Individual-Environment Transactions and Subjectivity

An Alternative Approach to Behaviour Change

Dr Kimberley Hill
The University of Northampton
Alcohol Misuse

- Remains a public health concern\textsuperscript{1,2,3}
- Drinking rates have reduced, but increasing patterns of binge drinking\textsuperscript{4,5}
- Related to long-term health damage, morbidity and criminal behaviour\textsuperscript{6,7,8,9}
- UK and Europe\textsuperscript{10}

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Prevention Approaches

• Social cognition – rational choice, predictors of behaviour (changing intentions/attitudes)\textsuperscript{11, 12, 13, 14, 15}

• Dual process – irrational/unplanned behaviour\textsuperscript{16, 17}

• Behavioural economics – ‘nudging’\textsuperscript{18}

• Drinking Environments\textsuperscript{19, 20}

• Limited success\textsuperscript{21, 22, 23}
Affordances

• Equal weighting

• Affordance – the *fit* of an individual to their environment\(^{24, 25, 26}\)

• History/ experiences (normative uses)

• Understand and predict complex adult behaviours\(^{27, 28, 29}\)

• What aspects increase or restrict individual drinking opportunities?\(^{30}\)
Subjectivity as a Tool

• Behaviour emerges from individual-environment transactions
• Re-tooling: relational \(^{26, 31}\)
• Subjectivity created, maintained and accessible at this relation
• Flow of uniquely specifying info: a window onto affordances?
Subjectivity as a window onto alcohol-related affordances:

Three studies assessed how drinking behaviour is constrained or extended by an individual’s relationship with their drinking environment.
Identifying Alcohol-Related Affordances

• 7 UK premises, rich ethnographic reports (21+ hours), visual maps

• Normative and functional qualities for alcohol-related behaviours

• Included: furniture, container availability, social and alternative action opportunities (food/entertainment)
Individual Subjectivities

• 12 pts (18-30 yrs) navigated 50 unfamiliar premise scenes
• Described opportunities for action
• Confirmed findings
• Embodied practices: imitate peers, rounds. Non-alcoholic containers, took up POS, soft drinks as mixers, alcohol-related décor…
Group Subjectivities

- 40 pts ranked 60 statements, 4 factors:

1. **Conscious and compliant** if promote, take action if limit (pub-hop/pre-load)
2. **Aware** of influences but **autonomous**, against social influences (goals)
3. **Unaware**, seek action opportunities **unanimous** with group, find canonical
4. **Concerned** about **context**-appropriate behaviour (canonical only: tables)
Conclusions

- Socioecological: Behaviour largely automatic, action-oriented
- Affordances: Robust theoretical perspective on behavioural determinants (functional *fit*)
- Captures interrelatedness, equal explanatory power
- Subjectivity as a tool to access these relations: re-tooling?
Implications

• Alternative starting point, implications for prevention
• Arranging the environment to offer the ‘right’ affordances/ limiting certain action opportunities
• Recommendations could contribute to policy initiatives
• Further work: test a range of behaviours


7. The Academy of Medical Sciences. (2004). *Calling time: The nation’s drinking as a major health issue. London*


Dr Kimberley Hill


Prof David Foxcroft
Dr Michael Pilling

Contact: kimberley.hill@northampton.ac.uk
Twitter: @KimberleyM_Hill