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Regulation of Deviance: Drug and Alcohol Use among Adolescents and Young Adults
Nikkee L Payne University of Nebraska at Lincoln Abstract

This paper explores the overall affects that peers, family members, and religious affiliations have among adolescents and young adults when it comes to the use of deviant substances such as drugs and alcohol. Here we will examine the specific affects that peers tend to have on individual adolescents and how subgroups can influence the future of the individual. We will look at the errors in the limitations placed throughout the different studies done and speculate on what could have been done to better generalize the results.

Drug and alcohol use among adolescents and young adults is common and tends to lead to later abuse of said substances. Here we will find better understanding of the overall outcomes of deviant adolescents and their choices that they make about drugs and alcohol in congruency to environmental factors. Regulation of Deviance: Drug and Alcohol Use among Adolescents and Young Adults There have been numerous studies done on the use of drugs and alcohol within the different cultures and subcultures seen throughout society. Many of these studies tend to focus more so on the young adults and adolescents use of different substances more often than the use across all different age groups. There has been much speculation among many psychologists and sociologists around the different influences of these adolescents and young adults. Different studies have focused on the influences of peers and parents as well as religion on the use of drugs and alcohol. It is seen that peers tend to have a more direct influence on the use of different substances than that of parents. Research by Bahr, Hoffmann

and Yang (2005) shows that the attitudes of the parents tend to affect the overall outcome of adolescent drug use. It is easy to see the correlation between drug use, deviance, and future accomplishments of the adolescents who choose to partake in these deviant acts. No matter what the choice of substance is there is a direct correlation between the use and committing different deviant acts. Literature Review There are many studies that emphasize the direct connection between adolescent drug use and the influences that family members and peers have on this. According to Walden et al (2004) there is a clear correlation linking parents, peers and substance use among youth. This study attempts to look at the genetic influences versus the environmental influences in question of which is more significant to adolescent sway. In the study they attempt to illustrate two possible genetic influences that could possibly help explain the connection between peers, parents and what is seen as substance use phenotypes. “ First, the associations could be the product of active genotype—environment correlations, wherein individuals gravitate to different environments (or perceive similar environments differently) on the basis of their unique, genetically influenced dispositions. To the extent that risk for early adolescent substance use is influenced by heritable factors (e. g., temperament), selection into deviant peer groups by adolescents with a propensity to use substances would represent an active genotype—environment correlation. Second, the associations could owe to evocative genotype—environment correlations, which occur when individuals elicit reactions from their environments on the basis of their own genetically influenced behavior. For example, an adolescent’s early use of substances

(again, as influenced by heritable factors) could negatively impact the relationship between the adolescent and his or her parent(s) by resulting in increased parent—child conflict. Given the possibility that these putatively environmentally mediated associations could, in fact, result from genotype—environment correlational processes" [(Walden, McGue, Iacono, Burt, & Elkins, 2004, p. 441)]. When looking at the results of the study Walden et al (2004) came to the conclusion that these genetic, heritable factors were far less significant than that of the environmental factors to influence youth early youth substance use. The findings here provided a much needed view on the different relationships between peer influence and substance use and parent characteristics and substance use. The different parenting styles definitely had a great affect on the choices that the youth made when it came to the different uses of substances. It is speculated that the choice of peers can also influence the parent-child interactions and account for relationship problems amongst youth and their parents. There are many positive correlations that came out of this study; however there were limitations on the study that did not account for specific aspects of young adult use of specific substances. There is an absence of the influence of that of teachers in the environment as well as a lack of an overall representative sample in that it consisted of mostly Caucasians. Also, there was a lack of recognizing the sibling influences possible. For the lack of coverage on the influence of the siblings of the deviant youth Stormshak et al makes up for in her article covering Sibling and Peer Deviance. Here the study looks at the different constructs set in place as predictors of substance use of adolescents; these constructs consist of sibling deviance, warmth, and

conflict. It is also speculated that the sibling relationships will outweigh that of peer relationships when it comes to influencing deviant behavior [(Stormshak, Comeau, & Shepard, 2004, p. 637)]. The results compare significantly with that of the hypotheses of the study. Sibling deviance was the more significant forecaster for adolescent substance use in comparison to that of peer influence. They bring up a good perspective on the fact that the antisocial youth, especially those with behavior problems, often are rejected from the main social groups around them; however they usually end up making their own subgroups. Usually these subgroups are focused on the thing that they have in common; the deviant acts they partake in. This study tends to jump back and forth on the stance of peer groups versus sibling influence on the outcome of the adolescents. However Stormshak does state that sibling relationships comparatively to peer relationships are far more stable and therefore could possibly serve as a more high risk context for adolescents [(Stormshak, Comeau, & Shepard, 2004, p. 645)]. One thing that we need to keep in mind is the limitation of age in this study. Age here can be applied in numerous cases; that is the age of the adolescent at risk as well as the age difference between the youth and their siblings. One thing that the majority of these articles can all agree on is the fact that early initiation of substance use is associated with more addictive behaviors later on in the youth's lifespan. Often early substance use is associated with more delinquent behavior, academic problems, impairments in the individual's ability to function as a contributing member of our society, and health problems. Kumpulainen (2000) gives several examples of different studies done with the conclusion that psychiatric problems reported earlier in the

adolescents life is correlated with that of drug use later on in life; also, “ mental disorders generally precede the development of addictive disorders” [(Kumpulainen, 2000, p. 1848)]. Here she focuses more on the mental state of the individuals and its correlation with the drug use. One can see that the mental health is significantly lower when it comes to the use of drugs and alcohol earlier in the adolescents life. Again, Kumpulainen (2000) refers to other sources to confirm that addictive behaviors and mental disorders tend to go hand in hand. Additionally, in a separate study by Andrews and Duncan (1997) they address the mental capacity and academic motivation of youth and its inverse relationship with substance use; rather than the mental state of the individual. Andrews and Duncan’s study had three major constructs to it; focusing on the family relationships, the deviance of the adolescent, and the academic motivation. One of the limitations as well as benefits to the study was the fact that all of the information gathered came from the reports of the mother and the target adolescents [(Andrews & Duncan, 1997, p. 527)]. Also, the confine of the individuals mostly being Caucasian and living in single-parent households may slightly skew the overall generalization of the study. The study comes to the conclusion that there is no significant relationship between alcohol use and that of academic motivation; also, for the other substances of marijuana and cigarettes it is inconclusive to the fact that the results cannot determine which act precedes the other. In that substance use precedes academic motivation or the inverse of this as well. However, they can conclude that the increased use in marijuana and cigarettes does lead to more of a lack of motivation when it comes to academics. [(Andrews & Duncan, 1997, p. 541)]. There are two separate

longitudinal studies that focus more so on the transitions made from these earlier adolescent years into the later adolescent years and adulthood. Here we look at the friendships and peers to understand the direction in which the adult will end up going. Dishion and Owen (2002) have findings consistent with numerous other studies in that many of these individuals tend to be put into specific peer groups that more regularly use substances [(Dishion & Owen, 2002, p. 488)]. One needs to remember that the connection made between these peers with the use of these substances is substantial and tend to be long lasting. Therefore we can assume that these connections will be significant throughout the individual's life and not just the adolescent years. Similarly, the study done by Mason, Hitch and Spoth (2009) shows the transition from early to late adolescents in that with the interaction of the proper peer group at age sixteen along with what they see as the negative affect can be a predictor of the amount of substance use in later adolescence. This negative affect that they speak of is alluding to the use of substance to escape or cope with the current reality that each individual may be facing at that time. This is one of the few studies that hint toward this hypothesis; " other studies have not supported the self-medication hypothesis among teens" [(Mason, Hitch, & Spoth, 2009, p. 1153)]. Here you see more of a lack from this study when it comes to the overall assessment of negative affective states. This is where you gain more insight through other articles concerning the actual mental states of individuals and the direct correlation that it has with the use of different substances. The study done by Dishion and Owen (2002) has fewer limitations on it; their unexpected findings helped to further understand the hypothesis of deviant

friendships and the relationship to dangerous drug use. They have seen to have fewer discrepancies when it came to the results and findings. “ The Young adult years are a critical transition point for many individuals, ” Dishion and Owen (2002) state; this is “ when selection of partners, formation of families, and the foundation for the next generation are established” [(Dishion & Owen, 2002, p. 489)]. One cannot forget the influence of religion and its effects on the use of what is seen as deviant substances by our different sub-cultures and societies. Walker et al states that, “ research has shown religiosity to be a protective factor with regard to substance use and other problem behaviors” [(Walker, Ainette, Wills, & Mendoza, 2007, p. 84)]. There are clear indications of differentiation of substance use dependent upon the entirety of the relationship that one has with religion. When it comes to religion they tend to encourage certain behaviors that are more socially accepted and fewer deviants. Therefore, one can assume that adolescents involved in their religious organizations will be less likely to commit acts of deviance such as use of specific substances. This study is yet another indication of the inverse relationship between religiosity and substance use. Discussion It is clear that there are many factors that come into play when it comes to deviance in adolescents and young adults. Many of the findings in the articles come to the same conclusions; that is that numerous environmental factors along with that of peer groups, religious groups and family members all come into play. The speculation that the sibling relationship is more significant than that of peer relationships by Stormshak et al. is simply just that, speculation. Looking at the results as a whole we can see that peer relationships are just as

significant of that of sibling relationships as well as parent relationships. Peer groups are what help adolescents more or less decide who they would like to be and the activities that they would like to partake in. Bahr, Hoffmann and Yang (2005) also concluded that “ peer drug use had stronger affects than any of the other variables; However, the results [also] showed that the family variables had significant impacts on adolescent drug use as well” [(Bahr, Hoffmann, & Yang, 2005, p. 545)]. A major limitation of the majority of the studies would be the ability to generalize them across a number of populations. Many studies are done on Caucasians and also have other specific measures that are not easily able to be generalized across many cultures and subcultures. In order to fully understand the compete influence on peer, family and religious groups one would need to look at numerous characteristics not just specific sub-groups. Conclusion and Future Study As a whole the amount of research done on peer, family and religious influence is significant enough that we can get a good idea on the overall affects. Substance use among more troubled adolescence is far more common than that of adolescence involved in religious organizations and those who are motivated academically as well. Those youth who have been labeled as antisocial and having more mental health problems are forced into this more deviant peer group and are more likely to become substance users and abusers later in life. There are clear correlations between deviant peers and drug usage among adolescents. In future studies we should make sure to have a more wide population to study. Not focus as much on the Caucasians and troubled youth. When it comes to troubled youth you need a comparison of what is seen as society as the more angelic adolescents who tend to not

get mixed up in substances that are deviant. Here, however, it is clear that there are many factors that come into play when determining the adolescent's use of drugs and alcohol. References Andrews, J. A., & Duncan, S. C. (1997). Examining the Reciprocal Relation Between Academic Motivation and Substance Use: Effects of Family Relationships, Self-Esteem, and General Deviance. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 20(6), 523-549.

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