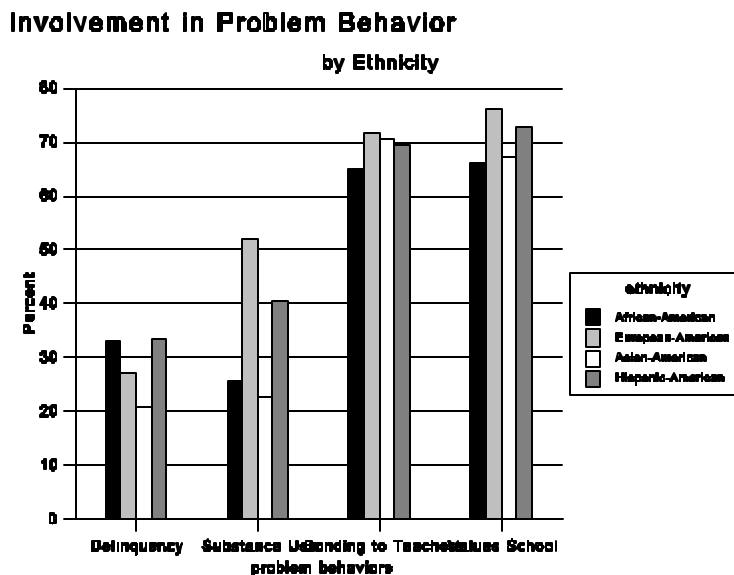


Ethnic and neighborhood variation in the association of deviance and academic engagement.

Nancy Darling

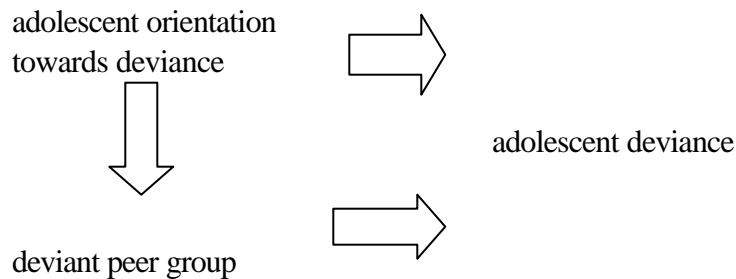
Paper presented as part of the symposium Developmental Processes: Are They Similar or Different Across Ethnic and Racial Groups? (Daniel Flannery, Chair) Paper presented at the 1995 Society for Research on Child Development, Indianapolis, IN

- 1) The majority of researchers comparing youths from different ethnic backgrounds have focused on differences in the prevalence of different outcomes.
 - a) Examples: school drop out, teen pregnancy, etc.
- 2) Differences in the rates of deviance have consistently varies across ethnic groups: (R101)



- a) Key points:
 - i) Delinquency and substance use consistently lower among Asian-Americans.
 - ii) Whites show highest levels of substance use and are most likely to be disengaged from school and unhappy with their teachers.
- 3) Although important in understanding the ecological contexts in which adolescents live, rates tell us little about the processes through which adolescents become involved in deviance or whether these processes vary as a function of ethnic background.
 - a) Rates could differ EITHER because processes are the same, but are more likely to occur in one context or another, or because processes through which involvement occur are fundamentally different.
- 4) Problem behavior syndrome offers insight into this process.

- a) Define problem behavior syndrome.
- b) Covariation of problem behaviors suggests a common underlying cause.
 - i) discussion of positive manifold based on Anastasi
- c) Jessor & Jessor argue that deviance occurs as adolescents weaken ties towards adult-values and become involved in contexts that support deviance.
 - i) Model:

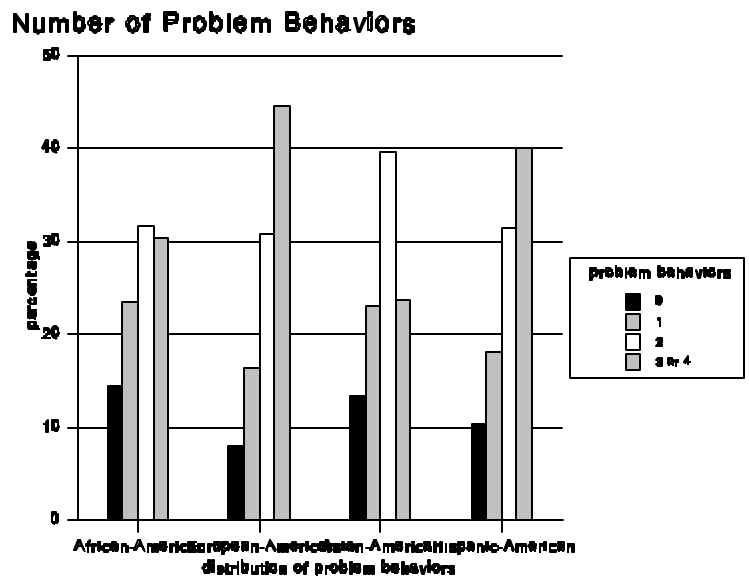


- d) Covariation of disparate behaviors suggests that an ecological niche exists that supports these behaviors.
 - e) This niche would include person characteristic of weakened commitment to adult values (orientation towards deviance) and a peer context in which deviant behaviors are sustained and new deviant behaviors are introduced.
- 5) This paper will examine questions that attempt to use problem behavior syndrome to gain insight into ethnic variability in the processes through which adolescents become involved in deviance.
- a) Do problem behaviors covary as a syndrome in all ethnic groups?
 - b) If so, suggests processes may be the same.
 - c) If not, suggests processes may differ.
 - d) Does the extent to which the context proposed to underlie problem behavior syndrome - i.e. the peer group - reflect adolescent orientations towards problem behaviors equally for youths of different ethnic backgrounds?
- 6) **Insert methods and measures.**
- 7) Question One: Do problem behaviors covary as a syndrome in all ethnic groups?
- a) Four types of problem behaviors:
 - i) bonding to teachers
 - ii) values schools

- iii) delinquency
- iv) substance use

8) Analysis:

- a) number of problem behaviors counts:
 - i) substance use (yes/no)
 - ii) involved in delinquency (yes/no)
 - iii) average agreement to value school items as 'disagree'
 - iv) average agreement to bonding to teachers items as 'disagree'
- b) examines distribution of number of problem behaviors by ethnicity (R103)



9)

10) POINT OUT:

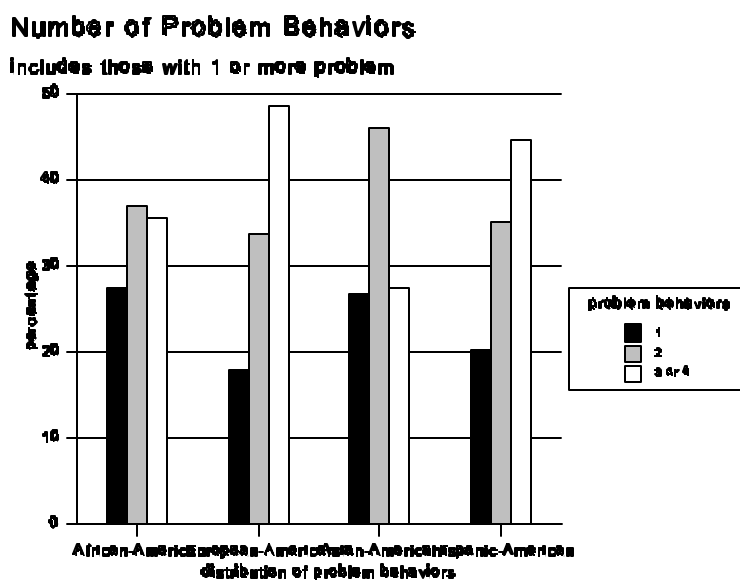
- a) Key bar is 3 or 4/4 problems: syndrome

11) Results:

- a) Significant difference in distribution of problem behaviors by ethnicity:
 - i) African- and Asian-Americans most likely to be experiencing no problems
 - ii) Syndromes of problem behaviors: 3 or more of the 4 problem behaviors: most frequently seen among European- and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic-Americans.

12) One problem with this analysis - and it is common to many methods of looking at covariation of problem behaviors - is that it suffers from problems of rates.

- a) Common problem to any method that includes those who aren't involved in problem behaviors: including all analyses based upon correlations, regression, and factor analysis.
- b) Does it make sense to talk about a 'syndrome' when there is no symptom?
 - i) pneumonia is a syndrome, or constellation, of symptoms, but we don't use people who have no symptoms of pneumonia to determine that if they have one symptom, they'll have others.
- c) syndromes can only be defined by those who have at least some symptoms.
 - i) otherwise base rate of people with no problems throws off comparisons
- d) Redo analysis, only including those who have at least one problem behavior. (R103)



13)

- a) Key points:
 - i) Again we see differences in the extent to which problem behaviors covary as a syndrome:
 - (1) highest among European-American, lowest among Asian-American

14) OVERHEAD OFF

15) Conclusion, Question 1:

- a) Ethnic differences in the extent to which problem behaviors act as a syndrome suggest that underlying processes differ.
 - i) problem behaviors covary as a syndrome to a greater extent among European-, and to a lesser extent, Hispanic-Americans than it does among African- or Asian-Americans
- b) This has important implications for intervention programs.
 - i) if underlying assumption is that commitment to school and other adult-oriented institutions will keep adolescents uninvolved with delinquency and substance use, ethnic differences in covariation are important.
 - (1) assume causal mechanism is weakened commitment to adult values
 - ii) if academics and substance use are only related among whites, limits the generalizability of the model, and thus efficacy of intervention programs.
- c) Alternative theories have argued that problem behaviors depend, not on overall orientation towards adult norms, but on specific norms for specific behaviors
 - i) these results, which show evidence of problem behavior syndrome among European-Americans more than African- or Asian-Americans suggests that syndrome model may hold for whites, but that specific norms may operate in other contexts.

16) Question Two: One reason for this may have to do with peers. Peer influence and context.

- a) Jessor & Jessor have argued that peer context and selection is one mechanism underlying the covariation.

17) Selection and mutual influence are both involved in similarity of peers to one another.

- a) Among white adolescents, orientation towards academics and deviance are organizing factors in the peer structure (Rigsby & McGill; Brown).
- b) Is this equally true among youths from other ethnic backgrounds?
- c) if YES, suggests that processes in peer selection and influence are similar
- d) if NO, suggests that processes differ

18) Method for defining peer group:

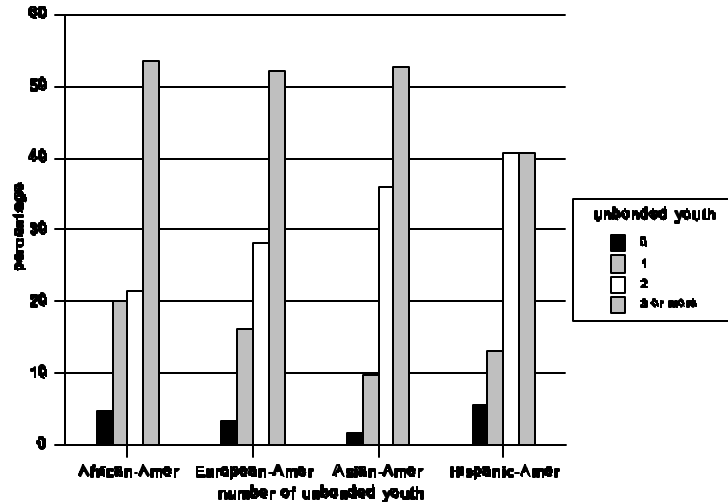
- a) Named 5 closest friends
- b) They were in our sample
- c) Used their reports about themselves, therefore not perception of target adolescent

19) Analysis:

- a) Are youths who are UNINVOLVED in problem behavior more likely to be in peer groups with deviant youths in some contexts than others?
- b) Counts number of peers (youths nominated as close friends) who manifest a problem behavior.
- c) Analysis includes only those who name 3 or more friends.

Bondedness of Peer Group

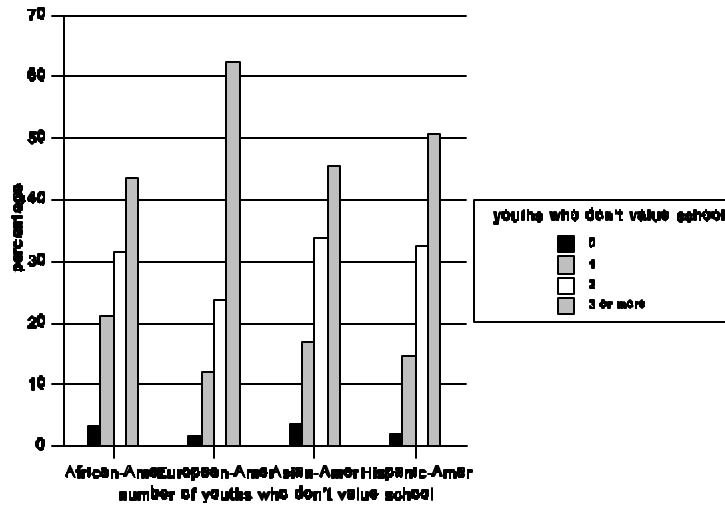
Bonded Youth Only



20)

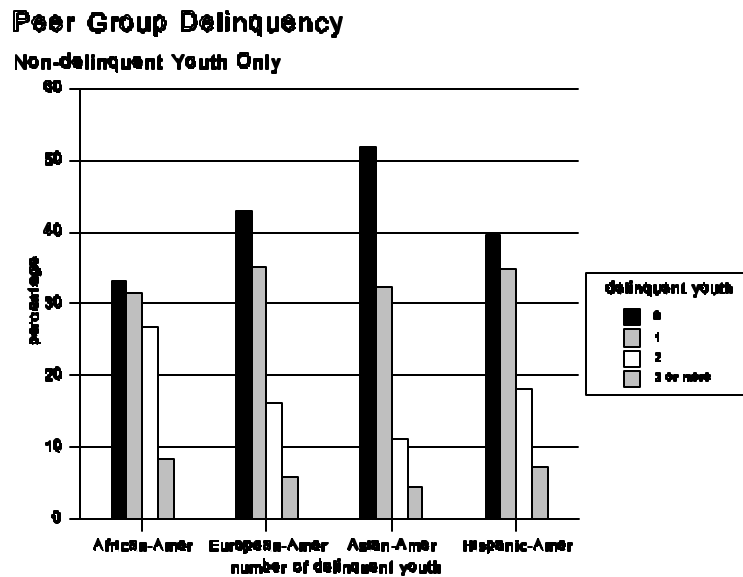
Extent of Valuing School of Peer Group

Youths Who Value School

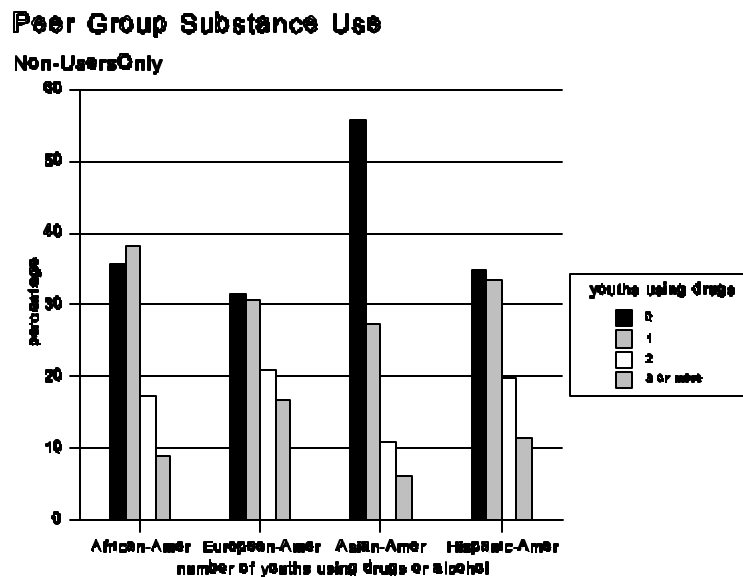


21)

22) POINT: Asian and European-American youths who are attached to school are most likely to be with peers who aren't



23)



24)

25) POINT:

- a) Non-delinquent African-Americans are most likely to hang out with others who are delinquent
- b) European- and Hispanic-Americans who are non-users are most likely to hang out with users.

26) Conclusions, Question 2:

- a) In each case, there are ethnic differences in the likelihood that an adolescent who is uninvolved in problem behaviors will associate with adolescents who do.
- b) For European-Americans, means more likely to associated with peers who are not bonded to teachers or don't value school, and who use drugs or alcohol.
- c) For African-Americans means more likely to associate with others who are involved in delinquency.
- d) For Asian-Americans, means more likely to associate with others who aren't involved in substance use or delinquency.

27) **OVERHEAD OFF**

28) Overall conclusions:

- a) Problem behavior syndrome is a constellation of problem behaviors, including lack of commitment to academics or commitment to deviant behaviors such as substance use and delinquency.
- b) The model underlying problem behavior syndrome suggests that it occurs because of an ecological niche that includes both an adolescent oriented towards deviance and a peer group that supports and extends initial deviance.
- c) These results suggest that this constellation of conditions is most likely to occur among European-Americans.
- d) Problem behaviors - as a syndrome - are less likely to occur among youths of other ethnic backgrounds.

29) Discussion:

- a) Does this suggest that the processes through which youths become involved in problem behaviors vary across ethnic background?
- b) It depends on how you define 'process'.
- c) Fundamental processes such as peer selection and peer influence are though to occur universally.
- d) The extent of their influence - their power - will vary depending upon person characteristics such as orientation towards deviance and resistance to peer pressure.
- e) Given adolescents who are in the same type of peer groups and have the same personal characteristics (such as orientation towards deviance and resistance to peer pressure), why would assume that their outcome would vary because of ethnicity?

- f) On the other hand, youths from different ethnic backgrounds are rarely in the same situation. These data suggest that European-American adolescents are more likely to associate with other youths who are involved in a variety of problem behaviors. Given typical sorting among peers in high schools that strongly favors selection of ethnically homogeneous peer groups, both the prevalence of a given problem behavior in a particular ethnic group and the variety of problem behaviors manifested by that group are going to strongly influence the exposure of an adolescent to a risk situation.
- g) Other research done with these data indicate that factors such as parental monitoring is moderated by peer group because, if you're not involved in a deviant peer group, monitoring doesn't matter.
- h) The distinction between ethnic differences in the prevalence of a given outcome and ethnic differences in developmental processes becomes meaningless when you are talking about peers and communities rather than about individuals.
- i) Ethnicity shapes the likelihood that you are exposed to particular risk factors, and those risk factors, in turn, moderate processes that operate at the individual and family level.
- j) If you think about ethnicity as one defining characteristic of an ecological niche, the distinction between rates and process becomes one of semantics.