Examining Differences Between Asian Americans and Whites for Gambling and Drinking

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Abstract

Limited research has examined the ethnic differences in gambling and drinking among emerging adults, therefore little is known about whether Asian American and White American youth are engaging in similar addictive behaviors. The purpose of this study was to examine ethnic differences in risk factors between Asian Americans and White Americans for gambling and drinking at two levels of involvement: problems and absence. The main objective 1) there are ethnic differences among emerging adults in gambling and drinking involvement, 2) there are ethnic differences exist, and 3) which impulsivity and psychological distress variables are specific to each of these ethnic groups. The sample consisted of college students, a total of 927 participants, 245 (9.1%) Asian Americans and 503 (20.7%) whites, with an age range of 18-36 from the psychology subject pool of a large West Coast University were selected for this study. The sample was composed of 404 (44.4%) Asian Americans and 593 (65.6%) White Americans. Asian Americans were found to be less involved and develop more problems associated with drinking, whereas ethnic differences were found for gambling involvement. Asian Americans were developing more problems gambling compared to White Americans. Ethnic differences were also found through risk factors at each level of involvement with Asian Americans being highly correlated to psychological distress risk factors and White Americans impulsivity factors. These risk factors, depression and belief in not being able to stop gambling (IRI), mediated the problem gambling and social anxiety mediated the drinking absence. Overall, results indicated an increased need for more culturally sensitive and comprehensive based treatment and prevention programs.

Introduction

Addictive behaviors are a growing mental health concern in the United States. Research findings have indicated significant ethnic differences exist in additive behaviors. Investigation of the additive behaviors between ethnic groups provides relevant clinical data for improving the effectiveness of treatment programs. Research findings have indicated significant disparity in the likelihood of developing different addictive behaviors when comparing Asian and White American college students. Statistically, Asian Americans have been largely targeted by gambling marketing schemes and are comparatively less likely to seek services after developing gambling problems. The presence of mental health problems is associated with problem drinking. White Americans have demonstrated higher rates of problem drinking than those of other ethnic groups (Lo et al., 2016).

Methods

Personality Risk Factors Risk-Taking. Jackson Personality Inventory Risk-Taking Subscale (1970) was used to assess risk-taking behavior. Belief in Good Luck scale (Darke & Freedman, 1987) was also used to assess good luck beliefs. Anxiety measured using Mood and Anxiety Symptom Questionnaire (MAQ) (Clark & Watson, 1991). Beliefs about the environment using Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) and Social Phobia Scale (SPS) (Brauns, 1997; Mattick & Clarks, 1988). A brief depression and anxiety scale was used to measure symptoms of general social interaction, whereas the SPS was used to assess symptoms of being anonymized during daily activities.

Results

Findings for Examining two levels of gambling involvement among Asian Americans and White Americans: Abstention and Problems

No ethnic differences for gambling abstention problems. No ethnic differences for gambling problems. Asian Americans were more likely to have problems gambling compared to White Americans, B = -.27, P = .001, and 404 (44.4%) Asian Americans more likely to have problems gambling compared to White Americans, B =-.27, P = .001. Cultural differences were also found through risk factors at each level of involvement with Asian Americans being highly correlated to psychological distress risk factors and White Americans impulsivity factors. These risk factors, depression and belief in not being able to stop gambling (IRI), mediated the problem gambling and social anxiety mediated the drinking absence. Overall, results indicated an increased need for more culturally sensitive and comprehensive based treatment and prevention programs.

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, there is limited research on the addictive behaviors among emerging adults, particularly Asian American and White American youth. This study found that the addictive behaviors are more common among White Americans than Asian Americans. This study provides evidence that Asian Americans are less likely to develop problems with gambling and drinking due to less impulsivity and risk factors. Asians are less likely to develop problems from gambling than White Americans. This study confirms previous research that indicates Asian Americans are less susceptible to gambling problems (Luczak, 2013). Results have indicated that psychological distress variables were less in Asian Americans, whereas impulsivity factors varied more in White Americans. Risk factors, excessive impulsivity were found to be more associated with White Americans at both level of involvement. Asian Americans were more likely to have psychological risk factors such as depression, anxiety, and social anxiety. Previous research found a common reason for Asian Americans to develop psychological distress is due to family stressors (Sanghvi & Cao, 2013). Asian Americans were more likely to develop problems with gambling and drinking due to impulsivity and risk factors. Asians are less likely to develop problems from gambling than White Americans. This study found that gambling disorder for Asian Americans is not facilitated through impulsivity factors. This study found that gambling disorder for Asian Americans is not facilitated through impulsivity factors.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS
- Ethnic differences exist within addiction illustrating a need for more culturally sensitive and comprehensive prevention and treatment.

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