

## Editorial

# Treating Addictions

On Failures, Harms, and Hopes of Success

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*Treating Addictions* is a special issue that emerged out of conference panels at the 117th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in 2018, San Jose, California. The panels, titled *Questioning Addiction and Contextualizing Treatment I and II*, were organized and chaired by Aleksandra Bartoszko and Paul Christensen. Additionally, participants of the Executive Session panel *Anthropological Interventions in the U.S. Opioid Crisis*, organized by Jennifer Carroll, joined this project. The panels, as shown in this special issue, has intellectually attracted additional scholars and advocates.

In this issue, readers will find a range of articles questioning many prevailing assumptions surrounding the labels of addiction as well as the pervasive methodologies of ‘treatment’ and ‘recovery’. The authors are astutely critical of the oft corrosive logics that dictate and organize these conceptual frameworks, offering innovative and informative insights, while questioning the ways in which care and treatment(s) can reproduce the very realities they purport to address or even cause harm. Highlighting the paradoxical conditions of institutional approaches to drug use, they document often life-threatening consequences for individuals struggling to realize institutionally and culturally dictated criteria of success. Doing so, they challenge the established understandings of ‘addiction treatment’ as inherently good and ask if there are other ways of social inclusion or of bettering life quality for persons who use drugs.

The issue begins with a critical examination of the principles of the Recovery movement as adopted by Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT) programs in the United States. In *'We're gonna be Addressing your Pepsi use': How Recovery Limits Methadone Maintenance Treatment's Ability to Help People Who Use Drugs in the Era of Overdose*, **David Frank** outlines the ways in which this particular model of recovery organizes treatment as abstinence-based self-help and simultaneously facilitates a greater degree of surveillance and intervention into patients' nutrition, public service, and spirituality. Such efforts, coupled with punishment, often fail to reduce the potential harms of drug use. Since many of the MMT participants do not seek the Recovery as it is conceptualized by this specific discourse, but join the program to avoid criminalization, Frank recommends a policy shift that would truly consider the diversity of treatment goals among the people on the program. Harms of care remain central in the following article. In *Gendered Triple Standard and the Bio-medical Management of Perinatal and Maternal Opioid Use Disorder in the U.S.: Investigating Bodily, Visceral, and Symbolic Violence*, **Alice Fiddian-Green** considers associations of stigma among pregnant and parenting women with opioid use disorder (OUD) in the northeastern United States. She deftly shows how a variety of institutional settings tasked with managing OUD simultaneously enact violence that becomes a form of embedded trauma for women enrolled in these programs. Examining the many forms of violence, she shows that the institutionalized and often conflicting ideas of legal, social, and medical care cause harms to both mother and child. Remaining in the United States, **Mark Chatfield** reveals the frighteningly pervasive abuse of patients at residential treatment programs for young people. As demonstrated in *Totalistic Treatment Programs for Young People: A Thematic Analysis of Retrospective Accounts*, these programs, exempt from Federal safety standards, are frequently sought out by distressed parents and loved ones on behalf of their children. But instead of help, they can end up creating a disturbingly widespread setting for abuse. Documenting the numerous 'thought reform techniques' and 'coercive persuasion' used within such programs, Chatfield opens for a needed, and, so far missing, discussion on the luring dangers of institutional treatments. Engagements with youth's experiences continue in *The Experimental Trajectories of Young Users of Psycho-active Prescription Drugs in Urban Indonesia*, in which **Nural Ilmi Idrus** and **Anita Hardon** study marginalized youth across the urban centers of south Sulawesi's. Contrasting their experiences with a treatment designed to target politically constructed problems, such as illicit heroin use, they illustrate the limitations of the harm reduction efforts in Indonesia and the failure of the methadone program to deal with poly drug use. Considering these limits and the ongoing War on Drugs, they propose and engage in educational interventions, which address the desires and aspirations evident in the youth's precarious lives. Discrepancies between individuals' needs and treatment opportunities are further explored by **Ingrid Amalia Havnes** and **Thea Steen Skogheim** in the context of the aftermath of legislative changes that made anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS) use illegal in Norway in 2013. As they show in *Alienation and Lack of Trust: Barriers to Seeking Substance Use Disorder Treatment Among Men Who Struggle to Cease Anabolic-androgenic Steroid Use*, few individuals with AAS-related health problems seek treatment.

In their examination of the situation, Havnes and Skogheim document that men using steroids consider their drug use in terms of healthy lifestyle and healthy identity. They see their addiction as different to, for instance, heroin addiction, which they consider as the opposite of health and well-being. Havnes and Skogheim demonstrate that physicians' lacking knowledge of using and ceasing AAS shapes patients' distrust towards health care and hinders treatment seeking. Finally, **Shana Harris** offers a methodological reflections based on her study of the use of psychedelic substances at drug treatment programs in Baja California, Mexico. In *Narrating the Unspeakable: Making Sense of Psychedelic Experiences in Drug Treatment*, she points out that the use of psychedelic substances is often described as 'unspeakable primary experiences.' At the same time, narration and narratives are considered essential in anthropological research, as well as in therapeutic settings. In this context, Harris asks: How does narration work if the psychedelic experience is truly unspeakable and how can we study it? Harris does not offer a conclusion. Rather, she invites the reader to explore innovative ethnographic approaches more suitable to the study of experience resisting conventional narrativization.

In two shorter essays, **Aleksandra Bartoszko** and **Allison V. Schlosser** offer reflections on the established ways of (thinking of) inclusion of persons who use drugs. Bartoszko, in *Patient Is the New Black: Treatmentality and Resistance toward Patientization*, questions the political desire to form new identities and social innovations, which aim at liberating the 'addicts' by redefining them 'patients.' She shows that participants in Opioid Substitution Treatment in Norway are not always comfortable with such redefinition, which complicates the current discourse advocating for shift 'from criminal to patient'. In *Recovery in the US Opioid Crisis*, Schlosser illustrates the individual struggles to navigate between the conflicting articulations of 'recovery', emphasizing that its moral good is often taken-for-granted. Examining 'recovery' as a space not necessarily suited to supporting the social inclusion and moral recognition desired by individuals labelled 'addicts,' she asks: 'Can we, as anthropologists of the extreme, resist the moral panic of the "opioid crisis" to find and foster such alternative spaces?' Remaining in the context of 'opioid crisis', **E. Summerson Carr** offers a thought-provoking commentary on the use of the concept of 'crisis' as a descriptive term in addiction scholarship.

*Treating Addictions* includes also book reviews of the following titles: *Addicted to Christ: Remaking Men in Puerto Rican Pentecostal Drug Ministries* by Helena Hansen (reviewed by **Jennifer Carroll**), *War on People: Drug User Politics and a New Ethics of Community* by Jarrett Zigon (reviewed by **Shana Harris**), and *Narcocapitalism* by Laurent de Sutter (reviewed by **Tracy Brannstrom**). The reader will also find an interview with **Laurent de Sutter** conducted by Tracy Brannstrom. The issue's final piece is a visual essay on Ibogaine treatment by **Sagit Mezamer**.

Last, but not least, we would like to express our thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their thorough engagement and critical work with all the contributions to this issue of the *Journal of Extreme Anthropology*.