

Editorial

Health Disparities in Alcohol Use, Delinquency and Violence among Minority Adolescents

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[§]Guest Editor

We would like to welcome you to our special issue on “*Health Disparities in Alcohol Use, Delinquency, and Violence among Minority Adolescents.*” The overall goal and purpose of this special issue is to provide a series of high quality articles that generally focus on the role of individual risk and protective factors including the role of families and parenting on a host of adverse and disparate outcomes such as alcohol use, aggression, antisocial behavior, delinquency, and violence. More specifically, the articles in the special issue examine this central research question from a variety of theoretical frameworks and methodological techniques, yet the intrinsic link across these studies remains their focus on minority adolescents. The eight articles in this special issue are organized in an age-graded developmental fashion and according to the race and ethnicity of the samples in order to assess how the relevant processes described above operate over the life-course and across race and ethnic group. These articles are further described below.

The first article, “Psychometrics and Cross-cultural Comparisons of the Illustration-based *Assessment of Liability and Exposure to Substance use and Antisocial Behavior*[®] for Children” written by Ridenour and colleagues involves a multiple sample comparison of a self-report instrument developed to measure substance use and antisocial behavior among 5- to 9-year-olds. Using a newly constructed instrument referred to as “*Assessment of Liability and Exposure to Substance use and Antisocial behavior*[®] (ALEXSA[®])” the authors demonstrated the reliability and validity of the instrument across the samples of young children. Furthermore, this reliability and validity largely held across race and ethnic group (White, Hispanic, and African American children).

Articles 2 and 3 that follow both focus solely on Hispanic youth. In Article 2, “Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Offending: Findings from a Sample of Hispanic Adolescents” Lopez and

Miller provide an investigation of the relationship between ethnicity, acculturation, and crime among a large sample of Hispanic children and adolescents ages 9-15. Using multivariate methods and data that were gathered as part of the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), the authors found that Puerto Rican youth reported higher rates of violence compared to their ‘other’ Hispanic counterparts, whereas Mexican youth were the least violent Hispanic subgroup. Additional analysis revealed that first generation immigrants reported less delinquent behavior suggesting that acculturation was a risk factor for involvement in delinquency. Youth who reported having delinquent peers also had a higher likelihood of reporting delinquency and violence. Comparatively, in Article 3, “The Role of Attitudes, Family, Peer and School on Alcohol Use, Rule Breaking and Aggressive Behavior in Hispanic Delinquent Adolescents,” Cordova and colleagues offer an in-depth examination into the ecodevelopmental risk factors associated with alcohol use, rule breaking, and aggression among 12- to 17-year-old Hispanic youth recruited from the Miami-Dade County, FL Department of Juvenile Services and from the Miami-Dade County, FL Public School system. Their results identified family functioning as a protective factor for alcohol use, whereas peer alcohol use and poor alcohol attitudes were risk factors for alcohol use. Subsequent analysis determined these variables to be relevant risk/protective factors for rule breaking and delinquency as well.

In Article 4, “Trajectories of Parenting Styles and Delinquency: An Examination Using a Sample of African-Americans,” Smith and colleagues present a unique contribution to the special issue by being the only article that focuses exclusively on African American adolescents. Relying on data from a nationally representative sample of African American youth ages 13-16 and employing semi-parametric trajectory models, the authors identified three distinct trajectory groups of parenting styles: one trajectory demonstrated a low level of an authoritarian parenting style and the other two trajectories exhibited a higher level of an authoritarian parenting (although one of these trajectory groups became less authoritarian over time). Following a dual trajectory analysis, Smith and colleagues reported that the relationship between parenting

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styles and delinquency varied over time and across parent (e.g., maternal parenting style or paternal parenting style).

Rennison and colleagues offer a novel and rigorous methodological examination into the differential rates of reporting violence against juveniles aged 17 and younger across race and ethnicity in Article 5, "Reporting Violent Victimization to the Police: A Focus on Black, White, Asian and Hispanic Adolescent Victims." Through an analysis of data collected between 1992 and 2005 as part of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the authors discovered that less than one-third of violent incidents committed against juveniles were reported to the police and that violence against African American youth was the most likely to be reported to the police compared to offenses that were perpetrated against White or Asian youth. The authors conclude with recommendations for how the criminal justice system can address the issues associated with the under-reporting of crimes and why this under-reporting varies across race and ethnicity.

The final three articles in this special issue, Articles 6-8, are similar in that they involve an analysis of multiple race and ethnic groups, assess risk and protective factors in mid-adolescence, and evaluate the effect of these risk and protective factors observed in adolescence on outcomes in young adulthood. In Article 6, "A Longitudinal Examination of the Relationship between Physical Aggression and Violent Victimization among Urban Minority Chicago Youth and Young Adults," Jennings and Komro extend the focus of the previous articles by seeking to identify the risk and protective factors that not only predict physical aggression but also to determine if these same risk and protective factors predict violent victimization. Drawing on data gathered from a large sample of African American and Hispanic youth who were participants in Project Northland Chicago (PNC) and followed from ages 12 to 18, a series of bivariate probit regression models illustrated that perpetrating physical aggression and reporting experiencing violent victimization were intrinsically linked outcomes. Additional analysis identified alcohol use and mental health issues (e.g., sadness and depression) as significant risk factors for reporting both outcomes.

Article 7, "Greater than the Sum of Its Parts: The Combined Effect of Early Alcohol Use and Violence on Alcohol Abuse and Violence in Adulthood" and Article 8, "Differential Effects for Sexual Risk Behavior: An application of Finite Mixture Modeling" both make use of the Add Health data, which is a nationally representative sample of 80 high schools and 52 middle schools in the United States. Reingle and colleagues (Article 7) offer an investigation into the relationship between violence and alcohol use during adolescence (approximately age 15) and how this relationship predicts continuing to display these behaviors in adulthood (approximately age 27). The authors' stratified analysis revealed racial and ethnic differences linking adolescent risk and adulthood alcohol abuse. Specifically, violence and alcohol use in adolescence predicted alcohol abuse in adulthood for Whites and African American, yet this same relationship was not observed for Hispanics. In

contrast, Lanza and colleagues (Article 8) estimated their multivariate models using a number of risk factors in adolescence including early sexual debut, heavy episodic drinking, school connectedness, positive consequences of having sex, and negative consequences of having sex to predict risky sexual behavior in adulthood. The results from their latent class analysis (adjusted for gender, race, and grade) revealed four latent classes based on the total number of sexual partner in adulthood. Furthermore, it appeared that efforts at mediating the risk factors among adolescents who were at lower risk for later risky sexual behavior seems prudent.

Taken together, the eight high quality articles included in our "Health Disparities in Alcohol Use, Delinquency, and Violence among Minority Adolescents" special issue provide a series of important results that have theoretical, methodological, empirical, and policy implications. First, these articles demonstrate that there are disparities in alcohol use, delinquency, and violence across racial and ethnic groups with higher rates of these behaviors being concentrated among minority adolescents. Second, there is a relative degree of commonality among the risk and protective factors that predict involvement in these outcomes across racial and ethnic groups. For example, parenting, peers, mental health issues, and contextual factors appear to play a role in determining whether or not adolescents report involvement in aggression, delinquency, and antisocial behavior and experiencing victimization and these relationships are, by and large, invariant across race and ethnicity. Third, the manner in which these risk and protective factors affect these outcomes is remarkably consistent across different stages of development and the life-course (e.g., childhood, early to mid-adolescence, late adolescence, and young adulthood). Collectively, all of the evidence available from these articles suggests that prevention/intervention efforts that are available early on in the life-course and targeted at identifiable risk and protective factors including parenting are likely to provide the most benefit in alleviating the risk associated with a host of adverse outcomes in adolescence and adulthood for minority youth.

We would like to close by offering a sincere thank you to the current editor, Dr. Augustine Kposowa, and managing editor, Nida Badar, of the *The Open Family Studies Journal* for providing us the opportunity to be Guest Editors for this special issue and all of their assistance along the way in seeing this project into production. We would also like to extend our gratitude to those individuals who participated in this special issue as blind peer reviewers. Their thoughtful comments and criticisms certainly improved the quality of each and every article in this special issue. We hope that you find this special issue as enjoyable a read as we do. Ultimately, we are confident that this special issue, which represents an extensive cross-disciplinary effort that involves sociologists, criminologists, psychologists, epidemiologists, and public health experts, has taken an important step in unraveling the complex issues surrounding "Health Disparities in Alcohol Use, Delinquency, and Violence among Minority Adolescents."