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Adolescent antisocial behavior and substance use Longitudinal analyses

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Abstract

This study explores how antisocial behavior among adolescents at age 14 is related longitudinally to their daily smoking, heavy alcohol use, and illicit drug use (hashish and amphetamines) at age 17. The sample of 9th graders ($n=1293$) attending compulsory schools in Reykjavik, Iceland participated in the study and in the follow-up 3 years later. The focus is on a subgroup of 17-year-old adolescents who had not experimented with cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, or illicit drug use at age 14. Even after eliminating from the study those who had experimented with smoking at age 14 and those whose peers smoked, the adolescents who showed more signs of antisocial behavior at age 14 were more likely to smoke daily at age 17. Similar findings were revealed for illicit drug use at age 17. Further, with regard to alcohol use, adolescents who had not experimented with alcohol but showed indications of antisocial behavior at age 14 were more likely to drink heavily at each episode at age 17 if their parents drank. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Adolescents; Antisocial behavior; Substance use; Longitudinal study

1. Introduction

Among the several risk factors for adolescent substance use (see overview by Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992) is antisocial behavior (e.g., Durant, Knight, & Goodman, 1997; Elliott, Huizinga, & Ageton, 1985; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Kandel, Simcha-Fagan, &

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Davies, 1986). In fact, aggressive behavior in childhood predicts antisocial behavior, which relates to substance use in adolescence (Block, Block, & Keyes, 1988; Kellam, Brown, Rubin, & Ensminger, 1983; Pulkkinen & Pitkänen, 1994). However, the direction and nature of the causal relationships between antisocial behavior and substance use remain obscure (e.g., Brook, Whiteman, & Finch, 1992; Brook, Whiteman Finch, & Cohen, 1996; Otero-Lopes, Luengo-Martin, Miron-Redondo, & Carrillo-De-La-Peña 1994; Robins & Wish, 1977; Rutter, Giller, & Hagell, 1998; Windle, 1990). Moreover, few studies have explored whether antisocial behavior among adolescents who have not experimented with drugs is associated with their later substance use. In the literature about alcohol expectancy, some have argued that in order to avoid a potential artifact of concurrent associations between variables in longitudinally designed studies, we must explore expectancies in a sample of nonusers to predict later substance use (Goldman, Brown, Christiansen, & Smith, 1991; Leigh, 1989). From both a theoretical and a methodological perspective, this focus is apparently lacking in the literature on adolescent antisocial behavior and substance use. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is to explore antisocial behavior among nonusers at age 14 to predict their substance use at age 17. By excluding adolescents who have already experimented with substances at age 14, we can see more clearly whether and how antisocial behavior during early adolescence relates to becoming a substance user.

Parental and peer influences have been shown to be important in adolescent substance use (Ary, Tildesley, Hops, & Andrews, 1993; Chassin, Presson, Sherman, Montello, & McGrew, 1986; Newcomb, Huba, & Bentler, 1983; Peterson, Hawkins, Abbott, & Catalano, 1994), as well as in adolescent antisocial behavior (Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Patterson, 1996; Rutter et al., 1998; Vuchinich, Bank, & Patterson, 1992). As recent studies claim that environmental factors, such as parental and peer cigarette smoking and alcohol use, are more effective than personal factors in predicting adolescent use of these substances (Doherty & Allen, 1994), surprisingly few longitudinal studies have focused simultaneously on adolescent antisocial behavior and the parental and peer use of substances. Therefore, we feel it important to take these factors into account in our model. In addition, we explore this relationship for the use of different substances, namely tobacco, alcohol, hashish, and amphetamines, as research has shown that antisocial behavior relates differently to the use of various drugs (Otero-Lopez et al., 1994; Windle, 1990). For example, Windle's study indicates that antisocial behavior (theft, fighting, vandalism) at age 14–15 predicts the use of alcohol and marijuana at age 18–19 but does not predict either cigarette smoking or illicit drug use. Moreover, in our previous analyses of Icelandic data, we have found that both environmental (Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2000) and personal factors (Adalbjarnardottir & Rafnsson, 2001) serve as different risk factors with regard to the substance in question.

Our main hypothesis is that adolescents who report more antisocial behavior at age 14 will be more likely to smoke daily, to drink heavily at each episode, and to use illicit drugs at age 17. We expect each of these findings even after eliminating from our analyses those participants who had experimented with the substance in question at age 14. Furthermore, we anticipate these findings even after taking into account the influential factors of both parental and peer smoking and drinking.

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