This study examined rates of lifetime and current alcohol use among 7th- through 12th-grade Mexican American and non-Hispanic White students. Students from 33 middle and high schools from the southwestern U.S. completed a survey of alcohol use. Odds ratios were calculated for grade by gender by ethnicity comparisons for Mexican American boys (n = 2170) and girls (n = 1294), and non-Hispanic White boys (n = 1723) and girls (n = 2117). Multiple imputation was used to account for missing data. Consistent with past studies, Mexican American students and alcohol were frequently than non-Hispanic White students, but boys drank more frequently. Somewhat surprisingly, among younger students more girls than boys reported current drinking, but among older students, fewer girls reported recent drunkenness or binge drinking. Grade in school moderated a number of ethnic- and gender differences. Higher rates of alcohol use among young girls compared to young boys may signal increased risk for girls, particularly among Mexican American.

KEYWORDS: Students, alcohol abuse, Mexican American, Hispanics, substance use
Clinical Variations of Adolescent Substance Abuse: An Empirically Based Typology

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This study was designed to establish and validate a multidimensional empirically based typology of clinically referred adolescent substance abusers. A total of 141 adolescent substance abusers, most of whom were male, African-American, and juvenile justice involved, comprised the study sample. Youth and their parents completed comprehensive assessments at intake to treatment, discharge, and at 6 months and 12 months post-discharge from treatment. Adolescents were classified based on individual and family risk factors, associated problems, and severity of substance use. Variables included in the 2-stage cluster analysis included adolescents’ substance use, psychiatric disorders, and legal involvement; peer substance use; family substance abuse; parental psychopathology; and family conflict. Three groups emerged: Juvetice Justice Involved Substance Abusers, with the lowest level of overall risk but highest juvenile justice involvement; Consensual Substance Abusers, with the greatest family risk and individual psychopathology; and Heavy Substance Abusers, marked by serious substance abuse and peer substance use. Discriminant and predictive validity of the typology were established. This multi-dimensional typology of teenage substance abusers suggests that risk factors, associated problems, and substance use severity are all critical in assessing and treating this heterogeneous population. Different intervention strategies may be appropriate for these subgroups of adolescent substance abusers.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, substance abuse, typology

Mental Health Status of Infrequent Adolescent Substance Users

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Frequent substance use has a strong association with poor mental health. The relationship between infrequent substance use and mental health is less clear. The present study investigated this relationship in a large group (n = 2,118) of 12-19-year-olds from Alberta, Canada. Results indicated that adolescents who used to use or alcohol once a month or less tended to have equivalent mental health status to non-users. Using cannabis 3-5 times/year or less had no adverse mental health associations. However, poorer mental health was associated with single use of hallucinogens or other drugs. In general, substance usage tended to have more negative mental health associations for younger compared to older adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Mental health, substance use, adolescents