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Future orientation, gambling and risk gambling among youth: a study of adolescents in Stockholm

Sara Brolin Låftman, Susanne Alm, Gabriella Olsson, Kristina Sundqvist and Peter Wennberg

Department of Public Health Sciences, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden; Swedish Institute for Social Research, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden; Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyze the association between adolescents’ future orientation and their engagement in gambling and in risk gambling, respectively. The data used come from the Stockholm School Survey, collected in 2016 among students in the ninth grade in elementary school (15–16 years) and in the second grade of upper secondary school (17–18 years) in Stockholm municipality (n = 11,661). The results showed that adolescents who expected their future to be ‘much worse’ than that of others were more inclined to engage in gambling and in risk gambling compared with adolescents who expected their future to be similar to that of others. Furthermore, adolescents who expected their future to be ‘much better’ than that of others had an increased likelihood of engaging in gambling but not in risk gambling. The results are discussed in the light of elements from rational choice theory.

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Adolescent gambling; problem gambling; future orientation; youth; school survey

Introduction

Gambling is not uncommon among adolescents, despite the fact it is illegal for minors in most judicial contexts. Yet, today’s youth live in a society in which gambling is seen as socially acceptable and are exposed to vast opportunities for gambling as well as ample advertising (Calado, Alexandre, & Griffiths, 2017; Volberg, Gupta, Griffiths, Olason, & Delfabbro, 2010). This may promote also young people’s inclination to take part in gambling activities, without necessarily contemplating the risks (Calado et al., 2017).

Gambling can be seen as a continuum, with ‘no gambling’ at the one end, moving on to ‘social gambling’, then to ‘at-risk gambling’, and further to ‘problem gambling’ at the other end (Turchi & Derevensky, 2006). Problem gambling refers to gambling with negative social, economic or health-related consequences (The Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2016). Research has demonstrated that problem gambling is more common among young people than among adults (Fröberg et al., 2015; Shaffer & Hall, 1999; Turner et al., 2017). A recent systematic review including 44 studies from Europe, North and South America, Asia, and Oceania reported that between 0.2 and 12.3 per cent of youth could be classified as problem gamblers (Calado et al., 2017). Studies have consistently shown that boys have a higher prevalence of problem gambling than girls (Calado et al., 2017; Downling et al., 2017; Turchi & Derevensky, 2006). Adolescent problem gambling has also been reported to be more common among older adolescents, among those not living with two parents, among...
those from an ethnic minority, and among those whose parents have been gambling (Calado et al., 2017). Other risk factors of adolescent problem gambling include problem behaviours such as alcohol use, antisocial behaviours, drug use, depressive symptoms as well as poor academic performance (Downling et al., 2017).

Adolescent problem gambling has been declared as an important public health issue (Messerlian, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2005), and accordingly, enhanced knowledge about its determinants is wanted. While earlier research on adolescent gambling has largely lacked theoretical underpinnings (Blinn-Pike, Worthy, & Jonkman, 2010), in the current study we will draw upon elements from rational choice theory (Brezina, Tekin, & Topalli, 2009; Caldwell, Wiebe, & Cleveland, 2006; Piquero, 2016) and investigate the links between adolescents’ future orientation and gambling as well as risk gambling, the latter being defined as gambling with potential (rather than already observed) negative consequences for the individual (cf. Turchi & Derevensky, 2006).

The basic assumption within the rational choice framework is that individuals are rational and that they, based on a calculation of costs and benefits, act to maximize their utility (e.g. Scott, 2000). While originating from economics, rational choice theory is today applied within a number of disciplines within the social sciences, such as e.g. political science, sociology and criminology. As regards the classic question within criminology of why individuals commit crime, from a rational choice perspective criminal behaviour does not differ from other types of behaviour, but is based on the same cost-benefit estimation (Becker, 1968).

Concerning the implications of future orientation from a rational choice perspective, theoretically, an individual who holds a pessimistic view of the future has little reason to delay gratification, but impulsive behaviour and a ‘here and now’ orientation are rational approaches. For instance, as noted by Brezina et al. (2009), it may seem puzzling how some criminal offenders tend to express an attitude of fearlessness, despite engaging in different kinds of high risk behaviours (see also Anderson, 1999). However, taking into consideration the sense of hopelessness in relation to the future often felt by these individuals, such an attitude may appear as less hard to understand. From a rational choice perspective, it can be assumed that low future expectations lead to a sense of having nothing to lose, and hence, to an inclination to engage in impulsive risk behavior. When the future seems insecure, delayed gratification is dropped in favor of a search for immediate benefits (e.g. Brezina et al., 2009; Caldwell et al., 2006; Hill, Ross, & Low, 1997). Furthermore, it can be added that it is not only within a rational choice framework that the role of future orientation for criminal offending has been acknowledged, but that negative future prospects as a driving force behind criminal offending also is at the core of classic, as well as general, strain theory (Agnew, 1992; Merton, 1938, 1968).

A number of recent studies, some of which applying a multi-methods approach, and some using longitudinal information, have found empirical support for an association between a pessimistic future orientation and criminal offending (e.g. Alm & Estrada, 2018; Brezina et al., 2009; Piquero, 2016) as well as other risk behaviours including at-risk alcohol and drug use (Chen & Vazsonyi, 2013). It could be argued that gambling and risk gambling, as well as perhaps utilitarian crime, in a more distinct way than other types of criminal offending and drug abuse, may also involve an element of hope for a brighter future, in case of a big win/gain. However, this study departs from the assumption that the driving forces behind in particular risk gambling primarily are to be understood in a manner similar to offending and drug abuse, and thus, that it can be studied within the same theoretical framework. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, the association between future orientation, gambling and risk gambling has hitherto not been empirically assessed. Using a new survey data material collected among students in Stockholm, the aim of the present study was to investigate if, and if so how, adolescents’ future orientation is associated with gambling and with risk gambling.
Data and methods

Data material

The Stockholm School Survey (SSS) is performed biennially among students in the ninth and final grade of elementary school (ages 15–16 years) and in the second grade of upper secondary school (hereafter referred to as the eleventh grade) (ages 17–18 years) in all public schools and a number of independent schools in Stockholm, Sweden. The questionnaires are completed in the classroom. The survey covers topics such as alcohol use, drug use, smoking and delinquent behaviour, but also various aspects of the school climate including bullying (e.g., Låftman, Alm, Sandahl, & Modin, 2018; Olsson & Fritzell, 2015, 2017; Olsson, Låftman, & Modin, 2018; Ramberg, Låftman, Fransson, & Modin, 2018; Sandahl, 2016; Stockholm Municipality, 2016). The survey in 2016 also included a question on students’ future orientation (Alm, Låftman, Sandahl, & Modin, 2019; Låftman et al., 2018). The response rate in 2016 was 78 per cent (Stockholm Municipality, 2016), resulting in a total of 12,943 participating students (6,465 students in the ninth grade and 6,478 students in the second grade of upper secondary school). Observations with missing information on gambling, future orientation, or any of the control variables used in the analyses were omitted (n = 1,282), leading to a final study sample of 11,661 students (5,836 students in the ninth grade and 5,825 students in the eleventh grade), corresponding to 90.1 per cent of the original sample. The analyses of different aspects of risk gambling are based on slightly fewer students due internal non-response also on these questions (n = 11,513–11,544).

The SSS is completed anonymously and the students do not provide any information on personal identification. Therefore, the SSS data are not subject to consideration for ethical approval according to a decision by the Regional Ethical Review Board of Stockholm (Ref. No. 2010/241–31/5).

Measures

Gambling

Gambling was captured by the question ‘Have you bought lottery tickets or gambled for money at any time during the last 12 months?’ with the specification ‘(Scratch ticket, game show lottery, casino, poker, betting on football, horses or the like, also on the Internet)’. The response categories were ‘No’ and ‘Yes’.

Risk gambling

Risk gambling was assessed by a set of subquestions which was posed only to the students who responded that they had gambled during the past 12 months: ‘How many times during the last 12 months have you’: a) ‘Tried to reduce your gambling?’, b) “Felt restless and irritated if you haven’t been able to gamble, and c) ‘Lied about how much you’ve gambled?’ For each subquestion, the students were instructed to mark one of the response categories ‘Never’, ‘1–2 times’, and ‘3 times or more’. For each of the three subquestions we dichotomized the answers and placed students responding ‘Never’ in one category and those responding once or more often into the other category. The three subquestions were analyzed separately but we also constructed a dichotomous overall measure of risk gambling. For this overall measure, students who answered ‘at least once’ to any of the three subquestions were classified as engaging in risk gambling, whereas those who answered ‘Never’ to all three subquestions (as well as those who reported that they had not gambled at all during the past 12 months) were classified as not engaging in risk gambling. The prevalence of risk gambling according to this definition is about 3.5 percent and in line with other Swedish studies (e.g. Sundqvist, Rosendahl, & Wennberg, 2015).

Future orientation

Future orientation was measured by the question ‘If you compare your future prospects to those of most others of your age, do you believe that yours are worse, just as good, or better?’ with five response categories: (1) ‘Much worse’, (2) ‘Slightly worse’, (3) ‘Just as good’, (4) ‘Slightly better’, and (5) ‘Much better’. 
Control variables

A number of control variables were included.

Gender was assessed by the question ‘Are you a boy or a girl?’ with the response categories ‘Boy’ and ‘Girl’.

Family structure was captured through the question ‘Which people do you live with?’ and a list of boxes to be ticked. Students who marked both ‘Mother’ and ‘Father’ were classified as living with two parents in the same household. (Those who marked ‘Mother’ and ‘Father’ and who also ticked ‘Step-mother/father’, ‘Lives alternately with mother and father’; ‘Foster parents’, and/or ‘I live on my own’ were coded as not living with two parents in one household.)

Parental university education was measured by the question ‘What is the highest education your parents have?’ The response categories (to be marked for the mother and the father separately) were: ‘Old elementary school (folkskola) or elementary school (max 9 years schooling)’, ‘Upper secondary school’, ‘University and university college’, and ‘Don’t know’. Students who responded ‘University and university college’ for the mother and/or the father were categorized as having at least one parent with university education, and were contrasted against all others.

Parental unemployment was constructed from the question ‘What do your parents do?’ with a list of (non-mutually exclusive) response categories for mother and father. Students who marked that the mother and/or the father were unemployed were coded as having at least one parent unemployed, and were contrasted against all others.

Migration background was captured by the question ‘How long have you lived in Sweden?’ The response categories were ‘All my life’, ‘10 years or more’, ‘5–9 years’ and ‘Less than 5 years’. The variable was coded into two categories, namely students who had lived in Sweden at least ten years (i.e. roughly during their school years), and those who had lived in Sweden less than ten years, respectively.

Statistical method

Binary logistic regression was used, applying the ‘logistic’ command in Stata 15. Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals are reported. Since the students were clustered in schools, robust standard errors clustering at the school level were estimated using the ‘robust cluster’ command in Stata. The 11,661 students in the study sample were distributed across 197 schools (126 elementary schools and 71 upper secondary schools).

Results

Descriptives of the study sample are presented in Table 1. In all, 14.2 per cent of the students reported that they had been gambling at least once during the past 12 months. With regard to our different measures of risk gambling, 2.4 per cent reported to have tried to reduce gambling, 1.7 per cent to have felt restless or irritated when not able to gamble, and 1.5 per cent to have lied about gambling during the past 12 months. In total 3.5 per cent of the students reported at least one of the different aspects of risk gambling. Future orientation had a skewed distribution in that smaller shares of students expected a ‘much worse’ (5.1 per cent) or ‘slightly worse’ (12.4 per cent) future compared with others, and larger shares expected their future to be ‘about the same’ as that of others (36.2 per cent), ‘slightly better’ (26.8 per cent) or ‘much better’ (19.5 per cent) than that of others.

Table 2 presents percentages of students engaged in gambling and in risk gambling respectively, by future orientation and by the control variables. Gambling was most common among students expecting their future to be ‘much worse’ (17.7 per cent) or ‘much better’ (18.2 per cent) than that of others. There was a clear pattern showing that for each separate measure of risk gambling, the category of students who reported the most pessimistic future orientation, i.e. those expected their future to be ‘much worse’ than that of others, were also overrepresented in risk gambling. This was also reflected in the overall measure of risk gambling (i.e. at least one indicator
of risk gambling). In all, 9.6 per cent of those expecting a ‘much worse’ future in comparison with others were engaged in risk gambling, compared to 2.5–4.4 per cent among those with a more optimistic future orientation. In contrast to the pattern for gambling, adolescents who expected a ‘much better’ future in comparison with others did not report to be engaged in risk gambling to any substantially greater extent.

Results from binary logistic regression analyses of gambling and of risk gambling are demonstrated in Table 3. All models adjusted simultaneously for future orientation and the full set of control variables. The patterns largely reflect those presented in Table 2. With regards to gambling, students who expected their future to be ‘much worse’ or ‘slightly worse’ than that of others were more likely to have been gambling during the past 12 months compared with the reference category (OR 1.40, 95% CI 1.10–1.77 and OR 1.21, 95% CI 1.03–1.43, respectively). In addition, also students who expected their future to be ‘much better’ than that of others were more likely to have gambled during the past year (OR 1.45, 95% CI 1.24–1.70). Furthermore, the results show that girls were less likely than boys to have been gambling (OR 0.26, 95% CI 0.23–0.29), as were students who had lived in Sweden for less than ten years compared with those who had lived in Sweden for a longer time (OR 0.74, 95% CI 0.59–0.91). Students who did not live with two parents in the same household were more likely to have been gambling compared with those who lived
Table 2. Gambling and risk gambling by future orientation and by control variables. Per cent (n within brackets). n = 11,513–11,661.

| Future orientation | Gambling (n = 1,659) | Tried to reduce gambling (n = 278) | Felt restless or irritated when not able to gamble (n = 196) | Lied about gambling (n = 172) | At least one indicator of risk gambling (n = 403) |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Much worse than others | 17.7 (106) | 6.4 (38) | 5.9 (35) | 4.9 (29) | 9.6 (57) |
| Slightly worse than others | 14.9 (216) | 2.5 (36) | 2.0 (28) | 1.5 (21) | 3.8 (54) |
| About the same as others | 11.8 (496) | 2.1 (89) | 1.3 (55) | 1.2 (48) | 2.8 (118) |
| Slightly better than others | 13.7 (429) | 1.7 (53) | 1.0 (31) | 1.1 (34) | 2.5 (76) |
| Much better than others | 18.2 (412) | 2.8 (62) | 2.1 (47) | 1.8 (40) | 4.4 (98) |

| Gender | | | | | |
| Boy | 22.2 (1,252) | 4.6 (253) | 3.0 (168) | 2.8 (157) | 6.5 (349) |
| Girl | 6.8 (407) | 0.4 (25) | 0.5 (28) | 0.3 (15) | 0.7 (44) |

| Grade | | | | | |
| 9 | 13.6 (793) | 2.7 (154) | 1.8 (104) | 1.7 (96) | 3.7 (215) |
| 11 | 14.9 (866) | 2.2 (124) | 1.6 (92) | 1.3 (76) | 3.3 (188) |

| Family structure | | | | | |
| Two parents in the same household | 13.7 (973) | 2.2 (152) | 1.5 (104) | 1.3 (88) | 3.1 (220) |
| Other | 15.1 (686) | 2.8 (126) | 2.1 (92) | 1.9 (84) | 4.1 (183) |

| Parental university education | | | | | |
| No parent | 15.2 (606) | 3.0 (120) | 2.4 (95) | 1.9 (74) | 4.6 (183) |
| At least one parent | 13.7 (1,053) | 2.1 (158) | 1.3 (101) | 1.3 (98) | 2.9 (220) |

| Parental unemployment | | | | | |
| No parent | 14.3 (1,550) | 2.4 (255) | 1.6 (170) | 1.4 (155) | 3.4 (362) |
| At least one parent | 13.9 (109) | 3.0 (23) | 3.3 (26) | 2.2 (17) | 5.2 (41) |

| Migration background | | | | | |
| ≥10 years in Sweden | 14.5 (1,521) | 2.3 (243) | 1.7 (176) | 1.4 (148) | 3.4 (352) |
| <10 years in Sweden | 12.1 (138) | 3.1 (35) | 1.8 (20) | 2.1 (24) | 4.5 (51) |

with two parents (OR 1.14, 95% CI 1.02–1.27). With regards to grade, parental education and parental unemployment, no statistically significant differences were seen.

The results regarding future orientation and our different measures of risk gambling show a consistent pattern in that the category of students who expected their future to be ‘much worse’ than others had an increased risk of having tried to reduce gambling (OR 2.54, 95% CI 1.66–3.87), having felt restless or irritated when not able to gamble (OR 3.77, 95% CI 2.32–6.12), as well as of having lied about gambling (OR 3.51, 95% CI 2.03–6.07). Expectations of a future ‘much worse’ than that of others also demonstrates a clear association with the overall measure of risk gambling (OR 2.99, 95% CI 2.04–4.36).

For all measures of risk gambling, girls reported a lower likelihood of risk gambling than boys. Students who did not live with two parents in the same household had a higher likelihood of risk gambling as captured by the overall measure, compared with those who did not live with two parents in the same household. Students with a university-educated parent were less likely to having felt restless or irritated when not able to gamble, and were also less likely of engaging in risk gambling in general as captured through our overall measure. Parental unemployment was associated with an increased likelihood of feeling restless and irritated when not able to gamble and of risk gambling as operationalized through the overall measure.
Table 3. Gambling and risk gambling by future orientation. Odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals from binary logistic regressions with robust standard errors. All models simultaneously adjusted for future orientation and the full set of control variables. n = 11,513–11,661.

| Future orientation                  | Gambling | Tried to reduce gambling | Felt restless or irritated when not able to gamble | Lied about gambling | At least one indicator of risk gambling |
|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Much worse than others              | 1.40**   | 1.10–1.77                | 2.54*** 1.66–3.87                             | 3.77*** 2.32–6.12 | 3.51*** 2.03–6.07                    | 2.99*** 2.04–4.36 |
| Slightly worse than others          | 1.21*    | 1.03–1.43                | 1.05 0.70–1.58                                | 1.29 0.79–2.11    | 1.12 0.66–1.90                      | 1.19 0.83–1.69   |
| About the same as others (ref.)     | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| Slightly better than others         | 1.17     | 1.00–1.36                | 0.80 0.56–1.14                                | 0.77 0.51–1.15    | 0.96 0.59–1.56                      | 0.88 0.66–1.17   |
| Much better than others             | 1.45***  | 1.24–1.70                | 1.08 0.76–1.54                                | 1.39 0.93–2.07    | 1.30 0.80–2.12                      | 1.33 0.98–1.81   |

Gender

| Boy (ref.)                          | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| Girl                                | 0.26***  | 0.23–0.29                | 0.09*** 0.06–0.14                              | 0.16*** 0.11–0.24 | 0.09*** 0.05–0.16                    | 0.11*** 0.08–0.16 |

Grade

| 9 (ref.)                            | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| 11                                  | 1.14     | 0.98–1.33                | 0.83 0.63–1.10                                | 0.91 0.65–1.27    | 0.81 0.54–1.21                      | 0.90 0.70–1.16   |

Family structure

| Two parents in the same household (ref.) | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| Other                               | 1.14*    | 1.02–1.27                | 1.22 0.99–1.51                                | 1.23 0.94–1.60    | 1.38 0.97–1.97                      | 1.20* 1.00–1.44  |

Parental university education

| No parent (ref.)                   | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| At least one parent                | 0.91     | 0.81–1.03                | 0.79 0.62–1.02                                | 0.66** 0.49–0.89 | 0.83 0.59–1.18                      | 0.71** 0.57–0.89 |

Parental unemployment

| No parent (ref.)                   | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| At least one parent                | 0.97     | 0.78–1.22                | 1.13 0.73–1.74                                | 1.95** 1.27–2.99 | 1.34 0.81–2.23                      | 1.43* 1.03–1.98  |

Migration background

| ≥10 years in Sweden (ref.)         | 1.00     | 1.00                      | 1.00                                           | 1.00             | 1.00                                 | 1.00             |
| <10 years in Sweden               | 0.74**   | 0.59–0.91                | 1.09 0.71–1.66                                | 0.78 0.47–1.30    | 1.19 0.76–1.86                      | 1.07 0.77–1.50   |

***p < 0.001 **p < 0.01 *p < 0.05
Discussion

In many countries including Sweden, there are widespread opportunities for gambling, favoured not least by intense marketing by the gambling industry. Thus, it is not surprising that also adolescents engage in gambling activities despite the fact that it is illegal to minors. Even though this situation calls for actions on many levels, it does point to the importance of increasing our knowledge about risk factors associated with gambling and risk gambling among the young.

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between adolescents’ future orientation and their engagement in gambling and risk gambling. From previous research, including such using longitudinal information, it is known that a pessimistic future orientation predicts criminal offending (Alm & Estrada, 2018; Brezina et al., 2009; Piquero, 2016) and at-risk use of alcohol and drugs (Chen & Vazsonyi, 2013). It was argued that this could be understood from a rational choice perspective: Assuming that individuals act rationally to maximize their utility, it can be presumed that low future expectations lead to a sense of having nothing to lose, and hence, make impulsive risk behavior and a search for immediate benefits a more rational response than delayed gratification. However, it was also acknowledged that gambling (as well as utilitarian crime), at least in theory, could also be associated with elements of hope (in terms of a big win/gain), something which may be more difficult to conceptualize in relation to at-risk use of alcohol and drugs and to non-utilitarian criminal offending.

Results from our analyses showed that, in line with expectations, individuals with a pessimistic future orientation were more likely to engage in gambling and risk gambling as compared to those with a more optimistic future orientation. Furthermore, for gambling but not for risk gambling, the analyses showed that not only those who estimated their future prospects to be ‘much worse’ or ‘slightly worse’ than those of most others, but also those who estimated them to be ‘much better’ than those of most others, were more likely to have gambled in the past twelve months. A possible interpretation of this is that moderate gambling, at least for some adolescents, could be associated with a positive element in terms of a hope for a big win, while risk gambling appears as more uniformly destructive and linked to hopelessness, impulsive behavior and a search for immediate gratification.

The main strength of the study is the recently collected large-scale data covering a large number of students in grades 9 and 11 in Stockholm, enabling us to make robust analyses of gambling as well as risk gambling. Yet, there are also limitations. The items on gambling and risk gambling were not derived from validated measures, restricting comparisons with other studies and samples. Furthermore, we lack information about what forms of gambling the adolescents were involved in, since the data do not contain any information on the type of gambling (e.g. slot machines, betting, lotteries), nor on whether the gambling takes place on the Internet or elsewhere. In addition, since the data were cross-sectional we cannot make interpretations about causality with support in the data. While it is possible that a pessimistic future orientation leads to gambling and risk gambling, it is also possible that engagement in gambling and in risk gambling affects an individual’s future orientation in a negative way. Relatedly, it cannot be ruled out that future orientation, gambling and risk gambling share common determinants, such as certain personality traits or behavioural characteristics, which may be confounders in the associations found. Yet, earlier longitudinal studies have shown that a pessimistic future orientation precedes engagement in other types of risk behaviour (Alm & Estrada, 2018; Brezina et al., 2009; Chen & Vazsonyi, 2013; Piquero, 2016) and it seems reasonable to assume that this is the case also for gambling and risk gambling. A recommendation for future research is to examine the link between future orientation, gambling and risk gambling using longitudinal data.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that most studies on gambling and risk gambling among youth, including the current one, have focused on associations between individual and family characteristics and gambling and risk gambling. A promising task for future research would be to look into how social contexts may promote or prevent against risk gambling among youth. One such context is the school. Hence, a suggestion for future studies is to explore how different types of school characteristics may promote or prevent against adolescents’ engagement in gambling and in risk gambling.
Conclusion

Using survey data collected among students in the ninth and eleventh grades in Stockholm in 2016, the present study showed that adolescents’ future orientation is associated with their likelihood of engaging in gambling and in risk gambling. Both students with a pessimistic future orientation and those with an optimistic one had a greater likelihood of having gambled during the past 12 months, compared with those who expected their future to be similar to that of others. By contrast, risk gambling was only associated with a pessimistic future orientation. An interpretation of the findings is that a pessimistic future orientation may promote a ‘here and now’ orientation and a search for immediate gratification at the expense of delayed gratification.

Note

1. The opening question on gambling was followed by a question on how much money the respondent had spent on gambling during the past 30 days, with a set of fixed response categories. The distribution of responses among those who reported that they had gambled during the past 12 months in our study sample (n = 1,659) was as follows: ‘Haven’t gambled for 30 days’: 34.3% (n = 569); ‘Less than 50 kronor [approx. €5]’: 18.3% (n = 303); ‘50–99 kronor [approximately €5–10]’: 11.3% (n = 188); ‘100–199 kronor [approximately €10–20]’: 9.4% (n = 156); ‘200–299 kronor [approximately €20–30]’: 5.2% (n = 86), ‘300–399 kronor [approximately €30–40]’: 2.2% (n = 37); ‘400 kronor or more [approximately €40 or more]’: 14.4% (n = 239), and no response: 4.9% (n = 81). Due to limited validity in this question we refrain from using it in subsequent analyses (more specifically, it is unclear whether the question is restricted to the initial stake or whether it also includes money that has been gained from gambling and used as stakes in further gambling).

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Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributors

Sara Brolin Låftman is an associate professor of sociology. Her main research interests revolve around children’s and young people’s living conditions with a particular focus on the school environment in relation to adolescent health outcomes.

Susanne Alm is an associate professor of sociology. Her research is primarily concerned with the relationship between childhood living conditions and various aspects of social exclusion and social problems in adulthood. Alm also does research on future orientation among the young, on adolescent psychological health and on youth culture.

Gabriella Olsson holds a PhD in sociology. Her main research has been on youth health behaviours, particularly the influence of conditions in schools and the family for such behaviours.
Kristina Sundqvist has a PhD in psychology and holds a postdoc position at the Department of Public Health Sciences at Stockholm University. She is a licensed psychologist. Her main research concerns psychological aspects of problem gambling.

Peter Wennberg is a professor in social alcohol and drug research. His research evolves around various aspects of addictive behaviors including alcohol, drugs and excessive gambling.

ORCID

Gabriella Olsson  http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2579-8798

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