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Substance Abuse & Asian American Pacific Islanders

Until recently Asian American Pacific Islanders were grouped together in national data sets examining substance use, which limited our knowledge about the differences across subgroups of AAPIs.

Studies indicate that assumptions should not be made about substance use among Asian American populations and show that different patterns of substance use exist for:^{1,2,3,4,5,6}

- Asian ethnic groups (i.e., Korean Americans, Filipino Americans, Japanese Americans have been found to have higher levels of problem drinking than other Asian ethnic groups)
- U.S. or foreign-born AAPIs (i.e., research indicates mixed results depending on the specific Asian ethnic group. For example, some foreign-born of certain ethnic groups have been found to have higher levels of alcohol use, whereas U.S.-born have higher alcohol use in other ethnic groups)
- Men and women (men typically have higher rates of drug, alcohol, cigarette use than women)

FACTORS RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE: CLINICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Clinicians should be mindful of the individual factors (e.g., age, generation, gender, acculturation level) as well as larger systemic factors (e.g., work or school environment, culturally prescribed gender roles, current portrayal of Asians in the media) that may influence how substance use presents in a client and how it should be treated.

Statistics on Asian American Pacific Islanders and Substance Use, based on data from 2003–2011, for individuals age 12 and older⁷

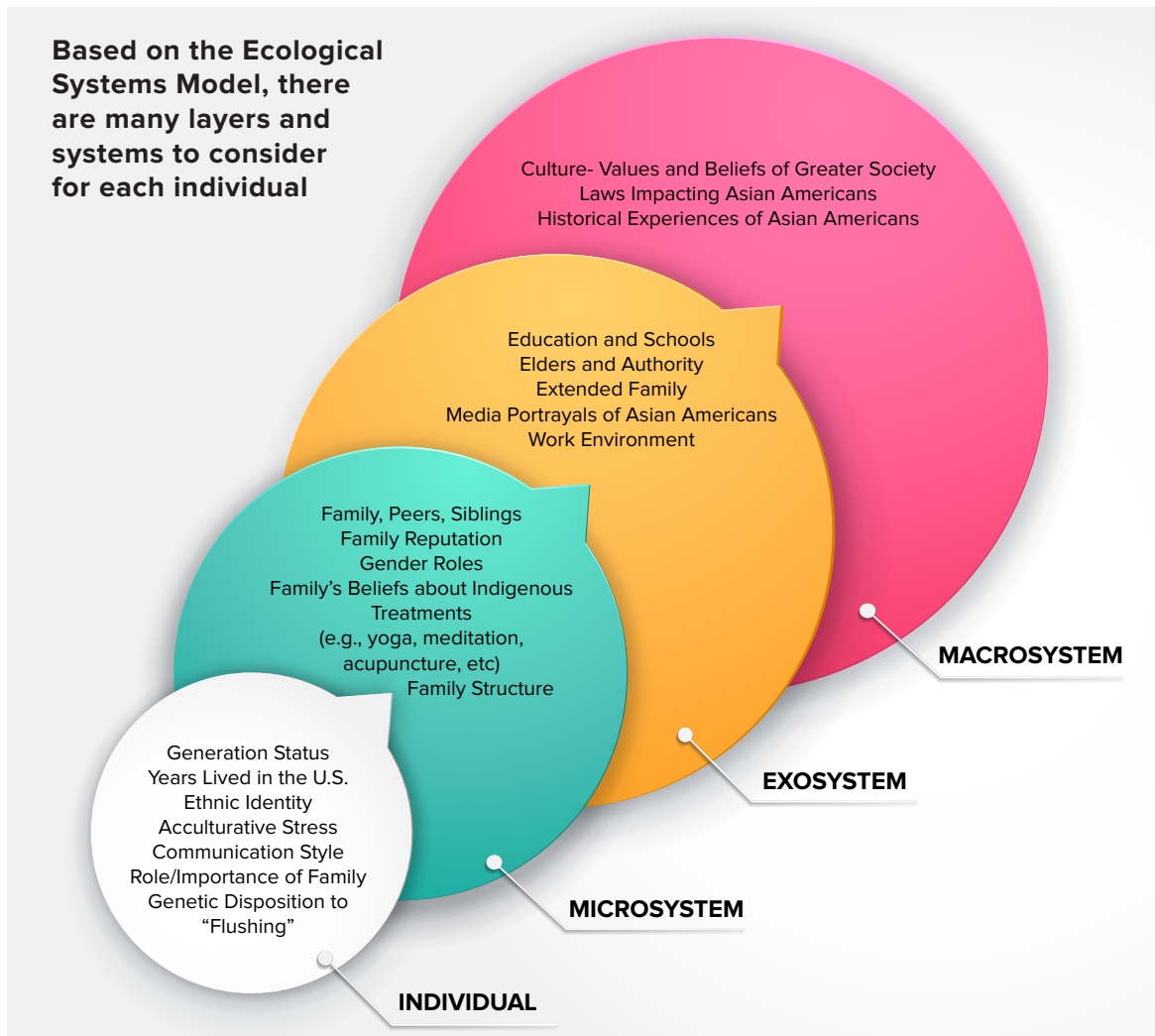
7.1% of Asian American adolescents between the ages 12–17 reported having used alcohol in the past month in the United States.

According to SAMHSA (2013) while the numbers suggest a lower use of substances, Asian American Pacific Islanders are **less likely to receive treatment** when they need it.

Rates of past month drug use were **lower** among Asian adults than national averages (3.4 vs 7.9%)

Nearly **14%** of Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders who were 18 to 25 years of age needed substance use treatment compared with **21.5%** of persons from other racial or ethnic groups.

Based on the Ecological Systems Model, there are many layers and systems to consider for each individual



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