

PSY292  
ADDICTION

# ENVIRONMENTAL BASIS OF ADDICTION

# Addiction as rational choice

- Taken from economic theory – addictive behaviours are consumer behaviour
- We do things because they bring some benefits. We know about the negatives, but benefits out-weight them
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Weighting benefits (pleasure) and costs (e.g. money, legal consequences, health consequences). In stressful times, benefits of drugs are getting higher. Why are some substances much more often used? – their costs are not that high (it is legal, health effects only slowly accumulates over time,...).
- Assumptions are rather vague. Detailed analysis (e.g. using mathematic formulas) usually wrong. E.g. theory predicts older people to be more involved in addictions, but it is the opposite

# *Why do we engage in addictive behaviours?*

- Improve social interaction
- Improved physical & sexual appearance
- Improved cognitive performance
- Improved sexual performance
- Improved self-esteem and feelings of self-worth
- Coping with stress
- Pleasure-seeking
- Sensation & novelty seeking
- Overcoming boredom
- Reduce psychiatric symptoms
- And others...

## *I prefer my life of a drinker*

- To outsiders, it may seem out-of-control, but the person prefers the life that way. Person is happier with the drug than he/she would be without it.
- We imagine alternative life for the addict but the addict imagines different alternative for him/herself
- Language and discourse used by addicts serves some function (addiction vocabulary used for psychologist, family members, but totally different language among other addicts)

# Diffusion and epidemic model of addiction

- Diffusion follows rules of imitation – inferiors imitate the superiors (trickle-down effect). E.g. lower class adopts behaviour of higher class; role-models show trends
- Epidemic follows rules of other (natural) epidemics. Spread of addiction through social proximity - via families, neighbourhoods, friendships, schools, workplaces, prisons
- Urban hierarchy – usually goes from large cities to smaller towns and to countryside via the most frequent used means of transportation

# Societal risk factors

- Families – genetics, parental neglect & abuse, impaired attachment styles, modelling behaviors, parental approval
- Intimate relationships paradox - addictive behaviors often appear in both but being in a relationship is one of the main protective factors
- Gender – addiction associated with a traditional gender role in men but also with non-traditional gender roles in women.
- Environmental factors stronger in women while genetic factor stronger in men. Women have much lower chance of becoming addicted, their addiction tends to develop later but has faster progression and is more frequently associated with affective dysregulation
- Being a parent is a protective factor in women but not in men

# Societal risk factors

- Peer influence is very powerful, especially in adolescence but also later in life
- In adolescent the reason is to gain better position within group hierarchy, to socialize, to be more confident in establishing romantic relationships, to decrease anxiety in general
- In later life stages the peer influence is more associated with mere availability of the substance and attitudes (norms)
- Normative substance use – each group has some unwritten rules what is considered as normal. Addicted people often think that the norm is higher than it actually is - e.g. that others drink as much as themselves
- Normative feedback (peer disapproval) can be used for prevention and interventions

# Societal risk factors

- Ethnicity – addictions and addictive behaviours are much more common in ethnic minorities
- Reasons: cultural background, genetic susceptibility, more frequent poverty, discrimination and stress
- Critical sociology – addictive behaviours are more frequently and more severely sanctioned when it is in minorities, youngsters, poor, lower socio-economical status – those that have less power within the society
- The major society (that in charge) has power to label what is legal and what is illicit, what should be punished, what should be treated and even what research to support
- Availability of the drug is necessary condition for addiction however many negative effects come only because the drug is not available. Difficult question – should be substances that are now considered as illicit available (under certain conditions)?



# Social developmental model

- Originated in criminology
- Explains the origins and development of delinquent behavior during childhood and adolescence
- children adopt the beliefs and behavioral patterns within 4 social units - **family, community** (neighborhood), **school, peer groups**. If the social unit has prosocial attitudes, then the child adopts a prosocial orientation; if the social unit is antisocial, then the child often manifests problem behavior
- Positive socialization is achieved when youths have the opportunity within each unit to be involved in conforming activities, when they develop skills necessary to be successfully involved, and when those with whom they interact consistently reward desired behaviors.
- These conditions should increase attachment to others, commitment to conforming behavior, and belief in the conventional order. These social bonds to conventional society prevent delinquent behavior.

# Social developmental model

- Individual risk and protective factors (e.g. cognitive and emotional regulatory abilities) out-weights the social factors
- Risk factors out-weights the protective factors
- From social factors, peer influence brings the biggest risks, especially in early initiation. The biggest protective factor comes from combination of well/functioning family and good individual predisposition
- Family and community are relatively more important in childhood and early adolescence; school and peers are relatively more important in mid- and late adolescence




## Iceland knows how to stop teen substance abuse but the rest of the world isn't listening

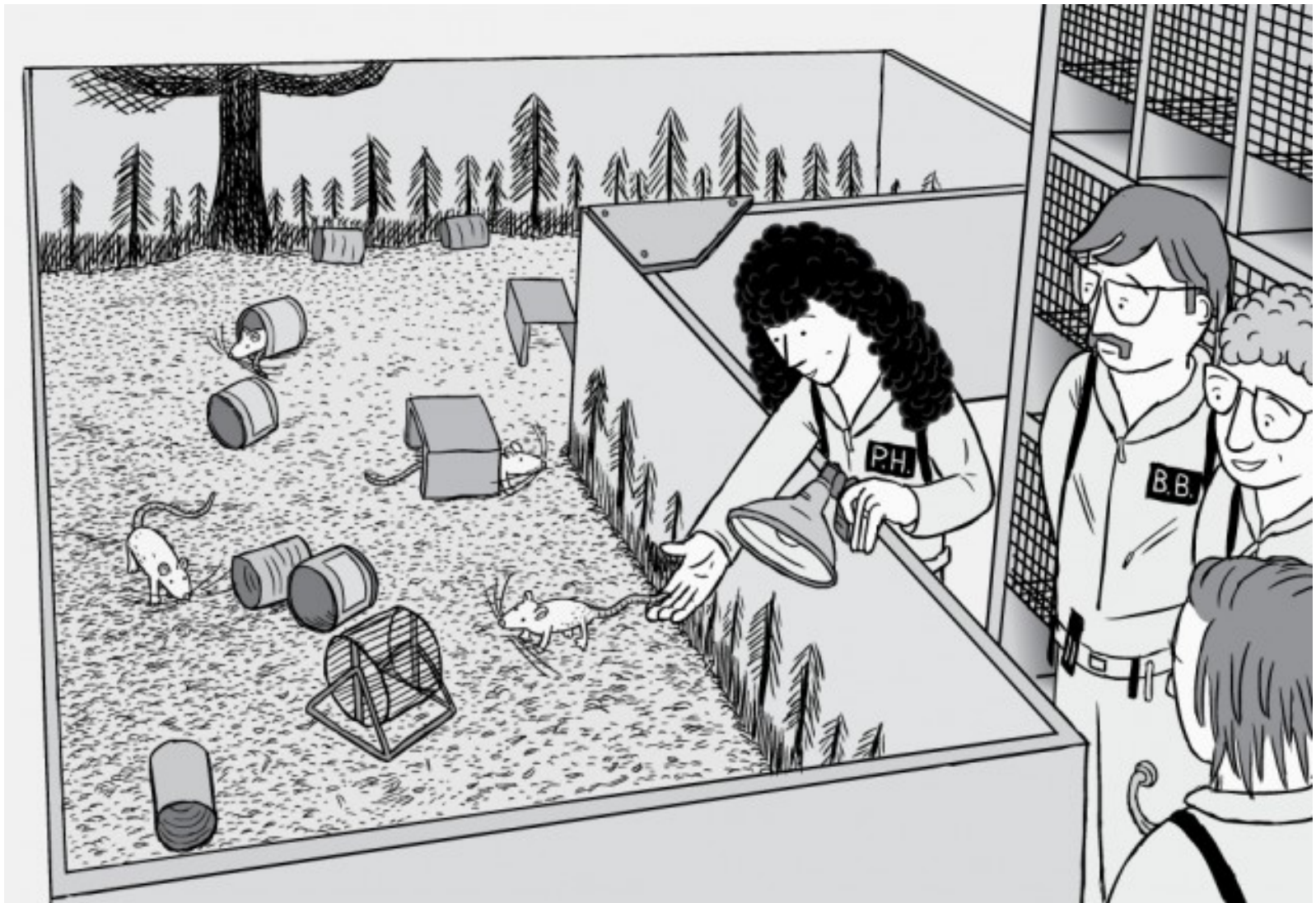
In Iceland, teenage smoking, drinking and drug use have been radically cut in the past 20 years. Emma Young finds out how they did it, and why other countries won't follow suit.

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It's a little before three on a sunny Friday afternoon and Laugardalur Park, near central Reykjavik, looks practically deserted. There's an occasional adult with a pushchair, but the park's surrounded by apartment blocks and houses, and school's out – so where are all the kids?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ao8L-0nSYzg>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/all-about-addiction/201508/addiction-connection-and-the-rat-park-study>