

Memoirs
of the Section on Alcohol Studies
Yale University
No. I

Sociology and the Problems of Alcohol
Foundations for a Sociologic Study of Drinking Behavior
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The Section on Alcohol Studies (School of Alcohol Studies) of the Laboratory of Applied Physiology, Yale University, is engaged in sociologic, legal and statistical research relating to the problems of alcohol. The results of these studies are published in the QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL, or as monographs in the series of *Memoirs of the Section on Alcohol Studies*, or in both forms. The present monograph constitutes Memoir No. 1 in this series and has appeared in the QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL, Vol. 4, No. 3, December 1943.

Introductory Note

JUDGING from headings in bibliographies of the alcohol literature, there appears to be a large volume of sociological literature extant. Close analysis, however, reveals that the subject matter of the books and papers referred to is related to sociology but, with a few exceptions, does not report sociologic research in the strictest sense. The majority of these writings belong to some borderland science of sociology rather than to the subject itself. They deal with subjects which are of interest to the sociologist, but they do not deal with them from the viewpoint of the sociologist, nor are they based on a utilization of his techniques.

The entire literature of prohibition, repeal, and all forms of controlled consumption is usually classified as sociological literature of the alcohol problem. In part, these works are treatises in the science of government, and to a much larger part they are politicopolemical writings for or against prohibition, or for or against diverse forms of controlled consumption. The attitude of a group toward these questions is a matter in which the sociologist engaged in research on alcohol problems must take an interest. Whatever phase of the problem he may study, he cannot avoid relating his findings to the social attitudes reflected in these categories of the alcohol literature. These books and papers thus afford source material for the sociologist, but they do not constitute sociological thought.

There is another group of writings in the alcohol literature which has given rise to the impression that a vast sociological literature on inebriety exists. There are numerous papers and one or two books, written by psychiatrists, which by their titles suggest sociological investigation. An example is Pohlisch's book.* With a few exceptions, such as Myerson's article,† these writings lack the frame of reference, the operational concepts and the techniques of the sociologist. Fre-

***POHLISCH, K.** *Soziale und persönliche Bedingungen des chronischen Alkoholismus.* Leipzig; G. Thieme, 1934.

†**MYERSON, A.** *Quart. J. Stud. Alc.* 1: 13, 1940.