

Public Abstract

First Name:Sarah

Middle Name:Lynn

Last Name:Pedersen

Adviser's First Name:Denis

Adviser's Last Name:McCarthy

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title:Common and Specific Alcohol Risk Factors in African Americans and Caucasians

Considerable research evidence shows that the alcoholism risk process differs for African Americans and Caucasians, with African Americans being at reduced risk for alcohol-related problems. The current study was designed to test a model examining racial differences in alcohol use. I examined both common factors (e.g., disinhibited personality characteristics) that function similarly across race and context specific factors (e.g., peer drinking, religiosity) that differ in their association with alcohol across race. A primary aim of the current study was to examine if African Americans and Caucasians respond similarly to alcohol following alcohol administration and if this response was associated with alcohol use and alcohol-related problems.

One hundred and seventy eight participants (mean age = 21.87, SD = 1.23; 47% male; 57% African American) completed an alcohol administration study. Participants consumed vodka and tonic in a laboratory setting to achieve an estimated peak blood alcohol concentration of 80 mg/dl (0.08%). Breath alcohol readings and measures of alcohol response were taken at 8 time points (i.e., baseline, 15, 30, 45, 60, 90, 120, and 150 minutes).

Results showed that African Americans and Caucasians are similar in their response to alcohol. Additionally, African Americans had lower levels of risk factors such as disinhibited personality characteristics and higher levels of protective factors such as religiosity compared to Caucasians. These mean level differences found between racial groups could explain the lower levels of drinking seen in African Americans.