

Wheeling and Dealing: An Ethnography of an Upper-Level Drug Dealing and Smuggling Community. Patricia A. Adler. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Pp. xi + 175 (index, bibliography). \$25.00 (hardcover).

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This fascinating exercise in existential sociology appears to us at an interesting moment in the history of our own discipline. Anthropologists are currently rewriting their professional code of ethics to insure its compatibility with the realities of our contemporary marketplace. We are becoming more disposed to "studying up," and to conducting inquiries in our own back yards. Our motivations for investigating human behavior, our selection of methods, and the ends toward which our research might be directed are becoming perennial foci of conference sessions and post-session gatherings. Each of these issues resounds in Adler's volume, making it an especially topical contribution to the anthropology of work.

The book describes a six year participant observation field study, set in a sunbelt county of the southwestern United States, of an elite drug dealing and smuggling community. The research was conducted by a wife and husband team of sociologists concerned with exploring the subjective understanding of behavior motivated by brute feelings, drives and emotions. Much to her credit, the author discusses in some detail her field methods and theoretical biases, thereby assisting the reader in arriving at an informed judgment of the study. The insights we are given into the researchers' own motives and behaviors surrounding the issue of deviance is as valuable as the ethnography of the deviant group itself. The interaction between field worker and informant, a rich source of insight far too infrequently tapped, is available for the reader's inspection.

Substantively, the author examines smuggling and dealing along a number of dimensions. The work process itself is effectively described in terms of

division of labor. The social structure and lifestyles of the community are examined. Career paths are explored quite thoroughly, from recruitment through retirement, with some interesting discussion of re-entry into deviant occupations. Socialization issues (ranging from drug argot to observations of precocious children) are treated as well. Examinations of the "dealing personality," of the relative business acumen of particular informants, of strategies employed by informants to avoid legal entanglements and of domestic relationships among informants are competently undertaken. Perhaps the major contribution of the book is its analysis of the illicit market structure, its regulatory mechanisms and its social structural implications.

Methodologically, the author initiates the reader into the practical and ethical dilemmas inherent in deviance research. From its serendipitous origins in casual interaction with a neighbor, to its ultimately focused and systematic regimen, Adler's field investigation illustrates the combination of trust, skill, opportunism, personal compromise and luck involved in bringing studies of deviance to fruition. The social identity of the author's key informant shifted from friend, to drug supplier to cultural broker as the study emerged. Through a combination of self-disclosure, carefully nurtured exchange relationships, calculated use of compliance techniques and earned good will, the author was permitted access to highly restricted venues, and allowed to tape record interviews with a number of critical actors. The conversion from covert to overt research role, (but not its attendant ethical difficulties) is sensibly discussed. In part through her own illicit drug use, and her willingness to work in so-called legitimate businesses owned by dealers, the author was able to achieve the status of privileged outsider, and provide us with what might otherwise have been an unattainable ethnography. Having once secured access, the author employed the standard ethnographic tools of anthropology and qualitative sociology to achieve her goals.



While the author provides both organizational and occupational perspectives of drug trafficking, she favors a hedonistic viewpoint as an interpretive vehicle. Hedonism and materialism drive the drug subculture. Adler's informants reject conventional society and embrace a subculture of hedonism more suited to their existential brute beings. This rejection is fueled in part by the stifling of the creative character of contemporary work roles. Deviant careers allow Adler's informants to indulge their primal feelings, and to negate mainstream society's normative edict that materialism is tied to rationalism. They construct a life which serves as an escape from routinization and repression.

The book is a valuable contribution to the literature of deviance and work. It is concise, it has an enjoyable prose style and is very well organized. Its emphasis on hedonic production and consumption is novel and important, if not satisfactorily articulated with existing treatments in expressive culture. My primary objection to the author's effort is her failure to address the personal and social impact of this type of illicit marketing upon consumer behavior. The consequences of dealing, and of the author's partial underwriting of these consequences, beyond the subculture itself are nowhere considered. Of lesser consequence, but more surprising, is the author's disinterest in proselytizing for her viewpoint by examining hedonism and the existential self at work in conventional society. It is likely that those of us who are professional researchers are driven every bit as much by hedonic impulse (albeit in a different key) as those whose careers are more traditionally deviant. This book could be used quite effectively as a supplementary text in courses on the anthropology of work, American communities and problems or deviance. It would also prove useful in courses devoted to expressive culture, leisure or play.