

# From Bag Brides to Skeezers: A Historical Perspective on Sex-for-Drugs Behavior†

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**Abstract** -- There are many ways that women support their use of crack cocaine, including sex-for-crack bartering and other forms of prostitution. Empirical studies conducted in the mid-1970s and in the mid-1980s in New York City, and in Chicago in the late 1980s to early 1990s are compared, analyzing similarities and differences between the contemporary crack-prostitution scene and previous prostitution scenes. Findings suggest that the arrival of crack cocaine has directly and indirectly affected the drugs-prostitution nexus by lowering the price of sex for street prostitutes, altering the social status of cocaine, and increasing the level of social disorganization in illicit street activities, including prostitution. Barterers are shown to be the heaviest drug users, using the greatest variety of drugs, using larger amounts of drugs, and using more frequently.

**Keywords** -- AIDS, crack cocaine, sex-for-drugs behavior, prostitution

The impact of drug use and prostitution on the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has increased the need for empirical data and conceptual understanding of these phenomena and their interrelationships. The widespread use of crack cocaine is alleged to have altered the drugs-prostitution nexus in a dangerous direction. Some women's desire for crack is alleged to be so strong that it overcomes all their moral boundaries, and they freely engage in prostitution, including sex-for-drugs bartering, in order to obtain crack. It is also alleged that crack has a power in this regard that is greater than previous drugs of choice, such as heroin.

Persons who are knowledgeable about the history of drug issues are aware that similar claims of inevitable moral degeneracy have been made with regard to a wide variety of drugs, including marijuana (e.g., the film *Reefer Madness*) and heroin. There is now a large body of literature that questions these claims (Faupel 1987; Johnson et al. 1985; Rosenbaum 1981; Inciardi 1981; Hughes 1977;

Waldorf 1973; Preble & Casey 1969; Lindesmith 1940; Dai 1937; Kolb 1925). Are contemporary descriptions of crack users accurate or are they as rife with excess as those of previous eras that purported to accurately describe other sorts of drug users?

Research experiences of the present authors in the area of female drug use and prostitution span nearly two decades. Empirical data are presented below from field studies done by the authors in New York City (and to a lesser extent in Boston, Fort Lauderdale, and Cleveland) in the mid-1970s; New York City in the mid-1980s; and Chicago in the late 1980s to early 1990s. The basic intent is to elaborate on the drugs-prostitution nexus, and to compare the contemporary crack-prostitution scene to previous prostitution scenes.

## DATA BASES

### Drugs-Prostitution Study

In the mid-1970s, 60 women were interviewed specifically for a study of the relationship between drugs and prostitution (Goldstein 1979). Subjects were contacted through a state-operated drug abuse treatment facility (n=24) in New York; through two different private programs for female ex-offenders (n=16); through prostitutes' organizations, such as Prostitutes Union of Massachusetts

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TABLE I  
DRUGS-PROSTITUTION STUDY: DEMOGRAPHIC  
CHARACTERISTICS (N=60)

<b>Race</b>	%
Black	40
White	50
Hispanic	10
<b>Education</b>	
Less than high-school graduate	43
High-school graduate	27
Some college/college graduate	30
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	49
Formerly married	31
Married	20
<b>Arrests</b>	
Drug Offenses	35
Prostitution	32
Property crimes	43
Crimes against persons	27
Never arrested	20

(PUMA), Scapegoat (a New York City group), and Coyote of Florida (n=12); and through referrals from friends and colleagues (n=8). The ages of interviewees ranged from 18 to 47, with a mean age of about 26. The most commonly used substances included marijuana (93% of interviewees), alcohol (87%), cocaine (83%), and heroin (72%). Forty-two women (70%) reported being addicted to some drug during their lives. Subjects were most likely to be addicted to heroin (55%). Table I presents demographic data on this sample.

A total of 43 women reported having engaged in prostitution. These women worked at all levels of prostitution; and most had worked at more than one level. The sample included women who had worked on the streets (n=20), as call girls (n=20), as mistresses (n=14), in brothels (n=9), as madams (n=6), and in massage parlors (n=5). The sample also included 14 women who reported bartering sex for drugs. Of the 60 women, 17 were drug users who had never engaged in any form of prostitution. A search for prostitutes who had never engaged in any drug use was unsuccessful.

### FEMDRIVE STUDY

Two ethnographic studies were undertaken on the Lower East Side of New York City between 1984 and 1987. One study, called DRIVE, examined the drugs-violence nexus among male drug users and distributors (Goldstein et al. 1987). The other study, called FEMDRIVE, focused on females (Goldstein et al. 1988). Both studies aimed at documenting the nature, scope,

and drug relatedness of all violent perpetrations and violent victimizations taking place during the study period (Fendrich et al. 1992; Goldstein et al. 1991a, 1991b, 1990; Spunt et al. 1990a, 1990b; Goldstein 1986). A substantial amount of data concerning women's prostitution and sexual bartering for drugs was also collected on FEMDRIVE, but was not previously analyzed.

Research subjects were drug users or distributors who lived in, or frequented, the Lower East Side of Manhattan. They were recruited primarily from field contacts and through snowball sampling techniques. Only persons over the age of eighteen were eligible to participate in the study. Interviewing took place in an ethnographic field station established solely for the purposes of these projects. All subjects were given a life-history interview. After completing the life-history interview, subjects were put on a weekly reporting schedule for at least eight weeks. The analytic time unit for the weekly interview was the day; data covering seven discrete days were collected each week.

The weekly interviews collected quantified data on drug use and drug dealing, criminal activities (including prostitution), violent perpetrations and victimizations, sources of income and types of expenditures, and varied dimensions of individual lifestyles (including sexual bartering for drugs). Narrative descriptions of activities were frequently obtained. Special tape-recorded interviews were

TABLE II  
FEMDRIVE STUDY: DEMOGRAPHIC  
CHARACTERISTICS (N=133)

<b>Race</b>	<b>%</b>
Black	53
White	26
Hispanic	20
Other	2
<b>Education</b>	
Less than high-school graduate	47
High-school graduate	26
Some college/college graduate	27
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	57
Formerly married	30
Married	13
<b>Current Living Situation</b>	
Shelter	40
Spouse/lover	10
Family	24
Friend	16
Alone	5
Vagrant	4
<b>Currently Employed</b>	<b>7</b>

conducted around topics or events of special interest to project staff. The field site became a hangout for drug users. Staff also went with research subjects to their homes, to shelters for the homeless, to shooting galleries, and to other places where they congregated to use or to sell drugs. A total of 133 women (median age of 32) completed the FEMDRIVE research protocol (life history and eight weekly interviews). Table II presents demographic data on the FEMDRIVE sample.

Given the focus of this article on crack, it is important to note that no data were systematically collected on the FEMDRIVE project that differentiated types of cocaine or modes of cocaine ingestion. When the research began in 1984, crack was not an issue. As the crack problem escalated, project staff considered whether or not to add questions that would specify forms of cocaine use. This notion was rejected in order to maintain comparability between data collected early in the study with those collected at a later date. However, as the research progressed and staff became more cognizant of the importance of the emerging crack problem, they frequently noted and described increased crack use and attendant behaviors among the women.

## CHICAGO STUDY

Data from Chicago were drawn from interviews of 13 crack ("ready-rock") smokers from the city's North Side, all of whom are either prostitutes or associates of street prostitution. Eight subjects participated in a focus group, while the other five took part in individual ethnographic interviews. The focus group, which was composed entirely of African-Americans, consisted of three women and five men in their early twenties to late forties. The individual interviews were with a 19-year-old Puerto Rican female, two African-American females in their late twenties to early thirties, an African-American male in his early thirties, and a 38-year-old White female. Both the focus group meeting and individual interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

The Chicago study also drew on data from an earlier examination of sexual behavior among Chicago's cocaine users, 77% of whom smoked crack (Ouellet et al. In press). Additional ethnographic data were collected as part of the AIDS Outreach Intervention Project-Chicago, a NIDA-funded effort to better understand and inhibit human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) transmission among injection drug users (IDUs) and their sex partners. This project used a multimethod approach that combined the basic principles of medical epidemiology with those of community ethnog-

raphy (Wiebel 1988). A key feature was its targeting of social networks of active on-the-street IDUs as opposed to individual IDUs who are in the process of passing through an official institution of some sort, such as a drug abuse treatment program, hospital or jail.

By early 1988, the project established storefront field stations in three areas of Chicago that varied from one another in their ethnic and community characteristics: the mostly African-American South Side, the ethnically mixed North Side, and the largely Puerto Rican Northwest Side. Field stations in these neighborhoods were staffed by interviewers, ethnographers, and indigenous sex-IDU outreach workers. Besides serving as research sites, field stations are drop-in centers for local IDUs and, more recently, crack smokers. One station provides on-site medical services and the other two will soon do likewise. Every workday, outreach workers and ethnographers go into the neighborhoods and congregation sites of IDUs and crack smokers to do AIDS education and individual risk assessments, pass out bleach and condoms, provide referrals to appropriate social and medical services, and conduct research. This ongoing involvement in subjects' lives over the years, in a helpful service-oriented fashion, has facilitated the gathering of data for the present article.

Both the drugs-prostitution study and the Chicago study reported herein are primarily qualitative, although the drugs-prostitution study did achieve some quantification of data. FEMDRIVE, although also heavily qualitative, contains the most rigorously collected quantitative data of the three studies. For this reason, the presentations of data from the three studies vary.

### PROSTITUTION: DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

Prostitution is not an easy activity to define or categorize. Common elements of most legal or social scientific definitions include sexual acts characterized by barter, promiscuity, and emotional indifference (e.g., Gagnon & Simon 1973; Lemert 1951; Flexner 1914). When prostitution is treated as a moral category, the element of promiscuity is typically emphasized. When prostitution is treated as a legal category, the element of barter is typically emphasized. In this sense, barter can include both cash-for-sex transactions and the trading of services or goods (including drugs) for sex.

Goldstein (1979) found that female research subjects frequently reported exchanging sexual services for professional or other services, or for material goods. For example, a well-educated professional woman reported engaging in "single woman's survival tactics." This woman, who was not an avowed prostitute, reported exchanging sex for professional services from both physicians and lawyers. A call girl specializing in sadomaso-

chism (S&M) reported exchanging S&M time with a leather maker for S&M equipment. Other call girls reported exchanging sex for furniture, dental work, automobile repairs and tires, television sets, and clothes. In May 1992, the State of Illinois suspended the prescription license and revoked the medical license of a Chicago physician for prescribing tranquilizers, stimulants, and sleeping pills to two women in exchange for sexual favors (Unsigned 1992).

It is therefore not surprising that poor drug-using women with scarce economic resources would employ sex in order to obtain desired drugs. Some of these women identify themselves as prostitutes, walk the streets, flag down automobiles, and behave in general as traditional prostitutes. They take the money that they have earned and purchase drugs.

Other drug-using women may trade sex for drugs without walking the streets like traditional prostitutes. Such women may form relatively long-term relationships with specific male drug users or dealers who take care of the women's drug needs. Other female drug barterers may engage in frequent, brief, and impersonal sexual encounters with men who may have drugs available at a particular time. There are complex nuances to these activities, both with regard to how participating men and women perceive them, and with regard to social antecedents, circumstances, and correlates of the behavior. Findings reported below examine these nuances with regard to changes over time and between women who are motivated by the desire for either heroin or crack.

The present article focuses exclusively on female prostitution, especially sexual bartering for drugs. There were a number of reports and observations on both the DRIVE project and in the Chicago studies about males engaging in homosexual acts in order to obtain drugs or the cash for drugs. However, male prostitution is excluded from this analysis for reasons of economy and because those data are sparser and were not consistently collected between the three separate studies.

In the discussions that follow, traditional prostitution for cash is frequently distinguished from sex-for-drugs bartering. Although bartering fits within the authors' definition of prostitution, it was felt that discriminating between the two behaviors was useful for heuristic purposes.

### RESULTS: OVERVIEW OF QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

#### Drugs-Prostitution Study

Sixty women (43 prostitutes and 17 nonprostitute drug users) were interviewed. Detailed data were gathered about their drug-using and prostitution experiences as well as the interrelationships between these behaviors. The

women worked in a variety of prostitution milieus (e.g., streetwalker, call girl, barterer), and used a variety of different drugs, including, heroin, alcohol, and cocaine. The prostitutes were divided into two groups for analytic purposes: low-class prostitutes (n=25) who were primarily streetwalkers and drug barterers, and high-class prostitutes (n=18) who were primarily call girls or madams.

The strongest drug associations specific to low-class prostitutes were heroin (96% used regularly) and cocaine (64% used regularly). Heroin- and cocaine-use careers tended to occur concurrently with low-class prostitution careers. The strongest drug association specific to high-class prostitution was stimulants (61% used regularly); however, many of the high-class prostitutes had begun using stimulants prior to entry into prostitution. Both high- and low-class prostitutes were also regular users of marijuana and alcohol; however, substantial periods of alcohol and marijuana use tended to occur prior to, or after, careers in prostitution. Regular use in this context means at least weekly use; periods of addiction are also included.

Of the 43 prostitutes, 27 identified themselves as addicted to drugs (primarily heroin). In 48% of these cases, addiction preceded prostitution; in 41% of the cases, prostitution preceded addiction. The remaining 11% of the cases included women who could not specify whether prostitution or addiction had come first. Prostitution was reported by 51% of these women as the primary means by which they supported their drug habits.

Drugs were strongly related to becoming a prostitute only for streetwalkers and barterers. Where this relationship existed, it was primarily economic in nature. These women became prostitutes primarily to support their drug use. However, some low-class prostitutes reported that initial prostitution experiences were caused by the psychoactive effects of drugs (mainly barbiturates) or the influence of a drug-using peer group.

Certain forms of drug use were deterrents to entry into certain forms of prostitution. Madams and massage parlor managers rejected opioid addicts. Heroin-addicted women were perceived by these authority figures as unreliable, criminalistic, unattractive to customers, and likely to bring police heat down on the establishment. Pimps rejected narcotic addicts because they consumed too much of the money that they earned, were unreliable and unattractive, and were perceived to be more likely to become police informers.

All prostitutes were asked whether they had ever engaged in drug use for prostitution-related purposes, and whether drug use had ever caused them any prostitution-related problems. A total of 124 "functions" of drug use and 83 "dysfunctions" were recorded. Functions of heroin use (21 mentions) were mainly relief of physical pain and deadening the realities of prostitution. These functions were reported by low-class prostitutes. Functions of cocaine use (15 mentions) were mainly enhancing sociability with

clients and assisting the prostitute to maintain an "up" tempo. These functions were reported by high-class prostitutes. Dysfunctions of heroin use (36 mentions) included becoming criminalistic, unattractive, unreliable, nervous and irritable (when experiencing withdrawal symptoms), and being prevented from rising in the hierarchy of prostitution. Interestingly, no dysfunctions were reported to be associated with cocaine use by any of the prostitutes in the sample.

### FEMDRIVE

During the eight-week slice-of-life for which data were collected from 133 female drug users and distributors, the majority (n=81) reported no sexual bartering or other prostitution, although a portion of these women had engaged in these behaviors prior to the study period. During the study period, 37 women reported prostitution, but no sex-for-drugs bartering; an additional 15 women reported both prostitution and sex-for-drug bartering. Thus, all of the drug barterers also engaged in traditional prostitution for cash during the same eight-week period.

There were no significant demographic differences between these three groups of FEMDRIVE subjects; however White women (59%) were more likely to report prostitution than were Hispanic women (42%) or Black women (28%). White and Hispanic women were about equally likely to report prostitution for cash (about 35%), while only about 21% of the Black women reported engaging in this activity. White women were more likely to exchange sex for drugs (24%) as compared to Hispanic women (8%) or Black women (7%).

The women who traded sex for drugs reported significantly more days of prostitution compared to other prostitutes over the eight-week reporting period. The 15 prostitutes who traded sex for drugs reported working an average of 24 days as prostitutes (about three days per week), compared to an average of 10 days for the 37 prostitutes who did not exchange sex for drugs ( $t=3.52$ ,  $d.f.=50$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

The women who traded sex for drugs were more likely to consume heroin over the eight weeks compared to the other two groups (73% for the traders, 57% for the prostitute nontraders, and 24% for the nonprostitutes;  $X^2=2$ ,  $d.f.=20.67$ ,  $p<.001$ ). All of the 11 traders who used heroin also used cocaine. Consumption of both heroin and cocaine over the eight weeks was a more prevalent practice for the traders than for the other women. While 73% of the traders reported both cocaine and heroin use, only 49% of the other prostitutes and 20% of the nonprostitutes reported using both substances ( $X^2=2$ ,  $d.f.=21.26$ ,  $p<.001$ ). All 15 of the traders were cocaine users, compared to 84% of the other prostitutes and 70% of the nonprostitutes

( $X^2=2$ , d.f.=7.54,  $p<.05$ ).

The most commonly used substances in the FEM-DRIVE study were cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and alcohol. Traders were the most likely to report use of at least three of these four substances during the eight-week reporting period. Twelve of the 15 traders (80%) reported using at least three of the substances, as compared to 57% of the other prostitutes and 47% of the nonprostitutes ( $X^2=-15.9$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

The average weekly frequency of use and dollar amount consumption of both heroin and cocaine were compared between the three groups. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) suggested significant differences for both dollar amount consumption and frequency of use for heroin. Both groups of prostitutes consumed significantly more heroin than the nonprostitutes. However, there was little difference between the two groups of prostitutes. The mean weekly consumption of heroin for traders was \$120, for other prostitutes it was \$117, and for nonprostitutes it was \$8 ( $F2$ , 130 d.f.=16.2,  $p<.001$ ). While both groups of prostitutes consumed heroin an average of more than two days per week, nonprostitutes consumed heroin on an average of less than one-half of one day per week ( $F2$ , 130 d.f.=17.4,  $p<.001$ ).

The greatest differences between the traders and all other women occurred with respect to cocaine consumption. Traders consumed an average of \$124 per week of cocaine; this contrasts with about \$59 per week for the other prostitutes and \$32 per week for the nonprostitutes ( $F2$ , 130 d.f.=16.3,  $p<.001$ ). Furthermore, traders reported using cocaine an average of about four days per week, other prostitutes reported using cocaine about two days per week and nonprostitutes reported using cocaine an average of about one day per week ( $F2$ , 130 d.f.=20.4,  $p<.001$ ).

### CHICAGO STUDY

The nature of the data collected from the Chicago study is not appropriate for quantitative analysis. However, important and provocative qualitative data are presented below.

#### COMPARING DRUGS-PROSTITUTION SCENES: QUALITATIVE PERSPECTIVES

A variety of issues will now be elaborated on with the help of qualitative data gathered from the three studies. Sources of accounts will be identified as being from the Drugs-Prostitution (Goldstein 1979), FEMDRIVE (FD), Chicago (CHI), or Chicago focus group (CHI FG) studies. It is interesting methodologically to compare the FD and CHI accounts. CHI accounts were all tape-recorded and retain their full natural flavor and syntax. FD accounts were gathered

during face-to-face interviews, written down by interviewers, with some inevitable paraphrasing and deletion of expletives, and lack the stark street linguistics of the CHI accounts.

As noted above, the phenomenon of women bartering sex for drugs is not new. In the Drugs-Prostitution study, 13 (39%) of the 33 heroin-addicted women engaged in bartering. At that time, street argot referred to such women as "bag brides." Today, women who barter sex for crack are called "strawberries," "toss-ups" or "skeezers." In a 1979-1981 study of 170 cocaine users in Miami, Morningstar and Chitwood (1987) found that 28% of the men and 47% of the women had traded sexual favors for cocaine. When asked if sex-for-drugs behavior was going on before ready-rock, two males familiar with the Chicago drugs and prostitution scene replied that it was: "They was turnin' dates for powder cocaine. I don't see any difference myself. Not too much difference between rocks and powder" (CHI FG).

Women engage in bartering out of financial necessity. In the Drugs-prostitution study, the factors that influenced women's decisions to barter sexually for drugs included the availability of men willing and able to enter into such a transaction (i.e., the man had to have drugs and want sex), whether or not the women had any alternative criminal skills (e.g., forgery, shoplifting), and how scared they were of engaging in traditional prostitution or other sorts or crime. Furthermore, some women (usually relatively inexperienced users) engaged in bartering because of the hazards of coping drugs in the illicit marketplace. Such women were afraid of being raped and/or robbed, or buying bogus or tainted drugs. They usually felt more secure acquiring their drugs from a male that they knew and trusted. Such men were frequently drug dealers. One male described a similar situation with regard to women bartering sex for crack in Chicago: "If a person, maybe she was square, didn't know nothin' about the street.... Then all of a sudden she smoke a rock and get addicted... then she lose her job, well, she might not know what to do for money. Well, consequently, somebody say, 'Well, I got a rock,' and she got a habit, she might go for it [sex]" (CHI).

Of the 14 drug barterers on the Drugs-prostitution study, five never engaged in any other form of prostitution; five went from bartering to traditional prostitution (mainly streetwalking), three engaged in bartering after having already worked as prostitutes, and one became a barterer and a mistress at about the same time. The transition from barterer to streetwalker generally occurred when the women had become increasingly resentful of being dependent on particular men to give them the drugs that they wanted and when the women had become sufficiently confident of their own abilities to make money and successfully negotiate the hazards of buying their own drugs.

There was considerable variation in the way that drug

barterers were viewed by others and how they viewed themselves. Barterers could be viewed as slick, clever females who were conning men out of drugs or at least engaging in appropriate female behavior. In the accounts that follow immediately below, it is apparent that these women feel that they are coming out on top or at least getting their fair share in sex-for-drugs transactions.

I would use the con game on him .... I would make believe that I loved them..., until I got tired of him. I didn't want to be with this one for too long, without him being too much of a boss to live with. (Goldstein 1979:47)

I felt pretty good about myself. I mean, I got over! And I didn't have to go out stealing, taking big risks. I always got what I wanted. (Goldstein 1979:48)

There would be this dealer that I knew. He would ask me if I wanted to go out and party. He would get a hotel room and we would be getting high on heroin and cocaine. We would have sex and he would give me some dope and coke to take with me. We would finish. I would wake up the next day and leave. He would be alright with me .... In no way have I been victimized [when exchanging sex for drugs]. They paid up with what they said they would. (FD #801)

This guy I knew from the street. He used to go with the girls and he would give drugs for my services. He approached me and asked if I want to go out with him and he offered me five bags to get started and then he gave me five more bags of heroin when we were finished. He also gave me five dollars cash after. All I did was have intercourse and kiss him all over. I get paid the right deal. (FD #816)

I was hanging with this [heroin] dealer. He was liking me a lot and I was watching his apartment. I was an apartment sitter for him. We would have sex and he would give me dope. (FD #786)

I used to work with this guy named Roberto. He was a dealer. He used to like me and he would ask me to give him a blowjob and also have intercourse. He would usually give me a gram of cocaine and about \$10 to \$15 for my services. We would also be smoking during the sex. We would do this about two or three times a week .... There was another guy named Ramos. He was also a dealer. We would have sex for fun and he would give me money and drugs. He would give me something to smoke before and during sex. We were pretty good friends. Only for money or drugs would I have sex. Not for free!... One time Roberto felt that since we had already smoked up a lot of cocaine, he didn't have to give me any more. I said, "Don't even think about it!" I told him that we had already made a deal and he was the one that was smoking and lighting up all the crack. He finally paid up because he knew that I wasn't going to let him get away with it. (FD #783)

Once in a while a guy would come up with a gram. Something you couldn't refuse. (FI #782)

There is this guy that I know who is a sanitation worker. He does crack and he likes me. When I see him he will give me \$300 to \$400 worth of crack for sexual favors. I've done it about five times with him. Also with another guy. He paid with crack. I have never been victimized. (FD #769)

I did it. If you smoke their crack they'd take it for granted. They'd ask if you wanted to hang out and you had to know what that meant. Guys I knew before or strangers that just came on to me. Some guys did not smoke themselves, but had some to offer the girls. (FD #763)

Whenever I knew someone who dealt in drugs, I would go and ask them if I could have sex to get high. They would, so I did. (FD #733)

I had a friend who dealt cocaine and marijuana. There would be times when I didn't have any money. I would give up my services for more cocaine. We would have sex and I would do it only for drugs with him. Most of my life I have used men and it has been for material things. I know a guy that is a construction worker and I am now leading him on to get access to his tools and expertise. (FD #729) [Note: Subject was "homesteading" an abandoned building at the time of the interview.]

I asked him to let me taste it [cocaine]. I'm not going to do anything until I taste it. It numbed my tongue, so it was good. He wanted to put it in my ass. I don't usually like it that way, but I wanted the coke badly. I'd do anything for coke. Good thing he was small. It wasn't so bad. I don't know why men like to put it there. I'll holler and they'll say, "I'm sorry, it slipped. I didn't mean it." (FD #725)

I went to cop. I was short. I asked for someone to go half-and-half with me. He was a customer at the spot .... He would buy me what I wanted if I would make love with him. He bought it and we went to his place.... I doubt that we will see each other again .... If I see him at the spot, it may happen again. (FD #719)

I always kept a man that dealt. I never had to go out and hustle. (FD #698)

I went to buy refer in an apartment building. Guy liked my voice. He opened the door and I went in...He suggested that in exchange for the reefer I go with him. He was real nice. The reefer was real good. I went with him because I knew I was going to get the reefer without paying for it. He gave me an ounce, but he was also a very nice person. I went looking for him afterwards, but he had moved out. That's the way it is with reefer people .... I would do this anytime I knew I'd get reefer and not have to pay for it. Even now. (FD #667)

Yes, with strangers. They would want to get high. They would give me the money to get drugs for the both of us and we would go to a hotel, and for the drugs I would give them something in return, sex. (FD #605)

I know him. He's a cab driver. I get a lot of coke in exchange for a blowjob and we stay overnight in a motel in New Jersey. He bought \$80 worth of coke and we split it. I see him once in a blue moon and we do the same thing, coke and motel. (FD #617)

He's a trick/friend. He came over and gave me \$30 of heroin and I gave him sex. He gave me what I wanted and I gave him what he wanted. (FD #630)

I have done a couple of things with a lot of dope dealers for some rocks, but dope dealers I've known for years that aren't

gonna fuck around and give me some shit to get me fuck'n in detox or something like that, or in a hospital for an overdose. Cause you can't trust some of these motherfuckers now. (CHI #3211)

I don't [barter] unless they got a lot of coke. 'Cause, you see I find that the guys who want sex for some coke, they wind up only like having a dime. There was one dude that wanted a date and yeh, I took a chance and went up to his apartment and he had this mirror and these big piles. (She smiled broadly.) Right, let's party!... We did a lot of coke and it was just coke, it wasn't rock... I shot it and then he gave me a little bit to take home .... It was some guy walkin' down the street and he said "You want to party," and I said "Sure." It was a big amount, really nice. (CHI #3323)

Now I have dated somebody for a bag. That's \$10 or \$20. I said, damn, if my boyfriend only knew that he'd probably kill me. You know, but it's the same as money .... When I was on Border Street I knew all the dope dealers and stuff. So it was \$20 and I mean some of this shit was good. I wouldn't mess with the Belizians, but the black dudes who sold the rocks, it was \$20 bags and the shit was so good you put the rock on the pipe and you take a hit of that, then you got to put the shit down. (CHI #681)

This same woman (CHI #681) was able to compare her current behavior to earlier years when she was using heroin: "Back then it wasn't popular to ask a woman, 'Hey, I got some dope, do you want to give me some sex for some dope.'... It was rare. That wouldn't even be the topic of the day. Now all the dudes talk about when they get high, 'Man, I got to get me a skeezer.'... Some can't even get erections .... But it wasn't popular to offer heroin for sex .... If a dope dealer would have told me that then, he probably would have insulted me, because I was worth more than a bag of dope." Many other women, both current and in past times, share this negative perspective on sex-for-drugs bartering. They consider such behaviors to be stupid and/or shameful.

We used to call those girls bums .... They go around and get in bed with this man for drugs. They were the bums .... I imagine some girls went and snuck out and did it, but they wouldn't let the other girls know that they did it. (Goldstein 1979: 48-49)

I blocked it out. I don't want to remember. It made me sick. (FD #841, who reported exchanging sex for drugs on three occasions)

I don't like that shit. I always felt that they cheat you. Give up my good sex for that shit? (FD #766)

I did it maybe four times. No more. I felt dirty about it. I preferred to work the street instead .... At the time I felt wonderful, I was able to be high all the time. The first two men I was with for drugs, I really felt for them. At first it might have been for the drugs, but I did really feel for them. The other two, it was only for the drugs .... I noticed a girl I know going after a man for the drugs. I felt it was wrong and rather dirty, and I knew I had been guilty of both things, and had done the same thing. Never again did I do it. I've had many girlfriends killed due to going with a man for drugs .... It's the last thing I would do. The woman who does that is not worth anything. (FD #685)

Not often, but at times. It felt worse than just giving sex for money. (FD #676)

I was offered drugs for sex, but never did it because I was afraid of getting poison. (FD #611)

[Sex-for drugs] degrades me. It's more businesslike to get the money. I'd rather go buy the dope myself. (FD #618)

I would say some people can't think. (CHI #681)

Some women clearly indicated being oppressed in sex-for-drug transactions.

My boyfriend was a user and dealer.... He never forced himself on me. But I knew if I didn't have sex with him I wouldn't get any drugs [heroin]. Army man [a different boyfriend] was the same. Sometimes I'll be so high, I didn't feel like doing it. But I knew I'll have to do it to get the pills, so I gave in. (FD #713)

I got involved with my common-law because he was a dealer and I could get drugs from him .... I lived with him for 12 years. The drugs were the motivating factor for my staying with him .... We used to fight a lot over how much I would get, who gets what, drugs and sex. He wanted it and I would not give it up .... He would not let me have drugs without sex as part of the deal. We never had sex for sex sake. In all the years I lived with him, maybe we made love once or twice. (FD #675)

This guy was a total jerk. I went to buy in Harlem, 125th Street. I had sex with him. Before the act, the agreement was that he would give me two nickel bags [marijuana]. But he reneged. He gave me one. After we finished he was concerned that I would have a baby. He said for me to go and do something so I wouldn't get a baby .... It was very painful. He was totally disregarding of me. (FD #667)

Sex-for-drugs situations always contained the possibility that one party or the other would get "beat" in the transaction.

There was a guy who was a crack dealer. I wanted to get high on crack. I didn't have any money and so I would have to have sex for the crack. I have done it about 50 times in the last three months. There have been two times where I have had sex with the guy and they said they would give me two bottles, but when I finished they only gave me one bottle. (FD #819)

It was usually a one-night stand type of thing. Many times if they smoke a lot, the urge is taken away and I don't even have to give the sex .... Two times I put out the sex first and then they took off. You learn not to put out first. (FD #781)

There was this guy that I met who wanted a blowjob but didn't have any money. All he had was \$10 worth of crack. We went to the roof and I did what I had to do. After he left I checked the crack and it was soap. I was beat. (FD #769)

Met two white kids. They wanted to get high and have sex .... I copped \$50 crack for them. We did it. I copped another \$50. We did that. They were high and horny. I conned them out of \$300 to get a lot of crack so I don't have to keep going back and forth and maybe get busted .... I never came back. I spent the \$300 on crack. I led them on to think they could have sex with me, and all I wanted them to do was buy me crack. They got no sex. (FD #722)

Sometimes sex-for-drugs transactions became violent: "I was waiting for a bus when I saw this guy .... He was looking real good and he had a bottle of rum. He said he had some crack and asked me to go hang out. We went to a friend that he knows .... We were getting high on rum and smoked some crack. After we left we went to a park and he attacked me and beat me up real bad. He used his fist. I was high from rum and smoking crack. (FD #819)

Women who were engaged in traditional prostitution for cash would sometimes be offered drugs in lieu of cash by the tricks. Some prostitutes would accept these offers; others would not.

This guy I had sex with on Monday was a regular trick. He didn't have any money, so he said he would give me some crack. I said okay and he gave me four bottles of crack. Tuesday I went with this guy who had crack and no money. I said, "Give me three bottles and I will do you good." He gave me the three bottles for the sex. (FD #763)

I had went with this guy. We had finished our sex and he paid me and pulled out some coke. We got high. A few days later he came to me and says he wanted to have some fun, but didn't have any money. He offered to pay me with cocaine. I said, "No problem." I see no difference. I always spend my money on coke anyway.... I do this quite a bit. I feel that I'm going to buy cocaine anyway. So if I can get it up front, then why not? Most of the time it's better quality coke anyway. Better cut. (FD #754)

When I was prostituting, they would offer drugs. But I'd rather have the money to buy drugs. (FI # 744)

Sometimes I'd be working the street. The trick would say I don't have money, but I'll give you coke. I have no problem with that. (FD #735)

I was smoking crack with a guy who wanted me to suck his dick. He got pushy and arrogant. I told him to "suck dead roaches from the bottom of my shoe." (FD #722 - a prostitute who would only accept cash)

I'd rather they give me money. Fuck that rock shit! 'Cause once you get on that rock shit you don't know what they're gonna do, you don't know what you're gonna do and it's better for you just to get your money and then do what you're gonna do somewhere safe. Because you never know what that person might do to you, or how .... If you don't know that person, or you just met that person, or you just seen him selling rocks on the street.... But if he's coming up to you and telling you, "let's do something for some rock," maybe he might give you some goddamn fucking poison, you never know. It's happened to me before. So I don't take rocks, I take money. Another thing is, it ruins your

reputation. 'Cause they think they can just run over you, "Well this bitch will fuck me for a rock," I don't go for that. I really don't. (CHI #3211)

Well, if you got a lot of coke, I'll do it for the coke. But I find these guys don't tell me what they got. I say, no way, man. There ain't shit there. Lotta times you get these guys, "Well, I got about quarter-gram of coke I'll give you," and they open up the package and there's only a line. "Fuck you." They're trying to get a piece of ass or blowjob for nothing. (CHI #3323)

They [men] be telling you, sex be goin' on, and they give you a little itty-bitty piece of the rock and they be smokin' it all up. And the girl sit up there, "Excuse me, where it at, what's happening?" Once she through she ain't had even a bump, ain't got no money. Ain't no more rocks, ain't no more shit and my ass is all wet and he done gave me all this sex and he says, "Ain't got no rock, I ain't even have no money." Ain't no man gotta tell me, I'm gonna give you two rocks and then we gotta do this and do that.... When he gets through smoking his, he'll say, "Baby, what happened to your rocks? We can smoke them." And then I'm smokin' my shit with him and I ain't get shit! If he give me my money, then if I want to buy me a rock or whatever, I can do that .... Now, if he give me a quarter ounce (laughing) we might go round and do somethin', a quarter ounce or ounce and we can go all night long. You see what I'm saying? 'Cause I can make some money right on the street off that. (CHI FG)

Some women reported that a major deterrent for them with regard to sex-for-drugs bartering was the fear of AIDS or other STD.

I never exchanged sex for drugs. I'm not getting no VD. (FD #849)

I was selling drugs to support my habits. I was selling cocaine and heroin. Now I do anything I can do to get money for crack. Rob, beat up, steal, beg, shout. Anything to get money for crack. But I don't trade sex for drags. AIDS has affected my sex life. I limit my sex. Now I don't have the desire anymore. (FD #810).

I've turned down offers of sex from men because of fear of AIDS. (FD #782)

A critical question with regard to AIDS is whether crack-related prostitution has a greater likelihood than other forms of prostitution of being characterized by unsafe sexual practices. Does women's desire for crack supersede appropriate caution? The answer to this question seems to vary among different women. The accounts given above indicate that at least some women have limited their sexual activity due to fears of contracting AIDS. Additional questions were asked of Chicago prostitutes concerning their use of condoms.

If somebody's smoking rock and they know what they're doing, and most of the gifts, they know what they're doing, they know to carry rubbers. I'm always passing out rubbers anyway. They know to carry rubbers, anyway, 'cause they know what's going on. I mean, they're not stupid. I mean, some of them don't

and some of them do. But I don't worry about who's carrying what I just worry about what I'm doing, how I'm doing it, where I'm doing it, and why I'm doing it, or what I'm doing it for. I just worry about me most of the time, because if I worry too much about people I'm going to drive myself crazy, because I've already done that. I try to worry about everybody else but myself and I don't look at what's happening to me, and that fucks me up. So I just don't worry about everybody. I just worry about me. (CHI FG)

Chicago prostitutes were asked if they really wanted another rock badly, and if a trick did not want to use a condom, whether they could or would say no to the trick.

It ain't hard to say no for me. I'll eventually talk him into it. I use reverse psychology. (CHI FG)

I'll still use them. I get a lot of guys who don't want to use a rubber now, but I say "nope." (CHI # 3323)

I'm goin' to admit, when I get geeked.., and we over there turnin' dates, we didn't have no rubbers .... One day over there I did pretty good. What I'd made, about \$60 one night, and we just smoked it all up and I didn't have a rubber. But most of them just want head nowadays. But some of them, I did have intercourse with 'em. And I hope I don't have AIDS. That's all it takes, just one time.... 'Cause I didn't have none [condoms] .... Tricks didn't have any, and then I wanted that money so I could get a bag. That was up on Border. They got some tens, but mainly they got \$20 hags on Border. You know, I was geeked and I wanted me a bag. Over on the West Side, I used to use them. But not always. 'Cause if a trick say "I don't use them things," I ain't gonna turn down no \$20, \$30 .... A lot here, they don't really use them. ... I'm telling you, once you get this rock in your system, a person might almost do anything. (CHI #681)

I use them every time. If a man tell me he don't want one, the condom is in my mouth already. He won't know 'til he's finished. (CHI FG)

The tricks... they come, they get pissed off when they don't want to pay people the right price. Some of these girls, I tell them, if he doesn't want to use a rubber, why don't you get the fuck out of the car.... I just know I use one. If the trick doesn't want to use a rubber, you know, I got to know a trick for years in order to .... But then again I think about his wife and shit like that, or who he's dating, or how many people he's done fucked, or how many hookers he done fuck'n picked up and done paid.., you know what I'm saying? It all goes through my mind. (CHI #3211)

It is interesting to note that not all sexual bartering was done with men. One woman (FD #704) reported that when she was 24 years old she traded sex for drugs with two older women who were drug dealers. She never engaged in any other form of prostitution.

In an account cited above, subject FD #781 noted that she would always get and consume her drugs before sex in bartering situations because the man might renege on his promise to give her the drugs after he had sex. Another woman (FD #777) reported

the exact opposite procedure in her sex-for drugs transactions. She claimed that she wouldn't smoke crack before sex in bartering transactions because it killed her desire. The issue of how sex and drug consumption are sequenced in bartering transactions appears to be a point of etiquette and possible contention among drug users. It also came up in the Chicago studies. The following account was given by a male crack user.

I'm gonna smoke with her. But that's another thing, 'cause it take away.... I'm gonna get mine off the top [i.e., sex first], because that take away all the sex drive .... A rockhead don't have no sex drive .... When you go to a smokehouse, the women will be there because they know they ain't got to spend no money, because they got what that man want: pussy. You understand what I'm saying?... But the man gonna get his broad anyway.... He comin' to the house, he know what he want. He knows a woman gonna be there. Before he start doin' anything he gonna get himself some ready-rock. Ya, he knows that sex will be available, so he gets his rock out. Once he gets his rock out, "Let's get busy [i.e., have sex]..." Around a woman who use cocaine, she never have to spend no money on it because she know there going to be a man out there who, you know, "I'm gonna find me a woman." (CHI #680)

The following exchange took place in the Chicago focus group. It indicates how women may manipulate crack's deadening effect on male sexuality to their own advantage.

**Woman:** A man buy himself a rock, he think he got to come... and then he can't .... Every time a man buy himself some rocks, he got to find himself a female, he got to find himself any kind of female just so he can get his nut off .... And then women get hip to that shit, that if they take more than three bumps, ain't nothing goin' on [i.e., man can't or won't want to have sex]. So they make sure the man, you know, "Here, baby, take another bump" ... so he can't get up, he can't come.

**Man:** What she said is true. I can't understand it. If I take my money and buy me some rocks, if I got a female and we goin' to get high, this sex shit, it ain't even goin' on. I just done spent too much money for this here rock, you dig, just to get charged [i.e., to get high from cocaine].

## SUMMARY

The accounts given by crack-using women do not support the notion that they are helpless slaves to their crack use. Many female crack users chose to barter sex-for-crack; others did not. Even among the crack barterers, most of the women who were interviewed portrayed themselves as engaged in economic transactions in which they were treated fairly. Female crack barterers reported strategies for conducting these transactions that minimized their potential for victimization and, indeed, sometimes provided opportunities for victimizing the male (e.g., withholding sex while they were smoking until the male had smoked enough that he was no longer interested in having

sex). This is not say that all crack-using women employ such ruses and/or avoid victimization. Rather, the data suggest that there are a wide variety of ways that women cope with their desire for crack, and it is fallacious to assume that the helpless/slave/victim is the only or even the predominant mode of adaptation to a crack habit.

The data from all three studies suggest that women who barter sex for drugs are also engaging in traditional prostitution for cash. FEMDRIVE data indicated that barterers tend to be the heaviest drug users, using the widest variety of drugs simultaneously, using greater amounts of drugs, and using them more frequently. The higher frequency and volume of drug use among barterers was most apparent with regard to cocaine. From the data, it is impossible to tell whether women with greater cocaine (including crack) habits chose to become barterers out of financial necessity or whether women who were willing to engage in bartering were able to increase their cocaine intake.

### Has Crack Changed the Drugs-Prostitution Nexus?

Chicago prostitutes seemed in relative agreement that one effect of the arrival of rock was to lower the price of sex for street prostitutes. The accounts that follow suggest that the price of a street trick tends to correspond to the unit price of street drugs. If \$20 bags are the minimum unit price for drugs, the trick will be turned for \$20. The lowest unit price for rock in Chicago is now \$10.

I guess back then, I would get like \$20, \$30, a date. Round here you get like \$10 and \$20... because everybody smoking crack cocaine and all you need is \$10 to get a rock. And the average prostitute got a drug habit. That's what I'm thinkin'. So if the trick sayin', "Damn, I could give her \$10 and if she turn me down, the next one will take it." Unless it's somethin' they really want. You know, "I want her," then they might give you \$20, \$30. (CHI #681)

When the powder was goin' on .... You see, it seems like the money was out there .... Because when it was powder, you buy 20 cent powder, you don't buy no dime powder. Okay? And a mutherfucka know for a blow job he give you \$20, \$25, and sometime a mutherfucka might give you \$30. Now, since the dime bags of rocks goin' on, this muthafucker say \$10. Okay? Then some girls out there that so desperate for the rocks that they take the \$10, and the man, be figures next time he picks up another girl, it's \$10. (CHI FG)

One important difference between the contemporary crack scene and earlier heroin scenes stems from the relative brevity of the crack high. For example, persons who had injected heroin generally would feel high or comfortable for three to four hours. The time that it takes crack users to desire more crack may be counted in minutes. The following account by a Chicago prostitute is illustrative.

Once you geeked off that stuff, rock, it's different. It ain't like shooting, 'cause I remember that shooting would last longer.

I'd shoot some dope with my man, we'd buy a fifth or liter of Thunderbird and we'd drink that and I'd sit back in the crib for maybe an hour, calm down, and I'd go back to work. But it wasn't no frantic thing. If I had \$40 in my pocket I might keep on workin'... 'til I get like \$70, \$80. Then I say, "Come on, I got \$80, lets go get some coke." But now, I get \$10, I do a rock, I want another rock -- after I do my wine to calm me down. (CHI #681)

Crack has certainly altered the social status of cocaine. It is informative to look back 10 to 20 years ago, and compare the present article to what was being written then about cocaine. Goldstein (1979:122-123), in discussing the functions of cocaine that were reported by prostitutes, noted that cocaine served the quasi-function of being a status symbol. It was considered to be the "rich man's drug." Conspicuous consumption of cocaine symbolized that one was doing well. A call girl described the role that cocaine played in the swinging nightlife of the mid-1970s: "When I first got into the business... it was like a way to make a lot of money fast and... you wanted to go out to the discotheque... and the whole night life ... coke is a part of that... If you want to be cool... I always wanted to have at least some coke on me in a nice silver box... It was an ego trip. It's silly, really." Siegel (1982:74) wrote of cocaine in a similar fashion: "[Its] appeal can be understood only in the context of cocaine's association with status, glamour and power.... Cocaine is by far the sexiest of the illicit drugs, both in ambience and effect." These portrayals of cocaine are certainly quite different from today's skeezer imagery.

Perhaps the biggest difference between crack prostitution and previous prostitution scenes has to do with social disorganization. Illicit street activities, both drug selling and prostitution, appear to have become more chaotic and anarchic over the past two decades. Two great waves of violence have occurred during this period. The first was roughly from 1979 to 1981, when a new market was being forged in powder cocaine, and various criminal organizations (mainly Colombian and Cuban) were fighting for control of that market. The second wave of violence began roughly in 1988; it arose from hostilities connected with crack distribution. Crack brought many small-scale entrepreneurs into the illicit drug marketplace. Their violent boundary disputes as well as other sorts of systemic violence have driven homicide rates to new heights in many locations (e.g., Goldstein et al. 1989).

The same sort of anarchy that characterizes illicit drug distribution today also seems to be present in street prostitution. At various points in history, prostitution has been more or less well organized and has been either favorably or unfavorably disposed toward drug use by prostitutes. Henriques (1968) argued that there was an intimate connection between prostitution and the rise of the brewery companies in England in the early nineteenth century (see also Flexner 1914; Acton 1857). In the early twentieth century, Chicago had a similar experience. Disorderly saloons,

under the control of brewery companies, employed prostitutes to attract customers and to encourage their drinking. The women drank with the customers, received a commission on the drinks that they induced their tricks to buy, and were protected by the saloon keepers and the brewery companies. While the alcohol interests were enriched, the laboring prostitute was pressured into continual alcohol use, with frequent tragic results (see Reckless 1969; Woolston 1969).

By the middle of the twentieth century, this state of affairs had largely disappeared. In the United States, brewery companies were forbidden to own outlets for their beverages. The liquor industry ceased to exercise control over working girls and prostitutes became more independent. However, as noted above, the remaining authority figures in the world of prostitution, pimps and madams, were adamantly opposed to the use of drugs by working girls. Pimps, and their women, frequently kept addicted women from working on popular "ho strolls" (Goldstein 1979).

There has been an apparent decline in the role played by pimps and madams in the world of prostitution over the past few decades. The cocaine dealer, representing new economic interests, in some way seems to have replaced the pimp. Morningstar and Chitwood (1987:138) clearly described this situation: "Several Black street users who were interviewed expressed the opinion that the cocaine dealer was replacing the pimp as the man of status on the streets of Miami. One of them said, 'It used to be that cocaine was for the big-style hustler... who had the ladies .. A man can hardly make a woman do anything now. A woman is for herself.. and just makes love for cocaine with dudes that have coke.'"

Members of the Chicago focus group expressed a similar view:

Woman #1: The dope man is the pimp.  
 Woman #2, Woman #3, and some other men: That's right.  
 Woman #1: The rock man's the pimp.  
 Woman #2: That's why there's no pimps. You know, they start selling drugs. 'Cause when they have their woman out

there workin' and can't find their woman once she get in the car, cause if they do find their woman, she's out in some smokehouse with a bag of rock. See what I'm sayin'? They say, "Why should they sit out there and have their woman workin' when they can't control..."

Woman #2: When they can sell rock...

Woman #3: That's fight, see what I'm sayin'? So they sell rock.

Actually, the sleazy sexuality in contemporary crack or smokehouses resembles the goings-on in the disorderly saloons of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The accounts given by contemporary Chicago rock users indicate clearly that one of the attractions of the smoke-houses, like the disorderly saloons, is that sex is so readily available. Men purchase additional crack to give to the women to pay for their sexual favors. The crack sellers and the smokehouse managers clearly benefit economically.

It is difficult to adequately conceptualize this economically synergistic relationship between crack distribution and prostitution. Is this relationship a product of social disorganization or of criminal organization? Is contemporary crack prostitution the logical result of a combination of social factors, including the decline in some segments of organized prostitution, the growing absolute and relative deprivation being experienced by the poor in American society, and the ideological encouragement for a woman to be "for herself"? To what extent have crack distributors organized or encouraged this state of affairs? It is hoped that further research will add to knowledge about the social factors that may be underlying the contemporary crack prostitution scene. The potential for crack prostitution to be contributing to the spread of HIV makes the need for better understanding of this phenomenon increasingly critical.

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