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Modulation of Drug Use in Southern Farming Communities: Social Origins of Poly-use

Keith V. Bletzer

Popular images of users who are overly fond of a "drug of choice" are belied by the experience of those who seek or become aware of varied effects from multiple forms of use. Based on fieldwork and ethnographic interviews, this article discusses poly-use by men and women who sequentially use new lifetime drugs; temporarily replace drugs over seasonal agricultural cycles that inhibit a schedule of regular use; pace use by days of the week; and/or mix drugs prior to and/or during a drug session. User narratives from farming communities of the southern United States highlight a poly-use discourse that accentuates knowledge of bodily effects that move beyond that of a mono-drug high. This individualization of self-experience is compelled by seasonal cycles of irregular and uncertain employment, residential dislocation, and strenuous physical labor, which often result in voluntary discontinuation, adjusted practices, and new routes of administration. For some, periodic incarceration results in forced cessation. This range of variability in patterns of using drugs and consuming alcohol reflects constrained and contained responses to demands on physical capacity. These responses reflect creative poly-use that iteratively builds toward a lifetime repertoire that buffers the hardships of demanding labor routines.

Key words: drug and alcohol use, social origins of poly-use, agricultural labor, southern United States

Introduction

I start with Valium…then I drink some alcohol, followed by a little acid, and I wait an hour before smoking a joint…. That's the best combination.

E. G.

Keith V. Bletzer is adjunct faculty in the School for Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. He has conducted field research with migrants and seasonal workers who perform agricultural labor, and worked with immigrant communities for more than two decades. Substantive interests include medical anthropology, community health, and social adversity (drug/alcohol use; sexual violence; HIV/AIDS). Current Email: keith.bletzer@asu.edu. *Funding is acknowledged from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research ("Inscription in Drug Use among Farmworkers," Keith V. Bletzer, Principal Investigator); National Institute on Drug Abuse ("Drugs/AIDS Intervention among Migrant Workers," DA 07694, Norman Weatherby, Principal Investigator); Faculty Grant-in-Aid from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; and National Research Service Award through the Department of Anthropology, Arizona State University. I thank Clyde B. McCoy for the supportive environment he created as Director of the Comprehensive Drug Research Center, University of Miami School of Medicine, at the time of my field research. As always, I owe a debt of gratitude to many men and women who shared their time, stories and experiences in farm labor.*

The popular image of the addict, as overly fond of a single *drug of choice*, is challenged by the experience of those who use multiple drugs. Over time, these poly-users construct a repertoire of use by learning which drugs and/or administration routes best serve them. What they learn from the choices they make in relation both to their personal use and their interactions with a range of individuals is the focus of this article. How users view reasons for poly-use centers on what they expect from what they use (Boys et al. 1999a) and what works to fulfill that expectation on given occasions (Boys et al. 1999b; Lende et al. 2007). This view differs from much of the available urban-generated drug research, where control by habitués is considered lacking (e.g., Rosenbaum 1981; Washton and Gold 1987), and the use of heroin and cocaine, as hard drug prototypes, is viewed as recreational (e.g., Pearson 1987) or an imbued lifestyle (e.g., Stephens 1991). Within this theoretical framework, use of drugs and alcohol in adolescence is viewed as a deterrent to school performance (e.g., Bachman et al. 2003), obstacle to stable employment (Booth and Feng 2002) at a good job (e.g., Kandel, Chen, and Gill 1995; Ringel, Ellickson, and Collins 2007), and consequence and predictor of employment difficulty (e.g., Gailaif, Newcomb, and Carmona 2001; Slaymaker and Owen 2006).

Taking a strong view of drugs/alcohol as irascibly holding users to escalating and continuing trajectories of consumption, this body of literature is focused on drug use

fixed in urban space. It is assumed the only path out from this use is intervention. What is most criticized about this position is supposition of non-existent agency or lack of control by individual users. After the ground-breaking study of controlled use by Zinberg (1984) that found restraint (binge avoidance) and moderation in drug use across various using populations, and later research of less known groups such as middle-class women who carefully control personal cocaine use (Sterk-Elifson 1996) or heroin users whose shifting roles inhibit maturing out (Boeri 2004), the emerging views of drug use emphasize flexibility and variation as commonplace occurrences. Correctives to the strong view of inevitable consequences have proposed that most drug use is intermittent and rarely reaches a compulsory level. A user may utilize paths that take her to *scenes* where co-occurring social roles differ within user networks, which in turn shift, dependent on who is using what (Moore 2004), who belongs to a particular *network* over a period of time (Valdez, Neaigus, and Kaplan 2008), and to what extent users wish to function normatively or to reach superlative levels in regular society (Lende et al. 2007). Questions remain on how variation in use originates and, ultimately, how the consequences affect users.

Moving beyond the emphasis on urban habitués and urban drug marts with an assumption of deleterious consequences to those who embrace a user lifestyle, I wish to consider poly-use for a population where jobs and residence fluctuate greatly over time. Workers in agriculture experience irregular, marginal employment, structured by seasonal demands for intensive harvest work and/or start-up to prepare the ground and to plant seedlings. Farm labor entails long hours; it is physically demanding and compels a flexible lifestyle to *follow-the-crops* to locales where one can secure short-term employment in fields, vineyards, orchards, groves, farmer markets, and packing houses. Demands on bodies outweigh demands on time, which attracts young, able-bodied workers to agriculture that results in fewer women than men, especially for recent immigrants (Kandel 2004).

Situations where a user's lived experience is embedded in social adversity, spatial dislocation and irregular employment, and the ambiguity and uncertainty of far-from-ideal work conditions (Frone 2008; Grzywacz, Quandt, and Arcury 2008), both influence and exacerbate multiple drug use. Such conditions encourage poly-use over a lifetime (farmworkers may initiate new drugs as adults), across life stages (as they age, farmworkers may transition to decreasing or increasing drug use), and for episodic use (farmworkers may shift drug choices and frequency of use when they experience irregular work). Use by farmworkers is far from recreational, since *non-work* represents a period of uncertainty that extends beyond off-work to between-job lay-offs, temporary shutdowns (weather-based, site-centered, grower-induced), or short-term disability. Also, exposure to drugs in variable settings is not limited to a single style of practice, which can easily encourage new modes of administration.

Research on drugs/alcohol and livelihood has opposing views of what brings use. Scholars may examine factors in the work environment that generate stressors on worker morale and how this perpetuates alcohol/drug use, which in turn places a worker at risk to injury or illness within settings of organizational injustices (Marín et al. 2009) and reduces overall productivity as well as job satisfaction (Butler 1993; Ghodse 2005). This research on work setting examines patterns of use and is aimed at developing interventions for use cessation. The environments of main interest are those outside normative expectations, such as night shifts, travel-centered work, settings with poor communication, and remote sites (e.g., Ames et al. 2007; Moore et al. 2008). Or research may focus on historic labor systems to explore how alcohol (given limited drug availability) was used to induce recalcitrant men to perform difficult work, to serve as partial/full exchange for labor in lieu of wages, and to enhance job performance (Bradburd and Jankowiak 2003a, 2003b). Research on historic contexts explores macro-forces leading to the introduction of alcohol, as it seeks to explain impact on individuals and communities when native labor is coerced through colonial systems, such as those founded in Africa (London 1999), Australia (Brady and Long 2003), and the Caribbean (Angrosino 2003).

By considering farmworkers as my population of concern, I wish to amplify the study of alcohol/drugs and labor organization, especially the interplay of social forces that inform workers about constructing an iterative repertoire of use through alternative choices and adjustments. By presenting material on poly-use in farming settings, I challenge parallel notions that drug use is solely recreational and that use interferes with work performance. Re-visiting these concerns, I will show that drugs like crack, marijuana, and alcohol, and local practices that support poly-use, serve to offset the physical harshness of agricultural labor and to mitigate the reduced bodily capacity that originates in physically demanding work.

Compared to the plenitude of alcohol and drug research on other populations, little has been published on drug use and alcohol consumption among farmworkers.[1] Early studies focused on alcohol in relation to mechanisms of social control "on the season" (e.g., Chi and McClain 1992, Watson et al. 1985), gender distinctions in its consumption (Alaniz 1994), and general patterns of use in home base communities (Trotter 1985; Van Wilkinson 1989). Later research explored illicit drug use among migrant workers on the season (e.g., Inciardi et al. 1999) and in home base sites (e.g., Weatherby et al. 1997), or included narratives from users among a broad coverage of general issues in farm labor (e.g., Rothenberg 1998; cf. Bletzer 2004a). Most of this research has been constrained by a lack of detailed materials to develop the kind of study designs that would lead to the articulation of stronger theory.

Methods and Sampling

This article is based on field interviews with a purposively recruited core sample of men and women in high-risk farming areas of the southern United States. To supplement

field recruitment, I arranged additional interviews at an in-residence treatment program for men with agricultural experience and both men and women with farm labor experience at two county corrections facilities. I taped ethnographic interviews with 127 unduplicated individuals; some were interviewed multiple times. Inclusion criteria were (1) past or present farm labor and (2) past or present drug use. Most men and women were active in farm labor and/or active drug users at the time of interview (Table 1). Ages ranged from 18-67 years (68.5% aged 21-39); mean age was 39.04 years. The core sample of 26 women and 101 men approximates division of labor by sex within agriculture (Kandel 2004).

A large sample was selected due to the range of emerging experiences in drug use and agriculture (on data saturation at the other extreme in homogeneous samples, see Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006). One may start as a child reared on a farm or in a migrant family, and/or one may seek frequent or occasional farmwork as an adult. Workers may be trans-migrants (trans-national) or United States-born (domestic), and they may combine multi-ethnicity with poly-lingual or monolingual skills.

Across the core sample, two-thirds were active users, more than one-half were active in farm labor, and more than one-third were active in both. Non-users at the time of interview were in recovery (one-sixth), having ceased drug/alcohol use on their own or in a structured program, or they were in treatment (one-fourth). Study respondents were recruited in three states from six field sites (street, migrant trailer park, county jail, town stockade, treatment program, recovery house). I had prior knowledge of alcohol-drug use and farm labor in three sites; three were new areas. Most of the men and women were recruited by me; some were introduced ("invited") or recommended ("nominated") by those already enrolled in the study. Ethnographic interviews used open-ended questions on recent/lifetime work-travel activities, drug-alcohol practices (first use, continuation, discontinuation), and sexual history. I taped all interviews and reviewed/revised text transcribed by author-trained technicians. Transcripts were coded as needed, permitting multiple analyses with Atlas.ti.

I heard self-reports for initiation of 525 different drugs; I call these narratives *Tales of Onset* since, regardless of length, each described the perceived rationale and context for initiating a drug not previously used. Although some onset descriptions were extensive, most were truncated synopses summarizing main elements of who was present, what was used, how the choice to use occurred (including doubts prior to onset and effects/non-effects at first use), and whether one was instructed in use.

One-eighth of the sample had experience with a single drug (12.6%; 15 men, 1 woman); one-fifth had used six or more lifetime drugs (22.0%; 18 men, 10 women); and the remaining two-thirds had used two to five lifetime drugs (65.4%; 68 men, 15 women).[2] At opposite ends of a continuum of use, those who had used six or more lifetime drugs first used in early adolescence (mean onset age 11.89 years), and those limited to a single drug (typically alcohol) started using in mid-teens (mean onset age 15.31 years). United States-born men and women had a mean of four-plus lifetime drugs, and transnational men and women had a mean of three-plus lifetime drugs. As farmworkers aged, initiation declined in alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, compared to sporadic but continuing experiences of initiation of crack and less common drugs.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	Current Use		In Recovery		In Treatment		Total
	n=	%	*n*=	%	*n*=	%	*N*=
Current Farm Labor	46	55.4	16	19.3	21	25.3	83
Inactive Farm Labor	14	50.0	3	10.7	11	39.3	28
Disabled Farm Labor	12	75.0	2	12.5	2	12.5	16
Total	72	56.7	21	16.5	34	26.8	127

Recruitment sites included: "street scene" in rural town (n=51), county jail (n=19), and the town stockade (n=11) of a three-county farming area (state A); clinic-affiliated drug treatment program (n=37) in a rural county and rented housing shared cooperatively by former addicts in recovery (n=8) in an adjacent county (state B); rural trailer park dominated by migrant occupants (n=1) where law enforcement surveillance led to a suspension of taped interviews but not fieldwork (state C). A total of 55 interviews were completed in the same site or in another location (e.g., program to living site; and town to jail, or jail to town). This sample excludes 13 women active in sex-work (cf. Bletzer and Weatherby 2009).

Twenty-two men and women active in farm labor, one disabled and two inactive workers, performed agricultural labor and/or migrated as children/teenagers. Seventeen active in farm labor, three disabled and six inactive, were raised on farms (usually owned by grandparents in the United States or parents outside the country). During childhood, school was a primary activity for 49 respondents (26 in farm labor; 11 disabled; 12 inactive). The remaining 27 of the 127 became economically emancipated through full-time work and/or by leaving home as teenagers.

Constructing a Repertoire of Use

At its broadest level, poly-use is the use of two or more drugs in a *lifetime*. Based on the definitions utilized by Boys, Marsden, and Strang (2001), a *life stage* poly-user uses two or more drugs over experimental phases, whether or not usage is overlapping, and an *episode* poly-user consumes two or more drugs concurrently or in succession, for an alternative chemical reaction to that from one or the other drug. Within the definitional frames of short-term poly-use, we find a policy concern for potential overdose and poor prognosis in recovery from multiple dependencies (e.g., Bovasso and Cacciola 2003; Gossop et al. 2003).

Multiple drug use was common among men and women I interviewed. More than 85 percent were poly-users, by the broad definition of poly-use as two or more lifetime drugs. Nearly this same proportion would be poly-users across life stages; among these users, many had ceased or tapered off one drug, after initiating another. More than one-half were poly-users by a narrow definition of concurrent use in one episode. Nearly all multiple experience users initiated more than half their repertoire before age 21, but still tried new drugs into adulthood. Overall, one-fifth of the total 525 drugs were initiated at age 25 and older (19.3%), and close to five percent at age 35 and older. Like those with extensive lifetime experience of several drugs/alcohol, early and late initiators combined less common drugs with ongoing but shifting use of alcohol and marijuana, and moderate to heavy use of crack.

Similar to the model of drug systems where local story circulation based on *reputation* and *experience* drive the waxing and waning of popular drugs (Agar and Wilson 2002), farmworkers gain knowledge of use from their experience, as well as interaction and communication with other users. The experience of another person (hearing it, seeing it) was confirmed, if similar to something felt as true for oneself. Although women and men based Tales of Onset on experience, many reported other instances where they had observed users in the process of using, especially when the intake route or the drug differed from what they were doing at that point in their life. Emphasized the most in formal interviews was talk of drug effects such as potency and duration, personalized practices related to pacing, reasons for using for bodily restoration, and the consequences of forced cessation.

Duration and Potency

Asked to describe their use, men and women spoke of how long drug/alcohol effects would last, and what they sought from what they used. They generally spoke in essentialist terms, contrasting the "high" of each drug. Unless they chose to cease using a particular drug, most sought to alter less desired aspects of certain drugs by combining another drug or switching to other practices (e.g., staggering days of use).

Nearly everyone noted an inner agitation ("jittery") with crack and cocaine, and unrelenting hunger that came with marijuana. Marijuana was, for some, a "mild high," and, for a few, a "downer" that gave a "depressive feeling," compared to the intense high of cocaine and crack, described as a "rush" (most common term), "jolt" (women) or "electricity" and "explosion" (both sexes). Internal effects gave users the experience to place drug behavior into context. Both men and women, for example, linked marijuana with social conviviality, and, hence, a good drug to use after work in the fields, in contrast to heroin, where users avoided social company that might "mess with the high." Thus, home-base drugs like heroin were less preferred on the season than high-intensity drugs like crack or mellow-high drugs like marijuana.

Users estimated duration of the high in minutes for crack, minutes to an hour or more for cocaine, and several hours for drugs such as heroin and meth ("crank"). Dependent on circumstances, estimates varied. The high from "dropping acid," for example, was three hours (e.g., "dream high" for a woman at a party in her hometown) to 12 hours (e.g., for a man on the season), and a peyote high might last five hours. Rubbing his eyes, S. P. spoke quietly as he told me that "good crack" would last 30 minutes, "but some crack, in less than five minutes, y' high gone." He described how crack would animate one to work long hours as well as encourage one to secure more by borrowing from a companion (future reciprocities) or stealing (no reciprocity, potential retaliation). For each of these things, he told me, "You ready to go, because you feel jittery."

Searching for the right effect was evident within the community at times that I observed users frustrated over a wrong dosage or recovering from a bad drug. Users recognized what they liked when they had it or when they observed it. Raised in a sharecropping family in the Middle South, for example, C. T. left his family's farm as a young adult when he turned 21.[3] He spoke admiringly of a user of methamphetamine (several years before its popularity), whom he met on the rodeo circuit, another form of seasonal labor:

> Some knew exactly where they wanted to get…they knew exactly how much to take and even knew time limits. {Like dosage?} Right. There's one guy that goes with me on the rodeo season; he did one crank hit every 30 minutes. He had the thing down…. He never went beyond or below. He would stay in one form.

Discourse on potency often centered on a bad experience that compelled one to cease using that drug. Caution was taken, if a user "heard bells ringing" (woman), or had blurry vision or a blackout, "That's the body's way of telling that you taking too much of a chemical" (man). Y. R., for example, tried amphetamine pills during the season as an adolescent in his hometown. When the "acid-like high" extended to 24 hours, preventing sleep and a return to work the next day, this became his only amphetamine experience: "I never touched no more since." S. L. twice became ill, once snorting cocaine, and a couple years later smoking crack. Each incident took place at season's end, first with a close friend and next by himself, as he felt that a partner might "mess up" the experience. He never again used either one.

Pacing

Another facet of adjusted use was pacing, which usually occurred in the context of work. E. I. explained how he only used crack on Tuesday and Wednesday ("my two days"), while working vegetables in the Upper South. He smoked crack in mid-week to alleviate pain from physical labor, but drank beer on weekends in the camp to quell the memory of pain from a full week in the fields. Most workers said they used crack after work or on weekends. L. S. was one of the few who reported he had smoked crack in the fields (as opposed to the camp or in a town near the camp), when he was cutting tobacco. As another example, use of amphetamines in the fields is common among workers in some parts of the country, as noted in a case study by Palerm (1992) for a farmworker on the West Coast from Mexico. Among the few in my sample who used amphetamines (even fewer had used methamphetamines), S. B. took "Black Beauties" (one type), en route on the bus, before the crew arrived in the orange grove; he followed this by a second tablet that he took shortly after lunch:

> I used two, one in the morning and one at one o'clock. I took the first one on the bus, with some water, before we started working, so it would get into my stomach. And the second I took at one o'clock, after lunch. That's how long they would last. I could stretch two of them out over an eight-hour day.

Many users practiced seasonal pacing, while performing farm labor or work outside agriculture. Generally, less use by men and women took place on the season than in a home-base community. Those into crack in a home base often turned thrifty with their finances and ceased crack on the season by alternating alcohol with marijuana. A marijuana purchase, for example, was said to last for several days, enabling one to save money on the agricultural season. Men took this alternative. Women more often gave up drugs completely or alternated with sporadic "social drinking." H. T., for example, worked in pecans and in citrus on the season with her boyfriend in the Lower South. Refraining from drugs while on the season, she used crack during the winter months. While he worked in another county (his home base was another county in the same state), she said that she took a "two-day vacation from drugs," Wednesday and Thursday, followed by heavy use on Friday-Saturday-Sunday, when she returned to winter sex work in her home-base. Weekend drug use helped her to self-medicate to "numb" the pain.

Restoration

Men more than women described analgesic benefits from illicit drugs used to alleviate back pain and general muscular aches, two ailments commonly experienced by farmworkers (Coye 1985; Finch and Vega 2003; Rust 1990). Workers chose the drug that best alleviated the after-effects of work. A. C. told me of the tension that he experienced on the season, which he calmed by smoking marijuana, "Reefer settles your nerves." S. B. in contrast indicated his intent to alleviate the muscle aches that he would experience by smoking crack:

> You work real hard on the season, ((inhale)) you go get you a rock to unwind on, because when you work real hard, your body all tight 'n tensed up. Man, you get a nice blast from crack that seems to relax you. You calm down, go get a shower, and then after that, you go 'n eat your dinner. That's the way it does for me.

When R. T. expressed a similar idea (a few interviews later), I sought to verify if any residues of pain from strenuous farm labor might return as the short high from crack [rock] was subsiding:

> You can drink beer, it cools you off a little bit but rock does it quicker. You don't feel tired, like your back hurting an' all that, from bendin' o'er an' pickin' tomato an' all that. You smoke a piece a rock an' I mean you don't feel no pain. You're just sitting down; you relax, and drink a beer. {The pain doesn't come back?} "No." {It's just gone?} "Yeah, it's gone."

Women on the season rarely sought to alleviate pain. Most of their heavy use was in a home base. For them, as illustrated in the above example of H. T., the pain they acknowledged and sought to eliminate was related to commercial sex work, an experience of all the women in my sample (in the recent past or at time of interview each had experience in farm labor). On the season, they accompanied a male friend or occasionally a family member; as such, they were not pushed to work long hours and they did not engage in sex work.

Through fieldwork in situations where users and non-users spent time together, I learned that non-users recognized drug effects. During extended observations in a gathering site where sex workers plied their trade, I often watched men accompany sex workers into an adjacent wooded lot. On one occasion, as a couple went into the bush, a man seated with us requested another man to increase the volume on a tape of Ranchero music in his truck. Although the seated man (asking for music) assumed the couple went to have sex, a light glaze in the man's eyes upon returning informed those present he had sought other diversions. When he sat down, a third man asked, "*¿No le duele la cabeza*?" (Your head doesn't hurt?). A few minutes later an older man asked in a lowered, gentle voice, "*¿Ya siente mejor*?" (Feel better now?). The first man's question was based on common knowledge that crack is felt in the head (and cocaine in the chest), but the older man surmised that the crack had likely alleviated whatever pain the man brought with him from a hard day of farm labor.

Forced Cessation

Below, I review an event that is not sought that adds to experiential knowledge of modulation that circulates in farmworker discourse. A worker using illicit drugs places

himself at risk of arrest either in relation to the drugs or related activities such as theft or disorderly conduct. Short-term incarceration that may follow will interrupt regular use. Since most the men and women I interviewed were incarcerated at some point (60%), several of them repeatedly, they were familiar with the benefits and the drawbacks of *forced cessation* through spending time in local jails.

Jail or prison with its routine daily cycles and clockwork regimentation is an abrupt contrast to the world of agricultural labor with its irregular employment and work routines, low pay and long hours, and an impending ambiguity on future work. Many men and women talked about a bodily purification ("cleansing") they derived from time in prison or jail. One man described a parallel process from hospitalization for a gunshot wound that was a one-time experience as a youth in his 20s.

Those who said the process was easy were those who had spent more time in jail owing to numerous arrests resulting in incarceration. Several told of withdrawal. Most everyone who had spent time incarcerated briefly continued abstinence after release from what started as forced sobriety. Exceptions took place when someone returned too soon to places where they once used frequently or they returned to re-associate with drug companions. As a first-time inmate overseas before coming to the states, N. E. told me "prison broke the vicious cycle of addiction." He went from daily use before prison to once a week use while imprisoned and after release, which he sustained for several months. Upon arrival in this country in his early 20s (he had sought expatriation overseas), he relapsed while performing farm labor, returning to almost daily use for nearly 10 years while performing farm labor across states on the east coast. Later, after completing residential treatment, he ceased use. A "turnstile" inmate (recidivist) and street player for more than a decade when he was not in jail, H. P. told me, "It doesn't bother you to be away from drugs. That's crucial, since it's hard to leave drugs." Having more than 30 years in farm labor and nearly 25 years in drug use, L. U. said he was content in jail, "A lot of people don't regret jail, because that's one time that you can feel (inhale) your real self again."

Statements from these experienced men emphasized benefits of forced sobriety rather than the experience of nightmares the first weeks of incarceration, wherein one dreams of searching for crack and/or of its removal from "stems" and "pipes," and related dreams that draw on elements from the drug world. These images ultimately reflect a common process of purification while in jail, where one (like the image) is removed from settings where crack use takes place. W. H. said the second week in jail was difficult withdrawal, reflected in interrupted speech (indicated by hyphens below), word repetition, and mixing of third person with second person pronouns:

> First time was real hard. I was tore–that was like taking a milk bottle from a baby. You miss it. If you make it that first week, maybe sometime that second week, it'll "wean off" [street term]. There's withdrawal. You'll have sleeping problems. You're gonna toss and turn. It's gonna take awhile to adjust to jail, because when you're high and you're drunk, you don't care where you're at.

Desire to cease drug use was linked to time incarcerated. When I asked N. C. his longest time with no drugs, he said it was two weeks in jail. He was one of the few with more than a decade of drug use to have no experience of self-engineered cessation. Long periods of use were common among several men and women in my sample. Never having ceased even briefly was rare. The Mexican American heroin addicts observed by Desmond and Maddox (1984), similar to those that were studied by Valdez, Neaigus, and Kaplan (2008), for example, often took a prolonged time to abstain from using. Desirous of "cleansing," B. T. told me of his childhood in a family that was hired to work year-round on a produce farm. After years of use in nearby rural communities and brief residence in a small town (never did migrant work as an adult but instead became active in rural drug-using scenes), he described how he would long for jail, stemming from a disappointment over two decades of non-success in leaving crack:

> At times I was sitting there trying to get high, hoping I would burst and kill myself, but it didn't happen. Sometimes I was praying for the cops to come in. I'd be sitting there with dope on me, hoping they would come in and take my "behind" to jail. So I could have peace of mind for a while. I could be in a cell house, where at least I wouldn't be around drugs. I'd have some security.

Recognizing a need to change, B. T. later took a major step to recovery by entering a drug treatment program, where I met him, and accompanied him and other enrollees on program events, and eventually interviewed him twice.[4]

Learning Modulation

Agricultural workers took knowledge gained from polyuse to sustain desired effects and to alter an effect that was unwanted. Recognition of effects, if that was the intent in seeking a new drug or transitioning to a new administration route, was important in learning how to get the most from the drug or drugs to which one had access, such as snorting cocaine and heroin together to prolong the high or smoking crack in a marijuana joint to reduce a feeling of agitation. Thus, some farmworkers sought what they used in relation to effects desired during work, particularly the few who used amphetamines to enhance functional capacity. Although this reasoning was similar to the meth users in the urban research described in Lende et al. (2007), agricultural workers in this long-term ethnography more often were seeking to alter work-demand stresses at the end of the day that resulted from strenuous and repetitive physical labor (on the consequences of farm labor to physical health, see Grzywacz, Quandt, and Arcury 2008), as much as they sought some benefits, as cheaply as possible, from what was available. Since patterns of use varied when a worker was without work, stressors alleviated by drug taking (often different drugs) came from the

uncertainty of waiting. Use facilitated continuing contacts in multiple networks where resources were available and news of future work was circulated.

One example of the high range for multiple use was T. C., a user since age nine, who was one of six individuals who had poly-used 10/more lifetime drugs. Most he enjoyed, except the time he served as heroin tester for a brother-in-law. He would try a new drug, be it amphetamines, cocaine, or mushrooms, and use it briefly before moving on, "searching for a better high." He once took two forms of acid the same summer; the first in the Upper South ("scary… guy with me talked me through it") and later "purple dots" at a camp in the Middle South (less satisfied, he felt "it had too much speed"). Born on the season in a northern state, he spent four decades as a migrant worker and as a drug user. Given experiences that included five years in sobriety as a treatment counselor, he was at the time of his interview at a point where he would alter that crack that he smoked. Referring to a jittery feeling that others mentioned, he explained how he re-cooked crack "to get speed off, so it don't have me running like a zombie, wanting more." Constrained by local availability, he extended knowledge from poly-use to better control what he chose to use at this point in life, based on what he felt he needed.

Each of the six individuals with experience in 10/more drugs came close to experiencing every popular drug locally available. Two with the most used (14 and 13, respectively) were in their early 30s and in treatment, and the remaining four, still active users, ranged in age from late 30s to early 50s. Each high-end multiple user fondly recalls one drug, whose comparative assessment was made possible from extended poly-use. All six high-end users *first used* in adolescence nearly everything they ever tried; a few remaining drugs they initiated in their early 20s. Multiple users not at the high end, in contrast, followed a pattern of occasional initiation as teens with the onset of their remaining drugs into the late 20s and 30s.

G. V. was at the low end of the user continuum. With minimal experience in use despite having more than 30 years of farmwork since childhood, he learned to adjust drug dosage watching a younger brother and companion take turns injecting heroin and cocaine. He remembered markings of the amount visible in the syringe. After moving with his wife and two children to a nearby town (intended to help him give up drugs), he transferred this knowledge to an experience he had with marijuana and alcohol to show ingenuity the first time he tried crack "laced" into a marijuana cigarette. Experienced with alcohol, marijuana, and powder cocaine (separately and once in a heroin speedball), crack became the final drug of his five-drug repertoire:

> I never smoked crack before…. I'm looking at it, because it's a different scent…. The laced joint I'm smoking, I be experiencing this quick high, so I'm getting scared.... I never experienced that type of high…. I sipped on my wine. The wine soothes it and changes the high…. Drinking wine kept me at a certain limit of the high…. If I don't drink enough, then all of a sudden I get an instant reaction, like my high was changing…. It was like SHAKING (each syllable shakes his upper body)…. When I experienced that high again, I quit smoking.

Multiple forms of modulated self-pacing and adjusted drug use presented in this article confirm the forms of "controlled use" noted long ago by Zinberg (1984). Although his intention was to show that not all users became heavily dependent, if able to muster control of use, I sought to show how multiple use can serve distinct purposes in different situations. More than simple engagement in common practices like pacing and voluntary cessation, farmworkers recognize the concept of control, described as esteemed inner strength that several African American workers called, "mind thing," particularly in relation to cessation, and which the Latino agricultural workers expressed as "not letting the drug grip you" (*no le deja agarrar*).

Structured to season, or times during the day within the season, the capacity to turn off and turn on one's interest in and responsiveness to drug effects was a part of a repertoire a worker constructed as the embodied capital he or she accumulated over a lifetime, while experiencing the physical harshness and irregularity and uncertainty of farm labor. Initiatory experiences with drugs and alcohol occurred among persons of broad sociodemographic diversity, not unlike that described for other populations (e.g., Boeri 2004; Moore 2004), wherein onset took place in scenes comprising close family as well as neighborhood networks (see Valdez, Neaigus, and Kaplan 2008). The difference between farmworkers and other populations was that initiation for the former was mostly rural with some urban experience; social milieu that varied for drug experimentation and for continuation was based on irregular and short-term employment (Bletzer 2004b); multiple drug scenes might be accessed in disparate locales and dispersed states that compelled as well as constrained drug choices and corresponding adjustments that users made; and worker-users were often challenged to facilitate drug acquisition from new networks in new locales, where variation abounded in pricing, product availability, and quality, accompanied by an increased probability of disclosure and discovery that might lead to arrest by local law enforcement, and/or harassment by members of local networks.

Conclusion

As a practice that parallels the general contours of poly-drug use in urbanized settings, multiple experiences with different drugs by women and men who perform farm labor requires knowledge of levels of adjustment. Since availability varies over seasonal activities, discontinuation may occur somewhat voluntarily through season work and, for some, during occasional periods of forced cessation by incarceration. As a worker gains experience with farm labor tasks and the toll that they take on the body, he (or she) learns to modulate use toward desired effects, and a corresponding repertoire of drug and alcohol use is generated. Modification of repertoires over time generates an ethos that, for some,

reflects long periods of self-control with bursts of abandon that often result in "24/7" binge behavior. Drug poly-use, then, generates iterative knowledge that teaches one how to get the most from certain drugs singly and combined, and/or it encourages switching drugs over life phases where work is sporadic. Thus, a worker meets challenges presented by farm labor by constructing lifetime drug experience, constrained by the demands of agricultural employment. She is not obligated to wholly follow local enticements that may have, at one time, originated solely with labor management, when alcohol was sold or distributed as an advance on future wages (Bletzer 2004b). Instead, agricultural workers take small steps to combat harsh demands of farm labor by modulated use of drugs/alcohol. In the meantime, farm labor advocates work toward erasure of demanding conditions and replacement by appropriate compensation grounded in humane treatment.

Responding to the seasonality of locales and crops, workers may cut back on drugs until they return to a locale of familiarity where drugs are less expensive. This may explain why some workers, despite expressing a desire to cease use, initiate new drugs into their 20s and 30s, well beyond a time when onset is theorized to cease by late adolescence (Novins, Beals, and Mitchell 2001; Swadi 1992). Sporadic but continual onset as adults acts to stop a growing dependency, as one drug replaces another.

Experienced users alternate days of use to renew drug effects. Simultaneously, this pacing keeps one prepared for times when drugs might not be available which is more likely on the season than in a home-base locale. Discontinuation compelled in incarceration occurs outside one's volition but adds to knowledge of tactics that help one through difficult circumstances. Above all, remembrance and talk of experiences are subject to revisions that eventually are incorporated into discourse that crosscuts the many farm labor settings and drug use scenes to which a worker is exposed.

For farmworkers in the agricultural South, multiple drug use creates a space to assert agency in developing a repertoire of use grounded in and exacerbated by poly-use. What may have started in the past as labor inducement became self-sustaining to where today it is increasingly worker-driven (Bletzer 2004b). Lessons learned by the analysis of Tales of Onset shared by agricultural workers emphasize their agency in actions taken and perceived benefits sought, rather than expectations that success at better living is the only standard by which to define personal intentions. Each choice made by a farmworker is constrained by a work environment and the locale where they find employment. Ingenuity in selections they make, abetted by strategies such as drug pacing, poly-use combinations, dosage adjustments, and drug substitutions, deserves the dignity of intervention that teaches effective decision-making rather than assumes lack of capacity for sense-making. As Tsing (2005) argues in *Friction*, interventions are invitations to identity transformation, whereas agency is a process of individuals and communities navigating the rivers of constraint and containment. Agency places one into motion; hence, it is removal from condition or circumstance. Combining levels of community and person in resolving issues of drug use (Ames et al. 2007) is the greater but more effective challenge.

Poly-use provides an improved framework to better understand processes of continuing initiation, as well as shifting use and cessation. Research on use of drugs and alcohol under compelling circumstances of social adversity outside the fixed-in-space environment of the metropolis, with its implicit assumption that consumption is restricted to predominantly recreational use that becomes a general deterrent to performance in school and employment, can move us beyond material long utilized in theorizing the how and the why of drug use.

Notes

[1]I limit my literature review to farm labor studies within the United States. Other research is instructive. Based on a sample of 13,582 men and women (ages 14/over), for example, a national study in Australia found that agricultural labor was highest among several occupations for long-term high risk alcohol consumption (RRR 9.41, $p < .004$) (Berry et al. 2007). Marijuana was used at work among agricultural day laborers in coastal Colombia; highland communities supplied the product but rarely used (Partridge 1975). Horticulturalists in rural Jamaica with cannabis experience (one to three decades) showed an increase in rhythmic work movements and greater calorie expenditure while smoking cannabis in the fields than work times when not smoking, based on an analysis of video-taped work behaviors (Schaeffer 1975).

[2]Natural breaks for lifetime drug clusters appeared at 1 / 2-5 / 6 or more drugs.

[3]"Lower South" refers to Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi; "Middle South" to Arkansas, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee; "Upper South" to Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia. These areas represent travel time; it takes one day to go from the Lower South into states of the Middle South, and one full day/night (with/without sleep) to reach the Upper South from Lower South or to return from Upper South to Lower South.

[4]B. T.'s connection to migrant work, however, continued into adulthood through commercial sex work at labor camps across several counties.

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