Ethnicity and alcohol: a review of the UK literature

Overview

- Review: draws together literature on alcohol and ethnicity
- UK studies from last 15 years
- Alcohol as main focus
- Structure:
  - Drinking rates
  - Cultural and social contexts of drinking
  - Service provision
Drinking rates

- High abstinence, low drinking rates among non-white minority ethnic groups
- Irish people report frequent & heavy alcohol use
- South Asians have lowest rates of alcohol use, but high rates among some drinkers
- Black Caribbean, Black British, Black African people consume less than general population
- People of Mixed ethnicity drink more than non-white minority ethnic groups
- Low rates of consumption among Chinese people
- Less variation in heavy drinking by age among Black Caribbean and Indian and Sikh men

Influences on low rates of drinking

- Maintaining traditional customs and norms
- Family influences:
  - Expectations of abstinence on YP
  - Unmarried working women abstain
- Religion:
  - Identification and importance predict abstinence
  - Muslim identity strongly tied to abstinence
  - Sanctions gendered in Sikh/Hindu religions
- Hidden drinking
Changes in drinking rates

- Increase in drinking for White and South Asian YP, Chinese men
- Acculturation; second-generations more likely to drink than first-generations
- Gender and SES differences:
  - Decrease in drinking among second-generation Sikh men
  - Sikh girls drinking frequently increased in the 1990s
  - Increase in heavy drinking among Indian women
  - Education, income, and divorce, predict women’s drinking
- Social drinking cultures
- Interethnic friendships predict drinking

Health problems and mortality

- Alcohol-related disease:
  - Black people lower risk of liver cirrhosis
  - South Asian / Sikh men, have high prevalence of alcohol-related liver damage and liver cirrhosis
  - Women with liver cirrhosis mainly from white backgrounds
- Irish, Scottish, Indian men and Irish, Scottish women have high rates of alcohol-related mortality
Service need

- Minority ethnic groups underrepresented in seeking help and advice
- Lack of need or barriers to access?
  - ANARP 2004: alcohol dependence similar among white, black and minority ethnic groups
  - Minority ethnic groups most disadvantaged
  - Asylum seekers, refugees also disadvantaged

Barriers to accessing services

- People unsure of where to go for advice
- Low SES and low take-up of services
- Hidden alcohol use:
  - Withdrawal from community
  - Need for confidentiality and discretion
- Help-seeking preferences:
  - Variation in preferences - GP, family support, friends
  - YP prefer mainstream service provision
Mainstream or specialist services

- Culturally specific services:
  - Approachable and accessible
  - Enhanced understanding of cultural issues
  - Targeted interventions
- Mainstream services:
  - Identities not just ethnic and cultural in nature
  - Specific services may exacerbate racial and social tensions
- Responsive to need – mainstream provision with targeted services where required

Cultural competence – drug services

- Framework for assessing cultural competence for drug services - Fountain, 2009
- Individual competence:
  - Improving knowledge of local communities
  - Developing skills
  - Developing communication skills
- Organisational competence:
  - A clear commitment to equality
  - Provision of staff training programmes
  - Engaging and consulting with local communities
  - Leadership and management
Final thoughts

• Evolving population and alcohol use
• New and emerging groups:
  o Little information on Eastern European ethnicities
• Engaging ‘hard-to-reach’ groups:
  o Travellers not considered minority group
• The nature and function of drinking
• Different cultural attitudes to alcohol

THANK YOU