

Examining the Role of BIS/BAS, Peer Relationships, and Negative Life  
Events in Depressive Experiences and Alcohol Abuse among Youth  
from a North American Indian Plains Tribe

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# Introduction

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- Youth experiencing depressive symptoms have an increased variety of problems
  - academic failure, school dropout, substance abuse, and relational difficulties with friends and family
- These risks emphasize the importance for understanding depression's etiology and contributing factors
- There is limited research on the processes that contribute to the development of depressive symptomology in minority adolescent populations
  - Particularly for American Indian youth

# Temperament

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- Temperament has been implicated in influencing youth depression and drug abuse
- Temperament refers to relatively stable individual differences in affective reactivity
  - Behavioral Inhibition (BIS) is theorized to trigger responses of inhibition, avoidance, and anxiety
  - Behavioral Activations (BAS) refers to a system that promotes movement toward anticipated or actual incentives
- The behavioral profiles of BIS and BAS influence decision-making and perception of stimuli and consequences in one's environment
  - Consequently, impacting their motivation to respond to particular situations in accordance to their affective style

# Potential Mediators

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- Victimization in youth has predicted externalizing, internalizing, and social complications 2 years later.
  - Overt victimization (e.g., intention to action physically harmful towards a peer) has been associated with internalizing symptoms
  - Relational aggression (e.g., using a relationship with another peer or their friendship to inflict social harm) has been associated with symptoms of disruptive behavior disorders
- Negative Life Events
  - Negative life events within 6 months

# Study Goals

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- In the present study, we examined the role of temperament in depressive experiences and substance abuse in American Indian youth by exploring the mediating role of negative life events and peer relationships.
- Why would the relationship between temperament and depressive experiences be mediated by social factors?
  - Positive affect (BAS) compared to negative and anxious affect (BIS)
  - Temperament influences how we react to stimuli, including social stimuli. Cultural expectations influence how our behaviors are perceived (e.g., AI culture encourages collectivistic behavior in comparison to mainstream Euro-American culture which endorses individualistic behavior) which possibly influences peer relationships.

# Methods

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## Participants

- Participants were 270 American Indian youth volunteers (4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) recruited from middle or high school on an Indian Reservation in the Northern Plains of the United States.

## Methods

- *Behavioral Inhibition and Activation Scale*
- *Peer Experiences Questionnaire*
- *Recent Negative Life Events Inventory*
- *Children's Depression Inventory*

# Results

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- High BAS has a protective effect when participants are also low in BIS
  - However, participants high in BIS, BAS appears to have no protective effect on depressive symptoms
- Negative life events override the protective effect of BAS when participants are also low in BIS
- Peer Relationships was not found a significant mediator in the relationship between temperament and depressive symptoms

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