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The Association of Acculturation with Smoking Status among Mexican Americans using a Multidimensional Approach for Assessing English and Spanish Language Use.

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INTRODUCTION: Previous studies suggest that greater acculturation may be a risk factor for smoking among Mexican-Americans (MA), one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (US). Our objective was to better characterize the relation of acculturation to smoking status among MA using multi-dimensional language assessment.

METHODS: Secondary data analysis from an ongoing population-based cohort of MA households in Houston, Texas, US. Our study sample (n = 11,674) was stratified into current smokers and non-smokers (former and never smokers). Acculturation was measured as use of both English and Spanish languages. Four language use groups were created based on Low/High use of Spanish and English, with high use of English and low use of Spanish representing the greatest degree of acculturation. Current smokers and non-smokers were compared using \(\chi^2\) and 2-sided t tests. Logistic regression analysis was performed to identify predictors of cigarette smoking.

RESULTS: Overall prevalence of cigarette smoking was 11.4%. Participants who reported high English but low Spanish use had the highest smoking prevalence (20.1%), followed by High English/High Spanish (13.6%), and Low English/High Spanish (8.7%). Current smokers were more likely than non-smokers to be male (adjOR 3.74, 95% CI = 1.975–2.636), have education level less than high school (adjOR 1.35, 95% CI = 1.095–1.659), be married or live with someone (adjOR 1.75, 95% CI = 1.516–2.022), be Catholic (adjOR 1.36, 95% CI = 1.174–1.585), currently consume alcohol (adjOR 3.98, 95% CI = 3.440–4.599) or had consumed alcohol but quit (adjOR 1.75, 95% CI = 1.419–2.165) and report low Spanish and high English use (adjOR 3.13, 95% CI = 1.850–5.310).

CONCLUSIONS: This study provides further support for the link between acculturation and higher smoking rates in Mexican-American adults. Consistent with more recent models of acculturation, individuals can differ both in their maintenance of the home culture and adoption of a new culture, and both dimensions are important in predicting tobacco use.