



## Research Paper

## Exploring what shapes injection and non-injection among a sample of marginalized people who use drugs

Andrew Ivsins<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Samona Marsh<sup>c</sup><sup>a</sup> Department of Sociology, University of Victoria, 3800 Finnerty Road, Victoria, BC, V8P 5C2, Canada<sup>b</sup> Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria, Technology Enterprise Facility Room 273, 2300 McKenzie Ave, Victoria, BC, V8P 5C2, Canada<sup>c</sup> Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, 380 E Hastings St, Vancouver, BC, V6A 1P4, Canada

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Actor-network theory  
 Injection drug use  
 Non-injection drug use  
 Qualitative  
 Harm reduction  
 Context  
 Event

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Few studies have specifically explored what influences people who use drugs to consume them in certain ways (i.e., smoking, injecting). While a great deal of research has examined the transition from non-injection to injection routes of drug administration, less is known about people who use drugs (PWUD) but have never injected or have stopped injecting. This paper draws on actor-network theory to explore what moves people to inject or not, among both people who currently smoke/sniff drugs (PWSD) and people who currently inject drugs (PWID), to better understand factors that shape/influence methods of drug consumption.

**Methods:** Two-stage interviews (a quantitative survey followed by a qualitative interview) were conducted with 26 PWSD and 24 PWID. Interviews covered a range of topics related to drug use, including reasons for injecting drugs, never injecting, and stopping injecting. Data were analysed by drawing on actor-network theory to identify forces involved in shaping drug consumption practices.

**Results:** We present three transformative drug use events to illustrate how specific methods of drug consumption are shaped by an assemblage of objects, actors, affects, spaces and processes. Rather than emphasising the role of broad socio-structural factors (i.e., poverty, drug policy) participant narratives reveal how a variety of actors, both human and non-human, assembled in unique ways produce drug consumption events that have the capacity to influence or transform drug consumption practices.

**Conclusion:** Actor-network theory and event analysis provide a more nuanced understanding of drug consumption practices by drawing together complex material, spatial, social and temporal aspects of drug use, which helps identify the variety of forces involved in contexts that are thought to shape substance use. By attending to events of drug consumption we can better understand how contexts shape drug use and related harms. With greater insight into the transformative capacity of drug use events, strategies may be better tailored to prevent drug use-related harms.

## Introduction

Few studies have specifically explored what influences people who use drugs to consume their drugs in certain ways, whether by smoking, injecting, sniffing, or other means. While abundant research demonstrates socio-structural and contextual influences of harm, and the production of harm, associated with various drug use methods and practices (e.g., injection drug use, needle and pipe sharing, rushed injections) (Burris et al., 2004; Rhodes, Singer, Bourgois, Friedman, & Strathdee, 2005; Small, Kerr, Charette, Schechter, & Spittal, 2006), little research has examined how drug use contexts shape specific methods (i.e., smoking, injecting) of drug consumption. A handful of

studies have directly explored the issue of personal motivations for choice of drug use method. These studies have elucidated a variety of reasons for deciding to inject drugs, including curiosity, belief that injection drug use (IDU) is more efficient and economical, search of a better/stronger effect, influence of the social environment, and ritual (Bravo et al., 2003; Giddings, Christo, & Davy, 2003; Kelley & Chitwood, 2004; Witteveen, Van Ameijden, & Schippers, 2006). Similarly, reasons found for choosing to not inject drugs include: concerns with assumed negative consequences of injection (e.g., overdose, physical health issues, dependence, loss of control), fear of needles, preference for smoking, influence of the social environment, past negative experiences with IDU, and stigmatized IDU identity (Bravo et al., 2003;

\* Corresponding author at: Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria, Technology Enterprise Facility Room 273, 2300 McKenzie Ave, Victoria, BC, V8P 5C2, Canada.

E-mail address: [aivsins@uvic.ca](mailto:aivsins@uvic.ca) (A. Ivsins).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.04.006>

Received 31 July 2017; Received in revised form 12 March 2018; Accepted 3 April 2018

0955-3959/ © 2018 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Des Jarlais et al., 2007; Kelley & Chitwood, 2004; Smith, Best, & Day, 2009; Witteveen et al., 2006). While useful in highlighting particular and discrete factors that might move people to choose specific methods of drug consumption, what is largely missing from these accounts is an understanding of how contextual dimensions of drug use influence or shape the decision to consume drugs in certain ways.

A robust body of literature now exists that expounds the relationship between socio-cultural/political/economic contexts and substance use and related harms. The risk environment framework (Rhodes, 2009), for instance, has been applied to show how specific “environments” (social, physical, economic and policy) shape and produce drug use-related risks and harms. For example, physical settings have been found to influence risky drinking practices among university students (Wilkinson & Ivsins, 2017) and risky drug consumption activities among PWID (e.g., rushed injections) (Cooper, Moore, Gruskin, & Krieger, 2005), while the policy environment has been implicated in shaping how crack is consumed (Ivsins, Roth, Benoit, & Fischer, 2013) and impeding harm reduction strategies among marginalized PWID (Small et al., 2006). As Duff (2011) notes, an important feature of work on social contexts “is the contention that social contexts exert a *structural force* that exceeds individual settings or locales” (p. 404, emphasis in original) such that contexts/settings are presented as determinants of behaviour. However, while contexts are frequently implicated in framing and shaping behaviours, the specific mechanisms at play are rarely unpacked. It is not always clear beyond simple identification, how and why specific mechanisms shape and influence drug consumption behaviours. Looking at the diversity of reasons given for choosing a specific method of consuming drugs (above), it is evident that drug consumption practices are shaped by a vast array of actors, material objects, physical and emotional concerns, and social encounters that require more than a broad framing of context or environment to adequately understand.

Following in the footsteps of Duff (2011, 2012, 2013) and other scholars (e.g., Dilkes-Frayne, 2014; Race, 2015; Vitellone, 2015), we turn to Latour (2005) and actor-network theory (ANT) to help uncover and identify forces that mediate drug consumption practices. We use ANT to understand how both human and non-human forces may transform the experience of drug consumption. This is accomplished by exploring the many actors, objects, spaces, ideas, processes, and so on, that form what Latour (2005) calls actor-networks. Also useful here is the notion of “assemblage” as used by Fraser, Moore, and Keane (2014), whereby the assemblage is understood as “an ad hoc cluster of knowledges, technologies, bodies and practices that contingently gather to form a temporary phenomenon, be it abstract or material” (p. 19). It is through these assemblages, within these actor-networks, that particular actions or phenomena are enabled (Duff, 2013). And by tracing/following the trail of relations, associations, and actions that form actor-networks we may better understand the intimate workings of the phenomena studied.

Unique to ANT is the idea that all things that make a difference to a situation, whether human or non-human, are ascribed agency and considered “actors” in the situation. This idea has also been put forth by Clarke (2003) in her conceptualization of situational analysis, stressing the need to include in analyses all consequential things in a situation, including histories, practices, symbols, material things, and so forth, “and provoke analyses of relations among them” (p. 554). As Sayes (2014) suggests, of prime importance is not whether actions follow from human or non-human entities, but to trace the actions of actors, regardless of what the actors look like. ANT provides the means of tracing connections between the various actors (people, objects, ideas) in a situation, and to articulate more precisely how the various forces assembled work to shape drug consumption.

In this paper we use principles of ANT to explore what influences PWUD to inject criminalized substances, or consume them by other means. We present three transformative drug use “events”, and analyse the various associations involved, an assemblage of actors, material

objects, place/space and affect, to better understand how contexts shape the decision to inject drugs or not. By focusing on the event we “disrupt and reorganise” conventional understandings of drug consumption which often rely on “a distinction between drugs, bodies and environments”, and take into full account the varied relations of human and non-human forces assembled in unique consumption networks (Dennis, 2017, p. 340). The focus here is on localised drug use experiences of PWUD, which draw together complex material, spatial, social and temporal aspects of drug use often overlooked by both epidemiological studies, and those whose primary focus is on broader structural determinants of substance use. In using the “event” as our primary unit of analysis we are able, as Dilkes-Frayne (2014) notes, to explore the “*process of context*” and the “*shifting network of human and nonhuman actors*” assembled in social phenomena (p. 452, emphasis added). This approach uncovers the various mediating relations among and between the various actants involved in particular situations. This paper adds to this growing body of research by highlighting the social, material and affective forces that shape drug consumption practices of PWUD.

## Methods

Data were collected as part of the first author’s PhD dissertation project comparing PWID with PWSD in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES). Fifty two-stage, face-to-face interviews were conducted at the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) building. VANDU is an organization made up of current and former PWUD who engage in advocacy and activism to promote social justice issues, with a specific mandate to improve the lives of PWUD. VANDU operates within a storefront building in the DTES which serves as a drop-in centre, harm reduction supply distribution outlet, and general safe space for PWUD. Since December 2016 VANDU has also operated one of several overdose prevention sites that have been set up to respond to the current overdose crisis in British Columbia.

Ethics approval was obtained by the Human Research Ethics Board at the primary author’s university. Permission to involve VANDU and its members in this study, and conduct interviews at their location, was granted by the VANDU Board of Directors after meeting with them and explaining the study. It was agreed with the Board that interested VANDU Board members would be hired to conduct participant recruitment, schedule all interview appointments, and maintain interview schedules (i.e., ensure participants arrived on time, recruit additional participants when appointments were missed). Payment of the VANDU members was discussed with the Board, and in line with previous similar studies conducted at VANDU these members were paid \$10 CAD per hour, and generally worked 2–3 h per interview shift (generally involving 2–3 interviews). While two other community partners were considered to use as additional interview locations, neither was able to consistently provide safe and private space in which to conduct interviews.

Study participants were recruited by the VANDU members inside the building, on the street, or in other locations frequented by PWUD (e.g., drop-in centres, shelters). The VANDU members in charge of recruitment were provided with a set of eligibility requirements to pre-screen and recruit potential participants. Participants were required to be: 1) 19 years or older and; 2) currently using drugs for non-medical purposes. Additionally, based on extant research on non-injection drug use (NIDU) and injection relapse, which commonly uses 6 or 12 month time periods for measurement (Des Jarlais et al., 2014; Galai, Safaeian, Vlahov, Bolotin, & Celentano, 2003; Gossop, Griffiths, & Strang, 1988; Mehta et al., 2012; Neaigus et al., 2001) current IDU was defined as having injected drugs for non-medical purposes at least once per month in the previous 12 months, and current NIDU defined as never having injected, or not having injected a drug for non-medical purposes in the previous 12 months. The recruiters were instructed to tell potential participants that the study was about drug use, and a comparison of

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7511517>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7511517>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)