

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Trevor Bennett** and **Katy Holloway**, *Drug-Crime Connections*. Cambridge Studies in Criminology. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 362 pp. \$US 32.99 paper (978-0-521-68714-0), \$US 85.00 hardcover (978-0-521-86757-3)

**D***rug-Crime Connections* is premised on the concept that a “drug-crime connection” may be misleading. Instead they argue that it should read “connections,” to reflect the many distinct ways in which drugs and crime are connected. This assertion is not overly controversial in the first place — many of their predecessors have underlined the various pathways linking drugs and crime. What they should be credited with is conducting their analysis with a healthy obsession for drug specific and crime-specific results, avoiding the pitfalls of aggregation and over-generalization sometimes found in the field and that unfortunately make their way to policymakers. The decision to disaggregate is an important one. Bennett and Holloway found many drug-crime connections that are strong and robust, but many others that are not. In that sense, the authors fulfill the expectations they themselves set out at the start of the book.

The title of the book, however, may lead some readers to expect something different, namely that it sheds a new light on the causal uncertainties between drug use and crime: does drug use causes crime, or does crime causes drug use, or is the association caused by a common third variable? The book does not answer any questions of causal inferences, and one should not expect substantial theoretical or policy contributions resulting from it. The causal models are mentioned, loosely guiding the interpretation of some results, but none of the models are tested. Policy implications are discussed, but are neither fully developed nor lead to a concrete policy recommendation. To be fair, this is not the authors’ objective either. As rich as their dataset may be in measuring the statistical association between drug use and crime, it is not suitable for causal inferences, and the authors prudently refrain from making misguided conjectures.

What the book does is revisit the statistical association between drug use and crime through a careful analysis of the United Kingdom’s New English and Welsh Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (NEW-ADAM) data on drug use by arrestees. Do offenders who use drugs commit more crimes than those who do not? Does the association hold for different

drugs, for a range of offence types? In answering these questions, Bennett and Holloway have made two analytical choices that lead to interesting findings. First, they have chosen to disaggregate the association between drug use and crime by type of drug, allowing the readers to appreciate whether the association is as strong for recreational (e.g., cannabis, amphetamines) as for hard drugs (e.g., crack, heroin). They found that use of any of these drugs is related to crime commission, but that the relationship was clearer and stronger for hard drugs than for recreational drugs. Another important finding is that the cocaine-crime association is more akin to the link found between crime and recreational drugs, rather than heroin, or even crack. These results underline the variations in the harms that are related to specific drugs, and have clear policy implications in regards the enforcement of illegal drug markets, and the sentencing of drug offenders.

Second, Bennett and Holloway have chosen to disaggregate their measure of crime: Is it mere participation in crime (prevalence) that is related to drug use, the rate of participation (incidence) that matters, or is it both? The answer is clearer for prevalence than for incidence. On the one hand, they found a general drug-crime connection in regards to prevalence: drug use is associated with a range of offence types. Among the more specific, but expected findings, they found that heroin use is strongly related to predominately money-generating crimes, and crack use is associated with most types of crimes. On the other hand, they found much less general support for the association between crime incidence and drug use. In fact, the only association of importance appeared to be between heroin use and high rates of shoplifting. This is an important finding because the aggregate analysis between drug use and crime incidence was previously found to be significant, suggesting a general drug-crime incidence connection. But once controlled for heroin users who shoplift, the statistical association disappears. This is an important finding, one that the authors should be credited for, but one which they may not have emphasized enough.

The findings summarized above and the main contributions of this book can be found in part III. The rest of the book may be qualified as “useful” for readers interested in a detailed summary of findings from the NEW-ADAM surveys, or an introduction to the association between some important topics (e.g., gangs, drug markets, health, gender, ethnicity) and drug use. But none of these chapters is essential to researchers in the field.

Let me conclude by highlighting the fact that the data analyzed by Bennett and Holloway was part of an important data collection program that no longer exists — and has never existed in Canada. The ADAM

program offered the most rich and precise data on drug use by some of the heaviest and most criminally involved drug users. It offered a much needed complement to the underestimates provided by the high school and general population surveys. Any government serious about collecting data on the scale and scope of its drug problem should consider a program like ADAM. Its loss has already caused significant gaps in knowledge in the previously participating countries, and Canada's non-involvement continues to be detrimental to research and drug policy to this day.

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