**Injunctive Norms** are perceptions of what behaviours are approved or disapproved by others.

Research has focused on how social norms might affect alcohol consumption amongst students. It is suggested that students overestimate both the descriptive and injunctive norms within their peer group.

Many students overestimate both drinking behaviours (descriptive norms) and approval of drinking (injunctive norms) of their peers (Bosae, 2001).

Therefore, an individual acts in the way they think the group are acting. They see no need to reduce their consumption as they think that everyone else is doing it more than them.

Addicts believe they see peers doing it and they approve of it, they may think it is ok, therefore develop an addiction.

Furthermore, while this research shows that peers and perceived social norms may influence an individual to drink, it does not illustrate whether social influences are enough to lead to an addiction. There is a difference between engaging in a behaviour and having that behaviour become an addiction with long-term negative consequences.

Other factors may be more important in influencing whether the drinking becomes an addiction. (e.g. ADH, DRD2)

**Methodological Issues**

Difficult to conduct experimental studies on humans in this area. You cannot manipulate who an individual is friends with (and peers change over time).

Control of extraneous variable, therefore more reliable results.

Therefore, the majority of studies in this area involve self-report methods and correlational research, both of which have issues associated with.

Self-report methods there is an issue of social desirability bias – show false information to look good/what is socially acceptable.

Correlational Studies: Extraneous variables may affect the relationship between the two variables. (relationship shown may not be entirely accurate) – can’t show causation.

**The Role of the Other Psychological Factors**

It is too simplistic to say that peer influences are the only social factors that influence the development of addictive behaviours. We need to consider larger social contexts like family, neighbourhood and the media.

In addition, the exact mechanisms involved are unclear. SLT and perceived social norms are just two social psychological explanations. And there may be other processed involved in addiction such as conformity and social identity. It is very difficult for researchers to try and disentangle these different mechanisms.