

The Role of Integrative Reviews in Alcohol Policy Development

- The use of scientific research to inform public policy is a relatively recent phenomenon
- In the 1970's social scientists, sometimes under the guidance of WHO or national governments, began to collaborate across national boundaries to study policy effects

Problem-focused integrative research approach

- A programmatic sequence of empirical studies and literature reviews organized around a common theme.
- Lasting between 3 and 10 years, these projects rely heavily on the population-based public health sciences, such as epidemiology and health economics, with the main impetus coming from interdisciplinary, cross-national collaboration among social and behavioral scientists.
- Other characteristics:
 - mixed methods including original data and systematic reviews
 - intellectual independence and managerial autonomy
 - publication of book length manuscripts and related background papers
 - Sponsorship by WHO and other organizations serving the public good

Alcohol Control Policies in Public Health Perspective (Bruun et al., 1975)

- Academics from Finland, Norway, the UK, Canada and the USA
- The average amount of alcohol consumed in a society directly affects the prevalence of problems
- Limits on physical availability and economic affordability of alcohol are among the best ways to reduce drinking and harm

Examples of Subsequent Projects

- 1981 International Study of Alcohol Control Experiences
- 1986 State Monopolies and Alcohol Prevention
- 1987 International Studies in the Development of Alcohol Treatment Systems
- 1994 Alcohol Policy and the Public Good
- 2000 Supply Side Initiative
- 2003 Drinking Patterns and Problems in Developing Societies
- 2003 Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity

Alcohol, No Ordinary Commodity: Research and Public Policy

Sponsored by:

The World Health Organization

and

The Society for the Study of Addiction (UK)

The findings and conclusions represent the consensus views of its 15 authors, none of whom received either direct or indirect support for their participation from the sponsoring organizations or any other organization that might represent a conflict of interest.

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Alcohol, No Ordinary Commodity: Second edition

An update and expansion of ANOC1, based on:

- New developments in epidemiological research, including alcohol's role in the global burden of disease
- Continued growth of the knowledge base on policy-related strategies and interventions
- New understandings of the policymaking process at the local, national and international levels, especially with respect to the role of the alcoholic beverage industry in research and policy

Impact of Purple Book, APPG, and ANOC1

- Translated into many languages
- Frequently cited in public policy documents and debates
- Tend to invite intense criticism from alcoholic beverage industry
- Have influenced national policy initiatives in developing and developed countries
- Serve as guides to subsequent research

CONCLUSIONS

- The difference between good and bad alcohol policy is not an abstraction, but very often a matter of life and death.
- Research has the capacity to indicate which strategies are likely to succeed in their public health intentions, and which are likely to be less effective or even useless, diversionary, and a waste of resources.
- Opportunities for evidence-based alcohol policies that better serve the public good are more available than ever.
- **Problem-focused integrative research has the potential to translate science into effective policy**
- There are still too many instances of policy vacuums filled by unevaluated or ineffective strategies and interventions.
- Because alcohol is no ordinary commodity, the public has a right to expect a more enlightened, evidence-based approach to alcohol policy.