

# ENVIRONMENTAL BASIS OF ADDICTION

ADDICTION

# Addiction as rational choice

- Taken from economy theory – addictive behaviours are consumer behaviour
- Cost-benefit analysis: we do things because they bring some benefits that out-weight negatives
- Weighting benefits (e.g., pleasure, relax, decreased tension, boosting energy) and costs (e.g., money loss, legal consequences, health consequences, deterioration of social ties).
- Example 1: why are some substances more common than others? – their costs are not that high (e.g., they are legal; easily accessible; health effects only slowly accumulates over time).
- Example 2: In stressful and bad times (personal or societal crisis), benefits of drugs are getting higher (e.g., they help to forget, create social ties)
- 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
- Gaining position within social structures
- And others...

# 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 – can be both the risk and protective factor
- Gender – addiction associated with a traditional gender role in men (men consume much more substances and are involved in addictive behaviors – often culturally understood as manly behavior) but also with non-traditional gender roles in women.
- Environmental factors are stronger in women while genetic factors are stronger in men. Women have much lower chance of becoming addicted, their addiction tends to develop later in life (often after 30 while in teenagerhood in men) but has faster progression and is more frequently associated with affective dysregulation – telescoping effect
- Being a parent can be a protective factor (but often it isn't, especially in men) - it is contextual with other factors

# Societal risk factors

- Peer influence is very powerful, especially in adolescence (but also later in life)
- 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 (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
- 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, stress
- Critical sociology – addictive behaviours are more severely sanctioned when it is in minorities, youngsters, poor, lower socio-economical status – those that have less power within the society
- Majority (or the group in charge) has power to label what is legal and what is illicit, what should be punished, what should be treated or even what should be researched
- Availability of the substance is necessary condition for addiction however many negative effects come only because the drug has limited availability. 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 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) outweighs the social factors
- Risk factors outweighs the protective factors
- Peer influence brings the biggest risks, especially in early initiation. The strongest 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

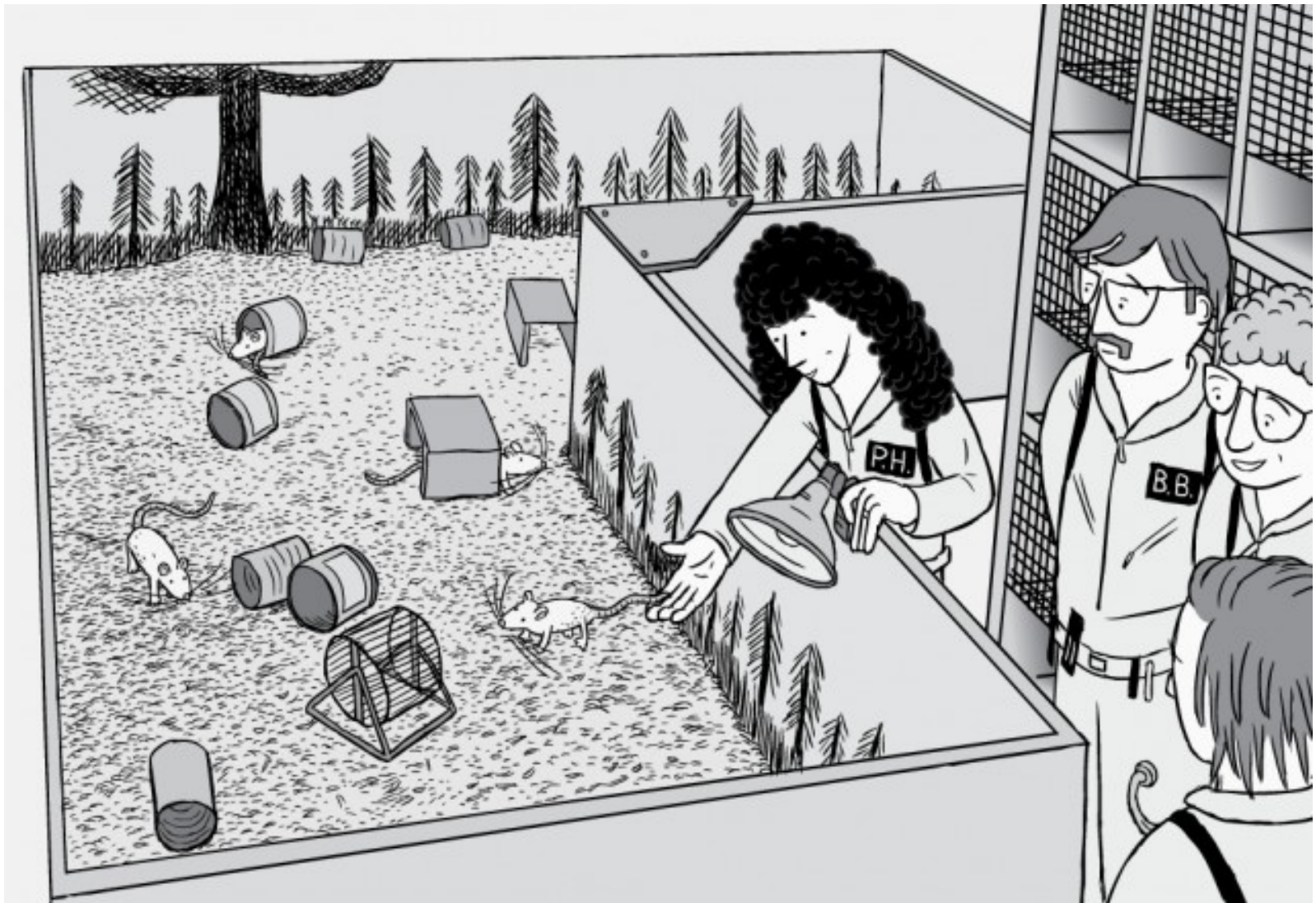
In Iceland, teenage smoking, drinking and drug use have been radically cut in the past 20 years. Emma Young finds out how they did it, and why other countries won't follow suit.

17 January 2017

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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?



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