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## Drugs and Crime

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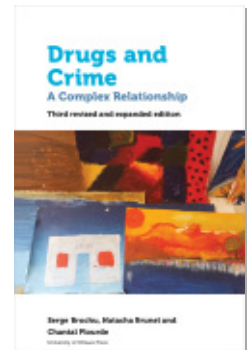
Published by University of Ottawa Press

Brochu, Serge, et al.

Drugs and Crime: A Complex Relationship. Third revised and expanded edition.

Third revised and expanded edition ed. University of Ottawa Press, 2018.

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## Proximal and Distal Models: A Static Conceptualization

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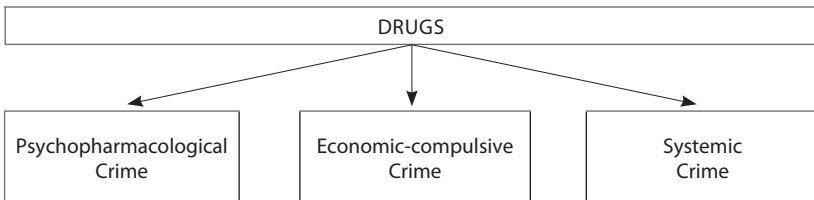
Studies show that, in Canada, fully half of all young offenders and inmates identify some connection between their criminality and their use of psychoactive substances (Brochu et al. 2010; Dufour 2004; Pernanen et al. 2002). In the latter half of the twentieth century, such statistics prompted researchers to develop a number of conceptual models in an attempt to fathom those connections. Two main schools of thought about these connections emerge from a review of the scientific literature on the subject. The first concentrates on proximal elements that may explain why drug users and dealers engage in criminal activity. The second concentrates on distal elements that may explain substance misuse and delinquency.

### Proximal Elements

Proximal elements include the state of intoxication (*psychopharmacological model*), dependence on a substance (*economic-compulsive model*), and involvement in the illegal drug distribution system (*systemic model*). These three elements were later combined into a single *tripartite model* (Goldstein 1985). Below, we present the three classical proximal models, together with Goldstein's tripartite model. A lesser-known proximal model approaches the issue from a different angle. We call it the *inverse proximal model* because it goes against the grain in its assertion that drug use is a logical outcome of involvement in a deviant lifestyle.

### ***Goldstein's Tripartite Model***

Goldstein's tripartite model (1985), the most classical and fully developed of the proximal conceptualizations, incorporates all three ways in which drugs contribute to criminality: (1) the psychopharmacological aspect or intoxication, (2) the economic-compulsive aspect or dependence, and (3) the systemic aspect, which has to do with the illegal distribution of drugs (see fig. 4.1). The integration of these three facets of the causal relationship between drugs and crime into a tripartite explanation is based on numerous empirical studies conducted in North America and Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.



**FIGURE 4.1.** A proximal conceptualization: Goldstein's tripartite model.

### ***The Psychopharmacological Model***

As we saw in previous chapters, the prevalence of drug use within the offender population tends to be high. While the lifetime prevalence of drug use for the Canadian population is around 40 percent (Health Canada 2012), it is nearly double that among offenders (Brochu et al. 2010; Pernanen et al. 2002). We also discussed how some drugs act on parts of the central nervous system, altering the emotional state, cognitive processes, and behaviours of intoxicated individuals. As such, some types of criminality can be attributed at least in part to the psychoactive properties of various drugs (most often illicit stimulants, according to Sutherland et al. [2015]). This is what the psychopharmacological model attempts to describe.

The psychopharmacological model focuses on intoxication and violence: What is the role of intoxication in aggressive behaviour? This model is based on many observations of the presence of psychoactive substances in arrestees (Brochu 2006; ONDCP 2014; Rainone et al. 2006; SAMSHA 2006; United States Department of Justice 1998).

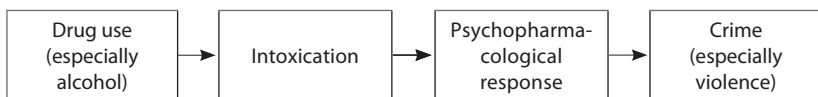
This model holds that a combination of psychological and pharmacological factors may cause a person to behave "abnormally" while intoxicated and give free rein to impulses that would otherwise be

held in check. In the psychopharmacological hypothesis, intoxication is a determining contributory factor in the commission of offences that the perpetrators would not have committed had they been sober.

A variant of this model is that intoxication can serve an underlying instrumental purpose. In a study by Havnes (2015), a number of participants reported taking high doses of benzodiazepines prior to committing crimes to help themselves transgress their moral codes, lower their inhibitions, and become unfeeling, and even hostile, toward their victims. Experience with a variety of drugs and information gleaned from various sources enables people to use narcotics deliberately for specific purposes. In addition, cultural norms and situational ecology play an important role in how an individual responds to psychoactive substance intoxication. For example, people with anti-social tendencies may choose to consume a substance that cultural norms and their own expectations lead them to believe will liberate their underlying aggressive tendencies (*ibid.*). Others may use drugs to facilitate integration into their new environment: to calm jittery nerves or give themselves the audacity to commit a planned crime. Still others, influenced by the symbolic value and cultural meaning of certain substances, may use intoxication as a convenient scapegoat for their socially unacceptable actions, thus alleviating the emotional unease associated with their crimes (*ibid.*). This pretext is commonly used by people who commit family violence.

In the first version of the psychopharmacological model, intoxication leads to crimes that would not have taken place in the absence of drugs (see fig. 4.2). In the second version, drugs are a tool (much like a weapon or a disguise) or a pretext to achieve very specific ends.

In 2012 in Canada, 75 percent of persons accused of homicide had consumed alcohol, one or more illicit drugs, or some other intoxicant before doing the deed. In addition, 62 percent of the victims had consumed an intoxicant (Statistics Canada 2013b). While we cannot establish a causal link between the perpetrator's or the victim's intoxicated state and the homicide, it is clear that psychoactive substances are often present in homicide cases.



**FIGURE 4.2.** The psychopharmacological model.

A study of all crimes committed by Canadian federal inmates serving sentences between 2002 and 2009 showed that 41 percent of the offenders reported being under the influence of drugs the day they committed the crime they were serving time for (Ternes and Johnson 2011). Typically, federal penitentiary inmates have committed serious or repeated and often violent offences.

Lambert and his collaborators (2012) reported that 66 percent of the youth centre clients in their sample had committed at least one offence while intoxicated. For violent offences in particular, 67 percent of the young offenders in a study by Brochu et al. (2010) admitted

### **The Psychopharmacological Model: Marc-Antoine<sup>1</sup>**

Marc-Antoine, thirty, is an all-around good guy. He's athletic, energetic, thoughtful, hard-working, and outgoing. A little while ago, though, his partner of ten years left him, and he was devastated. They had met at sixteen, started dating at eighteen, and moved in together when they started university at twenty. She left him because she fell in love with Charles, a colleague of hers. Ever since, for the past four weeks, Marc-Antoine has been hiding out at home. He barely sleeps, hardly eats, and, for the past few days, has been using whatever drugs he can get his hands on (cannabis, alcohol, anxiolytics, sleep aids). His friend, Louis, thinks he needs a change of scenery and wants him to go out to the bars, so he offers him some speed. Louis is so enthusiastic that Marc-Antoine agrees to take the little white pills before leaving the apartment and heading to the bar. When they arrive, there's a long lineup, and Marc-Antoine gets annoyed. He's very agitated and fidgety, he's talking loudly and bumping into people, and he's making clumsy attempts to flirt with a woman who's there with her friend. The friend gets annoyed by Marc-Antoine's behaviour and calmly but in no uncertain terms tells him to leave the woman alone. That's when Marc-Antoine snaps, insults the couple, shoves the man, and tries to start a fight. The doormen try to intervene, but before they can stop him, Marc-Antoine punches the other man in the face. Bystanders call the police. The couple have every intention of pressing assault charges against Marc-Antoine.

being under the influence of one or more drugs when they committed their most violent act ever. Four in ten young offenders blamed intoxication for the most violent act they had ever committed or been a victim of.

In another study (Parent and Brochu 2002), regular cocaine users told us that their drug use could help neutralize hesitations to commit a crime or violent act; in essence, it served as a buffer between their values and their actions. Users may experience detachment from their values while intoxicated and grow “increasingly distant from their moral center” with repeated drug use (Copes, Hochstetler, and Sandberg 2015, 37). In addition, intoxication “contributes to decision-making errors” by making fewer options available and preventing users from recognizing the consequences of their actions (ibid.). Certain drugs give the timid the nerve to go through with a crime and make criminal activity more pleasurable for the bold (Brunelle 2001; Dufour 2004; Parent and Brochu 2002). As Copes, Hochstetler, and Sandberg (2015) point out, intoxication, particularly repeated intoxication, “offers a fundamental transformation of character that may be more or less stable for a period and that is needed by many to engage in violence” (p. 38). Note that this phenomenon is not observed in the majority of illicit drug users. Most cannabis users never exhibit violent conduct while under the influence.

### ***The Economic-Compulsive Model***

One of the primary links between drugs and crime arises from the financial burden of buying illegal substances. A user who becomes dependent on a drug must use it several times a day to avoid physiological and psychological withdrawal. Over time, using these substances becomes extremely onerous. For one of our studies, we asked young offenders in Montreal and Toronto how much they spent on psychoactive substances in a given month. The Montrealers said they spent, on average, \$886.81, and the Torontonians \$1,107.71 (Brochu et al. 2010). The criminal activity of some users who can no longer control their drug use can be explained, at least in part, by their need for money to buy the drugs they are addicted to.

The economic-compulsive model describes a causal relationship between the use of costly substances that can lead to intense physiological or psychological dependence and involvement in lucrative crime (see fig. 4.3). Unlike the psychopharmacological model, the

### The Economic-Compulsive Model: Joël

Joël, sixteen, lives with his mother in Montreal. He hangs out with kids his age and has lots of fun doing things with them, such as playing football. Until recently, Joël was the quarterback for his private high school's elite football team. His mother provides adequate parental supervision, but is not well-off and has to work two jobs (day and evening) to make ends meet and pay for her son's private school. For the past year, Joël and his friends have been using cannabis and cocaine with some older female friends. Joël now feels the need to use drugs every day; without them, he doesn't feel as good. He is taking higher doses than he used to. His coach found drugs in his locker, and he missed several practices, so now he is on the verge of being expelled. His girlfriend dumped him because she didn't like his drug use. Yesterday evening, Joël and his friends robbed a convenience store and roughed up the cashier. That was not their first crime. They started with petty theft a few months ago (taking \$20 from mom's wallet, stealing small things from school, and so on) to pay for drugs. Then they began stealing more often, and their crimes got more serious. Yesterday, they scored \$150.

economic-compulsive model does not attribute criminality to unregulated impulsivity resulting from intoxication. The hypothesis here is that dependence on a drug and the high cost of that drug motivates individuals to commit crimes.

Empirically, this model predicts a unidirectional relationship between costly illicit drugs and lucrative crime. In fact, nearly one in five Canadian inmates report having committed their most serious crime for the purpose of obtaining a drug (Pernanen et al. 2002; see also Havnes 2015), as do one in ten offenders under the age of eighteen (Brochu et al. 2010). An Australian study (Payne and Gaffney 2012) concluded that heroin and other opiates, along with cocaine



FIGURE 4.3. The economic-compulsive model.

and other stimulants, were most likely to be involved when people committed crimes because they needed money to buy drugs.

The fact is, drug-dependent people need to get enough money to support their drug needs. However, as we have seen, studies clearly show that criminal activity is not always the only source of income (Brochu and Parent 2005; Grapendaal et al. 1995). Rather, individuals under financial pressure diversify their income streams, choosing from various options that include illegal activity. We have therefore adapted the economic-compulsive model diagram to better reflect reality (see fig. 4.4).

Another problem with the economic-compulsive model is that it is based on disease theories of addiction that view addicts' social behaviours as determined by their addicted state (Grapendaal et al. 1995). In this interpretation, the social actor's illegal act is psychosocially meaningless; it is merely symptomatic of an overpowering or even hereditary disease. It suggests that criminality is an unavoidable consequence of addiction to costly habit-forming drugs. This ignores, discredits, or denies the personal significance of the act and dismisses the dependent individual's socio-economic background. In contrast, none of the drug-dependent inmates interviewed by Pernanen and his co-researchers (2002) reported committing their crime for this specific purpose. Drug addicts have options and make choices about which income-generating activities to pursue. In their study of Dutch drug addicts, Grapendaal, Leuw, and Nelen (1995) found that acquisitive crime was the main source of income for a minority (22 percent) of the respondents. It is important to note that

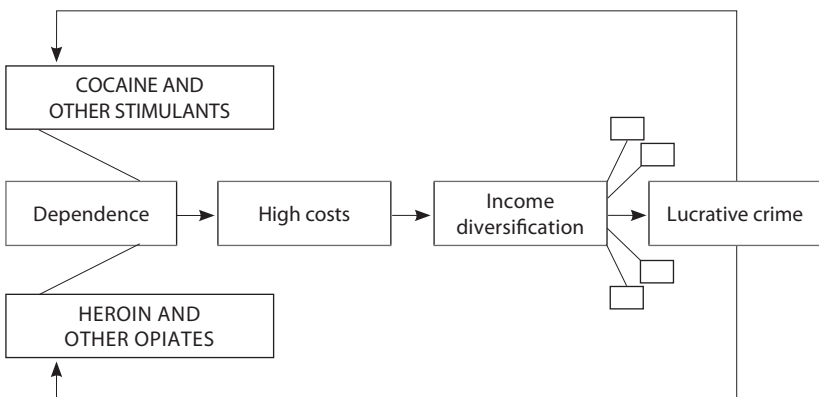


FIGURE 4.4. The contemporary economic-compulsive model.



many drug-dependent people match their drug use to their available income.

Grapendaal, Leuw, and Nelen (1995) also note that many drug users themselves buy into this economic-compulsive model. The researchers suggest that this reductionist view of reality actually serves the interests of all the social actors involved in the problem. Heavy users disavow moral responsibility for delinquent acts: "It's not my fault. I'm addicted. I'm sick." Therapists use this model to avoid confronting drug users about their unlawful behaviour. Law enforcement agencies use it to justify asking for bigger budgets and to avoid taking responsibility for their failure to curb crime. The model gives everyone permission to shift the blame for their inaction onto the murky properties of drugs.

The economic-compulsive model, which regards drug addiction as a tyrannical disease, does not take into account periods of reduced drug use or even abstinence that correspond to reduced availability of the drug (Brochu and Parent 2005; Faupel 1991; Grapendaal, Leuw, and Nelen 1995). Such periods are significant but difficult to reconcile with classical disease theory. Moreover, the model overlooks people who manage their drug use well (Alexander 1994; Zinberg 1984), who are not among the clientele of treatment centres and tend not to be behind bars. Researchers usually overlook them because they are discreet and hard to find. We believe that it would be misguided to base our understanding of the phenomenon on the most easily observed elements.

Teenagers begin to feel the financial pressure of regular drug use much sooner than adults. Tremblay, Brunelle, and Blanchette-Martin (2007) found that two-thirds of the young offenders in their sample reported committing lucrative crime to support their drug use. Brunelle, Brochu, and Cousineau (2000, 2005) showed that, because of limited access to legal income streams, adolescents venture into lucrative crime—particularly small-scale drug dealing—to pay for their drugs earlier in their trajectory than adults. This has been observed even among frequent users of relatively inexpensive substances such as cannabis. As with adults, their involvement in lucrative crime may increase in step with their drug use. Young people and adults alike who are dependent on costlier, highly addictive drugs are likely to commit more lucrative crimes.

Illegal drug users' economic-compulsive criminality is therefore a function of: (1) their income relative to the cost of their drugs, (2) frequency of use and involvement in a drug-using lifestyle, and

(3) history of involvement in crime (Hunt 1991). Consequently, the economic-compulsive model applies only to people with limited means to support their psychoactive substance use and who are heavily dependent on costly drugs. In addition, it is valid only for a specific phase of their dependence trajectory (Grapendaal, Leuw, and Nelen 1995).

The fact remains that many regular users of high-priced illicit substances get involved in dealing drugs in some capacity to make ends meet. The majority of young offenders in Montreal (69 percent) and Toronto (84 percent) report having been involved in drug trafficking at some point in their lives (Brochu et al. 2010). This means they have been exposed to a parallel universe in which systemic criminality often features very prominently.

### ***The Systemic Model***

As we saw in chapter 3, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961, amended in 1972) and Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988) were designed to limit, through criminalization, the cultivation, production, trafficking, distribution, possession, and consumption of certain substances. Taking their lead from the United States, many countries have used these conventions as the basis for a "war on drugs." Alongside this repressive approach, a distribution system for illegal drugs has taken shape (Roberts and Chen 2013), with its own laws, obligations, and normative codes. Unwritten internal rules, pseudo-contractual obligations, and implicit standards constitute an operational framework for a community functioning outside the law. Breaking the rules can provoke arguments and confrontations that are never reported to the authorities. Members of this society are well aware that breaking the rules is asking for trouble in the form of threats and violence against themselves and the people they care about (Brochu and Parent 2005; Jacques and Wright 2008).

Goldstein, the father of this concept, observed that violence associated with the illicit drug distribution system generally occurs in connection with *rip-offs*, *debt collection*, and *territorial disputes* (1985). These crimes are not related to the intrinsic properties of drugs (such as intoxication and dependence). They are directly related to the repressive environment, which relegates distribution of the products to a black market not subject to the governance and protection of public health and safety authorities (Roberts and Chen 2013). These crimes

are “systemic” in that they arise in direct connection with an operating system.

Johnson, Golub, and Fagan (1995) show that this is a world operating outside the bounds of public authority;<sup>2</sup> its culture and the people involved are not well known. Drugs change hands away from prying eyes, generating the kind of massive unreported profits that can make people greedy and deceitful. *Rip-offs* (higher prices, short-weighting, lower quality, etc.) are commonplace in the illicit drug market because perpetrators can make more money and are unlikely to be reported. Jacques, Allen, and Wright (2014) identified certain types of

### **The Systemic Model: Charlotte**

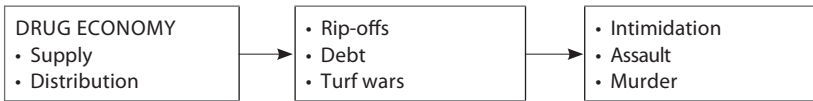
Charlotte, thirty-two, has a nursing degree. She had a job in the field for a few months, but she could not handle the lifestyle that went along with the profession. She lives alone in a small apartment in Quebec City. She and her family are close, and she visits her parents in Rimouski often. Without a legitimate job, she has been making ends meet with occasional work as an escort and by selling small quantities of drugs to her friends. Charlotte has been using cannabis occasionally since she was sixteen, and she’s done cocaine a few times in the past year. Through her escort work, she met Marc, whose “businessman” image is a front for his involvement in organized crime, and has been seeing him regularly. She says he thinks she is trustworthy, which is why he gave her a large quantity of cocaine to hide and sell. That’s how Charlotte got more involved in dealing and expanded her client base. A potential buyer paged her a few minutes ago to set up a deal. She is supposed to go meet him in a discreet location at some distance from her place because this is a new contact who was referred by a friend and she feels safer not having him come to her house. A few seconds after they meet, the man grabs Charlotte by the neck and tells her, “You have no business selling dope on my turf, and if you and your boyfriend keep it up, you won’t live long.” She hadn’t realized that she was selling in territory claimed by another criminal organization willing to do whatever it takes to protect its interests.

buyers who are more likely to fall prey to these tactics: “persons who are strangers, first-time or irregular customers; do not have sufficient money on hand to make a purchase; are uninformed about going market rates; are deemed unlikely to retaliate; . . . or are addicted to drugs” (p. 251). These ruses can spark arguments between sellers and buyers (Jacques and Wright 2008). According to a Quebec study (Dufour 2004), 42 percent of young offenders in youth centres have found themselves in a violent revenge situation following a drug transaction.

A dealer may front a buyer drugs on a promise of payment later (after a small-scale dealer’s shift or on payday, for example). In many cases, the price of the product will be proportional to the risk of not getting paid at the appointed time. Some dealers may be fairly tolerant, but when their patience runs out, they become more forceful, employing threats, intimidation, ultimatums, and violence to get their money (Brochu and Parent 2005). Fortunately, threats usually serve to resolve the situation quickly (Zaitch 2005). In our study (Brochu et al. 2010) of young offenders and their participation in drug trafficking, violence related to *debt collection* accounted for 27 percent of the systemic incidents in which young Montrealers were involved, second only to turf wars (41 percent).

Many of those involved in this highly lucrative illicit business are motivated to grow their client base and eliminate the competition, which leads to *territorial disputes* between rival dealers. Newspapers regularly report on violent incidents related to drug trafficking. In the late 1980s, conflict between major cocaine and crack distributors in the southern United States frequently made headlines. While the systemic violence associated with certain drug markets in the United States gets a lot of media attention (Zaitch 2005), similar levels of brutality have been observed among small-scale dealers and in other countries, including Canada. Canadian police services estimated that, from 1992 to 2002, 11 percent (684) of all homicides were drug-related, including those motivated by settling of accounts (Desjardins and Hotton 2004). The substance most commonly involved was cocaine (60 percent). Fortunately, the most common type of violence does not end in homicide. In Quebec, 43 percent of young offenders in youth centres reported being involved in a violent incident while selling drugs on someone else’s turf (Dufour 2004).

Here too, the systemic model illustrated in figure 4.5 has some flaws, four of which seem especially significant to us. The first is the unidirectional nature of the causal relationship, which suggests that



**FIGURE 4.5.** The systemic model.

the illicit drug supply and distribution system encourages criminal activity. However, studies indicate that individuals drawn to violence may be strongly attracted to the methods employed in this milieu, where their skills and physical strength can be exchanged for significant monetary rewards (Brochu et al. 1997; Ellickson, Saner, and McGuigan 1997). To protect their reputation vis-à-vis their colleagues and their hold over a given territory, the people at the top of these illegal organizations have every reason to surround themselves with short-fused enforcers prepared to rain down terror whenever it serves the organization's interests (Brochu et al. 1997; Brochu and Parent 2005). In this chicken-and-egg situation, there is no telling which comes first. Does a delinquent lifestyle lead to involvement in drug distribution, or, conversely, does involvement in the drug scene lead to criminal activity? It is also unclear what role the drug scene plays in violence in certain neighbourhoods. After all, neighbourhood deterioration, endemic unemployment, the erosion of traditional values, and delinquency were happening long before drug dealers showed up. Perhaps these areas were fertile ground for the emergence of brutality. Under such conditions, can drug trafficking be blamed for causing the violence we are now observing in these neighbourhoods? Although a significant proportion of the violence we are seeing seems directly related to the illegal drug trade, the trade is often just an excuse for violence (see Copes et al. [2014] and Ousey and Lee [2007]).

The second flaw has to do with whether this model, developed in the United States, accurately describes the situation outside North America. It is important to note that violence associated with the drug distribution system is far more prevalent in large American cities than in major European centres, which suggests that the socio-political environment (including repressive drug laws and access to firearms) is involved in some way (Zaitch 2005). Some studies suggest that the level of systemic violence may be related to intensity of repression. Two American economists carried out interesting analyses worth mentioning here. The first, Resignato (2000), correlated drug-related arrest data and illicit substance use statistics for twenty-three

major U.S. cities with violent crime in those cities. His results indicated that violent crime may be more strongly related to drug enforcement activities than to people's drug use. A second study, this one by Miron (2001), examined how gun control, drug prohibition enforcement activities (such as seizures), and violent crime (such as homicide) intersect. Unlike the first study, which was limited to the United States, this one compared statistics from sixty-six countries. Here again, the findings suggest that illicit drug prohibition explains the different homicide rates reported by different countries, which in turn explain gun ownership rates (which are correlated but not causally related to violence).

The third flaw is related to the second and has to do with the validity of this model. Aside from journalistic accounts, very few studies have set out to verify it empirically. Perhaps researchers lack enthusiasm for this approach because few victims seek help from the police. It is not really in a drug dealer's best interest to report being robbed of drugs and money, after all. Any dealer reporting such a theft is likely to misrepresent certain pieces of information. He or she might report the amount of money stolen but take care not to say where it came from. This makes it very difficult to accurately identify systemic crime and distinguish it from crime in general. It is also important to note that drug dealers do not commit only violent crime and that drug dealing is not the only type of lucrative crime they commit. Some also commit theft, for example (Kokoreff 2005). A study by Lacharité-Young et al. (2017) of 1,447 students at six Quebec high schools revealed that, among psychoactive substance users, having sold drugs is a predictor of membership in a group of young people that committed personal violence offences in the previous year. The problem is figuring out whether a violent act committed by a person who sells and uses drugs has more to do with the psychopharmacological effects of the substances consumed or the effects the user expects to experience if he or she is intoxicated when committing the act.

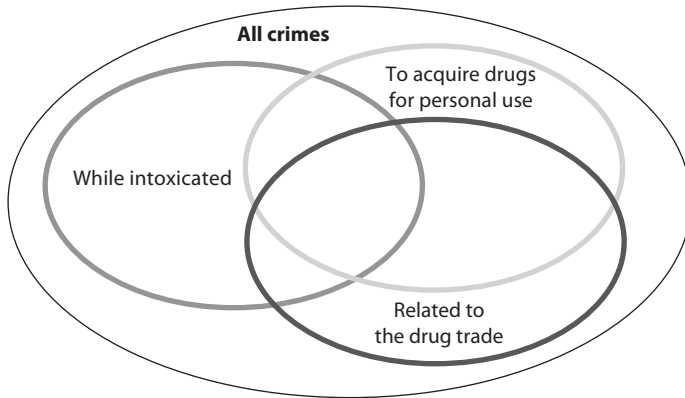
The fourth flaw we identified has to do with the fact that this model applies to only a minority of transactions. Studies of buyers and sellers clearly indicate that their transactions are often based on mutual trust or friendship (Belackova and Vaccaro 2013; Moeller and Sandberg 2015). The vast majority (89 percent) of transactions involving marijuana, the most widely consumed drug, take place between friends and relatives. Moreover, in 58 percent of cases, it is shared or given for free (Caulkins and Pacula 2006). Early drug experiences

typically happen with friends. Experimental or occasional consumption involves sharing substances. Regular buying is an extension of behaviour learned in previous stages. In the illegal drug scene, trust and friendship provide priceless protection and are much more valuable than threats and violence, at least for small, everyday transactions between people who know each other. Anyone who does not follow the rules, who does not share or pay on time, is likely to be avoided or shunned (Jacques and Wright 2008). This explains why violence and threats are not part of most illicit drug users' day-to-day experience. Systemic violence appears to be an optional dispute resolution technique in the illicit drug trade, not a mandatory one. It is just one of the available informal social control tactics. Of course, there are fewer alternatives in the drug trade than there are for legal transactions, but they do exist: tolerance (doing nothing), avoidance (of the deviant individual), negotiation, mediation (with a third party), and non-physical retaliation (theft, fraud, vandalism). Sellers can also employ preventive measures to avoid problems. They can be selective about their clients, specialize in a particular product (cannabis users, for example, are a less deviant clientele), or do business in safe places (Fleetwood 2014); others work with a partner (one handles the business side and the other is a lookout), place the drugs in a designated location (such as a locker) for pick-up once payment has been received, or even use conventional situational prevention technology (surveillance cameras, alarms) (Jacques and Reynald 2011; Piza and Sytsma 2015). All of these strategies can affect profit margins (Jacques and Reynald 2011), but from the dealers' perspective, they can prevent a lot of problems.

### ***Non-Mutually Exclusive Types of Crime***

One might think that crimes committed while intoxicated to procure drugs or in connection with an illicit distribution system are mutually exclusive, but this would be a grave misinterpretation of Goldstein's tripartite model. There is significant overlap among the types of crimes described above. A fairly significant proportion of individuals who commit a crime to procure drugs for personal use do so while under the influence of a substance (Havnes 2015; Pernanen et al. 2002), and in some cases, the offence is related to the drug trade (Brochu et al. 2010). This may give the impression that the proportion of crimes attributable to drugs is larger than it really is (see fig. 4.6).





**FIGURE 4.6.** Goldstein: Three non-mutually exclusive types of drug-crime relationships.

### *The Inverse Proximal Model*

Goldstein's tripartite model hypothesizes a causal relationship between criminality and intoxication, the need for money, and/or the violent nature of the drug economy. In contrast, some theorize that involvement in delinquent behaviour promotes illicit psychoactive substance use.

A number of studies (Doherty, Green, and Ensminger 2008; Fothergill and Ensminger 2006; Monahan et al. 2014; Odgers et al. 2008; Pardini, White, and Stouthamer-Loeber 2007) have shown that, in young people who engage in both delinquency and drug use, the former precedes the latter. Within this population, it is clear that consumption of drugs such as cocaine and heroin appears long after an individual's first property crimes (e.g., break and enter) (Parent and Brochu 2002; Seddon 2000). Even if drug use initiation occurs at an early age (with marijuana consumption), problematic behaviours will already have surfaced in a young adolescent's trajectory long before regular drug use begins and sometimes even prior to initial experiences with certain illicit psychoactive substances.

It is worth examining this simple chronological sequence of the onset of drug use and delinquency in light of findings from the broader field of criminology. Criminological studies such as those by Lanctôt, Bernard, and Le Blanc (2002) and Menard, Mihalic, and Huizinga (2001) generally show that initiation to deviance occurs gradually, beginning with minor crimes and proceeding to increasingly serious



crimes. Individuals begin with disobedience, then move on to deceit, and eventually physical violence. Rebellion typically precedes property crime. The more socially acceptable the behaviour, the earlier it is likely to begin. Individuals typically use cannabis, which is considered more socially acceptable, before they use drugs seen as more socially taboo or subject to stricter enforcement.

If we observe the order in which drug use and crime phases appear, we must keep in mind that the most deviant behaviours will “naturally” appear after those considered more socially “acceptable.” Accordingly, recent studies place greater emphasis on a more nuanced understanding of why delinquency and drug use emerge than on which came first. For example, a study of 1,076 U.S. college students revealed that early conduct problems, including delinquency, are a major risk factor for very early onset of marijuana use (Falls et al. 2011). Many researchers have noted that juvenile delinquency is a positive predictor of other conduct problems, such as psychoactive substance use (Menard, Mihalic, and Huizinga 2001; Poikolainen 2002; Windle and Mason 2004). Mason, Hitchings, and Spoth (2007) studied a sample of 429 American youths and found that onset of delinquency at eleven or twelve was positively associated with alcohol use at age sixteen and problem substance use at eighteen, with alcohol use at sixteen mediating an indirect relationship between delinquency and problem substance use.

A study of violent offences and substance use among Mexican American and European American adolescents found bidirectional associations between the two behaviours (Brady et al. 2008). Those who perpetrated violence early were more likely to exhibit problem substance use later on, and those who used drugs early were more likely to report violence involvement later on. Xue, Zimmerman, and Cunningham (2009) examined a sample of 649 African American youths and found that “early violent behavior predicted later alcohol use, and early alcohol use predicted later violent behaviour” (p. 2041). Early onset of either behaviour was a positive predictor of the appearance of the other a few years later.

We can see the inverse proximal model at work in the findings of Quebec studies that observed how some individuals celebrate criminal achievements by consuming drugs (Brochu and Parent 2005), while others report that income from criminal activity at a young age can contribute to initiation to drug use (Brunelle, Brochu, and Cousineau 2005).

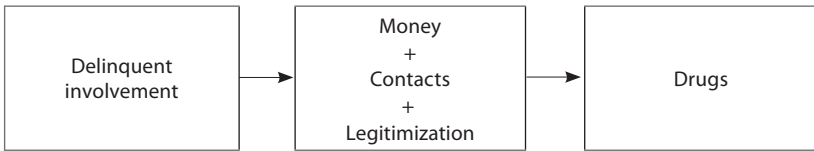
### **The Inverse Proximal Model: Tristan**

Tristan, fifteen, lives in a well-to-do Montreal neighbourhood with his two parents, both professionals. His friends don't know it, but for the past few months, he has been stealing from local businesses. He pawns the stolen goods and uses the money to buy pizza and energy drinks for his school friends at lunch. Now that he is popular, he gets invited to lots of parties, which he is really happy about. Recently, a friend introduced him to a cousin who invited him to a house party. That evening, Tristan met some teenagers who were bragging about their criminal activity. Laughing, they shared some tips for stealing. At one point, one of them offered Tristan a special discount on a gram of cocaine: just \$80. It was a lot of money, but Tristan could afford it and would be able to "share" the white powder with his new friends.

Other factors related to the world of crime play a role too. In addition to the proceeds of crime, the deviant lifestyle puts people in contact with illicit drug distributors and legitimizes drug use through models, norms, protocols, rules, and so on (Brochu and Parent 2005; Grapendaal, Leuw, and Nelen 1995).

As evidence for the validity of the inverse proximal model (see fig. 4.7), researchers usually cite studies showing that delinquent conduct precedes illicit drug use or that users continue to commit crimes even during periods of abstinence. Prior delinquency and residual criminality are evidence that delinquency springs from a constellation of factors other than drug use or dependence. In a way, this model led to the development of the biopsychosocial model, which draws on the notion of problem behaviour syndrome.

All things considered, proximal models fail to convey an accurate understanding of the complex drug–crime relationship. We believe this is because their supporters do not view individuals as social actors capable of logical reasoning and as products of their environment. Other researchers, however, have abandoned this linear cognitive schema in favour of a more comprehensive perspective. They focus on the distal elements (biological, psychological, and social) in the lives of people contending with dependence and delinquency.



**FIGURE 4.7.** The inverse proximal model.

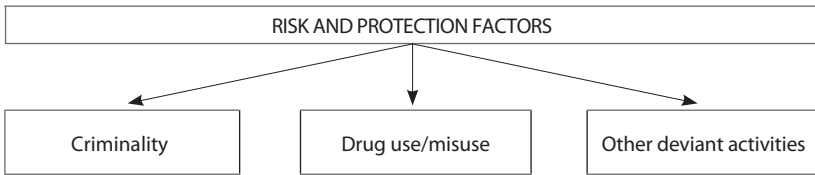
## Distal Elements

According to this model, biopsychosocial factors present during a person's development, usually during childhood and adolescence, affect the likelihood of that person engaging in deviant behaviour a few years later. Because they are not direct causal factors, they are known as risk factors, and they can be offset by protective factors.

Many studies show that both criminality and psychoactive substance abuse are very unevenly distributed across the population. This structural marginality is associated with general deviance syndrome (Corwyn and Benda 2002; Donovan, Jessor, and Costa 1999; Le Blanc 2010). According to this model, delinquency, drug use, and certain other deviant or marginal behaviours (such as early and often unprotected sexual experiences and dangerous driving) are linked to the presence of risk factors in a person's past that "predispose" him or her to adopt a lifestyle in which intoxication, impaired driving, and crime are part of everyday life. The appearance of one such behaviour could pave the way for further abnormal behaviours or trigger their expression, but this does not necessarily indicate a direct causal relationship (Brochu 1994; Grapendaal et al. 1995). However, as the name suggests, protective factors are thought to play an important role in the development of what researchers and other workers in the field call "resilience."

In essence, studies that look at the role of biopsychosocial factors in the emergence of deviant conduct clearly demonstrate how difficult it can be to establish exclusive linear causal links between psychoactive substances and crime because the relationship is also influenced by distal links and an imbalance between risk factors and protective factors (see fig. 4.8).

Some studies, most of them quantitative and a fair number of them longitudinal, have attempted to identify the risk and protective factors associated with deviant conduct. These factors tend to fall into four categories: biological (gender, heredity, hormonal and



**FIGURE 4.8.** Distal model: biopsychosocial factors.

neurophysiological elements); psychological (personality disorders, hedonism, failure to adapt to school, work, and social life); contextual (association with deviant peers, poor family environment, mistreatment and abuse, estrangement from social institutions); and social (poverty, endemic unemployment, unfit housing, difficult living conditions) (Bennett, Holloway, and Farrington 2008; Born and Boët 2005; Brown and Larson 2009; Buu et al. 2009; Castellanos-Ryan, O’Leary-Barrett, and Conrod 2013; Fallu et al. 2011; Farrington, Loeber, and Ttofi 2012; Jadidi and Nakhaee 2014; Hartwell et al. 2012; Haug et al. 2014; Henry, Knight, and Thornberry 2012; Krank et al. 2011; Pedersen and Skardhamar 2010; Monahan et al. 2014; Oesterle et al. 2012; Steinberg and Monahan 2007; Stone et al. 2012; Wanner et al. 2009).

### **The Distal Model: Pier-Alexandre**

Pier-Alexandre, fourteen, has been using cannabis occasionally for about six months. He has been an anxious person since early childhood. He suffers from trichotillomania, a psychological disorder that causes people to pull out their own hair. Pier-Alexandre pulls out his eyebrows and lashes so often that he has hardly any left, and other kids make fun of him for this. He also suffers from severe attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as does his mother, who was not diagnosed until adulthood. His severe anxiety combined with his ADHD makes it difficult for his psychiatrist to calibrate his medication. He has a lot of trouble at school and often cuts class to hang out with friends who think he’s cool and protect him. Sometimes they shoplift and pawn the stolen goods, then use the money to buy pot and smoke it together. Pier-Alexandre and his friends feel that it helps them relax and makes them laugh.

Early onset of deviant behaviour is a major risk factor for the development of a variety of problems (Le Blanc 2010).

Protective factors are much more than the absence of risk factors; some are their opposites. For example, associating with deviant peers is a risk factor for problem drug use and delinquency, but interacting with prosocial peers is a protective factor against deviant behaviour (Dufour 2014). Adequate parental monitoring is a protective factor, while poor parental monitoring is a risk factor (Casanueva et al. 2014). Other protective factors, such as religious faith, have no corresponding risk factor (Kliewer and Murelle 2007). Some protective factors, such as school connectedness, may be present from childhood (Wang et al. 2005); others, such as having and raising a child, may appear later in an individual's trajectory (Casanueva et al. 2014). By focusing on risk and protective factors, this explanatory model provides a much more dynamic interpretation of the drug-crime relationship than do the causal models based on proximal factors discussed above.

The distal model, which incorporates a range of biopsychosocial elements, is an appropriate framework for uncovering factors related to the onset of illicit drug use and delinquency among adolescents. However, it offers little insight into the development and nature of the drug-crime relationship for people whose trajectory includes both behaviours.

\* \* \*

Three observations stand out from our analysis in this chapter. First, humans are drawn to simple linear causal explanations and tend to attribute actions to factors that precede them, are easy to observe, and attract attention. If that factor happens to be deviant or illegal, why look any deeper? It seems perfectly natural to point to illegal drug use as the cause of criminality, hence the popularity of proximal models. Nevertheless, illicit drug use is a "determining factor in the development of criminal behaviour for only a small minority" of users (Grapendaal, Leuw, and Nelen 1995, 190<sup>3</sup>).

Second, a distal conceptualization of the nature of the drug-crime relationship makes it clear that the relationship is much more complex than previously thought. It involves an intricate interplay of risk and protective factors. Proximal models alone cannot account for the full measure of that complexity.

Third, we must keep in mind that the conceptual models of the drug–crime relationship that we have just presented, though crucial to our understanding of the phenomenon, are nevertheless incomplete because they are too static and do not take into consideration the experience of the social actors involved. Studies have shown that drug–crime relationships are not fixed and can be expected to change to varying degrees over time (Brochu and Parent 2005; Brunelle, Cousineau, and Brochu 2005). A range of possible interactions can influence a user’s life course and the specific nature of the drug–crime relationship at various stages. In the next chapter, we will detail the drug use and crime trajectories of people who become dependent on drugs.

## Notes

1. The sketches in this book are compilations of elements drawn from interviews with drug-dependent individuals.
2. See also Friedman, Terras, and Glassman (2003); Brochu and Parent (2005).
3. According to their Dutch study, only 20 percent of the addicts interviewed “began to commit criminal offenses *after* the use of heroin became an important element in their lives.”

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