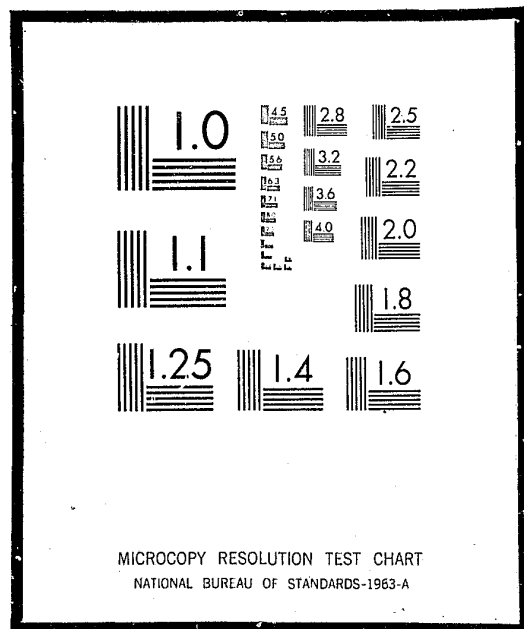


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RESEARCH REPORT I

0105

THE ALCOHOL RELATED OFFENDER IN KENTUCKY

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KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
Division of Research & Statistics
State Office Building
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

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THE ALCOHOL RELATED OFFENDER IN KENTUCKY

I Introduction

One of the greatest problems facing corrections in Kentucky and the nation is the alcohol related offender. National crime statistics show that two out of every three crimes committed in the United States have some relation to alcohol problems. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice states that almost one-half of the entire misdemeanor population in this country is made up of alcohol related offenders.

A research project completed by the Kentucky Department of Correction's Division of Research & Statistics analyzes the role of the alcohol related offender in Kentucky's corrections system. The alcohol related offender while comprising a large part of our institutions population have relatively few programs designed to deal directly with the problem. For this reason, the Division of Research has compiled this statistical profile of the alcohol related offender for the information of correctional administrators and other interested organizations.

II Observations

The study consisted of a sample of 311 offenders released to parole supervision and 243 offenders released at the expiration of their sentence. Those in the sample were released from Kentucky's three major penal institutions (Kentucky State Reformatory, Kentucky State Penitentiary and Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women) during fiscal year 1969-70. The parolees and expirationers had been in the community "at risk" from eighteen to twenty-four months

This is the first in a planned series of reports of studies undertaken by the Division of Research & Statistics. These studies will cover particular areas of concern to those engaged in the planning and administration of correctional programs in Kentucky. These studies are intended to provide an informal appraisal of our level of accomplishment in some specific areas of our corrections programming.

We intend to suggest some acceptable alternative approaches to problem solving in many of these reports.

Your response to the reports is encouraged. We hope that anyone with an alternative approach for dealing with subjects covered in these reports, will take a few minutes to outline their ideas in a brief informal statement.

at the time the study began. This amounts to a follow-up study of all those released during 1969-70 who had, in some manner, an alcohol related social history. The sample was segmented into factors that are generally considered critical to success and failure for the released offender, and are often influential in parole decisions. For our purposes alcohol relation was determined by examining the policy records and the subject's version of the crime and an alcohol related crime was coded if inebriation was indicated during the crime, or the offender had a long running alcohol problem indicated by the social history.

Success and failure rates are difficult to accurately determine, and the terms themselves can be misleading. A success was anyone who had not returned to the jurisdiction of the Kentucky Department of Corrections at the time of the study (April 1972). For both samples, the "at risk" period was the period between release and the date of this study. Failures included parole violators, new convictions, those released to a detainer from another state, and those who had warrants for their return outstanding. These categories applied only to parolees; the failure of expirationers, of course, could only be recorded by their return to the institutions on new convictions, and this fact makes comparison of the success rates of both groups more difficult.

The percentage of success for the alcohol related parolees was 63 percent as compared to 67 percent for all parolees. For expirationers the percentage of success was 71 percent, slightly lower than their over-all success rate of 74 percent. In both cases the alcohol related offender showed a lower success rate than the total sample.

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In regard to average length of sentence, the alcohol related parolee received 8.65 years average sentence while the non-alcohol related parolee received an average sentence of only 3.35 years. The only explanation for this large difference between sentences for alcohol related and non-alcohol related parolees is that, the alcohol related parolee tends to show a higher percentage of crimes against person, which carry longer sentences. Expirationers showed no difference in mean length of sentence, however, both groups average age at the time of their release were higher for alcohol related offenders.

The number of previous adult incarcerations was also a factor considered in the study. For alcohol related offenders, the average of 1.1 previous commitments was considerably higher than the average for all parolees of .63 prior commitments. This observation defies logical explanation since it implies that previous commitment is not as great a factor in parole selection for alcohol related offenders. Further study of the sample may reveal more about this particular result. Expirationers, in general, showed a higher number of previous commitments in both alcohol related and non-alcohol related offenders but again alcohol related expirationers had the higher mean (longer sentence - 1.51 as opposed to 1.32). This result was more easily explained since offenders with previous incarcerations are generally less likely to receive parole.

Blacks made up 20 percent of the parole sample, but accounted for 34 percent of the alcohol related offenders. For expirationers, the 19 percent blacks among the alcohol related offenders coincide exactly with the total percentage of blacks (19 percent) in the sample.

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Each case in the study was also coded for any previous probation revocation. Although this has often been considered an indication of criminality, this study failed to show any significant difference in probation experience that would indicate some pattern of future criminality.

As previously mentioned 47 percent of the alcohol related parolees was convicted of crime against the person, however, this is not significantly different from the 42 percent person crimes for the total parole sample. National statistics indicate a strong relationship between alcohol and person related crimes, however, this study found nothing to suggest that the alcohol related offender was more prone to crimes against the person than was the non-alcohol related offender. Alcohol related expirationers comprised 18 percent of the person-crimes, while the total percentage of person criminals among expirationers was also 18 percent.

The last category studied was that of marriage and parental factors. For parolees, an interesting observation proved to be between the percentage of parolees currently married and the percentage of parolees who were parents. The sample of parolees showed 39 percent of the alcohol related offenders currently married and 50 percent of the alcohol related offenders who were parents. The difference between non-alcohol related parolee parents and non-alcohol related parolees who were married was only 2 percent (45 percent married, 47 percent parents). It is evident that there is a higher percentage of non-married parents among the alcohol related parolees than among the general sample. Marital problems could be assumed to be a major problem of the alcohol related

parolee. No valid evidence has been provided that could link marital status with criminality, however, this study does seem to indicate a relation between alcohol related offenses and marital stability.

III Summary of Findings

This study revealed several major discrepancies between the alcohol related offender and the total population. The results show that the success rate for alcohol related offenders is generally lower than for the total population; this held true for parolees as well as the expirationer sample. The slightly higher percentage of crimes against person among alcohol related parolees as opposed to the total parole sample failed to support federal statistics of a significant relationship between alcohol and crimes of violence. Parolees had a significantly higher percentage of person crimes than did either category of expirationers (alcohol related or non-alcohol related) and consequently, showed a significantly higher mean sentence, 8.6 years versus 3.3 years.

Black parolees were over represented in the alcohol related sample with 34 percent of the alcohol related parolees being black and only 20 percent of the total parole sample being black.

The last, and one of the most interesting findings, concerned the percentage of married alcohol related offenders who were parents. For alcohol related parolees, 39 percent were currently married while 51 percent reported having dependent children. This difference in married parents versus non-married parents was not repeated in the non-alcohol related parolee sample

where 47 percent were currently married and 49 percent were parents. Differences of 10 percent in the percentage of married offenders and those with children was also found in both categories of expirationers. This seems to indicate a higher percentage of marital problems among alcohol related inmates and expirationers in general. Further study may show a clearer relation between alcohol and marital status and their relation to patterns of recidivism.

IV Conclusion

The alcohol related offender has a great part in the general crime pattern in Kentucky. The programs for the alcohol related offender at Kentucky's institutions are limited and the current fervor over the use of other drugs while entailing only a small percentage of the inmate population, threatens to force the alcohol related offender to an even lower level of priority. The higher overall recidivism rate and the generally longer sentence suggests a need for a comprehensive program for self-help for the alcohol related offender. Such programs, if they are to be successful, must deal not only with the alcoholic and his problems, but also, the offender who shows that alcohol was a contributing factor to his criminal behavior, whether he is diagnosed as alcoholic or not.

Our current efforts towards programming for alcohol related offenders are meager indeed. A recent survey indicates that the only formal programming consists of Alcoholics Anonymous Chapters at the Kentucky State Penitentiary, (25 participants), the Kentucky State Reformatory (150 participants), and the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women, which in addition to a group of 12

to 15 AA participants, has 10 women involved in Al-Anon. The program at Frenchburg consists of a group approach, though not AA and there is no specific program for the alcohol related offender at the newly opened Bluegrass Complex.

The underlying relationship between alcohol and criminal behavior has not yet been clearly defined, but research into the reasons for this behavioral pattern may open the door to deeper and more wide-spread causes of criminality. The task of any correctional institution is realistically to modify the behavior that caused criminality, and to keep the offender from returning to custody and when this behavior is very often the product of alcohol, it follows that the treatment of alcohol problems should be a critical part of any correctional program.

V Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon the information contained in the body of this report.

Develop in-house expertise for developing training programs and treatment programs for alcohol related offenders. Special seminars and training courses are available through federal programs.

Develop specific programs for all alcohol related offenders in each institution.

Develop a special facility or program location which will provide an environment specifically oriented towards dealing with alcohol problems. (The hospital facility at the Bluegrass Complex is a possibility.)

Expand the scope of the forensic psychiatry unit to include the alcohol related offender as a legitimate client.

Develop a program for training parole personnel in special counseling and supervisory techniques for alcohol related offenders.

END