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Reclamation Activism in Anti-drug Organizing in the USA

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This paper introduces the term reclamation activism to refer to the processes by which social movements make claims based upon a real or imagined status quo ante *during a period of transition. The motivation for a reclamation stance is the perception that a social good—such as some combination of social, economic or political privileges or cultural dominance—is being threatened. The notion is applied to the analysis of a modern social movement, the parents' movement against drug use in the USA. Based upon content analysis of movement literature, the claim is made that the movement is organized in opposition to its image of a 'pro-drug culture' rather than actual patterns of drug use. This oppositional stance is shown to have advantages for the movement over other claims-making strategies.*

Keywords: Drug law, drug policy, social movements, organizations, collective action, contentious politics, reclamation activism.

Introduction

Popular campaigns for social change may be distinguished by their organizational forms and by the strategies that they adopt in pursuit of their goals, among other attributes (Lune and Oberstein 2001). Movements that pursue new or extended rights tend to adopt different tactics and self-presentations than those that press for cultural changes, though elements of each will be present in both (Blum-Kulka and Liebes 1993). Grievance-based movements and identity-oriented movements cannot always be unambiguously separated (Calhoun 1993), yet movement leaders may choose to emulate one or the other ideal-type as a mobilization strategy. This paper introduces the term *reclamation activism* to refer to the processes by which movements make claims based upon a real or imagined *status quo ante* during a period of transition. The motivation for a reclamation stance is the perception that a social good—such as some combination of social, economic or political

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privileges or cultural dominance—is being threatened. Other social movements, electoral realignments, crises, and a host of other challenges, through institutional or extra-institutional channels, all threaten the balance of power and privilege, and all thereby invite opposing efforts to reclaim and restore status, structure and meaning. Reclamation activism mobilizes supporters with the promise of setting right a thing which has been actively made wrong.

Elements of reclamation activism have been examined previously, usually in the context of countermovements or conservative movements. But the endeavor to distinguish distinct movement types has partially obscured the variety of activism described in such studies. By distinguishing the claims-making strategies, such as reclaiming an earlier status, from the organizational goals, such as impeding another movement's progress, we can better understand the relationships between movement mobilization strategies and popular responses to them.

This paper undertakes two tasks. In the first section, the term 'reclamation' as a form of activism is elaborated. In the second, the notion is applied to the analysis of a modern social movement—the parents' movement against drug use. Although the anti-drug movement may be profitably analyzed in conjunction with prior prohibition movements or morality campaigns, such a perspective would not fully capture the processes by which the parents' movement constructed and mobilized a strategic representation of its constituency, and hence would fail to explain the great success of their efforts. And while the movement sets utopian goals of zero drug use anywhere in the country, it is not a utopian movement. For this goal rests explicitly on the claim that zero drug use is the normal and recently seen state of affairs, and not the dream of a new order.

This movement, with its strong ties to conservative political elites, might also be viewed in terms of conservative movements. This description would accurately reflect some of the political perspective and alliances of the movement, but it would not capture the ambivalence of the movement toward many of its allies and their interests. Whereas political conservatives are likely to support the use of police authority against drug use and the drug trade, as a corrective to what might be defined as a social problem, the parents' movement has organized against a particular image of the drug threat; one which has turned young people away from parental, and other, forms of authority, and which must be 'stopped' in order to restore that authority.

The distinction between the parents' reclamation activism and the new conservative movements that flourished in the USA during the 1980s helps to explain the convergence between the ideologies of smaller government and fewer taxes, associated with the new conservatives, and the vast new prison expenditures and the expansions of state agencies into schools, work places and the media integral to the war on drugs. A small government argument would discourage state investment in alternative interventions for drug offenders, including drug courts and syringe exchange programs, relying instead on the federal and state sentencing guidelines to convert illegal acts into prison time (Everett 1998). The parents' framing, different in form but similar in direction, encouraged the expansion of all efforts to 'send a message' to the nation's youth, including the threat of law enforcement in the home and school. Both perspectives were 'anti-drug,' and so, generally in agreement. Yet to call all anti-drug activism conservative is also to suggest that there is a single conservative position, and that it is self-contradictory. The two perspectives served one another's needs, but remained apart.

A second and possibly more important distinction is that the parents' movement was almost entirely cultural, with little attention to political questions. It spoke of 'the drug culture' and of media messages, and it spoke directly to parents as parents, not as voters, workers, or consumers. When parents' groups campaigned to pass laws against 'head shops' in Georgia, for example, they entered the political realm not with a pragmatic promise of reducing criminal activity, but with the more plaintive expressed goal of ridding their community of an immoral influence by any means. The empowerment of parents through grassroots activism is not a means to a legislative end. Their empowerment is encouraged by the movement as a form of restoration, an act of resistance against the cultural shifts that are supposed to have undermined them in the first place.

Data for this study come primarily from a content analysis of published documents of movement organizations, including organizational histories, books, pamphlets, newsletters, press releases, Web pages, and Congressional testimony given by movement leaders. Data were collected through a combination of archival searches, newsletter subscriptions, a review of organizational Websites, and requests for information from the organizations themselves. All texts are publicly accessible, and most are advertised by the organizations under study.

The present study identifies core movement organizations and goals based upon the movement's own definitions of the field of collective action. Beginning with the first group, National Families in Action (NFIA), organizational literature was searched for references to other organizations defined as sharing a developmental path and having a history of collaboration. The literature of each potential organization was then examined for references to (1) their primary tasks; (2) their opposition; (3) their allies; (4) explanations for their increasing or decreasing success; and (5) explanations for increasing or decreasing drug use in the USA. Finally, using organizational Web pages where available, the list of potential organizations was checked against the list of useful links and additional resources defined by each group. This last stage identified many non-movement organizations which support the movement groups, including The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Drug Watch International (DWI), Family Research Council (FRC), and numerous government agencies. Many of these organizations have reciprocal references, but do not qualify as grassroots, non-profit, parent-based social movement organizations dedicated to the elimination of drug use. The final set of organizations comprised only groups that met all criteria. That is, all core organizations were identified as movement groups by at least one other core group, identified as a reference by at least one core group, instrumentally linked to at least one other core group, and self-defined as a movement organization. All of the study organizations are among the thirty members of the National Drug Prevention League, an association of 'virtually all the major national drug abuse prevention organizations' (National Drug Prevention League n.d.). Details about the movement organizations may be found in Appendix Table A1.

Setting Boundaries on Movement Identity

Social movements, as organized and sustained campaigns for social and political change, are driven by the activities of social movement organizations. Movement organizations

recruit members, mobilize resources, create conceptual framings around popular grievances, and otherwise seek to define what needs to be changed and how that change might be accomplished (McAdam et al. 1997). Although many social movements appear to converge on a single 'master frame' as a strategy for self-presentation or claims-making, no single organization or leader can ever stand for all supporters and all interests (Benford 1993). Furthermore, social movements often rely on the support of numerous non-activist organizations whose goals and interests only partially overlap with those of the movement organizations (Carroll and Ratner 1996; Lune and Oberstein 2001). We must therefore speak of movement goals in the plural, including both the articulated demands or position statements issued by movement organizations in the name of the movement and the wider variety of related interests and goals expressed elsewhere by allied groups.

However clear a movement's issues might or might not be, organizers must make ongoing strategic decisions concerning the public representation of those issues. Movements must frame the issue or grievance with which the movement will be identified, define who or what they are organized against, and select the organizational forms and strategies to be adopted by the movement organizations in pursuit of their goals. Both the Weathermen and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, for example, shared elements of a 'racial injustice frame' in their claims-making activities. Yet one group organized as a radical underground committed to an oppositional stance against the established order, while the other was perceived as openly seeking accommodation and compromise. The two organizations were of opposite forms, though their goals overlapped. In theory, one could have supported or opposed either, both, or neither based on some combination of their interests and tactics.

The variety of organizations and potential supporters in a social movement, as well as the diversity of forms, interests, and activities, complicates the study of social movements. Movement organizers have a broad repertoire of strategies for mobilization and claims-making on which to draw. Yet in order for movement organizations to function collectively as a movement they must at least come to some agreement about who is on their side and whom they oppose. Having reached that point, they can further specify why others ought to support them and what is at stake in choosing whether or not to do so.

To Call Back from Flight or Disorderly Action

The first aspect of reclamation is the claim that something has been lost which may be restored. Such claims may be justified in the name of the 'good old days', for example, with reference to a time and circumstance under which significant problems of the present seemingly did not exist. Before widespread secularization, before the civil war, before women could vote, or simply when the Dodgers played in Brooklyn, things were right with the world. In this sense reclamation simultaneously represents change and continuity. The recent renovation of New York's Times Square as a business district with malls, entertainment complexes and a new branch office for the National Rifle Association is known as the Times Square Revitalization. It is not the architecture of the space that is being restored to life, for a great deal of vital activity had to be moved out of the way to accommodate the revitalization efforts, but the supposed time when order superseded chaos in New York's public spaces (Chesluk 2000). Naturally, even as

developers and speculators push the undesirables out of Times Square by day, many return at night to reinscribe their presence, to reclaim their home turf. Thus, both urban renewal coalitions and community opposition to such projects mobilize support in the name of reclaiming threatened space (see Brook et al. 1998). The fact that both parties may be defending a set of spatial privileges that only briefly, if ever, existed is not relevant to the process of making the claim.

To reclaim is to take back something that has gotten away or been taken; to retake ownership or responsibility. It also entails contradiction. To reclaim is to place one's claim against another possibility or interpretation. It is therefore an assertion of truth, power, and obligation all at once. The Ku Klux Klan sought to reclaim the South for Southerners following the Reconstruction even as the federal government reclaimed the South into the Union. To 'take back the night' asserts that one had once had possession, or at least free use of it, and that some change has unduly interfered.

By washing away that which is abject, reclamation is an act of purification which entails the return to an original, unspoilt condition. Yet in the context of land reclamation projects, violent action is called for to tame land that has always been wild, or to expose property that has previously been submerged by water and beyond development. To reclaim is to create what could be an entirely new state of being in the manner of discovering the 'true', or at least desired, state that has been hidden. It is to stand in opposition, to undo neglect, and to overturn instinct. Neither the 'reunified' Germany nor the proposed restoration of Ireland could reinstate a nation that has ever existed. But both are endorsed as a form of unmaking of error or injustice, thereby creating something that should have existed. (The new German state bears little resemblance to the previous German state, which, in contrast to reclamation framing, had been constituted by the National Socialists under the promise of a 'new' Germany.) The movement to restore the autonomy of Native American tribal structures first required, as a political act, the creation of tribal identities and governing structures as the embodiment of those whose rights had been abrogated and whose authority had to be restored (Nagel 1996).

Reclamation activism, therefore, is not inherently conservative, radical, liberal or reactionary. The boundary conditions between this and other forms of movement activism are not determined automatically by the issue or the actors. Adopting a reclamation stance is an organizational decision, a tactic, and an identity claim. In operation it must identify not only the nature of the threat against which the movement is mobilizing, but the social actors who embody this threat. It is epitomized by the underground efforts of resistance movements in occupied lands, who defend their political and cultural autonomy as represented by the former regime against the presence of a new authority without the necessity of agreeing on what form of authority would be best. It is pro-democratic when a democracy has been overthrown, but similar campaigns can become anti-democratic when those perceived as outsiders threaten to acquire 'too much' political representation.

Just as gated communities defend against criminals, as opposed to crime, and nativist movements organize against immigrants, as opposed to immigration, reclamation activists need to take control back from someone else. How to do so is a strategic and organizational decision made by movement actors. Individuals who claim to support 'political incorrectness', for example, present their position as a backlash against

tyrannical organized forces of political correctness, with occasional references to the 'PC police'. Yet the targets of this backlash tend not to be strange new cultural claims but ordinary attempts to enforce existing civil rights laws. There is no PC movement.[1] The anti-PC movement, discussed so often in popular media, is built upon anecdotal accounts of rights disputes and status claims of an 'extreme' and 'absurd' nature. The anti-PC rhetoric neither celebrates white supremacist patriarchal systems, nor attacks the principle of closing inequality gaps; yet it somehow conveys an almost panicked sense of privilege under assault from a vast conspiracy. The framing of 'anti-politically correct' acts into movement terms, as part of the defense against a sinister, hegemonic force that is both everywhere endorsed and universally reviled, recasts a self-serving protectionist response as the moral equivalent of the French Resistance.

Movement against What?

Social movement scholars have found it valuable to distinguish between movements and countermovements, in which the analysis of a movement is enhanced by consideration of movement–countermovement dynamics (Meyer and Staggenborg 1998). The division may not always be uncontested, but it has become clear that a movement may organize specifically as a countermovement (Jasper and Poulson 1993), and that an initial social movement is likely to become organizationally transformed into a countermovement in response to attacks by an oppositional mobilization (McCaffrey and Keys 2000). Despite a necessary lack of clarity about exactly what characterizes a countermovement as a unique movement type, several forms of countermovement activism have been meaningfully examined, including backlashes (Faludi 1991), vigilantism (Kowalewski 1996), and elite-driven movements to suppress popular protest (Pichardo 1995). Each of these forms may be considered as types of movements, each of which may draw upon a repertoire of strategies. Reclamation activism is one possible strategy.

Studies of conservative and/or corporate-sponsored countermovements suggest that reclamation activism may offer strategic advantages (Gale 1986). Some of these advantages relate directly to the likelihood that the movements under study are working to preserve and perpetuate the status quo. Such movements may be better positioned to claim to speak for the 'public good' while representing movements for change as 'special interest' constituencies. Such tactical advantages are reflected in Erin Steuter's (1992) analysis of anti-feminist women's movements and Bert Useem and Mayer Zald's (1982) study of pro-nuclear activism. Yet not every movement that organizes as a countermovement also adopts the strategy of reclaiming lost ground, if only to avoid inferring that ground has been lost. The Irish movement against the legalization of abortion, for example, contrasts the conditions of that country, which the movement favors, with the threat represented by other nations' more secular policies. Despite organized efforts from within and without, against which the countermovement is directed, the Irish legal system remains firm in its Catholic interpretations.

Progressive, or 'liberal' movements may also invoke countermovement ideas without making claims for the recovery of anything. 'Consciousness raising' efforts within the women's movement organized *against* patriarchy and the social subjugation of women, rather than merely in favor of expanded rights, political access and economic opportuni-

ties. But the historical references for this movement emphasized the long dominance of men, not the recent retreat of women. They sought to reinvigorate campaigns for change that had never gained much ground in the first place, working against the hegemonic discourses and practices—but not an organized movement—of 'male chauvinists' (Shreve 1989; Taylor 1989).

As a strategy, reclamation activism needs to be targeted against an enemy. But, unlike countermovements that operate against the actions of another movement, the reclamation strategy does not require the enemy actually to be present. Paul Burstein (1991), for example, provides evidence that the anti-reverse discrimination movement chose, as a political strategy, to present itself as a countermovement. The very notion of organization against 'reverse discrimination', not as an additional form of discrimination but as a product of movements against 'normal' discrimination, reveals both the reactionary and the moral claims inherent in the mobilization. Most of the countermovement's claims were pursued in court, where they were frequently rejected. Regardless of court decisions, however, Burstein indicates that following the movement's activities, public concerns over discrimination against women and people of color were 'balanced' by growing concerns about reverse discrimination. If we were to assume that the movement truly was a countermovement, then its lack of success in the courtroom would suggest that it had failed. Yet if the strategy of the movement was not to overturn a pattern of reverse discrimination, but to create the popular impression that such a pattern existed, contrary to evidence, then we must conclude that it was very successful.

Anti-drug Activism and the Rise of Zero Tolerance

The core organizations of the parents' movement against drug use have always described themselves as a network, and have devoted much of their efforts to expansion. Since its founding, National Families in Action has spawned over 4,000 chapters. NFIA supported the growth of the PRIDE World Drug Conference, which continues to provide a forum for movement growth and networking. Through this conference, leaders of PRIDE (now PRIDE USA and PRIDE-Omaha) and NFIA joined several parents' anti-drug organizations to form a new coalition, The National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth (later renamed the National Family Partnership, or NFP), which describes its mission as 'to lead and support our nation's families and communities to nurture the full potential of healthy, drug-free youth' (National Family Partnership n.d.). NFP operated both as a support network for concerned parents and as a consciousness raising organization. This expansion and interchange expanded during the Reagan administration to include government agencies and school boards. According to NFP's organizational history,

> The National Federation of Parents gained great momentum in the '80s through the power of its grassroots network. With a sizable gift from Nancy Reagan, the organization sponsored annual conferences to inform and motivate parents, provided millions of brochures to educate children, and led the fight for anti-drug legislation. (National Family Partnership n.d.)

The focus on reclamation as an activism strategy reveals the movement's cultural critique as distinct from its practical concerns. That is, reclamation activism emerges as a strategy

that is consistent with, but not necessarily a part of, the movements' stated goal of eliminating all drug use. While many parents, educators, and law enforcement personnel oppose juvenile drug use, or actively fight the drug trade, the unique contribution of the parents' movement was to define themselves as a countermovement against an organized pro-drug culture, and thereby to oppose this culture as one would fight an external enemy. The movement's commitment to the reclamation of traditional authority, beginning with parental authority, determined the trajectory of the movement's claims-making processes throughout changes in the political climate. Movement leaders had initially defined their campaign as a countermovement organized in opposition to a 'pro-marijuana movement'. After a period of growth in which the government adopted most of the movement's platform as policy, the movement reoriented itself for a larger public role.

In recent years, as new questions have arisen challenging its defining principles, the movement has become reinvigorated. In its new form, it still speaks as a group under attack, and as the guardian of both common sense and the moral high ground. But now it does so from the privileged position of policy insider. Making the transition from outside to inside, the movement has subtly altered its forms and claims, allowing it to maintain its original strategy despite significant changes in its position. The anti-drug movement presents itself simultaneously as representing the vast majority of American citizens and as a small group under attack from a powerful elite. With reference to their own interpretation of the recent past, movement organizations define themselves as calling back a preferred state of affairs and holding the line against their further erosion or incursion. In their new form, they epitomize the dual strategy of reclamation activism. They recall the recent past as a period before their opposition was dominant as well as a time when their own efforts against these opponents were better appreciated. We are encouraged to support the movement in order to restore the time when we didn't need it.

Families in Action (now National Families in Action, or NFIA) describes itself as having helped to 'create the national drug-prevention movement that ended the drug epidemic of the 60s and 70s' (National Families in Action n.d.(a)). The group was organized in 1977 by Sue Rusche, with help from Marsha Keith Schuchard, who later co-founded PRIDE.

> The founder was concerned that 'head shops' (that is, stores which sold primarily drug-related products) and drug culture publications were seeking to glamorize, teach the use of, and provide the paraphernalia necessary to use illegal drugs. … This implicit encouragement to break or disregard drug laws became known as the 'head shop message'—that drug abuse is both socially and legally accepted. (Healey 1988: 4)

The activists did not invent opposition to head shops on their own. At least one state, Indiana, had attempted to pass anti-paraphernalia legislation (later overturned) before the movement made it a popular political item (State of Wisconsin 1981: 1). But the parents' movement propagated the idea that head shops were merely the visible manifestation of a powerful national movement. They framed the drug problem as a culture war in which the law must be called upon to protect, reinforce, and reinscribe a system of values that was being deliberately subverted. Once formulated, the movement's framing

resonated throughout the legislative bodies that they targeted, and the activists' own language often found its way into the law.

In 1979, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) published *Parents, Peers, and Pot* by original NFIA member Marsha Manatt, giving government endorsement to what activists called 'the nationally known "Bible" of the parent movement' (Adams 1983: 147). That same year, the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control held hearings on paraphernalia restrictions for which movement leaders provided much of the testimony. Bolstered by testimony from the Drug Enforcement Agency's Administrator that 'the paraphernalia industry fans the fire of the growing abuse problem' (Tillett 1982: 2), the hearings wholeheartedly adopted the movement's definition of the 'head shop message' and its direct role in American drug consumption. Although the Committee declined to recommend federal legislation, it endorsed the activists' concern for sending 'the right message', and encouraged state and local legal responses. In the words of the Committee's Chair, 'Unrestricted sales of these devices in a pseudo-legal atmosphere may lead children to believe that the controlled substances they are designed to be used for are equally acceptable and legal' (Tillett 1982: 2). Federal statutes were introduced in the Senate in 1981 by Senator John G. Tower, who expressed concern that 'our efforts should not simply remain with the drug producing countries overseas or focused on the illegal drug distributors or the product itself. ... We need to reinforce the message that the drug paraphernalia industry should be controlled' (State of Wisconsin 1981: 8).

NFIA's initial efforts had simply targeted the record stores and other pop culture retailers where paraphernalia was sold, most of whom responded by pulling the items from their shelves (Massing 1998: 145). (A few years later, following reports that McDonald's coffee stirrers were being used as coke spoons, the spoons were also discontinued (Leonhardt 1980: 2).) Once NFIA had incorporated, it began a campaign, also quickly successful, to pass a state anti-head shop law (Massing 1998: 146). Feeling 'undermined' by the government's lax attitude towards pot (Massing 1998: 146), Families in Action actively rejected all public health approaches to drug use and positioned themselves as outsiders and minority challengers. 'And, accordingly, they regarded full opposition as the only acceptable course. "Zero tolerance", they called it' (Massing 1998: 151).

Movement organizers at that time were united by their experiences as mostly suburban and small city parents of teenagers whose focus was on casual pot use. Particularly abhorrent to the organizers was the government's apparent disregard for marijuana issues. When Schuchard began her anti-marijuana activism in 1976, she found the field of drug-abuse professionals, especially the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), overly focused on treatment for heroin addiction and relatively unconcerned with pot. The parents then had little interest in heroin traffic in New York or cocaine importing in Florida, which NIDA officials considered 'serious' drug issues. Schuchard's initial response to the government position was that 'these people are the enemy' (Massing 1998: 145). Many of the other organizations which would join with NFIA had also sought community-based support partly out of a sense of frustration at 'the lack of strong state efforts against the drug culture' (Manatt 1983: 65). In their version of zero tolerance, neither society nor parents should ever look the other way when kids were 'experimenting' with drugs. They should not tolerate any ambiguity or mixed messages. The casual use of soft drugs that their children were involved with should not be viewed

as relatively harmless in comparison to addiction to hard drugs like cocaine and heroin. (The parents adhered to the 'gateway theory' that pot smoking leads to harder drugs and is a 'stepping stone' to addiction.) But the parents had no attachment to the criminal justice system at that time. Their advocacy for harsh new drug laws only targeted paraphernalia merchants. The movement's prescriptions for zero tolerance with their kids meant curfews, supervised parties, discipline at home, and counseling for the more difficult cases.

By 1982, responding to popular concerns and increased media coverage, the Reagan administration declared 'war' on drugs. Movement leaders contributed to Congressional debates on drug policy, ushering in a new level of interaction between the government and movement organizations. Subsequent movement efforts were increasingly funded by state grants (National Families in Action n.d.(b)). With the passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which declared drugs to be 'a national security problem' (Belenko 1993: 14), new provisions far exceeding those of the anti-drug movement's platform were written into law. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 further escalated the war, the rhetoric, and the sanctions, including the federal death penalty for drug-related murders (Belenko 1993: 16). Movement organizations were invited to advise the new anti-drug education campaigns, such as DARE, that accompanied this escalation.

Even before the advent of crack in the early 1980s, the anti-drug movement had won virtually every campaign it had mounted, passed every law that it drafted, and established alliances with every branch of government concerned with its issues, from NIDA to the Department of Education. Lacking any meaningful opposition, the movement may have become complacent at this point. But even without head shops, and with marijuana use at a new low, the movement's cause found new champions. Spurred on by fears of crack-cocaine, and the consistent political success of anti-drug posturing, Congress continued throughout the 1980s to pass new, harsher anti-drug laws, to vastly increase law enforcement budgets for drug activities, to increase mandatory minimum sentences for federal drug law violations, and to dramatically increase the sanctions against every possible drug law violation covered by federal sentencing guidelines (Office of National Drug Control Policy 1999a). Most states followed suit. Consistent with the movement's explanatory framework, policy makers shifted their attention from the enforcement of specific laws to a campaign against the drug culture. In the words of Lois Haight Herrington, Chair of the White House Conference for a Drug Free America, 'The war on drugs … must be won in the conscience, the attitude, the character of Americans as a people' (White House 1988).

The Backlash

The language of zero tolerance has not changed much since 1980, though the meaning has shifted dramatically. When the Parent Teacher Student Association Special Committee on Drug Awareness at an Atlanta high school joined with movement organizations in the late 1970s, they stressed that students caught using pot would, without exception, be turned over to police before the parents were even called. But, prior to the war on drugs, these students rarely faced the prospect of jail, and most would never even be

convicted of a crime. NFIA's Marsha Manatt described the conditions in Atlanta as a movement accomplishment:

> Through the continuing efforts of the parents meetings, a good working relationship was developed with the local police and juvenile court judge. The court's mandate could be used to get parents and the young offender into a constructive education and intervention process. (Manatt 1983: 14)

Presently, most such special interventions have been eliminated, and current laws based on zero tolerance policies require expulsion and, in most states, jail time. Drug use in the schools has been criminalized far beyond the initial proposals of the activist parents.

Despite the growing commitment to zero tolerance approaches to drug control, or more likely in response to it, the strategy and its consequences have come under increasing attack since the early 1990s. Many of the largest programs and policies introduced by the anti-drug movement since the late 1970s currently face challenges in and out of the courts. School districts have increasingly run into repercussions of their zero-tolerance rules, and many parents, teachers and teachers' unions have begun to oppose them (Cienski 2000). Increasing numbers of school districts have canceled their contracts with the DARE anti-drug education program in light of questions about their methods, data and effectiveness. A wave of reports about selective targeting in drug stops and searches, a few lawsuits, and a series of highly publicized police shootings of innocent, unarmed, minority suspects have generated a surge of protest against drug-related racial profiling by police. As drug war prosecutions pushed the US prison population from 500,000 in 1980 to one million in 1990, and then approached the milestone of two million in the year 2000, prison reform advocates and drug law advocates joined together with judges and legal scholars to call for the repeal of mandatory minimums and three strikes laws, and to press for more discretion in drug sentencing (Purdy 2000). Reviews of racial biases in patterns of drug-related arrests and sentencing, and of the racial imbalance in the new prison population (cf. Human Rights Watch 2000), have mobilized scholars and activists to denounce drug war politics as a war on African Americans (ACLU 1993).

Concurrent with popular disillusion with the criminal justice side of zero tolerance, public health campaigns have also questioned or actively opposed the recent legal changes initiated by the parents' movement. The harm reduction movement in drug and health policy has sought to overturn anti-paraphernalia laws and other restrictions on syringe possession in the USA. Pioneered in The Netherlands during the early 1980s, modern harm reduction approaches are based primarily on tolerance as a means of effecting a working relationship with drug users on their own terms in order to bring them comfortably and willingly into contact with public health programs (Marlatt 1998). Internationally, harm reduction approaches to the control of HIV/AIDS among drug users has included needle exchange programs (NEPs) and public health sector involvement in drug policies (Stimson et al. 1998). Research and preliminary findings on the medical use of marijuana has also revitalized the call for decriminalization of 'soft' drugs (Sullum 1993). Marijuana use for chemotherapy patients and people with AIDS has been advocated by some doctors.

Each of these growing challenges to the present drug strategy has its own cause and its own dimensions, but collectively (and they are increasingly exchanging data) these

various efforts indicate a cultural backlash against zero tolerance. To the movement organizations dedicated to zero tolerance programs in the drug control strategy, these various trends threaten to dismantle their achievements. At the peak of its success, the anti-drug movement has found itself back on the defensive.

The shift in public attitudes regarding zero tolerance has not diminished movement activism. Instead, it has generated a renewed mobilization on the part of the anti-drug movement, and enabled it to define a dangerous new enemy to conquer. Where teen pot use was once enemy enough, the movement now presents itself as engaged in a much larger, more ideological struggle. As such, it is dependent upon the belief in a new, darker drug culture than the one which it claims to have defeated in the 1980s.

In its new form, the anti-drug movement has turned much of its attention away from drugs and onto all those who oppose zero tolerance for any reason. Recent activism has therefore joined the different points of opposition to their positions into a single ‘drug legalization movement’, organized, sustained, and mysterious. The parents’ movement still opposes ‘the drug culture’, but it now finds it in many more places and many new forms. For example, NFIA defines Families Against Mandatory Minimums, an organization advocating judicial discretion in drug law sentencing, and The Civil Liberties Monitoring Project as ‘key drug legalization organizations’ for their questioning of the implementation of recent drug laws (Rusche 1997: 95–6). Rather than advising parents on how to stop their children from trying pot, they now advise their constituencies on how to advocate against the legalization movement. The new literature distributed by movement organizations identifies America’s glory days: the 1980s; the present danger: the new tolerance; and the enemy: ‘the worldwide drug legalization movement’ (PRIDE-Omaha 2000). From this, their new mission clearly emerges: stop the legalizers before it’s too late.

Defying the Phantom Menace

NFIA’s recent book, *A Guide to the Drug Legalization Movement and How You Can Stop It*, explicitly defines the prior state of affairs as they now see it, and how and why it changed. The book opens with a chart, also reproduced by PRIDE-Omaha in its literature, which

> shows how the drug legalization movement increased drug use among young people from 1970 to 1978, how the prevention movement reversed those trends until 1992, and how the legalization movement is once again contributing to a rise in drug use among students. (Rusche 1997: 3)

The chart plots drug consumption by year, with various social and political events over the period in question indicated to demonstrate ‘the impact that the drug legalization movement and the drug prevention movement have had on high school senior’s [*sic*] drug use since 1962’ (PRIDE-Omaha 1998). The fitted line shown on the chart uses NIDA data to show rising levels of drug consumption from 1975 to a peak in 1978, then falling throughout the 1980s. The period prior to 1975 is represented by a linear projection of the downward slope from 1978 to 1975 backwards straight through to 1962. According

to NFIA literature, 'In 1962, less than 2 percent of Americans and less than 1 percent of adolescents had tried an illegal drug' (National Families in Action n.d.(a)).

The events highlighted along this sudden rise from near zero to extensive drug use are the founding of two 'pro-marijuana' groups in 1970 and 1972 and a brief period of decriminalization of marijuana in several states. The key events precipitating the subsequent decline are the founding of anti-drug use organizations, particularly NFIA in 1977, PRIDE in 1978, NFP in 1980, DARE America in 1983, the Partnership for a Drug Free America in 1986 and The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America in 1992. Reconstituting the work of the newer organizations in light of the old struggle, the text documents 'how drug legalization proponents are attempting to overturn laws that have protected Americans from drug use, drug abuse, drug addiction, drug-related deaths, and unsafe, ineffective medicines for nearly a century' (Rusche 1997: 7).

The organization's history of the drug war emphasizes that its present enemy is the same as the one it had faced before, whom it had briefly imagined to be defeated. But 'the 1980s found legalization proponents moving their message to Europe. Their work throughout that decade led the European Parliament to the brink of recommending that all member nations legalize drugs' (Rusche 1997: 40). The drug industry, by which it refers not to organized cartels but to drug law reformers (who 'are allowed to operate out of our universities with impunity' (Drug Watch International 1999: 2)), is described as motivated by profit and dedicated to the creation of an open market for their wares. 'Publicly, supporters of "safe-use," "reality-based" drug education deny that they want to legalize drugs. ... However, the policies they propose are integral components of the world-wide drug legalization movement' (PRIDE-Omaha 2000).

> The pro-drug legalization movement continues throughout the world. It is being pushed by a small, but very well financed lobby. There is little opposition besides a few organizations such as Drug Watch International, the National Families in Action, the Drug Free America Foundation, and small groups such as PRIDE-Omaha, Inc. (PRIDE-Omaha 1999)

The pro-drug movement is also represented as both subtle and deceitful. Readers might not even be aware of its existence, since proponents claim to be pursuing a variety of seemingly unrelated social goals other than their true purpose.

> Instead of calling for legalization, for which there was little public support, these groups began speaking in euphemisms: 'drug reform', 'harm reduction', 'medicalization', 'drug peace, not drug war', and a host of others. ... While publicly professing they only wanted drug reform, privately advocates made their agenda clear—to chip away at drug laws and ultimately achieve full legalization. (Rusche 1997: 42)

Although the anti-drug movement opposes any relaxation of the war on drugs, two of the most emphatic areas of concern at present are medical marijuana referenda and harm reduction. Harm reduction is described as 'a cover-all term coined by legalizers' which encompasses 'a variety of strategies for making illicit drug use safer and cheaper for drug users, at the expense of the rest of society', as Drug Watch International testified to the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources in June 1999 (Drug Watch International 1999: 2). Speaking at the same hearings a few days later,

the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Barry McCaffrey, offered that

> proponents of legalization know that the policy choices they advocate are unacceptable to the American public. Because of this, many advocates of this approach have resorted to concealing their real intentions and seeking to sell the American public legalization by normalizing drugs through a process designed to erode societal disapproval. (Subcommittee on Criminal Justice 2000)

The ONDCP *National Drug Control Strategy: 1999* warns that

> small elements at either end of the political spectrum argue that prohibition—and not drugs—create problems. These people offer solutions in various guises, but one of the most troublesome is the argument that eliminating the prohibition against dangerous drugs would reduce the harm that results from drug abuse. Such legalization proposals are often presented under the guise of 'harm reduction'. (Office of National Drug Control Policy 1999b: 52)

Of all the harm reduction practices, the HIV-prevention intervention of exchanging sterile syringes for used ones has drawn uniquely vehement attacks. Alleging that 'only a fraction of needles handed out are returned or exchanged', movement supporters describe needle exchange programs as a poorly conceived public health measure that 'appears to be a dreadful failure' (Voth 1999: 3). Furthermore, according to some movement allies, advocates know that needle exchange doesn't work, but professing concern about HIV/AIDS fools voters into supporting their agenda.

> Finally, we must ask the probing question of why such a failed policy continues to be supported ... Is it because of the profits made by NEPs? ... Is it because the legalization lobby has been successful at putting a 'happy face' on the concept of harm reduction and soft drug policy? (Voth 1999: 3)

Movement organizations have also brought considerable attention to bear on the progress of medical marijuana initiatives throughout the country. In recent years, voters in California and Arizona accepted resolutions making those states the first to legalize marijuana for medical use, which many of the organizations examined for this study actively opposed. The NFIA *Guide to the Drug Legalization Movement* devotes several chapters to the issue.

NFIA portrays specific legal initiatives, commercials and campaigns in support of these laws as an organized campaign of deception. NFIA presents the full text of a series of advertisements that ran in Arizona in support of the medical marijuana referendum, Proposition 200, along with a 'what legalization proponents didn't tell voters' response section. Predictably, where the commercials claimed that current drug prohibition laws don't reduce drug use, NFIA claims that they do, but that the legalization movement is undermining their success. What is interesting in their response, however, is not the number of times that NFIA challenges claims made about medical marijuana, needle exchange, or specifics of medicalization, but that the challenges focus on the integrity and validity of any and all information associated with this supposed legalization movement.

In one of the most remarkable challenges, NFIA quotes an ad featuring 'Karen, Sexual Assault Victim'. Her text reads, in part,

> I was assaulted by a serial rapist. He served only a year for each assault. ... I support Prop 200 because it will free up prison space for violent offenders like him. ... We can't waste prison space on nonviolent drug offenders while violent criminals run loose. (Rusche 1997: 65)

NFIA's response does not address the question of whether the prison system is overcrowded, or if increasing sentences in one felony category affects sentences in another. It does not seize the shared anti-crime premise to incorporate it into its own model, as countermovements often do (Lo 1982; Turner and Killian 1957). Instead, it questions the speaker's legitimacy to speak to the issue. 'In legal terms', it replies to the ad, 'assault means a verbal, not a physical, threat. The term for physically attacking someone is battery. It is entirely possible that the serial rapist that assaulted Karen threatened her verbally, but never touched her' (Rusche 1997: 65).

Here, Proposition 200 advocates are endorsing longer prison terms and stricter sanctions for violent criminals, both goals that NFIA and other anti-drug groups support. But because the Proposition 200 advocates consider violent crimes that don't involve drugs more serious than non-violent crimes that do involve drugs, they are implicitly undermining the logic of present drug sentencing policies. Rather than validate such a position, NFIA has chosen to ask whether serial rapists are really all that dangerous. In this it emphasizes that it is the identity of the speakers, and their ties to the hypothetical legalization movement, and not the content of their message that matters most. This strategy of engagement draws attention away from policy or specific social goals and onto the identification of 'sides'. In its framing, if you fail to support the anti-drug movement and its zero tolerance message then you are implicitly bolstering the drive for the complete legalization of all drugs.

Discussion

Content analysis of movement literature and public statements of the parents' movement against drug use reveals a consistent reliance on reclamation activism. The movement does not concentrate on convincing its readers that drug use is a social problem. It may take it for granted that almost no one would need to be convinced of this. Instead, it focuses considerable efforts on the representation of its own work holding the line against an organized enemy; one who seeks to encourage drug use throughout society. Through the combination of references to actual events and sometimes absurd constructions of secret agendas, the movement steadfastly argues that American society is under attack and that it is the bulwark of our defense.

The point of this analysis is not to claim that this movement is more or less prone to exaggeration and misrepresentation than any other movement, but to demonstrate the movement's commitment to a particular spin on its identity, its work, and its opposition, with or without supporting evidence. Whether it was seeking change or continuity in US drug policies, the parents' movement against drug use has always defined its work in

reclamation terms. 'There once was a time', this narrative suggests, 'when this problem did not exist, and therefore, children obeyed parents and the world made sense. We must restore this state of being.' The movement's opposition, the organized drug culture, is both alien to this representation of our society, and yet endemic to it. No one agrees with this hypothetical enemy, we are told, and yet vast numbers of people are in danger of being swayed by its arguments. Most importantly, there is nothing natural or systemic about the place of drugs in our society. It has a cause, and once that cause is defeated, everything will be fine.

The movement against drug use had once claimed the moral authority of parents. The traditional privileges that they upheld were the right and authority to guide their children's behaviors and values. These privileges, in their representation, were under assault from a pro-drug culture which usurped parental authority through advertising (aimed at minors) and popular culture (particularly movies and rock and roll). Even in the absence of any organized opposition, the movement defined itself as an oppressed group fighting against all manner of enemies, struggling, alone, to defend America's children and restore parental prerogative. It mobilized citizens to reclaim the image of the traditional middle-class family. The movement was remarkably successful in its mobilization efforts.

Two decades after its birth, the entire context in which the movement operates has transformed. Fighting drugs has become the national pastime. Hollywood scripts are routinely vetted by the Office of National Drug Control Strategy prior to production to ensure that they are 'on message' (Forbes 2000). The criminal justice system has been dramatically overhauled to focus on drug crime. Present sanctions so far exceed the original proposals of the parents' groups that the movement might even have objected to them. Yet, rather than celebrating its cultural victory, the movement has reorganized around the literal interpretation of 'zero tolerance', claiming that it must fight to restore a mythical time when no Americans used drugs.

In its campaigns, the parents adopt a very different set of strategies from their conservative supporters in government and political domains. They can as easily support the state as break away from it. But the various allies in the war against drugs stop short of actually criticizing each other. Having different targets for their messages, different media for the dissemination of their ideas, and a different construction of the drug threat, the many anti-drug efforts seem instead to be allowing a natural division of labor to take place within a larger, shared space of activism. Other groups may offer specific proposals for new legislation or sentencing patterns. Some may run campaigns for or against candidates. The parents' movement maintains the sense of urgency that something must be done, but also that something can be done, without needing to solve the problem of what that something is.

Conclusion

Social movement organizations undertake observable actions in pursuit of explicitly stated goals. But just as movement actors express concern for cultural products that 'send the wrong message', one can ask what messages a movement's actions are sending. It is not enough to measure whether a movement is succeeding or failing in its stated goals.

We also need to consider why they have chosen to state their goals in the manner that they have chosen. Social movements seek to change social practices, but, in doing so, also propagate their own understandings of how the world works. It would seem inadvisable not to include these constructions in our analyses.

Social movements' representations of their goals and identities necessarily include strategic representations of the context in which they work, including their vision of the struggle in which they are engaged. In the present case, we have seen that a movement's strategic use of reclamation activism has not merely fostered a broad popular appeal for its interests, distinct from governmental and criminal justice system support for the same interests. It has also created conditions under which it is difficult to examine the movement's actions or goals without reproducing its image of its opponent. To even raise the question of the movement's strategies is inextricably linked to the language of 'support for the enemy', even where no such enemy has been proven to exist.

All movements need to establish that their goals are credible, that their targets are well chosen, and that things would be better if they got what they wanted. Reclamation activism provides a particular spin on this process. Although movement actors are unlikely, in general, to pursue claims strictly in the name of elitism, they can always choose to define their issue or grievance in terms of threats to stability, breakdown of order, or possible future consequences of failing to uphold commitments, and to demonstrate these claims with instances in which their presumed privileges have failed. The documented association between these tactics and so-called 'conservative movements' and countermovements to date may discourage us from examining such practices in the more progressive social movements. Focusing on movement forms or claims, we can fail to notice movement strategies. Yet the case of the parents' movement reveals that reclamation activism may be quite fluid and adaptable to numerous situations. After all, we're all a bit nostalgic for things that never were.

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Note

1 I leave it as an exercise for the reader to identify a single organization claiming to represent political correctness, or a public figure who speaks in favor of a PC agenda.

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Appendix

Table A1 Core movement organizations (national)

Organization	Year founded	Partial list of references and resources	Mission
National Families in Action (NFIA)	1977	National Family Partnership; Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America; Partnership for a Drug-Free America; American Council for Drug Education; Drug Watch International; DARE America; Family Research Council; Drug Free America Foundation	'To help families and communities prevent drug abuse among children by promoting policies based on science.'
Parents Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE-Omaha)	1977	National Families in Action; National Family Partnership; Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America; Drug Watch International; Family Research Council; International Drug Strategy Institute; Partnership for a Drug-Free America; PRIDE-USA	'To prevent the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) by youth. Our goal is to activate parents, other adults and youth by raising awareness and by educating the community regarding the effects on and the danger to youth caused by the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and to encourage public policy which supports a safe, drug-free lifestyle.'
National Family Partnership (NFP)	1980	National Families in Action; Partnership for a Drug-Free America; American Council on Drug Education; Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America; National Drug Prevention League; PRIDE-USA	'To lead and support our nation's families and communities to nurture the full potential of healthy, drug-free youth.'
National Drug Prevention League (NDPL)	1995	DARE America; Drug Free America Foundation; Drug Watch International; National Families in Action; National Family Partnership; Partnership for a Drug-Free America	'To promote individual, family and community health and well-being by strengthening support for drug abuse prevention.'

Supporting organizations (national)

Partnership for a Drug-Free America (PDFA)	1986	CADCA; NFIA; NFP; PRIDE	'Based on the belief that changing attitudes is the key to changing behavior, the Partnership's mission is to reduce demand for illegal drugs by changing public attitudes about drugs—to "denormalize" drug use, by making use less glamorous and less acceptable.'
American Council for Drug Education (ACDE)	1977	PDFA	'A substance abuse prevention and education agency that develops programs and materials based on the most current scientific research on drug use and its impact on society.'
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)	1992	National Families in Action; Partnership for a Drug-free America; PRIDE	'To create and strengthen the capacity of new and existing coalitions to build safe, healthy and drug-free communities. The organization supports its members with technical assistance and training, public policy, media strategies and marketing programs, conferences and special events.'
International Drug Strategy Institute (DSI), also The Institute on Global Drug Policy; A subsidiary of The Drug Free America Foundation; Organized by Drug Watch International	Unclear	Drug Free America Foundation; National Families in Action; Drug Watch International	'To provide accurate information on a wide variety of drug related issues as well as promoting drug policies which will reduce current drug use and result in reductions in future drug use.'
Drug Watch International (DWI)		American Council for Drug Education; National Family Partnership; PRIDE Canada	'Promotes the creation of healthy drug-free cultures in the world and opposes the legalization of drugs. The organization upholds a comprehensive approach to drug issues involving prevention, education, intervention/ treatment, and law enforcement/interdiction.'
Drug Free America Foundation, Inc. (DFAF)	1996	N/A	'To educate Americans about ballot initiatives and other attempts to legalize as "medicine" unsafe, ineffective and unapproved drugs such as marijuana, heroin and cocaine.'
Family Research Council (FRC)	1983	N/A	'To reaffirm and promote nationally, and particularly in Washington, D.C., the traditional family and the Judeo-Christian principles upon which it is built.'

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