

# MIND ENHANCING BEHAVIORS TODAY

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# MY ANALOGY STRATEGY

- To suggest how society might treat new mental enhancements (NME), survey how we now treat enhancements, especially mental.
- Lessons on NME from each area considered:
  - Gruntwork - we sometimes choose pragmatically
  - Sport - some may seem unfair in some contexts
  - Medicine - big wins key, may do to show care
  - Nutrition - maybe slaved to local fashions
  - School - use of may signal smart, ambitious, rich
  - Story - we may be more like story characters
  - Could also do: **Art, Leader, Politics, Party, Sex**

# TWO DISCLAIMERS

1. I'll speak of “mental” not “cognitive”
2. To “enhance” is to improve from any level
3. *Signaling* can explain lots of seemingly non-functional human behavior
  - E.g., music, art, stories, religion, talk, sport, ...
  - “Ablers” folks can more easily perform well.
  - People/cultures who preferred folks who perform well were tied more to abler folks, and so competed better with others.
  - This is distal explanation of the functions shaping behavior; I'm not saying we consciously plan this.

# GRUNT WORK

- ◉ *Is*: garbage, plumbing, copyeditor, basic administration, code testing, ...
- ◉ Usually improved by better mental abilities
  - Even if less able folks usually do the tasks
- ◉ Little reluctance to use enhancements if simple cost less than simple benefit
  - Physical: glove, backhoe, flashlight, helmet, ...
  - Mental: calculator, spellchecker, caffeine, ...
- ◉ Sometimes outsiders ban aids that both worker and boss want; e.g., if risk safety.
- ◉ NME Lesson: here very pragmatic on aids

# SPORT

- *Is*: soccer, tennis, races, dance, marksmen, ...
  - Common feature seems relative scoring, body
- Physical gains: strength, stamina, coordination
- Mental gains: teamwork, discipline, speed, focus
- Trains features, but is main function to signal?
  - We brag of to friends, mates, schools, jobs
- We are picky on sport rules, allowed aids, pills
  - Usually would hide disapproved aids if allowed
  - Perhaps prefer to correlate winners, gene fitness?
- NME lesson: some enhancements may seem unfair for some “games.”

# MEDICINE

- *Is*: pills, creams, cuts, words, genes, ...
  - Doc-directed seems core - we regulate to ensure
- Mostly less “sick,” some “enhance”
- Psychiatry is mostly mental
  - In some subcultures do it when “well”; to enhance?
- Mostly local trial and error, not “science”
  - Most treatments have no good studies
  - Lots of study biases: publication selection, best patients, leaky placebos, ...
- Seek a main effect, watch for side effects
  - Thousands of possible side effects, only see strongest
  - How know main effect benefit beats side effect costs?

# MEDICINE II

- But average \$-marginal health benefit  $\approx 0$  !
  - See regional variation, RAND experiment data
  - Therapy helps, but not time, type, degree, years
    - Anti-depressants seem leaky placebos
- Is medicine's main function to let us show we care about associates?
  - Elective psychiatry show wealth, smarts?
- NME Lessons:
  - *Prefer*: clear big wins on prototypical cases
  - *Avoid*: weak main effects on marginal cases
  - People may give others NME to show they care

# NUTRITION AND HYGIENE

- ◉ *Is*: food, drink, water, air, washing, sleep, ...
  - We mostly have full discretion to choose, mix, etc.
- ◉ Mental gains claimed for foods, cleanliness
  - Caffeine, Nicotine, Alcohol long used
- ◉ Clear data on some extreme bads to avoid:
  - Lead, glass chips, smoke, tapeworms, ...
- ◉ For most, data unclear yet opinions strong
  - Almost no randomized trials
  - E.g., home cleaning, cholesterol, fat, alcohol, ...
- ◉ *Is* main function bonding via shared practices?
  - Practices vary greatly by locale, time
  - Friends and family eager to advise, offended if ignored
- ◉ NME lesson:
  - Maybe also mainly used to bond friends, family, etc.

# SCHOOL

- *Is*: lectures, texts, labs, exams, degrees ...
- Main gains claimed are mental
- Most learning (past age ~12) never used
  - Yet many quite useful things rarely taught
  - College kids prefer research teachers who ignore
- Is main function to *signal* mental features?
  - Broadly smart and not lazy? Also rich, healthy
  - Also function to bond with students, teachers
- Mental features can be highly dimensional
  - Improving some can reduces others
- NME Lessons, even if enhances little:
  - Might use to show smart, not lazy, rich, healthy
  - “Unfair” if enhance just helps in school, not outside?

# STORY

- ◉ *Is*: novel, movie, TV, sermon, video game, ballad, far news, far politics, ...
  - We consume, rate, review, create
- ◉ Little info directly relevant to our lives
- ◉ Mental gains often claimed
  - Perhaps mainly functions instead to signal?
- ◉ Relevant mental features
  - Abilities to comprehend and analyze
  - Personality: free or lazy, open or tight, ...
  - The kinds of folks/choices one admires/dislikes
  - Devotion to cultures/situations where focus
- ◉ NME lesson: might we “enhance” our personality to be more like story characters?

# SUMMARY

- ◉ Strategy: to suggest how new mental enhancements techs might be used, see how related enhancements are treated today
  - *Signaling* can explain seemingly non-functional human behavior
- ◉ **Gruntwork** - here we choose pragmatically
- ◉ **Sport** - seem unfair lower chance “best” win
- ◉ **Medicine** - small wins illusory; give to show care
- ◉ **Nutrition** - may be slaved to bonding, fashion
- ◉ **School** - use of may signal smart, rich, trying
- ◉ **Story** - we may become like story characters
- ◉ Could also do: **Art, Leader, Politics, Party, Sex**