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PREVIEW

ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE: THE RELATIONSHIP OF  
ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE WITH PARENTAL AND  
ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE  
FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

by

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PREVIEW

**ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE: THE RELATIONSHIP OF ALCOHOL  
AND DRUG USE WITH PARENTAL AND ADOLESCENT  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**

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**A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Rosemead School of Psychology  
Biola University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy**

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**by  
Terresa Deanne Eddington Williams  
August, 1998**

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PREVIEW

## ABSTRACT

### ADOLESCENT SUBSTANCE USE: THE RELATIONSHIP OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE WITH PARENTAL AND ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

by

Terresa Deanne Eddington Williams

This study investigated the relationship between adolescent substance use and the family environment from both parental and adolescent perspectives. Sixty-five sixth, seventh, and eighth grade adolescents from two junior high schools completed the American Drug and Alcohol Survey (ADAS; Rocky Mountain Behavioral Science Institute, Inc., 1986), a self report measure of substance use and attitudes regarding substance use. Forty-six parents of the adolescents surveyed completed surveys (developed by the researcher) on their perceptions of their adolescents' substance use and parental concern regarding their adolescents' substance use. Parents and adolescents also completed the following self report measures: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES II; Olson, Portner, & Bell, 1982), Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1992), and the Family Satisfaction Scale (Olson & Wilson, 1982).

Results of this study found that adolescent non-drug-users reported significantly more family cohesion and adaptability than adolescent drug-users. Adolescent non-drug-users also reported significantly better father-adolescent communication. Results of a discriminate analysis revealed that adolescent perceptions of problem communication with the surveyed parent and problem communication with their mother were significant in predicting whether or not an adolescent would be classified as a drug-user. Adolescent non-drug-users reported significantly higher overall family satisfaction and family adaptability satisfaction than drug-users. Results of this study also found that families with adolescent drug-users had significantly more parent-adolescent discrepancy in their perceptions of the family environment. A discriminate analysis revealed that the discrepancy between parent and adolescent perceptions of the family environment predicted

whether or not an adolescent was classified as a drug-users. Results also suggest that parents tended to under-report their adolescent's substance use.

Findings of this study support the positive relationship between adolescent perceptions of the family environment (less family cohesion, less family adaptability, less parent-adolescent communication, and less family satisfaction), parent-adolescent discrepancy, and adolescent substance use. This research also suggests the need for a family component in the prevention of adolescent substance use.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my sincerest appreciation to everyone who has contributed and supported me throughout this project. My father-in-law, David Williams, called me one night as I was working on my dissertation. When I told him about how busy I had been and all of the people I had helping me with different aspects of it, he mused, “It takes a village<sup>1</sup> to raise a dissertation.” He was certainly right. I am very grateful to the “village” around me who supported and encouraged me during this process.

I thank Tamara Anderson for all of her time and energy that she has dedicated. Her guidance and wisdom have not only been instrumental in the completion of this project, but she has played an important role in my personal and professional development throughout my graduate career. I also thank Chris Grace for his wisdom and encouragement. His expertise has been a valuable resource during this project. Additionally, I thank Charles Dickens for not only his supportive style, but also for his editing and assistance in helping me to present my ideas in a clear and thoughtful manner.

Along with my committee members, I extend my appreciation to my research assistants, Danielle Stewart and Julie Carlson, who assisted me in everything from library research to the collection of my data. I thank Ken Olson and Gail Herron who supported and believed in my research and were an integral part of the utilization of the schools for my sample. I am also grateful to the school staff for allowing me to use their schools, and to the adolescents and parents who participated in my study.

I am very grateful to my parents, Lester and Lyla Eddington, whose love and support have provided me a solid foundation on which to challenge myself and reach for my dreams. I also thank my brother, Brett Eddington, for his support and the errands he did on behalf of my dissertation. I appreciate my sister, Tracie Eddington, for her many hours of proofreading and words of encouragement. I extend my gratitude to David and Sandy Williams, and Melissa and Pim van Meurs who have become an important part of my family. Their encouragement has been a source of support during this process. I also want to thank all of my extended family, my friends, and classmates who comprise my

village. Their support and encouragement have made a challenging project manageable.

Lastly, I am most grateful to my husband, Mark Williams, who has endured and supported me throughout my graduate career. Words can not begin to express my deep appreciation of the endless hours he has contributed to this project. His patience, love, and belief in me have enabled me to grow and succeed while accomplishing some difficult challenges. I feel very blessed to have his love and support. It does take a village to raise a dissertation, and I am very grateful to mine.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the title It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us, (Clinton, H. R., 1996).

PREVIEW

## CHAPTER 1

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Adolescence is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by physical, cognitive, and social changes, and it can be a stressful period for both the adolescent and his or her family (Wodarski, 1990). During this developmental period, the family and the adolescent typically face new stressors and undergo changes. "It is a time when adolescents experience a rapid period of maturation and their focus of identity shifts away from their family and toward their peer group" (Olson, McCubbin, et al., 1983, p. 219). Families play a crucial, yet difficult role during adolescence. Parents are faced with the task of balancing the adolescent's desire for increased independence, while at the same time parents must provide guidance and protection for the adolescent who is not yet prepared for complete autonomy. Olson, McCubbin, et al. (1983) found a significant lack of agreement between parental and adolescent perceptions of family relationships. They suggest that during adolescence, ". . . the level of intrafamily stress may be elevated due to the discrepant perspectives of parents and their adolescents regarding family issues and dynamics" (Olson, McCubbin, et al., 1983, p. 220).

During this development stage, the risk of adolescents experimenting with drugs increases (Wodarski, 1990). Research indicates that the percentage of adolescents who use alcohol and drugs is high, and reported use has increased over the past decade (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 1995). Research performed in the area of family environment suggest a strong relationship between the characteristics of the family environment, parent-adolescent communication, and adolescent substance use (Rees & Wilborn, 1983; Stephenson, Henry, & Robinson, 1996). Additionally, recent research suggests that the discrepancy between parent and adolescent perceptions of the family environment is

significantly related to adolescent substance use (Langhinrichsen et al., 1990).

Research which identifies family characteristics associated with adolescent substance use can provide a foundation on which to develop family-based prevention and intervention programs (Denton & Kampfe, 1994; Stephenson et al., 1996). These prevention programs can facilitate the family's development of internal resources and more productive methods of communication, which in turn will reduce the risk of adolescent substance use. Additionally, this research has the potential to provide insight into family characteristics associated with adolescent substance abuse, which can serve as warning signs of adolescent substance use and at-risk behavior.

Although past research has provided a good beginning for understanding the relationship of the family environment and adolescent substance use, a serious limitation in the majority of studies is that results have been based exclusively on self report information from adolescents. Thus the picture of the family environment is from only one family member's perspective. Therefore, research which investigates the family environment and adolescent substance use from both the adolescent and parent perspective is needed.

The purpose of the current study was to evaluate the relationship between adolescent substance use and the family environment from both the parent's and adolescent's perspective. This was done by having the adolescent complete self report surveys on their amount and type of substance use and their family environment. Specifically, the following family environment characteristics were assessed: cohesion, adaptability, parent-adolescent communication, and amount of family satisfaction. To assess the congruence between parental and adolescent perceptions of the family environment and its relationship to adolescent substance use, parents were asked to self-report on identical items of the family environment as the adolescent. Parents were also asked to report on their perceptions of their adolescent's substance use and substance use attitudes. This allowed the relationship between the family environment and parental ability to accurately predict their adolescent's substance use to be explored.

The review of literature includes the prevalence of adolescent substance use. Research on the family environment and its influence on adolescent substance use is also reviewed, including a description of research on family characteristics, parent-adolescent

communication, and the discrepancy between parental and adolescent perceptions of the family environment. The relationship between parental substance use and adolescent substance use is also explored in an attempt to understand the impact of parental substance use and the influence of parental attitudes and behaviors which typically accompany parental substance use. The effect of peer substance use on adolescent substance use is also reviewed. Additionally, a review of the literature on the relationship between demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity, family structure, and adolescent substance use is reviewed. Research which offers insight as to the role protective factors (e.g., positive relationships with parents, self esteem) play in preventing adolescent substance use is examined. The final section summarizes the literature and presents the rationale and hypotheses regarding this study.

#### Prevalence of Adolescent Substance Use

The Monitoring the Future Study, conducted annually at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, is a longitudinal, nationwide survey of illicit substance use among adolescents. This research began in 1975, initially including only high school seniors. In 1992, the researchers expanded the population studied to include eighth and tenth-grade students. For the purposes of this study, the discussion of The Monitoring the Future Study focuses primarily on illicit drug use reported by eighth-grade students. This age group corresponds to the sample which is investigated in this present study. Table 1 presents the trends in prevalence of substance use for eighth-grade students.

From 1991 to 1995 reported lifetime substance use by eighth-graders has increased for the following drugs: marijuana, inhalants, hallucinogens, LSD, cocaine, heroin, stimulants, tranquilizers, cigarettes, and steroids (Johnston et al., 1995). During this same time period, reported alcohol use has essentially remained at the same lifetime use percentage (i.e., percentage who reported using alcohol at some point in their life). Despite this stability in prevalence from 1991 to 1995, the levels of reported alcohol use are high for eighth-graders (see Table 1). This is compared to 80.7% of high school seniors and 70.5% of tenth-graders who reported lifetime alcohol use (Johnston et al., 1995). Twelfth and tenth-graders reported higher percentages of annual, past 30 days, and daily alcohol

Table 1

Trends in Substance Use for Eighth-Grade Adolescents Reported in Percentages

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
<b>Marijuana</b>					
Lifetime	10.2	11.2	12.6	16.7	19.9
Annual	6.2	7.2	9.2	13.0	15.8
30-day	3.2	3.7	5.1	7.8	9.1
Daily	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.8
<b>Inhalants</b>					
Lifetime	17.6	17.4	19.4	19.9	21.6
Annual	9.0	9.5	11.0	11.7	12.8
30-day	4.4	4.7	5.4	5.6	6.1
Daily	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
<b>Alcohol<sup>a</sup></b>					
Lifetime	70.1	69.3	67.1	--	54.5
Annual	54.0	53.7	51.6	--	45.3
30-day	25.1	26.1	26.2	--	24.6
Daily	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	0.7
<b>Hallucinogens</b>					
Lifetime	3.2	3.8	3.9	4.3	5.2
Annual	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.7	3.6
30-day	0.8	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.7
Daily	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Trends in Substance Use for Eighth-Grade Adolescents Reported in Percentages

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
<b>LSD</b>					
Lifetime	2.7	3.2	3.5	3.7	4.4
Annual	1.7	2.1	2.3	2.4	3.2
30-day	0.6	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.4
Daily	< 0.05	< 0.05	< 0.05	< 0.05	0.1
<b>Cocaine</b>					
Lifetime	2.3	2.9	2.9	3.6	4.2
Annual	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.1	2.6
30-day	0.5	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.2
Daily	0.1	< 0.05	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Heroin</b>					
Lifetime	1.2	1.4	1.4	2.0	2.3
Annual	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.2	1.4
30-day	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6
Daily	< 0.05	< 0.05	< 0.05	0.1	< 0.05
<b>Stimulants</b>					
Lifetime	10.5	10.8	11.8	12.3	13.1
Annual	6.2	6.5	7.2	7.9	8.7
30-day	2.6	3.3	3.6	3.6	4.2
Daily	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>Tranquilizers</b>					
Lifetime	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.5
Annual	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.7
30-day	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.2

(table continues)