ABSTRACT

TITLE:	The Effects of Impulsivity on Gun and Substance Use
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ABSTRACT: Prior research examined the correlation between impulsivity, gun and substance usage. These studies isolated two variables at a time, while there was limited research that analyzed all three of these factors. It is widely debated whether substance usage increases aggression, thus making individuals more likely to commit gun crime, or individuals commit crimes with guns in order to uphold their drug habits (Williams-Reid, 2001). Impulsivity increased with a longer drug-use habit for alcohol, opiates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, hallucinogens but not for marijuana (Bernstein et al., 2014). Positive gun views were associated with impulsive and aggressive tendencies (Martin et al., 2001). We put forth a survey which consisted of three parts: hypothetical gun use, the UPPS Impulsive Behavior Scale (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001) and a substance use screening. Our hypothetical statements examined topics such as self-defense, protection of others and proximity to crime. The UPPS Impulsivity scale is divided into four sub-scales: urgency, lack of perseverance, lack of premeditation, and sensation seeking. We hypothesized that different substances will be correlated with individual subscales; gun use will be correlated with all subscales except for lack of perseverance. A sample of 100 students averaging 22 years of age participated in the study (56% female, 42% male). Our findings showed that gun experience and ownership were correlated with sensation seeking. Results varied throughout the hypothetical gun scenarios. The use of marijuana, depressants and stimulants was correlated with high impulsivity, while the four subscales of impulsivity were divided among substance categories. Suicidal thoughts were highly correlated with impulsivity, including 3 out 4 subscales. In the future we are interested in investigating scenarios that are based on criminal activity rather than ethical reasoning. We would also like to expand our sample to forensic and clinical populations in order further investigate correlations involving suicidality and criminal activity.