time frame during which specific substances were prohibited. Therefore a rigid chronological ordering would not allow for a full examination of the relationship between substance, user and prohibition movement.

I begin my examination with alcohol prohibition and the temperance movement. I then move on to Opium and Cocaine. The choice to place them together is largely influenced by the coinciding time period in which they were popular and first regulated in the United States. Their use, on the other hand, was associated with separate minority populations (Goode 2005). Next I move on to an examination of U.S. marijuana prohibition. Then I look at crack cocaine and the war on drugs. Although crack and cocaine are very similar, made from the same substance, the choice to separate them for the purpose of this literature review is motivated by the historical distance between their introduction into American society and coinciding prohibition movements. Finally, I examine contemporary scholarship on racism in the American media in order to frame this work in the broader theoretical scholarship.

Alcohol Prohibition and the Temperance Movement (1784-1920)

Alcohol consumption was commonplace and less than moderate in early American society. During the colonial period alcohol was part of most people's daily diets and "virtually everyone drank virtually all the time" (Blocker 1989: 3). In fact about half of all families produced their own alcohol (Blocker 1989: 3). At the time of the first U.S. census Americans consumed a per capita average of 5.8 gallons of absolute alcohol. By 1830 the number had risen to 7.1 gallons or 2 and half ounces of pure alcohol per person per day (Goode 2005). Due to the difference in social structures, alcoholism and heavy drinking were not considered social problems. This points to an interesting trend that can be seen across prohibition movements: prohibition efforts are not necessarily related to levels of consumption. There is not a direct correlation between a substance becoming illegal and the number of people using it; however, perceived levels of use are sometimes inflated through political rhetoric and media.

Alcohol prohibition became law in 1919 with the passage of the 18th amendment to the constitution. However, the temperance movement in the United States dates back to the 17th century (Abadinsky 2001: 20). It is well documented that nativism and anti-minority attitudes often fueled the U.S. Temperance movement and also provided a context in which the Ku Klux Klan was able to build a base of support (Abadinsky 2001).

The early United States temperance movement was partially a means to control the already oppressed minority population. As far back as the colonial period there were certain restrictions on who could and who could not consume alcohol (Gusfield 1963). This discriminative regulation seems unusual given the otherwise pervasive nature of

alcohol consumption noted above. Blacks, Indians and servants were forbidden to consume or purchase alcohol (Gusfield 1963: 43). The rationale behind differential regulation was that these subordinated minorities lacked the moral character to control themselves while under the influence of alcohol. The colonists feared a rebellion from such groups, believing intoxication could lead to an uprising. By not allowing certain groups to drink, while every middle class man, woman and child consumed alcohol, the middle class was symbolically asserting their moral superiority. The middle class had the character and moral values to be able to consume alcohol without succumbing to indecent behaviors while the subordinated groups, it was believed, did not. It is clear then that from its inception the United States temperance movement was used to control already marginalized populations as well as to assert the moral superiority of the white middle class.

Gusfield's (1963) history of the United States temperance movement details the racial tensions that fueled temperance rhetoric, politics and eventually policy. Gusfield (1963) asserts, "the political role of Temperance emerged in the 1840's in its use as a symbol of native and immigrant, Protestant and Catholic tensions" (6). At the time, drinking alcohol was a common alternative to drinking clean water, which was scarce. Also during this time the United States' unskilled labor force was made up largely of German and Irish immigrants. Both groups came from a predominately wet and Catholic culture and consumed beer and whiskey as a regular part of their diet. The Catholic immigrants stood in stark contrast to the largely Protestant American middle class that

came to view abstinence as a way to separate themselves from the immigrant culture². Prohibition then could be viewed as an attempt to destroy the immigrant culture through the tyranny of the majority, as well as a way to assert the moral superiority of the middle class. At the time the Protestant American middle class was becoming increasingly aware of a variety of social problems associated with industrialization, urbanization and immigration, and, seeking to preserve their own class interests, they came to blame immigrants and alcohol.

It was this tension between the immigrant Catholics and the native Protestants that would move prohibition into State and eventually Federal law. This is not to suggest that the sole cause of prohibition was racial and cultural tension. Nor would it be prudent to suggest that there were no legitimate grievances against alcohol made by the reformers. As Blocker (1989) suggests women in particular had a serious grievance against alcohol (61). Lacking rights and a certain status in society, women relied on men and if a man chose to take to drunkenness then a dependent woman and her children might experience a serious threat to resources and survival. While prohibition was a multifaceted issue, racial and cultural tensions alone do not account for the entire cause of the movement. What is important for this current examination is that there is ample evidence that temperance was driven by nativism, fueled by racial and cultural tensions and used to control oppressed, working class, and minority populations.

² The Protestant ethic provided the religious basis for the temperance ideology.

Opium, Cocaine and the Harrison Act (1850-1930)

Before comprehensive drug legislation was passed in the early twentieth century, cocaine and a variety of opium based products such as codeine, laudanum, heroin and morphine were widely available through pharmacists, mail order, patent medicines, general stores and even soft drinks. Goode (2005) estimates that at the time per capita drug use was greater than that of present day America. Brecher (1972) asserts that the country in this time period “could quite properly be described as a dope fiend’s paradise” (3). Despite such robust use and mainstream acceptance, both cocaine and opium, as well as their derivatives, would be illegal in the United States less than a century after cocaine was first isolated and heroin was first synthesized. The Harrison Narcotics Tax Act, passed in 1914, taxed and regulated cocaine, opium and all preparations containing them (Abadinsky 2001). Although the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 had begun the process of drug regulation, the Harrison Act effectively criminalized the producers, dealers and users of drugs such as cocaine, opium and their derivatives. By 1930 and the passage of the Uniform Drug Act, drug prohibition would be pervasive and commonplace. How the public perception of drug use changed so dramatically in such a short time can be attributed to a variety of factors and is a matter of some debate (Belenko 2000). What is clear however is that the association of cocaine and opium with minority populations through the media and political rhetoric of the day was one major factor (Musto 1973).

Cocaine

The association of cocaine with black criminality was especially common in the South and fueled the rise of anti-cocaine rhetoric at the turn of the century (Goode 2005). Blacks were largely lower class workers, laborers at the bottom of the social pyramid, many of whom used cocaine to stay awake during long work hours. White southerners believed that blacks, under the influence of cocaine, would rape white women and wreak havoc on white society (Ashley 1975). Helmer (1975) suggests that a cluster of articles was released testifying to the terrible crimes blacks would commit against whites while under cocaine's spell. Some examples of the crimes described include murder, theft and especially rape. According to Musto (1973), there is little evidence to suggest that cocaine use caused any such crime wave, rather "anticipation of black rebellion caused white alarm" (7). Indeed so great was the fear of blacks that southern police departments are thought to have switched from 32 to 38 caliber bullets. The belief was that the 32's would not affect black men under the stimulating effects of cocaine (Musto 1973: 7). In the end the movement to ban cocaine was driven largely out of fear of black rebellion coupled with the growing realization of the actual dangers of cocaine use such as overdose and addiction. One particularly strange effect of the anti-cocaine rhetoric of the day was that the South came to support stronger federal drug control driven by their fear of black violence and uprising. The South, less than a century earlier, had fought to prevent stronger federal regulation, specifically the federal government's attempt to abolish slavery in Southern states.

Opium

The first legislation to prohibit opium use in the United States was adopted in San Francisco in 1875 (Abadinsky 2001). The ordinance was motivated by racism rather than concerns for public health or safety (Brecher 1972). Opium use had come into prevalence with little public alarm via the patent medicine industry and liberal prescription practices (Courtwright 2001). It wasn't until opium became associated with the Chinese that a backlash against it developed (Goode 2005). The Chinese had come in large numbers to America to build the railroads and according to Musto (1973) "after economic depression made them a labor surplus and a threat to American citizens many forms of antagonism arose to drive them out" (6). Because the Chinese were associated with smoking opium, it became a point on which they could be persecuted.

As with the anti-cocaine movement, the rhetoric employed emphasized the dangers to the white middle class. Media stories circulated claiming that respectable white women were being lured into opium dens where they were raped or led into lives of prostitution (Courtwright 1982). Religious leaders also took up the cause by making opium addiction a moral issue (Chouvy 2009). The first opium legislation only targeted smoking opium, which was the form of ingestion most frequently used by the Chinese. White middle class use of opium through pharmacies and patent medicines continued even as the Chinese were demonized for smoking it. However in the years to come opium use of all kinds would come to be associated with the underclass and full prohibition would take hold (Abadinsky 2001).

It is clear that cocaine and opium were not subjects of great public concern until their use became associated with minority populations. Although both substances would become illegal under the same federal policy, they lost public favor by their association with the black and Chinese populations. These minority populations were both comprised of lower class laborers who did the work unwanted by whites. Prior to such associations the more affluent white middle class used both substances extensively. It is even said that Benjamin Franklin used opium in his last days (Goode 2005). Similarly Sigmund Freud was an avid user and one of cocaine's early champions (Brecher 1972). Again, it would not be reasonable to suggest that racism, nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment were the only causes of cocaine and opium prohibition in the United States. Indeed, there are very real dangers associated with the use of both drugs. What is clear, however, is that the anti-drug campaigns and politics of the time played heavily on white America's fears and were used to further subordinate minority populations who came to the country as laborers. This process of racial subordination through drug problem association was mobilized through sensationalized media coverage that drove public opinion and was eventually translated into policy.

Marijuana, Anslinger and the Marijuana Tax Act (1900-1937)

Like cocaine and opium, marijuana enjoyed significant use in the United States in the 1800's. Affluent members of society enjoyed marijuana in upscale hashish clubs (Inciardi 2002). Marijuana was widely available in patent medicines (Goode 2005). The weed grew "like dandelions" across the country (Musto 1999: 222). Even George

Washington is thought to have grown and used Cannabis for medical reasons (Goode 1969). Also like cocaine and opium, marijuana use became stigmatized when it became associated with minority populations and the underclass.

Bonnie and Whitebread (1970) suggest that marijuana legislation was primarily influenced by racism. Marijuana prohibition in the United States is generally credited to Harry J. Anslinger, head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in the mid 1900's (Inciardi 2002), however, more localized efforts to prohibit marijuana use emerged long before Anslinger. Early efforts to prohibit marijuana use and cultivation were largely aimed at minority groups associated with the plant. Fear of Mexicans and to a lesser extent blacks, drove such efforts (Rosenthal & Kubby 1996). Mexicans had immigrated into the country in large numbers to fill labor jobs in factories and agriculture (Musto 1999). It is suggested that early marijuana laws were largely a means by which to subjugate the growing Mexican population (Goode 2005). As the economy tightened, distaste for Mexican aliens grew and such sentiments were eventually translated into policy.

By 1933, thirty-three states had laws prohibiting the non-medical use of marijuana (Bonnie & Whitebread 1975). Anti-marijuana policy was fueled by a myriad of media accounts relating marijuana use to violent crime. According to Inciardi (2002), the drug “was considered particularly dangerous because of its alien (Mexican) origins” (32). Such accounts often emphasized the particularly disturbing effects the plant had on the “inferior” races, particularly Mexicans (Abadinsky 2001). Take for example the following excerpt about marijuana use among lower class Mexicans from a 1917 San Antonio newspaper: “The men who smoke this herb become excited to such an extent

that they go through periods of near frenzy, and worse, it is always aggressive as the crimes which they commit” (Bonnie & Whitebread 1975). Claims that marijuana caused “violence, lawlessness and crime” were common and saturated the news media (Goode 2005). Musto (1999) explains “as early as 1919 federal officials were reporting that marijuana was a cause of violence among Mexican prisoners in the southwestern states” (219). In a 1920’s newspaper an army botanist is reported as claiming that under marijuana’s influence “reckless men become bloodthirsty, trebly daring and dangerous to an uncontrollable degree” (Goode 2005: 102). Although there was little evidence to suggest even a correlation between violent crime and marijuana use, the absence of evidence to substantiate such stories went largely ignored (Musto 1999). News Stories claiming that marijuana use was responsible for a variety of violent crimes, including rape and murder, had the effect of creating little public opposition to policies aimed at eradicating marijuana use (Bonnie & Whitebread 1970). Likewise, popular fiction of the 20’s provided sensationalized accounts of the consequences of marijuana use (Inciardi 2002).

By 1930 the perception of the social ills of marijuana held by a relatively small group of overzealous editors and legislators was noticed by the newly installed Commissioner of the Treasury Department’s Bureau of Narcotics, Harry J. Anslinger (Inciardi 2002). Anslinger used the issue to forward his political career and make a name for himself. Like the prohibitionists before him, Anslinger relied on propaganda, the media and political rhetoric to fuel his cause (Goode 2005). He produced a plethora of anti-marijuana articles and films. In what is probably one of Anslinger’s best known

pieces of propaganda, he declared Cannabis to be “the assassin of youth” in a story of the same name about a young man turned murderer while under the spell of Cannabis (Anslinger 1937). Also like the anti-marijuana activists before him, Anslinger’s propaganda was often racialized and played off of fear of alien populations (Inciardi 2002). Take for example the following excerpt from a letter Anslinger published in the Alamosa Daily Courier. The letter describes a Mexican-American under the influence of Cannabis attacking a young girl:

I wish I could show you what a small marihuana cigarette can do to one of our degenerate Spanish-speaking residents. That’s why our problem is so great; the greatest percentage of our population is composed of Spanish-speaking persons, most of who are low mentally, because of social and racial conditions (Goode 2005: 103).

By 1937 Anslinger’s efforts paid off and the first federal legislation to criminalize marijuana was passed (Musto 1999). This occurred despite the fact that Anslinger brought no scientific evidence or testimony to support his case to congress (Bonnie & Whitebread 1975). The Marijuana Tax Stamp act was modeled after similar legislation used to ban machine guns. The act required any person wishing to transfer or possess marijuana to first pay a tax and procure a stamp. The catch was that there were no stamps. Even if there had been stamps, the law required that the applicant must have the marijuana to apply for the stamp. However, if one was in possession of marijuana, they were already in violation of the law (Goode 2005). The law had little to no opposition and so it was that marijuana became federally criminalized.

The movement to criminalize marijuana in the United States was, like the prohibition movements before it, largely a tool to suppress feared lower class minority

populations. Although there was little evidence that marijuana was responsible for the social ills with which it was associated, there was also little opposition to its prohibition. By the time marijuana became illegal at the federal level, it had largely fallen out of favor with the white middle class in large part because of its association with minorities and the underclass. Its prohibition then can be understood as a consequence of racist fears, political ambitions and an economic downturn.

Crack and the War on Drugs (1971-2010)

The war on drugs is the name used to describe the United State's current efforts to eradicate the use, sale and production of certain psychoactive substances through domestic and foreign efforts. The name and facets of the current policy are the result of President Richard Nixon's efforts in the 1970's (Belenko 2000). President Nixon "felt a reflective disgust for illegal drugs and the people who used them" and called drugs the "modern curse of the youth" (Goode 2005: 105). Nixon used magnifying language in his rhetoric such as "plague" and "epidemic" and made drug policy a major part of his political platform. Additionally, Goode (2005) suggests that Nixon played a large role in eliminating treatment programs and focusing drug policy on punishment. The war on drugs represents renewed efforts by the country to get tough on drugs. Policy that falls under this name has been repeatedly criticized as being ineffective, harmful and racially biased (Levine et al. 2010). Jones (2010) describes the war on drugs as "effectively a war on young black men and increasingly women" (159). Even the name "war on drugs" has been the subject of repeated criticism (Szasz 1988).

Of the many criticisms lobbied against the war on drugs, the one most pertinent to this analysis is that it is racially biased. Racial bias is particularly evident in arrest rates and differential sentencing guidelines used under war on drugs policies. According to Schneider (1998), as of 1994 “in at least thirty major cities blacks were ten times more likely to be arrested for drugs than whites” (432). Indeed, a recent report by the Drug Policy Alliance found that blacks were up to 12 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession in California (Levine et al. 2010). Levine goes on to juxtapose this finding with U.S. government studies such as the SAMSHA that consistently find that blacks and latinos use marijuana at lower rates than whites (Levine et al. 2010). Despite such disturbing statistics, contemporary marijuana policy is not as frequently criticized for being racist as the policy around another drug: crack.

Crack

Crack first gained national attention in the 1980s and was soon followed by some of the harshest U.S. drug policy in recent history (Reinarman & Levine 1997). In addition to being some of the most stringent drug laws on the books, crack laws are criticized as being among the most racially biased. While middle class whites in the suburbs primarily consume powder cocaine, crack is more often found in predominantly black inner city neighborhoods (Feagin 2010). Police efforts aimed at enforcement are overwhelmingly directed at black dealers and users (Berndt 2003). Possession of a simple gram of crack cocaine carries the same mandatory sentence of 100 grams of powder cocaine (Musto 1999). This one hundred to one disparity can be considered particularly strong given the

fact that crack's active ingredient is powder cocaine (Goode 2005). According to Morgan and Zimmer (1997) "materially and pharmacologically, crack is cocaine" (131).

How has crack policy come to be so much harsher than the policy directed at its active ingredient, powder cocaine? Like the drug scares that came before it, the media and political rhetoric of the time were chief actors in the crack drama. Also like the drug scares before it, rhetoric emphasized the threat to innocent people and the cost to middle class society. The myth of crack babies along with other sensationalized media stories perpetuated the fear surrounding use of the drug (Inciardi 2002). The crack baby myth is a media fabrication based on empirically flawed research that suggests that 100,000 babies are born every year deformed and addicted to crack, as a result of cocaine use during pregnancy, costing taxpayers around "20 billion dollars" (Morgan and Zimmer 1997: 151). Morgan and Zimmer (1997) go on to suggest that there are no such babies, the research is not conclusive and the research is based on cocaine and not crack, specifically. The crack baby myth lets mainstream white America justify a racially biased drug war because of the danger of drugs to innocent children (Sandy 2003). Before crack gained national attention in the 80's, cocaine use jumped sharply among middle class whites in the 70's. However it wasn't until cocaine became associated with a "dangerous class" that politicians and the media took notice (Reinarman & Levine 1997: 33). Reinarman & Levine (1997) suggest "crack attracted the attention of politicians and the media because of its downward mobility to and increased visibility in ghettos and barrios" (33).

Public concern about crack cocaine was politically crafted and widely promoted in the media. In 1998, then President Bush wished to have federal agents arrest a dealer selling crack directly in front of the White House. He felt that this would demonstrate the magnitude of the problem. The plan was that Bush would then hold up the crack in a speech announcing that the problem had become so pervasive that one could buy crack anywhere, including in front of the nation's capitol building. Try as they might the DEA could not find anyone selling crack anywhere near the White House. Instead they had to arrange for an 18-year-old high school senior to meet them there with the crack. Agents did not arrest the student, but instead purchased the crack that Bush would hold up in his speech for \$2,400 (Reinarman & Levine 1997). This incident demonstrates the way in which the crack scare was manufactured by the media and by politicians.

While the crack scare has come and gone, the harsh sentencing guidelines and disproportionate arrest rates remain with us. Many see the biased enforcement in crack laws and other drug policy as a continuation of the historical trend of using drug policy and anti-drug rhetoric to oppress racial minorities (Alexander & Gyamerah 1997). Harsh drug laws have also been blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS within minority communities (Schneider 1998). For example, laws that allow drug users to be arrested and prosecuted for possession of drug paraphernalia prevent some users from carrying their own needles. When users don't carry their own needles, they are more likely to share needles with other users thus greatly enhancing their chances of contracting a virus such as HIV.

It is true that drugs like crack have a negative impact on society. Users sometimes turn to prostitution or other crimes to support their habits. Gangs often engage in violent confrontations over the right to control the drug trade in a given area, sometimes harming innocent people. Finally, using drugs such as crack can have negative health consequences. Some might argue however that the cost of current enforcement practices far outweighs such dangers. Whatever the case, what is clear is that the war on drugs disproportionately targets minorities, is fueled by politicians and the media and continues the historical trend of using drug policy and rhetoric to suppress minority populations.

Race and Contemporary American Media

Of the many forces that influence United States policy, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that mass media is among the most influential (Bennett, 2001; Gilliam, 1999; Jamieson, 1992). Media affects public opinion, which is eventually translated into support for policy making. Racially biased news coverage of drug related crime has the potential then to be reflected in biased policy outcomes. As noted above a contemporary example of this is the crack baby myth. While most research indicates that the idea of there being a serious problem with crack babies in the United States is a media fabrication, this fabrication allows Americans to support a racially biased drug enforcement agenda by believing that it protects innocent children (Sandy 2003). Additionally, racially biased media depictions are also significant in that they frame many white Americans' conceptions of other races (Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, &

Wänke, 1995). Such conceptions are often reproduced in discriminatory attitudes and actions from white Americans (Mastro et al. 2008).

Given the significance of racially biased media, it is revealing to examine its pervasiveness. Young black men are consistently portrayed by the mass media as being “deviant, dangerous and dysfunctional” (Gibbs 1988: 51). Likewise, Majors (1986) suggests that coverage of black men on television is “harshly critical” (131). Glassner (1999) asserts that black men are much more likely to be the victims of crimes than the perpetrators, but their “victimization does not attract the media spotlight the way their crimes do” (314). The tendency to portray blacks in a negative light is not an isolated phenomenon but is reflected in mass media depictions of other minorities as well. For example, like blacks, Latinos are underrepresented in positive depictions by the mass media (Mastro & Morawitz 2005). A recent analysis of late night television found depictions of Latinos to be overwhelmingly negative (Lovato 2007). What these findings indicate is that two of the United State’s largest minority populations are consistently portrayed negatively in both entertainment and news media.

In several of the examples provided the media focuses on a relatively rare phenomenon, while sometimes ignoring a more pervasive one, creating the illusion that one type of social problem is more frequently occurring than it is. The aforementioned trend has been called “media magnification” or “routinization of caricature” (Reinarman 2006: 144). Reinarman (2006) suggests that media magnification occurs by the media “rhetorically recrafting worst cases into typical cases and the episodic into the epidemic” (144). An example of this might be Nixon’s use of language such as “epidemic” and

“plague” to describe drug problems in the U.S. The use of said language, while semantically inaccurate, creates the illusion that a problem is greater than it is. Media magnification is often directed at minority groups, like in the example provided above. Black men are far more likely to be victims of crime, but also far more likely to be portrayed in the news media as perpetrators. The above mentioned crack baby myth is another example. The media took a few inconclusive studies and portrayed the results as a pervasive national problem. Glassner (1999) also provides multiple examples of this. For example, in the early ninety’s after ten tourists were killed in Florida in one year, the media reported this statistic as a “crime wave” (314). However statistics demonstrated that many “tourists were more than 70 times more likely to be victimized at home” and at the same time the typical crime victim in Florida, although ignored by the media, was black or Hispanic (314). Media magnification is a phenomenon that routinely affects minority communities both historically and contemporarily.

It is not uncommon for depictions of minorities in the media to be negative. Negative depictions of minorities are common in both entertainment and news media. Such depictions are highly significant because they influence both policy and the opinions and beliefs that many Americans hold about minority populations. Bush (2004) suggests that the attitudes formed by white Americans about racial minorities allow for and support the reproduction of systemic racism. Such race based practices effect minorities “in workplaces, schools, housing, and other aspects of public policy” (Bush 2004: 3). Through policy and everyday interactions the life chances of many individuals who belong to minority populations are negatively impacted. The negative portrayal of

minorities in anti-drug rhetoric and news coverage of drug related crime, which is reflected in policy outcomes, is part of a larger pattern that reproduces systemic racism in American society (Feagin 2010).

Common Themes Across Movements

Historically speaking it is clear that U.S. domestic drug policy, politics and rhetoric have often been racially motivated and biased. According to Schneider (1998) “drug prohibition was carried out in stages as particular drugs were linked to particular racial and ethnic groups” (430). Alcohol prohibition, the first movement of its kind in the country, can be understood partially as a reaction to German and Irish immigrants. Early opium laws were in part a direct reaction to fears concerning a growing Chinese immigrant population. Cocaine became regulated in the context of a scare in which it was, wrongly, associated with black violence in the South. Marijuana became a state and national issue after concerns arose about its association with Mexican laborers and black jazz musicians. Crack, which is only a modified form of cocaine, currently carries a penalty 100 times that of cocaine. Many argue that the reason for this disparity is the drug’s association with black inner city neighborhoods.

Immigration & Economy

In almost every example the population that was targeted by drug policies, politics and rhetoric was a displaced immigrant labor force. Some like the Irish came willingly while others such as African Americans were forcibly brought into the country to work. Parenti (1999) explains this trend in the following way: “Capitalism always

creates surplus populations, needs surplus populations, yet faces the threat of political, aesthetic, or cultural disruption from those populations. Prison and criminal justice are about managing these irreconcilable contradictions” (238). Such a trend may be understood as being influenced by the need for cheap expendable labor and a combination of fear and nativism in regards to other cultures. Prohibition policies are therefore more likely to be implemented during a bad economy.

Threats to the Middle Class

Another factor in most of the prohibition movements examined was a fear that the group in question would attack or corrupt middle class white society. With cocaine it was feared that blacks would commit violent crimes against whites. With opium it was believed that the Chinese would use the drug to lure white women into prostitution. Finally with marijuana it was believed that Mexicans would give marijuana cigarettes to white children forcing them to become addicted and eventually go insane. Often these claims were greatly exaggerated or magnified and sometimes they were completely fabricated.

Threats to Innocents

An additional frequently emerging theme is the threat to innocents that a drug and a minority group associated with it poses. As mentioned above, marijuana rhetoric has sometimes emphasized the threat to children. Stories claimed that children were being given marijuana cigarettes by Mexicans. Other stories, such as those promoted by Anslinger, suggested that users would attack people at random. Anslinger’s stories often suggested that a minority protagonist would harm a child or elderly person. Likewise the

crack baby myth promotes the idea that innocent babies are being born deformed and addicted to crack, a drug largely associated with African Americans. Claims about opium suggested that middle class women were being taken advantage of by the Chinese. Even the morally driven claims of the temperance movement emphasized the threat to innocent families posed by the alcohol consumption of Irish and German immigrants.

Media & Political Rhetoric

The final theme that consistently emerges in the literature is the role shared by politicians and the media. Both groups seem to consistently be responsible for spreading propaganda that associates groups with substances and this relationship with crime. Often the crimes are against middle class white society. Sensationalized rhetoric is employed by said parties for political and commercial gain. This trend may also be situated in a larger pattern in which systemic racism is reproduced through media depictions that are then mirrored in policy outcomes and everyday interactions. The media often magnifies isolated phenomena into full on epidemics, emergencies and national threats, creating a climate of fear.

What emerges from this examination is that much of U.S. domestic drug policy, politics and rhetoric has been, at least partially, motivated by racism. Immigrant groups enter the country to work and when jobs become scarce they are then associated with a certain substance. That substance is then deemed a threat to the larger society. Politicians and the media facilitate this. Drug policies are then enacted that discriminately target the minority group. This cycle began with the very first prohibition movement (alcohol prohibition) and is reproduced in drug policy, politics and rhetoric today.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The common themes identified in the literature review may be understood as comprising a recurring pattern that explains how immigrant laborers are suppressed through anti-drug rhetoric and policy. The following theoretical framework visually demonstrates how this pattern functions and is reproduced.

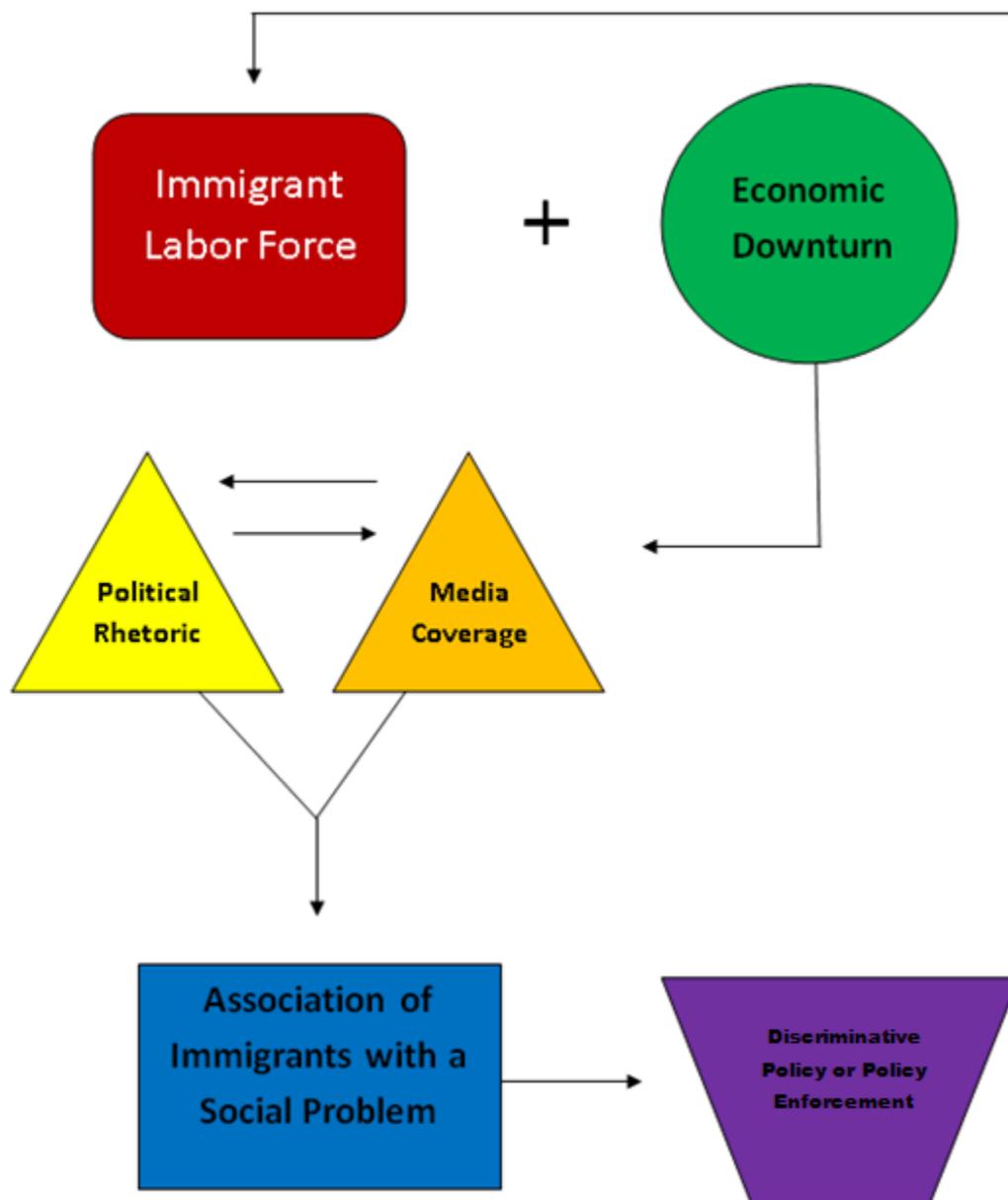


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Table 1: Definition of Terms

Immigrant Labor Force	In the first step, a group of people immigrates to the United States in order to find work. Usually these jobs are in the industrial or agriculture industries, pay poorly and are not filled by native-born citizens.
Economic Downturn	Next there is an economic recession or depression leading to higher unemployment rates and fewer resources such as jobs and social services.
Media Coverage	The media, through a variety of mediums such as newspapers, magazines, television, literature and radio, begins to portray the immigrant labor force as problematic.
Political Rhetoric	Politicians scapegoat the immigrant labor force in order to distract from social conditions and structural inequalities or promote their own agenda.
Association of Immigrants with a Social Problem	Through the media and/or political rhetoric the immigrant labor force begins to be associated with a social problem such as crime or poverty.
Discriminative Policy or Policy Enforcement	The claims made by politicians and the media lead to the creation of discriminative policy to suppress the immigrants. Alternately a policy may be discriminately enforced in order to suppress the immigrant population.

Explanation of Framework

There is a cyclical historical pattern (Figure 3) in which immigrant populations are suppressed through discriminative policy and policy enforcement. It is based on historical research on drug policy and is substantiated through the research in this study. In the first step, indicated by the red box, a population immigrates into the country in order to fill jobs. This may be by choice or it may be forced immigration. Typically this occurs during a stable or prosperous economy. As the plus sign and green circle indicate the cycle is set in motion by an economic downturn. Following the economic downturn the media and/or politicians, indicated by the orange and yellow triangles, respectively, begin to portray the immigrant population as problematic. This leads to the population becoming associated with one or more social problems such as drug related crime. This

step is indicated by the blue box. In the final step, as indicated by the purple box, a discriminative policy is enacted or an existing policy is discriminately enforced in order to suppress the immigrant population. This policy is directed back at the immigrant population completing the cycle.

Historically speaking, this model is applicable to every population examined in the literature review. For example the Chinese immigrated to America in order to build the railroads. After the railroads were complete, there were no longer jobs for the Chinese, at least no jobs that Americans didn't want. The media then began to associate the Chinese with opium related crimes and social problems. Policy was then enacted that targeted Chinese use of opium. In the case of the first marijuana prohibition movement the cycle is very much evident. Mexicans immigrated to America in order to fill agricultural and industrial jobs, then the great depression hit. The Mexicans began to be associated with marijuana related crimes through the media and the propaganda of a politician (Anslinger). Finally, policy was enacted to eradicate marijuana use, sale and production. In the present day the cycle is not yet complete. Mexicans have immigrated to fill agricultural jobs in California. The U.S. and particularly California's economy has gone sour. I am attempting to demonstrate that Mexicans are being associated with marijuana related crimes through this study. If the model is accurate, then Mexicans will next be discriminately targeted by policy, a process that has arguably already begun in Arizona with the passage of SB 1070. According to the New York Times (2010) the law "would make the failure to carry immigration documents a crime and give the police broad power to detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally" (A1). In

essence, the law allows (and requires) the police to investigate the legal status of anyone who appears to not be American. It has been argued that in practice the law amounts to racial profiling and strips away the rights of Latino residents.

Hypotheses

The literature review revealed that immigrant laborers, who came into the country to work during a prosperous economy, would most likely be negatively characterized by the media during or following an economic downturn. This negative characterization typically occurred through associating the immigrant group with a drug and presenting that group as a dangerous underclass. Furthermore, media stories typically depicted crimes as being a threat to innocent people such as children and middle class society. These claims have often been exaggerated through the process of media magnification or routinization of caricature.

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, I have several hypotheses regarding contemporary rhetoric, policy and politics surrounding drug related crime. Specifically, for reasons explained in my methods section, I plan to limit my examination to coverage of marijuana related crime in printed news media. I hypothesize that:

1. Media coverage of marijuana related crime will focus mainly on crimes associated with a minority group. I believe this group will be Mexican immigrants as they have long filled labor jobs in the U.S.
2. Coverage will emphasize threats to innocents and middle class society.

3. The minority group will be presented as or associated with a dangerous underclass.
4. The coverage will use typifying language to present the problem as pervasive and typical.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

In order to explore systemic racism in contemporary drug politics, policy and rhetoric I examined media stories about drug related crimes. Specifically, I limited my analysis to domestic coverage of marijuana crime. My literature review established historic and current bias in enforcement of marijuana laws; therefore, I examined rhetoric, specifically media coverage on marijuana crimes (Levine et al. 2010). This choice was also informed by my literature review since media coverage has historically influenced, justified and gathered support for domestic drug policy (Musto 1973). Furthermore, my literature review demonstrates that it is well established that, historically, many facets of drug policy have been motivated by racism including enforcement, media coverage, policy creation, propaganda and public support.

My goal in examining media coverage of marijuana related crime was to see if the historical patterns of racism in U.S. domestic drug policy, politics and rhetoric continue into current prohibition movements. Specifically, I tested the hypotheses presented at the end of the literature review. The literature review demonstrated a historical pattern in which immigrants enter the country as manual laborers during a prosperous economy; then the same immigrant groups often become associated with a social problem (such as drug related crime) once the economy declines. This association is facilitated by media and political rhetoric. Therefore, I wish to examine media coverage of marijuana related crime to find out if it focuses disproportionately on any one population. Although it

would seem, based on the literature review, that political rhetoric and anti-drug propaganda would provide equally relevant data, I chose print media coverage based on resource constraints. Because print media is easily archived and searched, a much larger analysis may be completed in a much shorter period of time. The method I employed in my research is content analysis.

Sampling

This study is based on a sample of 75 news articles from four U.S. newspapers. In order to create the most meaningful sample, I included data from influential and widely distributed newspapers. In order to evaluate current media representations, I examined coverage in the four most popular U.S. newspapers based on circulation. The papers are, in order of popularity: *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* (Burrelles Luce 2008). Although there are potentially other measures of influence and relevance other than popularity, I chose popularity because it would provide me with the stories most likely to be read by the most people.

To identify my sample I began by using ProQuest, a search engine available through the H.S.U. library. ProQuest is able to search every printed *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* article from the last 15-25 years (depending on the paper). This includes every article that appeared in the printed version of the paper. I searched for stories that contained the word “marijuana” in the headline or abstract. The rationale for this search strategy is that “marijuana” would

appear at least once in the headline or abstract for any stories whose main topic was related to marijuana.

I limited my search results to stories published in the last two years. Specifically I chose to limit search results to stories published between 12/01/2008 and 12/01/2010. I chose this exact date range to incorporate the most recent data available. When I began the data collection phase of this study in December 2010, this time period was the most recent cutoff date I was able to use. I also chose this time period for the following other reasons. First, I wanted to observe how the historical trend identified in the literature review is being played out during the present time. Second, the literature review revealed that the media is most likely to provide racially biased coverage following or during an economic downturn or crisis. While it is debatable whether or not the economy has begun to recover, most would agree that the U.S. and the world have recently or are still undergoing an economic crisis (Browning 2011). The final reason I chose this two-year period was that I wished to examine a broad enough time period to generate an adequately large sample. As there is only a limited amount of space dedicated to covering marijuana related crime, it was necessary to examine stories across a timeline during which enough stories would be generated.

Based on my search criteria I located 733 potential stories for my sample (Table 2). Most (49%) of the stories were found in the *The Los Angeles Times* (n=356). Additionally I located 58 stories (8%) printed in *USA Today*, 102 (13%) stories printed in *The Wall Street Journal* and 217 (30%) stories printed in *The New York Times*. Coincidentally there seemed to be a relationship between the popularity of the paper (by

circulation) and the amount of stories that paper dedicated to marijuana related news. The more popular the paper, the less stories it printed about marijuana in the last two years. It should be noted as well, that some of the same stories were printed in multiple papers. Nevertheless, if the same story appeared in multiple papers I counted it twice as it would be likely to reach different readers.

To further narrow my sample, I read each article for content. I found that many of the stories did not, in fact, relate to crime, rather they covered other topics such as politics and celebrity gossip. I discarded all stories in which the main topic of the article was not marijuana related crime. The crimes covered in the stories range from murder, to smuggling to simple possession. For the purpose of this study I decided not to include stories about medical marijuana in my data set. The reason for this choice is the somewhat ambiguous legal nature of medical marijuana (Horn et al. 2001). That is, while medical marijuana is legal in many states, it remains illegal on the federal level. My intention was to focus on coverage of behaviors that are generally agreed upon to be criminal.

Ultimately I narrowed the sample to 75 articles, printed in the last two years, in the four major U.S. media outlets, which directly covered marijuana related crimes.

Table 2: Media coverage of marijuana and marijuana related crimes 2008-2010

Paper	USA Today		The Wall Street Journal		The New York Times		The Los Angeles Times	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Marijuana & Crime Stories	4	7%	14	14%	18	8%	39	11%
Total Marijuana Stories	58	100%	102	100%	217	100%	356	100%

Since news media covers a wide range of mediums and sources, it is not possible to analyze all media coverage of a specific topic. As such I chose to limit myself to print-media because of the relative ease of analysis based on access through archives. Additionally, the format of written media better lends itself to analysis than other communication forms such as visual and spoken media. Even after narrowing down media coverage to one medium, it would be impossible to generate a truly representative sample of all print media coverage.

There is some debate about measuring manifest versus latent content (Riffe, Lacy & Fico 1998). For the purposes of this study I have chosen only to examine manifest content, that is, what is actually written. There is sufficient manifest content in my data to measure the theoretical concepts found in the literature review. Furthermore, replicability and inter-coder reliability are more difficult to achieve when measuring latent meaning in content (Holsti 1969).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a methodology in which messages, themes and concepts in communications may be measured by applying an objective and systematic coding scheme to a given unit of analysis such as an article, sentence or word (Riffe, Lacy & Fico 1998). This method is a preferred social scientific method for examining media messages (Krippendorff 2003). Content analysis may be used to describe, explore or build theory (Riffe, Lacy & Fico 1998). As a methodology, content analysis may be used to quantify otherwise qualitative data.

Content analysis has been employed as a methodology for hundreds of years; originally, it was used by the theologians to analyze written messages that might undermine the church (Krippendorff 2003). Sociologists began to use the methodology at the turn of the last century to analyze the increasingly popular printed news media of the time (Krippendorff 2003). It may be said then that content analysis is a well established and long trusted research methodology used to examine media messages both within and outside of sociology.

Content analysis has many strengths: it requires few resources, is unobtrusive and can be used to study phenomena that have already occurred, provided they have been recorded (Babbie 2004). Additionally content analysis has the advantage of being easily replicated and, as mentioned above, allows qualitative data to be quantified (Riffe, Lacy & Fico 1998). However, content analysis also has disadvantages. Some argue that content analysis over emphasizes the comparative frequency at which different symbols

appear (Holsti 1969). Additionally, there is some debate among social scientists about measuring latent or manifest content (Babbie 2004). Manifest content refers to the actual content itself, while latent content refers to the underlying meaning of the content. Some argue that it is not appropriate to attempt to measure latent content as one can never know for certain what is meant by a given communication. Finally content analysis is not appropriate for testing causal relationships between variables (Berg 2004). Although some critics question the credibility of content analysis, when done correctly, it may be just as rigorous and replicable as the more dominant research methodologies (Glasser and Strauss 2009).

I chose content analysis because I wanted to examine written media messages about marijuana related crime. According to Berg (2004) there are seven elements in written messages that may be counted: “words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts and semantics” (273). I chose the article as my unit of analysis. This choice was informed by a desire to quantify types of coverage in order to detect racial bias or the lack thereof in news stories.

Racial bias was measured based on the frequency at which specific racial groups are implicated in crime stories, as well as by the appearance of historically relevant themes. Specifically I examined the number of news stories that cover crimes in which the suspects are stated as belonging to a racial minority group. I juxtaposed this finding with those stories in which the suspect’s racial identity is not provided or is not associated with a minority group. I hypothesized that news coverage of marijuana related crimes will disproportionately emphasize crimes in which the suspects belong to a

minority group and that such stories will contain themes found in media coverage, propaganda and rhetoric of past prohibition movements. Examples of themes from past prohibition movements included: threats to innocents and members of mainstream society, media magnification or making an extreme example appear typical and association of substances with a dangerous underclass.

Coding the Data

The unit of analysis for this study is the article. Through careful review of the articles I inductively generated themes for coding (Berg 2004). Themes were created inductively. That is to say that although I had a general idea of what I was looking for (based on the literature review) the themes were created after examining the narrative in the articles (Table 1). I knew I was looking to see if articles mentioned suspect's race, however, I did not know precisely how this information would be represented.

I began by looking for racial identities of suspects but soon found that national identities were provided much more frequently than racial identities. Stories in which no national identity was provided or no suspects were mentioned were coded as such. If national identity was provided the specific country of origin was also counted. Additionally, I searched for recurring themes that the literature review revealed were prevalent in the media, rhetoric and propaganda of past prohibition movements.

Table 3: Coding Themes

National identity of suspects is explicitly stated	To be included in this category stories must explicitly provide the national identity of suspects in marijuana related crimes. National identity is made explicit when race, ethnicity or country, city or state of origin is specifically stated. Examples of this might include: “two Mexican nationals” or “a Canadian born woman”.
No national identity provided	This category includes all stories that explicitly mention a suspect in marijuana related crime, but provide no racial, ethnic or national identity.
No suspects identified	Stories that fall under this category are about a marijuana related crime where the suspect is unknown or unmentioned.
Media magnification or routinization of caricature	This theme includes stories that use language that presents the crime as typical, part of a pattern or representative of a continuing phenomenon. Typifying language includes statements such as “yet another”, “the latest in” and “the most recent example of”.
Threats to innocents and/or members of mainstream society	To be coded with this theme a story must present the crime mentioned or social problem addressed as a threat to groups considered to be innocent by society such as children, innocent bystanders or members of mainstream society not willingly involved in the crime.
Association of substances with a dangerous underclass	Stories that fall under this theme specifically associate marijuana with a dangerous subpopulation such as: “violent drug gangs” or “Mexican drug cartels”.

In order to test my hypotheses I coded each article for each theme noted in Table 3. I highlighted text that mentioned the national identity of suspects. I also highlighted text that represented a manifestation of any of the recurring rhetorical themes. I entered my results onto a coding sheet by hand. Although some articles included multiple manifestations of a rhetorical device, I only counted if a theme was present or not, I did not count frequency within articles. Therefore, an article in which I highlighted the appearance of a theme such as threats to innocents four times was counted the same way as an article in which I highlighted the theme only once.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

News coverage disproportionately identified Mexicans as suspects of marijuana crime. Eighty three percent (n=62) of the stories in the sample discussed a specific suspect and his/her national identity. Only three stories failed to provide any suspects and only 10 stories discussed a suspect without mention of a national identity (Figure 2). Of the 62 stories that did provide both a suspect and a national identity, more than two thirds (n=42) were about suspects with a Mexican national identity.

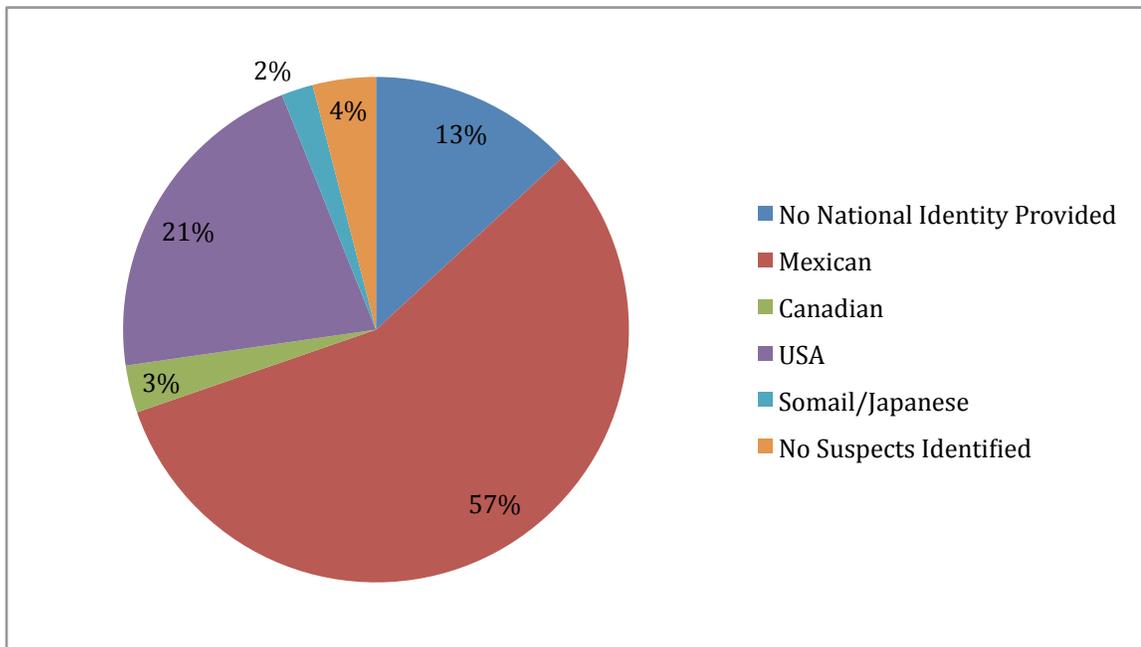


Figure 2: National identity in marijuana crime stories

This amounts to two thirds (68%) of these stories being about Mexican suspects. Stories in which the suspect was identified as originating from an American city or state were far

less frequent (n=16) accounting for 26% of the stories in which a suspect and national identity were provided.

Table 4: Distribution of Suspects in Marijuana Crime Stories

National Identity of Suspects	%	#
Mexican	56%	42
USA	21%	16
No National Identity Provided	13%	10
No Suspects Identified	4%	3
Canadian	3%	2
Somali	1%	1
Japanese	1%	1

Table 5: Total number and percent of themes coded in sample

	Total # of stories coded with theme	Total % of stories coded with theme
Association with a dangerous underclass	39	52%
Media Magnification	23	31%
Threats to Innocents	12	16%

Linking Drug Crime to a Dangerous Class

Mexican national identity was most likely to be associated with a dangerous class. Just over half (n=39) of the stories in the sample were coded as linking the suspect to a dangerous class at least once (Table 5). Again the majority (n=32) of stories coded with this theme were also coded as being about marijuana related crime in which a Mexican/s was suspected (Table 6).

Table 6: Number and percent of themes by national identity

	Mexican		USA		No National Identity Provided		No Suspects Identified		Canadian		Somali		Japanese	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Association with a dangerous underclass	32	82%	1	3%	2	5%	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%	0	0%
Media Magnification	21	91%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%	1	%
Threats to Innocents	8	67%	0	0%	1	8%	1	8%	1	8%	1	8%	0	0%

It is notable as well that some stories that were not about Mexican suspects still linked the crime to Mexican drug cartels. The dangerous class that is almost always alluded to is Mexican drug cartels. Sometimes cartels are mentioned by name like in this except from *The Los Angeles Times*:

“Government officials believe the marijuana probably belonged to Mexico's most powerful organized crime group, the Sinaloa drug cartel”

Other stories suggest that any particularly violent or brutal crime could only be the work of Mexican drug cartels, like in the following quote also from *The Los Angeles Times*:

"It's one thing to go in and put a gun in the face of a person who's running a commercial establishment and ask him for the money. It's a totally different thing by assassinating the person that you're robbing," Baca said. "That, to me, is very cartel-ish in its style."

The previous excerpt suggests that a certain type of violence could only have been committed by cartels. Cartels, in the context of the story refer specifically to Mexican Drug cartels. Still other stories seemed to blur the lines between Mexican drug cartels and Mexican people in general. For example, in the following two excerpts from the same USA Today story it is implied that drug smuggling is inherently Mexican:

"In these dark times, the faithful still come to worship in the chapel of Jesus Malverde, Mexico's patron saint of drug traffickers."

"The veneration of Malverde, a Robin Hood-style bandit who died in 1909, shows how deep the tradition of drug smuggling runs in Mexican culture"

Many of the narratives coded under this category almost suggest that all Mexicans are involved in some way with drug cartels and drug smuggling, or as the previous quote suggests, that drug smuggling is inherently part of Mexican culture and religion. By claiming that drug smuggling is a religious and cultural component of being Mexican this quote suggests that all or most Mexicans are likely involved in drug smuggling.

Furthermore by linking Mexican culture and religion with drug cartels Mexicans as a group are constructed as dangerous and threatening. Such claims are reminiscent of past prohibition movements that drew justification for biased policies from ideas of moral, cultural and religious superiority.

Media Magnification

Media magnification was a relatively infrequent theme in news stories sampled; as can be seen in table 5, almost 1 in 3 (n=23) stories constituted instances of media magnification. Of the stories in which this theme was present, the majority (n=21) were about a Mexican suspect/s (see table 6). The other two stories where this theme was found involved Canadian and Japanese suspects. Of the stories coded as being about a crime committed by a Mexican suspect/s, 76% were coded with this theme at least once. Many of the stories coded under this theme were related to an ongoing series that focused on drug crimes linked to Mexico. This theme was usually manifested through the use of typifying language that implied that the crime was part of a larger ongoing pattern or problem. Take for example the following excerpt from the Los Angeles Times:

"This is the trend," Russ Arthur, a special agent for the U.S. Forest Service, said at a Santa Barbara news conference. "I've been involved in hundreds of arrests and all of the suspects have been Mexican nationals."

The previous excerpt suggests that all people arrested for marijuana crimes are Mexican. Often the statements coded under this theme portrayed crimes, in which Mexicans were suspected, as being part of a large, out of control, national problem. As illustrated by this excerpt from the Wall Street Journal:

"Marijuana growers, many believed to be affiliated with Mexican drug cartels, are aggressively expanding their illegal farming operations in the U.S., clearing land to plant pot in dozens of national forests from coast to coast."

Such claims seem to imply that crimes linked with Mexican suspects are never isolated but rather indicative of a growing trend. The previous claim suggests not only that the crime is a typical example of a frequently occurring problem, but also suggests, by using the term “coast to coast,” that the problem is occurring literally in every part of the country.

Threats to Innocents

Surprisingly, only 16% of the stories conveyed a theme of threats to innocents (see table 5). This is surprising given the popularity of this rhetorical device in past prohibition movements. As can be seen in table 6, the majority (n=8 - 67%) of stories in which this theme was present were also coded as being about crimes in which the suspects were specifically identified as being Mexican. In fact, the theme appeared in twice as many stories about Mexican suspects than it did in all other stories combined. The stories in which this theme appeared typically emphasized the threat that the crime posed to innocent people such as children. Innocents were defined as children, the elderly, someone not involved in the crime such as a bystander or a person specifically designated innocent in the story. Take for example the following excerpt from a *New York Times* story linking a home invasion with cartel marijuana crime:

"At least they didn't put the gun in the baby's mouth like we've seen before," Sergeant Azuelo said. That same afternoon this month, his squad was called to the scene of another home invasion, one involving the abduction of a 14-year-old boy."

The statement suggests that innocent children are regularly being harmed by marijuana related crimes, frequently crimes linked with Mexicans. Stories sometimes emphasized

how people who were in no way involved in the drug trade could be victimized at random, like in the following excerpt from a *New York Times* story:

“In one case, the intruders burst into the wrong house, shooting and injuring a woman watching television on her couch.”

Often stories such as these found in *The New York Times*, combined threats to innocent people with typifying language to suggest that it could happen to anyone at anytime or that everyone is at risk of being a potential victim.

Discussion

Overall, the results of the content analysis seem to support the four hypotheses presented in this research. My first hypothesis, that media coverage of marijuana related crime will focus mainly on crimes associated with a minority group, appears wholly supported by my findings. Furthermore, my prediction that this group would be Mexicans is also supported. Two out of every three stories that did identify suspects based on national identity were about Mexican suspects. Marijuana related crimes committed by Mexican suspects are covered far more often than marijuana related crimes committed by any other group. In fact marijuana related crimes in which Mexicans are suspected were covered more frequently in the last two years than marijuana related crimes committed by all other groups combined and more than twice as often as the next most covered group, suspects with an American national identity. This coverage is particularly misleading when compared with national statistics. According to the most recent data available, in 2009 the majority (56%) of individuals sentenced in U.S. federal courts for marijuana crimes were U.S. citizens (Maguire 2011). Furthermore, in 2009 the

majority (65%) of individuals arrested for drug violations were white (Maguire 2011). It would seem then that the common marijuana offender is not from Mexico but an American citizen and the common drug offender is white. Such disproportionate coverage creates the illusion that only Mexicans are responsible for marijuana crime and supports a climate in which Mexicans are unfairly demonized. Additionally, based on the historical trend identified in the literature review, the negative climate created by disproportionate coverage makes Mexicans and Mexican-Americans into a political target to be exploited.

The second hypothesis, that coverage will emphasize threats to innocents and middle class society, is also supported by my findings. Overall this theme was found to be present most frequently in stories about Mexican suspects. Stories that included this theme often suggested that society's most vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly are at serious risk of being victimized as a result of Mexican drug crime. Both children and the elderly were specifically mentioned multiple times in stories from the sample. Furthermore some stories suggested that these crimes were upsetting the normal way of life for whole middle class communities. I believe that, like in previous drug scares, these claims function to justify racially biased drug policy or policy enforcement under the guise of protecting the most vulnerable members of society. Additionally, by presenting marijuana related crimes committed by Mexicans as disruptive to the middle class way of life, coverage serves to distract from other factors that have lead to a poor economy and a lower quality of life for average middle class Americans.

The third hypothesis, that the minority group will be presented as or associated with a dangerous underclass, also appears accurate based on the findings of this research. The majority (76%) of stories that involved a Mexican suspect directly claimed a relationship to Mexican drug cartels. It is also notable that some stories that didn't involve Mexican suspects also linked the crime being covered with Mexican drug cartels. For example, some stories that involved American suspects still inferred that the drugs came from Mexico or that the suspects were under the employ of Mexican drug cartels. Often little or no evidence was provided to link crimes with drug cartels. Some stories presented no other evidence than that a crime was particularly bad and that it was "cartel-ish in its style". Other stories seem to suggest that most or all Mexicans are involved in drug smuggling and that the very act is deeply rooted in Mexican culture. This last claim in particular is reminiscent of historical claims that draw on ideas of cultural and or moral superiority. By blurring the lines between a population and its criminals, broad claims serve the purpose of justifying policies that target entire populations. By suggesting that all Mexicans are criminals or involved in drug smuggling, biased rhetoric justifies prejudice on the part of middle class Americans by allowing them to believe that any Mexican is a potential threat.

My final hypothesis, that the coverage will use typifying language to present the problem as pervasive and common, is also supported by my analysis. Exactly half of the stories involving Mexican suspects employed typifying language to allude to a larger and/or growing problem. This being the case it is notable that typifying language was not coded in almost any other stories. Out of all the stories coded as using typifying language

(n=23) only two of them did not directly implicate Mexican suspects. Like in previous prohibition movements, media magnification allows individual crimes to be linked together. Typifying language is used to suggest a pattern and a more extreme problem. Media magnification is used to justify policies that target minority groups by suggesting that they are necessary to deal with a pressing problem.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Historically, minority populations have long been oppressed and controlled through anti-drug rhetoric, politics and policy in the U.S. Often times, the oppressed group is a displaced immigrant labor force. Immigrants come into the country during a prosperous economy to fill manual labor jobs, but once the economy begins to decline the immigrant labor force becomes a surplus population. Because they are no longer needed, anti-drug rhetoric, politics and policies are used to drive them out and suppress them. Typically, the group becomes associated with a specific drug or social problem through the media and political rhetoric. Once linked with a drug or social problem, policies are enacted or discriminately enforced in order to suppress and drive out the immigrant labor force.

During the course of conducting my literature review on past prohibition movements, I identified the pattern mentioned above across most historic U.S. prohibition movements. Alcohol prohibition may be understood in part as an effort to suppress German and Irish immigrant laborers. Early Opium legislation was enacted and discriminately enforced to suppress the Chinese population that came to the country to build the railroads. Early anti-cocaine rhetoric arose in order to demonize blacks, who were forcibly brought into the country to work. Anti-marijuana propaganda initially emphasized the threat posed by Mexican agricultural workers. I also identified this trend

in more contemporary domestic prohibition movements such as the War On Drugs. Based on these findings, I hypothesized that a similar pattern would be found around marijuana prohibition efforts today.

While examining each individual prohibition movement I found that there were also common elements present in the rhetoric used. Rhetoric, both political and presented through the media, is an important component of the theoretical pattern identified in the literature review. The most prevalent rhetorical devices, employed historically, across prohibition movements included: linking of a minority group with a dangerous underclass, media magnification and threats to innocents. These devices were manifested in all the prohibition movements I examined.

Because the U.S. economy had recently slid into recession, I hypothesized that a minority group would be rhetorically associated with marijuana crime. Because of the particularities of race politics in the state of California, I hypothesized, Mexicans would be the minority target and scapegoat for marijuana crime.

All three of my hypotheses were supported. Specifically, printed news coverage of marijuana related crime disproportionately emphasized crimes in which the suspect/s were Mexican. In fact marijuana related crimes in which Mexicans are suspected were covered more frequently in the last two years than marijuana related crimes committed by all other groups combined and more than twice as often as the next most covered group, suspects with an American national identity. Additionally, I found that the historically recurring rhetorical devices were manifested more frequently in stories with a Mexican suspect/s. It would appear that the theoretical pattern identified in the literature review is

still in operation and continues to function to suppress minority groups through anti-drug rhetoric, politics and policy.

Limitations

Although I tried to remain impartial in my analysis, I have long held adverse views on drug policy that may have biased my research. I have attempted to prevent this by remaining conscious of my own bias, not including unsubstantiated opinions and working with multiple persons in the research and writing process that do not share my views. Additionally, this study was limited in great part due to resource constraints. Like any researcher I was limited by monetary, time and space constraints. One of the major limitations of this study was the sample. It would be extremely difficult to produce a truly representative sample of all media coverage on a given topic. Because I only examined stories from the four most popular newspapers, over a relatively short timeline, my analysis can only be generalized to those papers during that time. Furthermore, I was unable to focus on the other major variable I identified as being responsible for associating minorities with drug problems, that being political rhetoric. It may have been beneficial to analyze political speeches and the language used when discussing this phenomenon. Again, I was unable to analyze political rhetoric because of resource constraints. Additionally, my research may have been strengthened by incorporating multiple methodologies. Finally, like any research, the possibility of human error is always a concern, although I have made every effort to safeguard against it.

Implications

This thesis adds to the continuing sociological scholarship on race, drugs and the media. This thesis also serves to raise awareness about the disparities in U.S. drug policy and policy enforcement. Although my findings are not conclusive, they support the growing body of literature that asserts that drug prohibition, drug policy and policy enforcement are racially biased. As my research demonstrates, this phenomenon is not an isolated incident, but is part of a continuing historical cycle. This cycle must be broken. If it is not broken, history is likely to repeat and biased policy outcomes will be directed at Mexicans. Some might argue that this stage of the cycle has already begun as immigration policy becomes more stringent. This pattern can only be broken through promoting awareness, reforming drug policy and ending the war on drugs. The public must become more media literate and must be informed about the realities of current drug problems and policies. The war on drugs, which has been described as “effectively a war on young black men and increasingly women” must be ended (Jones 2010: 159). An anti-drug agenda should not serve the purpose of oppressing minority communities in the U.S.

Further research is needed on the role played by race and media in shaping contemporary policy outcomes. Future research should examine political rhetoric as well as expand the analysis of media sources over a greater period of time. It should also employ additional methodologies and researchers to reduce the potential for bias. I would recommend statistical analysis comparing coverage rates to criminal justice statistics such as arrest and prosecution rates as well as self-report use data. It may also prove valuable

to examine whether public perceptions match media accounts and to interview law enforcement. Future work is also needed to discover the most effective ways to reform drug policy, reduce systematic discrimination and create effective alternatives to the war on drugs.

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