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ALCOHOL AND YOUTH

An Analysis of the Literature

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Chapter VII

Juvenile Delinquents

Introduction

Juvenile delinquents are another subgroup of the youth population whose drinking habits have been a topic for research. Some studies present drinking data for an entire sample of delinquents, while others focus on the drinking habits and characteristics of only that subgroup of delinquents who drink or display signs of problem drinking. In addition, studies of the characteristics and drinking patterns of teenagers arrested for drunkenness who may be considered to have a drinking problem have been conducted. Special groups such as jail inmates, delinquents involved in a drug education and rehabilitation program, and male undergraduates arrested for alcohol-related offenses have also been studied. The foreign literature is dominated by Swedish studies of teenagers arrested for drunkenness, but limited data from England, Germany and Austria concerning drinking habits of delinquents are also available. The major topics covered in both the American and foreign studies include drinking prevalence and frequency, signs of drinking problems, the circumstances surrounding the first drink, the context of drinking, the occurrence of drunkenness and alcohol-related arrests, relapse of arrests for drunkenness, attitudes toward drinking, and social and psychological characteristics. Data on juvenile delinquents are usually obtained from surveys of youth residing in detention homes and rehabilitation centers, or from court, police, and other agency records.

Patterns of Use

Data from self-report surveys concerning the current drinking practices of samples containing both non-drinking and drinking delinquents indicate

that alcohol use is somewhat more prevalent and more excessive among delinquents than among non-delinquent high school students. Figures on exposure to alcohol (percentage having had a drink at least once) for samples of delinquents range from lows of 84% among a group of 104 delinquent girls in Massachusetts (B459) and 86% for a group of 131 boys and 31 girls in New Hampshire (B262) to a high of 98% for 64 boys and 53 girls in Wyoming (B70). Other studies report that percentages of male and female subjects ever having had a drink are in the 90's (B301, 319).

Rates of current use of alcohol among most samples of juvenile delinquents are also high, although in some cases close to rates found among non-delinquent youth. Pearce and Garrett (B319), Nelson (B301), and Phillips and MacKay, Bryce (B262) found the highest current rates - 91%, 90%, and 82%, respectively. Rates of use more typical of the general teen-age population are 61% reported for in-school delinquent youth and 67% for delinquent dropouts for beer use only (D134), 64% for 500 male delinquents, the majority of whom were Catholic and aged 15 (B29, 260), 72% for a small group of 54 male delinquents (B368), and 75% for an all-female group with a mean age of 14.5 (B459).

A few studies have reported less use of alcohol by delinquents than is typical of high school samples. In a study of 190 boys and 61 girls (mean age=15) in Idaho (D80), only 31% were classified as drinkers on the basis of information obtained during an intake interview and from other records. Drinking was much more prevalent among the girls (56%) than among the boys (23%), and less than 1% (all boys) were classified as heavy drinkers. In a study of 157 white and 111 black male and female juvenile offenders discharged from juvenile courts in South Carolina in which counselors estimated the juveniles' rates of use, only 39% of the blacks

and 58% of the whites were classified as drinkers (B401). Similarly, only 49% of a group of 35 delinquents in a drug education and rehabilitation program in Maryland used alcoholic beverages (B88). However, among this group, other drugs were preferred. Edmundson, Davies, Acker, and Byer (B92) interviewed 429 inmates of the Dade County, Florida jail in 1970 and found low rates of use among whites but more typical rates for blacks. Fourteen percent of the 16- to 20-year-old whites used alcohol only, and an additional 33% used both marijuana and alcohol. Comparable figures for blacks were 16% and 60%.

Colasuonno (F25) concludes on the basis of a review of the literature that some studies have found that drinking patterns of delinquents do not differ from those of high school males in urban areas. Further, he notes the typical finding that the delinquents themselves do not perceive their drinking to be a problem or to be related to delinquent behavior, indicating that alcohol use is at least perceived similarly by both delinquent and non-delinquent drinkers.

In addition to rates of use, several other aspects of current drinking among delinquents have been studied. The results of those studies which report on the context of current drinking indicate that most drinking takes place with friends away from home (B262, 319). MacKay et al. (B262) found that the most popular reasons for drinking were because friends drink (51%), taste (50%), "to feel better when sad" (46%), and because of being angry (45%). Three studies found that the majority of delinquents approved of drinking (B301, 319, 459), while another (B262) found that only 23% thought drinking was "all right," with an additional 35% approving of drinking on certain occasions.

Initial Use

Initial use of alcohol occurs at the same time or somewhat earlier among delinquent groups than among high school samples. The average age at first drink among the delinquent girls studied by Widseth and Mayer (B459) and the boys and girls surveyed by MacKay et al. (B262) was 13. Auwaerter (E5) reports that "a considerable number of boys" in his sample of 500 began drinking by the age of 14. However, Nelson (B301) found that the average age at first drink was 11.3 for boys and 12.6 for girls. These figures compare with an average age at first drink of 13.4 years for non-delinquent youth (based on 25 studies; see Chapter II).

Those studies which report on the context of the first drink have found that the delinquent's first drinking experience usually takes place away from home and with friends (B262, 319, 459; D90). A tendency for delinquents to get drunk or high on the first drink (B262) and to drink again shortly after the first drinking experience (B262, 319) has also been reported. The usual beverage of choice for the first drinking occasion has been found to be beer (B262, 459).

Signs of Problem Drinking

Drunkenness has been experienced at least once by over two-thirds of several groups of delinquents studied (B70, 262, 459) and by 48% of the drinkers in the group surveyed by Blacker, Demone and Freeman (B29). Cockerham (B70) reports that almost one-half of his sample had gotten drunk more than ten times in the year preceding the survey. These figures indicate that drunkenness is much more prevalent among delinquents than among non-delinquent youth. The average percentage of non-delinquent youth experiencing drunkenness, based on studies conducted from 1945 to 1965, is 22%, and the average drunkenness rate based on studies conducted from 1966 to 1975

is 45% (see Chapter II). Other signs of problem drinking have also been reported for delinquents. Figures for arrests for drinking range from 7% (B459) to between 27% and 39% (B70, 262, 319; E5). Other pathological signs such as passing out or getting sick as a consequence of drinking, committing crimes or fighting while drinking, blackouts and drinking before breakfast have been noted. Cockerham (B70) reports that 50% of his sample had gotten into trouble with parents over drinking. Over one-third of the delinquents in two samples (B262, 319) had passed out from drinking. A majority of the delinquents surveyed by MacKay et al. (B262) had drunk alone, whenever they got the chance, and before a party, and had gotten involved in a fight while drinking; over one-third had drunk before or instead of breakfast and had experienced blackouts.

Several studies have been more directly concerned with the relationship between alcohol use and crime among adolescents. For example, 27% of Auwaerter's (E5) group had been drinking when they committed the offense for which they were sent to the Youth Authority. Forty-three percent of the delinquents studied by Pearce and Garrett (B319) had committed crimes while drinking.

Drinking practices of 130 older male adolescents (mean age for both groups=18.5) convicted of assaultive and non-assaultive crimes in California were studied in 1971 (B422). Alcohol was the substance of choice among these youth and had been used at least once by 98% of assaultive (n=50) and 99% of non-assaultive (n=80) subjects. Thirty percent of all assaults and 47% of the assaults committed while the assailant was under the influence of a drug occurred while the subject was under the influence of alcohol alone. Alcohol and secobarbital alone or in combination with other drugs were most often implicated in assaultive crimes. However, the subjects chose secobarbital overwhelmingly as the drug most likely to enhance assaultiveness.

Tinklenberg and Woodrow (A112) also interviewed 22 sexual offenders from the same group. Alcohol had been used at least once by 100% of these subjects. Subjects reported having been under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime in 32% of all 28 sexual offenses committed. These two studies corroborate popular conceptions of the link between alcohol use and youthful violence such as occurs among street gangs (E90).

Classifications of delinquent drinkers on the basis of the extent of pathological symptoms exhibited have been presented in several studies. MacKay (B260) used responses to 11 questions concerning drinking behavior (e.g., "About how many times have you become drunk?", "Do you drink alone?", "Have you ever done anything while drinking that you would not ordinarily do?") to categorize the drinkers in his sample as 41% mild or moderate drinkers, 13% heavy drinkers, and 10% addictive drinkers. Blacker et al. (B29) re-categorized the same group on the basis of ratings of frequency of drinking, pathological behavior (e.g., blackouts, arrest), effect of drinking (e.g., drunkenness, passing out), and pathological attitude (e.g., worrying about drinking, perceiving drinking as a problem). With these criteria, 34% were moderate social drinkers, 13% heavy social drinkers, 9% relief or kick drinkers, and 7% pathological drinkers.

MacKay (B260) and MacKay, Murray, Hagerty, and Collins (B261) classified another sample of 122 male and female delinquents using the 11 questions about drinking behavior. Sixteen percent of this group were categorized as addictive drinkers. Auwaerter (E5) also classified his sample of 500 boys using MacKay's criteria and found higher rates of problem use. In this group, 25% were abstainers or mild drinkers, 32% were moderate drinkers, 18% were heavy drinkers, and 25% were addictive drinkers.

Using the typology developed by Blacker et al. (B29), Widseth and Mayer (B459) found that the modal drinking category for their sample of delinquent girls was relief or kick drinking, characterized by occasional or frequent drinking with many effects such as drunkenness, but with few pathological behaviors or attitudes present. Thirteen percent of the girls were classified as pathological drinkers, 14% were heavy social drinkers, and 16% were moderate social drinkers. The girls in this sample who did not drink (16%) were characterized by more involvement with their families, negative attitudes toward drinking (often based on religion) and less dating. The heavy drinking girls had looser ties to home, greater hostility, were less likely to have had their first drink at home, and were more likely to not want to be like their mothers.

Barry, Barry and Blane (B19) classified 80 delinquent boys aged 14 to 16 according to their degree of alcohol involvement, based on such factors as pathological behavior, frequency of drinking, and drunkenness. Twenty-five percent had minimal involvement, 20% were moderately involved, 35% had marked involvement (excessive drinkers who became drunk two or three times a week or exhibited unusual behavior while drinking), and 20% were episodic drinkers who alternated between periods of marked involvement and periods of minimal consumption. A subsample of 74 boys included 26% with minimal involvement, 22% with moderate involvement, 20% with marked but episodic involvement and 32% with marked involvement (B32).

Comparisons between High School Students and Delinquents

Some of the studies on delinquents sampled both a delinquent and a non-delinquent population and compared the results. All of these studies found that more of the delinquents than the non-delinquents drank (B70, 262,

301, 319, 368, 459; D4, 134), although percentage differences between the two groups ranged from 7% (B70) to 37% (B319) for use ever. It has also been reported that delinquents drink more frequently (B301, 319, 368, 459; D4, 90) and experience drunkenness more frequently (B70, 262, 368, 459). Several studies found that delinquents began drinking at an earlier age than non-delinquents (B301, 319), although MacKay et al. (B262) found that delinquents began drinking later than junior and senior high school students. In all studies involving both delinquent and non-delinquent samples in which pathological drinking behaviors were studied, delinquents were characterized by higher rates of such problem signs as blackouts, arrests for drinking, drinking alone, and aggressive behavior while drinking (B70, 262, 319, 368, 459).

General population surveys which include delinquent behavior as a variable also provide support for a relationship between excessive and problem drinking and delinquency. In a study of 13,700 junior and senior high school students, Wechsler and Thum (A117; B445) found that heavy drinking and delinquent behavior were related. Over half of those who had used liquor five or more times and had been drunk during the preceding year had shoplifted or stolen during the year. Over one-third had been in trouble with the police and damaged property. Johnston (A59) also found a relationship between high incidence of self-reported delinquent behaviors and a high incidence of alcohol use and "regular" drinking (once a week to nearly every day). Fifty-four percent of those rated high on delinquency, in comparison to 13% of those rated low, were regular drinkers. In their study of 75 adolescent girls and 104 boys who used alcohol, Zucker and Devoe (A121) found a strong association between antisocial behavior and measures of both problem drinking and quantity and frequency of alcohol

consumption. The strongest association found was between problem drinking and non-alcohol-related antisocial behavior. Demone (C14) found greater drinking among 423 white delinquents in his sample of 3,376 male adolescents than among non-delinquents. Demone also found a relationship between pathological drinking and deviant behaviors such as destroying property and fighting.

In their study of 284 male high school seniors, Polk and Burkett (A91) found positive relationships between becoming high and three "trouble" attributes - referral to juvenile court, enjoyment of fighting, and agreement with the statement, "Sometimes I like to try to get away with doing things I know I am not supposed to." Jessor, Graves, Hanson and Jessor (A56) found that for 93 adolescents in their tri-ethnic study, higher frequency of drunkenness (two or more times in the past year) was related to greater exposure to deviant role models and greater tolerance for deviance. Similarly, greater tolerance for deviance was related to higher quantity-frequency scores. A composite measure of deviance (including socioeconomic status, access to illegitimate means, disjunctions between goals and expectations, and attitudes toward deviance) was also positively related to quantity-frequency scores and drunkenness among 85 subjects in this sample. In their four-year longitudinal study of junior and senior high school students, Jessor and his colleagues found that a tolerant attitude toward deviance was related to problem drinking among 388 drinkers (A57). In addition, based on data collected in both year I and year II, tolerance toward deviance and more frequent deviant behavior (e.g., stealing, fighting) distinguished those subjects (n=77) who changed from abstainer to drinker status during the first two years of the study from those who were abstainers in both years (n=221). Those who were drinkers in both years (n=368) had the highest rates of deviant behavior and tolerance of deviance of all three groups (B200).

Similarly, when data from years I and IV on the 432 subjects who participated in all four years of the study were analyzed, those who remained abstinent throughout the study showed less deviant behavior and tolerance of deviance than either abstainers who became drinkers or drinkers, with drinkers having the highest tolerance for deviance and the greatest involvement in deviant behavior (B202).

Several studies of general youth populations have obtained data on problem drinking which can be compared to those obtained for samples of delinquents. Using the same criteria Blacker et al. (B29) employed in their study of male delinquents, Demone (C14) classified 3,376 male adolescents in junior and senior high schools according to type of drinking. Fifty-three percent were moderate social drinkers, 13% were heavy social drinkers, 9% were relief or kick drinkers, and 2% were pathological drinkers. Figures for the delinquent sample were the same in the heavy social and relief categories, lower for moderate social (34%) and higher for pathological drinking (7%). Widseth and Mayer (B459) report greater differences between data on drinking classification using Blacker's typology for their sample of delinquent girls and unpublished data obtained by Blacker in 1969 on 3,590 high school girls. Only 2% of the high school girls were relief drinkers and none were classified as pathological drinkers (compared to 31% and 13%, respectively, for the delinquent girls). Thus, on the basis of limited data utilizing the same criteria, pathological drinking appears to be more prevalent among delinquents than among high school students.

However, other studies of high school populations involving criteria similar to those used by Blacker et al. (B29) and MacKay (B260) to identify problem drinkers have found high rates of problem drinking among non-delinquent

youth which match or exceed those reported for delinquents. Rachal, Williams, Brehm, Cavanaugh, Moore and Eckerman (D137) reported a 34% problem drinking rate for a sample of 13,122 junior and senior high school students. Problem drinking was defined by the criteria of drunkenness four or more times in the past year and/or experiencing two or more negative consequences of drinking related to interactions with friends, police, and school officials. Lee, Fishman, and Shimmel (D94) found that 12% of drinkers in their sample of 9513 high school students displayed a group of signs of being at risk for alcoholism or problem drinking, including getting into trouble over drinking, drinking to get drunk, experiencing blackouts and passing out from drinking.

Foreign Studies on Patterns of Use and Related Variables

Very little data on patterns of alcohol use among general samples of delinquents are available from foreign sources. Charnley (B65) found a rate of current drinking among 333 English male delinquents of 84%, which is comparable to rates reported for American samples. Forty-one percent drank five or more times weekly, and the most popular reasons given for drinking were to relax (65%) and to be with friends (53%). Most of these boys also had their first drink with peers and at the age of 14 or below as reported in most American studies. However, Backhouse and James (B17) report a lower current use rate of 63% for a similar group of 290 English male delinquents. Twenty-nine percent drank less than once a week, 27% drank weekly, and 7% drank more than once a week and on weekends. Drinking problems were not prevalent in this group. Similar findings are available for a group of 835 male felons aged 14 to 25 in Germany (E51), of whom only 31% used alcohol. Of this 31%, 9% were occasional drinkers and 22% were heavy drinkers.

Another German study (E58) concerned 100 male juvenile delinquents who were also social drinkers. They were characterized by below average intelligence, low achievement goals, poor school and job attendance, low cultural, political, and intellectual interests, and broken homes. Drinking among these boys was a group phenomenon, usually occurring after school or work. The authors attribute both the drinking and the criminality of these subjects to disturbed family structure.

Some limited data on problem drinking are also available from foreign studies. Thirty-one percent of the male delinquents surveyed by Charnley (B65) had experienced blackouts, 20% had drunk before or instead of breakfast, 46% had become drunk while alone, and 42% had become aggressive when drinking. In addition, 43% reported that they spent most of their money on drinking, and 41% stated that "to get drunk" was a good reason for drinking. In another study, data on 200 criminal adolescents in Austria in 1965-66 and data on an additional 200 delinquents in 1969-70 were compared (E65). Thirty-eight percent of the delinquents were alcoholics (based on such criteria as uncontrolled drinking, secret and solitary drinking, alcohol-related criminality, and social consequences of drinking) in 1965-66 and 29% were alcoholics in 1969-70.

Characteristics of Subsamples of Problem Drinkers

Several studies have focused on drinking patterns or psychological characteristics of delinquent problem drinkers or individuals arrested for drunkenness. Data are available on the characteristics of the 50 addictive drinkers in MacKay's sample of 500 delinquents (B260) and on 20 addictive drinkers from another sample of 122 male delinquents (B260, 261). Both groups were somewhat older than the other delinquents in the

samples. Over half of the group of 50 and over two-thirds of the group of 20 were from broken homes. Blacker et al. (B29) also found that the 35 delinquents from MacKay's sample of 500 whom they categorized as pathological drinkers had more often been institutionalized for previous offenses than boys with less serious alcohol involvement. Many had alcoholic parents. Most took their first drink at age 13 or 14 with peers and without parental permission. Alleys, playgrounds, cars, and friends' homes were the most frequent settings for the first drink. The majority became drunk or high on the first drinking occasion. Drinking after the first drink continued to occur with peers outside the home and without parental permission. All had been high or drunk many times, and the majority sometimes drank alone. Most had experienced blackouts, had passed out from drinking, and had gotten into fights while drinking. Most of the 20 addictive drinkers did not approve of heavy drinking among adults although they themselves were heavy drinkers. Most of the group of 50 problem drinkers did not perceive themselves as problem drinkers, worry about their drinking, or feel that their drinking and delinquency were related. Additional clinical data on 20 delinquent problem drinkers (17 boys and 3 girls), all of whom had alcoholic parents, further corroborate these findings. According to MacKay (B260), the drinking patterns of both groups differed qualitatively and quantitatively from those which characterize high school students.

Wattenberg and Moir (B443) compared the records of 141 boys under 17 years of age arrested for drunkenness with those of 9,555 boys arrested on other charges in 1948, 1950, 1952, and 1953 and found that the juveniles arrested for drunkenness were not distinguished by any particular personality pattern or environmental characteristics. All records for girls arrested in 1953 were checked, and 73 girls whose records included mention of drinking

were compared to 1,008 girls for whom drinking was not noted. Those with a record of drinking were more likely to have jobs, to belong to "wild" peer groups and to come from better socioeconomic backgrounds than the remaining girls. Ninety-six boys arrested for drunkenness were followed up when they were between the ages of 19 and 22. Records of only nine of these boys showed adult drinking offenses, and of those who had been arrested as juveniles only once, none had an adult record of alcohol-related offenses. Thus, the author concludes that there was little evidence in this study to implicate problem drinking in adolescence in the development of adult alcohol problems.

Sterling (B402) presents data on 50 (15 girls) youths arrested for intoxication in Chicago obtained from a random selection of cases in police files. They were more prone to misbehave while intoxicated than to commit a crime for personal gain and were likely to become intoxicated in a group. The group included dropouts and children from broken homes.

Lenning (D95) surveyed 34 male undergraduates convicted for alcohol-related offenses including drunkenness and 34 matched control subjects at the University of Iowa. While the two groups were alike in many ways, the undergraduates involved in the alcohol-related offenses were characterized by significantly less emphasis on educational goals, more frequent withdrawal from school, more participation in clubs and fraternities, and more emphasis on social and recreational pursuits.

Birth order and dependency are two additional variables whose relationship to problem drinking among delinquents has been studied. Barry et al. (B19) studied birth order data for a sample of 97 delinquents involved with alcohol who were participants in a treatment evaluation study (B32) and found that the birth order pattern for the entire sample was similar to that reported elsewhere for delinquents (those from the first half of large families

and from the second half of small families were over-represented). However, the birth order pattern of the boys with marked or episodic alcohol involvement resembled the pattern typically reported for adult alcoholics, with higher representation in the later birth positions in large families.

Blane and Chafetz (B32) measured the relationship between alcohol involvement and dependency for a subsample of 74 delinquent boys from the Barry et al. (B19) study. Those with marked involvement scored significantly lower on manifest dependency as measured by Blane's Dependency-Situation Test and significantly higher on covert dependency as measured by Witkin's Rod and Frame Test than boys with minimal involvement. This finding supports the theory of the role of dependency conflict in the development of alcohol problems and alcoholism.

One longitudinal study in which children with behavior problems were followed in adulthood to determine the proportion who became alcoholic also offers data relating to problem drinking and delinquency. Robins, Bates and O'Neal (A96) obtained follow-up data on 503 adults who had been seen as children at a psychiatric clinic in St. Louis approximately 30 years earlier (between 1924 and 1929). When compared to a matched group with no clinic experience, these subjects were significantly more likely to have become alcoholics. Further, subjects with clinic experience who had appeared in juvenile court and who had had a clinic record of anti-social behavior symptoms were more likely to have become alcoholics in adulthood than former clinic patients with no record of antisocial behavior or no juvenile court records.

Foreign Studies of Problem Drinkers

A few foreign studies have found a relationship between criminal activity and excessive drinking among delinquents. Jähnig and Szewczyk (E51)

found that violent crimes were more frequent among the heavy drinkers in their sample of 835 male felons in Germany. More heavy drinkers also had parents who drank to excess and parents and siblings involved in criminal activities. The offenses committed most frequently by the two groups of alcoholic youth in Mader's (E65) study in Austria were vandalism, aggressive acts, and sexual offenses.

Several Swedish studies have focused on adolescents and young adults arrested for drunkenness. Collett (E21) studied 1,190 persons (33 females) between the ages of 13 and 24 who were arrested for drunkenness in 1958. Blomberg (E11) compared 350 boys aged 15 to 24 chosen randomly from census data to 170 boys arrested for drunkenness in Stockholm in 1958. Eklund and Nylander (E34) present information about 226 boys aged 17 and under arrested for the first time in Stockholm in 1958 and 1959. Nylander and Rydelius (B304) studied 52 boys aged 14 to 17 arrested for the first time in Stockholm in 1964. All of these groups were characterized by low social status based on the occupations of the subjects' fathers. From 19% (B304) to 44% (E11) came from broken homes. When compared to the non-delinquent group, Blomberg's (E11) subjects had lower social status, less stable family backgrounds, were less involved in hobbies and social activities, less likely to live with their families, and more likely to be single.

Collett (E21) and Nylander and Rydelius (B304) report on the drinking habits of their samples. Most of these individuals used alcohol only sporadically. Twenty-three percent of Nylander and Rydelius' (B304) sample and 14% of Collett's (E21) group drank weekly. Thirty-two percent of those surveyed by Collett stated that they seldom drank but usually got intoxicated when they did, and 39% stated that the intoxication episode for which they were arrested was an exception, since they seldom drank.

Two of the groups (B304; E34) were followed up five years after their first arrest for drunkenness to determine their subsequent arrest records. Almost half of each group had been arrested on at least one other occasion during the five-year period. While in Eklund and Nylander's (E34) study, broken homes and alcoholism in the father were equally prevalent in the repeating and non-repeating groups, Nylander and Rydelius (B304) found that a significantly greater percentage of the eight boys who relapsed three or more times had fathers with a history of mental illness or alcoholism and had mental problems or behavioral problems themselves when compared to those with no relapse of arrests for drunkenness. Subjects in Eklund and Nylander's (E34) study with high social status and a secondary education, who got drunk on weekends or holidays only, and who had not been intoxicated prior to the first arrest were least at risk for repeated arrests for drunkenness. Nylander and Rydelius (B304) found that those who did not relapse had shown significantly more anxiety in reaction to their first arrest than those who had relapsed three or more times, leading them to conclude that anxiety at time of arrest is a good prognostic sign.

Methodological Limitations

The published studies on juvenile delinquents and alcohol use suffer from the same methodological limitations typical of other research on the topic of youth and alcohol. With the exception of the earlier studies done in Massachusetts (B29, 260) and California (E5) and most of the foreign studies, the size of the groups surveyed is fairly small. The range of geographical representation is narrow; research has been conducted in only 12 states, and Massachusetts has been the setting for eight of the reports of surveys conducted in the United States. Foreign studies are limited to Austria, Germany, Sweden, and Great Britain.

Virtually all of both the American and foreign groups studied were selected by non-random methods. For all of the foreign studies, the method is either not clear from the available report or abstract or is non-random. Only one American study (B402) utilized random sampling, and this study involved police records rather than actual subjects. The typical procedure is to include in the sample all those delinquents residing in a detention center or consecutive admissions to a juvenile agency over a certain period of time.

In addition, the majority of the samples in foreign and American studies do not include girls. The remaining studies involve very small numbers of girls. Only Cockerham (B70) surveyed an approximately equal number of male and female delinquents. One study is restricted to females (B459).

Further, all studies which aim to generalize to the population are hampered by their exclusive focus on officially identified delinquents and, often, on the most extreme cases in that group - those who have been institutionalized. Institutionalized delinquents may constitute a biased sample in terms of socioeconomic status, education, seriousness of offense, sex, age, race, and other variables. A focus on this group may result in inaccurate conclusions concerning drinking behavior and other characteristics. The problem of reliability of data is also greater among institutionalized delinquents who may tend to exaggerate their involvement in deviant behaviors or withhold information for fear of legal consequences.

The data presented on drinking in the research on juvenile delinquents are also limited. Only two studies (B262, 319) deal with context of current drinking. Detailed data concerning beverage choice, frequency of drinking, and amount of alcohol consumed per occasion for current drinkers are also

lacking in the majority of studies. Only MacKay et al. (B262) and, of the foreign researchers, Charnley (B65), report on reasons for current drinking.

The classification schemes employed in some studies to categorize subjects according to the extent of their involvement with alcohol can also be questioned. MacKay's (B259, 260) method involved classifying subjects solely on the basis of the number of 11 different potentially pathological symptoms which they had experienced. The types of symptoms experienced, the frequency of occurrence of symptoms other than getting high or drunk, and quantity-frequency data were not taken into account. The classification schemes developed by Blacker et al. (B29) and Blane (B19, 32) are potentially more accurate since they take into account frequency of drinking, drunkenness, and pathological symptoms, but are still limited. Blacker et al. (B29) used rating scales for effects of drinking, pathological behavior and pathological attitude comprised of only three to five items and did not include a quantity measure. Blane used global judgments based on clinical interviews and other sources of information about the subject which did not include specific quantity-frequency data.

Recommendations

Additional research is needed on the topics of patterns of alcohol use among juvenile delinquents and the relationship between alcohol use and delinquent behavior. Use of random sampling would improve the quality of research on juvenile delinquents. Attempts should also be made to survey larger groups. The studies which involve fairly large groups are now over ten years old (e.g., B29, 260; E5). Studies of samples which include greater numbers of girls would add to the currently limited knowledge concerning female juvenile delinquents.

Improvements in the content of surveys of delinquent alcohol use are also necessary, including increased attention to such variables as context, quantity and frequency of drinking, reasons for drinking, attitudes toward alcohol and drinking, and signs of problem drinking. Focusing on the moderate drinkers and abstainers in general samples of delinquents as well as on those who exhibit pathological drinking patterns and comparing the factors associated with various drinking behaviors would be instructive. Additional data on the relationship between drinking and committing specific offenses could corroborate or refute what has already been presented by some researchers (e.g., A112; B260, 319, 422; E5). As Burkett (A19) has suggested, there is a need for epidemiological research to determine the extent of alcohol involvement in crimes committed by teenagers.

Since some studies indicate that delinquent groups prefer to use other drugs such as marihuana rather than alcohol, surveys of both drug and alcohol use would aid in determining whether the use of drugs besides alcohol or the use of alcohol and other drugs in combination is more prevalent among delinquents than among other teen-age populations and what implications such drug use has for delinquent behaviors.

Continued attention to problem drinking and improvements in measures to determine the prevalence of excessive drinking and signs of potential or actual alcohol problems among delinquents are also recommended. Further research is necessary to ascertain whether problem drinking is more prevalent among delinquent teenagers than among non-delinquent youth, as some studies have indicated. Additional studies comparing delinquent and non-delinquent samples on the same measures of normal and pathological drinking behavior would be helpful in this regard. The nature of the relationship between excessive or problem drinking and delinquent behavior must also be

further explored. It remains unclear whether the extent of involvement in delinquent behaviors is related to the extent of alcohol involvement, whether drinking is a contributing factor in delinquency or delinquency contributes to problem drinking, and whether delinquency and problem drinking are both caused by other factors. Determining the balance of delinquent behaviors which occur in the context of alcohol use and those which do not would help in the analysis of these issues.

Use of participant-observation methods and ethnographic studies of street youth and gangs would provide valuable information to supplement that obtained by questionnaire and interview methods. Another source of data which has been virtually ignored by American researchers is case registers such as those used in the Swedish studies of juveniles arrested for drunkenness. Access to police, court and agency records would allow data on delinquents from still another perspective to be acquired. Studies of police and court behavior toward delinquents and the effect of alcohol involvement and other factors such as social status on that behavior would be another valuable source of information.

In order to study a more representative range of the population rather than focus solely on institutionalized delinquents, the model provided by Jessor's research (e.g., B200) could be followed. This would involve obtaining data on self-reported deviant behavior and relating them to alcohol use data among teenagers not officially designated as delinquents. Thus, bias resulting from the labelling process would be partially removed. In this way, a clearer picture of the relationship between drinking and deviance could be obtained.

Summary

Data from most American studies concerning the drinking behavior of juvenile delinquents indicate that alcohol use is more prevalent among samples of delinquents than among samples of non-delinquent high school students. Further, delinquents are characterized by more excessive drinking and a higher incidence of pathological symptoms. However, some data from studies of both delinquents and normal populations suggest that differences between delinquents and other youth of the same age are not as great as other research indicates, or that delinquents have a lower rate of alcohol use than normal youth. Research findings from Canada and European countries generally parallel the inconsistent data from American studies. Studies which have focused on various characteristics of delinquent problem drinkers also offer no consistent set of results, although some have presented evidence of the importance of the peer group as a factor in alcohol abuse by delinquents. Data from the Scandinavian studies of youth arrested for drunkenness indicate that these youth tend to be of low social status, to drink sporadically, and to experience additional arrests for drunkenness on subsequent occasions. Advances in methodology, attention to topics which have not previously been a focus for research, replications of studies which have been conducted, and research on non-institutionalized youth will be necessary before the nature of the relationship between alcohol and delinquency can be determined.

END