


### “Twenty thousand stones along the way”: a graphic representation of a drug user career based on his autobiography

“Vinte mil pedras no caminho”: a representação gráfica de uma carreira de usuário de drogas baseada em sua autobiografia (resumo: p. 18)

“Veinte mil piedras en el camino”: la representación gráfica de una carrera de usuario de drogas basada en su autobiografía (resumen: p. 18)

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The objective of this article is to construct a diagram based on the autobiographical narrative that describes the trajectory of a drug user, to allow visualizing the development of his career and dividing it into successive phases regarding the increase or decrease of self-control over drug use. The construction of a diagram allowed us to visualize the periods of increased and decreased self-control over substance use and the main factors involved. This procedure proved to be an able tool to provide a synthetic and, at the same time, diachronic representation of the user's career, divided into successive phases regarding the increase or decrease of self-control, which we found to be dependent on the drug consumed and the personal and social context of the user.

**Keywords:** Drug user's career. Crack. Autobiography. Diagram. Self-control.



## Introduction

In this article we will analyze the autobiography of Fabian Nacer<sup>1</sup> who consumed drugs intensively for at least two decades, until he was 36 years old. Based on this narrative and based on authors who have dedicated themselves to the study of drug use, from the perspective of self-controlled use<sup>2-4</sup>, we aim to construct a diagram tracing Fabian's career as a drug user. The term and the concept of career were introduced by Becker<sup>2</sup> from the literature of business administration, particularly human resources management. The term was used to refer to the career of employees in a company or the state over time. Similarly, in the user's career, experiences with the use of one or several substances are given in a diachronic fashion and not just in specific moments. The graphic representation of the drug user's career will allow visualization, in a single diagram, of the periods of increased and decreased self-control over substance use and the main factors involved. It is a new tool for the analysis of cases of people who use drugs, through a synthetic and at the same time diachronic representation.

Studies on drug use that observe careers of users do so for various reasons. Tammi<sup>5</sup> was concerned about the time needed for drug users to become politically aware and active in Finland. Smith's<sup>6</sup> findings pointed to the multiple roles and relationships that women try to manage while pursuing a career as injecting drug users (IDUs). In describing behaviors and preferences of drug use as well as the social and environmental context of young and former injecting drug users in the city of Toronto, Firestone and Fischer<sup>7</sup> concluded that the window of opportunity for disease transmission prevention and risk reduction presents itself at the beginning of an IUD career. It means that prevention efforts and harm reduction messages should be directed to this younger population. Silvestre and Manita<sup>8</sup> have related the precarious labor relationship with the career of drug use, with moments of being jobless the most prone to the consumption of substances. In a study developed in two periods, between 1994 and 2006, by Fernandez and MacRae<sup>9</sup>, we have the best example of the study of users' careers. Different patterns of cocaine use could be perceived, together with the self-regulation systems adopted by the subjects and their feedback, as originally proposed by Grund<sup>3</sup>, taking into account the reflections of Becker<sup>2</sup> and Zinberg<sup>4</sup>. Fernandez and MacRae<sup>9</sup>(p. 48) concluded that the unsuccessful careers of users who consumed drugs in an unsafe manner were marked by failure to escape the labeling processes, suffering greater exclusion and worse living conditions and survival.

The objective of this article is, from the analysis of the career of drug users, as narrated by Fabian Nacer in his autobiography<sup>1</sup>, to construct a diagram that allows us to visualize the development of the career and divide it into successive phases regarding the increase or decrease of self-control over drug use. We added to the diagram the representation of the factors that intervened positively or negatively on self-control, the availability of the drug, the rituals and rules, and the structure of life, with its different magnitudes and importance at each phase. This process will allow to verify if the set of data thus produced is capable of helping us to perceive how much the evolution of self-control over drug use, in the course of a career, may or may not be multidirectional, that is, not always in the sense of its loss.

## The autobiography

Studies regarding careers of drug users using biographies are present since Zinberg<sup>4</sup> and MacRae and Simões<sup>10</sup>. The writing of the particular facts that impacted a person's drug consumption during the various phases of her/his life is usually based on the biographical study and oral narration collected by the researcher. Regarding the narration about Fabian Nacer's life, written in the form of an autobiographical book<sup>1</sup>, we have a text whose main thread is his drug consumption. This work revealed a broad, detailed and comprehensive description of the entire period of the author's user career and, therefore, gave us the possibility of identifying distinct phases in terms of self-control of use and the preponderant factors in its variation.

Fabian Nacer, from the middle class of Moema, lived in the neighborhoods of Campo Belo, Aeroporto and Brooklin. According to the 2000 Census weighted areas these are regions inhabited "primarily by the richest social groups"<sup>11</sup> (p. 15). Son of business parents, he witnessed the early separation of the couple and began to live with his mother, who would abandon him a few years later. He suffered sexual harassment from his maternal grandmother and revealed discomfort with the family situation of early adolescence: "My father remarried and I did not fit in. My mother got married and I didn't fit in"<sup>1</sup> (p. 26)

At the age of 14 he consumed alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, anxiolytics, antidepressants, lily and mushrooms teas, besides the anticholinergic Artane. At the age of 17 he started using marijuana, abandoning the other substances except cigarettes and alcoholic beverages; at the age of 18 he used alcoholic beverages in any event or social interaction that required some dis-inhibition: "He couldn't even go to a party or contact a girl without alcohol in my mind"<sup>1</sup> (p. 68). At this age he also started manufacturing his own inhaler or perfume spray. At the age of 19, he became a marijuana supplier for small dealers in the school, just before he had his first experience in the consumption of cocaine that he also started to resell.

He traveled to the United States of America (USA) to study aeronautics and continued to consume alcohol and cocaine. He suffered an air crash while flying an aircraft drugged and returned to Brazil. Back in the USA he worked in low skilled jobs and consumed marijuana, alcohol, cocaine and LSD. In Brazil he opened a bar that went bankrupt in six months. He began his daily cocaine consumption. As Faupel<sup>12</sup> observed, breaks in the more conventional structure of life, such as the loss of a job or family separation have deeper consequences on the nature and extent of drug use.

Once again in the USA, he consumed cocaine, coming to beg and try heroin. Upon returning to Brazil he met his mother again after 13 years of separation. She moved to Florianópolis and, for about two years, consumed only marijuana and alcohol until he snorted cocaine again. He was caught in a sting by the police, was arrested and had to return to São Paulo, where he intensified the use of snorted cocaine, in a solitary way and in small hotels in the central region of the city. After a brief period in the city of Natal, he returned at the age of 28 to live with his mother in the neighborhood of Moema.



Upon returning one last time to the USA he experimented with crack, compulsively consuming it in a binge pattern and in a solitary way: "my life turned to being locked in my room drugging myself"<sup>11</sup> (p. 169). Again in Brazil, he returns to live with his mother from whom he subtracts small sums of money and some goods in order to sustain the consumption of crack on the street. He began to establish a daily life based on staying near the points of trade and drug consumption. Because of his new pattern of use, he was referred to a psychologist and a psychiatrist, being medicated. He also consulted with religious persons. He was hospitalized for the first time for two days. On his return, he found that the possibilities of shelter in family circle residences were denied, which forced him to be hospitalized again. He did not adapt to the religious-spiritual model<sup>13</sup> of hospitalization<sup>1</sup> (p.178-80). He changed his therapeutic community, read the Christian Bible, the only book available, and suffering at the same time delusions of a religious type<sup>14</sup>: "[...] he was seeing angels. [...] all sitting on the fence around the farm"<sup>11</sup> (p. 190). At the end of his internment, he returned to his mother's residence, attending religious services.

He started a new work and went back to use crack in the binge pattern, in the company of transvestites, in hotels in the central region of São Paulo. His mother, accompanied by the police, chased him when he was unaware, in a well-known drug spot in the Brooklin neighborhood. He carried out a last major robbery of his own residence and, after a car accident, ended at Praça da República, in the central region, where he tried to survive as a beggar until he lived with a transvestite for some time. He met the best crack vendors in the region, but had difficulty in obtaining funds for drug acquisition. He discovered and assumed for himself what he calls the "standard of living" of crack users in downtown: "[...] around the stone, to get the stone, to smoke the stone, to enjoy the noia of the stone [...]. To cover yourself, a piece of cardboard was enough"<sup>11</sup> (p. 213).

The dangers and violence of Cracolândia (Crack-land) made Fabian want to return to family life. His awareness of the family's opposition to the return, which would only be possible if he received new treatment, caused him to give up. The idea of having provoked feelings of anger in the family contributed to the delay of a new contact. In her first year in Cracolândia, he slept on the street and had few funds to buy crack. He ended up smoking only two crack stones a day, when his ideal would be ten. He lived in precarious conditions, similar to the street junkie<sup>12</sup> pattern: with low availability of the drug and also low life structure (set of relationships and activities that shape daily life). He was the target of various approaches by the public authorities and churches that had no effect. Motivated by the difficulties in staying in the region, with which he never identified himself, he sought out his family and went to a clinic where he learned about the 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous. He left after a month of hospitalization and returned to Cracolândia.



He realized that begging was more profitable in middle class neighborhoods like Chácara Santo Antônio and Brooklin. He started asking for money in the region. At the first attempt he got enough money to buy 15 crack stones at “[...] *boca da Água Espraiada*, where you could buy good stones twice the size of those I bought in Cracolândia [...]”<sup>1</sup> (p. 229), where Fabian used to pick up marijuana and cocaine in the past.

With the new prolific source of income and ease of supply of crack, he reached a stable consumption pattern. Even using a large amount of drugs, he lived a daily life that he considered satisfactory<sup>1</sup> (p. 230). He was able to plan his daily activities to obtain funds and consume crack (limited to the safe environment of hotel rooms and at set times). “As soon as I got 100 *reals*, I’d go to a ten *reals* hotel in Largo Treze, in Cupecê or in the Jockey’s surroundings, in the middle of the day, around eleven in the morning, I’d spend three, four hours smoking and watching a porn movie - and still take a bath”<sup>1</sup> (p. 230).

He began to wear only clean clothes, with which he could get more success when asking for money in middle-class residences. He was clean and shaved. With the money raised he could also buy marijuana to moderate some of the negative effects of crack. “It was six months of paradise”<sup>1</sup> (p. 230), in a pattern close to that established by Faupel<sup>12</sup> as of stabilized junkie: with great availability of the drug and structure of life. Until an important change in the social context came to destabilize the favorable routine: “[...] *Água Espraiada*, in less than a year was inflated from so much junkie that it began to circulate there, because of the many joints that proliferated in the region [...]”<sup>1</sup> (p. 230).

The greater availability of crack in the territory, something positive for consumers, eventually attracted a large number of users, but brought a deleterious practical consequence for obtaining funds to acquire drugs: “[...] everyone asking for money in the same places, for the same people, in the same traffic lights”<sup>1</sup> (p. 230). The new users’ scene

[...] competed with CEASA’s Cracoland for the city’s second largest post. Both were born from the times when they tried to disperse that of the *Luz*, as if it was that thing of “spreading the anthill”, you know?<sup>1</sup>. (p. 230)

The fact gives us a small dimension of the consequences of the actions of the public power, in the so-called “war on drugs”<sup>15</sup>, on the spatial distribution of the places of commerce and consumption of substances. A greater repression in Cracolândia, central region of the city, caused the dispersion of crack users in the neighborhoods that were not known as large scenes of drug use<sup>16</sup>. It was also possibly one of the reasons for the increase in the number of points of sale. The public power, acting in a repressive way, ended up fomenting the demand for crack in new places, generating new business possibilities for the drug traffic.



Fabian returned to the street junkie state<sup>12</sup>; he had to spend a lot of time fighting for funds for the acquisition of crack. His daily life was no longer filled by the time spent inside the hotel rooms, but by an extensive succession of hours spent in a ritualized behavior of asking for money. The old satisfaction provided by a regular supply of crack was replaced by the cravings.

Life was getting difficult. I stayed in the crack 90% of the time because I couldn't get as much money as I did in the beginning. I had to keep asking for three hours to get some and buy stones"<sup>1</sup> (p. 233)

Even though he spent most of his time obtaining funds, he couldn't sleep in the hotels where he used to stay and had to live on the street. Life on the streets, as Alves *et al.*<sup>17</sup> pointed out, is very harmful in comparison to staying in hotels. Thus, Fabian's physical appearance and clothing deteriorated, which made it even more difficult to get money. The residents of the middle class neighborhoods refused to help the crack user to keep his habit, believing, perhaps, that the more difficult it was to get the drug, the less drug would be used and, who knows, some improvement would occur in the user's life. However, the effect was reversed: "I was thinner, dirtier, clearly a street junkie ... Who would give me money for drugs?"<sup>1</sup> (p. 233).

To have to consume crack on the street is to be subject to serious environmental risks, the biggest of them is to have the drug and the pipe taken and even to be beaten by the police, as happened with Fabian. Paranoid sensations are understandable in the new environment:

[...] he entered the "paranoid trip" in any corner [...]. My financial income and I, we lost weight together, in inverse proportion to the paranoia, which only grew<sup>1</sup>. (p. 233)

Life on the street imposes a new daily routine because of the difficult situation regarding opportunities to obtain money:

[...] the police arrived with everything on top, the routine of walking without bathing for months, of starting to let myself go, of doing my needs on the street, wherever I felt the urge [...].<sup>1</sup> (p. 233)

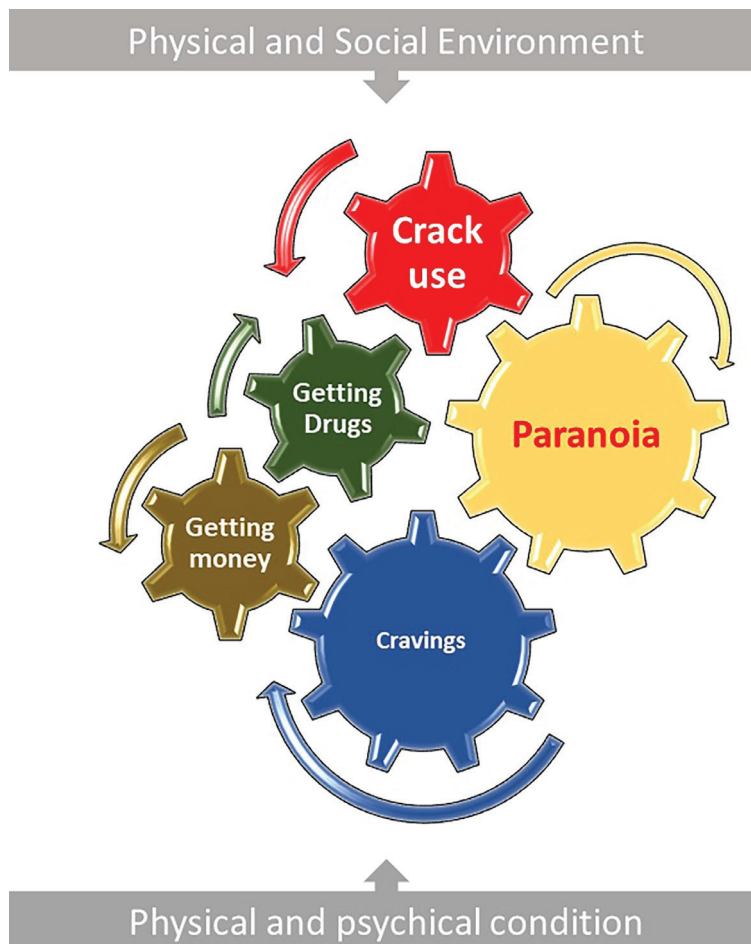
Not only life on the street, but the environment, the neighborhood, the disqualifying stigma around the crack user, the zombie<sup>16</sup>, impel the person to a situation marked by abjection<sup>18</sup> and, as in a vicious circle, degradation feeds back. "If it stinks you ask? What do you think? And to whom do you think I was calling? And who would let me use the bathroom? No chance"<sup>1</sup> (p. 233). The difficulties encountered by women who frequent Cracolândia in maintaining hygiene were reported in Alves<sup>16</sup>.

The absence of proper care appears as a corollary of their practical impossibility in a hostile environment, marked by repulsion; where the great difficulty is in "[...] finding where to smoke without getting "noied with the ghosts..."<sup>1</sup> (p. 234). A pattern of crack use renewed by the cravings in the street environment: "It hit an absurd irritation... It



got aggressive - which was bad for business..."<sup>1</sup> (p. 234). With no other possibility of relief than the morning consumption of the drug, Fabian was subject to the "run!" dictatorship<sup>16</sup>. In this incessant search for acquisition funds, he put himself in the street lights and began to ask for money and consume fifteen stones a day, numbers identical to those found by Alves<sup>16</sup> among crack users in São Paulo.

Fabian, living in "run! mode"<sup>1</sup> (p. 239), undertook his own adjustment, for maximum performance of movements and gestures, through activities codified in tactics<sup>19</sup>. This is the search for the best possible relationship between paranoia, cravings, obtaining funds, drug acquisition and crack use. As the author himself declared, he "was managing" these factors, even with all the impediments imposed by the vulnerability situation imposed by the street<sup>20</sup>. Figure 1 attempt to illustrate the relationship between the social environment and physical and psychic transformations, by means of bio-psycho-social gears.



**Figure 1.** Bio-psycho-social gears.



The difficulties in obtaining money and the memory of the day when his mother, accompanied by the police, had surprised him at the point of the drug trade turned into a succession of obsessive thoughts:

I began to believe with all my strength that there was a conspiracy, people who stayed at the previous traffic light warning not to give me money. A group of people hired by my family [...]¹. (p. 244)

Fabian named these imaginary people as the "White Army" who became responsible for the misfortunes resulting from the situation of street junkie.

The fact that the accumulated oiliness on the skin, after months without bathing, was moistening and ruining the crack stone, brought the need to bathe, making Fabian return to the maternal residence a few times. On that situation he was invited to check himself in. There were 25 admissions, many of them motivated by the desire to get away from the street. However they were not periods of abstinence, the biggest problem seemed to be in the so-called religious-spiritual model<sup>13</sup>:

[...] I spent three weeks there, praying, praying and praying, I gained a little weight, I lost my junkie look, I tidied up my clothes and calmed down my *noias*. [...] I didn't even understand how being there, in the midst of so much praying, could produce any miracle [...]¹. (p. 268)

In addition to the periods of internment, there was a continuous search to leave the environment of the street. Whether by going to crack houses, properties transformed by drug users into degraded places of consumption, or entering unoccupied houses or going to homes of new friendships made around drug use. There was also a constant search for conviviality with other consumers of the substance, something verified in Alves and Gomes Pereira<sup>21</sup> as important for crack users, it was always present as a matter of pertaining to a class. In the predilection for those who "[...] were from a family, like me, with living conditions, to dust yourself off and turn around, not to be with nowhere to go"<sup>1</sup> (p. 291); and in order to avoid what Fabian called the "crack slag": people from "poor and unstructured families"<sup>1</sup> (p. 293).

Alves<sup>16</sup> showed how the fatigued, thirsty and hungry body of the crack user on the street corresponds to a mind propitious to daydream and wake up, to then dream other times until turning off. Therefore, the state comparable to that of the zombie, which does not sum up the integrality of the life of the crack user on the streets, it concerns the movement of the exhausted body during the dream provoked after days and days of use in an alert state. Fabian reveals in his autobiography the immense difficulty in sleeping and the need, imposed by life on the streets, to continue consuming crack. "The way I was going, I only slept when exhaustion knocked me down - and that was rare. It was more common to spend the night on fire. Imagine running out of crack in a situation like this"<sup>1</sup> (p. 275).



To the alert mind corresponds a body in movement; to the fatigued body corresponds a mind that dreams awake and that, sometimes, can be more awake or more absorbed in a dream. Shuffled perception has in reality the dream, and in the dreams, the reality. When falling into a deep sleep, lying on a sidewalk or badly accommodated in his improvised refuge, Fabian was able to rest a little more, but, for this, he paid the price of fading into a long process of struggle to remain a little more semi-accommodated at the expense of the consumption of crack stones. Thus, what is called binge, the use of drugs until complete exhaustion, may be better conceptualized by considering the user, his body/mind in an environment that may provide him crack stones. These stones are obtained from the movement of the “*run*.” and necessary to keep a body/mind alert until the dream shuffles with reality; as Fabian observed about his fifth year as a drug user on the streets: “There was no room in my day or in my mind for anything that was not connected to crack. Both reality and *travelling* were almost the same thing”<sup>1</sup> (p. 305).

If drug use, in general, allows us to have a new perception of reality, crack use allows us to mix it with our dreams in an environment where everything seems to conspire to make rest difficult. In the last two years on the street, daily life became even more difficult. In order to get rid of the persecutory sensation coming from the recurrent idea that a “White Army” would come to kidnap him, the interval between a “*paulada*” (a term referring to the act of smoking crack) and another, had to decrease drastically.

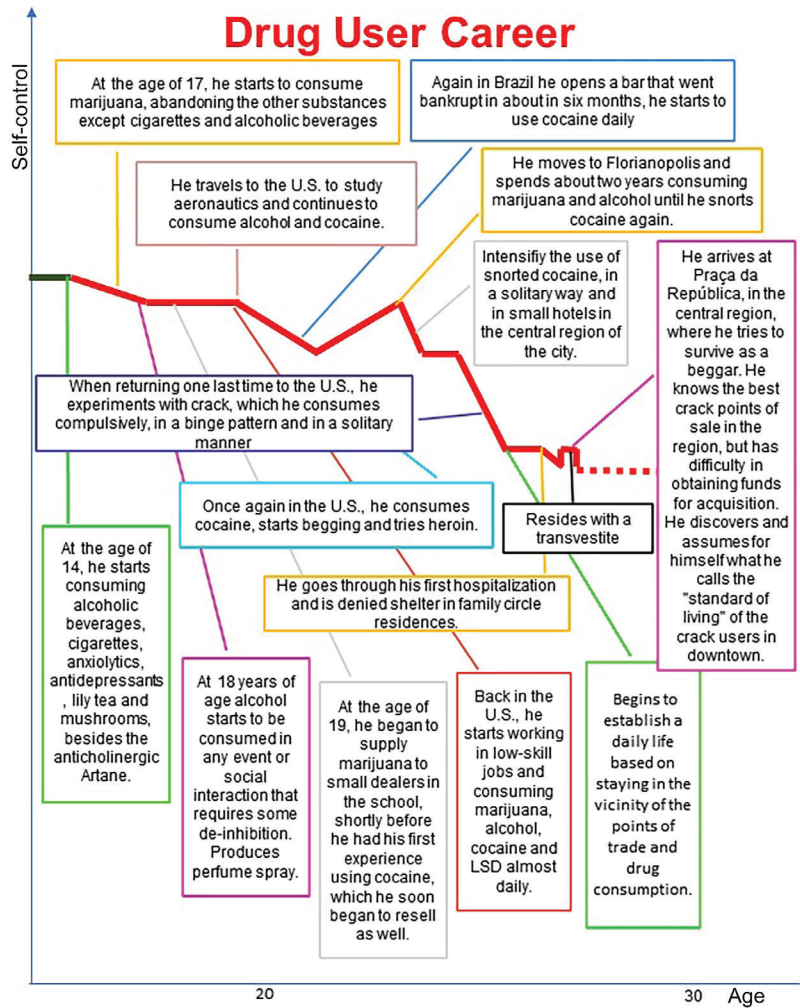
[...] the *noia* beat faster and faster, making me see things, imagine things. [...] And I couldn't stand another thirty minutes, the time to get the money in the traffic lights, change the coins and go get the crack in the sale joint<sup>1</sup>. (p. 310)

The difficulties increased even more due to his appearance and the fact that he became known. Fabian could not get money as easily. He credited this fact to the “White Army” and started hiding in the sewer, near the stream *Águas Espraiadas*. Let's remember that there are factual bases for paranoia: several arrests, serious physical violence by the Military Police, and persecution by the family in the crack trade places. “My persecutory delusions would not leave me alone for even a minute. It became a living hell, with or without drugs”<sup>1</sup> (p. 327). In the midst of all these difficulties, he planned, during the last ten hospitalizations, what he would do if he stopped smoking crack. Then, after some periods between successive hospitalizations consuming only alcohol or marijuana, he was sedated for one year, had therapy and did not consume drugs again. This concludes our description of Fabian Nacer's user career and allows us to trace his graphic representation.

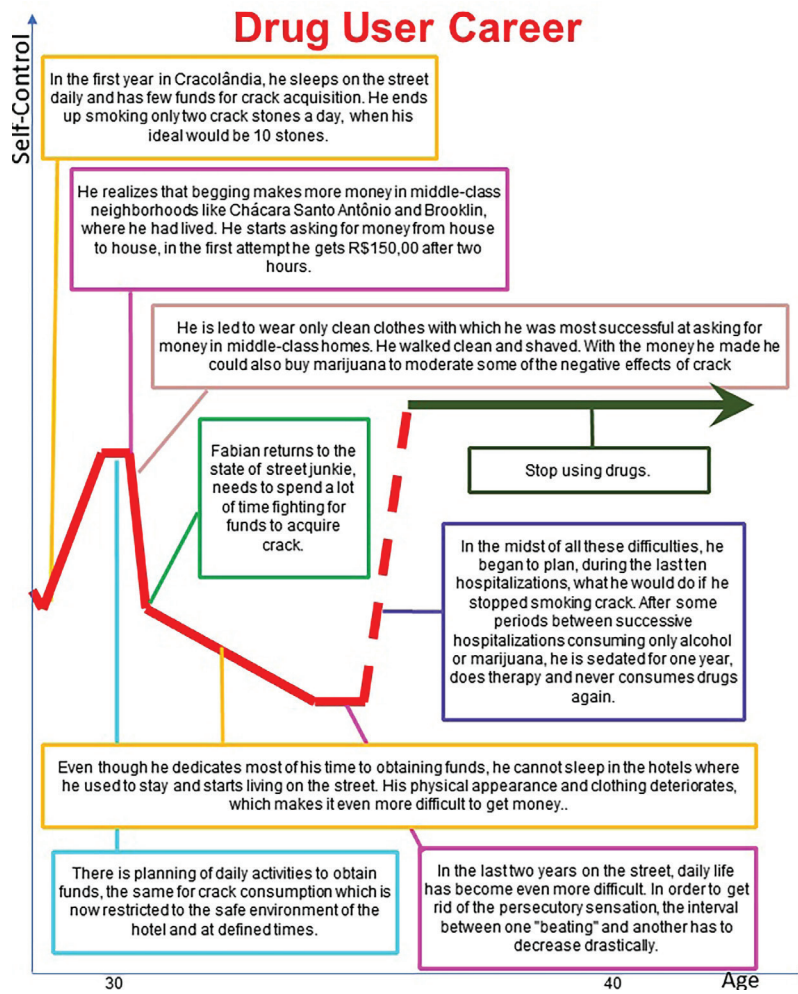
## The representation of the user's career

By placing the most striking events of Fabian Nacer's career as a drug user on a Cartesian plane, in a “mathematized” graphical representation<sup>22</sup> (p. 316), we were able to glimpse his evolution over the years, in relation to greater or lesser self-control over substance consumption (Figure 2). This procedure led us to obtain a line that marks highs and lows, which demonstrates a certain irregularity in the development of its relationship with drugs and, later, in a more accentuated way, with crack. For

better graphic exposure the timeline was divided in two parts. The first represents the beginning of drug use, still in adolescence, until almost thirty years of age. The second image represents the evolution of crack consumption until the abandonment of drug use (Figure 3). The most striking events and facts that lead to increased or decreased self-control over drug use are described in text boxes associated with each period.



**Figure 2.** The red line represents Fabian Nacer's career of drug use over the years, as to increased or decreased self-control



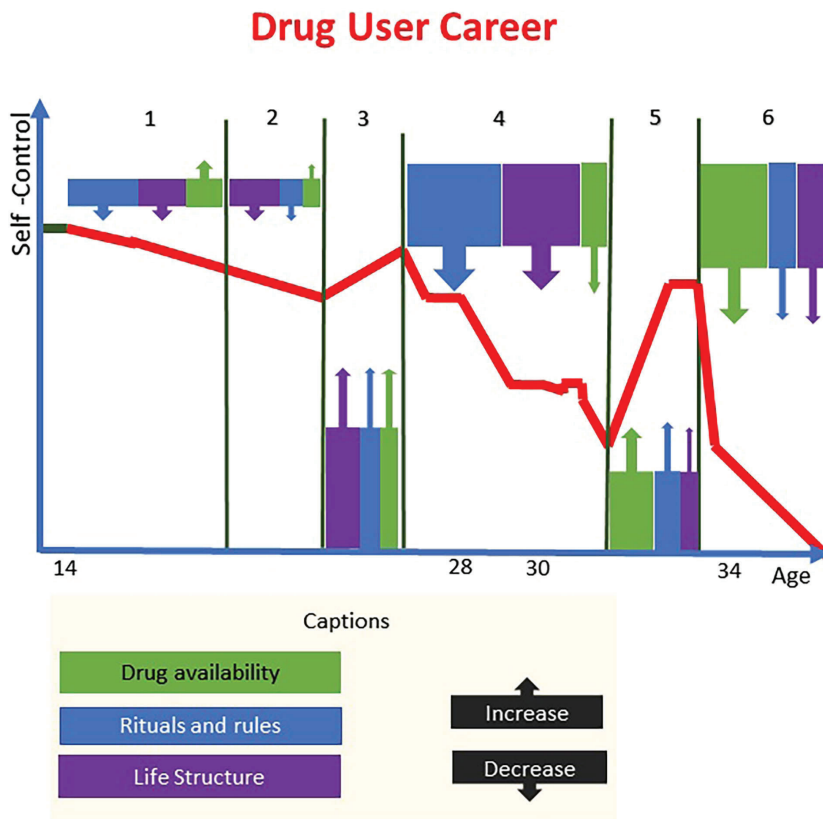
**Figure 3.** The red line represents Fabian Nacer's career of drug use over the years, in terms of increased or decreased self-control



The two figures seek to show the process of building Fabian Nacer's career as a drug user. The text boxes appear in different colors, to facilitate visualization and separation between them, linked to the red line that traces the career, and contains the most relevant facts in the changes regarding the self-control of substance consumption. The abscissa axis represents the age evolution, while the ordinate one represents self-control. The inclination of the straight lines that trace the career is determined by the variation in the intensity of the succession of events. Thus, a straight line is more inclined downward the more the events narrated are deleterious to self-control. The straight lines that point up trace their improvement.

The third image represents Fabian Nacer's career as a drug user, under the effect of the triad of drug availability, rituals and rules, and life structure (DARRLS), as present in Grund<sup>3</sup>. Drug availability (DA) depends on market mechanisms defined by trafficking, often in response to government policies such as increased repression. The rituals and rules (RR) around drug use can be learned by peer group-centered socialization, as well as be more centered on getting money or user safety and comfort, depending on other external determinants such as drug availability and life structure (LS). The latter characteristic of the social context in which drugs are consumed concerns the activities, connections, commitments and obligations of the person and is deeply linked to cultural factors such as the larger or lesser stigma surrounding the drug and the user.

Every time these aspects are represented above the red line that traces the career of Nacer's drug user is because they have exerted influence in the sense of diminishing their self-control over substance consumption. Conversely, when they are represented below the red line it is because they exert a positive influence on self-control. The three elements of the DARRLS triad are also presented in their larger or lesser influence on the development of the user's career in a certain period, and can be represented by bigger or smaller figures. The periods, from 1 to 6, were established according to their most marked characteristics, ascending or descending, in the self-control of drug consumption (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The red line represents Fabian Nacer's drug use career under the DARRLS triad



The initial period of drug use, number 1, is marked by multiple substance experimentation, in an environment shared by adolescents, in which the little presence of rituals and rules designed to control use stands out. The lack of more experienced people in the places where drugs are consumed, the troubled family and school environment, and the great social density of young people in search of sensations provided by the substances make self-control difficult. The great availability of drugs made possible by the small traffic also contributes in the same deleterious sense.

The number 2 marks a strong deterioration of self-control over substance consumption, driven in large part by the trip to the U.S. and the failure in the aeronautics course. This failure caused a brief return to Brazil, followed by a new return to the USA, but this time in very precarious conditions: without a clear objective that was filled by the intensive and varied consumption of drugs. There is no housing or fixed professional activities, nor the company of people who do not consume drugs. The great availability of substances also contributed to a decrease in self-control.

The move to the city of Florianópolis marked a period, number 3, of great increase in self-control over drug use. The lack of money did not prevent Nacer from establishing a daily routine in which he worked and consumed marijuana accompanied by moderate amounts of alcohol. Getting a job and more money changed the routine that became marked by travel and greater availability of drugs. But only the sting suffered by the local police, who seized Fabian's assets and forced him to leave the city, was able to unleash new self-control.

Upon his return from Florianópolis to the city of São Paulo, a new phase (number 4) began, characterized by constant and marked loss of self-control over drug consumption. The consumption of cocaine, which had begun in the capital of Santa Catarina, assumed a new ritual in the interior of hotels. The same solitary and binge pattern consumption occurred in a new return to the USA, only with crack. Back in Brazil, the degradation of the life structure, provoked by the daily permanence in the points of sale and consumption of crack, led the family, victim of his thefts, to condition the continued sheltering Fabian Nacer to be submitted to hospitalization. Instead of improving his self-control, he settled in Cracolândia, where he began to live as a street crack user. The limited availability of drugs made his situation even worse, forcing him into a daily life marked by rituals destined to acquire funds. There is only a short period of improvement when he lived with a transvestite.

A new and important turnaround occurred when a change of location, from Cracolândia to neighborhoods in the south zone, increased access to acquisition funds and the availability of drugs. The fifth period of the line, which represents the user's career, is marked by an improvement in rituals and rules, with a routine of a few hours dedicated to asking for money and using crack in hotels with the possibility of buying marijuana to get rid of some of the negative effects. The ritual of consuming drugs in hotels allowed Nacer to walk around in new clothes and taking baths.

Fabian Nacer's sixth and final period of use was determined by the radical decrease in funds for the acquisition of crack and its availability. This led him to a daily life immersed in the physical environment marked by the terrible accommodations in the





sewers, the chilling winters and caustic summers. Added to the violent social context, provided by the detention and beatings suffered by the police, and hostility towards people who ask for money in those middle-class neighborhoods in the south zone of São Paulo. Under such injunctions, Fabian's physical conditions deteriorated, marked by a thin and filthy body, while paranoia and cravings characterized his psychic state in the last months that remained on the streets. A life cadenced by the ritual of asking for money for hours on end until he could buy crack and then smoke in the streets in successive vain attempts to get rid of the paranoia and the crack cravings.

## Final Notes

In the course of the research we saw how the events of maladjustment in both parental homes, failure in the purpose of graduating as a pilot in the USA, the bankruptcy of a business, an automobile accident, a dismissal and the theft of his property by the police, were able to provoke great feelings of failure, as well as periods of being jobless<sup>8</sup>, were making Fabian successively more prone to the consumption of substances.

After these disruptions in the more conventional structure of life<sup>12</sup> and after many occasions when he stole property and money from family members, Fabian was removed from the domestic environment and had to live on the streets under constant repressive police violence, as pointed out by Fernandez and MacRae<sup>9</sup> regarding the process of labeling drug users.

Staying on the streets was not always the same and Fabian continuously sought the best conditions to obtain funds and use crack. For this reason, he left the dangers of Cracolândia and went to the middle class neighborhoods where he had spent his childhood and adolescence, and where the activity of asking for money was more profitable. With the new prolific source of income and ease of supply of crack, he reached a stable pattern of consumption, circumscribed to the safe environment of the hotels and with a defined schedule. Even using a large amount of drugs, he lived a daily life that he would remember years later, as a very satisfactory one.

The repressive action of the public power in Cracolândia ended up fomenting the demand for crack in new places, like the ones recently frequented by Fabian, generating new business possibilities for trafficking, more repression and an increase in the number of beggars. This caused greater difficulty in obtaining funds, taking Fabian back to the state of street junkie<sup>12</sup>. His daily life was no longer filled by the time spent inside the hotel rooms, but by an extensive succession of hours spent in a ritualized behavior of asking for money. The old satisfaction, provided by a regular supply of crack, was replaced by the cravings.

This user's career, after being represented in a diagram, proved to depend on factors associated around the DARRLS triad, oscillating between periods of increased or decreased self-control by Fabian Nacer over his drug consumption. Even with a general negative trend it was possible to visualize, at each period, the elements of larger influence. Sometimes, an improvement in the life structure or in the availability of drugs could positively influence Fabian's career. The availability of drugs proved to be the only factor whose increase could contribute, both positively and negatively, to self-control.



The development of Fabian Nacer's career as a drug user, as narrated in his autobiography, corroborates the ideas of Grund<sup>3</sup> and Zinberg<sup>4</sup> regarding the influence of the social context on the self-control of drug use. The construction of a diagram allowed us to visualize the periods of larger and diminished self-control over substance consumption as well as the main factors involved. It constituted an able tool to provide a synthetic and, at the same time, diachronic representation of the user's career, divided into successive phases regarding the increase or decrease of self-control over drug use; with the representation of the factors that intervened, positively or negatively on this self-control, its different magnitudes and importance at each phase.

### Authors' contributions

All authors actively participated in all stages of preparing the manuscript.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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O objetivo deste artigo é, com base em uma narrativa autobiográfica que descreve a carreira de usuário de drogas, construir um diagrama que permita visualizar o desenvolvimento da carreira e dividi-la em fases sucessivas quanto ao incremento ou à diminuição do autocontrole sobre o uso de drogas. A construção de um diagrama nos permitiu visualizar os períodos de maior e menor autocontrole sobre o consumo de substâncias e os principais fatores intervenientes. Tal procedimento mostrou-se uma ferramenta capaz de fornecer uma representação sintética e, ao mesmo tempo, diacrônica da carreira de usuário, dividida em fases sucessivas quanto ao incremento ou à diminuição do autocontrole, que constatamos depender da droga consumida e do contexto pessoal e social do usuário.

**Palavras-chave:** Carreira do usuário. Crack. Autobiografia. Diagrama. Autocontrole.

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El objetivo de este artículo es, a partir de una narrativa autobiográfica que describe la carrera de usuario de drogas, construir un diagrama que permita visualizar el desarrollo de la carrera y dividirla en fases sucesivas en lo que se refiere al aumento o disminución del autocontrol sobre el uso de drogas. La construcción de un diagrama nos permitió visualizar los períodos de mayor y menor autocontrol sobre el consumo de sustancias y los principales factores intervenientes. Tal procedimiento se mostró una herramienta capaz de suministrar una representación sintética y, al mismo tiempo, diacrónica de la carrera de usuario, dividida en fases sucesivas con relación al aumento o la disminución del autocontrol, que conforme constatamos depende de la droga consumida y del contexto personal y social del usuario.

**Palabras clave:** Carrera del usuario. Crack. Autobiografía. Diagrama. Autocontrol.