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Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, 259 p., ISBN 9-780812-241167.

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**Electronic version**

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/chs/1350>

DOI: 10.4000/chs.1350

ISSN: 1663-4837

**Publisher**

Librairie Droz

**Printed version**

Date of publication: 1 May 2012

Number of pages: 141-144

ISBN: 978-2-600-01594-3

ISSN: 1422-0857

**Electronic reference**

Klaus Weinhauer, « Schneider (Eric C.), *Smack : Heroin and the American City* », *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* [Online], Vol. 16, n°1 | 2012, Online since 12 March 2013, connection on 22 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/chs/1350> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/chs.1350>

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## REFERENCES

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- 1 Since the 1970s, heroin started to become a major urban problem in European cities, constituting a threat that increased over the following decade. In the US, especially in New York, these problems began much earlier and with greater intensity. While there are many sociological and anthropological studies on drug use, historical research is still rare. The same is true for studies which focus on heroin in a broader context and not only on individual drug takers, who are often labelled with the highly problematic term “addicts”. In his new book *Heroin and the American City*, Eric Schneider places strong emphasis on the interaction of social and spatial factors and focuses on heroin consumers as well as on heroin markets. He sees cities as the organizing principle behind the world’s opiate market, and aims at writing an “urban history of heroin” (p. xiii). In his view the marketing of heroin rests on a hierarchy of cities, on special urban landscapes and on inner cities that function as retail markets. Moreover, he emphasises the crucial importance of city neighbourhoods with a population of heroin users and the interaction between economic and social disadvantage. Four questions are at the centre of Schneider’s book. In the first place he asks what is specifically ‘urban’ about heroin ? And secondly, what impact has heroin and its users had on the city ? Schneider also studies the shifting ethnic dimensions of heroin use. Finally, Schneider seeks to analyze the dynamics of the commodity chain of heroin from the international to the local city level.

- 2 Schneider focuses mainly on New York. This city was the leading international and national centre for marketing and consumption of heroin. Between roughly 1940 and 1985 he identifies three waves of heroin consumption in New York. The first phase, covering the post-Second World War years, saw the expanding growth of opium in Mexico and the reconstruction of trading routes. The mass-migration of African-Americans and Hispanics into segregated city neighbourhoods re-established the supply and demand which had been interrupted by the War. During this phase the profile of heroin users changed from (older) white working class males to primarily African-American and Latino drug consumers. Since the mid- to late-1960s heroin was also widely consumed by young whites. The consumption of heroin in this second phase was paralleled by an explosion of city crime. While punishment was intensified at the street level, federal government spent much money funding treatment for addiction. This was motivated by the huge numbers of heroin consumers among Vietnam veterans. A third wave of heroin consumption began in the early 1970s, initiated by a growing supply of the drug. Around 1985 new drugs like crack cocaine led to a new pattern of drug consumption which came on top of the problems created by heroin use.
- 3 Schneider's main argument goes as follows : After the Second World War, as African-Americans migrated into big cities, they created a spatially concentrated population of marginalized people, a very good structure for heroin entrepreneurs. In this process demarcated central city areas were created, where drugs were retailed, purchased and consumed. These processes insured that drug knowledge could easily be passed from one generation to the other. Young people in particular adopted a life style in which heroin played an important role. In these neighbourhoods heroin users were instrumental in driving up crime rates as well as making life fairly difficult for the other inhabitants. As more and more inner city neighbourhoods became abandoned in the late 1960s this in turn created urban landscapes that facilitated drug trade. At that time, more and more white youths felt alienated from the mainstream American way of life which led them to experimenting with drugs.
- 4 In chapter one Schneider shows how New York shaped the heroin trade and market. It had big pharmaceutical companies, a huge port and a long-standing and well-developed underground economy. Until the 1970s New York kept its leading role as a centre for heroin because of its big market. In chapter two we learn that heroin first became an important drug in the 1940s' Jazz music scene of the city. Schneider then develops this argument in chapter three, showing that by the mid-1950s heroin use among white working-class males, which had experienced a tremendous upsurge after the Second World War, was in decline. Interestingly, while white users learned about heroin mostly in entertainment districts, African Americans got heroin locally in their neighbourhood, where areas for drug markets and drug use were abundant (46). Chapter four shows that during the 1950s the challenges that heroin posed to adolescents was an omnipresent theme in media such as comic books and popular nonfiction literature. Especially masculinity among middle-class American teenagers seemed to be threatened by heroin addiction. As Schneider puts it, "female-dominated homes produced sons who had personalities ill-fitted for modern life and who could not resist the lures of adult pushers" (p. 66). These pushers, in turn, symbolized a threat to American life that was greater than communism or the Mafia.
- 5 Chapter five focuses on the highly ethnically divided heroin market with special attention paid to the heroin markets of the US-West Coast (Los Angeles, San Francisco),

where gangs formed a closed trading system. Chapter six analyses the new wave of heroin use which started in the early 1960s. In New York at the end of that decade the population of known heroin users doubled, reaching a number of at least 60,000. Three factors influenced these changes in the underground economy. First, as Schneider underlines, policing contributed strongly to creating new jobs in the heroin trade. Since dealers wanted to minimize the risk of getting caught by the increasing numbers of antinarcotics policemen, the heroin market became more decentralized. Second, smuggling took new routes and new modes of smuggling were invented. Third, corrupt narcotics policemen in New York helped to promote heroin use. Unlike the early years of the twentieth century, it was now the police not the political machineries that controlled the New York's vice markets. Schneider states that in the late 1960s the collection of money formed the chief occupation of several police officers within each city precinct (108): The "market for illegal narcotics shaped the police department more than the police department shaped the market" (113). Chapter seven describes the crime wave that hit New York by the mid-1960s, especially the Lower East Side, East Harlem and South Bronx. Although heroin was not the only factor driving this crime wave, it was an important player, as the geography of heroin was closely linked to the geography of crime. This upswing in crime was, as Schneider rightly stresses, "neither a reporting artefact nor the result of a media-driven moral panic" (117). Chapter eight shows how in the 1970s heroin use spread into suburbs like New York's Greenwich Village or Haight-Asbury in San Francisco. In both areas the young white middleclass drug users met some existing networks of hippie- or old beat generation drug users who often also consumed amphetamines. Again, coffeehouses, music clubs and bars served as drug market places. Chapter nine discusses the problems that heroin created among soldiers in Vietnam, as well as the invention of methadone as a therapy against heroin addiction. Schneider also points to the fact that many Vietnam veterans stopped using heroin when they came back to normal life in the US. This in turn led some experts to question the widespread assumptions concerning the addictive potentialities of heroin. In this chapter Schneider convincingly makes the argument, that drug use was mainly influenced by the social setting of the inner city and less by the minds and bodies of the heroin users. In the mid-1970s a heroin drought hit the US-East Coast due to the breakdown of supply from Turkish and French sources. Heroin, however, was soon supplied from Mexico and from Asia. These far more decentralized drug market created many more problems to drug policing than the centralized systems of the preceding years had done. The open drug market signalled the advent of third wave of heroin consumption during which the number of heroin users rose by 50 per cent and included many middle-class whites. Especially in the Lower East Side neighbourhood, the music scene (this time punk music) and heroin formed a strong coalition, as had been the case with jazz music in the 1940s. During the 1980s, however, the importance of heroin was eclipsed by crack cocaine. Crack cocaine was easier to use and much cheaper than heroin. Crack created new markets where many dealers exploited themselves to a yet unknown level, developing a "form of bootstrap capitalism" (194).

- 6 Eric Schneider has written a brilliant book based on a rich set of sources and is an extremely stimulating contribution to the social history of urban heroin consumption in the second half of the twentieth century. Sometimes, however, the strength of the book – its wide geographical range – has some structural costs. Moreover, the reader is not always informed about the precise criteria that influenced the choice of the many case studies that are presented in the book. As a result the analytical focus sometimes

gets a little bit lost. Overall, however, this is a publication that will stand for many years as the reference book on US urban drug consumption and drug markets.

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