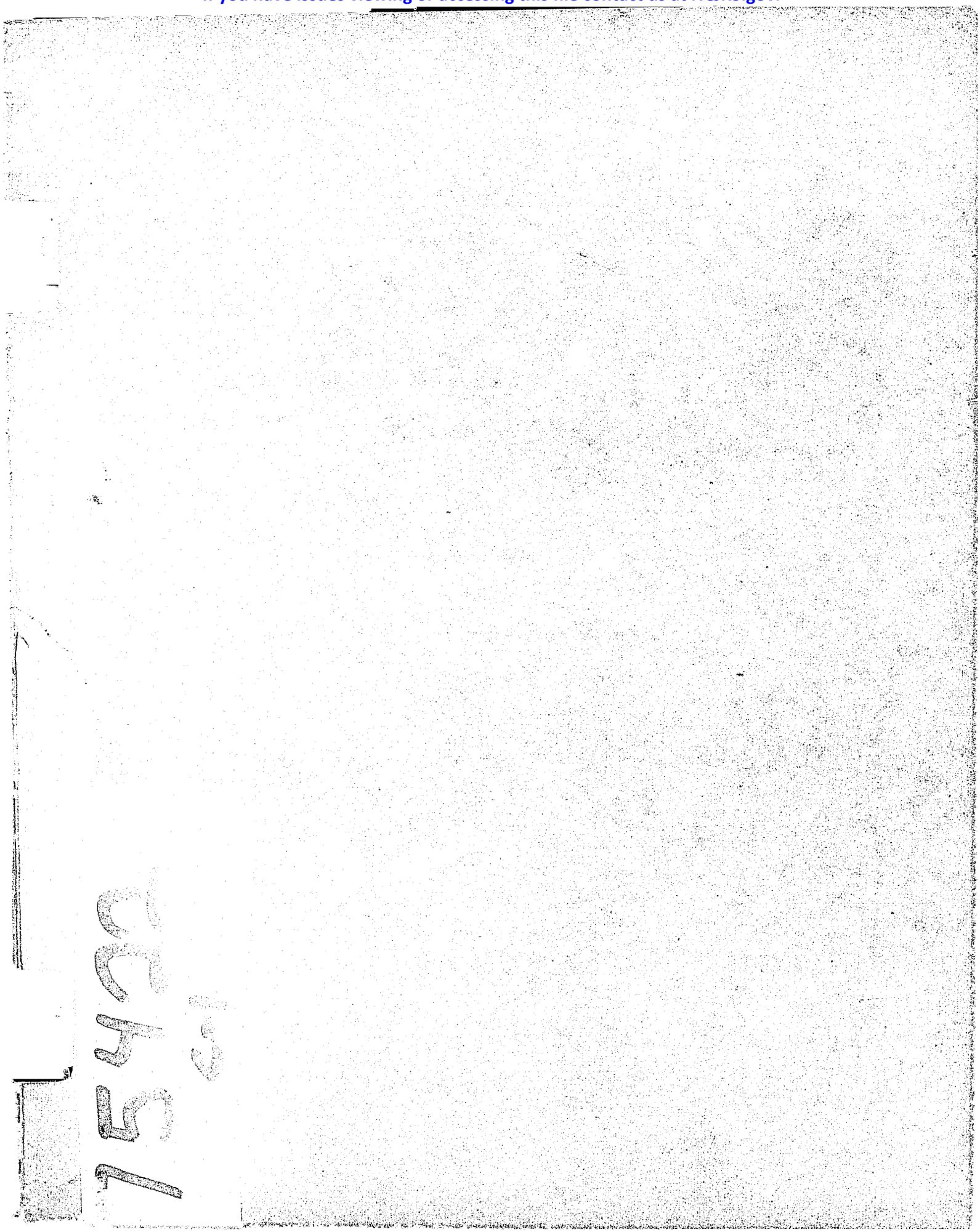

DRUG USE AND CRIME AMONG PERSONS ARRESTED IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Eric D. Wish, Ph.D.

Kandace A. Klumpp, B.A.

Amy H. Moorer, B.A.

Elizabeth Brady

Institute for Law and Social Research
1125 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

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These remarks, presented at the National Alcohol and Drug Coalition conference in Washington, D.C. on September 17, 1980, highlight the findings of a detailed study of drug use and crime among arrestees in the District of Columbia. A complete discussion of the study, including its design, methodology and potential limitations, appears in the final report, which will be available after December 1.

Introduction

What types of offenses are drug-using arrestees likely to be charged with? Can information about an arrestee and his or her current case predict whether the person will be detected (by urinalysis) to be using drugs? How likely are drug users to be rearrested? Do they specialize in committing particular types of crimes? Which arrestees enter treatment for drug abuse, and does treatment affect the person's subsequent criminal behavior? Are older arrestees less likely to use illicit drugs?

This paper describes a project--jointly sponsored by the National Institute of Justice and the National Institute on Drug Abuse--that constructed data files designed to address the questions above, as well as others pertaining to drug use and crime among a population of arrestees. In addition, we will present findings that describe how the arrestee's age, sex and offense charged predict detection of drug use and compare the likelihood that drug positive (D+) and drug negative (D-) arrestees recidivate.

Background of the Study

In 1970, the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the Narcotics Treatment Administration (subsequently called the Substance Abuse Administration, and currently called the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services Administration, ADASA) undertook a cooperative effort to develop a system for monitoring the drug use of arrestees. The goal of the program was to obtain information about the drug status of each arrestee that could be used by the judge in making a determination of bail or other conditions of release. Since December 1971, almost all arrestees who have been detained in the D.C. Superior Court lock-up facility prior to their court appearance have been asked to provide information about their use of drugs, prior drug treatment, and current arrest charge and to provide a urine specimen for analysis. To our knowledge, the District of Columbia is the only jurisdiction in the country that routinely tests arrestees for drug use, and it therefore provides a unique opportunity for studying the relationship of drug use and crime among arrestees.

Kozel and DuPont (1977) computerized the urinalysis information collected by the D.C. Superior Court and compared arrest charges and urine test results for 44,323 consecutive admissions to the lock-up between 1971 and 1975. Their study documented the increase in the use of phenmetrazine (Preludin) in this period and indicated that drug-using arrestees were less likely to be charged with crimes of violence than were nonusers.

In another study, Williams (1979) analyzed recidivism patterns among arrestees processed in the D.C. Superior Court during approximately the same period, January 1, 1971, to August 31, 1975. Williams used information from the Prosecutor's Management Information System (PROMIS), an automated case-tracking system that was installed in the

Superior Court Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia in 1971. Williams found that, other factors being equal, persons arrested for a drug offense were more likely to recidivate if they had a prior arrest record. In addition, she found that drug use in connection with any type of arrest was a significant predictor of recidivism.

The study described here builds primarily on those projects. The data available to Kozel and DuPont contained information about the drugs detected in the arrestee's specimen, but they contained minimal information about the charges made and no information about subsequent processing of the arrestee by the court or the final disposition of the case. The PROMIS data files used by Williams contained detailed information about charges, processing, and disposition. However, drug use by the arrestee had to be inferred from information stored in PROMIS about the arresting officer's perception of whether the person was involved with illicit drugs. It became apparent that if it were possible to merge each person's PROMIS case record with the ADASA record of the person's urinalysis test outcome, the resulting data base would contain a wealth of information that could be used to study drug use and crime among arrestees.

Two types of data files were constructed. The first is a set of cross-sectional files composed of each case in PROMIS for which a matching urinalysis test record was located. There are 57,944 cases in the final cross-sectional files for the period from 1973 through 1977. The cross-sectional files are case based, and a person arrested several times within this period would have multiple cases included in the file. The second type of file is a defendant-based, longitudinal file that contains the arrest records for 7,087 persons over a six-year period from 1973 through 1978. In addition to the case information from PROMIS and the matching urinalysis record, the longitudinal file contains information about time incarcerated during this period and any record of entry into treatment at an ADASA facility.

Results: Cross-sectional Data Files

At the start of this project, we were unsure how successful we would be in locating the urine test record for each person who had an arrest entered into the PROMIS system. After considerable computer-assisted and manual matching, we located a urine record for 57,944 of the 84,917 PROMIS cases for 1973 through 1977, (68 percent). This match rate was misleading, however, because PROMIS includes cases for persons who were released by the police after arrest pending court appearance, and who consequently were never detained in the lock-up where the urine specimen is obtained. When we looked only at the cases for persons known to have been detained in the lock-up, we found that we had found the matching urinalysis record for 90 percent. Further, once an arrestee was placed in the lock-up, there was a high probability that the ADASA record would be found, regardless of the offense charged or the arrestee's demographic characteristics. Because persons who

have criminal histories or who are charged with serious crimes are more likely to be placed in the lock-up, it is important to note that the resulting files of matched cases and the findings derived from them apply primarily to serious offenders and not to persons who are typically released after arrest by the police.

The urinalysis tests that were conducted were capable of detecting nine substances (morphine, quinine, methadone, phenmetrazine, codeine, cocaine, amphetamines, methamphetamines and barbiturates). In the analyses to be presented, detection of any of these substances constitutes a drug positive urine test result. In actuality, however, most of the positive results were caused by the presence of morphine, quinine, methadone or phenmetrazine. Phenmetrazine, or Preludin, is a stimulant that is often abused by addicts in the District of Columbia. Below are some of the questions addressed using the cross-sectional files for 1973 and 1974. (These years were chosen for analysis because of the high prevalence of drug use and because of the amount of information stored in PROMIS cases from these years.)

Do Age and Sex of the Arrestee Predict Drug Status?

Table 1 presents the proportion of tested specimens from male and female arrestees that were positive, by age at arrest.

Table 1

ARRESTEE AGE AND SEX AS PREDICTORS
OF A POSITIVE URINALYSIS RESULT
(Tested specimens from 1973-1974)

PERCENT OF CASES WHERE SPECIMEN WAS D+:

AGE AT ARREST	MALE ARRESTEES (N)	%	FEMALE ARRESTEES (N)	%
18 - 20	(3,372)	16	(507)	18
21 - 25	(4,707)	24	(886)	25
26 - 30	(2,700)	25	(393)	40
31 - 45	(3,279)	20	(386)	22
46+	(1,144)	8	(109)	6

Arrestees below age 21 were relatively unlikely to have been found to be using drugs. Arrestees between the ages of 21 and 45 had the greatest risk of detection, with a marked decline beginning in persons over age 30. Persons over age 45 were relatively unlikely to be found to be using drugs. Unfortunately, we cannot tell from our data whether this is evidence for a maturing out phenomenon.

Table 1 also shows that female arrestees were more likely to be found to be using drugs than were male arrestees. Overall, 24 percent of the specimens from female arrestees were positive, compared to 20 percent of those from males. We are unsure of the reason behind this finding. One possibility is that because females are less likely to be arrested, those that are arrested are more deviant and therefore more likely to be

using illicit drugs. It is also possible, however, that females are more likely to be using prescribed drugs that are being detected by the urinalysis test. A recent test of the feasibility of urinalysis screening in jail populations (Richardson et al, 1978) also found more drug use among female arrestees than male arrestees.

Does the Offense Charged Predict Arrestee Drug Status?

Table 2 shows how the offense charged was related to the likelihood that the arrestee was detected to be using drugs.

Table 2

WHAT CHARGES WERE MOST LIKELY TO PREDICT
A POSITIVE TEST RESULT?
(N=17,745 CASES FROM 1973-1974 WITH A URINE TEST RESULT)

Maximum Offense Charged	Percent With This Charge Who Were D+ [a]			
	Cases of Males		Cases of Females	
	(N)	%	(N)	%
Bail Violations	(849)	27	(139)	45
Larceny	(2,359)	27	(274)	30
Drugs	(1,249)	26	(142)	41
Weapons Offenses	(849)	24	(71)	30
Robbery	(2,209)	22	(149)	29
Fraud/Embezzlement	(486)	22	(143)	24
Consensual Sex	(363)	20	(656)	24
Burglary	(2,160)	20	(103)	15
Auto Theft	(602)	18	(45)	29
Homicide	(285)	18	(58)	19
Arson/Property Destruction	(314)	14	(23)	4
Gambling	(51)	14	(5)	b
Simple Assault	(584)	13	(32)	16
Aggravated Assault	(2,253)	10	(424)	12
Sexual Assault	(568)	9	(2)	b
Other Offenses	(256)	18	(42)	14
All Cases	(15,437)	20%	(2,308)	24%

[a] Offenses above or within dotted lines had a rate of drug positives that was higher than the expected rate based on all cases.

[b] Less than 1 percent.

Not surprisingly, persons charged with a drug-related offense were relatively likely to be detected to be drug positive. Twenty-six percent of male arrestees and 41 percent of female arrestees with a drug charge were D+, compared to 20 percent and 24 percent of the arrestees from all cases, respectively. It was somewhat surprising, however, to find that persons charged with violating bail were even more likely to be detected to be using drugs. This would tend to substantiate the urine testing program's function of providing judges with information useful for setting conditions for pre-trial release. Persons charged with crimes against persons, particularly assault, were least likely to be found using drugs. These results replicate those from prior studies of arrestee populations (Eckerman et al 1971; Kozel and DuPont 1977) that have indicated that drug using arrestees are likely to be charged with crimes that seek monetary gain, rather than crimes designed to injure another person.

Results: Longitudinal Data File

Table 3 summarizes the components of the longitudinal file. The file contains information about 7,087 persons arrested during an eight month panel period (August 21, 1974 through April 30, 1975). The first case for a panel member during the panel period was designated that person's panel case. Each panel member's pre-panel cases (in PROMIS) back through 1973 and all post-panel cases up through 1978 were extracted and added to the file. The 7,087 persons had a total of 19,277 cases during the six year period. To this file were added information about time incarcerated, urinalysis test results (if one was found) for each arrest and a record of contact with any of the ADASA drug abuse treatment facilities in the District of Columbia. (We found an intake record for 812 panel members, or eleven percent of the sample.)

Table 3

COMPONENTS OF LONGITUDINAL FILE

PRE-PANEL CASES (Back Through 1/1/73) N = 3865	+	PANEL CASES (8/21/74 - 4/30/75) N = 7087	+	POST-PANEL CASES (Through 12/31/78) N = 8325
• PROMIS Info.		• PROMIS Info.		• PROMIS Info.
• Urinalysis Results		• Urinalysis Results		• Urinalysis Results
• Treatment Info.		• B + S Info.*		• B + S Info.*
		• Treatment Info.		• Treatment Info.

*Time incarcerated while awaiting trial or after conviction.

The longitudinal file makes it possible to examine questions regarding each person's pattern of arrests, involvement of drugs at each arrest, and the possible impact of treatment upon the person's criminal career. We present below findings relevant to some of these issues.

Does drug status at the panel arrest predict rearrest?

Table 4 shows that persons detected to be D+ at the time of their panel arrest were more likely to be rearrested during the post-panel period than were persons who were D-. (Results are presented only for panel members for whom a matching urinalysis record was found and for whom a positive or negative result was recorded.) Not only did drug status predict the likelihood of any subsequent arrest, it predicted those who would have multiple rearrests. Thirty percent of D+ arrestees had three or more subsequent arrests, compared to 18 percent of D- arrestees ($p < .001$).

Table 4

DOES DRUG STATUS AT PANEL ARREST PREDICT REARREST?

# OF POST-PANEL ARRESTS	DRUG STATUS AT PANEL ARREST: D+ (N=670) %	D- (N=3,312) %
NONE	35	50
1	20	21
2.	14	12
3+	30*	18*

*P < .001

Is drug status at the panel arrest associated with drug status at another arrest?

Persons who were detected to be using drugs at the time of their panel arrest were more likely to have a subsequent arrest. Was it likely that these persons were using drugs at the time of another arrest? Table 5 looks at this issue.

Table 5

IS DRUG STATUS AT PANEL ARREST RELATED TO DRUG STATUS AT PRIOR ARREST OR REARREST?

	Drug Status at Panel Arrest: D+ (N) %	D- (N) %
Found Positive		
At preceding arrest	(220) 51*	(732) 21*
At next arrest	(273) 49*	(1,078) 15*

* P < .001

Persons who were D+ at their panel arrest had about a fifty percent likelihood of being found positive at the time of an immediately prior arrest or at their next arrest. Between 15 percent and 21 percent of the persons who were D- at the time of their panel arrest were found to be using drugs at another arrest. Thus, persons who are D+ at arrest are more likely to have additional arrests and to be found to be using drugs at the time of each arrest.

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