



Alcohol Use Trajectories from Adolescence to Young Adulthood: Comparing Biracial and Monoracial Youth

Schedule:

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UDC, ML 1 (Marriott Marquis Washington DC)

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Background and Purpose: Alcohol consumption escalates during adolescence and young adulthood and has long-term health consequences, highlighting the importance of understanding developmental patterns during these critical periods. While racial/ethnic differences in alcohol trajectories are documented, Biracial young adults remain understudied despite heightened vulnerability. This study compares alcohol use trajectories between non-Hispanic Biracial young adults (Biracial White-Asian, Biracial White-Black, and Biracial White-Indigenous) and their monoracial peers.

Methods: We used an integrated data analysis approach, combining two nationally representative longitudinal datasets, Add Health and Monitoring the Future, to increase the sample of Biracial individuals. Latent growth curve models estimated developmental trajectories of past 12-month alcohol use ($n = 34,269$) and drunkenness ($n = 23,964$) for individuals ages 18 to 31. Unconditional models (e.g., piecewise, quadratic) identified the best-fitting growth trajectory for each outcome. Subsequently, conditional models examined the effects of racialized/ethnic group, including interactions between race/ethnicity and data source, while controlling for sex, family structure, and mother's education.

Results: Piecewise models best fit the data. Add Health and MTF data displayed similar patterns with varying magnitude for alcohol use and drunkenness. Alcohol use increased from ages 18 to 21, then stabilized through to age 31. Biracial White-Black individuals followed alcohol use trajectories more like White individuals, who exhibited higher levels than monoracial Black individuals. However, their drunkenness patterns are more aligned with Black individuals, but at a generally higher level. Similarly, Biracial White-Asian individuals resembled White individuals in alcohol use trajectories, but in terms of drunkenness, they resembled White individuals until age 21, then diverged onto a unique downward trajectory. Biracial White-Indigenous individuals mirrored the alcohol use and drunkenness patterns of their White peers, albeit at slightly lower levels of drunkenness. In contrast, monoracial Indigenous, Asian, Black, and Indigenous-Asian individuals reported lower levels of alcohol use at age 18. Indigenous individuals, in particular, tended to catch up with their peers in alcohol use during their twenties.

Conclusions and Implications: These findings highlight racial/ethnic differences in the developmental trajectories of alcohol use and drunkenness, with Biracial young adults often showing alcohol use patterns similar to White young adults. Although monoracial minoritized individuals report lower levels of alcohol use at age 18, their rates tend to rise more steeply from 18 to 21, catching up with those of their peers. This suggests that prevention efforts remain important during emerging adulthood, especially for monoracial minoritized individuals. Given the already elevated levels of alcohol use among White and biracial individuals by age 18, prevention efforts should begin earlier in adolescence for these groups.

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