

COMMON AND SPECIFIC ALCOHOL RISK FACTORS IN AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CAUCASIANS

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ABSTRACT

Considerable research evidence shows that the alcoholism risk process differs for African Americans and Caucasians (Bachman et al., 1991; Wallace et al., 2003). The current study was designed to test a model examining racial differences in alcohol use. I examined both common factors that function similarly across race and context specific factors that differ in their association with alcohol across race.

One hundred and seventy eight participants (mean age = 21.87, $SD = 1.23$; 57% African descent) completed an alcohol administration study, receiving a moderate dose of alcohol (0.72g/kg alcohol for males, 0.65g/kg for females). Acute alcohol response was measured at 8 time points (i.e., baseline, 15, 30, 45, 60, 90, 120, and 150 minutes).

Latent variable growth models largely supported acute alcohol response as a common risk factor that functions similarly across racial groups. Regression analyses showed support for a mean difference model where African Americans had lower levels of risk factors (e.g., disinhibition) and higher levels of protective factors (e.g., religiosity) compared to Caucasians. The implications and limitations of these findings are discussed.