# TSSW professor to present on substance use and mental health disparities

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# Socioeconomic status differences in U.S. multiracial adolescents' substance use and mental health problems

Audrey H Hai, 1 Ai Bo, 2 Catalina Lopez-Quintero, 3 Laura Curran, 1 Amanda L. Elton 4

<sup>3</sup>Tulane University, School of Social Work: <sup>3</sup>University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Helen Bader School of Social Welfare <sup>3</sup>University of Florida, Department of Epidemiology: <sup>4</sup>University of Florida, Department of Psychiatry

#### Introduction

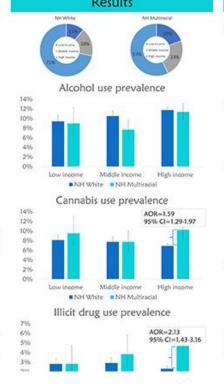
- While the United States is becoming increasingly multiracial, much is still unknown about the behavioral health of these growing new generations of multiracial Americans.
- Approximately 70% of adolescents have tried alcohol and 50% have tried an illicit substance by the time they finish high school. Depression among adolescents also have increased in the past decade.
- For multiracial adolescents, the rates of substance use and mental health problems are higher compared to monoracial groups.
- However, less is known about the prevalence rates of specific substance use or mental health disorders among multiracial adolescents, and even less about racial differences by socioeconomic status (SES).

## Study Aims

To investigate the prevalence of substance use and mental health problems among non-Hispanic multiracial adolescents compared to their White counterparts and whether racial differences vary by SES.

### Methods

We used data from the 2015-2019 National



### Conclusion

- Our findings indicated that non-Hispanic multiracial adolescents had higher prevalence rates of cannabis use, illicit drug use, and major depressive episodes than their White peers, but this racial difference might only be present in the higher SES context.
- This finding may be related to the fact that some stressors faced by multiracial adolescents could be more pronounced for those with higher SES, such as pressure to succeed and racial identity confusion.
- In addition, multiracial adolescents from higher SES backgrounds may be more likely to reside in areas and attend schools with fewer racial/ethnic minorities. Consequently, they may be more likely to be exposed to racial/ethnic discrimination and related stressors, which could lead to worsened drug use and depression outcomes.
- Further research is needed to investigate the intersectionality of race and SES and how these factors influence the experiences of multiracial adolescents.

#### References

Jackson, K. F., and Craig Lecroy, M. W. (2009). THE INFLUENCE OF

Tulane University is proud to announce that Assistant Professor <u>Audrey Hai, PhD, MSW</u>, will represent the School of Social Work with her insightful research at the upcoming 2024 Annual Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence. The poster, titled "Socioeconomic Status Differences in U.S. Multiracial Adolescents' Substance Use and Mental Health Problems," delves into the nuanced interplay between socioeconomic status, race, and mental health outcomes among adolescents in the United States.

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The annual meeting, which will be held in Chicago from April 18-20, 2024, promises to be a convergence of the foremost minds in adolescent psychology and sociology. Dr. Hai co-authored the presentation with Ai Bo, Catalina Lopez-Quintero, Laura Curren, and Amanda Elton.

The crux of their research lies in the examination of substance use and mental health disparities among non-Hispanic multiracial adolescents when juxtaposed with their White counterparts. Through meticulous analysis, Dr. Hai's study has unveiled a stark reality: multiracial adolescents, particularly those within the high-income bracket, face significantly higher prevalence rates of cannabis use, illicit drug use, and major depressive episodes compared to their White peers. This revelation underscores the imperative of dissecting the intersectionality of race and socioeconomic status in understanding adolescent health outcomes. It challenges prevailing assumptions and demands a more nuanced approach to addressing the multifaceted needs of multiracial youth.

Dr. Hai's findings have the potential to inform targeted interventions, policies, and support systems aimed at mitigating the disparities faced by multiracial adolescents across socioeconomic strata. Tulane's School of Social Work is delighted to celebrate Dr. Hai in this achievement.



Audrey Hang Hai, Phd, MSW

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