Abstract:
Purpose: Numerous studies have explored the importance of a sense of community on community participation (Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012; Lenzi, Vieno, Pastore, & Santinello, 2013; Talo, Mannarini, & Rochira, 2014). Other studies have examined the importance of social capital on civic engagement (De Donder, De Witte, Buffel, Dury, & Verte, 2012). However, few empirical studies have explored the longitudinal impact of the “neighboring” behaviors during adolescence on community participation in adulthood.

This study assesses the impact of “neighboring” behaviors during adolescence on adult community participation as measured by civic participation, political participation, and trust in government. The study tested the following hypotheses:
(1) A positive association exists between “neighboring” behaviors in adolescence and community participation as adults.
(2) “Neighboring” behaviors among racial/ethnic minorities and immigrants adolescents are more important in predicting adult community participation than amongst the general population.

Participants: A nationally representative sample of 15,243 adolescents participated in the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (Add Health). This study uses Wave I (1994-1995) and Wave III (2001-2002) data. Among the participants, 48.4% were male, 66.0% were white, 24.9% were black, 3.6% were American Indian, 4.2% were Asian, 5.3% were immigrants. The average age at Wave 1 was 15.75 (SD=1.78) and 21.86 at Wave 3 (SD=1.80).

Methodology: Community participation was defined to include civic participation, political participation, and trust in government. A series of sub-scales were developed from variables in Add Health to measure these constructs. Reliability tests were conducted to ensure validity using the Cronbach’s Alpha. Bivariate and multivariate regression analyses were conducted to model the relationship between “neighboring” behaviors, community participation, race/ethnicity, and immigration status. Moderational analyses were conducted to determine if race/ethnicity and immigrant status interacted with “neighboring” behaviors to predict community participation.

Implications for Practice: Better understanding the association between “neighboring” behaviors during adolescence and community participation in adulthood can improve positive youth development initiatives and participation in communities across the United States and the globe.

Citation: