



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 31
Issue 4 December

Article 19

December 2004

Drugs, Alcohol and Social Problems. James D. Orcut and David R. Rudy (Eds.).

Sean R. Hogan
University of California, Berkeley

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Hogan, Sean R. (2004) "*Drugs, Alcohol and Social Problems.* James D. Orcut and David R. Rudy (Eds.)," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 31: Iss. 4, Article 19.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.3041>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol31/iss4/19>

This Book Note is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN**
UNIVERSITY

James D. Orcutt and David R. Rudy (Eds.), *Drugs, Alcohol, and Social Problems*. Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003. \$72.00 hardcover, \$29.95 papercover.

The understanding of drug and alcohol problems is often confounded by competing perspectives and multiple interpretations of what are essentially ambiguous social phenomena. Attempts to attribute drug and alcohol problems to the physiological or psychological characteristics of individuals have proven inadequate particularly when considering the sociological implications of these problems. Sociological inquiry into the definition, construction, maintenance, and interpretation of social problems has provided researchers and scholars with a more veracious theoretical foundation for understanding the life cycle of drug and alcohol problems. Examining dynamics related to the historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts of drug and alcohol problems is vital to understanding the creation of these complex social phenomena.

In *Drugs, Alcohol, and Social Problems*, Orcutt and Rudy have compiled fourteen articles illustrating the rich and diverse nature drug and alcohol problems present within sociological discourse. The book is divided into five parts blending studies from social constructionism, epidemiology, and ethnographic research. Topics include the misrepresentation of drug problems by the media, the political symbolism of drug education in schools, the social organization of drug-using careers, and the relationship between HIV and heroin use among homeless drug addicts. Most of the articles are well written and easily read.

A potential disappointment to readers is that none of the articles are new. All of the studies originally appeared in the sociological journal *Social Problems* between 1977 and 1997. Most experienced drug and alcohol scholars have already read this information; however, the value of these articles is still significant. The theoretical and ideological chapters are time-tested and highly regarded in the drug and alcohol field. The ethnographic studies are equally impressive. Adler and Adler's description of the deviant careers of drug dealers and smugglers in Southern California is a classic from the deviance field. The veracity dis-

played in Bourgois, Lettiere, and Quesada's study of HIV risk among homeless heroin addicts in San Francisco is particularly striking and should be appreciated by all interested readers. A possible shortcoming to the text is the three epidemiological chapters. The quantitative discourse exemplified in these chapters is inconsistent with the rest of the book. Furthermore, the survey information studied in these articles is somewhat dated calling into question its contemporary relevance. Nevertheless, the articles in this text represent valuable contributions to the study of drug and alcohol problems. They are readings that all students and scholars in the drug and alcohol field will appreciate. Those interested in the social construction of social problems will find this book particularly satisfying.

Sean R. Hogan, University of California, Berkeley

Junko Kato, *Regressive Taxation and the Welfare State: Path Dependence and Policy Diffusion*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. \$55.00 hardcover.

The extent to which globalization creates new opportunities for world citizens or constrains already existing relationships between them has been of central importance to social scientists and policy makers. As the period of Keynesian sanctity yielded to neo-liberal market efficiency, welfare state expenditures were called into question and nation states began to face serious challenges funding and maintaining social programs. A number of policy makers, economists and politicians began announcing an era of retrenchment and in some cases suggested that the welfare state, along with twentieth century definitions of welfare, would need to adapt according to the dictates of an international economy. Welfare state proponents began to readily critique this assertion, resulting in an ongoing political and intellectual debate in which the supposedly inevitable impetus for welfare state retrenchment has been called into question.

In *Regressive Taxation and the Welfare State* Junko Kato provides some useful evidence to inform this debate. The book investigates how earlier tax policy decisions resulted in a limited or open set of funding options for maintaining welfare state expenditures when globalization began to bear down in the early 1990s. Kato's