

Voices from the field: The social construction of alcohol problems in inner-city communities

BY DENISE HERD

This study examines the social construction of alcohol problems by activists involved in alcohol policy campaigns in inner-city neighborhoods in the 1990s. Nearly 200 informants were interviewed and asked to describe why they thought local neighborhoods mobilized around alcohol policy issues. In contrast with other social movements that have emphasized individual alcohol problem or addiction experiences, informants in this study focused on the role of alcohol outlets and sales and marketing in contributing to various forms of social disorder, such as crime, violence, illicit drug use, public intoxication, and nuisances that

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were engulfing their neighborhoods. These themes were interpreted in light of the social conditions faced by inner-city residents in the 1980s and 1990s, including the crack cocaine epidemic, the spectacular rise in youth violence, aggressive new alcoholic beverage marketing campaigns, and the increasing rates of poverty in dilapidated urban centers.

KEY WORDS: *Alcohol policy, social movements, drugs, racial minorities, crime, urban problems.*

The social construction of problems has been recognized as a critical issue in social movement theory. Within the field of alcohol studies, the social constructionist perspective has been used to analyze the history of the temperance and prohibition movements (Levine, 1978); the rise of the alcoholism as a disease movement in the post-prohibition era (Room, 1983); and the crusade against drinking and driving in the 1980s in the United States (Reinarman, 1988). These studies analyzed the shifts in social meanings attributed to alcohol beverage use and to problems within the changing landscapes of social, economic, and political power relationships in American society.

The present study examined the social construction of alcohol problems within the social movement focused on changing alcohol policies in American inner-city neighborhoods in the 1980s and 1990s. This movement, peopled by ethnic minority residents and human service professionals working in social service agencies, law enforcement, and education, sought to change local and regional policies and legislation regarding alcohol sales and marketing in many cities across the United States. Since the 1970s, and most dramatically in the late 1980s and 1990s, these activists voiced open opposition to alcohol outlets, billboards, and alcohol advertising practices in their

communities. They developed local ordinances to limit and regulate alcohol outlets, mobilized networks to eliminate alcohol billboard advertising, and launched campaigns to protest efforts by alcohol and tobacco companies to market products targeted at African Americans in the inner city, especially youth (Harney, 1992; Jernigan & Wright, 1994; Ronningen, 1993).

Collectively, these efforts can be considered a social movement, as defined by Snow, Soule, and Kriesi (2007): “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority” (p. 11). Although falling within this definition, grassroots alcohol-related policy campaigns have been overlooked for the most part by the sizable body of literature focused primarily on such large-scale and well-known initiatives as the labor movement, civil rights movement, women’s movement, and environmentalist movement, among others (Fantasia & Stepan-Norris, 2007; Ferree & Mueller, 2007; Rootes, 2007). One of the central questions for any social movement is how social problems are constructed. As noted by Klandermans (1992), social movement theory and the social constructionist perspective both acknowledge that objective social conditions do not necessarily give rise to perceived social problems or social movements.

The idea that social problems are not objective and identifiable conditions but the outcome of processes of collective definition of the situation is not new. For many years now, students of social problems have argued that social problems are situations that are labeled as problems. . . . Nevertheless, this line of thought never really caught on in social movement literature, presumably because, once resource mobilization captured the field, the idea that grievances could explain political protest became obsolete. . . . Yet we can learn much from scholars in the field of social problems, both in terms of grievance interpretation and in terms of the politicization of grievances. (p. 78)

The present study analyzed how activists interpreted the origins of mobilization around alcohol policy issues within their neighborhoods and communities. Based on the constructionist perspective mentioned above, we assumed the public recogni-

tion of alcohol problems that gave rise to these campaigns did not necessarily stem from health crises or problems specifically related to alcohol consumption. This perspective is particularly significant in light of the history of African Americans' extensive support of the 19th century American alcohol reform movements—support that did not appear to be in response to alcohol problems. The limited data from observers and from Blacks themselves during the antebellum period suggested the problems of drunkenness in this population were no greater or less than those of Whites or American Indians; research and census data in the later part of the century showed that African Americans did not exhibit major problems with intoxication and that deaths from alcoholism were from 3 to 9 times less for Blacks than for White ethnic groups (Herd, 1985a).

The wholehearted participation of African Americans in temperance movements throughout the 19th century was apparently inspired by the close association of these movements with social and political ideology and alliances favoring emancipation and social betterment for enslaved or newly freed Blacks (Herd, 1985a, 1985b). Both the antislavery and temperance movements were aligned with Northern political and economic interests, were drawn from reformist Protestant churches, and shared the same leadership. The central imagery of the pre-Civil War movement was of “alcohol the enslaver,” and leaders such as Fredrick Douglass argued that drinking and intoxication among slaves helped preserve the system of slavery (Herd, 1985a). In keeping with this ideology, free African Americans created a network of temperance organizations and activities that rivaled the larger movement in scope and intensity, particularly for groups of such humble class origins. During the post-Civil War period, African Americans strongly supported temperance reform through Black women's clubs and Protestant churches. Alcohol was seen as a barrier to needed economic and political gains, as well as to upholding proper moral and religious values (Herd, 1985b).

Following changes in the political context of alcohol reform movements, from those associated with Northern liberal poli-

cies toward African Americans, to those associated with repressive Southern campaigns, such as Black political disfranchisement, African American leaders withdrew widespread support for the prohibition movement in the early 20th century. Urbanization and other social changes ushered in a new era in which alcoholic beverage consumption, bootlegging, and nightclubs became culturally acceptable in some sectors (Herd, 1985b). Although religious and informal norms perpetuated some of the abstinence values associated with the 19th century temperance movements, widespread public discourse and support for alcohol reform movements vanished until the latter decades of the 20th century (Herd, 1985a).

The resurgence of public concern about alcohol reform issues in the 1980s and 1990s raises questions about whether there were changes in the social or political context that motivated citizens to engage in social protests regarding alcohol problems at that time. In keeping with the historical legacy, it is possible that recent activism regarding alcohol policy issues developed as an offshoot of the modern civil rights movement and paralleled the concerns expressed in related movements, such as the environmental justice movement (Capek, 1993). Other localized policy research during this period (Wittman, 1980) showed that, in one small community, alcohol outlets were a target of community opposition because they were associated with high levels of violent crime, illegal drug sales and use, and a lack of economic development and service industries in the neighborhood.

The purpose of this article is to understand how activists in the modern alcohol reform movement in inner-city neighborhoods constructed alcohol problems as an issue for collective mobilization. The goal was to determine if activists were responding to what they perceived as an increase or change in alcohol-related problems; to concerns related to social equity (e.g., discrimination or segregation); or to changes or concerns related to other social problems (e.g., drug use or violence). This is an important area for research because practically no existing studies have examined how ethnic minority populations construct alcohol problems,

despite the fact that these groups are perceived as at high risk for such problems. Holmes and Antell's (2001) study of the social construction of American Indian drinking is a notable exception and illustrates that Indians and Whites differ in their interpretation of alcohol abuse. This study showed that while both groups acknowledged the severity of alcohol abuse among Indians, Whites were more likely to view Indian culture as the cause of these problems and to advocate cultural assimilation as a way to address them, whereas Indians favored explanations that focused on outside cultural influences, poverty, and lack of opportunity as causes, and looked to cultural revitalization as a way to solve them.

Data and methods

Data for this study were based on the responses of activists who were interviewed in neighborhoods in seven American cities, including Oakland and Los Angeles, California; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; San Antonio, Texas; Raleigh, North Carolina; Detroit, Michigan; and Baltimore, Maryland. These cities were chosen because they all had least a 5-year history of activism regarding alcohol policy issues (Table 1), were located in different parts of the country, and included activists working on a range of alcohol policy issues. The cities were selected on the basis of interviews with several key informants who had worked extensively on community-based alcohol policy issues, as well as through examining newspaper records of activism regarding alcohol policy in particular sites.

Informants from each site were selected using snowball sampling techniques described by Luker (1984) in her study of prolife and prochoice activists. Potential participants for each area were identified primarily by consulting with community organizers and advocates who had worked with community groups on alcohol policy issues and were familiar with key activists, and by examining newspaper coverage of alcohol policy activities that mentioned community leaders. To be included in the study, each potential informant had to be recommended by at least two people as an individual who could be considered an important leader

TABLE 1 | **Summary of alcohol-related activism in seven inner-city communities**

BALTIMORE

Issues: High prevalence of alcohol-related billboards, and high concentration of alcohol outlets, associated with increased loitering, crime, and violence

Strategies: The Coalition for Beautiful Neighborhoods formed in the late 1980s and organized rallies to protest the presence of junior billboards placed illegally on the sides of houses in residential neighborhoods.

Outcomes: In 1993, the governor signed two bills that banned alcohol beverage billboards from the city of Baltimore and alcohol beverage and tobacco advertisements from the sides of state Mass Transit Authority buses. The industry fought against this ruling, but it was upheld.

DETROIT

Issues: High unemployment rates due to the collapsing auto industry, and an epidemic of crack cocaine use

Strategies: The Coalition Against Billboard Advertisement of Alcohol and Tobacco (CABAAT) was formed in 1988, and the executive board of the City Council Task Force was formed in 1994 to work on issues of substance abuse. In 1996, CABAAT launched the “Denounce the 40-oz.” campaign, aimed at the targeted advertising of malt liquor.

Outcomes: One of the ordinances passed by the Task Force prohibited the display of alcohol-related or substance-related ads on any city property, including city buses. By 2000, the various alcohol-related campaigns in Detroit had largely met with success.

LOS ANGELES

Issues: Oversaturation of alcohol outlets, urban blight, lack of services, lack of political empowerment, and the crack cocaine epidemic

Strategies: In 1990, the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment became the pivotal organization of the alcohol policy movement. There was also grassroots community organizing, the involvement of city council members, and state networking.

Outcomes: Four bills were passed. One restricted new beer and wine licenses, expanded the power of the ABC to impose conditions on alcohol outlets to correct a public nuisance, and increased penalties for violations of the ABC code. A second increased funding for ABC. A third provided that undue overconcentration can be an independent basis for license denial. The fourth established statewide minimum nuisance-related operating standards for alcohol outlets and modified license review procedures to promote local input. Due to community involvement in public hearings, only 59 of the 224 liquor stores destroyed in the civil unrest following the Rodney King verdict applied to rebuild, and 47 were rebuilt with stricter conditions.

MILWAUKEE

Issues: Redlining and blockbusting, as well as prostitution and drug use

Strategies: Grassroots activism focused on prostitution and drug paraphernalia. Project Respect, a community organization, set out to remove alcohol and tobacco billboards citywide.

Outcomes: Although Project Respect's effort resulted in an ordinance being passed, enforcement proved a challenge, and widespread success was not achieved until 1998. Other areas of successful activism included stopping the issuing of new liquor licenses in already saturated areas, stronger enforcement of underage alcohol violations, separation of alcohol from other products in stores, and discontinuing sales of malt liquor.

OAKLAND

Issues: High concentration of alcohol outlets and associated problems (e.g., loitering and deterioration); drug dealing entrenched in the community

Strategies: The Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), a consortium of community groups, worked together against alcohol outlets in the 1980s. In the early 1990s, community groups coalesced around the so-called Deemed Approved ordinance, designed to regulate liquor outlets.

Outcomes: The OCO was able to pass a zoning ordinance that limited the number of outlets in the city. The alcohol industry opposed the Deemed Approved ordinance, but the Supreme Court of California refused to hear the industry's appeal in 1997, thus handing victory to the activists.

RALEIGH

Issues: More concern about violence and drugs than alcohol, with drug activity typically occurring near or within alcohol outlets

Strategies: Residents joined local watch groups, which organized antidrug marches, drug awareness rallies, and neighborhood clean-ups. In the 1990s, Octavia Rainey, chairperson of the College Park/Idlewild Watch Group, shifted the community efforts toward making changes in legislative policy.

Outcomes: By 1999, bills had been passed that regulated liquor licensing, and that required outlets classified as grocery stores to have at least 50% of their sales be food. As a result of their efforts, activists saw some problem outlets shut down.

SAN ANTONIO

Issues: Crime, safety issues, and the preponderance of alcohol and tobacco billboards and other advertising

Strategies: People mobilized around particular leaders, including San Antonio Fighting Back. A task force called the Drinking While Intoxicated (DWI) Saturation Patrol focused on underage drinking, and activists worked with police to reduce sales to minors. Protecting youth and preventing substance abuse was a major strategy. In the 1990s, as part of Bi-Cultural Organization for Leadership Development (BOLD), youth were involved in a campaign to take down alcohol-related billboards and replace them with antialcohol and antitobacco messages.

Outcomes: Community improvements were seen in the areas of outlet density, crime, and drug activity.

regarding alcohol policy work in his or her community. When neighborhood leaders were contacted or interviewed, they were asked if they knew of other people who played an important role in local campaigns regarding alcohol and whom we could contact. We continued the process of asking

for referrals and creating lists of people recommended by at least two sources until we reached the point at which no new names were being submitted. We invited these individuals to participate in the study and followed up by informing them about the study and scheduling interviews. Through working with local leaders who supported the goals of the study, we obtained permission from and completed interviews with most of those invited to participate in the study.

A total of 184 activists were interviewed across the seven sites. The interviews and fieldwork took place from August 1996 through the end of 1999. About 40 activists were interviewed in both Oakland and Los Angeles, 28 in Milwaukee, and 17 to 21 activists each in Raleigh, San Antonio, Detroit, and Baltimore. A little more than a third of the interviewees were classified as community or neighborhood activists. Neighborhood activists usually volunteered their time, in contrast with those described as professionals (41%), who worked with alcohol services for pay in the areas affected by alcohol use and policy, such as law enforcement, education, city planning, and law. One tenth of the interviewees were local or state politicians, 6% were clergy, and 7% were classified in other categories. The majority of leaders interviewed were African American (67%), although Whites (16%) and Latinos (14%) also were significantly represented. Asian Americans (2%) and Native Americans (1%) constituted very small proportions of the sample. A slight majority (52%) of the sample was male; people as young as 20 and as old as 82 were interviewed, and the mean age of interviewees was approximately 50 years.

The informants were interviewed face to face, either in their homes or in public places (e.g., office at a local community organization, informant's workplace, restaurant) using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were tape recorded and generally ranged in length from 1.5 to 2.5 hours. The full interviews were coded using the QSR NUD*IST program (Qualitative Solutions and Research, Non-numerical

Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing). Subsequent detailed content analyses were completed within specific theme areas.

Data for the analyses presented here came from responses to an interview item from a series of questions asked about the history of a recent local alcohol policy-related movement or campaign in the respondents' community. The informants were asked to describe what they thought motivated people to mobilize around alcohol issues in their neighborhood or city at that time. Although informants were asked another question about personal reasons for becoming involved in alcohol policy work, responses to the previous question were analyzed as a way to understand their perceptions of the broader issues or events that lead to collective mobilization efforts. Among the varied types of responses provided to this question (e.g., grievances, resources, and bridging factors), in this article, we have singled out reasons focusing on problems or grievances in order to analyze how alcohol-related issues are constructed within these movements. In a previous paper (Herd & Berman, 2010), we described the broader spectrum of responses to this question to better understand the interplay of resources and grievances in initiating social movements.

Results

The top ranking themes that emerged from the informants' responses about why people mobilized around alcohol policy issues were concerns about alcohol outlets, crime, drugs, public nuisances, and community-level alcohol problems. In addition, informants described problems with alcohol marketing and sales, individual family and youth alcohol-related problems, local issues that spurred mobilization, as well as other community problems (Table 2). Although discrete themes were identified, most of the responses were multilayered and combined a number of overlapping themes. Here we discuss some of the key issues that emerged from the informants' responses.

Alcohol outlets Alcohol outlets were a major focus of activism in some communities, and it is no surprise that many respondents discussed the problems associated with liquor stores as a reason for communities to mobilize. Three aspects of these outlets made them prob-

TABLE 2 **Reasons for mobilizing**

<i>Reason for mobilizing</i>	<i>Percentage (N = 154)</i>
Problems with alcohol outlets	28%
Crime and disorder	27%
Drug problems	25%
Nuisance problems	24%
Public drinking/Community alcohol-related problems	24%
Alcohol marketing/Sales	18%
Individual/Family/Youth alcohol-related problems	18%
Local issues	12%
Lack of community services	6%
General community problems	5%

lematic in the minds of informants. First was the notion that an overconcentration of outlets exists in inner-city, poor, and ethnic-minority communities, especially compared with the concentration in suburban neighborhoods. Respondents commented on the sheer number of these establishments, particularly in environments that lacked other retail amenities. For example, an informant from Milwaukee said people were prompted to mobilize when they realized the number of alcohol outlets was harmful to youth. He pointed out that “a child could go to every single corner and buy a beer or blunt cigarette, with some blocks having two or three establishments in a one-block radius.”

Second, the selling practices in liquor outlets were viewed as problematic. Some of the outlets were known for providing alcoholic beverages or tobacco to minors, or for selling drug paraphernalia and outdated or spoiled food.

Third, a number of respondents characterized alcohol outlets as magnets for crime and neighborhood disorder. These interviewees described the association of the outlets with violence, drug dealing, prostitution, loitering, public drinking, neighborhood blight (urban dilapidation and decay), and intimidation of neighborhood residents. For example, a respondent from Los Angeles, a police officer, said people started to get involved because of blight in the neighborhood caused by outlets and storeowners: "The blight of South Central Los Angeles, if I can really characterize it in 1990, was a wild Wild West time. It's hard to imagine that there was so much disregard for not only the law, but for the safety of children and people." This respondent said store owners had the attitude "I'm just here to make, to have, a business, and I don't care what I affect or who I do." He went on to describe a number of offensive selling practices of store owners: displaying pornographic materials in the window, in view of children; having arcade machines and allowing kids to use them; selling materials not included in their license; allowing people to consume on the premises; and selling gang attire and drug paraphernalia. He pointed out:

One of the places on Normandie and Florence, where the riots began . . . actually fueled the riots. They were selling alcohol through the bar doors to the rioters. After they drank it, they threw the bottles at vehicles going down the street. They were using 'em to go across the street. . . . Fill 'em up with gas so they can make Molotovs out of 'em.

In Milwaukee, an informant stated that people mobilized because:

There were two or three situations where there were killings or other violence connected to taverns in Central City. There were also at least two or three cases where taverns that were known to be really kind of out of control and serious problems in the community, very visible, would get renewals of their license. . . . And there was two or three times when distributors used symbolic advertising to promote alcohol among minority teenagers. And one in particular that stood out because we did some initial work on it, and were successful. They designed the bottle so that the handle of it. . . looked like the shape of a gun. It had the ripples on it, you know, you'd hold the gun tight and it was called the Gripper.

Crime Many of the informants stated that people were motivated to get involved with alcohol policy efforts to address problems with crime, particularly violent crime, in their neighborhoods. For example, one respondent from Raleigh said, “The key issue in the minds of a lotta people in South East Raleigh is not alcohol, it’s shootings. It’s crime.” Although a few informants viewed crime as a standalone issue, most linked crime with alcohol and drug use or drug dealing, or with the presence of alcohol outlets. In Milwaukee, one informant said that community-based organizations got together and began to work on drug and alcohol issues because “gang members had this whole Wells Street just infested with gangs and drug activity.” This respondent stated that gang members were standing on top of buildings “just literally shooting down at one another” and that “YW Villages was the biggest drug houses in the city.” In San Antonio, an informant described a particularly violent and disturbing incident related to alcohol use that prompted people to mobilize. A young man inherited a house from his parents and had many friends and people coming there all the time:

Alcohol ruled the day with those young people. . . . The street was noisy. Many of the neighbors could not even rest at night . . . could not sleep for the noise, the police calls. . . . I don’t know whether it was a year later or maybe some months later . . . murder was the end result in that house. . . . They murdered a man and wrapped him in a big rug or carpet and left him in the garage. . . . It wasn’t until later that the neighbors discerned that foul smell and, my God, it upset the whole neighborhood. . . . And that was alcoholism.

Respondents also discussed the relationship between alcohol outlets and crime. A woman from Los Angeles described instances of shootings and deaths that occurred at a liquor store:

There was a woman whose son had just died right two doors from her house in a shootout there I had witnessed. . . . I was driving home, and the liquor store that was on Main and 89th. . . . You have no idea that gunfire is gonna start. . . . I was just coming home, I was getting ready to turn, and all at once I heard this eck-eck-eck-eck-eck-eck. And in that instant they killed four or five people at that liquor store with that uzi thing. . . . Gang lord or whatever killed. . . . Didn’t kill the owner, killed the young guy working behind the counter . . . killed three people out in front. . . . I mean,

just that quick. It was like a war out there. . . . And we felt very sure that the liquor stores are the magnet for that type of crime.

In Baltimore, an informant stated that if an ordinary man goes into a liquor store to purchase a six pack and “he gotta pull money out of his pocket to pay for this stuff, guys see money coming out of his pocket, so he doesn’t know which of these people has intentions to rob him.” As a result, he said

I can’t even go and buy a beer without being afraid. . . . It’s a very noble thing for Black people to get together along with organizations like the CPHA and say we wanna change things. . . that the Black community don’t want things to stay the way they are. . . . A ghetto don’t start as being ghettos, they become ghettos.

Drugs According to informants, drug problems played a central role in mobilizing communities to action regarding alcohol policy. The 1980s crack epidemic increased the prevalence of substance abuse problems as well drug dealing, crime, and blight. Some activists, particularly those in California, described how responding to neighborhood problems regarding drugs led to community action and the formation of ongoing organizations. One informant from Oakland said, “The people of good will and a majority of the people of Oakland. . . were disgusted and fed up and wanted a better life for themselves and their children.” He indicated that the killing and funeral of the notorious drug dealer, Felix Mitchell, was the key event that motivated the community and eventually led to the establishment of the Oakland Crack Task Force:

A new inspiration came, and I think the seminal event for this response was the incident where the infamous drug dealer was killed after being a notorious drug dealer in East Oakland. He was killed and. . . they had his funeral down East 14th . . . and it was opulent and glorifying, as if he was some kind of a citywide hero . . . and it was just disgusting for me and disgusting for most of the community. So, you know, I complained to Pastor Smith . . . and he said, ‘We need to have a march, but we need to march for righteousness.’ . . . So we went organizing . . . and we had about 10,000, 20,000, in the street that marched for righteousness. . . . And from the spin out of this march . . . we decided to establish the Oakland Crack Task Force.

In Los Angeles in 1990, activists organized a 2-day conference that brought together about 200 people to focus on the impact of crack on the inner city and on strategies for progressive social change. This became the mandate to create the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment that was the pivotal organization in the 1990s alcohol policy movement. One of the respondents from Los Angeles stated that people attended the conference because “the problem was there, it has not gone away, it’s only compounded itself to include the psychedelics and the drugs of choice, along with alcoholism now, so it’s just one big cesspool of substance that permeates the community.” Another activist from Los Angeles emphasized the role of crack prices in starting the Coalition and movement:

So the Coalition came about as a result of the crack prices, not of the alcohol prices. . . . We always knew that there was liquor stores all over the place . . . but it was the crack cocaine that started [the] movement and allowing the community to start saying, ‘I can have some control here’ because the gangs were rampant, the crack was rampant, and there was a liquor store on every corner and [the] community was feeling very disenfranchised, very separated, you know, very under seige. And here was an opportunity for the community to start talking. And for the first time, it was a chance for them to come together and talk with each other. And once they started talking and finding out that they had some power . . . it’s about letting our hope have the knowledge. You gotta transfer the knowledge from those who have it to those who don’t have it . . . to allow them to take control of where they live, to take control of who’s in their community, and give them the same power that the other communities already have.

Parallel strategies appeared in other parts of the country, as indicated by an informant from Milwaukee who stated, “I think people were looking for something to organize around, and cocaine, freebase cocaine, came on the scene, and people started hearing all these things that mothers were doing to their children . . . and that was a catalyst.”

Activists’ concerns focused on two major issues. First, some traced the escalation of social problems in neighborhoods and

with alcohol outlets to the infusion of epidemic levels of cocaine in the 1980s. For example, a respondent from Los Angeles believed the influx of cocaine intensified problems with liquor stores in the community: "Even though liquor stores were always a problem 'cause winos hang around, you never had the sense that winos were dangerous. [But] crack addicts are another story. They would rob their own mother. So the crack heads . . . gave us the issues of liquor stores." Another informant from Los Angeles suggested that liquor stores were a magnet for crime and drug dealing: "The telephone is right there where the drug dealer sells it. He stands there day and night"; in addition, "the liquor store owner keeps a steady clientele of drug users by cashing their checks, providing them drug paraphernalia and processed foods." From a similar perspective, an Oakland activist described a local bar where drug dealing and violence took place, and eventually four people died from using black tar heroin. She stated, "Look at the whole picture of drug dealing, the people that were visiting the bar, the coming and the going, people under the influence, a bartender being shot . . . not being able to walk past the corner. . . . They sold drugs in there."

Other respondents focused on the problems with homeless people and loiterers addicted to both alcohol and drugs, alcohol as the gateway to and substitute for harder drugs, and the problems with violence and crime that were tied to drug dealing and threatened the personal safety of residents. One activist in Raleigh said people mobilized:

'cause they saw the deterioration, the consumption of beer and wine all day long. . . . It makes the community unsafe because of the crime that [is] associated with it [as the drinkers find] ways that they can continue to find money to consume their alcohol addiction and their drug addiction. . . . Alcohol and drugs are to be thrown in there together. The only difference is drugs are illegal.

Another respondent from San Antonio stated:

We saw so many people blocking the streets. . . in the broad daytime. . . . Some of the members of my community might be going

into church on Sunday mornings and they would get so far on Bellinger Street and cannot go any further because of all of these wayward and itinerant people were standing in the street, and most of them were looking dazed and looking strange, either with alcohol or dope. So we knew then that we needed to report on [this] and that's how we got the detectives and of course the area police involved.

Nuisance problems Nuisance problems (e.g., loitering, littering, gambling, public urination, excessive noise) related to public drinking were among the most frequently cited alcohol-specific reasons for mobilizing. Respondents described the nuisances as pervasive and as having an ongoing deleterious effect on community life. An informant from Raleigh stated that many people were offended because drinkers dropped their bottles wherever they drank, “so it’s just litter, litter, litter. Trashy. It was just terrible.” A respondent from Oakland said people got involved because they wanted a better community: “They don’t want drunk people defecating or urinating or throwing up in front of their doors.”

Harassment from drinkers and fears for personal safety were particular concerns voiced by respondents as reasons for neighborhoods to mobilize. One Baltimore community member stated that “people were afraid to even go down to the corner to check on their mailboxes in the evening because the alcoholics were standing around there. They got tired of picking up liquor bottles on their front lawns. It had brought the neighborhood down. They don’t call the police because the drunks just move on and return when the police are gone.” A respondent from Milwaukee said people mobilized out of a general “appreciation on the part of homeowners that there seemed to be a lot more people walking around the streets with bottles and finding them, and having to clean them up for your property every day. I can’t tell you how many bottles I pick up from this property on a weekly basis.” According to this respondent, the general nuisance, drunken arguments, profanity, and decline in civility also contributed to antialcohol mobilization efforts.

Public
drinking and
community
alcohol-
related
problems

Informants discussed the role of public drinking and community alcohol-related problems in mobilizing communities to action. Consuming alcohol in public was often associated with the kinds of nuisances described in previous sections, as well as with addiction, unemployment, and homelessness. One informant from Raleigh said people mobilized because of a number of neighborhood quality-of-life issues, including constant exposure to public drinking:

You know unemployed alcoholic guys who are hanging out in your neighborhood. . . . It's an all-day thing . . . you know, two o'clock in the afternoon, guys are hanging out drinking, drinking Thunderbird or [at] eleven o'clock in the morning. . . . So the effect on the neighborhood is not just at night, it's all day and all night.

Another activist from San Antonio said people became active because of a problem with drug dealing and public drinking that affected neighborhood children:

There was an elementary school in the very near area [neighborhood behind the Sonny Mitchell Village], and the children were passing every day and seeing drug deals going down, and seeing people standing on the street corners drinking alcohol, drinking beer. And it was just a bad situation and a bad image for our young people.

A respondent from Milwaukee described the problems with youth consuming alcohol and drugs in neighborhood areas as a reason people mobilized around alcohol policy issues:

Alcohol and drugs bring big groups of young people standing around in your yard. You can't never get in your house. They'll sit on your steps just like they own it, just like they live there, and then you'll find 'em drunk, laying around in your house and all of that. It's real scary.

In addition to describing problems with public drinking, informants in the study commented that people became active in alcohol policy work because of the impact alcohol problems had on neighborhoods. They emphasized the fact that problems with alcohol often have wide-ranging negative effects on communities, causing a number of social ills and problems

that result in community devastation and deterioration. An informant from San Antonio said what motivated people was activists helping people make:

the connection between alcohol and the devastating impact that it can have. . . . It's true with human nature [to say] if nothing's hurting me, why do I care? We had to change the face of addiction for the broader community, so that they understood that this kinda problem was not just a Black or Brown problem, and that the issues, the strategies, we needed to address that, were critical to every community. . . . Half of the sexual assaults that happened last year to girls under 16 was happening when folks were drinking too much. . . . So, getting them to realize, 'Look, this is your neighbor, what do you think is causing it?'. . . . You keep peeling off the onion, and people get down to some very basic things that are going on in their neighborhood. And they have got to change.

Alcohol sales and marketing problems

Respondents in the study described problems related to the sale and marketing of alcoholic beverages that led people to participate in alcohol policy activities. These problems included the presence of billboards and other kinds of media advertising alcohol and tobacco in inner-city areas and ethnic-minority neighborhoods; targeted marketing tactics that promote alcoholic beverages to vulnerable population groups, such as ethnic minorities, youth, and poor communities; problems with excessive alcohol availability in ethnic communities, particularly fortified beverages and those in large container sizes, such as the 40-ounce size; and the unequal exposure of ethnic minority and poor communities to alcohol-sales venues.

Several communities developed specific antialcohol billboard campaigns, and one informant from Detroit discussed how he became involved in this kind of local action. He described an alcohol billboard for Wild Irish Rose whiskey that was mounted on the side of a church adjacent to a shelter for runaway girls: "The sign had a woman who appeared to be naked, doing a back bend." This respondent photographed the advertisement and surveyed 50 people about why the community accepted this type of behavior. In Milwaukee, an informant stated that people mobilized around billboards because of

their overexposure, compared with the exposure of residents in other areas: “Every time you went around and looked up, you saw a billboard. And we decided to count ’em up one time. And when we counted, we saw the overconcentration of the billboards compared to some of the outlying areas.”

In Baltimore, an informant focused on the targeted marketing of pint-sized alcoholic juice drinks to African Americans:

We just feel it’s just another case of coming to the urban Black communities and exploiting folks. And that’s what pissed people off. . . . We were ready to take it to the streets and boycott the stores that sold it. . . . It was just vile, they just violated our community. So it wasn’t hard to get people motivated around that.

This informant also said people were motivated to address the billboard problem because they were feeling violated and outraged that the billboards were targeted at Black communities.

In Detroit, activists focused on problems with selling 40-ounce size bottles of malt liquor. One informant said they created the “Denounce the 40 Ounce” campaign to address the ever-increasing size of malt liquor bottles:

The enabling factor is the accessibility. . . . It’s relatively inexpensive, which means that the young people, even poor people, they can afford it and they continue to make it affordable. They are increasing the dosage, and that’s where we came up with these all these Denounce the 40 Ounce. Because first it was 20 ounce, now it’s 40 ounce and 64 ounce. . . . And now we understand that frankly they are planning a 125 ounce. . . . And all of that is enabling the youths. . . . In one sitting, you’re supposed to consume [it].

Informants in the study contrasted the alcohol-related problems in inner cities with those in the suburbs, and their relative role as reasons to mobilize. A respondent from Los Angeles said, “People [in our community] had been living with the problems for a long time—middle-aged people with jobs, homes, and they were putting up with needles and used condoms on their front lawns—things that wouldn’t be tolerated in Beverly Hills.” For others, the comparison focused on

overexposure to alcohol outlets or advertising, compared with the exposure in other communities. A respondent from Milwaukee said one of the reasons people mobilized was because of “the proliferation and the problems resulting from alcohol, especially in the inner city. . . . We don’t have as many outlets in the suburbs, or as many problems as a result of that. We wanted to try to make things less intense as far as liquor [is concerned].” Echoing this perspective, a respondent from Raleigh said:

If you go to North Raleigh, which is . . . kind of our ‘nice’ part of town, you do not see this proliferation of outlets. . . . In the poorer parts of our town, and this is just as true in the Black part of town as . . . what’s considered . . . the White part of town. The poor sections have lots of ABC permits [state Alcohol Beverage Control licenses to sell distilled liquors] being permitted. In heavy densities, too. I mean, lots of permits in little areas. What does that bring with it? The City of Durham recently did a study as well as the City of Charlotte did a study of violent crime in relation to ABC permits, and they found that the vast majority of crime, of violent crime, was occurring . . . within a certain radius of the ABC establishments.

Individual,
family, and
youth alcohol-
related
problems

Informants discussed problem-drinking experiences that influenced mobilization regarding alcohol policies. For adults, these mainly consisted of references to alcoholism or problem drinking and driving under the influence. For example, one informant from Oakland mentioned that his own addiction made him conscious of alcohol-related issues, although murders linked to alcohol use really motivated people. A respondent from Milwaukee pointed out that some people drink as a coping mechanism, and was careful not to judge drinkers because “it’s just the conditions which we live under.” Respondents also mentioned youth drinking and alcohol-related problems and family alcohol problems, such as domestic violence.

Combining the themes of drinking and driving and youth alcohol-related issues, an informant from San Antonio stated that people mobilized when two major accidents affected the community:

Well, we had a couple of really egregious accidents. One that was a few years ago was a young man who was a good guy, worked hard, helped his family. And he had been married and divorced, and his first wife had left him with their 4-month-old baby, which he pretty much raised himself. She was about 5, and he was about to be remarried. And there was a horrible rainstorm in the middle of the afternoon, and this man and his little girl were driving, and they saw a car with a flat tire and a woman by it in the rain. And even though he passed it, he got off the expressway and came back around and went up to help her change the tire, just because he was that kind of guy. And a drunk driver, in the middle of the afternoon, came along and hit him so hard he decapitated his body right in front of his daughter. And that really mobilized a lot of people in the community. About the same time, a couple of high school students died. Those kinds of things were what really got the public's attention. Just recently, in the past year, we had a drunk driver in the middle of the day run off the side of the road into a construction site, where a road crew was working, and kill a father and son. So that, as horrible as those things have been, that's what it took to get some public attention. In many areas, particularly in rural areas, there are just no checks on alcohol use. It's real easy for kids to obtain alcohol, and there aren't a lot of negative consequences even if they're caught in possession of it.

Aside from the topics described thus far, informants mentioned local issues that spurred activism around alcohol policy issues. Most of the issues referred to particularly gruesome crimes or the drinking and the driving accidents described in previous sections, and alcohol outlets that were especially problematic. However, in Los Angeles, several respondents mentioned the civil unrest that occurred in the wake of the Rodney King trial decision in 1992. During this period, a number of alcohol outlets were severely damaged or destroyed, and 270 surrendered their licenses. Due to community activism, many did not reopen.

Some informants also mentioned that mobilization occurred in their communities in response to the lack of city services and amenities, such as lack of youth centers or police services, and general social problems within their neighborhoods.

Discussion

As described in the previous sections, activists interviewed in this study expressed many concerns about the role of alcohol outlets in neighborhoods as magnets for social ills; the debilitating effects of crime, drugs, and alcohol consumption on community life; the plethora of nuisances associated with alcohol and drug use; and social inequities in the marketing of alcohol in inner city areas and to vulnerable population groups. As such, a much broader range of complaints were expressed in this study, compared with the range of concerns about alcohol problems associated with other alcohol-related movements. For example, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) focused on the comparatively narrow issue of increasing criminal and legislative sanctions to penalize drunk drivers. Renairman's (1988) analysis described how that movement came to prominence because of the persuasive appeal of the outraged mothers who led the movement, its resonance with the conservative Republican political context ethos of law and order, and with the alcohol beverage industry's focus on the deviance of individual drinkers and not on potential harm from consuming the product itself. In contrast with the suburban base and values represented by MADD, the perspectives espoused by inner-city activists in the present study articulated the problems experienced by citizens who felt trapped in decaying inner-city environments during a period of rising crime rates, the appearance of the crack cocaine epidemic, and new forms of alcohol advertising and marketing campaigns directed at young African American males.

The concern with crime and violence reflected in informants' responses is paralleled by the upsurge in violent crime statistics for this period. Violent crime rates in the United States rose substantially from the 1980s through the early 1990s. An analysis of violent crime rates from 1979 through 1997 found an increase of 32% in violent crime until 1991 (Gould, Weinberg, & Mustard, 2002, p. 47). Among youth, a surge of violent crime started in the mid 1980s and continued through 1993; according to Cook and Laub (1998, p.28):

The increase was concentrated among black males: between 1984 and 1993, the homicide-victimization rate more than tripled for thirteen to seventeen year old adolescents, and the homicide-commission rate increased by a factor of 4.5, reaching levels with no precedent in this century.

Cook and Laub pointed out that the leading explanation for the upsurge in youth violence was the introduction of crack cocaine and the conflicts surrounding selling and distributing these drugs. Young African American males were the primary purveyors of crack in most cities, and therefore were on the front lines in battles over territory and control. Cook and Laub also argued that the crack trade introduced new patterns of gun carrying, interpersonal aggression, and gang membership that perpetuated violence even after the height of the crack trade ebbed:

For many youths, the response to the increased threat of violence [in the drug trade] was to carry a gun or join a gang for self-protection, while adopting a more aggressive interpersonal style). Guns are of central importance in this account. The drug trade has provided dealers with the financial means and the incentive, as well as the connections, that facilitate their access to black-market sources of guns. The same fears that promote gun acquisition have also encouraged street youths to carry their guns when they go out in public. Since guns are a more deadly instrument than knives or fists and relatively easy to use, the result has been an increased lethality or intensification of violence among youths. This problem has been further exacerbated by a change in the mix of guns on the street, with an infusion of large-calibre pistols replacing revolvers). After the drug wars quieted, the guns and the fear remained, and so did the killing. (p. 54)

Kelley (1992) described the police brutality and criminalization of Black youth that helped fuel violence in some communities. He reported that scenes of police brutality reminiscent of what occurred following the Rodney King trial were well known to Los Angeles residents, as were countless other experiences, such as the killing of Eula Love (who was shot to death by police in a conflict over a \$22 gas bill in 1979); “fifteen deaths caused by LAPD choke holds” (p. 118); and

Operation HAMMER, in which almost 1,500 Black youth were picked up for merely looking “suspicious” (p. 131).

As indicated in previous sections, the crack cocaine epidemic was implicated in the wave of violence engulfing communities during this period. In addition to violence, the crack epidemic compounded the health and social problems experienced in inner-city communities. Crack, a freebase form of cocaine known for its highly addictive qualities, became cheaply and widely available in America’s inner communities in the 1980s. Although cocaine use peaked in 1985, the level of crack abusers remained extremely high throughout the 1990s. National household studies indicated that African Americans and Latinos had higher rates of cocaine use (1.3% and 1.1%, respectively), compared with the rates of Whites, who used at a rate of .05% (Cornish & O’Brien, 1996). However, rates in inner-city neighborhoods probably were much higher, as indicated by arrests statistics in the 1980s:

The Drug Forecasting System shows that 83% of arrestees tested positive for cocaine at arrest in Manhattan, about 65% in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C, and over 50% in Chicago, Dallas, Houston, New Orleans, and Birmingham. (p. 16)

According to Cornish and O’Brien, crack use was associated with increased rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including syphilis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), due to engaging in high-risk sexual practices, such as unprotected sex work in exchange for drugs. Johnson, Williams, Dei, and Sanabria (1990) pointed out that drug dealing in inner cities threatened the safety of these neighborhoods and that drug abuse had contributed to the economic decline of most users and sellers, as well as to “an environment of poor health and risk of death at an early age, and a weakening of family relationships” (p. 9).

During the same period that crack use rapidly expanded in America’s inner cities, alcohol advertising targeted to African American audiences dramatically increased. Alaniz and

Wilkes (1998) pointed out that after the 1970s, advertisers discovered the buying power of ethnic minorities and began to actively court these audiences through segmented marketing practices effective at reaching diverse elements of the population, based on characteristics such as gender, age, race, and geography. The alcohol industry in particular developed highly visible campaigns, starting in the 1970s. A critical feature of the new campaigns was the use of ethnic-specific communication channels, actors, organizations, and cultural symbols. Alaniz and Wilkes stated, "Corporations found that their advertising dollars could go farther, longer and deeper through a more direct infusion strategy into the organizations, streets, and celebrations of ethnic minority communities" (p. 449). In addition, as a result of pressure during the civil rights era, more ethnic minorities were hired into corporate sectors in the alcohol industry, and placed more attention on advertising within their constituent communities, based on sales potential.

The new focus on ethnic minorities, particularly African American youth, resulted not only in the use of culturally tailored advertising, but in the promotion of specific kinds of products, sized, priced, and packaged for widespread and easy distribution in inner-city neighborhoods. The development of very large single servings of malt liquor (e.g., 40 ounce), priced sometimes as cheaply as \$1.00, promoted through the use of rap music artists, is an example of this kind of approach. Herd (1993, p.746) stated:

One of the most prominent and controversial marketing campaigns over the period of this study used rap singers to promote St. Ides, a malt liquor that boasts the highest alcohol content of any mass produced beer (8.0% by volume). Well-known rap groups and individual performers such as EPMD, Geto Boys, Ice Cube and YoYo aired a number of radio and television ads, some of which associate alcohol with explicitly sexual and violent themes. For example, a rap commercial aired on MTV by Ice Cube asserted that St. Ides "Gets your girl in the mood quicker" and "Gets your Jimmy [penis] thicker." Another commercial asserted that St. Ides makes the drinker "Bold like Smith and Wesson (a major firearm manufacturer and maker of the famous .357 Magnum and the .38 special guns) and "Sharp as a blade."

In addition to being promoted through direct advertisements, St. Ides was extensively used in John Singleton's "Boyz in the Hood," a coming-of-age film about Black adolescents in South Central Los Angeles. The film's star, Ice Cube, a well-known rap artist, is constantly seen drinking and carrying 40-ounce bottles of St. Ides. After the movie debuted:

Liquor store owners reported such brisk sales of St. Ides that shelves of the malt liquor were completely emptied. The Los Angeles distributor of St. Ides stated that he was forced to ration the stock, since demand for the product rapidly outpaced normal supplies. (Herd, 1993, p. 747)

Other examples of malt liquors targeted specifically at Black consumers included Powermaster, the Cobra, and Old English 800.

Other research indicates that inner-city communities of this period had higher rates of alcohol and tobacco advertising on billboards and through the proliferation of alcohol outlets in these neighborhoods than did other communities (Alaniz & Wilkes, 1998; Altman, Schooler, & Basil, 1991). For example, Altman et al. showed that in San Francisco, African American neighborhoods had the highest rate of billboards per 1,000 population; that these neighborhoods had proportionately more tobacco and alcohol billboards than did White or Asian neighborhoods; and that African American neighborhoods were more likely to have billboards advertising malt liquor.

Against the backdrop of increasing levels of violence, the crack epidemic, and new aggressive marketing campaigns for alcoholic beverages was a rise in poverty and an overall decline and deterioration of inner-city neighborhoods during the 1980s. Wacquant and Wilson (1989) argued that urban conditions during this period were at a crisis level because "joblessness and economic exclusion" had reached "dramatic proportions" and triggered a process of "hyperghettoization" (p. 9). They pointed out that urban Blacks during this era differed from those of previous years and from poor Whites because they had become increasingly concentrated in dilapidated urban areas suffering

from extreme social and economic marginalization. Their analysis showed that, in Chicago, the level of impoverished Blacks residing in extreme poverty areas increased from 24% to 47% from 1970 to 1980, and that similar patterns were evident throughout the nation: "By this date, a full 38% of all poor blacks in the 10 largest American cities lived in extreme poverty tracts, contrasted with 22% a decade before, and with only 6% of poor non-Hispanic whites" (p. 10).

Sassen's (1990) review of nationwide trends drew similar conclusions. His analyses showed that the concentration of poverty in large cities had increased and that the racial gap in poverty levels expanded considerably:

Controlling for race we can see increasing differentials between whites and blacks as of 1969, with the urban poverty rate of blacks reaching a level triple that of whites in 1986; median income of black families in the cities has lost ground relative to that of blacks in the suburbs and to whites generally, and the concentration of blacks in large cities has increased while that of whites has decreased. (p. 482)

This study also showed that major urban cities experienced net job losses, ranging from 46,480 in Boston to 104,860 in Detroit, while suburban areas registered net gains (p. 482). The loss of jobs and economic standing among residents in these areas was accompanied not only by the physical decline of neighborhoods, but also by the undermining of social solidarity and social control and by the influx of drugs and criminal activity (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989).

Within this social context, the activists in the present study defined alcohol problems as part of the equation linking crime and drugs with social disorder and the breakdown of community life. As described previously, these informants were vocal about the negative role of alcohol outlets in neighborhoods as magnets for social ills, the debilitating effect of crime and drugs and public drinking on neighborhood life, the proliferation of public nuisances associated with alcohol and drug use, and social inequity in marketing and selling alcoholic beverages.

In contrast to other ways of framing alcohol problems that focus on individual experiences of problem drinking or addiction (Reinarman, 1988; Room, 1983), respondents in this study were primarily concerned with what they perceived as the damaging effects of alcohol use and sales that occur within the public sphere of everyday neighborhood life (e.g., the constant presence of intoxicated or drugged men and women standing on corners or wandering the streets; drinking alcoholic beverages from open containers; and using the streets as toilets and trash receptacles in view of children, the elderly, and churchgoers). Undoubtedly, an underlying source of friction for activists in the study, and for neighborhood residents, is the relative lack of separation between the commercial context for selling and consuming alcoholic beverages and the environment of residential areas. Concerns about the spillover of nuisances (e.g., noise, litter, and loiterers) into local neighborhoods and their effect on neighborhood esthetics, quality of life, and property values arose from the lack of spatial or structural buffers for selling and drinking alcohol and related behavior. Hence, respondents made references to the problems caused by open-air bars in neighborhoods where residents were trying to keep up property values and provide safe and attractive places for children to play.

However, one of the strongest themes to emerge in the study was the construction of the alcohol problem as an integral part of the escalating waves of violence and of the crack cocaine epidemic that engulfed these communities. Alcohol outlets, which were generally viewed as benign or moderately problematic before the crack epidemic, became interpreted as magnets for violence, crime, and social disorder. Liquor stores appeared to be at the epicenter of neighborhood crime waves, with homicides occurring on and surrounding the premises, as well as other illegal activities (e.g., sales of drugs and drug paraphernalia, and prostitution). The violence surrounding drug sales and use created an aura of constant danger and the erosion of ordinary mechanisms of social control in the minds of residents and activists.

Finally, the escalation of alcoholic beverage marketing, especially in the form of high-octane beverages, embedded in gang culture mythology appeared to add fuel to the fire, both in terms of increasing the level of visible intoxication along with drug use, and in terms of increasing violence levels because of the disinhibiting effects of alcohol. In addition, the disproportionate burden minority communities bore in terms of the distribution of alcohol outlets and billboard advertising was viewed as evidence of social inequity, which was heightened by the lack of alternative businesses and services.

The funneling of these concerns led activists to define social ills in terms of problems associated with alcohol sales and marketing. In the minds of activists, working to decrease or limit alcohol sales and promotion venues provided a policy lever to reduce neighborhood centers of crime and drug dealing; reduce nuisance behaviors and problems of social order related to public drinking; shield neighborhoods and residences from risky commercial enterprises; and assert claims for equal protection in exposure to environmental blight and hazards (e.g., excessive billboards and liquor stores).

The construction of alcohol problems by these activists provides a sharp contrast to how alcohol problems were framed by MADD, a social movement that came to prominence 8 to 10 years before alcohol-related activism in inner-city neighborhoods peaked. MADD was preoccupied with attacks on drunk drivers and on calling attention to drinking and driving as “America’s most frequently committed violent crime” and the “only socially acceptable form of homicide” (Reinarman, 1988, p. 105). Drunk driving was interpreted solely in terms of individual deviance and responsibility, without considering the impact of environmental or corporate concerns that affect alcohol promotion, availability, and consumption. The policies advocated by MADD sought to punish drunk drivers, but advocated self-regulation of the alcohol, advertising, and broadcast industries. Reinarman traced this focus to the victim’s-rights orientation of the movement, its compatibility with the

law and order campaign of the Nixon administration, and the policies and ideology of Ronald Reagan and the New Right.

The strong divergence in the social construction of alcohol problems by activists in this study, compared with the construction favored by MADD members, exemplifies the differences in the social context of these groups and in their social position within American society. The suburban, largely middle-class and White constituency of MADD gave birth to a movement in which alcohol problems were narrowly defined and individually focused; in contrast, inner-city groups beset with the problems of urban blight, poverty, violence, drugs, crime, and corporate marketing aimed at minorities defined alcohol problems in much broader terms, with a specific focus on environmental solutions that target corporate and business interests.

The findings from this study affirm the importance of analyzing the social construction of problems within social movements, and illustrate how the social context helps shape the interpretation and response to social and health problems. They also provide insight into the construction of these problems among inner city and minority groups, who have had little voice in creating the dominant frameworks for addressing alcohol problems, which like those used in other health-promotion efforts, focus on changing individual lifestyles (Tesh, 1988).

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