



Short Communication

Acculturation and perceived discrimination: Predictors of substance use trajectories from adolescence to emerging adulthood among Hispanics[☆]



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HIGHLIGHTS

- We surveyed Hispanic adolescents from 9th grade through emerging adulthood.
- Perceived discrimination was significantly associated with substance use.
- Hispanic acculturation was protective against an increase in substance use.
- Cultural phenomena affect substance use through the transition to emerging adulthood.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Previous studies have documented associations between cultural factors and substance use among Hispanic adolescents. Negative cultural experiences such as discrimination have been associated with an increased risk of substance use among Hispanic adolescents, whereas positive cultural resources, such as maintenance of Hispanic cultural orientations, have shown protective effects. However, few studies have examined the continuing influence of cultural factors on substance use from adolescence to emerging adulthood.

Methods: We surveyed a cohort of Hispanic adolescents in Southern California in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades, and 3–4 years after high school. Growth curve analyses were conducted to examine the effects of U.S. acculturation, Hispanic acculturation, ethnic identity, and perceived discrimination on change in tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use over time.

Results: Higher perceived discrimination at baseline was significantly associated with a higher intercept (initial level) of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use. Higher initial level of Hispanic acculturation was significantly associated with a lower slope of tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use.

Conclusions: Cultural phenomena such as acculturation and perceived discrimination can continue to affect substance use through the transition to emerging adulthood. Health education interventions are needed to help Hispanics navigate this developmental transition without engaging in substance use.

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1. Introduction

Hispanic Americans experience cultural challenges including acculturative stress (Romero, Martinez, & Carvajal, 2007), discrimination (Pérez et al., 2008), and family acculturation discrepancies (Schwartz et al., 2012; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Unger, Ritt-Olson, Wagner, Soto, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2009). Most Hispanics learn to navigate these challenges and become well-adjusted, productive members of society. Unfortunately, some turn to maladaptive

behaviors such as substance use. It is important to understand the risk and protective factors for substance use among this vulnerable population, especially those factors that are unique to immigrant and/or minority groups (Szapocznik, Prado, Burlew, Williams, & Santisteban, 2007).

1.1. Culture-related risk factors for substance use

1.1.1. Acculturation to the United States

Adoption of a new culture and retention of the heritage culture represent separate processes (Berry, 1980). Immigrants and their families can identify with the culture of settlement (i.e., U.S. orientation or assimilation), with the culture of origin (i.e., Hispanic orientation or separation), with both cultures (i.e., biculturalism), or with neither culture (i.e., marginalization). Biculturalism may be especially protective

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against substance use (Carvajal, Hanson, Romero, & Coyle, 2002; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). Hispanic adolescents who identify primarily with the U.S. culture but not with their heritage cultures may be at increased risk for substance use (De La Rosa, 2002; McQueen, Getz, & Bray, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2011).

1.1.2. Discrimination

Discrimination is differential treatment based on membership in a minority or lower-status group. It includes overt harassment and subtle micro-aggressions such as implying that a person is unintelligent or untrustworthy (Sue et al., 2007; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2008). Perceived discrimination has been associated with substance use among Hispanics (Kam, Cleveland, & Hecht, 2010; Lorenzo-Blanco, Unger, Ritt-Olson, Soto, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2011; Tran, Lee, & Burgess, 2010).

1.2. Culturally-related protective factors

1.2.1. Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity includes knowledge about one's ethnic group, emotional significance of group membership, and commitment to the ethnic group (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Studies have found that a strong ethnic identity is protective against substance use (Brook, Zhang, Finch, & Brook, 2010; Love, Yin, Codina, & Zapata, 2006; Marsiglia, Kulis, Hecht, & Sills, 2004). However, other studies have found opposite (Zamboanga, Schwartz, Jarvis, & Van Tyne, 2009) or inconsistent (Kulis, Marsiglia, Kopak, Olmsted, & Crossman, 2012) associations.

1.2.2. Maintenance of Hispanic cultural orientation

Maintenance of Hispanic cultural orientation may facilitate better relationships between adolescents and their parents, protect adolescents from peer influences, and promote protective cultural values such as collectivism and respect for authority (Schwartz et al., 2012). Maintenance of Hispanic cultural orientation has been associated with reduced risks for substance use (Love et al., 2006; Szapocznik et al., 2007; Unger et al., 2009).

Although numerous studies have identified cultural risk and protective factors for unhealthy behaviors among Hispanic adolescents, it is unclear whether those risk and protective factors continue to influence behavior in emerging adulthood (EA). EA is a transitional period for exploring options in love, work, and education before making firm commitments to specific roles and responsibilities (Arnett, 2004; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). EA also can be a high-risk period for substance use because it is a time of increased autonomy and exploration but few commitments (Arnett, 2004).

Most research on EA has focused on (non-Hispanic-White) college students, who are not representative of the Hispanic emerging adult population overall (Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco, 2011; Hernández, Ramírez García, & Flynn, 2010; Huynh & Fuligni, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011). The experience of EA may differ for those Hispanics who cannot postpone taking on adult responsibilities such as contributing to household income and caring for family members (Phinney, Dennis, & Osorio, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2013). Because Hispanic emerging adults—especially those from families that emphasize familism and other collectivistic, interdependent cultural values—face these added responsibilities, their experience of EA may differ from that of Whites. It is not known whether the cultural phenomena that influence Hispanic substance use during adolescence continue to influence substance use in EA.

This article examines longitudinal associations between cultural phenomena and substance use among a cohort of Hispanic adolescents in Southern California who completed surveys in 9th–11th grades and 3–4 years later, in EA. We hypothesized that Hispanic orientation and ethnic identity would be protective against increases in substance use over time, and that U.S. orientation and perceived discrimination would represent risk factors for increases in substance use over time.

2. Method

Project RED (Reteniendo y Entendiendo Diversidad para Salud; Unger et al., 2009) is a longitudinal study of acculturation patterns and substance use among Hispanic adolescents in Southern California. Students attending seven predominantly Hispanic high schools in the Los Angeles area completed surveys in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades, and again 3–4 years after high school.

2.1. Student recruitment

The 9th, 10th, and 11th grade surveys were conducted in 2005, 2006, and 2007, respectively. In 2005, all 9th-grade students in the 7 schools ($N = 3218$) were invited to participate. Of those, 2420 (75%) provided parental consent and student assent. Of those students providing consent and assent, 2222 (92%) completed the survey in the 9th grade. Between the 9th and 10th grade surveys, a school district transferred some of the participants to a new school, so we added that school's 10th grade class to the sample, resulting in an additional 704 participants in the 10th grade. An additional 43 students also moved into the schools and joined the sample in the 11th grade. Therefore, a total of 2969 students had provided data at one or more timepoints during high school. Of those 2969 students, 2722 (92%) self-identified as Hispanic/Latino and were included in the present analyses.

2.2. EA survey

In 2011–2012, we attempted to re-contact the 2722 Hispanic/Latino participants who had participated in any wave(s) of the high school survey for an EA follow-up survey. Valid contact information was located for 2151 participants, and 1303 completed the EA survey. Overall, there were a total of 7799 observations provided by 2722 Hispanic participants, of whom 274 provided data at 1 timepoint, 576 provided data at 2 timepoints, 1116 provided data at 3 timepoints, and 756 provided data at all 4 timepoints.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Acculturation

Acculturation was assessed with a short form of the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995): 7 from the U.S. orientation subscale and 5 from the Hispanic orientation subscale. These 12 items were selected based on a pilot study in which these items had the highest factor loadings on their respective scales. Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$ for U.S. orientation, .88 for Hispanic orientation.

2.3.2. Discrimination

Discrimination was assessed using a 10-item measure of perceptions of personal experiences of discrimination (Guyll, Matthews, & Bromberger, 2001). Sample items include, "You are treated with less respect than other people." Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$.

2.3.3. Ethnic identity development

Ethnic identity development was assessed with the 12-item Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). Items include, "I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs." Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$.

2.3.4. Substance use

Past-month use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana was assessed in high school and EA. Respondents were asked how many times in the past 30 days they had smoked cigarettes, had at least one drink of alcohol, and used marijuana. The variables were log-transformed because their distributions were skewed.

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