

# Predictors of Drug Use in Young Offender Institutions

Thimna Klatt, Dipl.-Psych., M.Sc.

Stockholm Criminology Symposium 2016



Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen  
Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony  
Germany



- Drug use is a common problem in both adult and youth prisons world-wide (although most studies focused on male adults imprisoned in the UK or in the US)
  - Levels of drug use among prison inmates even tend to be much higher than in the general population (e.g., Boys et al., 2002; Farrell et al., 1998, Fazel et al., 2006)
- Prevalence rates vary considerably, depending on the observation period, the sample, and especially the type of data collected (official records < self-report data) (see, e.g., Gillespie, 2005; MacDonald, 1999)



- Theories of inmate misconduct
  - Importation theory
    - Inmate (mis-)conduct reflects the attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural patterns that the inmate has acquired prior to incarceration (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; for an application of importation theory to drug misconduct, see, e.g., Gillespie, 2005; Jiang, 2005; Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; MacDonald, 1999; Thomas & Cage, 1977)
  - Deprivation theory
    - Inmate behaviour can be best explained by the conditions (i.e. the “strains”) of imprisonment itself (Sykes, 1958; for an application of deprivation theory to drug misconduct, see, e.g., Gillespie, 2005; Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; MacDonald, 1999; Thomas & Cage, 1977)



# Risk factors of drug misconduct in prison: Previous research

- Importation variables:
    - Age (-) (Gaes et al., 2002; Gillespie, 2005; Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; Jiang, 2005)
    - Criminal history (+) (Gaes et al., 2002; Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; Jiang, 2005)
    - Drug use history (+) (Jiang, 2005; Strang et al., 2006; Thomas & Cage, 1977)
    - Ethnicity (White/Caucasian: +) (Gaes et al., 2002; Gillespie, 2005; Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; Jiang, 2005)
  - Deprivation variables:
    - Relationship between staff and inmates (-) (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996)
    - Security level (+) (Harer & Steffensmeier, 1996; MacDonald, 1999)
- Risk factors for drug misconduct and violent misconduct largely overlap!



# Research questions

- Which importation and deprivation variables significantly predict drug misconduct among inmates of German young offender institutions?
- Is there a relationship between drug and violent misconduct among young offenders?



- Survey of male inmates of 5 German young offender institutions (self-report data), conducted in 2011 and 2012
- Sample:
  - N = 865 young offenders
    - average return rate: 71.9%
  - Age: 14-25 years
    - 70.2% were younger than 22
  - 32.1% of the participants had a migration background



- Dependent variable
  - drug use during the 4 weeks preceding the survey
    - 3 items used, referring to
      - (a) smoking cannabis
      - (b) injecting drugs
      - (c) taking drugs other than cannabis
  - Dependent variable was coded as 1 if an inmate indicated using drugs **at least once** during the past 4 weeks (if not, the dependent variable was coded as 0)
  - Cronbach's alpha = .76



- Independent/control variables
  - Importation variables:
    - Age (categorical)
    - Migration background (dichotomous)
    - Offence type (dichotomous: drug offence vs. other offence)
  - Deprivation variables:
    - Young offender institution (dummy-coded)
    - Relationship between inmates and staff
    - Sentence length (categorical)





# Descriptive Statistics

Variable	%
Drug use during last 4 weeks	30.2
Violent misconduct during last 4 weeks	33.0
Age: 14-17 years	6.9
Age: 18-21 years	63.3
Age: 22-25 years	29.8
Migration background	32.1
Drug offence	14.2
Sentence length < 1 year	10.6
Sentence length 1-2 years	33.0
Sentence length 2-3 years	33.8
Sentence length > 3 years	22.6

Variable	%
Facility 1	43.4
Facility 2	6.1
Facility 3	14.9
Facility 4	27.4
Facility 5	8.2
Relationship with staff (scale from 1 to 4)	$M = 2.59$ $SD = 0.80$



# Results of the binary logistic regression

Predictor	Odds ratio	SE	p
Facility 1	Reference	Reference	Reference
Facility 2	1.04	.38	.922
Facility 3	0.56	.40	.136
Facility 4	<b>0.41**</b>	.29	.002
Facility 5	<b>0.59*</b>	.23	.023
Aged 14-17	Reference	Reference	Reference
Aged 18-21	1.04	.37	.907
Aged 22-25	0.79	.40	.559
Migration background	1.24	.20	.285
Drug offence	<b>2.48***</b>	.23	.000
Sentence length < 1 year	Reference	Reference	Reference
Sentence length 1-2 years	1.97	.39	.080
Sentence length 2-3 years	<b>2.72**</b>	.38	.009
Sentence length > 3 years	<b>4.25***</b>	.40	.000
Relationship with staff	<b>0.52***</b>	.12	.000
Constant	1.03	.59	.965

N = 709

Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> = .203

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$



# Drug misconduct and violent misconduct

- Association of drug misconduct and violent misconduct:

		Violent misconduct		
		No	Yes	Total
Drug misconduct	No	437 (79.6%)	112 (20.4%)	549 (100%)
	Yes	90 (38.0%)	147 (62.0%)	237 (100%)
	Total	527	259	786

- $\phi = .406, p < .001$



- Drug use is a common problem in German young offender institutions
  - 30% of participants indicated using drugs during the 4 weeks preceding the survey
- Drug use was predicted by both importation and deprivation variables. Drug misconduct was associated with
  - Serving a sentence for a drug offence (+)
  - Sentence length (+)
  - Relationship with staff (-)
  - Facility (sign. differences between young offender institutions)
- No effect of age and migration background on drug use
- Positive and significant association between drug misconduct and violent misconduct



# Limitations and directions for future research

- The analyses show significant differences in the prevalence rates of drug use between the facilities
  - However, based on our data, it is not possible to say *which* characteristics of the facilities influence drug misconduct (e.g., more strict controls, more surveillance, better treatment for drug users, ...)
- Further research is needed to uncover the *mechanism(s)* underlying the relationship of drug and violent misconduct in prison; e.g.
  - drug use and violence as indicators of a general tendency to break rules
  - use of violence to get drugs
  - violent behaviour due to the disinhibiting effect of drugs
- Our study did not include female young offenders
  - Future studies should focus on young female inmates, especially since women seem to be particularly likely to use drugs in prison (see Fazel et al., 2006)



- Improving the relationship between staff and inmates could be a means to reduce inmate drug use
- Findings indicate that inmates sentenced for a drug offence are particularly likely to continue using drugs inside prison
  - Need for effective screening procedures and drug treatment
- Differences in prevalence rates between facilities indicate that characteristics of the facility and management practices influence drug misconduct → possible means to reduce drug use
- Further research on how drug misconduct can be prevented is clearly warranted, especially since drug use and prison violence are strongly associated



# References

- Boys A, Farrell M, Bebbington P, Brugha T, Coid J, Jenkins R et al. (2002). Drug use and initiation in prison: Results from a national prison survey in England and Wales. *Addiction* 97(12): 1551-1560. DOI: 10.1046/j.1360-0443.2002.00229.x
- Farrell M, Howes S, Taylor C, Lewis G, Jenkins R, Bebbington P et al. (1998). Substance misuse and psychiatric comorbidity: An overview of the OPCS National Psychiatric Morbidity Survey. *Addictive Behaviors* 23(6): 909-918. DOI: 10.1080/0954026021000045930
- Fazel S, Bains P and Doll H (2006). Substance abuse and dependence in prisoners: A systematic review. *Addiction* 101(2): 181-191. DOI: 10.1111/j.1360-0443.2006.01316.x
- Gaes GG, Wallace S, Gilman E, Klein-Saffran J and Suppa S (2002). The influence of prison gang affiliation on violence and other prison misconduct. *The Prison Journal* 82(3): 359-385. DOI: 10.1177/003288550208200304
- Gillespie W (2005). A multilevel model of drug abuse inside prison. *The Prison Journal* 85(2): 223-246. DOI: 10.1177/0032885505277002
- Harer MD and Steffensmeier DJ (1996). Race and prison violence. *Criminology* 34(3): 323-355. DOI: 10.1111/j.1745-9125.1996.tb01210.x
- Irwin J and Cressey DR (1962). Thieves, convicts and the inmate culture. *Social Problems* 10(2): 142-155. DOI: 10.2307/799047
- Jiang S (2005). Impact of drug use on inmate misconduct: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 33(2): 153-163. DOI: 10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2004.12.007
- MacDonald JM (1999). Violence and drug use in juvenile institutions. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 27(1): 33-44. DOI: 10.1016/S0047-2352(98)00033-6
- Strang J, Gossop M, Heuston J, Green J, Whiteley C and Maden A (2006). Persistence of drug use during imprisonment: Relationship of drug type, recency of use and severity of dependence to use of heroin, cocaine and amphetamine in prison. *Addiction* 101(8): 1125-1132. DOI: 10.1111/j.1360-0443.2006.01475.x
- Sykes GM (1958). *The society of captives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Thomas CW and Cage RJ (1977). Correlates of prison drug use: An evaluation of two conceptual models. *Criminology* 15(2): 193-210. DOI: 10.1111/j.1745-9125.1977.tb00061.x



# Thank you for your attention!

