



# RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

Barnes, G. M., Welte, J. W., Hoffman, J. H., & Dintcheff, B. A. (2005). Shared predictors of youthful gambling, substance use, and delinquency. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 19*(2), 165-174. doi:10.1037/0893-164X.19.2.165

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Does gambling, substance use, and delinquency in youth share specific predictors/characteristics?

## PURPOSE

Delinquent behaviours, substance use, and gambling behaviours are related in adolescence. Such behaviours are often grouped into a problem behaviour syndrome. The purpose of this study was to identify links between these problem behaviours in two longitudinal samples of adolescents using measures from three explanatory domains: sociodemographic, individual, and socialization factors.

## PARTICIPANTS

The data for this study were taken from two general population household samples of youth from the metropolitan area of Buffalo, NY - the Family and Adolescent Study (Study 1) and the Delinquency in Young Men (Study 2). Study 1: The sample included 226 males and 296 females with a mean age of 19 years. Twenty-nine percent of the participants were Black and 71% were White and Other. Study 2: All 597 participants were male, with a mean age of 19 years. The sample was nearly equally divided by race: 49% Black and 51% White and Other.

## PROCEDURE

Measures from three explanatory domains (sociodemographic, individual and socialization factors) were analyzed for links to problem behaviours in both studies.

## MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

**Gambling.** Indicators were derived from identical questions on gambling in both studies asking about the frequency of nine types of gambling. Items in the three resulting groups were: (a) sports, games of skill, and horses-dogs, (b) cards and dice, and (c) lottery, bingo slots, and casino games.

**Alcohol Misuse.** Indicators were used representing youth alcohol misuse in both studies including: (a) alcohol consumption, (b) number of times drunk in the

past year, and (c) frequency of drinking five or more drinks at one time in the past year.

**Drug Use.** Indicators were used representing youth drug use in both studies including: (a) frequency of marijuana use in the past year, (b) frequency of use of other illicit drugs besides marijuana in the past year, and (c) average number of cigarettes per day.

**Delinquency.** Scale-level indicators were used for the delinquency factor in both studies including: (a) frequency of delinquent acts committed for monetary gain, (b) frequency of violent delinquent acts, and (c) frequency of general delinquent acts consisting of minor, property, or nonviolent acts.

**Independent**

**Variables:**

**Sociodemographic Factors.** In Study 1 both males and females were included, whereas Study 2 had all male respondents. Race was coded as was youth age and number of years of mother's education.

**Individual Factors.** Factors measured were impulsivity (items from the Psychopathic State Inventory was used) and moral disengagement (questions reflecting youth attitudes toward deviance adapted from the National Youth Survey were used).

**Socialization Factors.** Both studies included five comparable questions about parental monitoring of the adolescents' whereabouts and peer associations. Peer delinquency was measured based on the youth reports of their friends' delinquent acts during the past year.

## KEY RESULTS

**Sociodemographic Factors.** For females, lower SES was weakly associated with higher levels of gambling, and lower SES was associated with less delinquency. Race was a strong predictor of the various problem indicators; for females, gambling was the only problem behaviour that did not show a significant association with race. Blacks had less alcohol misuse and less overall other drug use than their White counterparts. In Study 1 both Black females and males had less delinquency than their White counterparts.

**Individual Factors.** For females, impulsivity was a weak predictor of alcohol misuse. For males in Study 1, impulsivity was not a significant predictor for any of

the outcomes whereas for males in Study 2, impulsivity predicted later delinquency. In Study 2, moral disengagement significantly predicted gambling and other drug use.

Socialization Factors. In both studies, higher levels of parental monitoring resulted in less alcohol misuse and less other drug use for males, however, this was not the case for females. Increased levels of peer delinquency were related to increased levels of adolescent problem behaviours. For males in Study 1, increased peer delinquency predicted later alcohol misuse and drug use whereas for females it predicted all four problem behaviours. For males in Study 2, peer delinquency predicted later substance use and delinquency, but not gambling.

### **LIMITATIONS**

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Problem behaviours were not controlled for, either by selection of participants or by including earlier measures of the outcome behaviours in the models. A measure of gambling was not included in Study 1

as gambling was not measured earlier in that study. There were some differences in the measures between the two data sets, and not all measures were available at each wave in each data set. Also, neither of the studies included measures of problem gambling which may be more strongly related to other problem behaviours.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

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Findings from this study indicate that problem behaviours in youth are intertwined and that there are shared characteristics from various domains that can prospectively predict these outcomes in the adolescent general population.

**KEYWORDS:** adolescent, youth behaviour problems, demographic, substance use, psychosocial factors, risk factors, parenting

**URL:**

[tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14459795.2014.966131](https://tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14459795.2014.966131)

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Directory: S:\Knowledge Repository\Synopsis\Synopsis-pdf\_conversions\_2017\Needs Citation  
Template: C:\Users\krystal\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dotm  
Title:  
Subject:  
Author: Joseph Grady  
Keywords:  
Comments:  
Creation Date: 2017-03-07 4:20:00 PM  
Change Number: 5  
Last Saved On: 2017-03-10 10:27:00 AM  
Last Saved By: Krystal Luscombe  
Total Editing Time: 2 Minutes  
Last Printed On: 2017-03-10 10:27:00 AM  
As of Last Complete Printing  
Number of Pages: 2  
Number of Words: 822 (approx.)  
Number of Characters: 4,889 (approx.)