

Chapter 5: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

“The cultures from which people hail affect all aspects of mental health and illness, including the types of stresses they confront, whether they seek help, what types of help they seek... and what types of coping styles and social supports they possess.... Just as health disparities are a cause for public concern, so is our diversity a national asset” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2001.)

After reading this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- ▶ Identify the basic historical and cultural elements that shape the major racial/ethnic groups in the United States.
- ▶ Describe facts related to race, ethnicity, and culture and the associations of these factors with substance abuse risk of the specific target group.
- ▶ Incorporate into the implementation of prevention activities the knowledge gained about the target group, thereby making the prevention intervention more meaningful to that particular group.

Overview

This chapter is about ethnicity and culture and how these elements can help guide substance abuse prevention. While differences between any two individuals are likely to be far greater than differences that may exist between two ethnic groups, understanding general similarities and differences among various ethnic groups can be helpful to prevention leaders to better understand:

- ▶ The extent to which race, ethnicity, and culture may (or may not) contribute to substance abuse risk.
- ▶ How substance abuse prevention activities can be selected and implemented so that they are most relevant to the youth for whom they are intended.

The chapter begins with a definition of related terms and a discussion about the importance of understanding their meaning in the context of substance abuse prevention, as well as how these might be applied to best reach children and adolescents in multicultural settings. Next, some general cultural attributes of the primary ethnic groups are described.

Terminology

In the United States, the following general racial/ethnic categories have typically been used:

- ▶ African American: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Africa.
- ▶ American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America); indigenous peoples.
- ▶ Asian American and Pacific Islander (API): A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, Vietnam, and Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- ▶ Non-Hispanic White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Because the vast majority of the literature on substance abuse among minorities uses these categories, they are also used in this *Handbook*. The categories are listed in alphabetical order.

Defining Race

The term *race* refers to a politically and socially defined population (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention [CSAP], 1994c). While the concept of race is derived from distinguishable physical characteristics that are genetically transmitted, scientific evidence has failed to demonstrate a biological basis for it (DHHS, 2001). Likewise, there is no evidence that race predisposes individuals to particular kinds of behavior. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that race is not a good predictor of substance abuse. As described in the previous chapter, the most relevant predictors of substance abuse are

risk and protective factors that, in some cases, can be associated with race, ethnicity, and culture. Even then, it is broader social issues—most often associated with the various legacies of historical oppression and based on notions of race—that have the potential to affect risk and protective factors, resulting in elevated or diminished rates of substance abuse.

Defining Ethnicity

Ethnicity relates to the word *ethnic*, which means belonging to a common group—often linked by race, nationality, and language—with a common cultural heritage and/or derivation. Race and ethnicity are often thought to be dominant elements of culture. For example, Hispanics/Latinos are defined as persons of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Because individuals can be of any race and identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino, the term *ethnicity* is more appropriately used to categorize that identification.

Defining Culture

The definition of *culture* is broader than that of race or ethnicity. *Culture* refers to the shared values, traditions, norms, customs, arts, history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people who are unified by race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and/or religion. Likewise, cultural norms exist in smaller group settings, such as those shared by children and adolescents; we often speak of *youth culture* and use the term to describe subsets of norms and expectations among youth. Culture shapes the way people see their world and structure their communities and family lives. Culture affects the way

people respond to messages communicated through various channels (e.g., mass media, community events, person-to-person encounters, family discussions) and is often interwoven into the way drugs are used in various communities (CSAP, 1994c).

Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Risk for Substance Abuse

It is important to note some overall conclusions about race, ethnicity, and culture. While some risk factors for substance abuse may vary in their relative importance from group to group, there are generally more similarities across racial/ethnic groups than there are differences. Likewise, there are likely more similarities among youth of a particular age who have their own unique developmental and cultural characteristics than there are differences by race, ethnicity, or the broader societal culture. Still, the fact remains that differences in substance abuse by ethnicity consistently exist, particularly among adult populations.

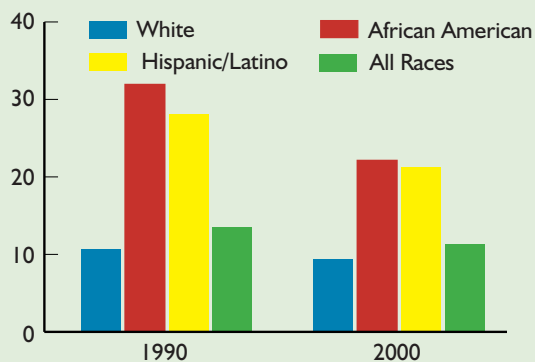
Wallace (1999) provides an explanation for these differences, suggesting that contextual rather than interpersonal or individual factors are the key to understanding substance abuse differences, namely:

- ▶ Laws and norms favorable to use.
- ▶ Availability of drugs.
- ▶ Neighborhood poverty and disorganization.

Certainly, adult African Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans, who suffer disproportionately from the negative effects of substance abuse, are also more likely than their non-Hispanic white counterparts to have lower incomes, live in poverty, be unemployed, and receive less pay for equal work—all contextual or environmental risk factors for substance abuse. These inequities are most likely a reflection of historical oppression and the indirect and direct ways in which this oppression operates in the contemporary United States (Wallace, 1999).

Likewise, magazines targeted to African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos include a greater proportion of alcohol advertising than similar magazines targeted to non-Hispanic white readers, and the alcohol industry is disproportionately involved in sponsorship of charitable, cultural, musical, and athletic events aimed at African Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans. In short,

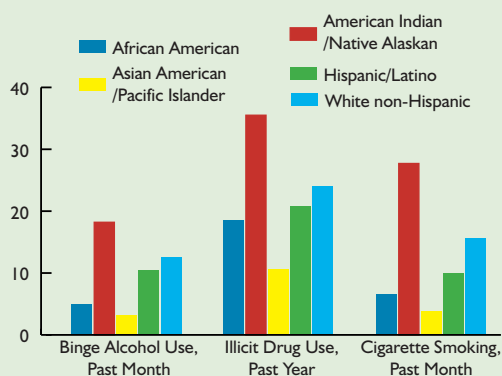
Percentage of Individuals Living Below the Poverty Level According to Race/Ethnicity



Source: NIDA, 2003a.

the environments of economically disadvantaged African Americans and Hispanic/Latino Americans promote substance abuse to a much greater extent than do the environments of more economically advantaged populations (Wallace, 1999).

Youth Aged 12-17: Percentages of Substance Abuse by Ethnicity



Source: SAMHSA, 2003.

However, economic disadvantage is not the only factor that seems to affect risk in various ethnic groups, particularly in the case of youth. When examining African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and non-Hispanic white youths' abuse of alcohol and marijuana—the substances for which youth have the highest prevalence of clinically defined substance abuse disorders—it is important to look at use patterns over time. A longitudinal study by Reardon and Buka (2002) examined these patterns and found that:

- ▶ At age 15, there are few differences in the prevalence of alcohol and marijuana abuse and dependence among non-Hispanic white, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino youth.
- ▶ Between the ages of 15 and 17 years, non-Hispanic white youth have higher rates of alcohol and marijuana abuse and dependence when compared with their Hispanic/Latino and African-American counterparts.
- ▶ Between the ages of 18 and 20, this trend reverses, with non-Hispanic white youth and Hispanic/Latino youth dramatically decreasing the initiation of abuse and dependence on alcohol and marijuana and African-American youth slightly increasing their initiation of abuse and dependence.

Cultural Values

Mainstream American cultural values include independence, competition, productivity, objectivity, and a proactive approach to life. These values are expressed in the media, entertainment, conversations, churches, schools, and other public institutions.

In contrast, individual ethnic communities provide their members with other cultural values, which include cooperation, a primary support network, intuition, and maintenance. These values are expressed by family and extended-family concepts, gender roles, concepts of time, and harmony or balance within an individual's life.

Given the cultural values of ethnic communities, it is important to recognize those issues related to gender, hierarchy, decision-making styles, communication patterns, learning styles, and etiquette when selecting and implementing interactive activities for substance abuse prevention. Prevention leaders should be appropriate for the target culture and reflect a respect for its norms and values. An important component is the recognition that different cultures may employ different learning styles, communication patterns, and problem-solving techniques.

These differences are not accounted for by socioeconomic status and are presumably the underlying reason that substance abuse rates differ among adults. The authors propose three possible explanations for their findings:

- ▶ Differences in access to alcohol and marijuana in the communities in which these youth live.
- ▶ Differences in perceived norms regarding acceptability of use and differences in parental monitoring of youths' behaviors.
- ▶ Differences in perceived opportunity structures, with African-American youth perceiving fewer opportunities as young adults compared with non-Hispanic white and Hispanic/Latino youth.

These findings further underscore the importance of the larger societal and cultural context in terms of risk for substance abuse, regardless of which of these explanations gains the most support from future research. It is also worth noting that American Indian youth have not been included in sufficient numbers in the national studies from which these findings were derived. However, separate, concentrated efforts at collecting similar data have resulted in findings that echo those described above. Higher substance abuse prevalence exists among both adults and youth in the American Indian/Alaska Native population, and similar conclusions can be drawn from other evidence indicating their experience of disproportionate economic and social disadvantage.

The Importance of Understanding Culture

Research in many public health areas demonstrates that substance abuse prevention programs are more effective when they acknowledge and speak to the concerns of the target culture and use terms and images unique to that culture. That is why it is important to acknowledge and incorporate the culture of the target audience into substance abuse prevention activities whenever possible. Still, studies have shown that there is no “magic formula” that works for all African Americans, all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, all Hispanics/Latinos, all American Indians/Alaska Natives, or all non-Hispanic whites. Likewise, recent evidence suggests that programs that are multicultural, acknowledging and reflecting a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, may be equally as effective as those that are culture-specific (NIDA, 2003b). However, simply substituting multicultural faces for white faces in prevention messages and materials is not sufficient.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is a set of academic and interpersonal skills that increase the understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between groups. This requires a willingness and ability to draw on community-based values, traditions, and customs and to work with knowledgeable persons from the community in developing and implementing targeted interventions, communications, and other support. Ideally, activities that the prevention leader selects for his or her target group will be culturally appropriate; that is, they will acknowledge cultural differences and similarities and demonstrate effectiveness in using cultural symbols and language to communicate a message (CSAP, 1994d). Cultural competence is an essential element in the development of both culturally targeted and multicultural interventions.

Prevention leaders can increase their cultural competence by (CSAP, 1994c):

- ▶ Validating the specific country of origin. Recognize historical and cultural backgrounds by acknowledging and validating specific countries of origin. For example, the terms *Asian* and *Hispanic/Latino* include people who come from a variety of countries and cultures, all with unique world views.

- ▶ Remembering that individuals are members of groups. Be aware that respecting the group is a large part of respecting the individual.
- ▶ Acknowledging the importance of family. Understand the importance of family and extended family as primary support networks in many ethnic communities.
- ▶ Recognizing the degree of acculturation. A common mistake in working with communities of color is in making broad generalizations based on interactions with a narrow segment of the group. Strategies effective with third-generation populations may not be effective with recent immigrant populations because of differences in acculturation and values.
- ▶ Understanding that culture’s “world view.” Learn the fundamental values and philosophies that drive the choices and behaviors of the target population.

Language and Symbols

Language and symbols are central to effective

Incorporating Culture Into Prevention

Consider the following when planning activities:

- ▶ Musical preferences, such as rap, heavy metal, salsa.
- ▶ Media choices, including radio stations and magazines.
- ▶ Favorite sports and sports figures.
- ▶ Dating rituals.
- ▶ Leisure-time activities.

A great deal of diversity exists within any ethnic group. However, in the absence of more specific information about a given target population, there are some general cultural patterns that can help guide the planning of substance abuse prevention curricula.

communication. Whether learning style is an innate or a learned behavior, it is critical to identify the most effective method of transmitting information. Metaphors, analogies, storytelling, music, visual aids, and written materials are all effective strategies to consider. However, translations should be conducted by professionals who understand the language’s nuances, context, and formal structure.

Words are critical in the effective implementation of culturally sensitive interactive activities. Terms that refer

to race and ethnicity often have both overt and hidden meanings. For example, some people of color resent the use of the words *minority* and *nonwhite*. Whenever possible, use the descriptive term preferred by the majority of persons in that specific target group. This may be nationality based (e.g., Japanese) or a broader description, such as *persons of color*. In some instances, it is better to use a combination of accepted terms or to ask about specific preferences.

Body Language

In many Hispanic/Latino cultures, a hug is a demonstration of affection, whereas in some East Asian cultures, a hug can be an invasion of personal space. Thus, in a story told to open a problem-solving exercise, the physical interaction between the characters can carry as powerful a cultural message as the actual dialog. Similarly, in some African-American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino traditions, young people may lower their eyes when spoken to by adults as a symbol of deference to authority. Other cultures, however—particularly those with roots in Western Europe—may see lack of eye contact as an indication that the person is being less than truthful. Thus, a young person may be directed to “look in my eyes when I am talking to you” by a non-Hispanic white person and told “don’t you dare look at me” by an elder of his or her own community (CSAP, 1994b).

Culture and Substance Abuse Views

The way in which problems with substance use and abuse are defined by a given ethnic community is also critical because it may determine who should be involved in the process of implementing interventions. Some cultures have beliefs about health that are based on folk wisdom, tradition, and custom. When these beliefs run against current research and scientific information or conflict with established or changing norms of the national culture, they can pose special challenges. Likewise, identifying and using cultural foundations that conflict with substance abuse can be very effective. Being sensitive to the possible existence of such beliefs is as important as developing strategies to effectively address them.

Ways to Recognize Bias in Educational Materials

The “sidebar” approach—Sidebar treatment occurs frequently in textbooks, where presentation of ethnic experiences is limited to a few isolated events, frequently relegated to a box or sidebar set apart from the rest of the text.

The “superhero” syndrome—Another frequent misrepresentation of certain ethnic groups occurs when only exceptional individuals—the superheroes of history from among that race or cultural group—are acknowledged.

The “one-size-fits-all” view—Instructional materials frequently reflect cultural bias through “one-size-fits-all” generalization, implying that there are homogeneous, single Hispanic/Latino, African, Asian, and Native cultures. This view fails to recognize that considerable cultural diversity exists within each of these groups and that even within a subgroup, culture changes over time (Escamilla, 1993).

The “Majority” or “Mainstream” Culture

The nation’s motto: “E pluribus unum”—“Out of many, one”—is an accurate reflection of this country. However, defining culture in this context can be complicated. “American” culture, when defined outright, is often understood to be non-Hispanic white culture. Many minorities whose families have been in the United States for several generations may still not be perceived to be “American,” despite having been in the country longer than many European immigrant groups (Takaki, 1993). The related implication is that those whose physical features are not of European origin are somehow less American. Likewise, assimilation and acculturation tend to be viewed as inevitable and desirable processes toward becoming American. However, while it is clear that the process of immigration can be stressful and fraught with numerous challenges, it is not minority status in and of itself or lack of assimilation or acculturation to American society that appears to increase risk for substance abuse. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary. In many cases, identifying with mainstream American culture is more likely to contribute to substance abuse than not. Recent research indicates that having a strong ethnic identity offsets some of the risks posed by minority status and thus protects youth from substance abuse (Zickler, 1999). Generally speaking, youth born in the United States are more likely to use drugs—and more likely to use them at an earlier age—than youth who are part of an immigrant family.

Youth Culture

Many of the same arguments for cultural competence can be made for adults working with youth as are made for understanding other cultures. Keeping abreast of cultural trends unique to youth may serve prevention leaders equally as well as understanding similarities and differences in the more traditional view of culture. Having open, unstructured discussions with youth and asking about popular trends, places and ways to socialize, popular youth Web sites, and music can be very helpful in allowing the prevention leader to gain credibility with his or her audience and identify specific issues to address.

Practical Points: Reaching Youth of Different Racial/Ethnic/Cultural Backgrounds

When working with members of different cultures, frame actions in the styles, norms, and behaviors of those cultures. In groups with mixed cultural backgrounds, pull from those backgrounds, inviting members of the target audience to reflect on and share cultural norms. Some attitudes and values that might be successfully incorporated into interactive prevention activities include:

- ▶ The level of importance placed on the individual versus the community.
- ▶ Generally accepted roles for women, men, and children.
- ▶ The preferred family structure—nuclear or extended, one generation or multigenerational.
- ▶ The relative importance of folk wisdom, life experience, and common sense in comparison with formal education and advanced degrees.
- ▶ The way wealth is measured—in material goods, such as money and property, or in personal relationships, such as those with children, extended family support systems, and friendships.
- ▶ The society's views in terms of revering its youth as the promise of the future or its elders as the repositories of wisdom.
- ▶ The way time is used and valued (e.g., importance of timeliness).
- ▶ The society's adherence to tradition or openness to experimentation.
- ▶ Linkage or separation between religious and/or spiritual life and secular life.
- ▶ Favorite and forbidden foods.
- ▶ Manner of dress and adornment.
- ▶ Body language, particularly whether touching or physical proximity is permitted in specific situations.

Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Multiracialism

The United States is a multicultural society, and it is becoming increasingly likely that a particular target population will be composed of children and adolescents from multiple ethnic groups and who are bi- or multiracial.

Likewise, the statistical meaning of the word *minority* is quickly losing its significance. It is estimated that by the year 2050, African Americans, Alaska Natives, American Indians, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans will make up nearly 50 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

The valuing of diversity is no longer merely a social goal. Multicultural education creates an environment in which youth can understand, respect, and ultimately value cultural diversity. It requires school and community youth leaders to incorporate techniques and skills for understanding, motivating, teaching, and empowering each individual in ways that acknowledge and appreciate differences. Schools and community youth organizations are already providing instruction that supports varied cultural styles and experiences by using culturally relevant materials (e.g., films, plays, biographies, novels, etc.) and creating options where students can choose between alternatives that celebrate diversity or provide cultural immersion.

A curriculum that is culturally responsive capitalizes on youths' cultural backgrounds rather than attempts to override or negate them. Likewise, such a curriculum is sensitive and responsive to bias in textbooks and other instructional materials, including:

- ▶ Invisibility.
- ▶ Stereotyping.
- ▶ Selectivity and imbalance.
- ▶ Unreality.
- ▶ Fragmentation and isolation.
- ▶ Language bias (Gollnick & Chinn, 1991).

Working Successfully With a Multicultural Population

Tensions can exist among different racial and ethnic youth groups as well as within groups. Suggested methods regarded as essential in maintaining stability and positive relationships in multiethnic classrooms include:

- ▶ Recognizing common values (all youth want to feel that they belong).
- ▶ Recognizing differential power (some groups “belong” more than others).
- ▶ Conducting interventions to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

Having accurate information about ethnic and cultural differences reduces the likelihood of accepting negative and inaccurate stereotypes for both prevention leaders and youth. Drawing attention to the processes of discrimination, engaging actively in team building, and consulting continually with youth all help develop an environment of tolerance and understanding.

Intergroup relations can also be improved by having youth participate in joint activities. Cooperative learning methods can create thoughtful, equitable interactions needed to promote positive racial attitudes by providing:

- ▶ Daily opportunities for intense interpersonal contact among youth from different backgrounds.
- ▶ Opportunities to judge others on their individual merits rather than on stereotypes.
- ▶ Structure to give each youth an opportunity to contribute, thereby enhancing self-esteem.

Working Successfully With Multiracial Youth

The term *multiracial* can apply to anyone of mixed racial, ethnic, or cultural ancestry. A great deal of variation exists among members of the multiracial population, both in the way they perceive themselves and the way they are treated by others.

Multiracial youth often have distinct advantages and disadvantages in comparison with their single-race classmates (Thornton, 1996). Children and adolescents

raised and socialized with more than one cultural heritage have a broader cultural education than monoracial youth. This education gives them a broader knowledge base and a more well-rounded sense of the world. Youth raised in multiracial homes often have an enhanced sense of self and identity and greater intergroup tolerance, language facility, appreciation of minority group cultures, and ties to single-heritage groups than do monoracial individuals (Thornton 1996).

However, multiracial youth may have a more complicated identity development process because of the strong and often contradictory influences they experience from family, peers, and society. Societal racism and society’s discomfort with interracial marriages are also causes for stress among these youth. People of color may also disapprove of intermarriage or dating as a rejection of pride in one’s own ethnicity (Thornton, 1996). These are just some of the factors with which mixed-race youth must deal in a very complex society.

While it is unlikely that prevention activities will be targeted specifically to multiracial youth, understanding the variety of beliefs, attitudes, and concerns of interracial youth and their families can help prevention leaders develop sensitivity to some of the strengths and needs that these young people may present in the classroom.

Practical Points: Multicultural Youth

When dealing with a multicultural target population:

- ▶ Use materials for substance abuse prevention efforts that reflect cultural diversity.
- ▶ Use some of the new textbooks and educational materials that address multiculturalism to help children understand cultural diversity.
- ▶ Use books and other materials that depict multiracial characters.
- ▶ Provide toys for younger children that include dolls with multiracial characteristics.
- ▶ Identify multiracial heroes such as Frederick Douglass, James Audubon, Maria Tallchief, Paula Abdul, and Tiger Woods.
- ▶ Include multiracial persons as role models when selecting speakers.
- ▶ Use ethnic holidays and celebrations as the basis for group discussions or problem-solving exercises related to substance abuse.
- ▶ Have children and adolescents participate in joint activities (e.g., cooperative learning).

- ▶ Highlight the many common threads among the diversity of cultures in an effort to create pride in sharing and an atmosphere of meaningful articulation among the various ethnic groups, leading to the lessening of tension and conflict.
- ▶ Realize that not all prevention activities require a “United Nations” approach, with each subgroup represented. The activities should, however, be inclusive, and none should contain elements that are offensive to or inappropriate for any segment of the population. For instance, if an activity is specifically designed to reach African-American youth within the target group, its content should also be appropriate for other cultures in the class.
- ▶ Be aware there may be group dynamics (e.g., silence, power struggles) that are race based.
- ▶ Confront the issues of racism and discrimination directly and honestly.
- ▶ Let participants “tell their stories” if they wish.

Migration, Acculturation, and Substance Abuse

The extent to which a given individual, family, or group acculturates to “mainstream” American culture varies greatly. The impact of migration, levels of assimilation, acculturation, language, and cultural values represent unique considerations for planning culturally targeted interventions.

The United States, with the exception of its Native American population, is a nation of immigrants and descendants of immigrants. Each generation of newcomers has been faced with the challenge of adapting to a foreign environment.

In general, immigrants will initially identify more strongly with their native cultural values than with those of the United States. However, it is common for each succeeding generation to further internalize “mainstream” American culture (DeAngelis, 1995).

According to psychologists who work with immigrants and refugees, gender and family roles are often thrown off balance, creating conditions for family conflict and change. Although there are variations in the ways immigrants of different cultures cope, many of the issues they face in the United States are similar. Recent immigrants may experience any or all of the following (DeAngelis, 1995):

- ▶ Language and cultural barriers.
- ▶ Unemployment or underemployment.
- ▶ Educational, social, and health difficulties.
- ▶ Pressures of being new, poor, and a minority in an unfamiliar community.
- ▶ Feelings of loss, grief, separation, and isolation as they adjust to a different way of life.

Facts About Immigrant Youth

According to the 1990 Census and other sources:

- ▶ There are more than 2.3 million immigrant youth in U.S. schools and colleges (about 5 percent of all students).
- ▶ The percentage of immigrant children and adolescents enrolling in U.S. elementary and middle schools is nearly equal to that of native-born youth.
- ▶ Immigrant youth are twice as likely as natives to live in families with an income in the lowest quartile and to have parents with less than 12 years of schooling. Asian and non-Hispanic white immigrants, like their native-born ethnic counterparts, are less likely to live in such families. Black youth—both immigrant and native-born—are significantly more likely than Asians and non-Hispanic/Latino whites to live in low-income families.
- ▶ Immigrant youth, especially Hispanics/Latinos, who enter the United States after the age of 15 are less likely to enter the school system or remain until high school graduation than are immigrants who arrive at a younger age.
- ▶ Adolescents who migrate after the age of 11 and who are refugees suffer particular stress. This is because they simultaneously have to pass through the developmental crisis of “identity formation,” which is characteristic of adolescence, and the trauma of being refugees.
- ▶ In general, immigrant youth and their parents have higher educational aspirations than do U.S. natives of the same racial/ethnic group.
- ▶ Immigrants are more likely than native-born youth to make choices, beginning early in school, that are consistent with eventual college attendance, regardless of race or ethnicity.
- ▶ Overall, immigrants are more likely than natives to enroll in postsecondary education, attend college, and stay in college through four consecutive years.
- ▶ Urban immigrants are more likely to enroll in college than those in rural areas.
- ▶ There is a trend towards monolingual English usage among the children of immigrants. It has previously taken three generations for a family to lose its native tongue.

Immigrants often leave behind patriarchal and hierarchical traditions and enter a world of democracy, individualism, and more open and commercialized

sexuality; in many cases, immigrants are also exiting cultures in which extended social supports were the norm, leaving them prey to the stresses of isolation.

Family Roles

Economic challenges often have the added complexity of disrupting family roles. In many cases, men who were professionals in their country of origin are unable to practice those professions because they lack U.S. credentials (DeAngelis, 1995). Conversely, women are often able to obtain a job status they have never known before. Men then become more dependent on their wives, potentially undermining what may be their traditional sense of self. Such power shifts have the potential to result in a range of negative repercussions, including increased domestic violence and alcoholism among men and depression and substance abuse among women. These conflicts are often played out through the children. For a variety of reasons, men appear to have more trouble assimilating or acculturating and learning English than women, and they may also be more likely to face a loss of status.

Preparing Substance Abuse Prevention Materials for New Immigrants

- ▶ Use humor only if there is assurance that it can be used in a way that is appropriate and sensitive to the cultural context.
- ▶ Use appropriate language.
- ▶ Look for alternatives to print materials; use oral messages in both the native language and English whenever possible.
- ▶ Write English-language messages clearly and simply for readers who are just learning the language.
- ▶ Many factors determine the different contexts in which either colloquialisms or formal language may be used. There is no consensus on whether colloquialisms should be used, but many professionals oppose their use. Common wisdom suggests that it is best to approach each case separately, without attempting to mechanically apply a formula. Ask members of the target group about specific local or regional dialect expressions that may be used in more informal conversation.

Similar to marital relationships, parent-child relationships can also be thrown into conflict in the immigration process (DeAngelis, 1995). The children of immigrant parents often cope more readily with and adapt more quickly to the American culture and language than their elders. This can put them in conflict with the cultural traditions, beliefs, values, and practices of their parents, grandparents, and country of origin, as well as cause

communication problems. Teenage immigrant girls are often the center of the intergenerational conflict because they have the greatest distance to span between the old and new environments. In some cultures, immigrant girls have reported that while their brothers were allowed to get out of the house and become a part of Western culture, they were often prohibited from doing so. Many immigrant girls rebel in response. In addition, for those who cannot speak English, children often act as interpreters, another role shift that has the potential to threaten the adult male sense of self, possibly creating a number of new difficulties.

Environmental Vulnerabilities

The context in which immigrants arrive in the United States plays a decisive role in the course their children's lives will follow (DeAngelis, 1995). Many immigrants never experienced prejudice in their native lands, while others are escaping persecution. For some, it is a result of moving into a new social environment, marked by different values and biases, that physical features are redefined as handicaps.

A second source of vulnerability arises from the fact that large concentrations of immigrant households are located in central cities, which places them in proximity to concentrations of native-born minorities. This may expose children of immigrants to an adversarial subculture that other marginalized youth have developed to cope with their own difficult situations.

A third source of vulnerability results from changes in the economy in which jobs usually held by new immigrants (e.g., labor-intensive manufacturing in the cities) are niches that seldom offer channels for upward mobility. Children of immigrants often face formidable obstacles to pursuing an occupation requiring advanced training. To do so may require accumulation of significant resources by immigrant parents.

Community Support

Many immigrant minorities also have to cope with the absence of a supportive community (DeAngelis, 1995). In some cases, however, the existence of a large but oppressed coethnic community may be even less desirable than having no community at all. This is because newly arrived youth have immediate contact with the reactive subculture developed by earlier generations.

The influence of this subculture is all the more powerful because it comes from individuals of the same national origin who can effectively define the proper stance and attitudes of the newcomers. Depending on the extent to which this occurs, the aspirations of the first generation can be negatively affected. Thus, parental socioeconomic background, resources of the coethnic community, and the experiences of discrimination all decisively influence the outlook of second-generation youth, even at a young age, and these factors are likely to have strong effects on the course of their future assimilation or acculturation.

Use of Colloquialisms With Immigrant Populations

Support for using colloquialisms:

- ▶ Careful use of certain colloquialisms makes verbal messages more realistic and, thus, more credible.
- ▶ Certain colloquialisms, such as terms of endearment, may be more universal or useful than others.
- ▶ Colloquialisms can be more freely used when they are part of a local message intended for a local audience.

Reasons for not using colloquialisms:

- ▶ Many immigrant audiences consider colloquial language derogatory.
- ▶ Colloquialisms tend to stress differences among immigrants rather than emphasize linguistic and cultural commonalities.
- ▶ They can be used in a way that reinforces stereotypes sometimes used in the mainstream media to depict immigrants of any ethnic/cultural group.

Source: SAMHSA, 1997.

Education

Immigrant families often see education as a special privilege. They may see long-term security for their families as a result of education. For most immigrant parents, this is the greatest gift they can give to their children: the opportunity to make something of themselves and one day provide a better life for the whole family (DeAngelis, 1995).

Language

When immigrant children and adolescents leave their country of origin to live in the United States, they leave behind a familiar language, culture, community, and social system. Similar to their parents, they may also experience a variety of emotional and cognitive adjustments to the realities of life in the United States. Many of these conflicts and adjustments, including

the need to learn a new language, adapt to a different educational system, and make new friends, in addition to the issues described above, may place immigrant youth at increased risk for psychosocial problems, school failure, substance abuse, and other risk-taking behaviors (DeAngelis, 1995).

Ethnic/Cultural Backgrounds

Cultural values, customs, and beliefs; environmental and psychosocial factors; and the prevalence, knowledge, and attitudes regarding substance abuse that are unique to each specific minority population are described below. In addition, the following pages will describe practices that have been identified as useful (or not useful) in addressing different cultural needs. By understanding the sociocultural strengths of the target population, the prevention leader will be in a better position to serve its needs. Still, categorizing and defining large groups of people according to race, ethnicity, or culture is an imperfect and relatively inaccurate way of understanding specific individuals—or even specific communities. Therefore, the following descriptions should be used only as general guides and must be interpreted with caution. Individuals in a given community may share most, some, or few of these characteristics.

Overview of African-American Youth

Demographics

African Americans are the second largest minority group in the United States. According to population projections, the African-American population is expected to grow over twice as fast as the non-Hispanic white population between 1995 and 2050 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).

The African-American population is young, with an estimated median age in 2000 of 29.5 years, nearly 8 years younger than the median for the non-Hispanic white population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). In 1995, about 1 in 8 African-American children and adolescents under the age of 18 lived in the home of grandparents, compared with 1 in 25 non-Hispanic white children and adolescents. About one-third of African-American youth lived with both parents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).

In 2000, 47 percent of African Americans lived in the South, comprising 20 percent of that region's population. Five states had more than 2 million African-American residents in 2000: New York (3.2 million); California, Florida, and Texas (2.5 million each); and Georgia (2.4 million). About 17 percent of the African-American population resides in rural areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

As discussed briefly above, although the African-American poverty rate has dropped, African Americans remain disproportionately poor. Even at its historic low in 2000, the African-American poverty rate was almost 15 percent higher than that for non-Hispanic whites (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Substance Use Trends, Attitudes, and Beliefs Among African-American Youth

- ▶ African-American youth are less likely to drink—and even less likely to binge drink—than youth from most other ethnic groups. Only 10.9 percent of African-American youth ages 12-17 reported past-month alcohol use in 2002 (SAMHSA, 2003).
- ▶ Studies suggest that religiosity is a large factor in why African-American youth are more likely to be abstinent; differences in substance abuse prevalence are greatly diminished when differences in religiosity are controlled (Wallace, Brown, Bachman, & LaVeist, 2003).

Historical Perspectives

As is the case with all groups, African Americans share major historical experiences that are distinct from experiences lived by any other minority group in the United States. A major distinction for African Americans is that, in contrast to the voluntary immigration of other minority groups, many Africans were forcibly imported to the United States from the 17th to the 19th centuries and placed into a system under which they were treated as property.

After Emancipation and a brief period of experimentation with new social forms during post-Civil War Reconstruction, African Americans were again relegated to the oppressive status of explicit second-class citizenship under the “Jim Crow” system. Both systems placed African Americans in a disadvantaged position by law, either as property and unable to marry or carry out free-market economic decisions or by forcible segregation in education, employment, public accommodations, and housing. This period of legalized

discrimination, which changed over time in its details but not in its broad outline, lasted more than 300 years, from the early 17th century to the middle of the 20th century. It ended, in theory, with the Civil Rights era.

This experience is well within the living memory of African Americans today. Likewise, prominent inequities exist today, not only in the form of disproportionately high rates of poverty, but also in academic achievement—a prominent risk factor—where minority youth are consistently outperformed by their non-Hispanic white peers, with those making it to graduation performing, on average, 4 years behind their non-Hispanic white peers (National Governors Association [NGA], 2004).

Claude Steele (1992), a social scientist, hypothesizes that “... black achievement is undermined by stigma—the endemic devaluation many African-Americans face in our society and schools. This status is its own condition of life, different from class, money, and culture.” This hypothesis touches on a still unhealed part of American race relations. Terms like *prejudice* and *racism* often miss the full scope of racial devaluation in our society, implying as they do that racial devaluation comes primarily from the strongly prejudiced, not from ordinary people with abstract images of society who tend to catalogue people. This devaluation is implied by the kinds of people revered in advertising and movies, school curricula, literary and musical canons, etc., in which African Americans are not accurately represented or, sometimes, not represented at all. It is Steele’s contention that these images, which do not require fueling from strong prejudice or stereotypes, expand the devaluation of African Americans and act as mental standards against which information about African Americans is evaluated. In the classroom, these images further create devaluation of African Americans. Like any other youth, African Americans risk devaluation for a particular incompetence (e.g., a failed test), but there is further risk that such performance will confirm the broader perception of racial inferiority. Thus, Steele argues that “... from the first grade through graduate school, African-Americans have the extra fear that in the eyes of those around them their full humanity could fall with a poor answer or a mistaken stroke of the pen.” Because these images are conditioned in everyone, they can spawn racial devaluation in everyone, not just in the strongly prejudiced. Steele contends that with this racial devaluation, which seems inescapable, many African-American youth are left feeling hopeless and deeply vulnerable in U.S. classrooms (Steele, 1992).

Other research suggests that minorities are consistently outperformed by their non-Hispanic white counterparts because of larger societal racism and oppression that result in less access to the fundamental building blocks of academic success, including:

- ▶ Adequate nutrition and health care.
- ▶ Stable and consistent relationships with caring adults.
- ▶ Age-appropriate learning opportunities from birth through age 5.
- ▶ High-quality teachers in schools.
- ▶ Extra learning opportunities, including afterschool programs (NGA, 2004).

From either perspective, it is clear that while discrimination and oppression may have lessened over the last few decades, they still exist and are manifested in some outcomes in academic achievement and substance abuse. Likewise, it may be these factors that underlie the transition from low substance abuse prevalence in African-American youth to high prevalence by the age of 20 years. Lower academic achievement may carry with it a perceived and/or real lack of opportunity.

Cultural Values and Traditions

Substance abuse prevention curricula for African Americans are most effective when they take into consideration the particular needs, culture, values, and norms of this population. Data about lifestyle habits, leisure activities, and ways of obtaining information can help prevention leaders select and implement effective prevention activities for African-American youth.

Sociocultural factors such as race consciousness and community or religious involvement have been negatively correlated with substance abuse among African Americans. These findings suggest that a strong emphasis be placed on encouraging the development of a positive racial identity.

Some substance abuse prevention experts suggest that programs for African Americans focus on the environmental factors that determine the real-world experiences of adolescents. That is, factors that protect African-American youth from using substances (protective factors) exist within the community, and

prevention programs should increase the natural resilience and protective factors in the community rather than seek to arbitrarily change some behaviors of the target population. Amuleru-Marshall (in Goddard, 1993) explains that culturally appropriate interventions for African Americans have to be designed to heal and empower this target population. Youth who have prevention leaders who are African American may form a more positive racial identification than those with teachers of another ethnicity (Sancore, 2002). Likewise, the more African-American youth at risk for substance abuse identify with teachers, youth workers, or prevention leaders, the more likely they are to model their own behavior after them.

Rites of Passage

Historically, the backbone of African-American religious organization has been the process of initiation, training, and ritual through which novices gain knowledge of the spiritual and ritual practices that enable them to function effectively in society. Ancestral traditions that perpetuated spiritual awareness included a rite of passage for every significant stage of life, indicating mastery of a particular level of life. Especially significant moments in life included birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Even now, rites-of-passage ceremonies are a source of affirmation for the young and provide the community with the opportunity to express love, pride, and respect for its youth. Contemporary rites-of-passage training agendas incorporate:

- ▶ Areas of educational preparation, such as history of the people and spirituality/community spirit.
- ▶ Taking care of oneself.
- ▶ Values clarification.

Rites-of-passage rituals manifest the intentional cultivation of “spiritual qualities” that can facilitate proper decision making and development of natural resistors to negativity among African-American youth as they face the temptation to resort to substance abuse to cope with a hostile, racist environment (Lee, 1991).

Corporate and Individual Worship

Another ritual frequently found in African-American tradition is the ceremony of corporate and individual worship. African-American history has shown how

African-American churches have served as sources for direction and inspiration in times of peril when other mechanisms have failed. Contemporary practices to add to the repertoire of traditional rituals could include spiritual enrichment support groups, retreats, and scripture study from an Afrocentric substance abuse prevention perspective.

Eldership

Eldership is another African ancestral tradition in which adult members of the family and community serve as models and mentors. Historically, elders claimed responsibility for rearing the younger generation and guiding it toward wholesome and effective living. This practice was traditionally used by Africans to heighten spiritual awareness and was the daily means by which life values and the proper treatment of God, others, nature, and knowledge were instilled in youth. Modeling and mentoring entailed teaching not merely by talk, but also by action. By displaying strong character qualities, mentors increased their impact and influence on African youth so that integrity, courage, and faith were more readily perpetuated. Consequently, prevention of substance abuse among African-American youth demands the identification and utilization of models and mentors.

African-American Cultural Values

African-American families, regardless of status or condition, have a comprehensive common cultural theme by which they have historically been characterized. The African-American family is a group of people who: (1) are bonded by their racial and cultural heritage; (2) believe that “something” connects them (“we are one because we essentially have the same spirit”); (3) are shaped by a distinctive historical experience out of which has been forged the grace and stature to constantly and collectively resist societal injustice and inequity; and (4) are capable of expressing the will and intent to openly negotiate and attempt to change the real-world conditions of the times.

According to Goddard (1993), the functional African-American family is characterized as having:

- ▶ An extended family with significant male participation.
- ▶ A strong emphasis on parenting strategies that reflect the cultural themes of a sense of excellence and appropriateness.
- ▶ A value orientation that is a reflection of the Afrocentric principle of *maat* (truth, justice, righteousness, propriety, harmony, balance, and order).
- ▶ Childrearing practices geared to developing a sense of humanness in children and emphasizing responsibility for the family unit.

- ▶ A strong sense of spirituality based on the belief in a Supreme Being that manifests itself in the way of life of African Americans and is reflected in the kinds of connections between and among African Americans that indicate they are of the same spirit.

Other characteristics of the African-American family include:

- ▶ Extended family networks, including multigenerational households in which resources are pooled for the support of children and the elderly.
- ▶ Relatively equal and easily adaptable family roles, with relatively egalitarian male-female roles and responsibilities shared more according to ability than gender or whether the family member is a parent or grandparent.
- ▶ A religious orientation, with the church serving as an extension of the family, providing not only an environment for self-expression and leadership, but also a source for emotional and material support.
- ▶ A strong work ethic; education and hard work are seen as the ways to overcome societal barriers to upward mobility.
- ▶ Flexible and strong coping skills resulting from the combination of the previous four factors.

Source: Kane, 2000.

Other cultural values include:

- ▶ Respect for the collective worth of the community, which influences Africans’ conviction to take no credit as individuals for accomplishments and achievements in life. Instead, credit for such successes is given to God, one’s ancestors, one’s community, and one’s family. The world view seen in Africans’ sacred treatment of God, ancestors, and all of Creation is clearly and intensely spiritual.
- ▶ African modes of thought and expression, often expressed in symbolic ways. African culture is rich in symbols and symbolic behavior that reflect a religious world view. Substance abuse by African-American youth can be viewed as a substitute coping mechanism for a missing spiritual ethos (Goddard, 1993).

Risk Factors for Substance Abuse Among African-American Youth

Contrary to some commonly held beliefs, rates of substance abuse are relatively low among urban African Americans under the age of 16 who stay in school. Although these youth tend to delay starting the use of alcohol and other drugs (into their mid-to-late teens) compared with their non-Hispanic white, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian peers, they are still at high risk for developing heavy patterns of substance abuse. This is particularly true of those who encounter negative environmental factors such as daily exposure to drugs, absence of meaningful employment opportunities, and

the lure of the drug trade and drug culture. Living in the urban environment is an additional stress for the urban African-American population in general and for adolescents in particular. As mentioned above, African-American youth are more likely to initiate substance abuse when they are beyond the school years.

As previously discussed, the negative environmental factors surrounding youth still experiencing the legacy of historical oppression continue to permeate large segments of the African-American community. Such factors include poverty, crime, unemployment, poor schools, disrupted families, teen pregnancy, and homelessness. Research has found that compared with non-Hispanic whites, African Americans are more likely than other ethnic groups to (DHHS, 2001):

- ▶ Experience homelessness.
- ▶ Be incarcerated.
- ▶ Have children in the foster care and child welfare systems.
- ▶ Be exposed to violence.
- ▶ Experience post-traumatic stress disorder.

Researchers have found an interaction between ethnic and cultural identification and substance abuse among adolescent African Americans. Components of ethnic identity—such as awareness of African-American history and tradition, identification with African-American friends, or participation in African-American cultural activities such as Kwanzaa—interact with other factors to reduce risk or enhance protection against substance abuse (Brook, 1998). This author contends: “... in isolation, few specific components of ethnic identity play a role as main effects on substance abuse. Instead, they act in combination with family, personality, or peer influences to blunt the negative impact of risk factors and magnify the positive value of protective factors.” This finding further emphasizes the importance of incorporating ethnic identity into substance abuse prevention programs (Zickler, 1999).

Prevalence of Substance Abuse

Historically, overall levels of substance abuse among African-American adults have been lower than those among non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics. However, African Americans are disproportionately affected by the

negative consequences associated with substance abuse. When averaged, African-American (and Hispanic/Latino) rates of substance abuse are comparable to those of non-Hispanic whites, but these average rates mask a large majority that either uses drugs minimally or not at all and a small minority that participates in more continuous, very heavy substance abuse (Wallace, 1999).

As discussed briefly above, African-American youth are less likely to be involved in substance abuse than non-Hispanic white, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Hispanic/Latino youth until they approach the age of 20 years. Current data on substance abuse among African-American youth are available from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health at www.oas.samhsa.gov and from the *Monitoring the Future* study at www.monitoringthefuture.org.

Practical Points: African-American Youth

When implementing interactive activities for African-American youth, prevention leaders should:

- ▶ Avoid stereotypes.
- ▶ Build a relationship with each member of the African-American target population. The goal is not only to become meaningful and important to each of them, but to make each youth in this group feel valued for his or her potential and as a person.
- ▶ Take into account the existing skills of each youth in the target group and move each along at a pace that is demanding but not defeating. One should challenge them, because challenging youth affirms their potential, credits their achievements, and inspires them.
- ▶ Praise and use as positive role models contemporary and historical figures who have specific significance for African-American youth.
- ▶ Highlight African-American contributions in the development of the United States and the emergence of world civilization.
- ▶ Include African-American history and cultural rituals; communicate to African-American youth the rich cultural heritage they share with people of African ancestry all over the world.
- ▶ Incorporate mechanisms designed to heighten spiritual awareness and sensitivity among African-American youth.
- ▶ Incorporate African-American art forms (e.g., drama, vocal and instrumental music, poetry, creative writing) and culture-specific curricula into substance abuse prevention efforts.

- ▶ Encourage general civic values, but also support practices and events that promote ethnic/cultural pride and higher self-esteem.
- ▶ Include positive messages (e.g., it is “cool” to be drug-free).
- ▶ Hold a poster or rap song contest.
- ▶ Involve the target audience in the development of substance abuse prevention campaign themes and messages and/or design and implementation of additional interactive activities.
- ▶ Remember the following characteristics that may be shared by African-American youth: awareness of skin color and racial differences; sense of self-reliance; strong “people orientation”; sensitivity to nonverbal cues; and well-developed verbal and motor skills.
- ▶ Provide youth with problem-solving skills.
- ▶ Help youth plan a positive, realistic future and promote this with a positive and consistent mentor.

Overview of American Indian/Native Alaskan Youth

Demographics

American Indians/Alaska Natives make up the only ethnic group residing in the United States that has been legally defined. The U.S. Bureau of the Census now recognizes more than 500 tribes and 187 American Indian languages. It is estimated that more than 4.1 million American Indians and Alaska Natives reside in the United States, representing 1.5 percent of the total population. In 2000, 1.3 million U.S. youth were American Indian/Alaska Native. The Census Bureau estimates that the American Indian/Alaska Native population will reach 4.3 million by 2050 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Today, less than one-third of American Indians live on reservations or Trust Lands, while over 60 percent live in urban areas (Health Resources and Services Administration [HRSA], 1998).

In 2000, the West had the largest American Indian population. Over one-half of the American Indian population at that time lived in the following ten states: California, Oklahoma, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, New York, Washington, North Carolina, Michigan, and Alaska. The Cherokee tribal grouping, with a population of more than 700,000, has the largest geographic distribution. The next largest tribal groupings are Navajo, Latin American Indian, Choctaw, Sioux, and Chippewa. These six tribal groups accounted for 42 percent of all respondents to the 2000 census. The Eskimo was the

largest Alaska Native tribal grouping, followed by the Tlingit-Haida, Alaska Athabaskan, and Aleut.

Although a broad diversity of cultural organization exists among the tribes, many American Indian people share significant cultural values as well as some important demographic trends and health concerns. Urban and rural American Indian communities alike have faced considerable challenges to their collective and individual well-being. While little concrete information exists for Alaska Native youth, data on American Indian youth indicate a greater likelihood of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), substance abuse, substance dependence disorders, anxiety, conduct disorders, and suicide compared with nonminority youth (DHHS, 2003).

Throughout the 20th century, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have been confronted with significant stressors. One source of stress involves the dramatic changes that have occurred within many American Indian tribes. While the population of some tribes has increased significantly, other tribes have virtually disappeared. Many tribes have had to leave the lands of their ancestors, both as a result of forced relocation policies and in search of economic opportunity; others continue to live on family lands but have left behind ways of life that were practiced for generations. Centuries-old language bases, child-rearing practices, life roles, and family structures have been disrupted to such an extent that many tribes have struggled to maintain awareness of the traditions and practices that defined their ancestors.

American Indians/Alaska Natives are the most impoverished ethnic group in the United States. This is likely the result of lack of economic and educational opportunities, which in turn is a likely outcome of their history of oppression, discrimination, and removal from traditional lands (DHHS, 2001).

Historical Perspectives

The contemporary problems of substance abuse among many tribes can best be understood in the context of the social, cultural, and tribal diversities and the geopolitical realities of American Indian life. After centuries of misinformation and historical trauma, the average non-Indian American still has only limited knowledge about the historical mistreatment of American Indians,

the importance of treaty rights, and the differences in world view between Americans of European descent and American Indians. Negative stereotypes about American Indians/Alaska Natives prevailed for several centuries. According to Grant and Gillespie (1992), the earliest stereotypes came from explorers and missionaries who portrayed native populations as uncivilized, simple, superstitious, and dependent on colonizers and missionaries.

American Indians have long been portrayed as inarticulate and incapable of metaphysical thought. These stereotypes were maintained despite early Jesuit missionary reports demonstrating that Indians had a sophisticated belief system. As European rivalries over land were brought to North America, the stereotype changed, and American Indians were perceived as bloodthirsty savages who were often greatly feared. With the end of the wars, frontiers were opened for settlement, and native people no longer held essential roles in terms of trade or war. The burgeoning settler population of the land largely ignored natives except when they occupied wanted land. The most recent stereotype arose about 100 years after the American Indians had been placed on reservations. As concern grew for civil rights, equal opportunity, and other social issues during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, American Indians/Alaska Natives again received attention. This time, American Indians were often portrayed as victimized, dispossessed nomads without culture and unable to cope in either the traditional world or the world of assimilation and integration.

Alaska Native history is both similar and dissimilar to that of American Indians (DHHS, 2001). Like American Indians, theirs is a diverse culture, with varied languages, traditions, and cultures, depending on the origin of the community and its location. Alaska Natives were also decimated by disease brought by Europeans and suffered greatly under Russian occupation. When the U.S. Government bought Alaska from Russia in 1867, Alaska Natives fared somewhat differently from their southern “cousins”; the Federal Government did not form reservations for more than 20 years, and even when it did, only a small percentage of Alaska Natives came to live on them (DHHS, 2001).

Cultural Values and Traditions

Anthropologists group American Indian and Alaska Native populations into ten main “cultural areas.” A

cultural area is a geographic region in which most American Indians share a similar lifestyle. While no two tribes live identical lives, the concept is useful in gaining an understanding of traditional American Indian life. These ten cultural areas include (Shanks & Shanks, 1986):

- ▶ California Cultural Area (e.g., Maidu, Pomo, Miwok, Cahuilla, and Mission Indian tribes). This is the only area that corresponds closely to a state boundary. Central California was the heart of this region. Today, traditional dances are still performed by these tribes and traditional religions thrive among a number of groups.
- ▶ Northwest Coast Cultural Area (e.g., Skokomish, Yakonan, Tulalip, and Spokane tribes). This area extends along the Pacific Coast from Oregon through Washington and British Columbia to southern Alaska. It is famous for its magnificent wood carvings, including totem poles; large seagoing canoes; and colorful masked dances.
- ▶ Southwest Cultural Area (e.g., Pueblo, Navajo, Mojave, Apache, and Zuni tribes). This area comprises Arizona, New Mexico, and Northern Mexico. Traditional American Indian activities are highly visible today in this region, including richly costumed ceremonies. Many Indian tribes have fine cultural centers here, and events are frequent and well attended. The Navajo Nation Council has grown into the largest and most sophisticated American Indian government in the United States. The Navajo Nation continues to forge ahead in its goal to attain economic self-sufficiency.
- ▶ Southeastern Cultural Area (e.g., Creek, Seminole, Yuchi, Catawba, Choctaw, and Cherokee tribes). The boundaries of this region correspond closely to those of the “Old South” (i.e., Florida, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Louisiana). However, early in the 19th century, most Southeastern Indians were forcibly removed to Oklahoma in response to political agitation by land-hungry white settlers. Once there, American Indians established independent Nations with capitol buildings, schools, churches, farms, etc. Despite hardships, Indians in Oklahoma have long been

and remain leaders among American Indians. Many aspects of traditional life remain among the Southeastern Nations in Oklahoma. Stomp dances—a form of traditional American Indian dancing unique to the eastern half of America—are often observed in this region.

- ▶ Great Plains Cultural Area (e.g., Cheyenne, Lakota, Comanche, Ponca, and Sac & Fox tribes). No group of American Indians has influenced worldwide recognition of American Indians as have the Plains Indians. Plains Indian tribes inhabit the Great Plains of the United States and Canada. From among the many differing Indian cultures, movies and television have generally chosen the Plains Indians as subjects for their dramas. This has been a mixed blessing, bringing worldwide fame but also perpetuating much inaccurate information. Today, Plains Indians live largely in the Midwest. Most of the Plains Indian tribes have retained old traditions, including deeply religious ceremonies.
- ▶ Eastern Woodlands Cultural Area (e.g., Iroquois, Algonquin, and Mohawk tribes). This cultural area is located in what is now the northeastern United States and adjacent Canada; it extends west to include the Great Lakes. The Six Nations of the Iroquois, the most powerful Indian confederacy ever formed, was such an inspired form of government that Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and other founders of the Republic are said to have been influenced by the Iroquois example when writing the U.S. Constitution. The crops and game eaten by the New England Algonquin Indians are the basis of the modern American Thanksgiving celebration. The modern game of lacrosse, along with today's canoes, toboggans, snowshoes, and moccasins, are inventions of Eastern Woodlands Indians. Most Eastern Indian Nations are alive and well today. High-steel workers of the Mohawk and other Indian Nations built New York City's tallest buildings. Most groups also carefully retain old traditions, including outstanding celebrations with traditional dancing.
- ▶ Great Basin and Plateau Cultural Areas (e.g., Paiute, Shoshone, and Flathead tribes). This is the mountain-rimmed high desert interior of

the eastern portions of Washington, Oregon, California, southern Idaho, western Utah, and all of Nevada. Nutritious roots were more important here than anywhere else, and root festivals are still held. Today, powwows are common and often feature traditional stick games (also called “hand games”).

- ▶ Subarctic Cultural Area (e.g., Tutchone and Athabaskan tribes). This area includes the noncoastal Northwest Territories and the Yukon in Canada and interior Alaska. Tribes here speak Athabaskan languages and often refer to themselves by the name “Dene.” Drum dancing is a common musical form of entertainment.
- ▶ Arctic Cultural Area (e.g., Inuit, Inupiat, and Yupik tribes). The Eskimos of the coastal Far North often prefer to be called Inuit. These people have based their lives largely on the sea and have developed rich artistic abilities. Dancing, music, and games are traditional events in many villages.

American Indian and Alaska Native Cultural Values

- ▶ Events. American Indian events can be sacred or social occasions. Some are a mixture of both. Sacred events or dances are generally activities aimed at accomplishing religious goals and are of profound meaning and great importance to participants. Social dancing and events are done for pleasure, and most powwow activities fall into this category. For some tribes (Plains Indians), powwows include traditional dancing, but for most American Indian groups, tribal events are where real traditional dancing occurs.
- ▶ Elders. Elders hold a high position in most American Indian tribes, and their wisdom, knowledge, and beliefs are honored. Elders are welcomed not only as participants, but as leaders. Elders often serve as cultural historians, passing on the heritage of a people. Usually, middle-aged and young people learn as much as they can from the elders, since they know that one day they will be elders and, therefore, must keep the knowledge and someday pass it on.
- ▶ Spiritual Leaders. Many tribes also have spiritual leaders. These are usually elders and can be men and/or women, depending on the tribal culture. Becoming a spiritual leader takes many years. Some are ceremonial leaders; others are healers; and some are teachers of both Indian and non-Indian students. Others may be all of the above. Spiritual leaders generally have exceptional knowledge and are highly respected in the Indian community. They are often very influential in tribal decisions and opinions.

- ▶ **Diversity.** There are many shared beliefs among American Indian religions, but there is also great variation from one tribe to another. There is also variation in the level of Christianization of different tribes, as well as differences in how much, if any, of the tribal religion is practiced. Spirituality was everywhere in traditional Indian life, and many American Indians and Alaska Natives still believe that much in the world is sacred. Spiritual life and activity can be seen in all aspects of nature, material objects, human behavior, and human activities.
- ▶ **Coping.** American Indians/Alaska Natives often draw upon traditional sources of strength to cope with stress, including the family, the tribe, and the land itself. Interdependence, group affiliation, social respect, generosity, and mastery are some values inherent among Native cultures. American Indian/Alaska Native youth need strong family and community support if they are to develop and remain rooted in a strong sense of cultural identity, self-esteem, and values—all of which have strong protective value against substance abuse.

Risk Factors for Substance Abuse Among American Indian/Alaska Native Youth

Overall, evidence indicates that many of the etiological influences on substance abuse among American Indian and Alaska Native youth are the same as for other ethnic groups and that relatively high rates of substance abuse are not the result of anything inherent in American Indian tradition. Similar to what is seen in adolescents of other ethnic groups, stressful life events, behavioral disorders, lack of social support, poverty, and emotional distress are all associated with the quantity and frequency of substance abuse among American Indian and Alaska Native youth. American Indian youth, however, face uncertainty and integration problems more than any other population group and suffer more severely from problems such as:

- ▶ Chronic unemployment.
- ▶ Poverty.
- ▶ Low educational levels.
- ▶ Substandard housing.
- ▶ Malnutrition.
- ▶ Inadequate health care.
- ▶ Lack of community resources.
- ▶ Poor school adjustment and failure.
- ▶ Antisocial behavior.

- ▶ Lack of opportunities.
- ▶ Hopelessness and despair.
- ▶ Family breakdown.
- ▶ Acculturational pressures.

These problems place many American Indian/Alaska Native youth at high risk for substance abuse (Herring, 1994). Of all of these factors, three that have been identified as especially important in increasing the likelihood of substance abuse among some American Indian youth are:

- ▶ Lack of integration into either a traditional American Indian or mainstream society.
- ▶ Lack of clear-cut sanctions against substance abuse.
- ▶ Peer pressure. Higher levels of substance abuse have been found among more acculturated (to mainstream society) youth than among those who do not perceive themselves as acculturated.

Youth from well-integrated tribes in which cultural identification is strong are less apt to use drugs. Therefore, identification with and strong involvement in American Indian culture may be protective factors against substance abuse. For some American Indian youth, growing up in an environment in which substance abuse, particularly alcohol use, among adults may seem to be the norm may cause them to regard substance abuse not as deviant behavior but, rather, as a sign of adulthood. Peer attitudes, modeling by siblings, and peer acceptance are probably the greatest determinants of substance abuse among younger American Indian populations (Herring, 1994). Little attention has been paid to those counterbalancing positive trends and features of American Indian communities through which, despite considerable risks, many children grow into adolescence with secure and strong identities and family and community affiliations. The early school-age years have been noted to be successful ones for most American Indian children. As a group, American Indian children appear to function as well as their non-Indian counterparts until early adolescence. The academic struggles of American Indian youth may be a direct result of being poorly understood with respect to their values, learning strategies, and perceptual styles.

Positive changes have occurred in Indian education, including the dramatic decrease in boarding schools that focused on discouraging a Native identity and the enrollment of American Indian youth in educational institutions with either tribal leadership or a substantial focus on tribal views. The increased responsiveness of public schools to the needs of American Indian youth to maintain their American Indian identity and culture in the past two decades is also notable (Hodgkinson, 1992). Likewise, there is a growing trend toward American Indian parental involvement in schools. Outcomes anticipated in youth as a result of these changes include greater pride in their heritage, an increase in self-esteem, greater success in school, and a decrease in school dropout rates (Hodgkinson, 1992).

Substance Use Trends, Attitudes, and Beliefs of American Indian and Alaska Native Youth

- ▶ In 2002, 22.6 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native youth aged 12-17 years reported alcohol use in the past month; 18.2 percent reported binge drinking; and 2.9 percent reported heavy drinking, the highest prevalence in all three measures of all ethnic groups (SAMHSA, 2003).
- ▶ American Indian and Alaska Native adolescents also had the highest prevalence of cigarette smoking (27.7%) and current illicit drug use (20.9%) in 2002 (SAMHSA, 2003).

According to Herring (1994):

- ▶ By 11 years of age, nearly one-third of all American Indian children have tried alcohol.
- ▶ Once they enter adolescence, American Indian youth seem particularly prone to using alcohol and other drugs in combination. Inhalant use, however, seems to decline as other substances become more accessible.
- ▶ Reports consistently indicate that American Indian youth have one of the highest prevalence rates for inhalant use: an estimated range of 17 to 22 percent compared with 9 to 11 percent for other ethnic groups.
- ▶ Non-Indian youth, in general, show higher rates of perceived harm from substance use than American Indian youth, which is consistent with the lower rates of substance abuse reported for non-Indian youth.
- ▶ In one study, only 51 percent of 8th-grade reservation youth believed that using marijuana regularly would lead to “a lot” of harm. In another study, American Indian 6th graders saw teenage problem drinking as less serious than did non-Indian and Hispanic/Latino children.
- ▶ American Indian children attributed less responsibility for problem drinking to the individual, adopted a less aggressive approach toward treatment, and endorsed the disease theory of alcohol dependence to a greater degree than did other children. In a different study, American Indian males believed more strongly than European-American

males that heredity played a more important role in their use of alcohol. These children also believed more strongly than females or other males that fate was a more important influence on their use of drugs, and environmental events (e.g., problems at home) were a less important influence.

- ▶ A report of games played by elementary-school-aged American Indian children on a reservation indicates that intoxicated adult behavior is perceived as funny. Thus, prevention messages targeted at this age group need to provide positive alternatives to the humor perceived in drunkenness and should be culturally adapted. Rates of criminal arrest and juvenile delinquency among American Indian youth are also the highest of any U.S. ethnic group; the number of offenses committed under the influence of drugs is four times that of African-American youth and ten times that of non-Hispanic white youth. The vulnerability of American Indian youth to psychological disturbance appears to be exacerbated by forced acculturation through urbanization and their failure to form a traditional frame of reference. Depression and adjustment disorders are common among American Indians.

Prevalence of Substance Abuse

While prevalence rates vary significantly from tribe to tribe, overall, American Indian and Alaska Native youth show high levels of substance abuse compared with the national average for all youth and those of other racial/ethnic groups (DHHS, 2001). Likewise, evidence indicates that American Indian/Alaska Native youth who drink are more likely to drink heavily and suffer related negative social consequences than their non-Native peers (DHHS, 2001). Current data on substance abuse among American Indian/Alaska Native youth are available from the National Survey on Substance Use and Health at www.oas.samhsa.gov and from the National Institute on Drug Abuse at www.drugabuse.gov/pubs/minorities.

Practical Points: American Indian/Alaska Native Youth

When implementing interactive activities for American Indian and Alaska Native youth:

- ▶ Avoid stereotypes.
- ▶ Identify and apply cultural norms and traditions that emphasize pride and health in order to discourage substance abuse.
- ▶ Determine the particular American Indian or Alaska Native characteristics of the target group, such as tribalism, Indian identity, spirituality, acculturation, and biculturalism. Activities must reflect both ethnic-specific and tribal-specific components.

- ▶ Praise and use as role models contemporary and historical figures who are of specific significance for each American Indian/Alaska Native tribe.
- ▶ Highlight American Indian/Alaska Native contributions to the development of the United States and the emergence of world civilization.
- ▶ Include American Indian/Alaska Native cultural rituals.
- ▶ Encourage general civic values, but also support practices and events that promote ethnic cultural pride and higher self-esteem among American Indians/Alaska Natives.
- ▶ Understand that there is no single explanation for substance abuse among Native cultures.
- ▶ Include positive messages (e.g., it is a matter of pride to be drug free).
- ▶ Promote respect for elders and interest in disappearing traditions.
- ▶ Acknowledge that there may be culturally acceptable use of a substance in specific settings, such as peyote or tobacco use during Native American ceremonies.
- ▶ Facilitate skills training for achieving bicultural competence to offset pressures that might increase risk of substance abuse. Bicultural competence allows American Indian/Alaska Native youth to integrate majority cultural values, norms, and behaviors without losing their identification with and respect for traditional values.
- ▶ Target the interventions, according to experts' recommendations, at reducing substance abuse initiation among youth as well as reducing use among older users. Implementation of substance abuse prevention activities must begin at an early age to be effective because of the very young age at which substance abuse is initiated among some American Indians/Alaska Natives.
- ▶ Involve the target audience in the development of substance abuse prevention campaign themes and messages and/or the design and implementation of additional interactive activities.

Overview of Asian American and Pacific Islander Youth

Demographics

The Asian/Pacific Islander-American population comprises more than 60 racial/ethnic subgroups that can be generally classified into the following 3 ethnicities: (1) Pacific Islanders—mainly Hawaiians, Samoans, and Guamanians; (2) Southeast Asians—largely composed of people from Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and the Philippines; and (3) East Asians—including Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans (CSAP, 1997). Each group reflects a varied history, language, religion, culture, socioeconomic status, degree of acculturation to mainstream society, and experience in the United States.

For example, the Vietnamese and Hmong, both from Southeast Asia, differ in their basic cultural patterns. The Vietnamese, many with Chinese ancestry, have a sophisticated, literate culture and strong abilities to adapt to the market society; the Hmong have no written language and few skills that are easily adaptable to labor needs in the United States. Understanding such differences can help prevention leaders devise appropriate strategies for communicating with Asian/Pacific Islander people (Huang, 1993). Even so, there are commonalities among Southeast Asian cultures as well, including the belief that a child's actions reflect on the entire family; the teaching of respect for parents, older siblings, and other adults, in contrast to more mainstream values of independence and assertiveness; and obligations to parents and family holding greater importance than individual needs (Bempechat & Omori, 1990).

In 2000, Asians made up only 3.6 percent of the population of United States, at approximately 10.2 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Between 1980 and 1998, the percentage of Asian-American and Pacific Islander youth doubled from 2 to 4 percent of all U.S. youth. This percentage is projected to continue to increase to 6 percent by 2020. Most of the growth is the result of immigration, and over half (51 percent) of these immigrants have settled in California, New York, and Hawaii. Most newcomers have chosen to reside in urban areas. The vast majority of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans live in 50 metropolitan areas. According to 2000 census data, the total Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander population in the United States was slightly under 1 million in 2000. Most of the Pacific Islander population resides in the West (73 percent), with over half of the population residing in just two States (Hawaii and California).

When working with Asian/Pacific Islander-American subgroups that are relatively new to the United States, it is important to consider the circumstances of their emigration to this country. For example, many Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians came to the United States as refugees (Bempechat & Omori, 1990). For many others, provisions of the immigration laws that favor migration of people related to U.S. residents encouraged them to come to the United States.

The ethnic differences among the Asian/Pacific Islander-American subgroups are complex. Individuals within these subgroups may differ in many ways, and it is

important to consider the following factors in defining and segmenting the Asian/Pacific Islander target population (CSAP, 1997):

- ▶ Ethnicity.
- ▶ Geographic origin.
- ▶ Area of residence in the United States.
- ▶ Age and gender.
- ▶ Generational status in the United States (e.g., first, second, third generation, etc.).
- ▶ Degree of acculturation.
- ▶ Native-language facility.
- ▶ English-language competency.
- ▶ Degree of identification with home country and region of origin.
- ▶ Educational background (number of years abroad, in the United States, and/or elsewhere) and literacy level.
- ▶ Family composition and degree to which the family is intact.
- ▶ Social/economic/political value orientation and identification.
- ▶ Immigrant or refugee status.
- ▶ Access to local formal and informal institutional networks (family associations, churches, mutual assistance associations, etc.).
- ▶ Perception of choice in emigrating to the United States.
- ▶ Health status.

Historical Perspectives

Immigration of Asians to the United States began over 300 years ago with the Chinese, who came primarily for trade (DHHS, 2001). The mid-to-late 1800s brought more than a quarter of a million additional Chinese immigrants, primarily for the purpose of working in mines and on railroads.

Japanese immigrants originally migrated to Hawaii to work on plantations, eventually settling in California, where most immigrants worked in agriculture. In the

early 1880s and again in the early 1900s, the United States passed legislation aimed at limiting the immigration of various Asian groups, beginning with the Chinese and followed by restrictions on the immigration of Japanese, Koreans, and Filipinos.

In response to strong anti-Japanese sentiment during World War II, an estimated 120,000 people of Japanese heritage, including many American citizens born in the United States, were placed in internment camps and Federal prisons. In 1965, the Immigration Act was passed. The Act discouraged discrimination against Asian immigrants and resulted in the tripling of the Asian population in the United States in just 5 years (DHHS, 2001).

Unlike people of Asian origin living in the United States, Pacific Islanders are not primarily immigrants. Their presence in the United States is for the most part a result of the colonization of Hawaii and of the United States taking administrative responsibility for other Pacific territories, such as Guam and American Samoa. In this way, Pacific Islanders share a history similar to that of Alaska Natives. Indigenous populations were largely destroyed by formerly unknown diseases. In addition, their land and its resources were redistributed (DHHS, 2001).

Cultural Values and Traditions

Prevention programs and, hence, prevention activities, for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are most effective when they take into consideration the particular needs of the group or subgroup being targeted and reflect the values and norms of that specific culture. Psychographic data about the target population, including its knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices with respect to substance use; lifestyle habits and leisure activities; and ways of obtaining information are crucial for effectively implementing interactive activities for the target segment of the Asian/Pacific Islander population. Understanding the specific cultural values and norms of the target group is, therefore, essential.

To the extent that it is possible and practical for a prevention leader to customize prevention activities and corresponding materials for Asian/Pacific Islander target groups, it may be necessary to use several languages or dialects and varying cultural contexts. Likewise, there is broad variation in the cultural traditions and norms

of the various Asian/Pacific Islander subgroups. Rather than presume anything, it would be more prudent for prevention leaders working with target populations comprising Asian/Pacific Islander youth to identify the dominant cultural elements of their specific country of origin.

Asian/Pacific Islander-American Cultural Values

- ▶ **Denial.** Denial and concerns about the stigma associated with substance abuse may be barriers to parents' involvement in prevention and/or treatment efforts.
- ▶ **Holistic views.** Many Pacific Islander cultures have a holistic world view that is built on a strong interrelationship among the spiritual world, family, community, and the universe. In Hawaiian culture, for instance, great emphasis is placed on social relationships based on genealogy, with the terms *Wakea* (Father Sky) and *Papa* (Mother Earth) reflecting how the natural world is perceived in terms of family relationships. Thus, fostering group harmony, support, and well-being in the context of such a world view may be a useful approach for implementing substance abuse prevention programs for Native Hawaiians.
- ▶ **Parental socialization.** Most Southeast Asian groups share cultural values that influence parental socialization practices. Children are taught to respect their parents, older siblings, and other adults in positions of authority (e.g., teachers), and individual family members are made aware of their place in the vertical hierarchy. Mutual interdependence is fostered from an early age such that obligations to parents and family are expected to outweigh personal desires or needs. This is in direct contrast to Western values of assertiveness and independence.
- ▶ **Harmony.** In Southeast Asian cultures, individuals strive to attain the Confucian goal of harmony in social relationships and in life in general. They emphasize the family as the most important factor in their childrearing practices.
- ▶ **Oral traditions.** Many Asian/Pacific Islander populations, particularly those from the Pacific Islands, have oral traditions for communicating information and messages. In these cultures, the use of traditional channels such as chant, dance, music, talking through chiefs, and special dialogues or stories can be effective in conveying substance abuse prevention messages. Interactive activities should be tailored to utilize these channels.
- ▶ **Different heritages.** Historically, under the influence of Chinese Confucianism, East Asians developed complex, literate cultures and cohesive family organizations. The history of Southeast Asians reflects both the Chinese tradition and Indian Buddhism. Among the Pacific Islander groups, each has a history of struggle for cultural preservation against colonial oppression, and each has a unique and rich tribal cultural heritage.
- ▶ **Marriage or marital relationships.** In Cambodian culture, as well as in other Asian/Pacific Islander cultures, there is tight control of relationships between boys and girls, and marriages are often arranged. Cambodian refugee parents do not see as acceptable behavior the practice of dating many

different people before deciding on a marriage partner.

This is one issue that leads to highly stressful and painful relations between Asian/Pacific Islander parents and their adolescent children, often resulting in children running away and/or becoming involved with gangs and substance abuse.

- ▶ **Time.** Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders have a different concept of time from Western populations. The former groups have a polychronic time framework, versus the monochronic time framework present among Western populations. Polychronic time allows different social interactions to happen at the same time; in contrast, monochronic time demands a linear scheduling of events. In addition, some Asians/Pacific Islanders, such as the Hmong, believe that time, per se, can solve problems better than human intervention. An understanding of such a notion of time may help prevention leaders facilitate interaction between Asian/Pacific Islander parents and Western individuals, such as school staff and officials.
- ▶ **Communication.** Asian/Pacific Islander cultures also differ from Western cultures in their communication patterns. Asian/Pacific Islander communication relies more on presumptions shared by people, nonverbal signals (e.g., body movement), and the situation in which the interaction occurs. Western communication, in contrast, involves more intensively elaborate expressions that do not need much situational interpretation. Asians/Pacific Islanders, particularly East Asian Americans, are typically polite and even submissive in social encounters, but when a dispute persists, they may suddenly become hostile without providing warning signals. Asians refrain from making spontaneous or critical remarks. Their body language is characterized by repeated head nodding and lack of eye contact. The Japanese and Vietnamese are frequently unwilling to use the word *no*, even when they actually disagree with others. Misinterpretations of Asians/Pacific Islanders' verbal and nonverbal expressions occur because neither Asians/Pacific Islanders nor Westerners are aware of this hidden dimension in communication.
- ▶ **Differences.** Although Asian/Pacific Islander groups may differ in their cultural backgrounds and practices with respect to substance abuse, most encourage the use of alcohol.

Sources: Bempechat and Omori, 1990; Huang, 1993.

Risk Factors for Substance Abuse Among Asian-American and Pacific Islander Youth

Substance abuse is not as extensive among the Asian/Pacific Islander population as among other minority groups. However, it is important to recognize that there is less research focused on Asian/Pacific Islander Americans and that substance abuse does exist within this population, and stereotypes of the “model minority” are inaccurate. Factors that place Asian/Pacific Islander youth at increased risk for substance abuse include (CSAP, 1997):

- ▶ A high immigration rate.
- ▶ Problems with language and acculturation.
- ▶ Peer network changes.
- ▶ Intergenerational conflict.
- ▶ Lack of community support systems.

The intense pressure placed by many Asian/Pacific Islander parents on their children to succeed often gives rise to intergenerational conflicts and psychological difficulties for youth. Many Asian/Pacific Islander youth suffer from test anxiety, social isolation, and impaired self-esteem due to mediocre school performance. These negative feelings can be exacerbated by the segregation of students with limited English proficiency (DeAngelis, 1995).

Other factors that may help place Asian/Pacific Islander youth at risk for substance abuse include backgrounds of poverty, crowded living quarters and communities, poor educational systems in their native lands, and parental discomfort in getting involved in the school system. Many families suffer a fall in social status and are culturally marginalized. Many parents speak no English and have to rely on their bilingual children to get by, a situation that sometimes causes family conflict (Cheng, 1998). San Francisco's Chinatown, with 220 persons per block in the early 1990s, ranked as the second (following Manhattan, NY) most densely populated neighborhood in the United States.

Despite a lack of a unified approach to document the needs of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the areas of substance abuse-related research, prevention and treatment activists and providers have begun to network and collaborate on a number of community prevention projects. National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse (NAPAFASA), an umbrella organization, has been successful in drawing attention to substance abuse problems in the Asian-American and Pacific Islander population.

Facts About Asian/Pacific Islander-American Youth

- ▶ Chinese adolescents are generally more willing to accept their parents' advice and care more about fulfilling academic expectations than do American adolescents.

- ▶ Asian/Pacific Islander youth are often the most effective in communicating substance abuse prevention messages to other youth in peer-group and training settings. The elders in the community may be particularly effective in transmitting to younger generations the values, strengths, customs, and norms of the traditional culture.
- ▶ Traditional Asian families expect their children to do well in school and may feel ashamed and responsible if a child does poorly or needs special attention. East Asians, particularly Chinese, value education highly. They often consider their children's schooling directly related to the family's integrity: High achievement brings honor and prestige to the family; failure brings shame. In addition to regular schooling, many Asian-American parents take their children to community language schools on weekends, expecting to increase their home language skills and maintain their native culture.
- ▶ Because of homeland traditions, many Asian-American parents do not believe it is important to become involved in their children's schools or education. However, children benefit significantly from their parents' involvement, and they feel less marginalized as they view themselves and their families as constructive members of the school community.
- ▶ Asian/Pacific Islander youth who live in "ethnic enclaves" (such as Flushing, New York, and Little Saigon in Southern California) experience particular difficulty in gaining both basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic linguistic proficiency in English. Thus, while some Asian/Pacific Islander students actively engage in verbal discourse with their teachers, others are ostracized during classroom discussions and risk school failure.
- ▶ While American teachers expect students to be interactive, creative, and participatory, Asian/Pacific Islander parents teach their children to be quiet and obedient and not to question teachers. Asian/Pacific Islander students use a soft voice, since a loud voice may signal disrespect in some Asian cultures. These children are used to learning through listening, observing, reading, and imitating. Thus, typical American classroom activities often leave these students feeling ambivalent and confused. In addition, volunteering information may be considered bold in Asian classrooms; thus, the behavior of Asian/Pacific Islander children and adolescents may appear to teachers to be a lack of participation.
- ▶ Asian/Pacific Islander youth may avoid eye contact with adults (a sign of respect in Asian culture), frown (in concentration, as opposed to displeasure), or giggle (from embarrassment or lack of understanding, not in response to something perceived as humorous). Such students may have different greeting rituals, and youth may appear impolite or unfriendly because they look down (out of respect or fear) when the teacher or instructor approaches instead of offering a greeting.
- ▶ Youths' native culture may regard humility and self-criticism highly.

Source: Bempechat and Omiri, 1990; Ascher, 1989

Prevalence of Substance Abuse

Asian/Pacific Islander youth aged 12 to 17 years report the lowest rates of alcohol, cigarette, and illicit drug use of all racial and ethnic groups. Current data on substance abuse among Asian/Pacific Islander youth are available from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health at www.oas.samhsa.gov/ and from the *Monitoring the Future* study at www.monitoringthefuture.org/.

Substance Use Trends, Attitudes, and Beliefs Among Asian/Pacific Islanders

- ▶ There is considerable variation among the many Asian-American/Pacific Islander cultures with regard to both substance abuse prevalence and related attitudes and beliefs (NIDA, 2003a).
- ▶ While the overall rate of Asian/Pacific Islanders' use of illegal drugs is 2.7 percent, 6.9 percent of Korean Americans and 1 percent of Chinese Americans reported illegal drug use; likewise, while overall rates of substance abuse are lower than for other racial/ethnic groups, Korean Americans and Japanese Americans report substance abuse rates comparable to those of the general population (SAMHSA, 2001).
- ▶ Japanese-American and mixed-heritage Asian/Pacific Islanders are at high risk for substance abuse (Price, 2002).
- ▶ Southeast Asian refugees are at particularly high risk for substance abuse (Amodeo, Robb, Peou, & Tran, 1996).
- ▶ There may be a greater tendency for Asian/Pacific Islanders to internalize rather than express stress because of beliefs that such expressions are signs of weakness (DHHS, 2001). While outward signs of stress may not be apparent, it may still exist and increase risk for substance abuse.
- ▶ One explanation for overall lower rates of alcohol use may be related to cultural values of moderation and self-restraint (Naegle, Ng, Barron, & Lai, 2002).
- ▶ Another explanation is the genetic predisposition of many Asian/Pacific Islanders to facial flushing as a result of drinking alcohol; this condition is present in up to 70 percent of East Asians (Naegle, et al., 2002).
- ▶ Cultural values regarding maintaining the respect of the community may contribute to substance abuse within a family being kept secret (Naegle, et al., 2002).

Practical Points: Asian/Pacific Islander-American Youth

When implementing interactive activities for Asian/Pacific Islander-American youth:

- ▶ Avoid stereotypes.
- ▶ Help young people develop refusal skills that incorporate the cultural norms of subtlety and nonconfrontational communication.

- ▶ Emphasize the role of parents and cultural strengths within the family.
- ▶ Recognize the role of elders and promote respect for them.
- ▶ Promote interest in disappearing traditions.
- ▶ Emphasize the varying religious belief systems and philosophical orientations found among the diverse Asian/Pacific Islander populations.
- ▶ Use the target group's traditional culture as a basis for substance abuse prevention messages within the interactive activity and as a source for communication strategies and channels.
- ▶ Establish a clear definition of substance abuse when considering substances that are indigenous to some Asian/Pacific Islander cultures, such as betel nut, kava, and sakau.
- ▶ Praise and use as role models contemporary and historical heroes and figures who are of specific significance for each Asian/Pacific Islander subgroup.
- ▶ Highlight Asian/Pacific Islander contributions in the development of the United States and the emergence of world civilization.
- ▶ Include positive messages (e.g., it is "cool" to be drug free).
- ▶ Involve the target audience in the development of substance abuse prevention campaign themes and messages and/or the design and implementation of additional interactive activities.

Source: CSAP, 1997.

Overview of Hispanic/Latino Youth

"Hispanic" or "Latino" Terminology

The *Hispanic/Latino* combination term may be the most appropriate and acceptable one to use for national materials, but it may not be as effective at the local level. If a local youth group is targeted, carry out research to determine with which term youth feel most comfortable. Spanish-speaking people can also be helpful in implementing activities.

Demographics

Hispanics/Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority population in the United States. The Hispanic/Latino population increased from 22.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000, an increase of 57.9 percent. Hispanics make up about 12.5 percent of the total population of the United States. The number of Hispanic youth has increased faster than that of any other racial or ethnic group, growing from 15 percent of the youth population in 1998 to 35 percent in 2000. Hispanic youth outnumbered non-Hispanic African-American youth for the first time in 1998. By 2020, it is projected

that over one in five children and adolescents in the United States will be of Hispanic origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

U.S. Hispanics/Latinos represent a variety of racial and ethnic groups with different histories, occupations, educational levels, social service utilization levels, and degrees of assimilation into mainstream American culture, among other distinctions. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) reports that 58.5 percent of U.S. Hispanics are Mexican; 9.6 percent are Puerto Rican; 3.5 percent are Cuban; and 17.3 percent are Central or South American, Dominican, or Spanish. Despite their largely rural roots, almost 90 percent of U.S. Hispanics live in urban areas (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Although every state has some Hispanic residents, the vast majority reside in just seven states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, New Jersey, Arizona, and Illinois (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Thirty percent of Hispanic-American adults have less than a 9th-grade education; one-quarter of Hispanic families fall below the poverty line; and many suffer from high levels of unemployment. Linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers prevent many Hispanics from using health and social services.

Substance Use Trends, Attitudes, and Beliefs of Hispanic/Latino Youth

According to the 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (SAMHSA, 2003) and the 2002 *Monitoring the Future* study (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 2003):

- ▶ Among 12th-grade students, Hispanic/Latino youths' past-month reported use of alcohol (47.5 percent), marijuana (34.6 percent), cigarettes (21.3 percent), and MDMA (Ecstasy) (7.0 percent) were all lower than that of their white non-Hispanic/Latino peers but significantly higher than that of their African-American peers.
- ▶ Puerto Rican high school seniors reported higher rates of cigarette smoking, while heavy alcohol use and marijuana use were most common among Mexican-American males.
- ▶ With the exception of cigarette smoking, Hispanic/Latino males were significantly more likely to use alcohol or other drugs than their female counterparts.

A relatively high proportion of Puerto Ricans live in poverty. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, and many residents of Puerto Rico have at some time in their lives lived on the U.S. mainland and commonly retain close contact with friends and relatives who still live here. In the continental United States, Puerto Ricans are concentrated in the industrial Northeast.

Most Mexican Americans live in the U.S. Southwest (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The combination of a largely unguarded border between the two countries, economic problems in Mexico, and the demand for cheap labor north of the border have made it profitable for many Mexicans to come to the United States—sometimes without immigration documents—to find work. Recent decades have seen a large influx of Central Americans into the United States, primarily from the war-torn countries of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Historical Perspectives

Cubans began arriving in the United States in large numbers after the overthrow of the Batista government in 1959. Initially, these immigrants were from the elite classes; they were then followed by less-privileged groups making the dangerous water crossing (DHHS, 2001). The experience of Hispanic and Latino groups in the United States has been largely determined by the reason for a given group's migration (DHHS, 2001). Cuban Americans have historically been granted relatively large levels of support as a result of having fled a Communist government. Most Cubans living in the United States are American citizens, in contrast to only 15 percent of Mexicans living here.

Approximately 21 percent of foreign-born Central Americans arrived in the United States in the 1970s, with most of the remainder arriving between 1980 and 1990. The vast majority of these individuals were fleeing political terror or other atrocities in their homelands (DHHS, 2001). Because Central Americans are not recognized as refugees, they receive less governmental support. They are more likely to arrive without proper documentation, making their adjustment to the United States extremely difficult.

Mexicans have the longest history in the United States, originally as the result of U.S. takeovers of large territories from Texas to California as a result of the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848), through which this nation absorbed all Mexicans living in those areas who chose to remain in what became U.S. territory (DHHS, 2001). Additional Mexicans arrived in the United States as the result of political instability during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). Mexican immigration continues as difficult economic conditions persist in Mexico and the United States has a continued demand for cheap labor.

Large numbers of Puerto Ricans began arriving in the United States after World War II. Emigration to the United States continued from the 1950s through the 1960s, after which some Puerto Ricans returned to the island. A distinctive characteristic that sets Puerto Ricans apart from other Hispanic/Latino groups is their U.S. citizenship, granted in 1917 by means of the Jones Act (DHHS, 2001).

Hispanic/Latino Cultural Values

- ▶ The primary values that influence Hispanic/Latino decision making include the importance of extended family, clear family roles, work, loyalty, group interdependence, spirituality, and *personalismo*. These strengths, in addition to the list of values provided below, appear to contribute to the resiliency of the Hispanic/Latino community against alcohol and other drug problems.
- ▶ In general, Hispanics/Latinos have strong and traditional family values (*familismo*). Individuals are strongly attached to and identify with their families (nuclear and extended members), and feelings of loyalty and reciprocity are typically strong.
- ▶ *Respeto* refers to Hispanics/Latinos' need to respect and maintain self-worth in social relationships. Important aspects of this approach include the use of formal greetings and language (*usted, señor, señora*) in professional associations. Another dimension of *respeto* refers to the special attention, respect, and consideration that are to be shown to community and family elders.
- ▶ Hispanics/Latinos are expected to be personal and warm in their interactions with others, and they value smooth social relations, a concept known as *simpatía*. This cultural value emphasizes respect and politeness and condemns assertiveness, confrontation, and direct criticism.
- ▶ Hispanics/Latinos feel more comfortable than non-Hispanics/Latinos when they are physically close to others and are less likely to feel that someone who is physically close to them has invaded their "private space." Another cultural value is *confianza*, which denotes a close, trusting relationship between individuals.
- ▶ *Personalismo* refers to Hispanics/Latinos' preference for personal associations, the quality of which are seen as being of far greater value than, for instance, efficiency or punctuality. It is less important for Hispanics/Latinos to "save time" than to maintain warm social relationships.
- ▶ A clear hierarchy of power is evident in more traditional Hispanic/Latino families. The father is regarded as the most powerful member of the household and is the one who makes the decisions, protects the family from danger, and provides emotional and financial stability. The mother is regarded as capable of enduring any suffering and sacrifice to help her husband and children.

Cultural Values and Traditions

To the extent possible, prevention leaders should select and implement substance abuse prevention activities for Hispanic populations that reflect their social, economic, and familial norms. Inclusion of culture, customs, and ethnic heritage in prevention materials should be a part of the effort aimed at this minority group. Understanding the behaviors, traditions, norms, beliefs, and values of the Hispanic population is an important prerequisite to selecting and implementing effective substance abuse prevention curricula.

Hispanic/Latino culture has been identified as having a collectivist orientation in which the needs, goals, values, and expectations of the group are emphasized. Collectivism has been associated with high levels of personal interdependence, conformity, readiness to be influenced by others, trust of group members, and mutual empathy. This value orientation stands in stark contrast to the competitive, individualistic, and achievement-oriented U.S. mainstream culture.

Traditional Hispanic cultural values include:

- ▶ *La unidad de familia* (the enduring alliance of the family).
- ▶ *Respeto* (the value of rituals and ceremonies and respect to elders).
- ▶ *Dignidad* (individual self-worth).
- ▶ *Confianza* (close, trusting relationships).
- ▶ *Caridad* (assisting, supporting, and tangibly aiding others in need).

Recent decades have seen major changes in the structure of Hispanic/Latino families in the United States. Hispanic/Latino husbands increasingly participate in household chores, and decision making is becoming a joint venture. Many of these changes are related to the shifting roles of Hispanic/Latino women. Female labor force participation has increased in some Hispanic/Latino subgroups more than in others. The number of Hispanic/Latino single heads of household in the United States also appears to be rising.

Machismo and Marianismo

- ▶ While *machismo* has come to have negative connotations (i.e., chauvinistic and tyrannical male character; an exaggerated masculine posture), in the current social climate of the U.S. mainstream, *machismo* is to the traditional Hispanic/Latino a desirable combination of male gallantry, courtesy, fearlessness, self-sufficiency, and courage. A *macho* is the protector of the family and defender of family honor. Cultural behaviors linked to *machismo* include extramarital sexual activity, involvement in physical abuse and violence, displays of physical courage or daring, heavy drinking, and the imposition of restrictions on women's freedom of movement (Griggs & Dunn, 1996).
- ▶ *Marianismo* defines the Hispanic/Latino female ideal. Like the Virgin Mary, the ideal woman in Hispanic/Latino culture is regarded as morally and spiritually superior to men. She is seen as centering her life around those of her husband and children, is unfailingly submissive and obedient, avoids self-indulgence and sensuality, is expected to be chaste before marriage and to accept her husband's *macho* behavior when married, and is able to endure whatever suffering men may impose upon her.

Research findings indicate that:

- ▶ Hispanic/Latino families in trouble, and especially Hispanic/Latino men, tend to resort to self-help or family help rather than seek outside help, despite data suggesting the presence of stressors that may disrupt Hispanic/Latino families.
- ▶ Traditionalism in Hispanic/Latino families declines and acculturation accelerates with urbanization of residence. In large cities, it is unusual to find an extended family household, and the concept of godparents is reduced in importance.
- ▶ While the peer group is the major predictor of behavior in the mainstream population, the family plays as large a role as peers among Hispanics/Latinos.
- ▶ Cultural maintenance among Mexican Americans is prominently manifested in the use of Spanish and parental emphasis on the importance of discipline in their children's formal education.
- ▶ The Catholic Church in Mexican-American communities attempts to counter acculturation—which weakens the Church's influence—by holding religious festivals such

as *Las Posadas*, which reinforces traditional values.

Concepts that might be included in interactive activities for Hispanic/Latino youth are:

- ▶ They are not alone; they have people around them who can help them solve family problems.
- ▶ They need to know who their friends really are and who is just “hanging out.”
- ▶ Parents and children need to listen to each other.
- ▶ It is okay for youth to talk to others and among themselves when things get tough.
- ▶ Alcohol and other drugs do not make life easier.

Facts About Hispanic/Latino Youth

- ▶ Achievement. Hispanic/Latino youth (particularly Mexican Americans) strive where cooperation with other youth is allowed, especially in goal-setting activities. This is in contrast to the isolation from peers and competition that “mainstream” youth may seek. Mainstream youth often learn early on that it is important to strive to be “*numero uno*” and that it is okay to achieve at someone else's expense.
- ▶ Parental influences. Hispanic/Latino adolescents are more inclined than non-Hispanic white adolescents to adopt their parents' commitment to religious and political beliefs, occupational preferences, and lifestyle.
- ▶ Family loyalty. Many Hispanic/Latino youth are distinguished by a sense of loyalty to the family. Children are brought up with the notion that bearing the family name is a very important responsibility and that their behavior reflects on the honor of the family. Individual motivation comes from an external source: the family. In contrast, mainstream families support a strong sense of individualism, a deeply rooted value in American mainstream society.
- ▶ Culture maintenance. Nearly 95 percent of Hispanics/Latinos consider it very important to maintain their language and culture. Almost 70 percent of Hispanics/Latinos over the age of 5 still speak Spanish at home.
- ▶ Biculturalism. Many Mexican-American youth who have attended between 8 and 11 years of school in the United States and have continued through college are bicultural. They have acculturated to the extent of being able to function in mainstream American society but are still linked to their culture of origin in both cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty (Vasquez, 1998).

There is no universal answer regarding the language to be used in conducting prevention activities with young Hispanics/Latinos. Some studies indicate that Hispanic/

Latino youth prefer the use of English over Spanish. However, because Hispanics/Latinos constitute an essentially bilingual community, linguistic competence and language use are important issues that should be considered when selecting interactive activities for these youth. In terms of effective channels, health education materials presented in the form of *novelas*—short novels that often include moral lessons—have been shown to reach and affect the Hispanic/Latino population. *Novelas* may overcome barriers in reaching rural Hispanics/Latinos, adolescents who have dropped out of school, those who are marginally literate, and those who cannot speak or read English. *Novelas* have proven to be popular with the Hispanic/Latino population and have been shown to be effective in changing knowledge, attitudes, and/or behaviors (LaLonde, Rabinowitz, Shefsky, & Washienko, 1997). It has been reported that *fotonovelas*, brief novels written in a comic book format, are read repeatedly by the same person, have a greater effect, and are shared with a greater number of people than are other, traditional reading materials. *Novelas* can be used as materials for starting discussion groups or problem-solving exercises with Hispanic/Latino youth. Videos in Spanish can also be used to launch interactive activities, and the U.S. market for videos in Spanish is rapidly expanding.

Risk Factors for Substance Abuse Among Hispanic/Latino Youth

Data from a number of studies have suggested that Hispanic/Latino youth are at high risk for substance abuse (Vega, Sribney, & Achara-Abrahams, 2003; Collins & McNair, 2002; Vega, Alderete, Kolody, & Aguilar-Gaxiola, 1998; Epstein, Botvin, & Diaz, 1998a; Epstein, Botvin, & Diaz, 1998b). Some of these studies suggest that parental and sibling alcohol use are the best predictors of alcohol use by young Mexican-American boys (but not girls). Other studies indicate that parents' attitudes toward and use of licit and illicit drugs play an important role in their children's substance abuse behaviors.

The Hispanic/Latino population includes a higher proportion of female-headed households than non-Hispanic whites and Asians—and proportionately fewer married couples (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). These characteristics suggest life in disruptive environments, which is viewed by some researchers as an early antecedent to substance abuse among adolescents. Other potential family disrupters might be illness,

unemployment, immigration, sibling experience with incarceration, and teen pregnancy—among others—all of which are experienced at high rates by Hispanic/Latino populations. One particularly important aspect of family dynamics for Hispanics/Latinos is intergenerational conflict due to differences in acculturation. Families with the greatest parent-child differences in cultural orientation also have the highest levels of intergenerational conflict.

The processes of migration and acculturation often produce conflicts and strains within the Hispanic/Latino family and constitute stressors for the Hispanic/Latino individual. Migration can be particularly stressful to Hispanics/Latinos because of difficulties in communicating in English, obstacles to finding employment; loss of family ties, and problems adapting to American cultural norms, including unease with liberal social values and American childbearing standards and fears about the possibility of their children drifting into delinquency or substance abuse. These processes are related to the likelihood of substance abuse among such individuals themselves.

Some studies have also provided support for the hypothesis that Hispanic/Latino youth whose parents are more acculturated into American society are at higher risk for abusing drugs. These studies have shown that foreign-born adolescents who have lived in the United States for over 2 years have higher rates of substance abuse than those who have lived here less than 2 years. The difference in rates is particularly significant for alcohol use among girls, suggesting that the acculturation process may be more strongly associated with substance abuse among females than males (Baldrige, 1996).

Prevalence of Substance Abuse

Hispanic/Latino youth generally report prevalence rates of alcohol, tobacco, and other substance abuse lower than those for American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic white youth but higher than those for African-American and Asian/Pacific Islander youth (SAMHSA, 2003). Current data on substance abuse among Hispanic/Latino youth are available from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health at www.oas.samhsa.gov/ and from the *Monitoring the Future* study at www.monitoringthefuture.org.

Practical Points: Hispanic/Latino Youth

When implementing interactive activities for Hispanic/Latino youth:

- ▶ Avoid stereotypes.
- ▶ Include Hispanic/Latino cultural rituals (e.g., a *quinceañera* scene—a coming-of-age ceremony for a teenage girl).
- ▶ Show how family and cultural values conflict with the risk factors Hispanics/Latinos face.
- ▶ Include positive messages (e.g., it is “cool” to be drug free).
- ▶ Promote respect for elders and interest in disappearing traditions.
- ▶ Listen to and respect youth and promote this attitude among Hispanic/Latino parents.
- ▶ Facilitate sharing and discussion of experiences.
- ▶ Promote the importance of extended kinship (grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins) in family relations; also promote nonfamily forms of close relationships between individuals, such as *compadrazgo* and friendship.
- ▶ Promote communal values and neighborly attitudes, such as *barrios* (specific areas in the community and/or neighborhood), fiestas, and traditions, and support the forms of extended social networking that are central to Hispanic/Latino culture.
- ▶ Encourage general civic values, but also support practices and events that promote ethnic cultural pride and higher self-esteem among Hispanics/Latinos.
- ▶ Praise and use as role models contemporary and historical heroes and figures who are of specific significance for each Hispanic/Latino subgroup.
- ▶ Highlight Hispanic/Latino contributions in the development of the United States and the emergence of world civilization.
- ▶ Involve the target audience in the development of substance abuse prevention campaign themes and messages and/or the design and implementation of additional interactive activities.
- ▶ Expect many Hispanic/Latino students to prefer conformity, peer-oriented learning, a more kinesthetic learning style, a high degree of structure, use of peak energy in the afternoon or late morning, and variety over routine (Griggs & Dunn, 1996).

Understanding Non-Hispanic White Youth

Demographics

Non-Hispanic whites comprise the largest segment of the U.S. population. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) estimates that non-Hispanic whites constituted over 77 percent (about 211.5 million) of the total population in 2000. However, the non-Hispanic white population increased more slowly than the total population between 1990 and 2000. In 1998, 65 percent of youth in the

United States were non-Hispanic white, with 15 percent African American, 15 percent Hispanic/Latino, 4 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent American Indian/Alaska Native.

Non-Hispanic whites make up almost 83 percent of the rural population, compared with 69 percent of the urban population. The percentage of non-Hispanic whites living in central cities is 20.4. While most youth who live in poverty are non-Hispanic whites, the proportion of African-American and Hispanic/Latino youth living in poverty is much higher than the proportion of non-Hispanic white youth.

Cultural Values and Traditions

Mainstream cultural values are often defined as those of Americans with European origin (Takaki, 1993). As such, mainstream American cultural values include:

- ▶ Competition.
- ▶ Productivity.
- ▶ Objectivity.
- ▶ A proactive approach to life.

These values are expressed through many public institutions, including communications media, entertainment venues, churches, and schools. Non-Hispanic white families support a strong sense of individualism, which is a deeply rooted value in American mainstream society.

In general, non-Hispanic white Americans place emphasis on their personal goals over group goals because they are usually goal- and future-oriented, especially when it comes to monetary security. Preparing and saving for the future are common non-Hispanic white traits, as is the tendency to strive for material comfort (Vasquez, 1998).

The non-Hispanic white tendency toward goal orientation is also seen in the area of communication. When non-Hispanic whites, particularly males, converse, discourse is usually oriented toward exchanging information in a quick and efficient manner. A direct question often leads to a direct response, without a great deal of polite “small talk.” Compared with other cultures, non-Hispanic whites tend to be more direct in addressing their conversational partners, using the partner’s name often in the course of

the conversation. They also tend to interrupt each other more often. (Pajewski & Enriquez, 1996).

Other typical non-Hispanic white American beliefs include:

- ▶ The concept that man has power over nature.
- ▶ The idea that nature itself has laws; everything that happens can be scientifically explained.
- ▶ The importance of being the first to climb the ladder of success.
- ▶ The importance of striving to be the best.

Non-Hispanic white youth often learn early on that it is important to strive to be “number one.” Hard work is rewarded, as is adherence to a schedule (Pajewski & Enriquez, 1996).

As mentioned earlier, non-Hispanic white Americans are more likely to be competitive than cooperative, and aggressiveness and ability rather than fate or destiny are believed to be responsible for leading a person to great achievement. The more competitive and individualistic character of non-Hispanic white Americans compared with other cultures is reflected, for example, when non-Hispanic white youth work together in a group: Each youth is expected to do his or her share. In contrast, when Hispanic/Latino youth work in a group, not all are expected to contribute an equal share, and a group member who does not work as hard is not considered lazy. Similarly, while sharing material objects and information during a test is considered cheating in the non-Hispanic white culture, other cultures see this as helping another person, reflecting the cooperative tendency of those cultures (Pajewski & Enriquez, 1996).

Risk Factors for Substance Abuse Among Non-Hispanic White Youth

As noted earlier in this chapter, social research has identified many indicators that place youth at risk for problems ranging from hyperactivity to dropping out of school to becoming involved with crime and substance abuse. Non-Hispanic white youth share with other racial/ethnic subgroups many of the risk factors for such problems.

Prevalence of Substance Abuse

According to the 2002 National Survey on Drug Abuse and Health, the rates of current illicit drug abuse among adolescents aged 12 to 17 years were slightly higher for non-Hispanic whites than for African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos. With respect to absolute numbers, most current illicit drug abusers are non-Hispanic whites.

Likewise, non-Hispanic white adolescents have the second highest rate of reported drinking during the past 30 days and the second highest rate of binge drinking, exceeded only by American Indian/Alaska Native youth (SAMHSA, 2003). These rates of alcohol use are approximately double those of African-American adolescents and almost three times those of Asian-American adolescents (SAMHSA, 2003).

Approximately one-third of non-Hispanic white adolescents have ever used any illicit drug, a rate of use higher than for any other ethnic minority group except American Indians/Alaska Natives (SAMHSA, 2003). Current data on substance abuse among non-Hispanic white youth are available from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health at www.oas.samhsa.gov/ and from the *Monitoring the Future* study at www.monitoringthefuture.org.

Substance Use Trends, Attitudes, and Beliefs of Non-Hispanic White Youth

- ▶ Non-Hispanic white youth participate in substance use to a greater extent than every other ethnic group, with the exception of American Indians/Alaska Natives.
- ▶ In 2002, 44 percent of non-Hispanic white 12th graders reported use of any illicit drug during the past year, compared with 39 percent of Hispanic/Latino and 30.4 percent of African-American 12th graders. Among 10th graders, 38.6 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 36.2 percent of Hispanics/Latinos, and 28.5 percent of African Americans reported illicit drug use in the past year, while for 8th graders, the rates were 18.3 percent, 24.8 percent, and 15.1 percent, respectively.

Source: Johnston et al., 2003.

Practical Points: Non–Hispanic White Youth

When selecting and implementing interactive activities for non-Hispanic white youth:

- ▶ Focus on individualism in making choices and decisions.
- ▶ Teach and practice direct refusal skills; they are particularly appropriate for non-Hispanic white youth.
- ▶ Talk about how decisions made today can affect future opportunities.
- ▶ Appeal to their goal orientation by offering opportunities for goal-oriented pledges.
- ▶ Emphasize that substance abuse compromises the ability to be the best one can be.

Conclusions

Ethnicity and culture are somewhat associated with substance abuse patterns and prevalence. Research indicates that these patterns are reflective of risk and protective factors shared by those of a given ethnicity or cultural identification. Such factors include economic disadvantage, stress associated with immigration, language barriers, and historical and present-day oppression and discrimination. Understanding risk and protective factors in their variety of contexts can help prevention leaders better understand their target populations and select prevention activities that can most effectively address those populations' relative risk for substance abuse. Likewise, and perhaps of greater importance, is that prevention leaders need to understand the key cultural elements that can help them implement multicultural prevention interventions that are relevant to the entire target audience.

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