



summer 2023 press release

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON ALCOHOL, CANNABIS, AND OPIOID USE AMONG URBAN AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE EMERGING ADULTS

Elizabeth J. D’Amico

David P. Kennedy

Nipher Malika

David J. Klein

Ryan A. Brown

Anthony Rodriguez

Carrie L. Johnson

Wahpeton Dakota

Kurt Schweigman

Lakota



Virginia Arvizu-Sanchez

Tongva, Kumeyaay, Apache

Kathy Etz

Daniel L. Dickerson

Inupiaq

SUMMARY

Emerging adulthood, defined in this article as ages 18-25, is an important developmental period when many social changes take place, and young people may be influenced by their social networks. Social networks can increase risk for some people, for example, by influencing individuals to increase their substance use. They can also be protective, for example, by encouraging people to participate in healthy behaviors such as exercise. To date, there is not much information on the social networks of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) young people who live in urban areas.

In this article, we assessed 150 urban AI/AN emerging adults ages 18-25 who lived in urban areas across the United States. We asked them to name up to 15 people whom they talked with most over the past 3 months and report who (a) used alcohol heavily, or used cannabis regularly or used other drugs (e.g., opioid use), (b) engaged in traditional practices, and

(c) provided support. They also reported their own past 3-month alcohol, cannabis, and opioid use and intentions to use.

We wanted to understand how both substance use behavior and participation in traditional practices in these emerging adults’ social networks might influence their personal cannabis and alcohol use. When participants had more people in their network who engaged in heavy alcohol use, regular cannabis use, or other drug use and who did not engage in traditional practices, they were more likely to report cannabis use and greater

intentions to use cannabis and drink alcohol. In contrast, when participants had more people in their network who engaged in traditional practices and who did not report substance use they were less likely to report intentions to use cannabis or drink alcohol.

Findings emphasize what many studies have shown for this age group - having people in your network who use substances increases the chance of use. Findings also highlight that traditional practices may be an important part of preventing substance use for urban AI/AN emerging adults.

Access the full article at our website, www.tacunaproject.com/pub-media.

To find out more about the TACUNA project, scan the QR code.



HIGHLIGHTS

“One way to connect urban AI/AN emerging adults with their culture is by helping them develop supportive social networks with whom they can share traditions.”

HIGHLIGHTS

“Traditional practices and cultural teachings may increase protection because they reinforce Native American community connectedness and highlight the importance of relationships with self, others, and the land.”