

In recent years, studies about Mexican American smoking behaviors have presented results on the influence of acculturation. After adjusting for age and education, Sundquist et. al. (1999) reported Mexico-born males and females were less likely to be current smokers than US-born Mexican American females. Other research has shown inconsistent results relating acculturation to smoking status (Markides K, et. al., 1987). Using data from the Hispanic Established Population for Epidemiologic Studies of the Elderly we seek to determine if, among older Mexican Americans, acculturation and nativity status play a role in smoking behavior.

Tobacco use is a leading health problem at the center of public health discussion in the United States today. Smoking, a preventable cause of disease and death, is responsible for more than 400,000 deaths a year and up to \$157 billion in healthcare costs annually, and the Surgeon general predicts that smoking-related deaths will continue at current rates over the next few decades (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004). While the literature describing smoking trends among Americans is vast, there is limited evidence related specifically to the Mexican American population. There is even less evidence regarding the smoking patterns of older Mexican Americans. Over the course of the next few decades, the percent of Hispanic people living in the United States is projected to double from 12.6% in 2000 to 24.4% in 2050 (US Census Bureau, 2004a). Among Hispanic persons in the US, those of Mexican origin currently make up nearly two-thirds (US Census Bureau, 2004b). Therefore, it is important to study the health behaviors of older Mexican Americans and the potential effects of acculturation on those health behaviors.

The purpose of the current research is to examine the relationship between smoking and both acculturation and immigrant status in older Mexican Americans. The general research question is:

- Are older Mexican Americans who are more highly acculturated (more proficient in English, more interaction with Anglo-Americans, and born in the US) more likely to be current or former smokers versus never smokers?

Additional exploratory analyses will examine the timing of immigration and smoking initiation and cessation:

- Are older Mexican American current or former smokers more likely to have started smoking after their immigration to the United States?
- Are older Mexican American former smokers more likely to have quit while in the US or prior to their immigration?

Sample

Data come from wave 1 of the Hispanic Established Population for Epidemiologic Studies of the Elderly. Data were collected from a representative sample of community-dwelling older (age ≥ 65) Mexican Americans in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California (1992-1993). The baseline sample included 3050 subjects. Sampling methods are described elsewhere (Black SA, et. al, 2003)

For the purposes of the current study, the samples were further reduced to include only those individuals who responded to the questionnaires themselves (non-proxy subjects). This lowered the sample size to 2734.

Variables and Measures

Dependent variables include smoking status (current, former, never), age the respondent first started smoking, years since a respondent stopped smoking, and smoking frequency. Control variables are sex (58% female), age (Mean 72.5), education (76.6% ≤ 7th grade), income (58% ≤ \$9,999/year), number of chronic illnesses (68% have one or more), and marital status (56% married). English language proficiency (scale 0-35, higher scores indicate more proficiency) and interaction with Anglo-Americans (scale 0-6, higher scores indicate more interaction with Anglo Americans than Mexican Americans) are two measures of dimensions of acculturation. Questions were extracted from work by Hazuda and colleagues who developed scales to measure acculturation specifically in Mexican Americans (Hazuda, et al., 1988). Other acculturation-related measures include nativity status, and age when the subject migrated to the United States to stay.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary results in Table 1 indicate that current smokers and former smokers are more proficient in the English language and have more interaction with Anglo-Americans than those who have never smoked. Nativity status and the number of years that a subject has spent in the US appear to have no association with smoking status.

Table 1 Means of acculturation measures by smoking status

	Never Smokers	Former Smokers	Current Smokers
English language proficiency	8.945 ^{a,b}	10.538	10.932
Interaction with Anglo-Am	0.337 ^{a,b}	0.489	0.483
US Born	0.564	0.554	0.592
Age at migration	31.67	32.33	30.12

a p<0.01 between never and former, **b** p<0.01 between never and current

Preliminary results indicate that some measures of acculturation are associated with smoking behaviors. The next step is to examine the association of acculturation measures with smoking behaviors in multivariate models using multinomial logistic regression. In addition, we will examine descriptively the association between timing of immigration and smoking initiation and cessation.

References

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