

Neighborhood ethnic composition and problem drinking among older Mexican American men

August 19 2014

LSU Sociology Professor Samuel Stroope is the lead author of a new study, "Neighborhood Ethnic Composition and Problem Drinking among Older Mexican American Men," that will appear in the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.

Stroope – and co-authors at Baylor University and the University of Texas Medical Branch – found that older Mexican-American [men](#) are less likely to engage in problem drinking as residents of neighborhoods with a higher proportion of Mexican-Americans. The study used data on 350 men aged 75 and older from the "Hispanic Established Populations for the Epidemiologic Study of the Elderly," a survey of older adults across the southwestern United States.

His study adds to a growing body of research on the Hispanic Health Paradox, which revealed Hispanic and White Americans have similar [health](#) and mortality profiles despite significant differences in socioeconomic status.

Stroope's article expands upon this prior research by highlighting the protective influence of Mexican-American neighborhoods for older men's problem drinking, a behavior that is linked to a variety of health problems, and one of which Mexican-American men are less likely to age out.

Such ethnic enclaves may have a protective influence because of inter-household family networks, residential stability, high levels of trust, local community institutions and other sources of social support. Such neighborhoods also tend to have shared norms regarding alcohol abuse that provide effective social regulation of problem drinking.

The study also found that U.S.-born men were less likely to be problem drinkers compared to those who were foreign born and integrating into American society. This contrasts to prior studies that found the foreign born to generally have better health profiles than the U.S. born. Stroope suggests that his study's findings may differ because U.S. born problem drinkers may have already died and therefore were not present in the study's sample of very old adults. He also found that men with English language ability were more likely to be problem drinkers, similar to other studies of the influence of acculturation on health behaviors.

"The focus of this research is important because the U.S. population has been quickly aging in recent years and this population aging is expected to continue over the coming decades," said Stroope. "Hispanic-Americans are expected to increase as a percentage of older Americans."

More information: *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10903-014-0033-8

Provided by Louisiana State University

Citation: Neighborhood ethnic composition and problem drinking among older Mexican American men (2014, August 19) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-08-neighborhood-ethnic-composition-problem-older.html>

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