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## ALCOHOL AND CRIME

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### 1.

#### BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS

**Alcohol, criminal behavior, and criminal events.**  
In nineteenth-century American thought, the link between alcohol and crime was strong and certain. The showman P. T. Barnum was echoing countless other

writers when he stated, in a temperance pamphlet published at mid-century, that "three-fourths of all the crime and pauperism existing in our land are traceable to the use of intoxicating liquors." In many novels, films, and other forms of popular culture influenced by temperance fiction, alcohol was not only linked to violent crime but was almost a necessary precondition. Behind the statistics, many of which trace back to a pioneering empirical investigation by Samuel Chipman, first published in 1834 (Levine in Room and Collins), lay a "scientific" explication in terms of the physiological action of alcohol: "Alcohol has a specific affinity for the brain centers and paralyzes them in the inverse order of their development. It paralyzes the centers of inhibition first and self-control and self-restraint disappear. . . . The center which suffers first and suffers most in the degenerative process constitutes the highest and noblest faculty of the human mind and is the throne of conscience" (Chapple, p. 21).

Substantial scholarly examination of the alcohol-crime link, stimulated by the claims of the temperance movement, was initiated around the turn of the twentieth century. An early landmark in the American literature was John Koren's sophisticated multifactorial analysis in 1899 of the role of alcohol in the causation of crimes. In the wake of this research, a note of caution emerged in scholarly expositions of the alcohol-crime link: "The assurance with which intemperance is held responsible for the mass of criminality has at any rate the merit of being quite natural. When an offense is committed in a state of intoxication or by a habitual user of strong drink, the causal relations seem unmistakable, even inevitable, no matter how infinitely complicated the problem appears to the criminologist. . . . [But] we are still confronted with the question: Assuming that alcohol had never existed, how many and which of the criminal acts perpetrated during a period would not have been committed?" (Koren, 1916). In the polarized atmosphere of the era of national Prohibition (1919–1933) and after Repeal, empirical research on the linkage of alcohol and crime declined, although, as a vestige of the earlier interest, prisoner surveys to this day often retain a few questions relating to alcohol. There was relatively little advance in research design or in theoretically relevant knowledge until the advent of the line of research on alcohol and crime initiated by Marvin Wolfgang (Wolfgang and Strohm; Wolfgang).

For many years, then, the literature on alcohol and criminal behavior and events revolved around a set of "tacit theories" (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Cameron et al.) of the relationship, derived primarily

from temperance-era thought, and centering on what Kai Peranen (1976, pp. 393–399) has named the "disinhibition theory" of the effect of alcohol as an explanation of crimes of violence. The disinhibition theory proposes that alcohol disinhibits behavior pharmacologically—the usual "explanation," now as in Koren's time, is that alcohol suppresses the inhibitory actions of the "higher centers" of the brain.

The present discussion is concerned with alcohol's role in non-alcohol-specific crimes. In the United States, a large part of all reported crimes are accounted for by two alcohol-specific types of crime—drunken driving and public drunkenness: "decriminalization" of the latter offense remains a pious intention rather than a practical reality in much of the country. A third type of alcohol-specific crime—the illicit production, sale, or purchase of alcohol—has been less prominent since the repeal of Prohibition, although it remains a numerically substantial component of juvenile crime.

**Empirical evidence on alcohol and crime.** Several major reviews of the available literature on alcohol, criminal behavior, and criminal events have appeared (Peranen, 1976; Aarens, Cameron et al.; Collins; Roizen; Lahelma; Vogt; Aarens, Blau et al.; Coid; Morgan). Taken together, these reviews and analyses offer a well-defined picture of the findings—and of the strengths and weaknesses—of the voluminous empirical literature. But beyond this, in reexamining the theoretical presumptions that underlie the empirical literature, these studies have provided a solid basis for new directions of theoretically grounded empirical work on a variety of aspects of the relationship between alcohol, criminal behavior, and criminal events. Relevant also to such future work are the reconsiderations of theoretical issues in the quite separate literature on drugs and crime (Inciardi; Johnson, 1981 a, 1981 b) and in the special area of alcohol and disinhibition (Room and Collins).

Both drunkenness and the commission of a crime are, roughly speaking, *events* rather than *conditions* (Aarens, Cameron et al.). The most voluminous part of the empirical literature on alcohol and crime consists of studies of the interrelation of drinking occasions or drunkenness with criminal *events*. The drinking or drunkenness involved can be that of the perpetrator, of the victim (in the case of interpersonal crimes), or of both. The frame of reference for almost all of the studies is the criminal event, and the findings revolve around the percentage of criminal events studied in which drinking or drunkenness was involved. Few studies offer a picture of the association in the opposite direction—the proportion of drunken

events that involve criminal activity. Many studies provide no enlightenment on the potential processes linking alcohol and crime beyond a percentage of events in which drinking and crime are conjoined. Given the assumption of intentionality involved in criminal behavior, the alcohol and crime literature has no equivalent of the epidemiological concept of a "control sample," comparing the involvement of drinking or drunkenness in noncriminal events (Aarens, Cameron et al.). Smaller traditions of empirical work bear on the relations between alcohol and criminal conditions—on the prevalence of alcoholism among criminals, on the criminal history of alcoholics, and on the intertwining of the "criminal career" and the "alcoholic career" (Collins in Collins).

**Types of offenses.** The cumulation of studies on alcohol in criminal events allows for substantial comparisons of the rate of occurrence of alcohol factors by type of crime, by sex and age, and by ethnicity and nationality. A lengthy tradition of generalizations on the involvement of alcohol in particular types of crime asserts that drinking is more involved in crimes against the person than in property crimes, and that drinking is more involved in serious than in trivial crimes (Aschaffenburg). The relatively small number of American studies based on arrest-record data on drinking by the offender offer some support to these generalizations. Studies in the tradition of Wolfgang's homicide study show that drinking by the offender is mentioned in police reports for 7 percent of robberies, 24 percent of rapes, 24 percent of assaults, and 55 percent of homicides (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Cameron et al., p. 372). On the other hand, when prisoners are asked whether they were intoxicated during the commission of the offense for which they were incarcerated, no such clear differentiation appears. Reanalysis of a large 1974 American national sample of inmates in state correctional facilities showed substantial proportions who reported drinking (38 percent to 67 percent) and who reported drinking heavily (19 percent to 39 percent) at the time of committing a variety of crimes against persons or property (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Cameron et al., p. 370).

Judy Roizen and Dan Schneberk (Aarens, Cameron et al.), as well as Stephanie Greenberg (Collins), have discussed at some length the potential artifacts—in terms of different populations sampled, different procedures, and response effects—that could contribute to the different results of the two types of study. For example, it has been noted, particularly for sex (McCaghy) and family crimes (Aarens, Cameron et al., p. 554), that offenders may overreport drunken-

ness as a form of "deviance disavowal." Moreover, Greenberg has argued that drunken arrestees may be more likely than others to be diverted to dispositions other than prison (cf. Speiglman and Weisner), and that police may be more likely to note that the offender had been drinking for some types of crimes than for others. The fact that homicide shows a similar and substantial drinking involvement by the two methods has been noted as a convergence which may be significant, since police and judicial procedures are followed more meticulously for this type of offense. However, the net result of research on alcohol in criminal events must be stated cautiously: it is clear that the offender had been drinking in a relatively high proportion of serious events where the offender is captured, but there appears to be only a weak tendency, subject to exceptions, for drinking by offenders to be associated more with crimes against persons than with crimes against property. Since the bulk of the available literature is concerned with violent interpersonal crimes, the emphasis here will be on alcohol's relation to such crimes.

**Sex and age variables.** Heavy drinking and criminal behavior show considerable similarity to each other in their distribution by sex and age within the American population. Heavy drinking is more common among men than among women at all ages, and it peaks among men in the general population in their early twenties (Clark and Midanik, p. 35; Collins in Collins, pp. 160–167). This is in contrast to "alcoholism" in clinical settings, which is more concentrated at ages thirty-five to sixty. Men account for 80 percent to 90 percent of those arrested and convicted for serious crimes in the United States. The peak age for numbers of criminal offenders is sixteen; however, for some serious offenses like robbery, "the young adult years may represent the more serious age period" (Collins in Collins, p. 174). The near-coincidence in the gender-age distributions of heavy drinking and crime in the general population of the United States practically ensures some positive correlation between heavy drinkers and criminals in the population as a whole. But "it is not certain that the similar empirical regularities of drinking problems and criminal behaviors in the young adult years have any systematic causal relationship to each other. These two phenomena may each be independently explained by other factors" (Collins in Collins, pp. 205–206).

**Ethnic and cultural differences.** Contrary to common assumptions in the literature, Roizen's 1981 review concluded that "data from arrest records, prison records, and interviews do not generally support the view that Blacks are more likely than Whites to have

been involved in a crime with alcohol present" (Collins, p. 221). For every type of crime, in the 1974 national sample of inmates mentioned above, black males were less likely than white males to report drinking at the time of the crime. Research in the Wolfgang tradition of studies of violent criminal events showed somewhat different results—that "alcohol involvement [was] comparable for Black and White groups"—but this finding also provides little support for the theory that "a disproportionate amount of Black crime is a consequence of drinking" (Roizen in Collins, pp. 224, 232, 252).

More generally, cross-sectional comparisons have long noted substantial differences between nations, as well as between ethnic groups in the United States, in rates and patterns of heavy drinking and drinking-related problems (Mäkelä, Room et al.; Cahalan and Room). Regional comparisons within the United States, and national comparisons between the Nordic countries, have suggested differences in the explosiveness of drinking patterns and in the associated social disruption. The countries or regions with the most explosive drinking styles—Finland as compared, say, to Denmark; and the American South as compared, say, to the Northeast—also have comparatively elevated homicide rates (Christie; Cahalan and Room; Room; cf. Levinson in Room and Collins).

Quantitative empirical studies have shown cultural differences in the association of drinking, violent behavior, and crime (Permanen, 1982; Graves et al.). These findings converge with one strand of the emerging social-science critiques of the disinhibition theory of the relation of alcohol and crime. Craig MacAndrew and Robert Edgerton collected a broad range of anthropological and other evidence of very wide variations between different cultures and contexts in drunken comportment, suggesting that the link between drinking and violence is at least as much a matter of cultural expectation as of pharmacology. More recent anthropological work (Marshall), as well as evidence from other fields (Room and Collins), has provided further support for this position. Although the literature on variations in the alcohol-aggression link in American subcultures is not well developed (Levinson in Room and Collins), an ethnographic report that drinking and violence seem to have a weaker cultural link among black than among white Americans (Herd in Room and Collins) provides some support for Roizen's conclusions from the quantitative literature, noted above.

**Influence on careers in crime.** Reviews of the literature (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Cameron et

al.; Collins) agree that there is a positive raw correlation between alcoholism as a condition and careers in crime. Roizen and Schneberk made a rough comparison of reported alcohol problems in prison populations and in general population samples of men and concluded that "it is clear that prisoners have a greater incidence of drinking problems than is found in the general population," although "the differences are not as great as might be expected." Looking at the relationship through the other sampling window, "chronic inebriate offenders, excessive drinkers, and alcoholics in treatment have records of criminal behavior far in excess of those expected in a sample of the general population." Roizen and Schneberk note that most of the studies proceed no further after establishing the association, and "spend little effort investigating characteristics of the criminal event for which offenders are incarcerated or major life problems other than drinking." The agenda is "to identify both crime and drinking problems as moral failings of the individual" without attention to the potential contributions of situational or general sociocultural factors (pp. 378, 381–384, 395). It is clear that the empirical relationship of criminal and alcoholic careers is greatly affected by the definitions used, reflecting differences in the life circumstances and chances of those included in the sample. Thus, a Swedish study found wide divergences in the proportion of individuals with criminal records among three samples of different kinds of "alcoholics": 11 percent of voluntary admissions for "alcoholism" in a mental hospital; 42 percent of those hospitalized for acute psychiatric sequels of, and withdrawal symptoms from, excessive drinking; and 77 percent of homeless men receiving social assistance. The proportions with records of "crimes of violence" were, respectively, none, 10 percent, and 27 percent (recalculated from Lindelius and Salum).

As this study suggests, only a minority of even those alcoholics who are entangled in the criminal justice system have records of serious crime. A classic American study of 186 public inebriate offenders found that although they had experienced a total of 3,078 arrests, 77 percent of these were for public intoxication; only one-third of the sample had a criminal history which included serious crime (Pittman and Gordon). Jeremy Coid suggests that both the epidemiological and clinical literatures support a conclusion that there is a special psychiatrically disturbed subgroup in the population of alcoholics with violent proclivities: in his view, there is a "strong association between violence by alcoholics and a prior abnormality of personality.

which has led both to violent behavior and the alcoholism itself." Judging from David Pittman and Wayne Gordon's study, "serious crime, if it is committed at all, is committed early in the criminal careers, followed by a longer career of drunkenness offenses" (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Cameron et al., p. 399). Greenberg suggests that such a pattern "may represent those with failed criminal careers. Problem drinking may have prevented a successful criminal career or may be the result of continued failure for other reasons" (Collins, p. 90). Noting that a longitudinal prison study concurred in finding that "criminality by and large preceded the development of a drinking problem" (Goodwin, Crane, and Guze), and that alcoholism as a clinical phenomenon is more a phenomenon of middle age than of youth, Roizen and Schneberk conclude that "if there is a causal connection" between criminal history and alcoholism, then the time-ordering of the behaviors suggest "it is crime 'causing' chronic inebriacy rather than the other way around" (Aarens, Cameron et al., p. 399).

It should be noted that the empirical relations between criminal records, alcoholism diagnosis, and treatment history are likely to be affected by ongoing changes in the American alcoholism treatment and criminal justice systems. There seems to be a general tendency for more and more of those in treatment for alcoholism to be there as court "referrals"—for non-alcohol-specific as well as alcohol-specific crimes (Speiglman and Weisner). Although this reflects the population pressure in the criminal justice system and the expansion of the alcoholism treatment system, it also reflects the operation in the law courts—more at the phase of disposition than at that of determination of guilt (Mosher in Room and Collins)—of the cultural belief in alcohol's criminogenic powers. This trend is likely to produce samples of treated "alcoholics" who are younger and more criminally involved, while lowering the prevalence of "problem drinkers" in prison populations.

**Situational factors.** Detailed studies of the context of criminal events and of alcohol's place in them have been seen as crucial to an understanding of the nature and strength of the potential links (Permanen in Collins). But the quantitative empirical evidence available remains rather sparse. A substantial minority of homicides, rapes, and assaults take place in or around bars (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Cameron et al., pp. 322-364). Drawing on ethnographic studies, Roizen suggests that for some populations, taverns may be a particularly important factor in the alcohol-crime link: "among lower-class Blacks, taverns are

both the legitimate settings for interpersonal confrontation and violence, and also places which offer freedom from the norms of everyday life" (Collins, pp. 244-251). In systematic observational studies in Vancouver, British Columbia, Kathryn Graham and her associates found that bars "varied enormously in frequency of aggression"; although "no aggression was seen" in 62 percent of the 185 bars visited, "in 1 bar 14 incidents were recorded in a total of 5 hr of observation." Aggressive incidents were concentrated in bars that were in or near skid row and frequented by patrons who were outside the work force, by those involved in drug dealing, prostitution, and other hustles, and by members of ethnic or other minorities.

Reflecting the weekly cycle of drinking in the general population, homicides involving alcohol are more likely to take place in the evening and on weekends than at other times. A Finnish study found that in homicides and serious assaults the offender was most likely to be drunk when he was an acquaintance of the victim, and least likely to be drunk when they had a close relationship; offenses involving strangers fell in between. The offender was more likely to be drunk in disputes originating on the spot than in revivals of old disputes (Lahelma, pp. 82-86). In interpreting these findings from police reports of assaults, as well as homicide, Permanen's conclusions (1981) in a Canadian study should be kept in mind: violent incidents were more likely to be reported to the police when the offender and victims were strangers, and when the offender but not the victim had been drinking. Results in American police-report studies suggest that alcohol is about as likely to be a factor in homicides committed in the home as in homicides committed elsewhere. Both inside the home and outside, stabbing is overrepresented and shooting underrepresented as the means of assault in homicides involving alcohol. Alcohol appears to add excess violence to already homicidally violent situations. Homicides involving alcohol are substantially more likely than others to be "victim precipitated," where the victim is "the first to commence the interplay or resort to physical violence" (Wolfgang).

The finding on victim precipitation is related to a more general pattern of association of drunkenness in the offender and in the victim in interpersonal crimes. For robbery, rape, assault, and homicide, American studies show that the offender is more likely to have been drinking if the victim has been drinking, and vice versa. This association is particularly strong for homicide and for rapes involving acquaintances and friends. For these offenses and for assaults, North

American studies suggest that the offender and the victim are about equally likely to have been drinking. For robberies and for rapes involving strangers, it appears that the victim is more likely to have been drinking than the offender.

The special association of the victim's drinking with exploitative crimes should occasion no surprise. In the special context of skid-row drinking, the vulnerability of drunken persons to robbery by "jackrollers" has long been recognized: Edwin H. Sutherland and Harvey Locke described the jackroller as the "worst enemy" of homeless drinkers (p. 120). A study of robbery victims in Helsinki between 1963 and 1973 showed that the median amount taken was considerably greater for drunken than for sober victims (Lahelma, pp. 106-112). A Polish study of injured robbery victims found that two-thirds were definitely "tipsy" and only 6 percent definitely sober. The most common pattern was for the robbery to take place near a restaurant; injuries were usually minor and resulted from slaps or kicks. The victims commonly reported the crime several hours afterward, often claiming an intervening loss of consciousness (Marek, Widacki, and Hanausek). On the general issue of alcohol's "victimogenic" powers, it is suggestive that one of the few clear findings from animal-model studies of alcohol and aggression is that "when given low doses of ethanol, subordinate rodents are more likely to be attacked or injured by dominant animals" (Woods and Mansfield in Room and Collins). However, "alcohol as a victimogenic factor is an important but relatively unexplored aspect of the alcohol and crime question" (Roizen and Schneberk in Aarens, Blau et al., p. 325). The continuing neglect of the issue probably reflects ideological concerns: much of the literature has been oriented toward increasing sympathy and social assistance for the victim, and to establish that victims are often drunk might diminish their perceived blamelessness (Miers, pp. 170, 177, 181-184).

The connection of the victim's drinking with exploitative crimes seems particularly promising as an arena for preventive action. For once, the mechanism of alcohol's involvement in the situation is relatively clear, and the drinking person's intentions and interests tend to be aligned with the aim of crime prevention.

**Alcohol as a cause of crime.** We turn at last to the vexed question of causation: does alcohol cause crime? Other than for the alcohol-specific offenses, where the answer is a matter of definition, the answer must be, "it depends what you mean." In the first place, any causative connection must be seen as condi-

tional: drinking in combination with other factors can result in a crime. The operational test for such conditional causation becomes, Would the crime fail to take place if the alcohol were removed from the situation? With respect to alcohol's victimogenic powers, it seems likely that the answer will be yes. Drunkenness is affecting at least the choice of a victim for the robbers lying in wait outside Polish restaurants and for the jackrollers prowling American tenderloins, and fewer targets of opportunity might well in the long run mean fewer crimes. In terms of criminogenic powers, there seem anecdotally to be circumstances where the answer would be yes. Coid has remarked on the different assumptions in the recent North American literature concerning the criminogenic powers of heroin and alcohol as addicting substances: "Alcoholics are frequently encountered in clinical and forensic practice who have used violence in attempts to obtain more alcohol, or subsequently to escape arrest, but this motivating factor has not been examined in any of the criminal studies found" (p. 9). But mostly when the question of whether alcohol causes crime is asked, the questioner has in mind some version of disinhibition theory as the link between drinking and crime. In his detailed discussions of the potential theoretical connections between alcohol and violent crime, Per-nanen (1976; in Collins) elucidates the diversity of possible theoretical connections relevant to disinhibition theory. One of his conclusions is that "no one theory or model will be able to provide the explanation for the totality of the observed statistical association(s) between alcohol use and crime, no matter how grand its scale. Partly, this is due to the fact that the referents of the concepts of both 'alcohol use' and 'crime,' 'criminal behavior,' or 'deviance' are so manifold" (Collins, p. 63).

Often, the question of cause is defined in terms of a biological link: does alcohol pharmacologically make one mean, vicious, or violent? To this question, the converging evidence from various lines of research suggests that the answer may be no (Room and Collins). Pharmacologically, alcohol certainly makes one clumsy, and it certainly makes one feel different—but it seems to be culture and circumstance that determine what meaning and implications this "feeling different" will have. These findings that the link is socioculturally rather than pharmacologically determined are highly controversial—particularly in the United States, given the medical hegemony over alcohol problems and the current return to assumptions of physiological etiology in American psychiatric thought. It should be kept in mind that a sociocultural link is no less "real" than a pharmacological one; para-

phrasing the classic sociological dictum, effects that are believed real are real in their consequences. For well over a century, Americans have clearly believed (and have acted and reacted on the basis of the belief) that alcohol has the power to make the drinker act violently and criminally (Levine in Room and Collins).

From a pragmatic policy perspective, the question of cause might well be rephrased to the question, Are crime rates affected by the level or patterning of alcohol consumption? This question is often approached by means of cross-sectional comparison of national or other aggregate alcohol-consumption and criminal statistics. But such analyses—which often show negative raw correlations—are very weak both as tests of cause and in terms of their policy utility. As Klaus Mäkelä notes, “Cultural variations in drinking patterns are based on lasting historical traditions, and they may well be resistant to a certain degree to changes in the level of consumption. To take a somewhat extreme example, we have no reason to believe that the French would start drunken fights should they lower their consumption to the same level as the Scots or the Finns” (1978, p. 333). Far stronger as a test, and far more useful to policymakers, is a study of how criminal behavior in a given culture reacts to changes in the level or patterning of alcohol consumption.

So far, most of the evidence in this direction for non-alcohol-specific crimes comes from Nordic countries. A 1981 collaborative study of seven countries singled out Finland and Poland as “societies with a historic pattern of extreme drinking events and associated consequences” (Mäkelä, Room et al., p. 50). Results from such societies should not be lightly extrapolated to societies where the belief in alcohol’s link to violence may not be so firmly established. An additional caution, as Permanen has noted, is that positive findings in studies of covariation over time of drinking and crime rates in a given population “should not be taken to mean that a causal relationship on the individual level between alcohol use . . . and criminal acts has been established. There may still be common-cause factors on the individual level which explain the statistical associations. . . . It is, for example, possible that when the supply of alcohol is cut down, the frequency of social interaction (through partying, etc.) is also reduced, with a resulting decrease in the probability of interaction and, consequently, interpersonal crime. Thus, the frequency of interaction could be the main explanation of violence in a society” (Mäkelä, Österberg, and Sulkunen, p. 4).

Despite these caveats, aggregate-level studies of temporal changes are probably the strongest existing

evidence of the potential importance of alcohol consumption in explaining crime—and are certainly of interest from a policy perspective. In a series of papers, Leif Lenke has conducted time-series analyses of Swedish and other Nordic official statistics on alcohol consumption and violent crime. He concluded that, within a given society, changes in the total consumption of alcohol are likely to induce similar changes in the recorded rates of crimes of violence (1975, 1982; Lahelma, pp. 97–105). In a careful analysis of postwar Finnish data, Esa Österberg (pp. 65–84) showed a generally close relationship between the per capita alcohol consumption and the rates of cases of assault and battery and of associated crimes known to the police. The steep rise in consumption when beer was made much more available in 1969 was matched by a steep rise in assault and battery cases. In general, there was a long-term gradual trend downward in the rate of crimes of violence per liter of absolute alcohol, but “the trend towards less conflict-prone patterns of drinking was apparently interrupted suddenly after the legislative reform of 1969.” After 1975, the trend in the direction of fewer consequences per liter seemed to resume (Mäkelä, Österberg, and Sulkunen, pp. 38, 39).

In the 1970s, a small genre of studies of the effects of strikes and other temporary perturbations in the alcohol supply has emerged. Such studies are particularly direct tests of whether crimes are prevented when alcohol is removed, although of course long-term effects might well differ from the short-term effects measured in these studies. In an exemplary series of studies of the strike in the Finnish alcohol monopoly stores in 1972, it was estimated that overall consumption was reduced by about 30 percent, with less impact on middle-class drinking habits and a particularly strong impact on homeless alcoholics. To an “absolutely striking extent,” visible public drunkenness disappeared from the Helsinki streets. “Cases of assault and battery were reduced by some 20 to 25 percent,” and there were reductions in “such offenses as impeding a public official in the discharge of his duties, violently resisting an officer of the law and disturbing the peace at a public gathering. . . . The fall-off was particularly evident in the rate of aggravated assault. . . . In Helsinki, 95 percent of the persons convicted of aggravated assault and 85 percent of their victims have been under the influence of alcohol at the time of the deed.” The rate of cases of “fight injuries sustained by acutely intoxicated persons” appearing at emergency clinics also fell (Mäkelä, 1980, pp. 136, 137); the greatest changes in the case load of a Helsinki emergency hospital service during

the strike were reductions in the number of strongly intoxicated patients and in the number of injuries resulting from murder, manslaughter, or assault and battery (Karaharju and Stjernvall). A study of a 1978 Norwegian alcohol monopoly strike in which overall alcohol consumption was estimated to have fallen by only 5 percent to 10 percent nevertheless found "much evidence . . . that skid-row drinkers were strongly affected," including a decline in the rate of "home quarrels" offenses (Horverak).

A last piece of evidence comes from the Gdańsk shipyard strike of 1980, out of which emerged the Polish Solidarity movement. Since accusations of drunken disorderliness had been frequently used by official sources to discredit workers' demonstrations in previous years, the strikers imposed a prohibition on alcohol in the shipyard, a ban quickly picked up and extended by the local government throughout the province. In the succeeding weeks, temporary alcohol bans became a frequent symbolic gesture by both the Polish government and Solidarity, signaling to each other a serious intent and yet a desire to avoid violence (Moskalewicz). A study of the effects of the initial Gdańsk prohibition showed it to be highly effective and widely accepted. Although drinking was not banned per se, most of the respondents in a local survey did not drink at all during the prohibition. Eighty-four percent of the respondents thought that the prohibition had a "large effect" in "reducing the numbers of rows, riots, etc."—second only to the proportion who saw "maintaining discipline during the strikes" as a positive effect of the ban. According to the authorities, "a drop in the number of crimes was noted, although the militia activity in the town was reduced to a minimum." The local ambulance service reported an unusually quiet time (Bielewicz and Moskalewicz).

Besides the ban on alcohol sales, the drop in crime in Gdańsk may well have reflected an increased sense of common purpose, such as has been noted in grave times elsewhere as producing perturbations in social statistics. Such a mixture of abstinence and common purpose was regarded by Gustav Aschaffenburg as having had the same temporary effect in nineteenth-century Ireland: "Father Matthew succeeded, by the power of his personality and his enthusiastic speeches, in making total abstainers of 1,800,000 persons in the course of a few years. The result was that, whereas, in 1828, 12,000 serious crimes were committed in Ireland, in 1841 the number had sunk to 773, the sixteenth part! The slight permanence of this unexampled success proves, it is true, that the method employed was not the right one" (p. 129).

Whatever their applicability outside their national settings, the interrupted time-series and the strike-type studies do pose a challenge to researchers everywhere. In the modern era, most studies of alcohol and crime in English-speaking countries have focused their attention on the relationship as it may exist within the individual psyche—occasionally extending the view to cover factors in the immediate situation of the criminal event. Much remains to be learned, indeed, about the role of alcohol in criminal events, and about the intertwining of drinking and criminal behaviors. But from the point of view of policy, such studies often focus on elements of the connection that are the hardest to change. The studies of change over time reawaken one to the existence of historical change and to the possibility of doing something to prevent crime by influencing the fact, context, and consequences of drinking. This is a worthy agenda for future research and experiment.

ROBIN ROOM

See also ALCOHOL AND CRIME, articles on LEGAL ASPECTS and TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION; DRINKING AND DRIVING; DRUGS AND CRIME; BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS.

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