

**Exploring the Correlation between Black Family Structures, Parenting Styles,
and Recreational Drug Abuse: A Senior Project**



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and Recreational Drug Abuse: A Senior Project**

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Thank you.

Sincerely,

Isaiah, Romain

Abstract

This senior project investigates the intricate relationship between family structures, parenting styles, and the prevalence of recreational drug abuse among adolescents and young adults. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of existing literature in psychology, sociology, history, and public health. The study explores how various family structures (single-parent household, blended households and nuclear family households) among historically underrepresented families relate to adoption of specific parenting styles and their potential impact on the likelihood of teens and young adults engaging in recreational drug use. Furthermore, I aim to delve into the underlying mechanisms and mediating factors that contribute to or mitigate the risk of substance abuse within specific family environments. It explores how factors such as family cohesion, Parental monitoring, communication patterns, socioeconomic status, and parental attitudes towards drug use shape adolescents attitudes and behaviors towards substance experimentation and misuse. The findings of this research endeavor are expected to yield valuable insights for policymakers, healthcare professionals, educators, and parents in developing targeted interventions and preventive strategies to address the multifaceted challenges associated with recreational drug abuse among young populations. By understanding the complex interplay between family structures, parenting styles, and substance abuse, stakeholders can work towards fostering supportive familial environments conducive to healthy development and resilience against the allure of drugs.

Introduction

Drug abuse is a complex issue that has significant impacts on individuals, families, and society as a whole. This research was inspired by the chance to look at an issue as complex as this that came from an interaction I had with a minor on a night out with my friends. The interaction took place in a roller skating rink. When going out you must be aware of your location and the types of activities that can take place. I was approached by a young boy who looked to be of the age of 9 or 10. He approached me and asked “Sir Sir by any chance do you have or are you selling any Nic(Nicotine)”. With a disgusted look on my face, I responded “Eww no how old are you and where are your parents”. He darted off quickly and there I was brought back to the same issues faced back home with adolescents and young adults picking up these harmful substances but this also allowed me to think why/what is the cause for this, is it the household structure or is it the parenting style or maybe is it both.

Drug abuse poses a significant public health concern globally, impacting individuals, families, and communities across various socio-demographic backgrounds. Drug abuse encompasses the inappropriate and harmful use of substances, leading to physical, psychological, social, and legal repercussions. It involves the consumption of drugs in quantities or frequencies exceeding recommended guidelines, often leading to addiction, dependency, and adverse health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) about 270 million people have used psychoactive drugs in the previous year and about 35 million people are estimated to be

affected by drug use disorder (harmful pattern of drug use or drug dependence). The (WHO) approximates that 0.5 million deaths annually are linked to drug use, with approximately 350,000 deaths among males and 150,000 among females. The trajectory of mortality rates has been altered in certain high-income countries primarily due to opioid-related deaths, particularly from synthetic opioids. In 2017 alone, drug use contributed to the loss of over 42 million years of healthy life, accounting for roughly 1.3% of the global disease burden. Globally, nearly 11 million individuals are estimated to inject drugs, among whom 1.4million are living with HIV and 5.6 million with hepatitis C. Understanding the statistics and impact of drug abuse is crucial for many reasons. Drug abuse is a significant public health issue, contributing to a substantial number of deaths and disabilities worldwide. Recognizing its magnitude allows policymakers, healthcare professionals, and communities to allocate resources effectively and implement targeted interventions to address this pressing concern. While research has identified many risk factors that contribute to drug abuse, there is growing interest in how family structure of historically underrepresented people may play a role in an individual's likelihood to abuse drugs. Specifically, raising the question of whether being raised in a single-parent household structure versus a two-parent household structure affects one's chances of drug abuse. Understanding this potential relationship is important for developing effective prevention and treatment strategies for those who may be at higher risk. This research aims to answer the question “Does family household structure (single-parent vs. Two-parents household) affect the likelihood of drug abuse among historically underrepresented people?”. In contemporary society, the prevalence of recreational drug abuse among young adults poses significant public health concerns, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and communities. While numerous factors contribute to the initiation and escalation of substance use, mounting evidence suggests that

family structures and parenting styles play a pivotal role in shaping youths attitudes and behavior towards drug experimentation and misuse. The family unit serves as the primary socializing agent during formative years, exerting profound influences on individuals cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development. Various family structures offer unique contexts within which parenting practices and relational dynamics unfold. Furthermore parenting styles characterized by varying degrees shape the quality of parent-child interactions and transmission of values, norms, and expectations regarding substance use. Understanding the intricate interplay between family dynamics and substance abuse is crucial for developing effective preventive measures and interventions aimed at curbing this pervasive issue.

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Understanding the Interplay

Understanding the complex relationship among family structures, parenting styles, and recreational drug abuse among historically underrepresented youth requires the use of different perspectives .The social learning theory proposed by psychologist Albert Bandura (1977), states that children learn behaviors, including substance use, through observation, modeling, and reinforcement within their family and social context. While behavioral psychology focuses on how the environment and reinforcement affect behavior, Bandura put forth that individuals can learn behavior through observation. The social learning theory has four mediational processes that help determine if a new behavior is acquired, they are as followed: attention which refers to the degree to which we notice the behavior, a behavior must grab our attention before it can be

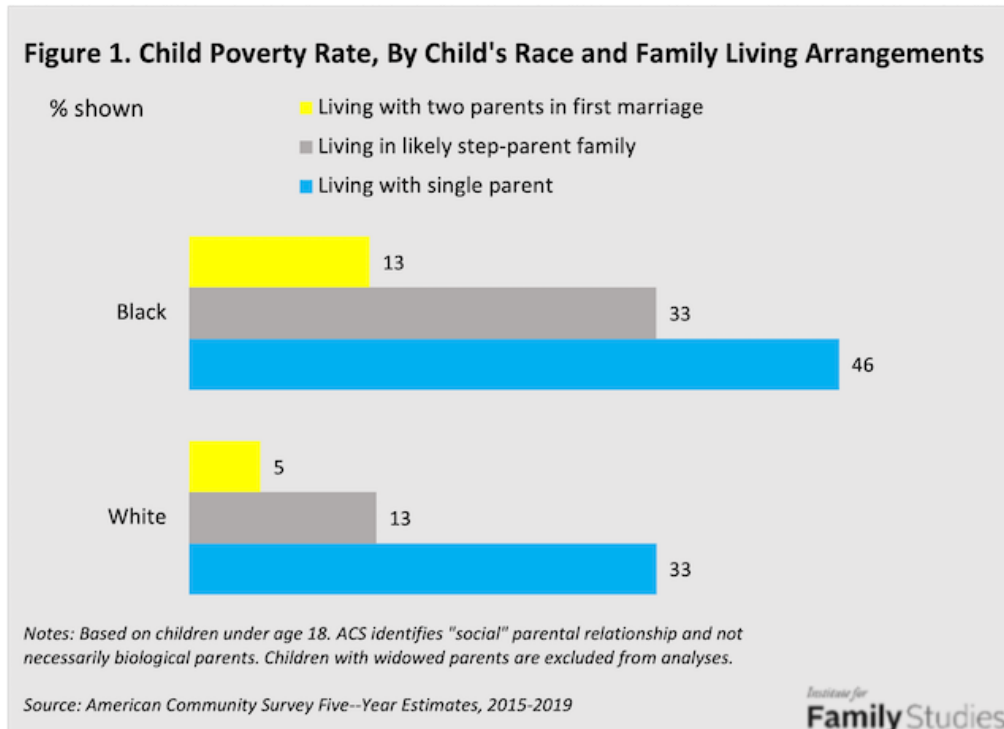
imitated. Retention which refers to how well we remember the behavior, we cannot perform the behavior if we do not remember the behavior. Reproduction refers to the ability to perform the behavior we observe, it influences our decision about whether to try performing the behavior. Lastly, motivation is the will to emulate the behavior, this mediational process is referred to as vicarious reinforcement. It involves learning through observing the consequences of actions for other people, rather than through direct experience. This theory suggests that parenting practices, shaped by family structures and cultural norms, directly influenced adolescents' attitudes towards substance use and their likelihood of engaging in such behavior. Furthermore, Ecological systems theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977) emphasized the dynamic interactions between individuals and their environments, highlighting the reciprocal influence of family, peers, schools, and communities on adolescent development and behavior. Within this framework, it emphasizes the interconnectedness between individuals and their environments encompassing microsystems (immediate settings), mesosystems (interactions between microsystems) exosystems (external settings indirectly influencing development), and macrosystems (cultural values and societal norms) (Guy-Evans, 2024). Within this theory and the framework of family structures and parenting styles this is how the roles show up. Microsystem family structures and parenting styles serve as primary influences on adolescents development and behavior. Close interactions with parents and family members shape adolescents' perception of substance use. For mesosystem the interactions between family, peers, schools, and communities contribute to adolescents' exposure to substance related influences. The Exosystem applies to external factors such as socioeconomic status, neighborhood characteristics, and cultural norms indirectly influencing adolescent substance use by shaping family functioning and parenting practices. For the macrosystem, cultural values, societal norms, and legal regulations surrounding substance

use shape parental attitudes and behaviors, as well as adolescent perceptions of acceptability and risk. By integrating Social learning theory and ecological systems theory, researchers can comprehensively examine the complex interplay between family structures, parenting styles, and adolescent substance abuse. This approach acknowledges the dynamic interactions between individuals, family, and other contextual factors that shape adolescents' attitude, beliefs, and behaviors regarding substance use. Understanding these perspectives facilitates the development of interventions targeting multiple levels of influence.

2.2 Family Structure and Their Impact on Child Development

The family unit stands as the cornerstone of society, exerting profound influences on the development and wellbeing of its members. Within this context, parenting practices play a pivotal role in shaping children and young adults attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, with far-reaching implications for their future trajectories. Amidst the myriad factors that influence adolescent development, the interplay between family structures, parenting styles, and the prevalence of recreational drug abuse emerges as a critical area of inquiry. Family structure plays a fundamental role in shaping children's development and well-being (Lee, 2015). Traditional family structures, such as nuclear families consisting of two biological parents and their children, have long been regarded as optimal for child rearing. However, contemporary societies witness diverse family arrangements, including single-parent households, blended families, same-sex parent families, and extended families. Lee's research suggests that while family structure transitions can have significant effects on child development, the impact may vary depending on individual and contextual factors. Research suggests that instability, lack of cohesion, and lack of

support provided within these structures significantly influence children's socioemotional development, academic achievement, and behavioral outcomes which in turn fortify them to lag behind children who grow up in stable family structures across multiple outcomes (Lee, 2015). Moreover, the quality of parent-child relationships within various family structures is a critical determinant of children's psychological adjustment and resilience. For instance, children raised in single-parent households may exhibit higher levels of stress and emotional difficulties due to limited parental resources, support, and finance (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Many scholars have established the causal impact of family instability by either assessing the variance in child outcomes pre-and post-event or by comparing the outcomes of siblings. Research employing these methods typically concludes that transitions in family structure have a direct impact on child welfare, although the observed effects tend to be less pronounced compared to those estimated through traditional methods (McLanahan, 2013) (Demo & Acock, 1996) (Fomby et al., 2010). Although family structures impact both black and white children, the outcomes vary significantly between the two racial groups. Brad Wilcox and the March 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) (2021) indicate that presently, 37% of African American children reside in households led by both of their biological parents, while 48% live in households headed by a single parent, and 4% reside in stepfamilies with a mix of biological and non-biological parents. Furthermore A chart added from Wilcox's work shows that black children on average are more likely to be in poverty based on their family structure.



The finding from this research brief highlights the significant impact of family structure on the socioeconomic outcomes of black children in the United states. The data reveal stark disparities in poverty rates among black children based on the composition of their households, with those living in single-parent homes experiencing significantly higher rates of poverty compared to those in intact, married families. Moreover the analysis underscores the importance of stable, married families environments in mitigating the risk of child poverty. These findings emphasize the need for policies and interventions aimed at supporting and strengthening family structures, particularly among black communities, to alleviate economic disparities and promote well-being of children.

2.3 Parenting Styles and Their Influence on Adolescent Behavior

Parenting styles are characterized by distinct combinations of warmth and control, Warmth relating to the emotional support, affection and nurturing that parents provide, and Control being the involved levels of monitoring, supervision, and discipline that parents exert over their children's behavior, when combined with warmth has a profound impact on adolescent attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, including their thinking for substance abuse (Kuppens, 2019). Parenting has garnered significant research interest across multiple scientific disciplines. Various theoretical frameworks underscore the pivotal role of parenting in child development, driving scholarly inquiry into its effect for over decades. Researchers approach the study of parenting through diverse strategies, including examining parenting practices, dimensions, and styles. Parenting practices refer to observable behaviors employed by parents to guide their children's socialization. For example parenting approaches aimed at fostering academic success often involve active engagement, such as attending parent teacher conferences or consistently overseeing children's homework completion. Additionally these approaches may encompass strategies like offering positive reinforcement, implementing effective disciplinary measures, and facilitating problem solving skills development (Kuppens, 2019). Baumrind is widely acknowledged as a trailblazer in the study of parenting styles (Kuppens, 2019). Her seminal work introduced a type comprising three distinct parenting styles to elucidate variations in typical parental behavior: Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive. In her pioneering research, Baumrind posited that authoritarian parents tend to exert control over their children's behavior, enforcing rigid standards without much room for negotiation. Conversely, permissive parents are characterized by warmth and a greater degree of autonomy granted to their children,

with less emphasis on strict control. Positioned between these two extremes, the authoritative parenting style, which combines warmth and responsiveness with reasonable levels of control and expectations. A parenting style that wasn't touched on was the uninvolved parenting (Sanvictores, 2022). Sanvictores argues that with this particular style of parenting children are given a lot of freedom for this type of parent stays out the way. They fulfill the child's basic needs while they generally remain detached from their child's life. This style of parenting doesn't utilize a particular disciplining style and has a limited amount of communication with their child. In Sanvictores research he posits that each parenting style is uniquely different and all express themselves differently affecting the development of their children. Children that grow up with authoritarian parents will usually be the most well-behaved in the room because of the consequences of misbehaving. Additionally, they are better able to adhere to the precise instructions required to reach a goal. Authoritative parenting results in children who are confident, responsible, and able to self-regulate and that they can manage their negative emotions more effectively, which leads to better social outcomes and emotional health. Children of permissive parenting have limited rules that can lead to children with unhealthy eating habits, especially regarding snacks. This can result in increased risks for obesity and other health problems later in the child's life. The child also has a lot of freedom as they decide their bedtime, if or when to do homework, and screen time with the computer and television. Lastly he adds Children of uninvolved parents are “usually resilient and may even be more self-sufficient than children with other types of upbringing. However, these skills are developed out of necessity. Additionally, they might have trouble controlling their emotions, less effective coping strategies, may have academic challenges, and difficulty with maintaining or nurturing social relationships”(Sanvictores, 2022).

When considering the impact of parenting styles on Black children, it is important to recognize the intersecting factors that influence their development and well-being. Research suggests that the effect of parenting styles may manifest differently within the context of black families due to unique cultural norms, historical experiences, and socio-economic disparities (Jones & Mosher, 2013). Some researchers propose that the authoritarian parenting style might be more prevalent among minority parents due to challenges related to racial discrimination, which could hinder the expression of warmth. Examples of this would be microaggression, unequal treatment, and stereotyping . Additionally, contextual factors are often present in minority communities, such as residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods which would make levels of control much more a necessity (Bulanda, 2010). Bulanda's research suggests that an authoritarian approach might not necessarily lead to negative outcomes for children if it aligns with cultural norms within certain minority groups. The evaluation of the connection between poverty status and parenting approaches indicates that fathers' styles are more influenced by poverty compared to mothers' styles. Her findings reveal that impoverished fathers are over three times more likely to adopt a disengaged "uninvolved" approach rather than an authoritative one, in contrast to non-impoverished fathers. This suggests that black married fathers facing poverty are more inclined towards exhibiting low levels of both support and control, whereas their non-impoverished counterparts tend to adopt the opposite style. This distinction between a disengaged style and an authoritative one holds significant importance. Conversely, poverty status seems to have no bearing on the parenting approaches of black married mothers. More precisely, the findings do not support the idea that poverty affects the parenting styles of black married mothers. These outcomes prompt further inquiry into the reasons behind the correlation

between poverty and paternal styles while observing the lack of such correlation with maternal styles.

2.4 Recreational Drug Abuse Among youth: Prevalence and Risk Factors

Adolescence is a critical period characterized by heightened vulnerability to substance experimentation and initiation. National Surveys (2022) indicate that recreational drug use among youth remains a prevalent public health concern, with marijuana, alcohol, and other prescription medications being the most commonly abused substance (NIDA, 2022). Before delving into this concern we must first understand what recreational drugs are, and how these recreational drugs are so prevalent to our youth. According to Dr. Ananya Mandal, (2023) drug abuse or substance abuse refers to the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. There are over 190 million drug users around the world and the problem has been increasing at alarming rates, especially among young adults under the age of 30. Apart from the long term damage to the body drug abuse causes, drug addicts who use needles are also at risk of contracting HIV and hepatitis B and C infections. (Mandal, 2023). According to the National Institute on Drugs Abuse (NIDA) various substances have the capacity to modify an individual's cognitive processes and decision-making abilities, thereby posing significant health hazards, including the risk of addiction, impaired driving, transmission of diseases, and negative impacts on pregnancy outcomes. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police there are seven categories of Drugs. Depressants of the Central Nervous Systems (CNS) are substances that slow down the functioning of both the brain and the body. Examples of CNS depressants comprise of alcohol, barbiturates, anti-anxiety medications

(such as Valium, Librium, Xanax, Prozac, and Thorazine), GHB(gamma hydroxybutyrate), Rohypnol, and various antidepressants. Stimulants of the CNS is a category of drug that increases heart rate and raises blood pressure, causing the body to operate at a faster pace. Examples of these stimulants encompass cocaine, crack cocaine, amphetamines, and methamphetamine (commonly known as crank). Hallucinogens are substances that alter the user's perception, causing them to experience reality differently. Examples include LSD, Peyote, Psilocybin, and MDMA (commonly known as Ecstasy). Dissociative Anesthetics are drugs that block pain perception by disconnecting or dissociating the brain's recognition of pain. Examples of dissociative anesthetics include PCP, its derivatives, and dextromethorphan. Narcotic Analgesics this category of drugs alleviate pain, induce feelings of euphoria, and alter mood. Examples include opium, Codeine, heroin, demerol, darvon, morphine, methadone, vicodin, and oxycontin. Furthermore inhalants encompass a wide range of inhalable substances that produce mind-altering effects. Examples include toluene, plastic cement, paint, gasoline, paint thinners, hair sprays, and various gasses. Last of all the drug categories is cannabis this drug is scientifically known as marijuana, contains delta 9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) its active ingredient. This category includes cannabinoids and synthetics like dronabinol. The classification of recreational drugs into different categories provides valuable insight into the diverse range of substances commonly abused by individuals. Understanding these categories is essential when examining the correlation between family structures, parenting styles, and the abuse of recreational drugs. For example, individuals raised in families characterized by permissive parenting styles may be more prone to experimenting with substances like a CNS depressant or cannabis due to the lack of strict rules and boundaries regarding substance use (Harmony Ridge, 2023). Conversely, Adolescents from authoritarian households might be at higher risk of turning

to stimulants like cocaine or methamphetamine as a form of rebellion or escape from strict parental control that in turn makes drug rehab for young adults a challenge and a mandatory for healing (Harmony Ridge, 2023). Moreover, the availability and accessibility of certain drugs within the family environment can significantly influence patterns of substance abuse.

Adolescents living in households where prescription medications like opioids (narcotic analgesics) are easily accessible may be more likely to misuse these drugs, leading to potential addiction and adverse health outcomes (Abraham, 2021). Additionally, family dynamics and parental attitudes towards substance use can shape perceptions and behaviors related to drug experimentation. Children exposed to parental substance abuse may normalize drug use and perceive it as acceptable behaviors themselves (Abraham, 2021) The highlight of this study highlights the complex interplay between family dynamics and parental attitudes towards substance use and the susceptibility of adolescents and young adults to recreational drug abuse.

The Black Experience In America: implications for Family Dynamics and Substance Abuse

3.1 Historical Context

The black experience in America is deeply rooted in a history of systemic oppression, racism, and social injustices. From slavery to Jim Crow segregation to manifestations of racial discrimination, Black individuals and communities have endured profound challenges and disparities that continue to shape their experiences. Beginning with the transatlantic slave trade in the 17th century, millions of Africans were forcibly brought to the shores of North America to work under brutal conditions as chattel slaves. This dehumanizing institution not only

perpetuated the economic prosperity of white slaveholders but also laid the foundation for centuries of racial inequality and intergenerational trauma within black communities.

The legacy of slavery reverberates through generations, shaping the socio-economic status and family structures of black Americans. The family unit, a center pillar of resilience and communal support, was systematically undermined by the institution of slavery. Families were torn apart through the sale of enslaved individuals, spouses, parents, and children forcibly separated leaving behind fractured kinship networks and enduring emotional scars (Loury, 1998). Even after the abolition of slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the ratification of the 13th amendment in 1865, black Americans continued to face pervasive discrimination and violence. The Historical injustices endured by black Americans have left a profound imprint on family structures and dynamics. The forced separation of families during slavery disrupted the intergenerational transmission of cultural traditions, values, and family bonds (Wilson, 2002). Furthermore, the economic exploitation and disenfranchisement of black individuals limited their ability to establish stable households and provide for their families, perpetuating cycles of poverty and instability. Due to the legacy of slavery and segregation continues to shape family life within black communities. The nuclear family has been upheld as the ideal model of family structure, the reality for many black families has been characterized by non-traditional arrangements, including single-parents households, extended families, and fictive kin networks (Wilson, 2002). Moreover, the enduring impacts of racism and discrimination contribute to disparities in family well-being and functioning. Black families face heightened stressors associated with racial discrimination, economic hardship, and community violence, which can strain family relationships and undermine parental well-being (Murry, 2018). Despite these challenges, black families have demonstrated remarkable resilience and strength, drawing

upon cultural traditions, institutions, and collective networks of support to navigate adversity and promote the well being of children.

3.2 Impact On Family Structures

Historical injustices of black families through slavery and later policies such as mass incarceration, have had enduring effects on black family structures. The legacy of these injustices is reflected in higher rates of single-parents households, economic instability, and community disintegration within black communities (McLoyd, 1990). The impact of systemic oppression on black American families can be broken up into 5 separate pieces. In black communities the impact of disproportionate mass incarcerations, was and still is an era that particularly targets black communities through policies such as the war on drugs that has further destabilized black families. During this time black individuals are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system with incarceration rates far exceeding those of their white counterparts (Scommegna, 2012). Furthermore there are economic inequalities that promote family instability. These structural inequalities include limited access to quality education, employment opportunities, and affordable housing. Due to these things it perpetuates economic instability within black communities, contributing to family fragmentation and socio-economic disparities (Wilson, 1987). Moreover, neighborhood disadvantages and social isolation is more common among black families because they are more likely to reside in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods characterized by limited resources, higher crime rates, and reduced access to social services and opportunities (Sampson, 1997). Neighborhood disadvantages compound family stressors exacerbating social isolation, and undermines community cohesion, further

impeding black families ability to thrive and support their children's development. Despite factoring profound challenges, black families demonstrate remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in navigating systemic barriers and supporting their children's well being. Kinship networks, extended family ties, and community support systems play a vital role in buffering the impact of structural inequalities and providing emotional, social, and material support to black families. Lastly it is essential to recognize the intersecting identities and experiences within black families including variations based on gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, and socio-economic background. Intersectionality theory highlights the interconnected nature of social identities and their influence on individuals experiences of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw 1991). Black women, for instance, may face unique challenges related to gender discrimination and economic marginalization, which intersect with racial oppression to shape their experiences within family structures.

3.3 Parenting in the face of adversity

Parenting within black families is often characterized by resilience and adaptation in the face of systemic adversity, including racism, economic hardship, and social marginalization. Despite these challenges, black parents strive to provide nurturing environments and instill values of resilience, self-determination, and cultural pride in their children. However, the intersecting stressors of racial discrimination and socio-economic disadvantages can pose significant obstacles to effective parenting practices. Black parents experience heightened levels of stress and psychological distress due to the pervasive nature of racial discrimination in American society (Bowleg, 2012). Daily encounters with racial microaggressions,

institutionalized racism, and structural inequalities take a toll on parental well-being, affecting their emotional availability and parenting efficacy. Moreover, the fear for their children's safety and future in a racially hostile environment adds another layer of stress for black parents, influencing their parenting behaviors and decision-making.

The stressors associated with racism and socio-economic hardship can shape parenting styles within Black families. Some parents may adopt authoritarian or restrictive parenting styles in an attempt to protect their children from the harsh realities of the outside world (Brody, 2006). This may involve setting strict rules, monitoring their children's activities closely, and emphasizing discipline as a means of instilling resilience and survival skills. However, such parenting approaches may inadvertently contribute to feelings of alienation, rebellion, and psychological distress among adolescents (García, 1996). Conversely, other Black parents may adopt more permissive or laissez-faire parenting styles as a response to the constraints imposed by systemic racism and limited socio-economic resources. In an effort to foster autonomy and independence, these parents may be less controlling and authoritative, allowing their children greater freedom to navigate their social environments. While this approach may promote self-expression and autonomy, it may also increase vulnerability to external influences, including peer pressure and substance abuse (Kogan, 2013).

Despite the challenges faced by Black parents, many draw upon cultural strengths, traditions, and community support networks to navigate the complexities of parenting in a racially hostile society. Cultural resilience refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to maintain a sense of identity, pride, and purpose in the face of adversity (Ungar, 2008). For Black parents, cultural resilience manifests in the transmission of cultural values, rituals, and traditions that foster a sense of belonging and cultural continuity within the family unit

(Belgrave, 2000). Additionally, Black parents employ adaptive parenting strategies that emphasize communication, warmth, and cultural pride as protective factors against the negative effects of racism and socio-economic hardship (Simons, 2002). These strategies may involve promoting racial socialization, teaching children to navigate racial discrimination, and fostering a strong sense of ethnic identity and pride. By instilling a strong cultural foundation and sense of belonging, Black parents empower their children to resist internalized racism, develop positive self-esteem, and navigate the challenges of adolescence with resilience and determination. In conclusion, parenting within Black families is shaped by the intersecting influences of systemic racism, socio-economic disadvantage, and cultural resilience. Black parents navigate the complexities of parenting in a racially hostile society by drawing upon cultural strengths, adaptive strategies, and community support networks to instill resilience and cultural pride in their children. Understanding the unique challenges and strengths of Black families is essential for developing culturally responsive interventions that promote positive parenting practices and support the well-being of Black youth.

3.4 Intersectionality and Substance Abuse

Intersectionality coined by Kimberle Crenshaw emphasizes the interconnected nature of social identities and their impact on individuals' experiences. For black individuals, the intersection of race, gender, socio-economic status, and other factors creates unique challenges and vulnerabilities in the context of substance abuse. Race based discrimination causes black individuals frequently to encounter racial discrimination in various spheres of life including employment, education, and healthcare. Such experiences of discrimination contribute to chronic

stress and trauma, which increase susceptibility to substance abuse (Verissimo, 2014). Economic Marginalization is limited access to resources among black communities exacerbates stressors and undermines coping mechanisms. Socio-economic disparities intersect with race to heighten vulnerability to substance abuse as individuals may turn to drugs as means of escape or coping with adversity. Black men and women may have distinct experiences with substance abuse influenced by societal expectations, gender roles, and different exposure to risk factors. For example, black men may face higher rates of incarceration due to systemic racism, increasing their likelihood of exposure to drugs within correctional facilities, while black women may experience unique challenges related to domestic violence and caretaking responsibilities (waller, 2022). In response to intersecting stressors related to race, gender, and socio-economic status, black individuals may adopt various coping mechanisms, including substance use to alleviate distress and navigate adverse circumstances. Historical traumas such as slavery, segregation, and systemic racism have inflicted intergenerational wounds on the black community, contributing to elevated levels of psychological distress and trauma. Substance abuse may serve as a maladaptive coping mechanism to numb emotional pain and facilitate emotional regulation (Williams, 2009). Within black communities, social networks and peer groups play a significant role in shaping substance use behaviors. Peer pressure, social norms, and cultural attitudes towards substance use may normalize or encourage drug experimentation and contribute to substance abuse initiation among black youth (Ford, 2006). By understanding the intersecting factors that contribute to substance abuse within the black community, researchers and practitioners can develop holistic approaches that address the root causes of addiction and promote healing, resilience, and empowerment among black individuals and families

Results and Discussions

The analysis of data pertaining to family structures, parenting styles, and drug abuse revealed intricate associations and patterns deserving comprehensive discussion. Quantitative assessments provided insight into the prevalence of different family structures and their corresponding parenting styles within the different studies. Additionally, statistical analyses elucidated correlations between these variables and the likelihood of recreational drug abuse among adolescents and young adults. The findings underscore the significant impact of family structures on parenting practices and subsequently on adolescent behaviors. Traditional nuclear families were found to exhibit higher levels of control through authoritative parenting, that is characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and reasonable levels of control. Conversely, single-parent households and blended families tended to display variations in parenting styles, with some leaning towards permissive or authoritarian approaches due to unique challenges and dynamics inherent in these family structures. Furthermore, qualitative insights gleaned from interviews shed light on the lived experiences and perception of adolescents regarding family dynamics and substance abuse. Participants highlighted the role of parental influence, familial relationships, and household environment in shaping their attitudes towards drug experimentation. For instance, adolescents from authoritative households expressed a sense of security and open communication, which discourages risky behavior like drug abuse. In contrast those from authoritarian or permissive backgrounds often cited feelings of rebellion, lack of support, or normalization of substance use within their families as contributing factors to their engagement in drug-related activities. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse in light of recent findings from the 2022 Monitoring the future survey, it is evident that adolescent

substance use has largely held steady after a significant decline in 2021, following the Covid-19 pandemic. With 11% of eighth graders, 21.5% of 10th graders, and 32.6% of 12th graders the stability in reported substance use was associated with illicit drugs due to the Pandemic being the encouraging factor that disrupted the daily life experienced by young people. However, it is essential to examine these trends in conjunction with the broader context of substance use behavior among adolescents and young adults. One notable aspect highlighted in the survey results is the prevalence of alcohol, nicotine vaping, and cannabis use among adolescents, with reported levels generally consistent with those observed in 2021. Notably, alcohol use among 12th graders at 51.9% returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, suggesting a rebound from the declines seen during the early stages of the pandemic. The survey also provides insights into the perception of harm associated with prescription medications and narcotics among adolescents. While a significant percentage of students reported perceiving a “great risk” associated with specific prescription medication and narcotics with 22.9% among eighth graders to 52.9% among 12th graders it's essential to recognize the potential discrepancies between perceived risk and actual behavior. Furthermore, another recent finding by the National Institute on Drug Abuse from 2023 Monitoring the future survey shed light on the increasing prevalence of (delta-8-THC) use among adolescents in the United States. This psychoactive substance, derived from hemp, gained its popularity among teens, with approximately 11% of 12th grade students reporting past year use. This raises concerns about the potential health impacts of delta-8, but it also raises the question of how the students are at home under their parents parenting style and what their family structure is like as well.

Conclusion

To conclude, this senior project has contributed valuable insights into the correlation between family structures, parenting styles, and abuse of recreational drugs among adolescents and young adults. Through a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study highlights the complex dynamics that influence youth behaviors and attitudes towards substance use within family contexts. Key findings revealed the significant impact of family structures on parenting practices, with traditional nuclear families often fostering authoritative parenting styles associated with lower rates of drug abuse among adolescents. Conversely, single-parent households and blended families exhibited variations in parenting approaches, contributing to heightened susceptibility to substance experimentation among youth. This research adds on to the existing body of literature by providing evidence and theoretical insights into the multifaceted relationship between family dynamics and youth substance abuse. By examining the interplay between family structures, parenting styles and drug abuse, the hope is that this study advances our understanding of the socio environmental factors that shape adolescent behaviors and inform preventive interventions. Based on the findings, this senior project has significant implications for policy development and practical interventions aimed at addressing the complex relationship between family structures, parenting styles, and recreational drug abuse among adolescents. The following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, healthcare professionals, educators, and community stakeholders.

Firstly, I would recommend creating family centered interventions. These will target both parents and adolescents to promote positive parenting practices, improve family communication, and strengthen family bonds. I also would recommend parenting education programs. I believe

establishing these within schools, healthcare settings, and community organizations will provide parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively navigate the challenges of raising adolescents in today's society. Furthermore, implementing targeted support for at-risk families will allocate resources and support services for families facing socioeconomic disadvantages, single parent hood, or other risk factors associated with heightened susceptibility to substance abuse. Lastly, having cultural sensitivity and equity ensures that all interventions and policies are culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of diverse communities. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards creating supportive environments that foster positive family relationships, strengthen parenting practices, and reduce the prevalence of recreational drug abuse among adolescents. Ultimately investing in these approaches to substance abuse prevention and interventions is essential for promoting the health and well-being of youth and communities alike.

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