

Steven DOWNEY [1], Claire RUSSELL [2] & Rob DOUGLASS [1]

[1] Drugs and Homeless Initiative, UK

[2] Mental Health Research and Development Unit, University of Bath, UK [Corresponding Author: pspclr@bath.ac.uk]

INTRODUCTION

The British Home Office consider the engagement of drug users into treatment to be an effective way to combat drug-related offending (2005). Whilst interventions have demonstrated some efficacy, recidivism and relapse remain salient issues (Home Office, 2003). It is suggested that causal links, which position substance addiction as *the* motivator to offend simplifies the complex patterns of addiction to risk that expose a person to multiple harmful situations. Russell (2002) found that even when substance use reduced, people disclosed continued offending and unsafe sex as a means to gratify addiction to risk. This underscores the need to unravel the complexities of addiction to risk through theory-building to enable the development of effective harm reduction interventions.

AIM

The aim of this research was to explore substance user's perspectives about risk behaviours and orientation to time, in addition to transferring knowledge into practice by beginning to plan the development of an intervention for offenders.

METHOD

Procedure

- Participants were administered the Perception of Risk Activities Questionnaire (Russell & Downey, 2005), the Stanford Time Perspective Inventory/Short Form (Zimbardo, 2003) and the Christo Inventory for Substance Misuse Services measure (CISS).
- Descriptive statistics and t-tests were employed.

Sample

- Twenty participants aged 21- 55 years were recruited from a treatment agency in a rural area in the South West of England. The sample comprised seven females and thirteen males.
- All participants were engaged in treatment to address problematic substance use. 90% disclosed a history of offending. CISS scores ranged from moderately to severely problematic experiences in domains such as substance use, housing, social networks, occupation and psychological health.

FINDINGS

Engagement in Risk Activities

Percentage (%)	Yes	No
Substance Use	100	0
Offending	90	10
Sex Risks	67	33
Eating Risks	65	35
Exercise Risks	41	59
Outdoor Activities	33	67

- The majority of participants have engaged in risk activities across several domains in their lives. This suggests that problematic substance use and offending co-occur with other risks.
- However, most people had not engaged in 'healthier' risk activities such as mountain biking, rock-climbing or running. Indeed, the finding was statistically significantly different between participants who engaged in less healthy risks ($t=14.2, p=0.000$) and those who had engaged in healthier risks ($t=16.2, p=0.000$) at some time in their lives.

Perception of Risk

Percentage (%)	No Risk	Moderate Risk	Extreme Risk
Substance Use	20	28	52
Offending	12	37	51
Sex Risks	15	36	49
Exercise Risks	33	40	27
Eating Risks	28	48	24
Outdoor Activities	41	46	13

- Despite engaging in activities, the majority of participants perceived substance use, offending and sex risks to represent 'extreme risk'.
- The descriptive analyses showed that those who engaged in an activity were more likely to perceive the activity to be moderately or extremely risky.
- Overall, there was a statistically significant difference in people's perception of outdoor activities ($t=10.5, p=0.000$) which were seen as constituting less risk than all other activities ($t=36.2, p=0.000$).

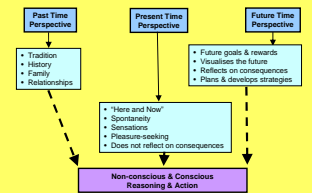
Perception of Impact

Percentage (%)	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact
Offending	15	12	73
Substance Use	12	21	67
Sex Risks	11	41	48
Exercise Risks	9	51	40
Eating Risks	8	45	47
Outdoor Activities	37	49	14

- Despite engaging in most activities, the majority of participants perceived substance use, offending and sex risks to have had a negative impact on their lives.
- The descriptive analyses showed that those who engaged in an activity were more likely to perceive the impact as being negative or neutral (but generally, not positive).
- Overall, there was a statistically significant difference in people's perception of outdoor activities ($t=3.6, p=0.000$) which were considered to have the potential for a more positive impact on people's lives in contrast to all other activities ($t=12.5, p=0.000$).

Time Perspective (TP)

Time Perspective is the "subjective conception of focusing on temporal time frames when making decisions and taking action" (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).



Time Orientation	Percentage
Present TP	75
Future TP	25

- The majority of participants disclosed a present time perspective.
- Even when a future TP existed, there was a tendency for people to provide neutral ratings for emotionally based future TP statements.

APPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

A Basis for Theory Building

The authors tentatively hypothesise that addiction may be motivated by time perspective which drives people to engage in risk to fulfil either a 'here-and-now' hedonistic need or a fatalistic pattern of behaviour. The assumption that decision-making and actions occur consciously and unconsciously according to temporal time frames may have explanatory power as to why harmful risks were undertaken across life domains by these participants, generally, at the expense of healthier outdoor risks.

Cycle of Change

Steven Downey spent five years developing an intervention for people whose motivation to engage in substance use is related to addiction to risk. Cycle of Change is an intervention that uses mountain biking to engage people in a healthy and positive sport. Through group work, mountain biking serves as a forum to explore people's reasons for using and taking harmful risks, to calculate risk, to learn new strategies, to set goals and to plan time (and shift towards a future time perspective). Whilst Cycle of Change is focused on healthy risk taking, it is anticipated that the intervention will also provide individuals with an immediate and long-term sense of self-worth, achievement, practical skills, social competence and socially inclusive opportunities.



FUTURE WORK

Whilst the findings are informative that time perspective and *multiple* risk taking should be considered when exploring addiction amongst offenders, this work is still in its infancy. This calls for appropriately funded interventions that are robust and can withstand the evaluation of their effectiveness. In order to rise to this challenge, the authors argue for continued theory development and the design of interventions that use a sound theoretical basis to meet needs and provide socially inclusive opportunities for previously disenfranchised people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For their support, we thank the participants, the DHI Running Club members, Aaron Brennan, Eleanor Platt, Nigel Hills (Drug Intervention Programme), staff and the Board of Directors at DHI, Rosie Phillips (DHI Executive Director), Phillip Zimbardo, Mark Thorpe (graphic design), Cleo Proterogerou, Lorna Templeton & Dele Arayoye (friendship).