A Contest of Values: A Cultural History of Approaches toward Alcohol

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APPROACHES TOWARD ALCOHOL
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ABSTRACT

The problem of drinking alcoholic beverages has been of concern to American society since its beginning. At any given point in time, there is usually a perspective about alcohol which is generally accepted (e.g., it should be avoided; it should not be avoided, etc.). The problems raised by alcohol consumption (including problematic consumption itself) are sociologically fascinating because they serve as both instance of the problems of permission and control within American society. This paper looks at orientations toward alcohol use over time from a permission/control perspective. Society needs not only social control, but social permission as well. These two forces tend to alternate over time, and one instance where their operation can be observed is in orientations toward alcohol.

INTRODUCTION

The study of attitudes and thought about alcohol, its use and abuse, represents one of the more fascinating areas of American history and social structure. Alcohol, of course, is of interest in its own right for its social and biological properties, for the widespread nature of its use, and the problematic occasions of its abuse. More importantly, or at least as important, issues in alcohol permission and control are central to the warp and woof of the social structure. Thus, understanding them helps us to understand a great deal about the culture under consideration. They represent generalized problems of social and moral order, issues of personal and social control, as well as being of direct interest themselves. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is twofold; primarily it is to shed light on the social history of attitudes toward alcohol throughout the history of the American republic. To do so will serve our second purpose whether we wish it to or not. In order to develop some comprehensive and cogent iterpretation of alcohol attitudes and actions we need to develop a framework that will touch upon some central issues within the American social structure itself. These, I hope, will be interesting in their own right.

The issues of control in American society provide some key perspectives for thinking about alcohol. They have been implicit in our Protestant history with its focus upon predestination and the extent to which within the Protestant tradition (as opposed to the Catholic one, for example) man can, through his actions, control God's actions and thus guarantee salvation. Or, has God acted already, leaving very little that man can do about his salvation?[1] A second concern, of course, rests on the individual as the center of the social order. American society, perhaps preeminently among the more individualistically oriented western societies, has elevated the single person to a high status. Whether that has given the individual responsibilities for controls that he/she cannot fully master, and at the same time ignored the role of the system in guiding our behavior and shaping our alternatives, remains to be seen. Thirdly, as a counterpoint to the issue of control, America has been concerned about permissions and their structure. What can the individual do? Wht is it "OK" to become involved in? One has the sense that permissions are few and far between in American society. Illustrative of this is a person who defined a puritan mind as "the sneaking feeling that somehow, somewhere, somebody was having a good time," painting them, in fact, as much more dour than they indeed were. While control is certainly a basic element in psychological, personal, political, economic, sexual realism, we need permissions, too. It is important to see that society is as much a permission giver as a control enforcer. The history of American society is an intricate set of variations on these themes of permission, control, and the role of the individual in relation to them.

PERMISSION AND CONTROL

Throughout the history of American society we have waivered back and forth between permission to drink and control of drinking. Prohibition was certainly the penultimate example of control while the period after independence, as Rorabaugh points out, was a period of high permission. It is important not to see permission as the other end of control. Rather, these two dimensions exist more in the shape of an X or a + in which one can envision high permission, high control, or low permission, low control as characteristic of the society. Alternately, there can be the off-centered cells of this fourfold table, a situation of high control and low permission, as well as a situation of low control and high permission. Each of them may have some unique properties and may appear at various points in the history of thinking about alcohol.[2] My thought is that it is useful to consider "alcohol history" as swinging among these cells, not unlike the shift between "sensate" and "insensate" emphases within society as suggested by Pitrim Sorokin (1956), or "ascetic" and hedonistic" poles developed by Meyerson (1941). This conceptualization, in which the actual drinking attitudes and patterns are seen as the product of the interaction of forces of permission and forces of control, is simply more elaborate. It is important to underscore here that drinking should be seen not as an example of cultural "failure." Rather, it is a result of culture success. The operation of two sets of processes, processes of permission and processes of control, are necessary to understand why a particular culture at a particular time, has the thought and action that it does have.

These norms, by the way, may differ considerably for different subgroups within the same society at the same point in time, particularly when that

society is of pluralistic background as is American society. That may be why
Meyerson's (1941: 17) focus of explanation , when he was seeking to
understand why women have different drinking patterns from men, and Jews from
non-Jews, rests on social tradition and social pressure. From my point of
view, social tradition and social pressure are simply the result of forces of
permission and forces of control as we think about the way in which a
particular culture has handled alcohol.

A HISTORICAL APPROACH

As norms shift over time (and it is helpful to think as if they do
shift), different patterns or crystallizations of activity and thought may
emerge as characteristic of different periods. I would like to avoid, if I
could, the discussion of whether things "really" change or whether each new
phase is simply a substitute for the last phase, and hence, however different,
essentially the same. Those kinds of discussions are of interest, but not
here. American society has moved through several distinct periods in its
alcohol history. The exact dating of these periods is certainly open to
question. The extent to which every single individual did or did not
participate in this shift is not a question which will occupy a great deal of
time here. Rather, this study attempts to do some intellectual rough
carpentry, to construct a picture of major periods, and to characterize these
periods. The danger in rough carpentry is that you may think you are building
the central framework of a house when all you are constructing is a
scaffolding which is later removed. Be that as it may, the scaffolding is
essential to the construction of the final house. Others may shift the focus
of explanation or may change the nature of the characterization of the
periods, and this would be fine. New work builds upon older work. The
purpose here will be well served if some overall sense of the pattern of
orientation toward alcohol can be developed and some very preliminary sense of
the reasons why shifts occurred can be understood. The basic argument is
presented in the fourfold table presented as Figure 1, following Gusfield.

Figure 1 Here

Overall, as the figure suggests, the country has moved from the repentant
drinker to the enemy drinker to the sick drinker to the responsible drinker.
The first three of these, repentant, enemy, and sick drinkers, respectively,
are phases developed by Joseph Gusfield (1967) to describe the different
attitudes toward drinking within the country. The last is not one of
Gusfield's and represents, more or less, the modern day. It is perhaps useful
to think of a progression in terms of alcohol attitudes from approbation to
abolition to alienation, and finally, to anti-abuse.

The Repentant Drinker

In the early period of the country drinking was a part of the way of
life and was woven into the social fabric itself. One drank all the time and
repented only for drinking too much. A "high" point, 1830, represented the
consumption of 3.9 gallons of absolute alcohol per capita, or 7 gallons of
absolute alcohol per capita of drinking age population, 15 years and over
(Rorabaugh, 1979:Table A1.1 and A1.2). The earliest figures for which

Rorabaugh has data is the year 1710, in which 5.1 gallons of absolute alcohol per drinking age population was consumed. That represents the lowest point during the 1710-1830 period. These consumption levels are considerably elevated from our current (1975) consumption of 2.7 gallons of absolute alcohol per drinking age population. Alcohol was as common then as perhaps the automobile is now. While alcohol has its dangers, so does the car, and yet there appears to be an acceptance of those dangers, in the same sense that American society continues to accept the dangers of hand guns, and we find them currently widely distributed. This early period (1620-1820) was a period of relatively high permission and relatively low control. However, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century some things in the social fabric began to shift which caused American attitudes toward alcohol to move a notch over from the repentant to the enemy drinker.

The Enemy Drinker

What were some of the things that accounted for this shift? It is impossible to go into a complete detailing here, but among them were the following:

1) Stronger Beverages

   Stronger beverages came into use. Early in the period before 1800 cider and perhaps beer were prominent. The hard liquor began to be used and the potency level of drink went up considerably.

2) High Permission Climate

   There was a heady, high permission climate following independence. This climate of freedom from constraints pushed permission to one of its highest levels. At points of high permission often additional controls are desired.

3) Industrialization

   The rising rate of industrialization and the need for disciplined workers created pressures for control. It is one thing to work in an intoxicated condition when the only implement you are using is a hoe or a rake. But as heavy machinery began to develop, the possibility of injury from an intoxicated operator increased. In addition, some of the things that the industrial worker did depended upon things that other industrial workers did, so the possibility of not only harming yourself, but harming others, was quite a vigorous one.

4) High Consumption

   The high consumption rate itself generated a pressure for control.

5) Immigration

   Immigration contributed in the sense that less "controlled" people were entering the country. For example, people who were of Catholic or Jewish background, or Irish or German in nationality represented a

point of difference with respect to the dominant Protestant culture. Particularly with respect to immigrants of Catholic background, alcohol use was common and provided a possible moral lever to be used against them.[3]

The beginning of the temperance movement (which had been around during the later periods of the repentant drinker stage) now took a turn and became the abstinence movement. In this respect the prohibitionists provided a model of social policy which has been used again and again in American society; "if you don't like it get rid of it completely." In recent days we are struggling between, as it were, nuclear abstinence and nuclear temperance. Many of the same issues in control, fears of lack of control, or fears of an uncontrolled state exist within the nuclear field, as exists within the temperance field. As unlikely companions as those two fields are, there is that commonality.

The drinker himself became the enemy, both of himself and, perhaps even worse, of society. Rather than being seen as a freeing up from control, alcohol was reinterpreted as a new prison from which one had to be freed, rather than to which one went for freedom. Alcohol began to be seen as the cause of poverty, or if not the cause, most closely related to poverty, and conjoint with it. Indeed, there is a piece on alcohol, "Alcoholism and Pauperism," in the classic book ALCOHOL, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY.[4]

In this respect, then, the drinker was the enemy of himself, his family and the state, a combination which was hard to overcome. In addition, the idea usefully focused the cause of drinking on the individual person and "his" weakness or "lack of control" and did not raise, therefore, difficult and potentially embarrassing questions about the structure of society, its pressures and problems. This period continued in ascendancy through the Civil War and became vigorous after the period of the Civil War up until the time of prohibition itself. Indeed, prohibition as a matter of social policy was actually possible only because the substantive goal of prohibition had virtually been achieved. By 1900 Americans were consuming only 1.4 gallons of absolute alcohol (Rorabaugh, 1979), down from 3.9 gallons in 1830. It is important to be aware that alcohol consumption had dropped drastically. It is difficult to tell who drank and who did not. One might suspect that at this point the difference so clearly etched by Gusfield became crystallized in the national consciousness; native WASPs drank little, or less perhaps, and incoming immigrants, particuarly Irish and Italians, were regular users of alcohol. This difference is not a result of "natural" traits but rather a diminishing use of alcohol by native Protestants over the period since 1830, and a carryover of European habits and practices by immigrants adding a substantially moral flavor to the problem of control. I think one would have to say, withal, that the temperance movement was largely successful before prohbition. Had they remained there everyone might be now better off, but there was a need for that final push, and with it came prohibition.

The Sick Drinker

Just as there had been pressures to control during the high permission climate, the high control climate of prohibition was represented by its own pressures for greater permissions. Some of these pressures were of the following sort:

1) Control

There was too much control. Prohibition represented more control, perhaps from the government itself, than Americans were comfortable with over long periods of time;

2) Urbanism

Urbanism and cities grew. During the period just before the turn of the century and into the beginning of the twentieth century, urbanism was on the rise. Tne more cosmopolitan, open nature of cities cannot be ignored as a factor in generating additional needs for permission.

3) War Experience

World War I and the experience abroad, to say nothing of "gay Paree," made it hard to keep people down on the farm. The contrast between European culture and American culture which many doughboys saw and brought back with them must have been a factor in generating desires for higher permission.

4) Protestant Decline

Protestantism was on the decline. Hudson (1961:126-127) comments:

"The outward indications of Protestant strengths and well-being were deceptive. They represented little more than the high tide of a Protestant advance which had been carried forward by an accumulated momentum from the past, and the momentum was largely spent. In spite of the business of the churches, the halcyon years of the two decades bridging the turn of the century actually marked the end of an era."

5) Professional Growth

There was white collar and professional growth. As the century progressed and urbanism and cosmopolitanism flourished, white collar employment grew with its focus on more internal social controls rather than the external controls more characteristic of industrial employment. In 1900, for example, white collar workers were some five million out of a work force of twenty-nine million. By 1950, there were 21.6 million out of a work force of 58.9 million, of a shift from about 17% to 36% (THE STATISTICAL HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT, Series D72-122, Major Occupation Group of the Economically Active Population by Sex, 1900-1950; 1972:74).

6) Egalitarianism

The rise of egalitrianism and women's suffrage was important. Whatever internal social controls were developing within the white collar group, they were certainly redoubled in their

efforts by the rise of egalitarianism as represented through women's suffrage. The implicit push to let each man – and woman be master of his/her own destiny could not help but be extehded to the use of alcoholic beverages, however implicit such an extension might be. It represented another breakdown in the external social controls represented by prohibition.

7) The Media

Glamour models and media, unquestionably played a role in popularizing the use of alcoholic beverages within the context of a highly attractive, highly volatile life style, that media figures to some extent replaced religious ones as central symbols of the desired life. This modeling tendency would only be encouraged.

These points are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive and illustrative of the type of social change which created the pressures toward repeal. Such pressures take time to develop, and the defeat of Al Smith, a wet Catholic mayor, probably represented the last bastion of politicized prohibition. His defeat heralded its defeat.

With repeal, a climate of increased permission became the norm. Indeed, for many years very little was done. It was almost as if a policy of hands off was a "washing of hands" of the whole matter. It was only in the mid 40s that a vigorous, systematic attempt to study alcohol began with the energetic activities which led to the volume ALCOHOL, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY. However, the higher permission climate, particularly generated by the Second World War, required some increase in controls. The use of the sick lable kept control at the forefront. The sick drinker concept had something in common with the enemy drinker one in that it continued to focus the problem on the individual person, and on what that person could or could not do, or what could or should be done to that person to be helpful. The concept of the sick drinker, based as it is in the medical model, tends to eschew the public health orientation to a very large degree. It softens the sense of fault implicit in the enemy drinker by suggesting that while it is true that things are out of control, the individual who is out of control cannot control the loss of control. On the other hand, there is considerable question which remains in the minds of many about the psychological component of illness itself. Therefore, a medical model may imply some fault. Susan Sontag (1977) speaks of "the cancer personality" as she experienced hearing about it. In any event, it did not appear that the medical model was completely sufficient. The era of the sick drinker is still, of course, with us. But it has been giving way, and will perhaps increasingly give way, to the era of the responsible drinker.

The Responsible Drinker

It seems very clear that if we are not in a new period we are in a transition period. Cahalan and Cisin report as follows:

"To sum up the present state of American Attitudes and values concerning alcohol, events in our history, reinforced by findings of recent surveys of the general public, lead to the conclusion that a large proportion of

the American people are rather uneasy and misinformed about the subject of drinking and its consequences" (Cahalan and Cisin, 1976:82). Ambivalence, of course, has always been a hallmark of the alcohol field. But they go on to say, "The general public will need to be well informed and to have confidence that they can (and should) keep their drinking within moderate limits" (Cahalan and Cisin, 1976:83).

There seems to be a new feeling abroad in the land that moderate drinking is what is appropriate and even helpful. A recent UPI release which doubtless appeared in papers around the counrty, and did appear in the DETROIT FREE PRESS, is headlined "Moderate Tippling Aids Heart." The article was a public release of a study by a Harvard Medical School reseach team and appeared in the November 2, 1979 Journal of the American Medical Association. The article ends as follows:

An accompanying editorial by Dr. William F. Castillo, of the National Heart Institute, was cautious with the martini-a-day news. "With 17 million alcoholics in the country perhaps we have a message for which this country is not yet ready." Castillo said, "Zero intake of alcohol seems less healthful than a moderate intake, but higher intakes of alcohol are associated with increased rates of all the well known problems that alcohol produces from nutritional, gastro-intestinal, neurological, cardiological, hematological, pulmonary, electrolyte, and cancer problems. Thus, the problem seems simple. Just two a day and that is it," he said.

The quest, then, seems to be for a new sense of permission. What is "OK" and what is "not OK"? The old notion in which drinkers reaffirmed each other in an "if I'm OK, then you're Ok" version of the old Alphonse-Gaston scenario seems less appropriate than an independently based scientific standard to which people could apply themselves, and which people could apply to themselves. Control is still vested within the individual, but permission is granted for drinking as long as it remains within moderate limites. What is new and different now is that some actual figures with respect to moderate limits are coming to be defined.

CONTROL THEMES

Up until this point I have been discussing a possible interpretation of history and the locating of certain orientations toward drinking within historical periods. As far as it goes such an effort is useful because it typifies a series of main points in the overall progression of events. However, it can also be very misleading because it suggests more of the mean than the variance, more of the central tendency than the spread around that central tendency. It seemed to me useful to leave history aside for a moment and focus on the conflicts within the alcohol field that seem to emerge again and again, now in major key, now in minor, that represent the constant rather than the variant element of alcohol history. One could identify, I am sure, a range of themes. Six seem to me to be most prominent. They are as follows:

1) voluntary control vs. governmental control;
2) male control vs. female control;
3) collegial control vs. communal control;
4) drinking control vs. alcoholism control;
5) rational control vs. nonrational control;
6) internal control vs. external control.

In a moment I will briefly discuss each of these dichotomies. An overall point needs to be made here. In each case the one on the left (voluntary, male, collegial, drinking, rational, and internal) I find to be the more prominent, more desirable state within the American way of viewing things. Everything else being equal, we would prefer voluntary control, male control, collegial control. We would prefer to have a situation of drinking rather than alcoholism and we would prefer rational, internal control. These, of course, do not always work, and we need to rely on government, on women, on the family, on definitions of drinking that define it as alcoholism, or nonrational elements, and external control forces to fill in the gaps, sometimes major gaps. Indeed, one of the problems in the field of alcohol, one it shares with other fields such as population control and environmental control, is that we do not recognize the need for a balanced system of controls. Rather, we seem to have a preference for one type of control, and view the other as a fall back. Rather than having a balanced system, we seem to have more of a jerky teeter totter. The most recent example of this situation might be the drinking age, especially in the state of Michigan. First it was 21, then 18, then it was raised again, etc. Much like the fluid in a blood pressure machine, it pops up and down, responding now to this aspect of the society structure, now to that aspect, without any sense of balanced development based on data and the wisdom of the time.

Voluntary vs. Governmental Control

Throughout the history of our country we have been sensitive about governmental control. We would prefer "voluntarism" to government programs. The United States was late in coming to the field of financial assistance, and it was only with the passage of the Social Security Act that a comprehensive, economical floor was put into effect. From that time until fairly recently, we have been through a period of high governmental involvement and initiative. If public opinion data are any indication, data which clearly point to the substantially dropping levels of confidence in the government, we may be in for a period of voluntarism again (Tropman and McClure, 1981). This is certainly suggested within the alcohol field in the emphasis on the responsible drinker. The conflict between "voluntarism" and government control has gone on since the American Revolution itself.

Male vs. Female Control

The issue of men and male drinking has always been an important element in the history of alcohol attitudes. Arthur Krock, former Washington Bureau chief of the NEW YORK TIMES, comments in hs autobiography about the relationship of alcohol and violence in his southern boyhood. He comments, in one particular passage on the need of the southern sheriff to kill three brothers who became violent after drinking too much:

"This wholesale instance of justifiable homicide was not unusual in the
south of my boyhood. Its source, the dangerous combination of the
Southerner and whiskey was a major reason these communities voted dry
and were - as many remain - steadfast advocates of national prohibition"
(Krock, 1968:9-10).

And Rorabauch points out that one of the features of the pre-temperance
period was the substitution of solo bouts for group alcohol use. Men may view
alcohol, also, as a weapon against other men.[5] Peter Meinke, in his story,
"Conversations with a Pole," talks about this.

"Of course, most men nowadays are proud of their capacities; it is one
of the new frontiers. The action today is not in the wild West, but in
the business lunch. And instead of shootouts, we have drink-outs: may
the best man win. It is not accident that those short, lethal drinks
are called shots, that we get bombed, and blasted. And even the later
stoned and paralyzed imply a violent metaphor. It works the other way.
Molotov cocktails" (Meinke, 1979:114; italics in the original).

Until recently, saloons and bars tended to be male hangouts with women
either not welcome, or being forced to use a separate entrance. Women have
sought to control men's drinking perhaps for direct purposes as well as
indirectly to control male violence. Women were prominent in the temperance
movement, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union represented an all-out
battle of the sexes over booze. Today, though, women seem to have taken a
different tack, and it may be that the increase in female drinking is a
strategy of acceptance which implies "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." If
one accepts the hypothesis that women are less likely to be "permissive" than
men, then drinking with women is likely to be more moderate.

Collegial vs. Communal

I mentioned a moment ago the location of drinking and referred to
Rorabaugh's point with regard to solo bouts. If, indeed, collegial drinking,
drinking with buddies, or other men at a special place is more prominent, then
it seems drinking is likely to be more excessive. If, on the other hand,
drinking occurs within the family situation, with meals, a greater element of
control may obtain. Among other reasons, the fact that one continues to have
responsibilities around the house, means that the "night out" concept of
complete release does not occur. Spouses are likely to restrain each other,
women perhaps acting as a restraint on men, and the presence of children with
their needs and requests as a constant part of what is going on may act as a
restraint as well. Snyder and Pittman report the work of Field in this regard:

"...he found that in societies with strong corporate kin groups
(organized on unilineal principles, exhibiting continuity in time,
capable of concerted social action and having elaborate collective
ceremonial [sic] and symbolism) seemed markedly sober, whereas those
structured bilaterally with amorphous, fragmented and loosely organized
social relationships appeared marked by extensive drunkennes" (Snyder
and Pittman; 1968:270).

Bales' study of Jewish and Irish alcohol patterns is similarly suggestive
(Bales, 1944)

Drinking Control vs. Alcoholism Control

A fourth type of issue is the intellectual way in which the problem is defined. The alcohol field, of course, is sufficiently broad that several definitions are available, and two are crucial. If the problem is defined as drinking and how much to drink, alcohol is seen as the usual part of life, in which potentially dangerous things are used (such as fire, guns, cars), but cautions are advised. On the other hand, a definition in terms of alcoholism refers to the lethal potential that alcohol has and which the other examples I just mentioned - guns, cars, fire - have also. to the extent that the most dangerous aspects are highlighted is the extent to which control through fear, through the fear that one will become "an alcoholic," is used.

Rational Control vs. Nonrational Control

Over the years within the alcohol field there has been vacillation between whether or not "drinking" is within the rational control of the individual, and hence, something for which the individual is responsible, or alternately, whether it is outside the rational control of the individual, and thus something for which he could not be considered responsible. This issue is simply one version of the whole fault/no-fault situation which so bedevils us in all of our public policy areas. American society is fault-oriented and implicit, of course, in the concept of responsibility is the concept of control. The only legitimate way that one can assert irresponsibility is to indicate that there was no possibility of control. The enemy drinker formulation is certainly one which suggests responsibility. While it is true that in that formulation the individual cannot be fully trusted with that responsibility, it is, nonetheless, located at his feet. The government had to come in to help him. The sick drinker, on the other hand, suggests irresponsiblity, and with the responsible drinker one is back to a rational, as opposed to a nonrational, formulation of the problem.[6]

Internal Control vs. External Control

Finally, it is necessary to consider the element of locus of control. This distinction is one which has been developed in detail by Rotter (1966) and his colleagues, but one can see it emerge in the history of attitudes and actions around alcohol. If we think, though, of a situation in which permission and control have internal and external aspects, then a fourfold table is developed in which one cell reflects internal permissions and controls, while another cell reflects external permissions and controls. Too often diagonal cells suggest conditions in which permissions are internal, but controls are external, or in which controls are internal but permissions are external. I have made some very tentative suggestions of what types of societies and societal periods might fit into such a fourfold table, as listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Here

I realize the dangers of making any assignments, and if one could view these merely as suggestions, the utility of the table would be enhanced. There are likely to be significantly different types of stresses and problems depending upon where the overall society, or subsociety, is with respect to the permission control matrix.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have suggested some orientations toward the history of alcohol attitudes within this country, and the constant themes and tensions which crop up around providing permission to drink and controlling the amount of drink. All of these tensions, of course, exist within and are products of American society itself. A society in which everything is possible, but very little is certain. Everyone wants to get ahead and it seems that everyone can get ahead. On the other hand, the means for so doing are not equally distributed. Indeed, there is the mythology that the means are within the control of the individual person. As erroneous as that may be, it, nonetheless, places a heavy burden on the individual person, leaving in many instances, a sense that he/she has fallen short of the norm. Roger Hilsman talks about American society when he refers to a professor of sculpture and boxing at Yale who had designed a playground toy made of metal rods connected with an elastic string forming a sort of spider web. Children play on this toy and the interconnectedness of the nylon ropes created a situation in which someone at one side of the web could pluck a sting and someone way over on the other side would be thrown violently off. Professor Brown commented that this toy taught children two valuable lessons about life: the first was that there are sons of bitches in the world, and the second and more important was that it was frequently impossible to tell just who they are (Hilsman, 1964, in Tropman, et al., 1976:22). Such a metaphor is a good one to describe American society itself. We depend a great deal on others, but cannot acknowledge that dependency, nor can we control it. alcohol certainly serves to give us the sense, at least, of power over events that we cannot control, and that may make us feel a bit better. It also gives us a weapon, as suggested in the Meinke quote, to use against others even though we are not sure, perhaps, who those others may be. It is the uncertainty of interdependence, and the lack of specificity of social relations, the great possibilities and limited potentialities, that give American society its unusual texture. That texture of uncertainty suggests the need for and preoccupation with power. For this reason the issues of alcohol control and alcohol permission are likely to be long with us.[7]

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FOOTNOTES

1. It is curious that in a society founded on the basis of freedom from
    control there should have been such a lack of control at the very center
    of the social psychological structure of those who founded that society.
    Indeed, one could argue that the very lack of control over God himself in
    salvation terms provided the energy for a psychological substitution, a
    focus on this worldly mastery as opposed to religious drift. Societies,
    of course, which have ethics that permit the control of God through "man's
    actions" may well be characterized by emphasis on salvation, rather than
    more worldly types of concerns. Brickman, et al. (1982) comment that the
    Protestant reformation now placed man "...in a direct and terrifying
    relationship to...God, with no priests or sacraments to take away the
    burden of their sinfulness."

2. This framework is similar to what Rorabaugh (1979) did to explain the
    strength of beverage preference. He uses level of aspiration on the one
    hand, and level of achievement motivation on the other, creating an
    implicit fourfold table (though he, himself, does not create such a table)
    of high achievement, high aspiration, low achievement, low aspiration, and
    high achievement, low aspiration, and high aspiration and low achievement,
    as related to the extent to which people prefer strong drink.

3. It it interesting to point out here, though, that alcohol use among
    immigrants, Catholic or whatever, was unlikely to have been greater than
    alcohol use among Protestants during the high permission climate of the
    early 19th century. Thus, the attempt by the majority culture to control
    drinking may well have served the function which Gusfield (1963) suggests
    viz, "controlling" the subdominant population of European immigrants. It
    seems less likely to me that that was its central purpose. Rather, it
    seems as likely, if not more likely, that the Protestants wanted to
    control themselves and used control of alcohol as both a direct and
    indirect surrogate for such control. The fact that it also served as a
    way to establish moral superiority over alcohol using immigrants was
    doubtless a happy circumstance, and one which provided much additioal

motivation of a sociological sort for the continuation and enhancement of alcohol control. Indeed, in the post-Civil War stages it may well have become the dominant motive. Nonetheless, the fact that it was unlikely that immigrants, at least in the early stages, drank more than the new native inhabitants, and the fact that some of the immigrants were not alcohol users at all, suggests that Gusfield's explanation might be slightly modified in the way I have suggested. In this respect Rorabaugh (1979) has a point when he says "while (Gusfield's) theory may hold true for the prohibition movement during the late 19th century it fails to explain the anti-liquor movement in its earlier phase." Indeed, Rorabaugh points out that "...the temperance movement began twenty years before mass immigration" (Rorabaugh, 1979:188).

4. This work is recognized as a classic one, opening a new "scientific" period in the study of alcohol, problem drinking and the field of alcohol use in general. It was first published in 1945.

5. Lisansky comments, also, that "Alcohol has been used occasionally as an instrument to achieve submission of and achieve control over others" (1968:264).

6. Phillip Brickman and others, in a pathbreaking new work, argue that the attribution of responsibility is central to the understanding of human motivation. "The central thesis of ths paper is that people hold in their heads models of human behavior based upon attribution of responsibility for problems and solutions (1982). By drawing a distinction between attribution of responsibility for a problem (who is responsible for a past event) and responsibility for a solution (who is to control future events) we derive four general models that specify what form people's behavior will take when they try to help others or help themselves. In the first (called the moral model because of past usage of this term) actors are held resposible for problems and solutions and are believed to need only proper motivation. In the compensatory model, people are seen as not responsible for problems, but responsible for solutions and are believed to need power. In the medical model, individuals are seen as not responsible for either problems or solutions, and are believed to need treatment. In the enlightenment model, actors are seen as responsible for problems but unable or unwilling to provide solutions and are believed to need discipline". These distinctions bear considerable similarity to the ones made here and support the kind of approach this paper represents, as well. "We must understand," they argue, "what a people, a culture, or a historical period assumes about the fundamental causes of human misery to comprehend the institutions - law, medicine, education - it develops to deal with these problems."

7. I have also suggested in this paper a "values model" of tension and change, in this case tension between values of permission and values of control and change over time, from one to the other. Such shifting involvements have been recently suggested in a book by Albert Hirshman of that title - Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action (1982). Hirshman argues that history may well swing between these two

orientations, and seeks to explain the shift. His explanation is
disappointment. At a certain point, we become disappointed with private
pursuits and shift to public ones. Simiarly, we may become disappointed
with public activities and move to private involvements.

Figure 1

Illustrative Patterns of Drinking Attitudes/Actions as
They Relate to Levels of Permission and Control
(after Gusfield)

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td colspan="2">CONTROL</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>Low</td><td>High</td></tr>
<tr><td>P
E
R
M
I</td><td>Low</td><td>Repentant Drinker

1620 - 1820</td><td>Sick Drinker

1930 - 1960</td></tr>
<tr><td>S
S
I
O
N</td><td>High</td><td>Enemy Drinker

1820 - 1931</td><td>Responsible Drinker

1960 ————</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 2

Suggested Soceital Type By Permission/Control
And Internal/External Locus of Control*

Permission	Control	
	Internal	External
I N T R T N A L	Puritan Society Jewish Soceity Mormon Society The Repetant Drinker	Protestant Soceity Renewal Soceity "Born Again" Society The Enemy Drinker
E X T E R N A L	Runaway Twenties Society The Sick Drinker	Catholic Society Southern Society Male Society The Responsible Drinker

* This fourfold table bears a certain resemblance to one developed by Linsky,
which provides a framework for thinking about the etiology of alcoholism.
His dimensions are the location of the control as within or outside the
alcoholic, a dimension quite similar to the internal/external locus of
control dimension here. His second dimension is a moral one, and he divides
it into moralistic and non-moralistic (or naturalistic) explanations
(Linsky, 1970-71).