

Let Us Do It As We Like It. Women's Chemsex As Freedom And Resistance.

Rosa Toriello

LSE Graduate

Abstract

The emergence of Critical Drug Studies within the broader framework of Gender Studies has deeply contributed to advocating for human-centred reconceptualization of drugs and drug users, as like as Feminist, Queer scholars and activists have done with Sexuality.

Drawing a parallelism between sex and drugs, I argue that the categorizations of good and bad sexualities and substances, sexual subjects and drug users, are constructed upon the same heteronormative, intersectional paradigms. To address my point, I will leverage discourse analysis to critically engage with various sources engaging with these topics from political, historical, anthropological and clinical perspectives.

Unpacking the US drug policy over the Western War on Drugs, this paper wants to demonstrate how the illegalization of specific substances is neither related to their harmfulness nor aiming at risk reduction. Instead, it ultimately serves as a tool to target some of the groups within which they circulate, together with the meanings and outcomes that this involves. In this way, the criminalization of ecstasy and amphetamine becomes that of the working class and the queers; the prohibition of crack cocaine that of the African-American community. Political technologies shaping social culture, as well as security strategies, turn out to be perpetrators of intersectional structural violence. The same reasoning applies to sexual pleasure: a man's thing. Women's sexuality remains largely circumscribed to heteronormative and heterosexual practices. Anything transcending functionality to reproduction is pathologized and securitized, framed as deviancy, madness or risk.

Drawing on Lorde's concept of "the erotic as power", this paper merges the two domains of drugs and sex by foregrounding selected case studies examining the correlation between drug use and sexual pleasure. Shifting the focus from danger to pleasure while acknowledging heteronormativity and intersectionality, women's vulnerability becomes self-determination, (bio)power; substance use a ritual of knowledge production, collective resistance; chemsex practices sites of (epistemic) justice. Falling within the theoretical framework of Critical Drug Studies, this piece aims to contribute to its further development by bridging it with Sexuality Studies, Politics and Concepts of Security, Embodiment and Biopower, through an interdisciplinary, queer analytical approach. From start to end, however, it never neglects the risks that substance abuse entails: this is not a psychedelic hymn, but an ode to women's freedom.

Keywords: Drugs, Gender Issues, Sexuality, History, Cultural Studies, Humanities, Sub-cultures, Personality & Emotions