The Effect of General and Drug-Specific Family Environments on Comorbid and Drug-Specific Problem Behavior: A Longitudinal Examination

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Previous research has shown that the development of alcohol and tobacco dependence is linked and that both are influenced by environmental and intrapersonal factors, many of which likely interact over the life course. The present study examines the effects of general and alcohol- and tobacco-specific environmental influences in the family of origin (ages 10-18) and family of cohabitation (ages 27-30) on problem behavior and alcohol- and tobacco-specific outcomes at age 33. General environmental factors include family management, conflict, bonding, and involvement. Alcohol environment includes parental alcohol use, parents' attitudes toward alcohol, and children’s involvement in family drinking. Tobacco-specific environment is assessed analogously. Additionally, analyses include the effects of childhood behavioral disinhibition, initial behavior problems, and age 18 substance use. Analyses were based on 469 participants drawn from the Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) sample. Results indicated that (a) environmental factors within the family of origin and the family of cohabitation are both important predictors of problem behavior at age 33; (b) family of cohabitation influences partially mediate the effects of family of origin environments; (c) considerable continuity exists between adolescent and adult general and tobacco (but not alcohol) environments; age 18 alcohol and tobacco use partially mediates these relationships; and (d) childhood behavioral disinhibition contributed to age 33 outcomes, over and above the effects of family of cohabitation mediators. Implications for preventive interventions are discussed.