SUNY Series in Deviance and Social Control
Ronald A. Farrell, Editor

THE POLITICS AND MORALITY OF

DEVIANCE

Moral Panics, Drug Abuse,
Deviant Science, and
Reversed Stigmatization

Nachman Ben-Yehuda

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS
reported in the literature, and by using accurate information, they could devise motivational accounting systems that accused various social control agencies and moral entrepreneurs of withholding information from the public. Scientists increasingly concluded that many of the social, medical, pharmacological, and physiological damages attributed previously to drugs were actually the result of their being outlawed.

Eventually, there arose a whole middle-class subculture that published journals (e.g., High Times) and that was politically active in struggling to generate power and legitimize their symbolic-moral universe, supporting psychoactive drug use. Adherents to this symbolic-moral universe maintained that it was each individual's inalienable right to pursue happiness via the use of psychoactive drugs (especially the private use of marijuana), as long as other individuals were not forced into contact with drugs.

One can acquaint oneself with this type of motivational accounting system by browsing through any issue of High Times. This journal provided prices of drugs, positive personal stories of drug users, and where to buy drug paraphernalia. The journal was lavishly illustrated and emphasized "the good life" and sex. Specialized motivational accounting systems were developed, and some culture-like symbols were created. Another example is the 417-page High Times Encyclopedia of Recreational Drugs, published in 1978 by the Stonehill Publishing Company (N.Y.). This encyclopedia openly endorsed the recreational use of drugs, informing its readers that such prestigious social actors as Pope Leo XIII, Thomas Edison, Emile Zola, Jules Verne, and Sigmund Freud were all regular users of cocaine. The book detailed how, where, when, and on what substance one can get "high"; how to grow marijuana plants; and the like. It is well worth our time to examine the type of motivational accounting systems that this encyclopedia employs to describe what happens when one injects intravenously amphetamines (rather than take it in a pill form): "The high from injected amphetamine differs in quantity and quality from the pep-pill high. The shot-for-the-stars rush, the instant gratification, the feeling of "where has this ecstatic, powerful me been all my life?" makes the needle...seductive" (pp. 239-240). One of the most interesting and controversial components of this subculture was NORML—National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws—formed in 1971 in the United States. NORML's formal stated goal is to bring about a change in the U.S. drug laws so that people could openly and legally use marijuana (Anderson 1981).

To illustrate the struggle between the different symbolic-moral universes, let me use two items that appeared in 1981 in High Times. The degree of accuracy of these reports at best is secondary. What is important is the very fact that they appeared at all in High Times. The first example is King's (1981) report on the National Anti-Drug Coalition (NADC). This organization, according to the report, sends young representatives armed with antidrug literature on a house-to-house campaign in U.S. cities and suburbs. They "declared war on drugs" and solicited contributions. They claimed that marijuana destroyed the young brains of America and caused youngsters to move on to hard drugs. The report stated that the NADC was active in at least twelve U.S. states, supporting a monthly newsletter with a circulation of about 30,000. In his article, King exposed the connection between the NADC and the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC), an extreme rightist group. King claimed that he had considerable evidence pointing to intimate links between NADC and organized crime. Lyndon LaRouche, a major figure in NCLC's moral crusade against the use of drugs, was also known, according to King, to be very much involved with both the NCLC and with organized crime. King also pointed out that the NCLC and the NADC integrated anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic and antiminorities propaganda with their antidrug campaign. For example, King noted that one particularly contemptible NCLC book stated that Zionism constituted a way to legitimize drug money and that America was being destroyed by a subhuman species of Jewish bankers from London.

The second example of the moral-ideological struggle being waged around drug use consisted of a coalition of parents and community leaders who supposedly met in New York's LaSalle Junior High School auditorium in March 1981 to rally against drug use among young people. High Times (King 1981), which attributed this gathering to the organizational efforts of the NCLC, stated that it was led by the "Anti Drug Coalition prima donna Carol White...[and] was something of a charade, a Trojan horse, a front for recruiting converts to the arcane social philosophy of Lyndon LaRouche, failed presidential candidate and guru to the cult like U.S. Labor Party" (pp. 19, 29).

The amount of accuracy included in the accusations that were published in the accounts given by the pro-drug use High Times is not significant here. The important point is the fact that ideologies regarding drug use are integrated into larger moral struggles about the nature of reality and the moral-ideological shape of our society. That


The Disobedient Generation

SOCIAL THEORISTS IN THE SIXTIES

Edited by Alan Sica and Stephen Turner
Alan Sica is professor of sociology at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author or editor of several volumes, including, most recently, Social Thought From Enlightenment to the Present. Stephen Turner is graduate research professor of philosophy at the University of South Florida. His most recent book is Liberal Democracy 3.0: Civil Society in an Age of Experts.
just before the World Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. This ended up being the basis for my first edited book but, more important, my ticket to the congress itself, a huge academic blow-out that had aspects of a farewell to the Sixties. Sol Tax organized it right over the top, with not one but fifty edited volumes, and even an opera commissioned from Giancarlo Menotti: Tamú-Tamú (The guests) polemically juxtaposed foreign war and domestic security. The Native American activist Vince Deloria was invited to give the opening speech. Drinking late one night, he told me he finally understood why anthropologists were always out bothering Indians: they didn’t like to be with each other unless they were drunk.

I got a master’s from Columbia’s anthropology program without ever really connecting. I sampled all manner of interesting offerings around the university, from Jacques Barzun to Robert Denoon Cumming, and found myself drawn more and more to sociology. Indeed, when my alternate service ended, I briefly stayed on at Columbia as Peter Blau’s research assistant, running many a multiple regression for the Comparative Organizations Research Program. I learned a great deal from Robert Nisbet and Ben Zablocki and even more from Robert Merton, with whom I started discussing a potential dissertation: making national differences in anthropology an object of the sociology of science.

Columbia was suffering a post-Sixties fatigue. Still intellectually rich, its older generation was wary of the younger ones and, relatedly, finding it hard to reawaken the faculty. Radical politics was receding: while I remember getting summoned away from beer and jazz at the West End for a “riot at the Sundial,” streaking was disassociating demonstrating. Nevertheless, a variety of political sects survived on the university’s fringes. Lyndon LaRouche (then calling himself Lynn Marcus) had been expelled from the SDS but reinvented its Labor Caucuses as the National Caucus of Labor Committees. They sold New Solidarity on Broadway, attacked Leftists of other factions, and decreed a conspiracy mounted by the Rockefeller family, the inventors of Musac, and the Columbia anthropology department (where a former lover of LaRouche’s had enrolled). Like all paraideits, LaRouche saw himself at the center; diagrams in New Solidarity graphically represented how nearly all of the global power structure was organized mainly to get at the National Caucus of Labor Committees. My friends and I wondered whether he was simply crazy or backed by the Central Intelligence Agency or both. But the real puzzle was that he had perhaps a thousand followers—some loyal enough that when one young woman tried to quit they took her prisoner for “deprogramming.” One of the failings of the Sixties was that such people were taken too seriously by too many for too long.

I was still searching for something, perhaps a better connection among the intellectual, the political, and the personal. England and anthropology still had an allure, and Max Gluckman and I had stayed in touch. He taught for a term at Yale and this gave ample opportunities for visits. On one, we attended a memorable very-Sixties event, a performance of the Living Theater. It was Mary Gluckman who really wanted to go. Max was impatient from the outset (and in truth, the Julian Beck/Judith Malina formula had gotten a bit stale). So, when, in one of the troop’s post-Brechtian agitprop set pieces a young woman, wearing only some dirty rags, ran up to Max and shouts “Am I your slave?” Max rose to his full and considerable height and yelled back “No! I’m bloody well yours, but no longer.” With that he headed for the door. Making one of the career changing decisions that seemed to come up a lot those days, I followed. Max said he would arrange funding for me in Manchester.

Manchester social anthropology was a somewhat more critical, conflict-oriented stream within the broad current of British social anthropology to which Sally Moore had introduced me. This was just coming under attack for its complicity in colonialism and obscuring of the role of the colonial state in constituting the societies studied. The attacks had some purchase but not nearly as much as the attacks thought. If social anthropology had sometimes hypothesized the “peoples” studied—if, for example, Edward Evans-Pritchard’s brilliant accounts of the Nuer made them seem more autonomous and self-contained than they were—it also produced substantial internal critical analysis of just this issue. Godfrey Lienhardt’s study of the neighboring Dinka raised questions about that of E. P.’s of the Nuer. Jack Goody challenged the idea of discrete “tribes” before that rejection became fashionable, showing how language, ritual, and identity varied along a sociogeographic continuum in Northern Ghana, free of sharp borders. And indeed, Meyer Fortes’s extraordinary research on the Tallensi had at the least foreshadowed this point a generation earlier (and in doing so brought to the fore the concept of a social field). Social anthropology had also produced major studies of “prehistoric” states—S. F. Nadel’s Black Byzantium and M. G. Smith’s extraordinary series of studies of the Haussa-Fulani kingdoms, for example—and Gluckman had long stressed both the importance of historical perspective and the interrelationship of colonial state and local social relations. Indeed, he was in the forefront of arguing that anthropologists were concerned with