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Drugs and Drug Policy: The Control of Consciousness Alteration. Clayton J. Mosher and Scott M. Akins. Reviewed by Sean R. Hogan.

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he sees as a general silence about gays in the military. He argues that "the politics of military service are also the politics of memory." If we are not told of the valor of lesbian and gay veterans, he fears Americans will not see us as having been there to defend our nation. Although there are other books on this subject, this one is different in that it covers over 60 years of voices openly talking about their military service.

In October 2000, a bipartisan Congress overwhelmingly approved funds to establish the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress to collect the stories of those who served their country in time of war. Among the questions interviewers ask is one on the discrimination veterans faced in uniform and out. Although Congress did not intend it, it gave lesbian and gay veterans the opportunity to come out. Steve Estes, working for this project, felt an obligation to "Ask and Tell" so that these stories will now be part of recorded history.

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Clayton J. Mosher & Scott M. Akins. *Drugs and Drug Policy: The Control of Consciousness Alteration*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007. \$54.95 papercover, \$99.95 hardcover.

In the field of alcohol and drug studies, many scholars and policy analysts have effectively utilized a constructionist orientation to help explain and understand substance abuse policy and policymaking. From this perspective, individuals interested in the creation and interpretation of alcohol and drug policy can integrate information from multiple disciplines, including history, sociology, economics, and political science. It also allows individuals to take into account the interaction between dynamics, such as historical and cultural relativity, political and self-interest, language and discourse (including rhetoric, propaganda, and mediated information), and power relationships, in constructing substance abuse policy. In *Drugs and Drug Policy: The Control of Consciousness Alteration*, Mosher

and Akins examine substance use and drug policy from what is essentially a constructionist perspective. When utilized in an objective manner, this theoretical framework can be very helpful in understanding complex social phenomena.

In this text, the authors integrate general substance abuse information with drug policy discourse into one comprehensive textbook. This is intended to make the text more appealing to a wider audience, particularly students in academe. This unique characteristic, not always evident in alcohol and drug policy texts, is a strength of the book. The text contains chapters on substance abuse theory, epidemiology, prevention, and treatment, as well as policies regulating illegal and legal drugs in the United States. A discussion on policies regulating the pharmaceutical industry is very well done. The final chapter of the text presents a cross-national examination of drug policies from around the world.

In this text, the authors openly denounce the "War on Drugs" as a misguided and corrupted campaign of self-interested government officials and private entrepreneurs to mislead the public into believing that alcohol and drug use is more detrimental to American society than evidence would indicate. They take a position that current drug policy goals have not been realized. In fact, the current drug policy agenda has resulted in tremendous social and economic costs and significant ancillary harm. The authors also feel that drug use, in general, is neither an immoral or unhealthy behavior, and serious consideration should be given to drug policy reforms, including the legalization, decriminalization, and regulation of current illicit and controlled substances.

While the authors adamantly advocate against the use of rhetoric, propaganda, misinformation, and advocacy group "evidence" to inappropriately influence public thinking on drug problems, it does not stop them from presenting information and using similar tactics in promoting their own drug policy reform agenda. The evidence proffered by the authors to support their arguments runs the gambit of intellectual propriety from interesting and provocative to sensationalistic and absurd. At times, the litany of both scientific and anecdotal information presented by the authors to "prove" certain points degenerates into nothing more than finger pointing at the

apparent incompetence of researchers and anti-drug legislators. At some point, given their obsession with presenting counterfactual material relevant to drug use in the United States, the reader must begin to question the credibility of some of the authors' supporting statements.

Rather than a critical examination of the country's drug policy, the text is almost exclusively a criticism, minimizing any positive aspects of current anti-drug measures and amplifying the negative characteristics associated with these efforts, in some instances to the point of distortion. By the end of the text, the reader is exhausted by the overriding contempt the authors display toward the current status quo. This is unfortunate, because it is clearly evident that Mosher and Akins possess the expertise necessary to offer a constructive and objective analysis; they simply choose to promote their own anti-establishment–drug reform agenda. The authors' overwhelming bias compromises the academic integrity of the book. As a result, I would not recommend this work as an introductory textbook in a course on substance abuse or alcohol and drug policy. Scholars and students familiar with constructionist discourse on substance abuse policy may find some value in the text; however, information should be reviewed through a discriminating lens.

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