Coping in Silence: Emotional Suppression, Minority Stress, and Alcohol Related Consequences in College Environments

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Introduction

Our study: The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between racial identity, emotional suppression, and alcohol use by surveying first-year students at Muhlenberg College.

- People who are a part of racial minority groups are more likely to face discrimination (Bracegirdle et al., 2023).
- Discrimination is shown to be linked to emotional suppression. Minority groups, specifically Black individuals are more likely to emotionally suppress anger and avoid social interaction because of the oppression they face (Green & Klein, 2025; et al.).

Defining Emotional Suppression: "Inhibiting the overt expression of emotion", (Srivastava et al., 2009).

- Discrimination and emotional suppression can lead to isolation and poor mental health, which increases the likelihood of excessive drinking (Fang & Lung, 2022; et al.).
- The American college environment promotes permissive drinking habits because of the stereotype surrounding the college experience and pressure from peers (Davis et al., 2025; et al.).
- Racial minority college students, specifically Latinx Americans, are more likely to endorse and take part in excessive drinking habits (Lui, 2019).
- Alcohol impairs future oriented thinking, reduces judgement, and decreases impulse control, which can all contribute to greater emotional suppression (Bushman et al., 2012).
- Alcohol numbs emotions, which increases behaviors of emotional suppression (Volpicelli, 1999).

The Gap

- There has been limited research on examining the gap between minority race, emotional suppression, and alcohol consumption. We want to explore these variables and see if there is a relationship between them.

Hypothesis: We predict that emotional suppression mediates the relationship between racial identity and alcohol consumption.

Method

We plan to recruit first-year second semester students at Muhlenberg College to fill out our anonymous online survey measuring emotional suppression and alcohol use, first beginning with informed consent.

Our variables include racial identity and alcohol use with the mediating factor of emotional suppression.

- Emotional suppression will be measured using an adapted version of the suppression subscale from the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (EQR) developed by Gross and John (2003) and Emotion Regulation of Other and Self (EROS) scale developed by Niven et. al. (2011).
  - An example item is "I keep my emotions to myself"
- Alcohol consumption will be measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) developed by Saunders et al. (1993).
  - An example item is "How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?"
- The participants will then complete the demographic section.
  - This will ask about race, sexual identity, gender and age.
- Lastly, participants will then be thanked, debriefed, and given resources if they needed help coping with discriminatory behavior and alcohol consumption.

Proposed Analysis

- We test this hypothesis by conducting a path analysis.
- There are four regression analyses:

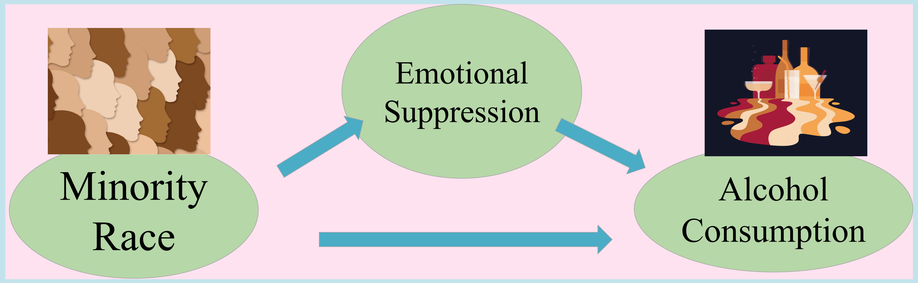
i. Race as a predictor and Alcohol Consumption as the outcome.

ii. Race as a predictor and Emotional Suppression as the outcome.

iii. Emotional Suppression as the predictor and Alcohol Consumption as the outcome.

iv. Race and Emotional Suppression as predictors and Alcohol Consumption as the outcome.

- We expect regressions 1-3 to show significant relationships.
- In the 4th regression, suppression should be a significant predictor of alcohol.
- Critically, the Beta value for race in the fourth regression should be smaller or non-significant compared to the Beta value in regression number one.



Limitations

- We would have a small sample size to measure due to Muhlenberg being a PWI
- Researcher bias, which can lead to cultural misinterpretation
- Self-report bias
- Under reportings or dishonest answers
- There is no evidence to conclude that the mediator would hold outside of a permissive drinking environment
- Different racial identities may have different definitions of emotional suppression

Conclusion

- If our hypothesis is supported, this study suggests that racial minority students will consume alcohol in a permissive drinking environment due to regular emotional suppression. Compared to non minority students, emotional suppression would mediate the relationship between identity and alcohol consumption.
- POC college students should be given more support with discrimination so that there is less need to rely on emotional supression.

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