

Book Reviews

Variables Affecting Drug Use

Longitudinal Research on Drug Use. Empirical Findings and Methodological Issues. Papers from a conference, San Juan, P.R., April 1976. DENISE B. KANDEL, Ed. Hemisphere, Washington, D.C., and Halsted (Wiley), New York, 1978. x, 314 pp. \$22.50.

For decades, knowledge of drug users was based mainly on studies of those who were found in prisons or hospitals, and it turned out that many beliefs based on those studies were wrong. This was shown by Lee Robins's study of drug use among Vietnam veterans and by surveys of the general population started by the Marihuana Commission in 1971 and continued by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). But these surveys, though they provided data on drug use over time, did so retrospectively, and causal order was never satisfactorily established—reports on early events or feelings could have been colored by later events. So true longitudinal studies were needed. Such studies were started as early as the surveys, but naturally were later in being completed. Now we have some of their results, and the reports presented in the compilation under review show that some of the early hopes for such studies were justified—but that the studies pose problems too.

Examples of hopes fulfilled are the clear demonstration by Johnston, O'Malley, and Eveland that most of the difference in delinquency among non-users and various drug-using groups existed before drug use began and Kandel's identification of the stages through which youthful drug use progresses, previously described in these pages (*Science* 190, 912 [1975]).

A major problem is best pointed up in the study by Josephson and Rosen of the differences between those persons who complete questionnaires or are interviewed in all waves of a panel study and those who are captured by the first wave but are lost in later ones. In the typical research design, the investigator uses probability methods to choose a sample

of some population worth generalizing to. Some members of the sample refuse to cooperate or can't be located, even in the first wave. Of those seen in the first wave, only a percentage are seen in the later ones. It is usually only those who furnish data in all waves on whom data analysis is based, but if a large percentage of the original random sample is lost the generalizability of the conclusions becomes questionable.

Several of the authors would seem to agree with the solution Jessor and Jessor have adopted to this problem. They would not generalize to the population because their core sample (students who completed each of four annual questionnaires) constituted only 38 percent of the original sample, but they saw the core sample as "nonetheless, satisfactory for the testing of hypotheses about variation in behavior and development." But the statistics used for these tests are means and product-moment and multiple correlation coefficients, all of which can clearly differ in part of a sample from their values in the full sample.

Generalization is also affected in other ways. "Drug use" carries its usual connotation, of extensive use of powerful drugs, in only one paper, Robins's examination of her data on Vietnam veterans to tease out the effects of setting and predisposition on whether use of drugs was begun before, during, or after Vietnam service. She looks at initiation into use of marihuana, amphetamines, barbiturates, and narcotics with her usual imagination and rigor, showing that Vietnam had negligible net effect on use of amphetamines and barbiturates but large effects on use of the other two drugs.

The only other paper that deals with part of what is usually perceived as the "drug problem" is one by Roizen, Cahalan, and Shanks on "spontaneous remissions" among problem drinkers. Using a general population sample, these authors show that there is a substantial amount of spontaneous remission of drinking problems, as assessed by a variety of criteria for remission, problem, and seriousness of problem, even when the ac-

tual amount of drinking remains stable or increases. Their findings bring into question the clinical picture focused on "alcoholics" instead of on "drinking problems" with the latter viewed as lasting.

All the other studies are essentially studies of marihuana use. Use of other drugs was found, but infrequently enough that categories like "no drug use," "marihuana only," and "other drugs," or merely "nonusers" and "users," serve Jessor and Jessor, Kandel *et al.*, Mellinger *et al.*, and Smith and Fogg, while those employed by Johnston *et al.* were only slightly more extensive.

This reflects the nature of the samples used. When one thinks of drug use as a social problem, those pictured as users are likely to be minority group members, living in slum areas of large cities, drop-outs from school or frequent truants, in their late teens. But here the samples were:

Jessor and Jessor: middle-class Anglo-American students in grades 7 through 12 of six schools in a small Rocky Mountain city; also a sample of similar college freshmen.

Johnston, O'Malley, and Eveland: national random sample of boys selected in 1966 from 10th grade in 87 high schools across the United States.

Josephson and Rosen: 18,000 students from 18 junior and senior high school systems, purposely selected to reflect racial, regional, and community size differences in the United States.

Kandel, Kessler, and Margulies: students from 18 New York State high schools, grades 9 through 12.

Mellinger, Somers, Bazell, and Mannheim: freshmen at the University of California, Berkeley; 82 percent white, 12 percent Asian; middle-income parents; superior high school records.

Robins: random sample of army enlisted males who returned to the United States from Vietnam in September 1971, and another random sample of those who tested positive for morphine just before departure.

Roizen, Cahalan, and Shanks: probability sample of white males, aged 21 through 59, in San Francisco.

Smith and Fogg: students in grades 4 through 12 of six suburban school systems in the Boston area; white, middle-income parents.

Of these, only Robins's sample was both complete for the last wave and representative of a segment of the general population at risk of serious drug use. The studies by Jessor and Jessor, Mellinger *et al.*, and Smith and Fogg were on samples in which use of drugs like heroin was improbable, and age decreased the

Longitudinal Research In Drug Use Empirical Findings And Methodological Issues

Arturo Cuomo



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