This study examined interpersonal and intrapersonal risk for substance use in a sample of Caucasian and Hispanic early adolescents. A total of 1170 sixth and seventh graders, equally divided by gender, participated. Interpersonal risk was assessed by susceptibility to peer pressure, parental monitoring, peer substance use, parent–child involvement, and school adjustment. Intrapersonal risk was measured via self-efficacy, impulsivity, aggression, depression, and academic achievement. As expected, mean level of use did not differ between ethnic groups. Regression analyses indicated susceptibility to peer pressure and peer alcohol use were the best predictors of individual substance use. These findings were consistent across gender and ethnicity. In all groups, interpersonal variables accounted for more variance in predicting risk (49% for Hispanic males) than intrapersonal variables (0% for Hispanic females). Findings are discussed (1) in terms of examining mean levels vs. the underlying pattern predicting substance use, and (2) regarding implications for prevention efforts in early adolescence.

INTRODUCTION

Despite an increasing awareness of its physical and social consequences, drug use continues to occur with epidemic proportion among ado-
lescents. Recently researchers have used an epidemiological approach to examine both the number (Bry et al., 1982) and types of factors (Jessar and Jessor, 1978; Kandel, 1978; Newcomb et al., 1986; Smith and Fogg, 1978) that predict substance use risk in adolescence. An underlying assumption of the epidemiological approach is that individual variables are of little importance; knowing the overall number of variables that predict risk is sufficiently informative.

The purpose of this study was to use a risk factor approach to directly compare the influence of the interpersonal and intrapersonal domains for predicting substance use in early adolescence. Unlike early epidemiological approaches, we were interested in examining the specific influence of individual factors and the general influence of variables by domain. Focusing on the overall number of risk variables may be adequate when asking questions about level of use and mean differences between groups. An examination of specific variables is more appropriate, however, when examining similarities and differences in the underlying pattern of factors that predict substance use risk.

The question of whether to examine mean differences or pattern reflects one of the biggest ongoing disputes in substance use research, whether (1) a multiple pathway model of drug use is most appropriate, where several different factors may lead to substance use and abuse; or (2) a specific pattern or combination of variables accounts for all types of drug use in all types of users (Brook et al., 1990). Much research points to the importance of a multivariate framework for understanding substance use. Specifically, simultaneous consideration of personality, perceived environment, and behavioral systems has been found to be more heuristic than simplistic, univariate explanations of substance use (Bloch et al., 1991; Huba and Bentler, 1982). Several recent studies have examined risk factors by various domains.

Brook and her colleagues (Brook et al., 1990; Brook et al., 1984) have examined the influence of family and personality factors on adolescent alcohol use. In an early study of Black and Anglo high school students, Brook et al. (1984) found that peer, personality, and family factors each independently predicted adolescent risk for initiation of alcohol use. Coombs et al. (1991) recently showed that, among Caucasian and Hispanic youth, friend marijuana use was the most reliable predictor of an adolescent's own drug use. These data are consistent with the findings of Newcomb et al. (1986) who, in a sample of 10th–12th graders, showed that peer drug use (vs. parent factors) had the highest average correlation with an individual's self-reported drug use.

In the present study we examine risk for substance use by comparing the specific influence of the interpersonal and intrapersonal domains. A to-