

Emeryville, CA (June 14, 2016) – Discrimination is positively associated with heavy and hazardous alcohol use and risk of drinking disorders according to a new study from the Alcohol Research Group, a program of the Public Health Institute published online this week in *Social Science & Medicine*.

This systematic review is the first comprehensive assessment of the research on how individuals use alcohol to cope with the stresses of discrimination. Researchers included 97 studies and performed quantitative tests of association.

Results found that the majority of studies assessed racial/ethnic discrimination followed by sexual orientation, and gender discrimination. However, not all population groups were equally represented.

“While our assessment confirmed the widely accepted relationship between drinking and discrimination, most of the racial/ethnic discrimination research we reviewed focused on African American samples,” said principal investigator Paul Gilbert, Ph.D. “More studies are needed to determine how discrimination affects other minority groups and their alcohol use.”

The review also found that researchers combined alcohol and drug use and that the majority of studies did not distinguish between heavy drinkers and people who drank less frequently. Further, discrimination measures varied and methods used were often less robust.

“Since alcohol is the most widely available psychoactive drug, it’s critical that future studies use consistent measures and look at specific groups and types of discrimination instead of reporting general results so we can develop and initiate the best preventative strategies. “

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Gilbert, P. A., Zemore, S.E. (2016). Discrimination and drinking: A systematic review of the evidence. *Social Science & Medicine*.

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If you are interested in arranging an interview, contact Paul Gilbert, Ph.D at (319) 384-1478 or paul-gilbert@uiowa.edu.