

Race, Drugs, and the Making of the Modern World

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(This paper is in progress. We expect to make significant revisions in the months to come, making the argument more coherent, eliminating repetition and finding additional sources to support our claims. We expect to upload an updated version closer to the ASA conference. If you would like to cite it, please email us at luisa.fs@utoronto.ca for the latest version)

Abstract

This paper discusses the intertwining of race, drugs and modernity historically. We bring three literatures into conversation: critical race theory, the history of psychoactive drugs, and historical sociology. Through an analysis of secondary sources on the history of drugs, we engage three broad and interrelated themes: racial and colonial capitalism, state formation, and the embodied making of modern subjecthood. Here, race and drugs are both linked to changing relationships between humans and nature, and the anxieties, social dislocation, violence and changing power hierarchies that this process entails. The production, exchange, and consumption of drugs on a global scale under capitalism has been a vital site of commodification of nature in a broad sense, including the commodification of humans, their livelihoods, and their relationships with each other, with their environment, and with the metaphysical. The economy and politics of drugs have been intimately connected to the logics slavery, colonialism, empire, bordering and criminalization that have shaped the racialized inequalities and exclusions of the contemporary era. Moreover, in a profound sense, race and drugs have been historically seen as threats to idealized Western understandings of a modern, liberal subject, capable of self-regulation detached from their natural impulses. Both materially and symbolically, drugs have been constitutive of racialization and the making of the modern world.

Introduction

In 1883, a prominent American physician claimed that opium addiction was a form of enslavement “worse than African Slavery” (Sell 1883). In 1931, David Anslinger, the first commissioner of the U.S. Federal Narcotics Bureau, claimed that not only were most cannabis users “Negroes, Hispanics, Filipinos and entertainers” whose “[s]atanic music, jazz and swing result from marijuana use,” but also that “marijuana causes white women to seek sexual relations with Negroes, entertainers and any others” (Smith 2018). In 2017, U.S. President Trump told Mexican President Peña Nieto that it was important to build a wall to contain Mexican migrants because in the U.S. “[w]e are becoming a drug-addicted nation and most the drugs are coming from Mexico or certainly from the southern border.” (Miller et al. 2017). These quotes illustrate that concerns about psychoactive drugs have long been linked to anxieties surrounding the preservation of whiteness, be it the control of territories and political communities, concerns with racial mixture, or the preservation of white freedom. These examples drawn from U.S. history are particularly stark instantiations of a

set of concerns that extend much further both historically and geographically. The relationship between race and psychoactive drugs both precedes and transcends contemporary nation-state borders, having roots in the transcontinental encounters between Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia that have shaped the modern world.

We argue that examining the interconnected histories of race and drugs allows us to revisit and rethink classic themes of historical sociology's examination of "modernity," such as the development of global capitalism, the formation of modern states, and the cultural frameworks and worldviews that accompanied these institutional changes (Marx 1978 [1848]; 2004 [1867]; Weber 1978, 2012 [1920]; Tilly 1992; Wallerstein 2011 [1974]). Critical race and decolonial scholars have long been involved in linking race to modernity, studying for instance how capitalism developed in relation to race and colonialism (e.g., Robinson 2020[1983]; Du Bois 1947; Rodney 2018 [1972]; Quijano 2000), how modern political institutions developed according to racial and colonial logics and struggles (e.g., Goldberg 2002; Omi and Winant 2014; Mills 2014; Alexander 2020 [2012]; Mbembe 2003) and how racism and colonialism interacted with modern ideas about subjecthood (Wynter 2003). Recently, some scholars have brought these traditions together, seeking to overcome the Eurocentrism and race-blindness that had long been dominant in the discipline (Hammer and Itzigsohn 2021; Go 2013; Bhabra 2016; quizumbing king and White 2021). Independently, historians have studied how production, commercialization, consumption, and regulation of psychoactive drugs have shaped modern political and economic institutions and ideologies (for a synthesis, see Courtwright 2001). This paper seeks to bring these different sets of literatures in conversation, along with insights from social scientists studying related dynamics in the contemporary period.

By adding the problematic of drugs, the paper makes three contributions to our understanding of the relationship between race and modernity. First, it allows us to revisit theories of racial and colonial capitalism, by allowing us to think of the social world, including its power structures, as simultaneously cultural and material, recovering the original Marxist sense of materiality present in his early writings on alienation (Marx 1978[1844]). Second, it allows us to think through the connection between racialization and state formation on a global scale, taking into account how racialization affects the differential governing of populations and territories both in the Global North and in the Global South, and the implications this has for the differentiated distribution of rights across racial, (post-)colonial and geographic lines. Finally, it suggests a rethinking of racial ideologies as being about *denaturalization*, rather than of *naturalization*, as conventional framings suggest.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first two sections examine how the historical intersections of race and drugs illuminate the development of capitalism and the process of modern state formation, respectively. In the third section, we conceptually locate the historical relationship between race and drugs within the development of ideas about modern human subjecthood in relation to nature and the metaphysical world. These sets of developments have been interlinked, and pervasive in all of them are the relationships between culture and materiality, as well as the contradictions between struggles for freedom and efforts at greater social control that are characteristic of the modern era.

Our analysis covers three major historical periods, although we cover the first two more extensively than the third. First, the period between the 16th and 19th century, characterized by European and Euro-American colonial expansion, and the transatlantic enslavement of Africans, with it the emergence of both modern ideologies of race and the

global capitalist economy in which drugs play important roles. Second, the period between the late 19th and early 20th century, which is characterized by the abolition of slavery, the imposition of new controls on labor and movement, the expansion of European imperial power in Asia and Africa, as well as technological developments that make drugs more potent and racially-charged political developments, including drug panics and prohibitions. Third, the period after World War II, which is characterized by Civil Rights and postcolonial independence, but also enduring racism on global scales and within rich countries that we see through intensifications of global inequalities, of bordering practices and of the carcerality and militarism of the War on Drugs.

Following the conventions of historians and social scientists who have studied this topic, we define drugs here as psychoactive substances that people insert into the body (through various means such as ingestion, smoking, injecting) and that have an effect on the mind – on perception, mood, consciousness, or cognition. This definition is fuzzy, blurring the boundary between food, psychoactive drugs and other medical drugs, and we leave some ambiguity and edge cases in the paper because they are sociologically interesting to think with. Nonetheless, this definition has some advantages. First, since drugs are not being defined in terms of their legality/illegality, which vary by time and place, the regulation of drugs can be examined as one of the *outcomes* of particular social and historical configurations. Rather than figuring drugs as the terrain of criminalized and marginalized populations and organizations, we articulate drugs as *constitutive* of mainstream modern political and economic institutions and social life. Second, examining drugs through their *psychoactive* properties (whether real or imagined, whether subtle or intense) allows us to think through how the political economy and ideology of drugs relate to racial ideologies and social structures in the modern era, through different articulations of dichotomies such as freedom/social control, culture/nature.

Race, Drugs and Capitalism

Critical race and decolonial scholars have argued that one needs to understand the history of colonialism, slavery and racism to explain the origins and development of capitalism. Following Marx's idea of primitive accumulation, many scholars such as WEB Du Bois (1947), Walter Rodney (2018[1972]) and Cedric Robinson (2020[1983]), show how capitalism developed through the theft of people, lands and livelihoods associated with the African slave trade, the colonization of the Americas, and the occupation of Africa by European powers in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. Furthermore, some scholars have argued that *racialization* processes are integral to the division of labor under capitalism. For Robinson (2020[1983]) the racialization of people of African descent created the stereotyped figure of the “negro,” i.e., ahistorical people of allegedly inferior moral and intellectual abilities, only fit for manual work. This ideological construct was key to legitimizing the enslavement and exploitation of people of African descent in the Atlantic world. Quijano (2000) adds that racialization segmented three distinct and coexisting labor regimes in colonial Latin America, which were tied to the solidification of three racial categories: White, Black and Indian. These were, respectively, associated with peoples' classification into three types of labor relations: free labor, slavery, and serfdom.

The transatlantic enslavement of Africans, the colonization of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and, from the 19th century onwards, the rise of European and U.S.-American empire in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, were driven and financed, in large part, by the production and commodification of drugs. Not all drugs have become commodities, but many have, and are produced on a mass scale and commercialized over large distances. Hence, many scholars have examined drugs through a commodity chain approach, linking productive and labor processes to consumption patterns in faraway places, generating global relations of exploitation and dependence (e.g., Gootenberg 2017, Jankowiak and Bradburd 2003).

For drugs to be transformed into commodities, they need to be physically transformed, and also their meaning and use changes. This has two implications: first, more labor and land and different kinds of knowledge and technology are used to do this transformation. Second, this transformation has a consequence for how drugs are consumed, both in terms of the physical effect of drugs on the body and in relation to the meaning and purpose of drugs. They are commodified also in the sense that they become spatially mobile, being disconnected from their original system of meaning and natural and social environment, and getting integrated into the logic of the emerging global capitalist economy and worldviews.

Furthermore, the drug economy and its entwining with racialization were central to the creation of what Polanyi (1944) calls “fictitious commodities:” labor, land and money. Not only was land, labor and money required for the commodification of drugs, but, by aiding the disciplining of labor, commodified drugs became an *input* into the production of money and other commodities. Through their role in political processes elaborated further in the next section, drugs became and input into the commodification of land and of humans (through enslavement and dispossession).

Finally, adding the history of drugs to our analysis of racial capitalism allows us to theorize the relationship between race and capitalism one step further. Here, we take inspiration from the early writings by Marx (and partly to Weber), and ask how racialization relates to commodification, labor power disciplining, alienation and materiality which are characteristic of capitalism. That is, what is different about the way that capitalism changes people's relationships to nature, to each other, and to their own experiences, and how does that relate to the new ways in which “race” is conceived?

A key factor in the European expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries was the ability to bridge the oceans, connecting the Americas to Europe, Asia and Africa (Schwartzman 2021). The sails and ropes of Spanish and Portuguese ships were made of hemp (Castro 2009), and hence hemp cultivation in the Americas soon became widespread, being encouraged by Spanish authorities in the 18th century. Use of the plant then crossed over from its use as fiber for cloth and rope to use as a narcotic, where cannabis got incorporated into Mexican Indigenous practices of using hallucinogens to connect with divine beings. This use was condemned by Spanish religious authorities (though not enough to discourage the cultivation of hemp), who interpreted drug-induced hallucinations as a sign of devilish possession. By the 19th century Mexican cannabis use had become associated with the “mad” behavior of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized populations, and a serious movement toward its prohibition began (Campos 2012).

Central to plantation slavery in the Americas was the production of sugar (and its byproduct, rum), tobacco and coffee. While sugar's addictive and psychoactive properties are not fully established (see Freeman et al. 2018), following Mintz (1986), many historians of drugs and modernity include sugar in their accounts as a “drug-food,” highlighting its co-

production with rum and its complementarity to the consumption of caffeinated beverages. In the Americas between the 16th and the 19th centuries, there was an expropriation of land from Indigenous peoples (many of whom also became enslaved) to plant, among other things, sugar cane, coffee and tobacco. The demand for labor for these crops fueled the slave trade from Africa (Luna and Klein 2003; Bergad 2007; Monteiro 2018; Mintz 1986). Tobacco and alcohol (at first, wine, but increasingly rum and cachaça as sugar plantations expanded) were then exchanged for enslaved people in Africa and for furs (with Indigenous peoples) in the Americas (Curto 2004; Mancall 2003; Russell 2019).

Following the Haitian revolution, followed by abolition of slavery in the British and French Caribbean, Europeans and U.S.-Americans intensified their imperial and commercial ambitions in Asia, which was associated with the production of tea and, especially, opium (Schivelbusch 1992; Trocki 1999; Rappaport 2017). The trade in tobacco from the Americas enabled a change in the consumption of opium in Asia, from ingestion to smoking. Eventually it became possible to smoke opium without tobacco, but at first they were mixed together (Trocki 1999, Dikötter et al. 2004).

Nonetheless, the production of coffee, sugar, and tobacco in the Americas continued in Brazil, Cuba and the United States, temporarily increasing the demand for enslaved labor through the late 19th century (what historians call the “second slavery”), causing a growth in slavery in Brazil, Cuba and the United States after the British prohibition of the slave trade and its abolition in the British and French empires. As formerly enslaved Haitians revolted against the plantation economy and expelled French colonizers, Brazil and Cuba took Haiti's place as the most important exporters of coffee and sugar, respectively in this period (Luna and Klein 2003; Bergad 2007).

In post-abolition Brazil, coffee production became associated with settler colonialism and with the racial project of whitening the population. Railroads facilitated the expansion of coffee production into the interior, further encroaching onto Indigenous land (Topik and Samper 2006). Planters and political authorities encouraged European migration to replace enslaved Africans and Afro-Brazilians in coffee plantations, which was justified through an idea of “whitening” the population (Skidmore 1992; Azevedo 1987). There was also a debate about bringing Asian workers, which were thought to be cheap and exploitable labor but unassimilable and untrustworthy. This resulted in a rejection of Chinese workers, but an encouragement of Japanese migration after Japan made an agreement with Brazil in the early 20th century to make up for US exclusion. To help this agreement happen, Japanese authorities, drawing on their own post-Meiji Restoration modernizing ideology, tried to convince Brazilian authorities that the Japanese were the “whites of Asia” and therefore disciplined workers. Japanese migrants then joined European ones in replacing Afro-Brazilians in coffee plantations (Lesser 1999).

Agriculture and technoscientific innovations enabled new transformations of plants into psychoactive drugs. They made them more addictive, more easily ingested and easier to transport. Such transformations detached some drugs from their local uses and meaning and introduced them to new social and cultural contexts. Tobacco, which was consumed for ritual and medical purposes by Indigenous peoples in the Americas transformed eventually into cigarettes, which are much more easily and rapidly consumed (Goodman 2005). In North America, from the late 19th century to the mid-20th centuries, commercial tobacco was marketed and sold to Indigenous peoples while native tobacco use for religious rituals was prohibited (Nez Henderson et al. 2022). Similarly, sugar cane was transformed into a white powder and into distilled alcohol through a semi-industrial process, that required multiple

phases of heating, cooling and isolation of different compounds from one another, leaving two substances that were more transportable and more potent (Mintz 1986).

Mintz (1986) argues that the cheap availability of sugar in England, made possible by plantation slavery in the Caribbean, was key to creating a disciplined urban labor force for the Industrial Revolution in England. The consumption of sugar allowed for a cheap and fast diet for workers and provided them with a quick source of energy that allowed them to have short breaks and a fast-paced environment, without the necessity of spending time preparing meals.

Some of the effects of drugs on work, however, are socially constructed: for instance, contrary to the belief that opium would make workers less productive, Dikötter et al. (2004) and Trocki (2000) argue that Chinese workers in Southeast Asia and in China itself often took opium to increase productivity, as the drug allowed them to stay awake for long periods of time. The capacity of some drugs like opium, tobacco and coca to quench pain and hunger could have enhanced productivity (Dikötter et al. 2004; Mancall 2003; Gootenberg 2008).

Drugs also fostered capitalism by creating new, and often addictive, consumer habits. In the late 17th century, coffee spread from the nobility to the bourgeois and middle classes in Europe, being praised as a form of class differentiation from the alcohol-drinking working classes, and consistent with Protestant emphasis on sobriety (Schivelbush 1992). In the 19th and early 20th century, coffee and tea spread to the working classes in Europe and the United States. The shift from craft traditions to industrial work was marked by employers increasingly seeking to discipline workers' drinking (Roberts 1981) and employers increasingly favored alternative drug foods such as tea and coffee over alcohol (Jankowiak and Bradburd 1996). However, alcohol's relationship with factory work is complex: it may be good for maintaining the factory workforce under particular urbanizing conditions, not least because beer can be safer than the local water supply (Bynum 2013). Trocki (1999) Europeans were able to revert the balance of trade with Asia through large-scale profits from opium sold to inhabitants of the region, and hence establish colonial rule. While opium had been in Asia for centuries, the British empire transformed it into a mass-produced substance the production and trade of which it increasingly controlled. It was the control of the opium market that allowed the Europeans to reverse the flow of precious metals, which until the 19th century went from Europe, Africa and the Americas to Asia.

Up until the 19th century, race and drugs were also intertwined in the production of money. Because chewing coca provided energy required to work at high altitudes under demanding work conditions, Spanish colonizers encouraged the spread of its consumption from elites to peasant farmers. Enslaved Africans and Afrodescendants and Indigenous peoples under forced labor regimes were employed in gold and silver mines, at a time when these metals were used to make silver and gold coins used in global trade. In the early 19th century, with the independence of Latin American states, this system collapsed, causing a global shortage of money which disrupted the trade between China and the West, leading to the opium wars. Eventually, coca became racially stigmatized: in the 19th century, the advent of cocaine as an industrialized medical drug in Peru was initially tied to the elite idea about being modern and industrial, while coca was negatively associated with backward Indigenous peasants (Gootenberg 2008).

The Industrial Revolution, and especially the second industrial revolution in the 19th century, which combined scientific and medical knowledge with emerging chemical and

pharmaceutical industries, allowed for further transformations (Sturchio and Galambos 2011). Chemical compounds could now be extracted from plants as well as from byproducts of industrial processes such as coal tar to produce new drugs, which are all used for medical purposes, initially (and tend to have an “in” ending in German). Cocaine, heroin, morphine are part of this group (Goodman 2005; Jones 2011).

In the mid-to-late 20th century, completely new chemical compounds were created (e.g., opioids, LSD). The growth of the military and welfare states in the Global North during this period provided much money for scientific research. With the neoliberal moment from the 1980s forward, there was a deregulation of certain medical drugs (like opioids), combined with the growth in the global pharmaceutical industry, which was increasingly concerned with managing long-term illness and chronic pain instead of short-term infectious disease. Here, the discovery of new drugs and their use in different populations related in complicated ways to both the repressive and the welfare arms of the state, to both private and public interests, to both demands of domestic publics and imperial geopolitics (Langlitz 2013; Sherman 2017; McCoy 2003).

Today, thinking of drugs through commodity chains is an important dimension of understanding how the politics race and drug control are intertwined. Taking a commodity chains approach to drugs allows us to see the links between drug consumption in the Global North, and the attendant racialization of those who bring, sell drugs and use drugs in the North, and the production, sale and consumption of drugs beyond the border. Corva (1998) has noted that international policies of drug control today, with regards to illegal psychoactive drugs, make distinctions between “producing” and “consuming” countries, creating global geographic zones that are clearly racialized. He argues that U.S. has made debt relief policies conditional on “good behavior” with regard to drug policies in countries marked in this way, which means imposing punitive anti-drug laws in producing countries. Current debates about legalization of drugs focus on consumers and sometimes domestic sellers and producers of drugs, but a discussion on the labor conditions of production and sale of drugs in places like Latin America and other drug producing regions is not in consideration, nor the extent to which anti-drug policies produce, in the context of high demand by countries of the Global North, the social conditions that lead some migrants from the Global South to flee northwards, while others remain at home in the context of high levels of violence and growing incarceration, exacerbated by transnational and local drug wars.

Race, Drugs and State formation

How does an examination of the historical articulation of race and drugs help us make sense of modern processes of state formation and of the making of modern political subjects? In this section, we argue that, rather than a teleological story of state formation which points to the gradual consolidation of borders, national identities and the monopolization of domestic violence by emerging nation-states, and the increased ability for citizens to have rights, looking at state formation processes through the intersection of racial formations and the political economy of drugs allows one to see a global *diversity* of state formation processes, which strengthens some states, weakens others, and also blurs the distinction between state and non-state actors in the management of territories and

populations. As race scholars have already noted (e.g., Mills 2014, Goldberg 2002), modern nation-states have defined and delimited citizenship and rights in racially stratified ways, and public and political concerns about drugs have been key to these definitions. Furthermore, divergent state formation processes have implications for rights and citizens as, in much of the world, the state is not the only actor involved in the political organization of life and death and its uneven application, nor in the management of populations (Mbembe 2003). In many contexts, criminalized drug organizations become one of several domestic and transnational actors to perform violence and regulate bodies and spaces.

We examine below how the economy, politics and ideologies around race and drugs interact with (1) globally divergent but interconnected state formation processes, including the development of non-state organizations that perform state-like functions, (2) the management of the internal and external boundaries of citizenship and belonging and (3) the transnational organization of *necropolitics*, i.e., the political management of life and death. For examining item (1), we provide examples from around the world, while we rely primarily on the experience of the U.S. and Canada for (2) and of Latin America for (3).

State formation processes: military power, diplomacy, colonization and empire

Using the framework of historical sociology (e.g., Tilly 1992; Mann 2012), we can examine processes of colonial, national and imperial political formations as a process of accumulation of infrastructural power, taxation, and control over land and people. While in Europe this process led to the eventual development of imperial nation-states, in Africa, the Americas and South and Southeast Asia it led to the development of colonial infrastructures, while simultaneously leading to the breakdown or reconfiguration of local polities (Rodney 2018 [1972]; Trocki 1999; Schwartzman 2021). In colonial organizations, the separation of political, economic and military power was often non-existent (Adams 2005). At the same time, the mobilization of military power was rarely done through centralized conscripted armies, but were more often subject to more local control, and thus depended on military allegiances and the mobilization of people with various degrees of freedom (Reed 2020; Schwartzman 2021). Tilly (2017) has argued that there is a continuum between “the state” and organized crime. At least in Europe, the state can be seen as racketeering organizations gradually gained legitimacy and eliminated the competition. Nonetheless, critics have shown that, in most of the world, the use of necropower has rarely been monopolized by the state (e.g., Mbembe 2003). In fact, colonialism, enslavement, empire and, more recently, the war on drugs helped prevent this monopolization, leading to blurred and unstable relations between state and criminal violence in much of the so-called Third World.

Drug economies, the changing politics around the regulation of drugs, and their associated colonial and racializing logics, have all been intertwined with state formation processes for different reasons. First, starting in the 16th century, drugs became materially and symbolically embedded in practices of warfare and diplomacy which changed the structure of political and military power along racial and geographic lines. Second, as profitable commodities, they were key to financing newly empowered Euro-colonial elites in the Americas and European imperial projects in Asia and Africa that emerged in the 19th century. Finally, starting in the 20th century, with the advent of national and international regimes of drug prohibition, drug economies and the racializing logics of criminalization of

these economies helped blur the boundaries between state, private and criminal governmentalities.

Historians of slavery and colonialism in the Atlantic world argue that the transatlantic slave trade of the 16th to the 19th centuries brought about a breakdown of African states, while colonization of the Americas in the same period brought about a gradual replacement of Indigenous by Euro-colonial states, in a process that required a complicated combination of warfare, allegiances and the large-scale mobilization of workers and soldiers locally and across the Atlantic (e.g., Rodney 2018[1972]; Heywood 2009; Heywood and Thornton 2007; Alencastro 2000; Matthew and Oudijk 2007; Schwartz and Seijas 2018; Sidbury and Cañizares-Esguerra 2011; see also Schwartzman 2021). Alcohol and tobacco were central in facilitating warfare and diplomacy during this period, and therefore central to the processes of political formation and breakdown. Alcohol played an ambivalent role in colonial militaries, both sustaining and undermining the morale and efficacy of soldiers (Kopperman 1986). The business of the slave trade relied on and encouraged warfare *among* Africans, some of whom incorporated alcohol into their practices and meaning-making around warfare (see Heywood and Thornton 2007 on the Imbangala in Angola, and Akyeampong and Ntewusu 2014 on warring states in West Africa).

Also, in both Africa and the Americas, diplomacy required gifts, often in alcohol and tobacco. Sometimes these were pervaded with religious and legal meanings, implying a relation of trust and commensality. However, getting the other party drunk to get advantage in negotiations was also a common strategy (Curto 2004; Goodman 2005). As with ritual wine drinking for Catholics in Europe (the blood of Christ), traditional uses of alcohol in West Africa and of tobacco in the Americas involved not just relations with other humans but also with non-humans and supernatural beings (Akyeampong and Ntewusu 2014; Simpson 2008). As with the current Western legal practice of swearing on the Bible, legal agreements among humans get more validation when more-than-humans are involved. Nonetheless, in colonial contexts where different meaning systems and religious beliefs meet, this trust often gets broken or misinterpreted.

Profits from the exports of sugar, coffee and tobacco were central to the formation of the planter classes that came to dominate the political and economic system in places like Brazil, Cuba and the United States (both Jefferson and Washington planted tobacco in their estates, see Sturges 2015). In Haiti, this dominance lasted until the late 18th century, when revolutionaries killed and expelled the old planter elites. Nonetheless, revolutionary elites' perceived need to rebuild the capacity to export sugar to pay the debt imposed by France as compensation brought new class divisions in the island, later exacerbated by US imperial intervention (Girard, 2019). Across the ocean in the Portuguese colonial settlement in Angola, Brazilian political elites aligned with plantation interests became the dominant political force, winning over Portuguese interests in a politics of settlement and taxation which required peace. They encouraged the continuation of warfare and political instability for the purpose of enslavement (Heywood and Thornton 2007; Heywood 2009; 2017). In Brazil, the planter classes that produced coffee not only oversaw much of the "second slavery", but also were key to the change in immigration policies since the end of the 19th century, which aimed at "whitening" the population (and the coffee plantations) in the context of abolition (Azevedo 1987). In the early 20th century, coffee planting elites from Minas Gerais and São Paulo took turns in appointing Brazilian presidents in what was called the República do Café com Leite.

Opium also facilitated the rise of European and U.S.-American power in Asia, which was not just economic but also military and political. Trocki (1999) argues that the profit from opium was an essential form of revenue that allowed for maintenance of the colonial administration of the British East India company in Bengal, and of the subsequent British Indian government. Trocki argues that the opium trade of the 19th century indirectly destabilized the political structures in Southeast Asia and China. In China, the opium trade provided independent revenue to regions that became more autonomous from the central governments' control (Trocki 1999). Kim (2020) argues that profits from opium and their definition as “vices” of the local population were key to the making of Euro-colonial administration in Southeast Asia, with “vice” allowing colonial administrators to simultaneously tax opium sales and naturalize the alleged inferiority of native populations (hence racializing them).

The association of opium and other drugs with difference-making in Asia in the 19th and early 20th century was not limited to the East-West divide. Within Asia, struggles over opium regulation also were overlaid with struggles around local ethnic, racial, national caste and class divisions, which were pervaded with moral judgements. In India, opium plantations were put to work within a colonial system of indentured labor, which made use of both pre-existing caste divisions and British-imposed racial ones. In China, beyond the conflicts of class and region, opium came to symbolize the decay of the Manchu elites associated with the Qing dynasty for Han intellectuals, who protested against being excluded from positions of power within the Chinese bureaucracy. Throughout Southeast Asia, opium economy and consumption came to be associated with migrant Chinese workers (Dikötter et al. 2004; Lovell 2011; Trocki 1999; 2000).

In the second half of the 20th century, drug trade became enmeshed with Soviet and American power during the Cold War. In Laos and in Afghanistan, the CIA facilitated the production and commercialization of heroin, which was a source of income for local warlords that were allied with the United States in fighting the Soviet side (McCoy 2003). These wars not only created new structures of Western military power over Asia but also created new (racialized) diaspora populations, some of whom migrated to North America and Europe.

As described below, in the Americas of the 20th and 21st centuries, prohibitionist drug regimes, in conjunction with racial governmentalities, have led to divergent state formation processes in the Americas. In Canada and the U.S., the predominant trend is a concentration of power in the hands of the settler-colonial nation-states, with heightened control of borders, increased policing and incarceration, and an expanded capacity to segregate or forcibly assimilate populations. In Latin America and the Caribbean, prohibitionist drug regimes strengthen *both* state and non-state forms of violence, which compete and cooperate in complex ways. The hemisphere is linked in racialized ways through the war on drugs via the continuation of U.S. imperialistic meddling in the region, the operation of criminalized transnational drug markets, the criminalization of local and migrant populations, the transnational diffusion of technologies of policing and population management, and the continuation of long-standing colonial violent practices through state, criminal and other private agents.

The management of populations and territories: borders, frontiers and citizenship in Canada and the United States

While psychoactive drug production fueled migration and the expansion of settler nation-states and empires, this process also led to racial restrictions on migration in white settler states. More broadly, there has been an association between the prohibition of certain drugs and racialized patterns of exclusion, violence and confinement, affecting the relationship between race and citizenship. The fear of both race and drugs as threatening and corrupting of whiteness and white nationhood, and the close relationship between these two fears in the public imaginary, meant that drug prohibition and racism came to pervade the definition of national borders and the boundaries of local, domestic and global citizenship.

The regulation of drug trade and of drug use was intimately tied to this project of constructing and preserving whiteness in white settler nations like Canada, the United States and Australia. In these places, immigration policies, as well as policies of forced assimilation and segregation, became a way of constructing a white citizenry and nationhood (Lake and Reynolds 2008). The early 20th century is the period of Asian exclusion in the Americas and in Australia and also the period of the first international treaty on narcotics after WWI. This is not a coincidence: opium was read and associated in white settler colonies with racist stereotypes against, Asian migrant workers, helping fuel debates that led to exclusionary immigration laws (Carstairs 1999; Ahmad 2007). Interestingly, China and the West agreed on prohibiting opium. In China, opium became associated with Western interference in the country, and therefore became a major rallying point for the new communist regime in the 20th century (Lovell 2011; Dikötter et al. 2004).

Within Canada and the United States, the regulation of alcohol consumption, sparked by the temperance movement of the late 19th and early 20th century was intimately linked to the project of white settler nation-building that occurred in the context of the abolition of slavery and the occupation of the West. Part of what is going on is a reconfiguration of European ethnic and class identities into a unified white identity, as European immigrants of different origins are recruited to settle the frontier (Valverde 1998; Campbell 2008, McGirr 2015).

In Canada, starting in the 19th century and throughout the 20th, legislation aimed at assimilating Indigenous peoples came together with a policy of prohibition of drinking. While alcohol prohibition in Canada ended much earlier than in the U.S., prohibition against drinking for Indigenous peoples lasted until the mid-20th century. Enfranchisement of Indigenous peoples was conditional on sobriety, while sobriety was also imposed on those with “Indian” status, who were not enfranchised but on the contrary lived in segregated conditions. In fact, Campbell argues, citing Mariana Valverde, that the classification of people as “Indian” vs. white in Canada was to a large extent regulated by the government liquor stores. According to this logic, prohibition of drinking goes together with the production whiteness (Valverde 1998; Campbell 2008). Religious use of tobacco for Indigenous peoples in Canada and the U.S. were also prohibited during this period, together with Indigenous religious and cultural expression more broadly.

In the U.S., the prohibition of alcohol and later cocaine came hand in hand with Jim Crow segregation after abolition. The history of Coca-Cola provides a good example. In 1886, Coca-Cola was initially introduced as a modification of coca-wine for a newly-dry Atlanta, a “temperance drink” that would be distributed not through saloons but through

reputable (and racially segregated) soda fountains -- the cocaine would be removed only later, as bottling technology made the drink more mobile and race panics about “Negro cocaine fiends” accompanied the entrenchment of Jim Crow (Cohen 2006). The reforms of the 1906 Food and Drug Act that are typically historicized as a victory for consumers broadly in the new mandates for disclosure of ingredients and quality control are inextricably linked to the 1914 Harrison Anti-Narcotic Act less than a decade later that is widely recognized as a foundational salvo in the racist War on Drugs (Herzberg 2017).

Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* (2020 [2012]) persuasively argues that the control of drugs has been used as a way to control Black people in the post-Civil Rights era. Ironically, psychoactive drugs have sometimes provided a technology of social control, being directly enrolled in the implementation of carceral control. One example was the pathologization of Black Power through schizophrenia as “the protest psychosis” in the promotion of the antipsychotic drug haldol (Metzl 2009), and in the ongoing heavy use of psychotropic drugs in U.S. prisons (Hatch 2019).

Today, as Trump's quote in the beginning of this article suggests, the racialized scare over Latin American importation of drugs over the border and corrupting American white youth is very much part of the national debate and policy on immigration. Kane Race’s analysis of the film “Traffic” is an illuminating one into the interconnected ideas of the traffic in drugs across national borders and different parts of segregated urban spaces on the one hand, and the threat that addiction poses to young white women’s purity by fostering the conditions for degraded interracial sex on the other (Race 2009).

While analyses focused on the U.S. have increasingly pointed to the increasingly isomorphic connections between domestic criminal justice and migration control institutions in the United States, in a phenomenon labelled “crimmigration” (e.g. Menjívar et al. 2018), the links between race(ism), drugs and the state can only be fully comprehended through a transnational perspective. While the domestic U.S. war on drugs was a reaction to the 1960s countercultural movement of white youth, reacting to fears that this youth would be corrupted in the context of domestic movements for minority rights, it is important to note the transnational and imperial context in which those movements and counter-movements were happening. At the global scale, as we have seen, drugs were intimately linked to the expansion of U.S. (and European) imperial power abroad. Starting in the 1980s, the U.S. imperial Cold War politics in the Global South would increasingly be redirected toward a transnational war on drugs. These conditions mean that the U.S. is fueling both the drug economy south of the border and the violent conditions that lead some people to migrate (Gootenberg 2012, 2017; Zilberg 2011). Nonetheless, the importance of understanding the relationship between drugs, race and rights transnationally go beyond their implications for the U.S. and its borders. They matter for understanding the relationship the how racial governmentalities get differentiated *within* the Global South.

Necropolitics beyond the nation-state: drugs and racial frontier projects in Latin America.

In Latin America, the transnational war on drugs not only becomes a new frontier for U.S. empire, but perpetuates long-standing efforts by local and national elites to maintain pre-existing racial and colonial and class-based power structures, especially after the breakup of dictatorships after the end of the Cold War. Hence, long-standing historical legacies of

colonialism and authoritarianism join forces with U.S. domestic and imperial interests. Furthermore, technologies of governance, prisons and policing circulate worldwide, along with ideas and legal frameworks around drug control have diffused transnationally that merge foreign racist naturalizations of criminality with local ones. Finally, the simultaneous prohibition and continued profitability of the drug economy in the region has made it one more of the violent actors that competes, but also often cooperates, with the violence of the local and imperial states.

The war on drugs, combined with the profitable illicit drug economy, has had significant interactions with state formation processes in Latin America. Throughout the region, states and private elites have long relied in private actors for exercising violence and social control. In the late 20th century, local elites often used state forces and paramilitaries to fight armed guerillas, often with backing from the United States in the context of the Cold War. After the end of the Cold War, and in the context of the transnational War on Drugs in the region, the drug economy came to both finance and provide soldiers to fuel these pre-existing social struggles (Cruz 2011; Pearce 2010; Grajales 2013).

The political economy of illegal drugs and its interaction with diverse (state and private) violence-producing actors in the region has disproportionately harmed the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous and Afrodescendant populations, as well as reinforcing stereotypes and social boundaries associated with Blackness, Indigeneity and racialized class categories such as “campesino” in the Andes or “favelado” in Brazil. In Bolivia and Peru, Indigenous peasant farmers have been the primary producers of coca plants, much of which goes now into the production of cocaine. They become the most exploited end of the coca production, having been historically subject to violence and exploitation by various actors competing for power over land and people (and sometimes cooperating) such as paramilitaries, government agents (including military and police), guerrilla movements. More recently with the election of Evo Morales and his successors in Bolivia, coca also becomes a symbol of Indigenous identity and political struggle (Farthing and Kohl 2010; Taylor 2017). In Colombia, the illicit cocaine trade financed land-grabbing in the country's North (investment in land for licit crops are now a form of money laundry), displacing Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities who had recently acquired land rights (Grajales 2013). In Brazil the war on drugs has brought about an increase in police violence and in violence more broadly, and also (relatedly) a rise in incarceration, contributing to the criminalization of Black people and Black spaces. As the only alternative to state power inside prisons, and in the context of extreme anti-Black state violence, drug trafficking organizations also have become, at times, sites of resistance, solidarity and alternative forms of justice for criminalized Black youth (Alves 2016; Schwartzman 2020). By the 21st century, the rise of incarceration has become a hemispheric phenomenon (Hathazy and Müller 2016), disproportionately affecting youth of African and Indigenous descent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Race, Drugs, and the Making of Modern Subjecthood

In this final section, we take a more theoretically-oriented approach in order to explore how “race,” “drugs” and the ideas and institutions associated with Euro-colonial “modernity” can be seen as inter-related through projects of controlling and transforming “the subject” by and through controlling and transforming “nature.” In European and Euro-American colonial imaginaries, “nature” to be controlled included their own human natures, the natures of other humans and the non-human natural environment, through a process we

label *denaturalization*. While these ideas are not new or exclusively present in European thought, in the last 500 years they came to be associated with two major social developments: the development of (colonial and racial) capitalism and the reconfiguration of political power at the global scale, with the rise of nation-states and the increasing power of European and Euro-American colonial and imperial power in much of the world, but also increasing the power and capability for violence of non-state entities. Under capitalism, controlling nature means being able to transform nature into things that can be sold on a global scale, through *commodification* of nature and people. Intertwined with racial capitalism are reconfigurations of political power concerned with the transformation of places and people into territories and population, whose management is also informed by the problematic of control of peoples' "natures." Depending on the context, "race" and "drugs" appeared as either resources or challenges (or both) to those seeking to expand economic and political power.

Denaturalization

By *denaturalization* we mean the project of constructing of "nature" as separate, or at least separable, from human agency. In the Euro-colonial imaginaries, "race" and "drugs" have the potential to disrupt the *denaturalization* process. Wynter (2003) argues that Euro-colonial ideologies have restricted human agency and rationality (which she labels "Man") to white, male, middle-class, First World citizens, while women, people of color and third world inhabitants were deemed as part of "nature," deemed as inherently chaotic and irrational. Similarly, historians of drugs have emphasized how drugs have challenged the presumption that people can control themselves, as well as others (workers, citizens, soldiers etc.) (Valverde 1998, Seddon 2009). Discourse on race and drugs have also become intertwined with each other. Drugs became regarded as a threat to whiteness as the latter became associated as the ability to be rational, and hence free, citizens and workers, as well as dangerously exacerbating the supposed "animal" natures of people of color.

In terms of ideologies of controlling non-human "nature," post-Renaissance Christian thought and utilitarian liberal ideologies frame non-humans as subordinate to humans (Wynter 2003, Watts 2013). Furthermore, utilitarian philosophy, some strands of Christian doctrine, as well as those of modern science, frame non-human nature as being intelligible and manipulable without recourse to invisible metaphysical forces (Wynter 2003; Weber 2012 [1920]; Langlitz 2013). Hence there is a *denaturalization* of humans, whereas agency is attributed to the humans, and random behavior (chance) to the nature, both of which are seen as comprehensible and manipulable independently of the metaphysical world (Watts 2013; Wynter 2003). This worldview provided legitimation and legibility to expanding European and Euro-American colonial projects and their attendant increasingly capitalist and nationalist logic which violently uprooted people from their previous relations to places, nature and the metaphysical worlds, creating citizens and workers, land and territory, medical and recreational drugs.

Commodification of nature

The histories and contemporary realities of drugs and race are intertwined through the physical and symbolic processes that are required to transform the natural environment into commodities. Broadly defined, psychoactive drugs are commodities that are central to the development of global capitalism. As commodities, "drugs" are *transformed* nature, which become separate from local uses and systems of meaning to be sold in the global

marketplace, what Marx would call commodity fetishism, i.e., an estrangement between the worker and the things that s/he produces. Under racial and colonial capitalism, the global commodification of drugs also means a dissociation from local social and religious meaning of the drug for people in places where these drugs were originally used.

The accelerated transformation of nature into commodities under capitalism requires labor, land and natural resources, and their sale in the global economy depends on the development of a monetary currency that can be exchanged over long distances. Hence, race and drugs are involved in the creation of fictitious commodities, i.e., it requires the treatment of labor, land and money, human effort and of the interaction of humans with each other and with the material world, as if they were commodities (Polanyi 1944). Up to 19th century, when long-distance trade was based on gold and silver currencies, the commodification of money also depended on the disciplining of labor and the accumulation of natural resources, both of which were intertwined with racialization and colonialism and the economy and politics of drugs. The commodification of land for the production of global drugs meant, and still means, the transformation the homes and natural environments of colonized peoples into “land” and “resources,” resulting in displacement, alienation and dispossession. Finally, the commodification of labor is done through processes of expropriation and displacement that separates people from the natural environments that enables an independent subsistence, transforming them into appendages of the global capitalist economy.

Bifurcated governmentalities of human “natures”

There is a large tradition, inspired by the work of Weber and Foucault (and to some extent Bourdieu), in understanding the development of technologies and practices of rule, as well as the construction of the subject that is the agent and object of self-control. Social scientists and historians studying race have picked up on these themes as well, examining how racial categories became embedded in bureaucracies of the state (e.g., Loveman 2004), how practices of instilling self-control and discipline became embedded in institutions of health, city planning, education, punishment, labor regulation and childrearing (e.g., Stoler 2001; Davila 2003; Cooper, Holt and Scott 2014).

Historically, the production of drugs has made use of large quantities of exploitable human beings, who were stratified between enslaved, free and many different forms of bondage in different colonial situations. As Robinson 2020 [1983] and Quijano (2000) have noted, the organization of segmented systems of labor under capitalism was accompanied by an attendant racialization process that legitimized and naturalized these divisions. Because drugs may alter people's ability to work, the politics of drugs became intertwined with economic interests, their use by workers being sometimes favored and sometimes condemned by economic elites. Because our understanding of the effects of drugs on human behavior are often based on cultural assumptions rather than empirical reality, debates about the effects were often filtered by racial ideologies of human difference and ability to self-control. Drugs hence both feed *into* the project of taming labor process and can be seen as a threat to the control of labor. They can also be a site for resistance to exploitation.

Ideologies of the relationship between human agency and our “natures” becomes especially important in the 19th and 20th centuries, as the abolishment of slavery and the struggle for the expansion of citizenship rights clash with continued attempts by political and economic elites to discipline territories and populations. While Weber and Foucault have

noted an effort by economic and political elites to create a culture of self-discipline in the European context (Weber 2012 [1920]; Foucault 1991; 1995), race and postcolonial scholars argue that there was a *bifurcation* of the (self-) disciplining process. Holt (1992) argued that the abolition of slavery created a “problem of freedom” for planter elites, which challenged the idea that formerly enslaved people could become “free workers,” creating new systems of bondage after slavery. Mills (2014) similarly argues that liberal social contract theorists who gave legitimacy to liberal democracies also argued for racial exclusion from citizenship, based on racialized understandings of human difference in rationality and moral capability.

This governmentality of peoples’ *natures* was intimately associated with constructions of whiteness, through the regulation of behavior of “marginal whites” such as those who were women, working class or ethnically distinct (Harris 1993, Bonnett 2000). In Latin America, Lamarckian eugenics and, later, mestizaje ideologies allowed for a view that racially mixed individuals could eventually be civilized and incorporated into the nation, although the nation always allegedly ran the risk of being dragged into barbarity by its racially mixed population (Stepan 1991, Skidmore 1992; Davila 2003). In Canada, policies of forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples, such as the prohibition of religious practices, internment of children in residential schools and the policies for “enfranchisement” of Indigenous adults were justified as projects of “civilization” and incorporation as proper, well-behaving citizens and workers into the nation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

In parallel with constructions of whiteness and to efforts to “whiten” certain populations were efforts to contain people deemed incapable of becoming white (and hence deemed incapable of *denaturalization*). Those deemed not capable of self-control, were required to be segregated, disenfranchised, imprisoned and to suffer, pace Foucault, from the plain old spectacle of violence (Mbembe 2003, Fanon (2004[1963]; Smångs 2016). Postcolonial authors such as Fanon (2004[1963]) and Mbembe (2003) extend the analysis of this racist bifurcation of attributed rationality into the postcolonial condition of the contemporary Third World. They argue that while white-dominated countries in Europe and European settler-colonies may put constraints on the use of state violence internally (at least for White people) the use of unrestrained violence in the Third World is commonplace, a process that the postcolonial state never manages to monopolize. Hence, for Mbembe, Foucault’s governmentality through an induction of self-discipline, as opposed to the application of extreme physical violence, never gets realized in the Third World. Similarly, historians of “drugs” argue that ideas of addiction emerged historically as a “problem” in the context of ongoing debates by liberal thinkers and policymakers about individuals capable of exercising free-will responsibly (Valverde 1998; Seddon 2009). In this context, “drugs” threatened the established racial and institutional order, as it was deemed to corrupt the rationality and agency of whites, while exacerbating the allegedly irrational threat to white social order by people of color. Regimes of drug prohibition and racial oppression thus became intimately connected.

Alienation and connectedness

Finally, the history of drugs, race and colonialism can be linked both with alienation and with the creation of communities. In some cases, the creation of European, wealthy communities aided the destruction of communities in Africa. For instance Lloyd’s

coffeehouse (precursor of Lloyd insurance company), helped people in the insurance business connect (Schivelbusch 1992). An important activity that was being insured by these businesses was the slave trade (Pearson and Richardson 2019). In other instances, drugs have connected people for insurgent activities, in places like pubs and coffee houses (e.g., see Plys 2020). More recently, Indigenous movements in Bolivia and North America have reclaimed traditional uses of coca and tobacco, respectively, as important in their struggle for cultural, religious and land rights (Farthing and Kohl 2010; Nez Henderson et al. 2022). In a way, Indigenous and Afrodescendant people are fighting against the kind of alienation that drug capitalism brought about for their communities. This has to do not only with the expropriation of land, the displacement of people from their communities, but also with what Marx identified as commodity fetishism. Whereas drugs were linked to meaning systems that connected people to each other, to nature and to the metaphysical world, racial capitalism and the commodification of drugs separated them from their original context. Nonetheless, colonized peoples also continuously recreated meanings and communities and connected them to new drugs that came along.

Conclusion

The making of capitalism and of state power has been intertwined with the making of modern subjecthood, in ways that have been fundamental for sociology. Following Marx and Weber, many scholars in the social sciences and humanities have described the so-called “modern” era (roughly the last 500 years) as a period characterized by the development of capitalism, the rise of the nation-state, and the cultural frameworks and technological transformations that accompanied these changes. While much of this analysis has been focused on the European experience, decolonial, critical race and world systems scholars, among others, have worked to rethink these developments through a global lens, and through standpoint of colonized or racialized populations (e.g., Du Bois 1947, Wallerstein 2011 [1974], Bhambra 2016, Go 2013, Rodney 2018 [1972], Robinson 2020 [1983]). This paper has examined how ideas and practices associated with “race,” and “drugs” have jointly shaped these developments at a global scale. While recognizing that similar dynamics may also have shaped non-European colonial formations and categorical divisions, we focused in particular on how the entanglement of “race” and “drugs” aided the establishment and maintenance of European and Euro-American colonial power in relation to peoples of African, Indigenous and Asian descent in much of the world today.

Consider the examples racist and colonialist sloganeering that we quoted at the opening of the paper: their invocations of drugs are not merely incidental. If we imagine drugs to be a vice, we notice that other vices also have racist histories (e.g. gambling), but they haven’t sustained this kind of centrality to debates about the character of the state and the proper citizen and worker on the one hand and the racialized excluded other on the other.

The interconnections that we have charted start to illuminate why. Drugs are fascinating commodities that simultaneously mediate capitalism on the one hand and racial differences on the other, and they have been fodder for durable preoccupations with difference in ways that extend well beyond the contemporary drug war in the United States. Drugs are “re-creational”: objects that facilitate the recreation of ourselves and our social and material worlds (Race 2009, 9). As we have explored in this essay, drugs have been constitutional in the formation of both subjects and state power, and race and colonialism

are at stake in precisely these processes. Indeed, as we have shown, drugs, race, and the unequal structure of global modernity are all at stake in each other.

Drugs are material semiotic objects – they carry both matter and meaning – and this makes them useful for thinking about other material semiotic processes (Pollock 2012). These processes include phenomena at the core of sociological inquiry, notably subject formation and the exertion of political power. These in turn are inextricable from historical sociology's newly invigorated concerns of studying the development of capitalism and state formation in relation to colonialism, empire and racialization on a global scale.

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