



Parent-adolescent relationships in Hispanic versus Caucasian families: Associations with alcohol and marijuana use onset



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HIGHLIGHTS

- PAR had a larger influence on age of AOD onset for Hispanics than Caucasians.
- Support and negative interactions with Hispanics fathers predicted earlier alcohol onset.
- Social support from Hispanic mothers predicted later alcohol onset.
- Negative interactions with Hispanic fathers predicted earlier marijuana onset.
- PAR on AOD onset may be larger for Hispanics than for Caucasians.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Ethnicity
Hispanic
Adolescents
Parents
Parent-adolescent relationships
Paternal role
Alcohol use
Marijuana use

ABSTRACT

Parent-adolescent relationship (PAR) factors such as social support and negative interactions are associated with initiation of alcohol and marijuana use during adolescence. However, few studies have examined whether the relationship between PAR, especially the paternal role, and substance use onset varies by ethnicity. This is important given that ethnic group differences have been related to alcohol and marijuana use, cultural values and parenting. This study examines whether ethnicity moderates the prospective prediction of substance use onset by PAR factors. The sample comprised 124 adolescents who self-identified as Hispanic and 795 adolescents who self-identified as non-Hispanic Whites, and was drawn from an ongoing longitudinal survey on adolescent substance use. Discrete-time survival modeling was used to prospectively predict age at onset of substance use among participants who were substance-naïve at baseline. Interactions between ethnicity and PAR factors indicated that PAR factors had a larger influence on age of alcohol and marijuana onset for Hispanics than for Caucasians. Among Hispanics, greater social support from and greater negative interactions with the father-figure were more predictive of earlier onset of alcohol, and greater social support from the mother-figure was more predictive of later alcohol onset, compared to Caucasians. Similarly, greater negative interactions with the father-figure were more predictive of earlier onset of marijuana use among Hispanics than among Caucasians. These findings suggest the influence of PAR on alcohol and marijuana use onset may be larger for Hispanics than for Caucasians. Incorporating these parenting factors in substance use prevention programs advances public health in a culturally sensitive manner that is relevant to at-risk Hispanic adolescents.

1. Introduction

Alcohol and marijuana are the two most commonly used substances by adolescents in the United States (Johnston, O'Malley, Miech, Bachman, & Schulenberg, (2016) MTF reference). Early initiation of alcohol and marijuana use is a public health concern given the rapid progression from first use to escalation of more frequent and hazardous use during adolescence (Carliner et al., 2016; Fidalgo et al., 2016; Robinson & Riggs, 2016; Stone, Vander Stoep, & McCauley, 2016). Consequences of adolescent alcohol and marijuana use are vast, and

include increased likelihood of being involved in a motor vehicle crash, suicide, engaging in violent behaviors, and experiencing co-occurring mental health concerns (Bukstein, 2016; Fishman, 2016; Kaminer, 2016; Tarter & Horner, 2016; Watson, Greene, & Kelly, 2014; Windle & Davies, 1999). Further, only one in ten adolescents meeting criteria for substance use disorder actually receive treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015). This underutilization is particularly true for Hispanic adolescents (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2016). Research also consistently indicates that parent-adolescent relationships (PAR) play a

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significant role in adolescent's substance use behaviors (Trucco, Colder, Wieczorek, Lengua, & Hawk, 2014). However, more research is needed to investigate ethnic differences that consider both the father- and mother-figure on PAR and adolescent substance use. Assessing both parents allows us to understand if differences in familial relationships from different ethnic groups uniquely impact adolescent alcohol and marijuana use.

1.1. Ethnic differences and adolescent alcohol and marijuana use

Prevalence rates of substance use differ across ethnic groups (Miech et al., 2015). Hispanic adolescents report more alcohol use, binge drinking behaviors, and marijuana use than their Caucasian counterparts (Johnston, O'Malley, Miech, Bachman & Schulenberg, 2016). Hispanic adolescents also tend to initiate alcohol and marijuana use earlier compared to Caucasians and so may be at greater risk for future escalation of use and comorbid mental health problems (Miech et al., 2015). Additionally, ethnic minority adolescents (e.g., Hispanics) tend to underutilize programs for substance use more so than Caucasians (Burrow-Sánchez, Minami, & Hops, 2015; Saloner, Carson, & Cook, 2014). Although efforts to improve underutilization of substance use treatment programs have been evaluated across cultural groups (Greenfield et al., 2007; Hser et al., 2001), few studies have focused on Hispanic adolescents (Burrow-Sánchez et al., 2015; Saloner et al., 2014). This is particularly true for substance use programs that incorporate parents into treatment (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002; Estrada et al., 2015; Prado et al., 2012; Szapocznik et al., 1991, 1988). There are reasons to suspect Hispanics may respond differently to particular involvement of parents, compared to other minorities, because of specific cultural values regarding the family.

1.2. Cultural values within Hispanic families

Cultural values and traditions impact family and parenting relationships and are particularly prominent within Hispanic families. *Familismo*, conceptualized as the value on family as the primary source of social support and identity (Romero & Ruiz, 2007; Smith-Morris, Morales-Campos, Alvarez, & Turner, 2013), continues to play a more significant role for Hispanics as compared to Caucasians (Marin & Gamba, 2003; Smith-Morris et al., 2013). *Familismo* highlights intimate family bonds built on loyalty and solidarity throughout one's life (Marin & Gamba, 2003). The same has been noted with *respeto*, typically conceptualized as the Hispanic value to maintain respectful hierarchical relationships within the family (Gil et al., 2000). For many Hispanic families, *respeto* provides an honor and respect to one another in relation to the family system; this is especially true for adolescents honoring both father and mother and the eldest in the families. These two culturally specific and commonly shared values among Hispanic families have been found to predict lower rates of substance use (Guilamo-Ramos, Bouris, Jaccard, Lesesne, & Ballan, 2009; Romero & Ruiz, 2007). Families that value *familismo* may serve as a source of inspiration, strength, and support against threats that put adolescents at risk for initial alcohol and marijuana use, as well as escalation to abuse or comorbid psychiatric conditions (Cupito, Stein, Gonzalez, & Supple, 2016; Marquez & Ramirez Garcia, 2013). Similarly, *respeto* may also serve as a source of harmony within the family. Through this cultural value, adolescents may respect and honor parental structure, rules, and attitudes towards alcohol and marijuana use (Soto, Unger, Ritt-Olson, Soto, Black, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2011). These two constructs may describe differential relational effects of parenting behaviors on alcohol and marijuana use between Hispanics and Caucasians.

1.3. Quality of parent-adolescent relationships and adolescent substance use

The nature of parent-adolescent relationships (PAR) can be

characterized and quantified along a number of positive and negative dimensions. Positive PAR is characterized by supportive, nurturing, and encouraging parent behaviors and companionship between the parent and adolescent, whereas negative PAR is characterized by parent antagonism or criticism of the adolescent, or by conflict between the parent and adolescent (Ryan, Jorm, & Lubman, 2010). Across races and ethnicities, the quality of PAR is associated with adolescent alcohol and marijuana use (Ryan, Jorm, Lubman, 2010). For example, adolescents whose parents embody positive dimensions of PAR tend to be less likely to initiate alcohol use (Cleveland, Feinberg, Osgood, & Moody, 2012; Jones et al., 2005; Koning, van den Eijnden, Verdurmen, Engels, & Vollebergh, 2012; Trucco et al., 2014) and marijuana use (Cleveland et al., 2012; Kamon, Stanger, Budney, & Dumenci, 2006; Marsiglia, Nagoshi, Parsai, Booth, & Castro, 2014). The protective effects of positive PAR persist into adulthood, as evidence suggests positive PAR prospectively predicts less problematic alcohol use (Ryan et al., 2010), and less use of tobacco, marijuana, and other illicit substances later in life (Branstetter, Low, & Furman, 2011; Ledoux, Miller, Choquet, & Plant, 2002). Conversely, negative dimensions of PAR have been shown to lower age of alcohol and marijuana onset (e.g., Abar, Fernandez, & Wood, 2011), as well as predict more problematic use later in life (Kamon, Budney, & Stanger, 2005; Kamon et al., 2006; Stanger, Budney, Kamon, & Thostensen, 2009). Negative dimensions of PAR may disrupt family cohesiveness, important values of positive authority, and overall support, all of which serve as protective factors for adolescent substance use (Schwarz et al., 2012; Schwarz et al., 2005).

Importantly, studies to date have not accounted for ethnic differences in the relationship between positive and negative dimensions of PAR and adolescent alcohol and marijuana use. The cultural values described above shape parent-adolescent relationships within Hispanic families. For example, through the cultural values of *familismo* and *respeto*, adolescents may respect and honor parental structure, rules, and attitudes towards alcohol and marijuana use (Soto et al., 2011).

Although existing data on the effect of PAR factors on adolescent alcohol and marijuana use have consistently shown significant associations (Cleveland et al., 2012; Koning et al., 2012; Trucco et al., 2014), most of the PAR literature has only considered the maternal role within this interaction. Studies that have examined the father-figure in relation to PAR and substance use (Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2010) have tended to focus relatively narrowly on the influence of individual paternal predictors of adolescent alcohol and/or marijuana use, such as paternal: communication quality (Friedman, Ali, & McMurphy, 1998; Jordan & Lewis, 2005; Kafka & London, 1991; Stern, Northman, & Van Slyck, 1984); substance use (Brooks, et al., 2002); support (e.g., van der Zwaluw et al., 2008; van der Zwaluw et al., 2006); supervision (Cookston, 1999); and conflict (Jordan, 2005). Therefore, an important gap in the literature is the lack of studies that have jointly modeled the individual influences of the father and the mother.

1.4. The current study

Given that the prevalence rates of alcohol and marijuana use are higher among Hispanic adolescents than Caucasian adolescents and that parents play a large role in shaping Hispanic substance use behaviors, it is important to examine the extent to which the effect of PAR on alcohol and marijuana use onset varies for Hispanic adolescents as compared to Caucasians. In this study, we investigated if ethnicity moderates the relationship between positive and negative dimensions of mother- and father-figure PAR and alcohol and marijuana use onset. We expected the positive effects of supportive parental interactions to be stronger for Hispanics as compared to Caucasians, and the harmful effects of negative parental interactions to be reduced for Hispanics as compared to Caucasians. A more thorough understanding of these ethnic differences will inform the development of culturally specific substance use preventive programs that incorporate both paternal and

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