Alcohol And Substance Abuse Among Ethnic Groups

Many have been affected by alcohol abuse or substance abuse, either directly or indirectly. It is a huge problem which affects many people daily. They affect the body, the lives around us, and can be viewed differently as a problem throughout society. I do agree with the author's point of view regarding substance use and abuse varying by different racial/ethnic groups. There has been proof alcohol abuse and substance abuse varies by racial/ethnic groups, particularly Whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics. Regardless of ethnicity or cultural points of view, alcohol and substance abuse related problems will always be a concern.

People quite often use alcohol or substances as an everyday coping mechanism. "Whether it's depression, anger, anxiety, boredom, frustration, etc., very soon drinkers may find that they do not have any ways of coping with emotional problems other than alcohol…. Heavy alcohol use inevitably causes emotional problems of its own, (BrightEye Counselling, 2014)." Alcohol and substances can take a toll on one's emotions, yet some may not notice like others do. Regardless of one's racial/ethnic group, one's body can go through changes as a result of alcohol abuse and substance abuse. Some of these changes may be sleep disturbances, other addictive disorders, anxiety problems, depression, hypertension, mood or personality changes, shortened attention spans, coordination problems, and a sudden result of either a coma or death.

As the author states (2010), "in order for researchers to understand race different in drug use, they must understand the ways in which social systems influence individual, interpersonal, and community level risk and protective mechanisms that are linked to race." Whites tend to consume alcohol or substances at higher levels earlier on in life and demonstrate increased patterns as opposed to African-Americans and Hispanics. I do believe Whites are more prone to being alcoholics or substance abusers. One's racial/ethnic background does play a factor when it comes to punishments. Unfortunately, Whites tend to "get off easier" than those of other races in alcohol and substance abuse cases. This plays into general strain theory and social earning Theory.

General strain theory and the social learning theory examine the different pathways to alcohol/substance abuse by racial/ethnic groups. The general strain theory refers to a discrepancy between "valued goals and the legitimate means to achieves those goals would create strain, and people who would alleviate this strain by adapting in a variety of ways," (Atkins, Smith, & Mosher, 2010). According to general strain theory the use of substances is and to be useful at managing strain, stressors, as it functions to minimize strain-related distress. Minorities are more likely to experience strains, and resort to alcohol/substance abuse to cope with strain as legitimate coping mechanisms are less available as compared to Whites. Negative emotions are more of an indicator of alcohol abuse within the minority groups as these groups have less access to coping resources rather than partaking in substance abuse. This theory closely links with the social learning theory. All races adapt to and are rewarded by good behavior when following their peers. Social learning theory specifically address drug and alcohol related behaviors. This theory is based on an action committed by imitation or reinforcement. Someone can learn this behavior through their family members or peers. This theory applies to children, adults, and the elderly.

There have been studies proven that addiction is a family trait that can be passed down from generation to generation. It is also more prevalent among Whites rather than African-Americans and Hispanics. Children see their parents abusing alcohol or substances; thus, when the child grows up, they are more predisposed to doing it themselves. Research has consistently found that parental influence to be a key reason that black adolescents drink less than Whites, (Atkins, Smith, & Mosher, 2010). Also, peer substance abuse can assist in the prediction of adult alcohol abuse use across racial/ethnic groups. Whites are more strongly peer oriented than those who are less strongly peer oriented, African-Americans. “According to the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 38.2% of White young adults 18 to 25 years of age in the U.S. reported any illicit drug use in the past year, followed by African-American (30.6%) and Hispanic (27.5%) young adults,” (SAMHSA, 2004). It has been statistically shown that Whites are more prevalent to partake in drug usage that African-Americans and Hispanics.