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YOUNG ADULTS' PHENOMENOLOGICAL MEANINGS OF CANNABIS AND LEISURE,
CANNABIS RISK-BENEFITS AND OPTIMIZATION OF DRUG EDUCATION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Recreational cannabis use has been framed by the media and academic literature as an activity pursued by pathological individuals, criminals, and those who belong to abnormal leisure subcultures. However, due to the normalization thesis, there is a growing acknowledgement that cannabis use as may be a normal feature of some people's leisure and lifestyle. The purpose of this study was to understand leisure meanings associated with recreational cannabis use, perceptions of cannabis-related risks and benefits, and views on (in)effectiveness of three drug education approaches (i.e., zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion) among young recreational cannabis users. This study used hermeneutic phenomenology based on the in-depth interviewing and photo elicitation. The interviews were conducted with sixteen individuals (18-30 years old) living in the U.S. states where recreational cannabis use is legalized. Their cannabis use patterns spanned from one-time experimental use to daily use.

The findings revealed that young adults experience and associate various normative leisure meanings with their recreational cannabis use (i.e., leisure state of mind, free time, leisure activity, and pleasure). Additionally, the participants perceived physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural cannabis-related risks and benefits. Cannabis-related risks and benefits were also conceptualized using leisure well-being model distinguishing between hedonic and eudaimonic outcomes. Furthermore, participants shared that leisure meanings served as protective factors which could help minimize cannabis-related risks towards their health and well-being.

In terms of drug education, young adults preferred the health promotion and harm reduction approaches over zero tolerance. They preferred these approaches because they represented a non-judgmental 'neutral-educational' style that accounted for a more balanced consideration of cannabis risks and benefits. They also discussed the usefulness of adding leisure

meanings to drug education, which would best align with health promotion and harm reduction approaches because they allowed for recognizing the pursuit of cannabis for pleasure. In conclusion, this study expands our knowledge on recreational cannabis use in/as leisure, which can be leveraged to enhance health communications and drug education targeting young adults who consume recreational cannabis for its pleasurable and leisurely qualities.

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To my family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There has been a centuries old desire to use psychoactive substances for acts of desperation and celebration (King, 2003). This long-standing feature of human life is often associated with seeking pleasure and/or alleviating pain. Although drug use has been rooted in human civilization, the perception of drug use and drug users are heavily impacted by societal norms. To this regard, Foucault (1977) proposed that drug users are often denied rationality and deemed illegitimate according to societal standards. However, shifting drug laws, such as the legalization of recreational cannabis across U.S. states, presents changes in the attitude towards drug use and its potentially recreational and leisure meanings. As of July 1, 2021, there are 18 U.S., states plus the District of Columbia, that have legalized the purchase and consumption of recreational cannabis to adults aged 21+ (Rense, 2021). There is also growing support for cannabis legalization in the United States, recent figures show that 61% of Americans believe cannabis should be federally legalized (Pew Research Center, 2018). These legal shifts also align with the normalization thesis that suggests drugs, such as cannabis, have become socio-culturally accommodation and accepted as a pursuit of leisure and pleasure (Pennay & Measham, 2016).

Research attention to recreational cannabis use is particularly warranted because the prevalence of cannabis use has increased among recreational users more than medical or chronic users (Palamar et al., 2021). Based on the U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, cannabis use has specifically increased among young adults aged 18 to 25 years old, of which 23% reported past 30 day use (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2020). Additionally, studies have connected lowered cannabis harm perceptions with greater likelihood of cannabis use (Danseco et al., 1999; Lipari et al., 2017). Thus, the

public health and policy experts need to consider how they will manage recreational cannabis use and its leisurely meanings and risk-benefits related to cannabis in/as leisure. Furthermore, experts will need to look at the optimization of drug education for young adults in the U.S.

Traditionally, research has focused on drug use, including cannabis use, as a form of deviant leisure related to immorality and irrationality (Malleck, 2008; Rojek, 1999a), psychological deficits (e.g., impulsivity, psychosis; Russell, 2017; Williams, 2009), disconnections between an individual and wider societal expectations (Rojek, 1995, 1999b) and abnormal leisure subcultures (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004). Drug discourses, however, have been changing and recognizing that drugs, such as cannabis, represent a normal feature of young people's modern-day leisure (Parker et al., 1998; Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004; Liebrechts et al., 2015; Pennay & Measham, 2016; Gould et al., 2018). Research has suggested that cannabis use can serve as an enhancement of young people's other leisure pursuits (Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2020), including nightclubbing (Bellis et al., 2000; Korf, 2002). According to Turner's (2018) work, drug use within leisure spaces-times (e.g., night clubs, tourist resorts, music festivals) encompasses complex spatial, socio-cultural, psychological, and economic processes. For instance, these places provide a sense of feeling united with others socially (Electronic Daisy Carnival, 2016) and offer fleeting moments of transgression and adventure through drug use (Preston-Whyte, 2004; Pritchard & Morgan, 2006). Within these play spaces, drug use is considered a "positive signifier of identity" (Turner, 2018, p. 41).

Furthermore, drug use in/as leisure can facilitate self-reappraisals related to purpose in life, quality of interpersonal relationships and heightened senses (e.g., enhanced sound, sight, smell, etc.) and foster feelings of *communitas* with strangers and moments of bonding with loved ones (Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2021). Understanding the psycho-socio-cultural complexities of

drugs in/as leisure will better prepare scholars, practitioners, and policy makers who are concerned with addressing drug use among young adults. Given the currently ever-evolving changes in drug legalization and normalization it is timely to investigate in-depth the leisurely meanings and characteristics of recreational cannabis use. This investigation can provide rich data about young drug users in their ‘leisure life setting’ (Demant et al., 2010, p. 247).

Young adults are endorsing recreational cannabis because illicit drug use is most prevalent among young adults between the ages of 20 and 29 years old (Mey et al., 2018). While college students are a high-risk group for developing addiction (Addiction Center, 2019), non-college attending adults also face considerable risk of developing substance related disorders. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA; 2021), illicit drug use was highest for young adults aged 18 to 25 (37%) and second highest for adults 26 years and older (19.9%), representing ages that span across the emerging adulthood life stage. Furthermore, in 2020 cannabis use, specifically, was highest among young adults aged 18 to 25 (34.5%) followed by adults aged 26 and older (16.3%; SAMHSA, 2021). Nonetheless, much of the existing research on substance use disorder and treatments have focused on adolescents or prevention of binge drinking among emerging adults in college (Smith, 2017). Thus, young adults (both attending and not attending college, who are both at risk for problematic cannabis/substance use), will be targeted in this dissertation.

Young adults’ developmental life stage presenting risks for substance misuse

There are various contextual and developmental factors in young adulthood life stage that increase young adults’ proclivity for substance use, positioning them as a high-risk group for substance misuse. According to developmental psychologist, Arnett (2005), there are five key features characterizing emerging adulthood (i.e., the life stage spanning from 18 years old to late

twenties) that make young adults more susceptible to (problematic) drug use: (1) the age of identity explorations, (2) the age of instability, (3) the most self-focused age of life (4) the age of possibilities and (5), the age of feeling in-between life stages (i.e., in-between adolescence and adulthood).

The age of identity explorations. Throughout the emerging adulthood life stage young adults engage in substance use to alleviate the difficulties of exploring and eventually forming a stable identity (Arnett, 2005). Additionally, they may experiment with substance use because they want to accumulate a larger range of experiences before settling into the responsibilities of full adulthood (Arnett, 2005). Thus, young adults explore their selves under the influence of various drugs to “[get] the most out of life” (Fry, 2011). Furthermore, research suggests that the sensation-seeking personality trait is heightened throughout late adolescents and early young adulthood, making some young adults more prone to substance abuse as they have a lower tolerance for repetitive experiences (Evans-Polce et al., 2018). Some young adults seek out cannabis for the potentially novel experiences (Keyes et al., 2015).

The age of instability. Emerging adulthood is also described as an unstable life stage. The on-going changes throughout this period, including, changing partners, switching jobs, or starting college, can be anxiety producing. Therefore, some young adults may turn towards self-medicating with different drugs (Arnett, 2005). *The most self-focused life stage.* This is also the most self-focused age. During this life stage, individuals set their own rules and standards for behavior and apply their own sanctions when they fail to comply (Arnett, 2005). Many younger adults move out on their own or with roommates, leading to loosened parental controls, which is also associated with increased substance use (Kypri et al., 2004).

The age of possibilities. Emerging adulthood is characterized as the age of possibilities because it nurtures optimistic expectations (at least for some; Arnett, 2005). The Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults found 83% of 18-to-29-year old's agreed that 'anything is possible' at this life stage and reported being confident that they would 'eventually get what they want out life' (Arnett & Schwab, 2013). Indeed, emerging adults are guided by having high hopes for their futures and possibly overlook the negative aspects of their drug use (e.g., drinking and driving, developing dependence, becoming arrested; Arnett, 2005). Although, Fratila and Berdychevsky (2020), found that emerging adults are cognizant of the 'irrationality' and irresponsibility that is inherently part of their drug use experiences and, therefore, practice safeguarding strategies to minimize harms (e.g., reserving drug use to leisure non-work time).

The age of feeling in-between life stages. Emerging adults are considered neither adolescents nor full adults. Thus, they are transitioning between life stages, experiencing the feeling of being in-between life stages (Arnett, 2005). Many young people view alcohol and drug use as a 'badge of adulthood' in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, along with other life facets such as, working, voting, or attending university (Fry, 2011, p. 68). Still, many emerging adults believe avoiding illegal drug use is a requirement of becoming an adult (Arnett, 1998; 2001).

Studies have also examined the flourishing and floundering well-being outcomes during the emerging adulthood life stage, generally in relation to risk behaviors (e.g., drug use). Specifically, flourishing emerging adults are characterized as having internalized their values (i.e., beliefs become consistent with one's personality and behaviors forming healthy foundation to life), developed a more stable identity, and engaging in less substance use (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Floundering emerging adults are found to be more engaged in risky behaviors,

having a tendency to internalize problems, lower identity achievement, and lower participation in prosocial behaviors (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Studying emerging adults' leisure perceptions in conjunction with the contexts and circumstances which make up their lived experiences also provides deeper understanding of flourishing and floundering outcomes (Layland et al., 2018). Moreover, the new socio-cultural landscape of cannabis legalization and normalization may alter and complicate the drug rhetoric surrounding the flourishing and floundering well-being outcomes of emerging adults consuming recreational cannabis in/as leisure. Perhaps, rather than completely avoiding drug use that is deemed legal, the anticipated norms are to consume in moderation, within certain contexts, and/or to reduce frequency of use throughout different developmental life stages.

For instance, young adults have reported expecting to naturally mature out of the 'excessive' drinking stage to a 'sensible' drinking style once they commit to more adulthood responsibilities such as having children, getting married, or paying a mortgage (Fry, 2011). For some emerging adults "maturing out" of drug use means cutting back or stopping all together once they have left college or moved out of their parents' home (Finlay et al., 2012). This maturation pattern could exemplify a unique and complex relationship between the emerging adulthood life stage and the use of cannabis in/as leisure. In order to better understand cannabis in/as leisure among young adults in the U.S., this dissertation will address three gaps in the literature, Specifically, (1) unpacking leisure meanings related to cannabis-use, (2) learning about pleasurable and leisurely evaluations within young adults' risk-benefit perceptions of cannabis use, and (3) assessing the roles of leisure within drug education approaches.

Gaps in knowledge and practice and the current study

Cannabis use in/as leisure

The first gap this dissertation will help address is constructing an in-depth understanding of cannabis in/as leisure. This involves considering normative leisure definitions. Drug use has traditionally been construed as a ‘deviant’ form of leisure connected with the ‘oppressed and dispossessed’ (Pearson, 1987; Rojek, 1995, p. 99; Stebbins, 1996). However, changing societal factors affecting norms, politics, morality, and legality are setting new trends for (re)classifying (deviant) leisure (Sullivan & LeDrew, 1999). The reliance on conceptualizing various risky behaviors mostly through a deviant leisure lens, fails to provide a holistic psycho-socio-cultural perspective on participation in these activities by excluding the possibility of normative leisure motivations and meanings. However, researchers have noted an increasing normalization of drug use within young people’s leisure (Aldridge et al., 2011; Frank et al., 2013; Measham, 2004; Parker, 2005; Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002).

Young people’s views on drugs in/as (normative) leisure are influenced by factors such as college leisure culture, the type of drug, generational attitudes towards drugs, and experiencing drug use during the emerging adulthood life stage (Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2020). Researchers have been developing a framework around the normalization of young adults’ drug use positing there is increased availability and accessibility to drugs, increased rates of drug experimentation and regular use, higher levels of knowledge about drugs, increased intentions of future use and a cultural accommodation of use (e.g., acceptance among non-drug users, drug legalization policies; Parker et al., 1998). These characteristics have been attributed to the recreational use of drugs amongst diverse contemporary young adults (e.g., across different genders, socioeconomic status, and ethnic backgrounds) who are experiencing life differently

than their parents including a delayed transition to work and family commitments allowing them to situate drugs within their leisure (Pennay & Measham, 2016). While this framework sheds light on the reality of cannabis in/as normative leisure there are significant gaps in what leisurely characteristics this normalization entails. Learning these details (e.g., the role of pleasure, relaxation, free choice) may expand already established deviant leisure conceptualizations and contribute to the less researched relationship between drugs and normative leisure.

Leisure and recreation are defined in various ways and encompass an array of characteristics, which merit further attention in the study of recreational cannabis use. Classic leisure conceptualizations define leisure as free time beyond existence (i.e., time spent on the biological things people do to stay alive such as eating, sleeping, medicating; Brightbill, 1960). Alluding to a distinction between medicinal and recreational cannabis use. Leisure is also considered free time offered outside of the things we must do to make a living (e.g., working, going to school to prepare for job; Brightbill, 1960). Leisure is therefore “a condition of the soul that is “contrary to the ideal of ‘worker’” (p. 43). Indeed, Fratila and Berdychevsky’s (2020) research found that some young adults reserved cannabis use for their free time when they were not consumed by their existence or what they were doing for subsistence. However, other young adults found cannabis useful in conjunction with their household chores, schoolwork, or job (Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2020).

Characterized by several different factors, beyond leisure as free time, leisure can be construed as activity or state of mind; a process (i.e., developing over time) and a situation (i.e., continuously situated and constructed in different contexts; Kelly, 1987, p. 49). Leisure has been defined as a recreational activity or the participation in nonwork activities (Russell, 2017). When leisure has been studied as an activity the focus has largely been on the relational pursuit of play

during one's free time (Freysinger et al., 2013). It is also assumed that these activities are pursued for their own sake and for fun (Freysinger et al., 2013). These characterizations can be applicable towards understanding young adults' perceptions of cannabis in/as leisure activity.

Leisure has also been considered as an experience or state of mind (Veal, 1992) that is pursued with a sense of personal choice and control (Henderson et al., 2001). This means leisure is a creation of decision and action that develops in its own place and time (Russell, 2017). More attention is needed to understand how cannabis use in/as leisure decision making is handled by young adults. Scholars have pointed out that characterizations of leisure as experience/state of mind involve only the *perception* of free choice and focuses exclusively on how the individual feels without considering contextual factors (Henderson et al., 2001). However, leisure can be understood beyond these individual meanings (e.g., free time, state of mind, activity; Coalter, 1999).

Thus, leisure is also viewed as a situation ever evolving in new forms and contexts (Kelly, 1987, p. 49). Leisure is perceived as a contextual experience shaped by one's physical environment (i.e., the places and spaces making up their leisure) and as part of a social constructions, such as legitimated pleasure (e.g., legalized cannabis Freysinger et al., 2013). According to Coalter (1999), leisure is embedded within several layers of contextual fabric, making it impossible to understand without its connection to the personal, social, cultural, economic, and political components of daily life. The reality of young adult cannabis users is not an individual experience, nor is it based entirely on social constructs instead their reality of cannabis in/as leisure is made up of the interaction between an individual and their community, culture, and society.

Leisure is a flexible umbrella term that does not lend itself well to simple definitions. Furthermore, “understanding leisure requires “both-and” rather than “either-or” thinking” (Freysinger et al., 2013, p. 16). Therefore, the use of drugs such as cannabis in/as leisure necessitates an understanding of how various binaries interact, rather than how they are opposed. This includes considering binaries such as deviant/normative, healthy/unhealthy, and risky/beneficial together or as continuums of leisure. This allows for more nuanced understandings of leisure and the use of drugs in/as leisure. Therefore, this dissertation will apply leisure’s complexity to the study of recreational cannabis to provide meaningful insights into young adults’ drug using experiences. These attributes can also help us better understand young adults’ negotiations of cannabis related risk-benefits.

Cannabis related risk-benefit perceptions and leisure

The second gap this dissertation will address is related to the risk-benefit perceptions of cannabis in/as leisure. Indeed, it is important to understand the ways in which young cannabis users perceive risk-benefits because cannabis risk perceptions have been changing among youth in U.S. Specifically, young people are reporting lowered cannabis risk perceptions (SAMHSA, 2021). In 2006, 55-56% of U.S. young adults aged 19 to 30 perceived great risk from regular cannabis use. However, by 2020, that statistic has dropped to 19-22% (Schulenberg et al., 2021). Furthermore, national survey research shows that the perceived risks of regular cannabis use reported in 2019 and 2020 were the lowest since the 1980s (Schulenberg et al., 2021). Although 91% of U.S. adults believed cannabis presents at least one risk, 81% believed that cannabis also offers at least one benefit (Keyhani et al., 2018). Plus, in neighboring Canada, national survey conducted with adults found that 6 in 10 people considered cannabis more helpful than harmful for their health (Spackman et al., 2017). Thus, it is important to dig deeper into the balancing act

of risk-benefits and understand the associations with leisure meanings. Nonetheless, currently the predominant drug discourse has focused on the cannabis-related health risks.

There are various risks involved in the use of recreational cannabis that align with the bio-psycho-socio-cultural model of health and well-being. This model suggests shifting away from viewing health in terms of survival and absence of disease and instead considering one's ability to engage in daily tasks, personal happiness, social and emotional well-being, and equitable distributions of health care across societies (Labonte, 2000). One tenet of this health model involves the 'bio' or biological functioning, which considers physiology, physique, sensory function, nourishment, strength, and physical appearance (Lindau, et al., 2003). In terms of the physical health dimensions, previous research has discussed cannabis risks such as psychomotor impairment (Hunter et al., 1998), and damaging respiratory effects, including chronic bronchitis and histopathological that could lead to cancer (Tashkin, 1999).

Another dimension of the bio-psycho-socio-cultural model takes into account the 'psycho' elements, including emotionality, mental well-being, personality, self-esteem and self-efficacy, ability to cope, and resiliency (Lindau, et al., 2003). Psychological cannabis risks include anxiety, dysphoria, panic, and paranoia (Beardsley & Kelly, 1999; Smiley, 1999) and psychotic symptoms among vulnerable people (e.g., schizophrenia; Hall & Degenhardt, 2000), disruption of cognitive functioning (e.g., memory, learning and temporal processing; Beardsley & Kelly, 1999; Smiley, 1999).

The final dimension of the bio-psycho-socio-cultural model revolves around the 'socio-cultural' features, including the networks of relationships that individuals have with others (e.g., friends, partners), the ways in which others encourage or discourage behaviors, and the social (dis)connectedness that results from various health behavioral choices (Lindau, et al., 2003).

Socio-culturally, cannabis use can be particularly risky for individuals experiencing challenges in familial life that spearhead maladaptive coping mechanisms and encourage harmful patterns of use (Hayatbakhsh et al., 2009). Although the risks of cannabis use have been heavily investigated, the potentially beneficial bio-psycho-socio-cultural aspects of cannabis use in general, and in association to the leisure sphere, specifically, are severely understood and understudied.

Indeed, leisure is something that is appealing to whoever is experiencing it because there are “certain anticipated benefits” (Cushman & Laidler, 1990). Some of the expected benefits of leisure, which cut across bio-psycho-social-cultural domains, include experiencing visual or auditory stimulation (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 2004), freedom (Russell, 2017), happiness (Kleiber, 2000; Russell, 2017), social or group bonding (Russell, 2017; Robinson et al., 2016) and pleasure (Esch & Stefano, 2004; Smith, 1991). Each of these expected leisure benefits can be explored in relation to cannabis in/as leisure on their own and in combination with one another. For instance, it is important to consider people’s subjective leisure experience as well the consequences of that within a broader societal perspective (Freire, 2017), such as the context of legalized cannabis use. Cannabis in/as leisure may provide young adults the benefits of relaxation and fun while presenting them with trouble in terms of their employer’s perspective of them. Understanding the risk-benefit variables of cannabis in/as leisure may require evaluations of different leisure meanings and/or anticipated benefits of leisure and how they fair alongside the potential risks.

For substances such as alcohol there already exist established ways to analyze the functional risks and benefits of consumption (Moore, 2008). Alcohol ‘benefits’ are related with moderate use and ‘risks’ are related to excessive use (Moore, 2008). Similarly, this could be

considered for the use of cannabis in/as leisure. However, there currently exists a gap in the literature in terms of better understanding cannabis risks-benefits, specifically related to medical and recreational cannabis use and the benefits of pleasure (Subritzky, 2018). Pleasure is a highly sought-after benefit of leisure because humans are biologically hard-wired to seek pleasurable opportunities (Esch & Stefano, 2004). Researchers have suggested that epicureanism and hedonistic pleasure ideals are commonly seen as part of present-day postmodern leisure (Smith, 1991). Epicureanism refers to pleasure that should be experienced in moderation, while hedonism positions pleasure as the highest goal in life (Goodale & Godbey, 1988).

According to Kernan and Domzal (2000) modern day leisure adds excitement, challenge and personal growth to life that is often void in the busy day-to day operations. Therefore, drug use has been framed as a form of commodified pleasure in the leisure sphere of contemporary society (Measham, 2004). Drug use among young people specifically has become a ‘calculated hedonism,’ meaning that drug experiences are temporary, happening under consumptive limits, and undergoing rational cost-benefit analysis (Measham, 2004, p. 319). Indeed, the discourses surrounding calculated hedonism, which require a careful analysis of drug related risk-benefits, have contributed largely to normalizing drug use as a common feature of young people’s leisure (Brain, 2000; Featherstone, 1991; Measham, 2004; Žižek, 2014). Drug-related pleasure is carefully cultivated in such a way that the fun aspects are prolonged while the hurtful aspects are avoided (Žižek, 2014). Drug users seek to make their pleasurable experiences as safe as possible while adhering to societal norms about what is and what is not acceptable hedonism (Taylor et al., 2020).

Although pleasure-seeking is one of the anticipated leisure benefits of drug use experiences it is often overlooked in drug education efforts (Subritzky, 2018). Beneficial facets

of drugs in/as leisure in general are rarely addressed in drug education (Houborg, 2010; Subritzky, 2018). With the caveat of some drug education campaigns (e.g., Fisher & Measham, 2018), which have sought to “de-dramatize” the focus on risks within drug education by acknowledging that people can make practical choices around care and safety (Race, 2008, p. 422). Nonetheless, there are still many missing details about drug-related risk-benefit calculations and their leisure meanings. There are bio-psycho-socio-cultural details to consider, such as how cannabis in/as leisure benefits and harms one’s physiology (e.g., physical health, memory, creativity), psychological wellness (e.g., sense of self, identity) and sociality (e.g., their relationships with peers, family, employers). Furthermore, it is important to understand young cannabis users’ risk-benefit calculations and associated leisure meanings contribute towards overall well-being.

Indeed, leisure is often described in terms of its connectedness to hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The hedonic well-being is also labeled as subjective well-being and revolves around pleasure attainment and pain avoidance (Carruthers & Hood, 2004). This hedonic branch focuses on the satisfaction and enjoyment of life (Keyes & Waterman, 2003), the experiences of happiness and pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2001), and positive emotion/affect (Peterson, 2006). In other words, when people are experiencing subjective/hedonic well-being they are happy more often than sad and are generally satisfied with their life experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Carruthers & Hood, 2004). On the other hand, eudaimonic well-being, which is also conceptualized as psychological well-being, revolves around human potential, including self-realization or self-actualization (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This eudaimonic/psychological branch highlights the importance of personal growth (Keyes & Waterman, 2003) and cultivating one’s fullest potential to live a meaningful life (Carruthers & Hood, 2007).

To experience the complete state of well-being (i.e., being in a state of satisfying engagement with life and experiencing one's fullest physical, cognitive, and social potential) involves feeling good and experiencing positive affect (i.e., hedonic factors) and developing strengths and capacities in meaningful ways that provide purpose in life (i.e., eudaimonic factors). Leisure (meanings) can directly impact these defining qualities of well-being by providing a context for the hedonic and eudaimonic factors to manifest (Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Scholars have suggested that determining the hedonic and eudaimonic meanings related to young adults' leisure can be helpful for creating programs for well-being enhancement and the prevention of risk behaviors in/as leisure (e.g., problematic recreational cannabis use; Anić, 2014). However, to create effective prevention and intervention focused on well-being outcomes, they must be relatable to young adults' perceptions of how their health behaviors impact their well-being. Thus, we need to also uncover the potential connections between drug use, hedonic and eudaimonic ill/well-being, and leisure.

Links between other controversial topics such as sex or violence and their impacts on health and well-being have been under researched in leisure scholarship (Berdychevsky, 2018). Although leisure could offer both risk and protective factors, most scholars choose to shy away from these "risky" research topics (Berdychevsky, 2018). Cannabis in/as leisure presents another 'risky' topic that has the potential to contribute meaningfully to research and practice. Scholars need only to dare tread these waters in pursuit of understanding the deviant/normative leisure meanings, and their associated negotiated risks-benefits. Cataloguing substance users solely on the potential risks of their drug use can potentially exclude individuals who could benefit from reducing their substance use but who show no signs of physiological dependence or addiction (Smith, 2017). Thus, a more nuanced appreciation of different risk-benefit calculations and types

of drug users paired with a developed drugs in/as leisure perspective can serve as useful ammunition for building drug education and health messaging targeting young adult cannabis users.

Drug education and the role of leisure meanings

Previous drug policies, committed to building a drug free world, have restricted our ability to create relevant drug education. These policies have also excluded any mention of drugs in/as leisure and the associated risk-benefit calculations that could be better understood and applied to drug education for young adults. The U.S. Congress enacted the Controlled Substances Act in 1972, which established the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and promoted President Richard Nixon's declaration of the 'war on drugs,' prohibiting drug use and criminalizing drug users (King, 2003). The new laws did not stop the demand for drugs, and instead drugs became a 'forbidden fruit' luring young people in (Stuart McMillen comics, 2019). This approach also focused on associating anyone who wanted drugs with criminals, leaving little concern about their actual safety and overall well-being (Stuart McMillen comics, 2019). Furthermore, in efforts to battle the 'war on drugs,' President Nixon mandated drug-related sentencing minimums that were racially inequitable from their inception (Heath, 1996), which led to skyrocketing rates of non-white demographic groups' incarceration in the U.S. (Bourne, 2008). This exasperated drug-related harms particularly among minority communities and youth.

Following the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 (Dufree, 2012), scholars observed large disconnections between science and policy; wherein science explored alternative explanations to drug use and different approaches to drug policy and education while powerful policy makers were dismissive of facts and alternatives to drug prohibition because they were viewed as inappropriate solutions (Falk, 1996). Thus, one of the key components of the war on drugs has

been to use information *against* drugs rather than to provide information *about* drugs (Dorn & Murji, 1992). This model represented an educational provision of drug information that was based on the political discourses rather than on scientific evidence of how to effectively reduce drug-related harms. Namely, this abstinence only or zero-tolerance drug education approach claimed that teaching youth to “just say no” to drugs would be sufficient (Cermak & Banys, 2016). However, drug education experts considering the cannabis legalization lens posit that the criminalizing effects of prohibition actually increased drug related harms instead of reducing them (Dalgarno et al., 2021; Harm Reduction International, 2017).

Contrary to the traditional drug prohibition stance, the legalization of drugs such as cannabis has been connected to creating a more just society wherein individuals decide for themselves if they want to use cannabis without experiencing value-laden restrictions from authorities (Belhassen & Jackson, 2018). In places where cannabis has been legalized there are reportedly less cannabis related arrests and court related instances (Farley & Orchowsky, 2019), suggesting better treatment of communities that were racially targeted in the ‘war on drugs.’ This legal approach also encourages governments to focus on providing accurate cannabis information (Gettman & Kennedy, 2014; Pudney, 2010; Room, 2014; Shechtman, 2012; Wynia, 2018). Experts posit that drug related harms are lower when drug education focuses more on positively impacting drug decision making and influencing healthy choices rather than prohibiting drug use all together (Chief Medical Officers of Health of Canada [CPHO] & Urban Public Health Network [UPHN], 2016).

Indeed, the legalization of cannabis supports the development of health-focused drug education to address cannabis harms (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2014). Thus, some are comparing the traditional “just say no” abstinence mantra to the increasingly popular

“just say know,” slogan (Mold, 2021) that encompasses philosophies such as harm reduction and health promotion. Harm reduction is concerned with minimizing drug related risks and helping drug users to reduce their use if completely terminating use is not their goal (Canadian Public Health Association, 2014; Single & Rohl, 1997). Health promotion is a related drug education approach that seeks to empower people to have increased control over their health and well-being regardless of whether they choose to use substances or not (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, 2014; Here to Help, 2013; Subritzky, 2018). Although each drug education approach has its own philosophy for addressing drug harms, there is insufficient mention of pleasure among them. Fox (1999) has suggested pleasure is often encoded as ‘risk’ in many contemporary public health discourses. Even within drug education approaches such as harm reduction that encompass a felicity calculus of pleasure over pain, pleasure is often left out because of the fear that even mentioning pleasure might be encouraging and disrupt the sought-after neutrality of informed choices (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). The failure to incorporate pleasure, however, can be detrimental to the effectiveness and receptiveness of drug education and health messaging. This dissertation will review the possibilities and shortcomings of zero tolerance, harm reduction and health promotion drug education approaches and relate them to the understandings of drugs in/as leisure.

Furthermore, drug educational approaches can address the unique harms and risks that emerge in campus settings among college students and in the communities where young people work, live, and play (Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, 2018). Drug education approaches can be particularly useful if drug use information is implemented in leisure contexts, such as music festivals, clubs, and other bounded play spaces (Turner, 2018). Indeed, scholars have suggested that to improve drug prevention efforts there should be increased focus on

determining which activities are associated with drug use and the reciprocal relationships between lifestyle formation and drug consumption (Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004). Lifestyle expectations can also be shaped by changing cultural norms such as the normalization of drug use in/as leisure (Measham, 2004; Parker, 2005; Parker et al., 1998). Researchers have asked whether there are any novel ideas to integrate into drug prevention and treatment that help address emerging adults' perceptions of alcohol and drug use as "normal" aspects of the emerging adult experience (Osberg et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2016). Thus, it is important to learn what leisure information young adults would like to see incorporated within drug education, particularly as the use of recreational cannabis continues to be legally accommodated in American culture. Both the legalization and normalization shifts surrounding young adults' cannabis use predicate the need for updated drug knowledge.

There is growing support for 'sensible drug information' that encourages a 'reflexive and sensitive' approach towards drug education built on accurate evidence and research, which engages young adults in challenging and critical conversations around drug use (Blackman et al., 2018). The leisure definitions/characteristics (e.g., pleasure) and the risk-benefit calculations related to cannabis in/as leisure can be meaningful contributions towards these conversations and assist drug educators and messaging designers to create content that is relevant for young adult cannabis users. Effective drug education messaging for young cannabis users requires creating meaningful promotional materials resonating with their reality (Roe & Becker, 2005), which includes legalized recreational cannabis and potential leisurely meanings. Thus, this dissertation can provide a meaningful perspective from the leisure lens about the unfolding dialogues surrounding cannabis use and drug education within the bigger bubble of post-prohibitive society.

Research purpose and research aims

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand meanings related to cannabis use and leisure, cannabis- related risk and benefit perceptions, and views on (in)effectiveness of drug education efforts among emerging adults who engage in recreational cannabis consumption.

Aim 1: To explore the potential links between cannabis use and leisure among U.S. emerging adults.

- Research question 1.1: What are the links (if any) between cannabis use and leisure among emerging adults?
- Research question 1.2: Whether and how can drug use be construed in/as leisure among emerging adults?

Aim 2: To explore cannabis-related risk and benefit perceptions among U.S. emerging adults.

- Research question 2.1: What are the risk perceptions (e.g., physical, psychological, socio-cultural) associated with cannabis use among emerging adults?
- Research question 2.2: What are the perceived benefits (e.g., physical, psychological, socio-cultural) associated with cannabis use among emerging adults?
- Research question 2.3: What are the links (if any) between risk and benefit perceptions and the views of cannabis use in/as leisure?

Aim 3: To explore the emerging adults' views of the effectiveness and appeal of drug education approaches.

- Research question 3.1: What are the emerging adults' experiences with drug education?
- Research question 3.2: What are the emerging adults' perceptions of effectiveness and appeal of the different drug education approaches (e.g., zero tolerance, harm reduction and health promotion)?

- Research question 3.3: What are the potential ways of including leisure meanings across the three drug education approaches (e.g., zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion)?

Conclusion

Addressing the identified gaps and aims benefit both knowledge and practice. Societal knowledge of drug use is no longer being passed down, or vertically, from one generation to the next but rather through the exchange of social knowledge happening horizontally across intragenerational or peer interactions (Zinberg, 1984). Thus, young adult cannabis users themselves and their personal experiences are a valuable fountain of information. This generation of young adult cannabis users is particularly important to study because they are the first modern cohort experiencing socio-cultural shifts of cannabis legalization. The phenomenological qualitative approach of this study is ideal for learning the way young adults interpret their lived experiences with cannabis within the current socio-cultural landscape. Thus, young adults' perceptions and experiences will be utilized in this study to enhance academic theories informing cannabis-leisure meanings, risk-benefit perceptions, and effectiveness and reactivity towards drug education approaches.

Furthermore, adding onto other leisure scholars' works (e.g., Berdychevsky, 2018), it is important to learn about leisure that is not innately considered beneficial or appropriate (e.g., cannabis in/as leisure) because dismissing such activities from the framework of legitimate leisure hinders the leisure sciences relevance (Franklin-Reible, 2006). Therefore, while it is important to be concerned about drug-related harms and related risk behaviors in the legalization era, it is equally crucial for there to be formal recognition that not all young people's cannabis use is harmful (Watson & Erickson, 2019) and that for some it is "controlled, recreational use"

(Hathaway, 2019, p. 605). Opening ourselves to these realities can impact public health practices such as health communication (e.g., drug education programs and campaigns). The nuanced understandings of young adults' recreational cannabis use can also become part of health experts educational training. This can better equip them for their interactions with young drug users so that they are not stigmatizing or judgmental when learning about their (leisure) lifestyles and providing them health and well-being recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

SYNTHESIZING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Health and prevention efforts

Health is a widely known concept across world cultures, although its definition can encompass different characteristics. In 1958, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed a vastly more inclusive definition of health that linked health to well-being, in terms of "physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1958). Prevention seeks to inhibit and/or reduce unhealthy and harmful behaviors and can take on different shapes and stages.

First, primordial prevention focuses on the general social and economic circumstances of the society a person is living in (Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada [AFMC], 2013). Examples of primordial prevention include establishing healthy communities, promoting healthy lifestyles in childhood and developing energy green approaches. Next, primary prevention focuses on reducing the occurrence of disease by addressing disease related risk factors or by enhancing resistance to unhealthy behaviors (AFMC, 2013). These approaches focus on promoting the abstinence from participation in risky or health threatening behaviors. Lifespan primary prevention can encompass initiatives that seek to prevent the severity of taking on risky behaviors such as using illicit drugs early on in a young person's life (Gullotta & Bloom, 2014). Preventing the initiation or delaying the onset of risk behaviors such as drug use is deemed necessary for young people to have a healthy development trajectory and easier transition into adulthood (Foxcroft & Tsertsvadze, 2011). Primordial and primary prevention efforts attempt to reach citizens before they ever participate in or initiate risky behavior, such as using cannabis in/as leisure.

Secondary prevention seeks to control the progression into bad health or disease, tracking the risk or disease, and creating interventions that occur before aggregated symptoms appear (AFMC, 2013). Lastly, tertiary prevention works at modifying the risk factors and focuses on rehabilitation or learning to accommodate to life with the disease or compromised health and trying to enhance quality of life with the adverse health (AFMC, 2013). Thus, secondary and tertiary prevention related to cannabis in/as leisure revolve around encouraging safe use and avoiding the progression towards more problematic use. Each level of prevention has its own strengths and weaknesses and can be applied to drug use and the avoidance of problematic drug misuse. Indeed, prevention efforts related to non-medicinal drug use can be challenging to address, especially in societies which may encourage and culturally accommodate or accept recreational drug consumption (e.g., recreational cannabis use; Gullotta & Bloom, 2014). The increasing support for cannabis legalization, in particular, presents a new legal approach to drug use that will need to be paired with appropriate prevention efforts built for a post-prohibitive drug society, wherein law enforcement is no longer the first line of defense against cannabis use and/or the related harms.

Drug abuse prevention

The U.S. federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (Brounstein & Zweig, 1999) has identified various approaches to drug prevention. The outlined strategies include: (1) disseminating information designed to increase knowledge and alter attitudes, (2) providing prevention education that teaches personal and social skills useful for avoiding problematic substance use, (3) identifying problematic substance use and referring individuals to treatment, (4) increasing community resources for substance abuse prevention, and (5) promoting policies

geared towards reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors that eliminate substance misuse problems throughout communities.

Indeed, drug abuse prevention strategies share a common goal of strengthening “protective factors” (e.g., social skills, strong family bonds, attachment to school, and active involvement in community organizations) and reducing “risk factors” (e.g., abusive family, school failure, early experimentation with drugs and living in communities where substance abuse and drug dealing are pervasive; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000). Drug related risks and prevention can also be broken down into (1) universal interventions that target an entire segment of the population (e.g., youth) without specific attention to those who present high levels of risk; (2) selective interventions that focus on specific sub-groups of the population who are at an elevated risk for DSM-V substance diagnosis (e.g., personal, family or community factors); and (3) indicated interventions that are aimed at youth already experimenting with alcohol and other drugs or are participating in other risky behaviors (Cermak & Banys, 2016; U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

The effectiveness of substance abuse prevention strategies is highly contingent on how consumers of substances perceive the related risks and benefits. Perceptions of risk-benefit will be touched upon throughout the remainder of the chapter and fully addressed in terms of cannabis specifically in the literature review chapter of the dissertation. Understanding target audiences’ perceptions of drug related risk-benefits is crucial for creating effective drug education. Drug education experts are tasked with the job of responding to drug users’ risk-benefit calculations through health communication and messaging features that can resonate with them and lead to informed drug related choices that foster healthy lifestyles.

Health communication and messaging

Increasingly, health information and drug communication are reaching young people through unofficial channels (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction [EMCDDA], 2008). Furthermore, young adults are facing conflicting messaging and education about drugs from different sources and contexts that can be mapped using the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), as their health information is filtered through the individual, interpersonal, school, community/neighborhood, and broader societal layers. Jointly one could also consider the factors that impact transitions into adulthood, such as peers and leisure, parents and families, society and culture, and the labor market and education system (HM Treasury, 2007). The potential for youth to hear mixed messages about cannabis further emphasizes the need for the development, implementation, and evaluation of more nuanced prevention efforts (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, 2015). Therefore, understanding how prevention efforts such as drug education are communicated and received among U.S. young adults and college students, as well as their links to leisure, is an important goal of this dissertation.

Health communication theories and messaging mechanisms

Health communication is often founded on the premise that only a limited number of variables are needed to influence health behavior choices (Fishbein et al., 2001). The Integrative Model (IM; Fishbein, 2000) has been proposed to explain the relationship between intention and performing a certain health behavior and has been utilized in the health communication field. According to the IM framework the underlying psychosocial variables that lead to outcome beliefs (i.e., whether or not performing the behavior will have negative or positive consequences, or outcomes) are reliant on beliefs about whether or not the specific group of individuals should

be performing that behavior (i.e., normative beliefs) and whether one is able or not to perform the behavior under different circumstances (efficacy beliefs; Fishbein, 2000). Health Messages that are perceived to be more likeable and effective can positively affect attitudinal and behavior changes (Fishbein et al., 2002). Thus, health communication is largely concerned with messaging mechanisms that are used to promote healthy behavior and often times seek to change beliefs about and/or motivations to engage in risky or adverse health choices.

Most health communication theories follow a similar plan by focusing on the stimuli that is intended to trigger motivation in an individual so that they will perform an act, which is also influenced by the individual's appraisal of their environment and resources (Murray-Johnson & Witte, 2003). Stimuli is designed to motivate or reach the internal drive of a person and influence the extent to which the person feels compelled to appraise their resources and environment to determine what coping mechanisms and resources are available to promote positive behavior and/or to avoid the potential health threat. Thus, health message designers rely on stimuli to grab the attention of their intended message receivers (Atkin & Freimuth, 1989).

The final part of health communication is concerned with measuring the effect the stimuli had on the intended audience (Murray-Johnson & Witte, 2003). Determining the effectiveness of public health campaigns or messaging depends on the way the audience evaluates the messaging both affectively (Batra & Ray, 1986) and cognitively (Hastak & Olson, 1989). This means measuring variables related to changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, knowledge, and behaviors as well as feelings of reactance or denial. The public which receives various health communication and messaging has the options to either accept or reject the message and/or actively re-interpret the contents wherein the message takes on a new set of meanings that can potentially be in direct opposition to the original intended message (Mold, 2021). Indeed, health

communicators must keep in mind how their messaging relates to psychological reactance and the adverse or unintended effects message exposure can have on their target audience.

Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT) is commonly discussed within the health communication field. PRT looks at reactance or the motivational state of negative affect and cognition occurring when people react to experiences where they perceive their “behavioral freedoms” are being threatened (Brehm, 1966). Reactance occurs when one’s sense of freedom collides with a threat to freedom and the cognitive process of trying to restore the freedom (Quick, 2012). In an attempt to restore these freedoms individuals may feel they need to increase their engagement in the discouraged behavior, which is characterized as a “boomerang” effect (Dillard & Shen, 2012; Dillard & Shen, 2005). For example, youth who feel there is a threat to their freedom of choice thereby experience a pressure to reestablish that freedom by reacting in an oppositional manner to the messaging and further engaging in the behavior (Hornik et al., 2008). There are various factors that can influence reactance to health communication.

Health messaging language and content largely impact reactance (Slavin & Earleywine, 2019). Messages with rigid, controlling and/or explicit language are more likely to cause reactance (Grandpre et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2007). These flawed message characteristics include imperatives (e.g., “must” or “need), absolute allegations, contempt toward other perspectives or threatening warnings (Slavin & Earleywine, 2019). Certain target groups, such as college students, have reported greater reactance when they experience exposure to freedom-threatening language (Quick & Stephenson, 2008; Rains & Turner, 2007). In some cases, communicators have sought to induce reactance and therefore manipulate the language of the persuasive appeal (e.g., ‘any reasonable person would agree that not exercising is a problem’), however, this type of language has often been deemed ineffective in messaging related to alcohol

(Rains & Turner, 2007) and drug use (Burgoon et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2006). Reactance is also connected to personality (Slavin & Earleywine, 2019). Individuals that are high in “trait reactance” are more likely to experience reactance to a message (Dowd et al., 1994). These individuals are also more likely to display denial, dominance, independence, mistrust and to value the right of self-governance or self-directing freedom (Dowd et al., 1994). Reactant prone individuals are also more likely to engage in risky health behaviors than low-reactant prone individuals (Miller et al., 2006). Thus, reactance theory and reactance proneness are important considerations for health campaigns and messaging that are geared towards addressing risky behaviors (Miller & Quick, 2010; Quick et al., 2009), such as cannabis in/as leisure.

Nonetheless, reactance has also been implemented as a useful persuasive strategy. One example is the “truth” campaign that was designed to address teen smoking (Bauer et al., 2000). This campaign sought to be transparent about reactance effects by including messaging on their website that said, “tell someone not to do something and they will.... we're not here to tell people not to smoke, because, well, it doesn't work” (truth®, 2012). Moreover, health communicators have leveraged reactance effects by portraying the tobacco industry as controlling deceptive agents attacking individuals’ personal freedom by making people dependent on tobacco, suggesting people should really be angry with tobacco manufacturers (Farrelly et al., 2005).

Slavin and Earleywine (2019) highlighted the importance of applying PRT to marijuana prevention and health communication in particular, noting that messages tailored to decrease reactance will likely increase the messages potential effectiveness in reducing marijuana related harms. PRT has also been used to explain resistance to specific language choices within persuasive messaging related to marijuana (Crano et al., 2017). According to Crano et al.’s (2017) study, using extreme language leads to stronger perceptions of attempted control,

weakening anti-marijuana messages' intended effects. The use of moderate, non-directive language, however, can generate significantly lower perceptions of persuasive intent, which is related with significantly fewer positive attitudes toward cannabis and lower intentions to engage cannabis use. Understanding which messaging features are positively evaluated and less likely to cause reactance by intended audiences helps researchers and message designers to create effective public health campaigns that address health-risk behaviors such as drug (mis)use (Fishbein et al., 2002; Strasser et al., 2009). However, it also important to consider how different drug education approaches or frameworks rely on different messaging styles and contents to inform the public about drug related health information.

Drug education approaches and their messaging styles

There are various socio-cultural and historical influences that have impacted the evolution of different drug education approaches, specifically related to cannabis in the Western U.S. context. In the late 1930s, Harry Anslinger, then America's Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, warned that marijuana use would lead to the destruction of American youth, prompting the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 that prohibited marijuana cultivation, possession, use, sale and distribution as well massive prevention efforts in the form of drug education (Rosenbaum, 2000). The drug education programs throughout the 1940s, 50s and 60s relied heavily on the use of “scare tactics,” which dated back to the Women’s Christian Temperance movement and intended to frighten young people out of using marijuana and other drugs such as LSD, heroin and methamphetamine (Beck, 1998).

Throughout the 1970s, drug education took on a more ambivalent tone that suggested the mere use of addictive drugs was not necessarily bad and encouraged youth to learn about all the favorable and unfavorable effects of drugs in order to make their own decisions about drug use

(Goldstein, 1994). This softer approach to drug education was created by the Drug Abuse Council, the 'Do It Now' Foundation and federal government (Rosenbaum, 2000). However, it did not last long because the late 1970s and early 1980s refocused drug education efforts to be explicitly concerned with the goal of primary prevention (Rosenbaum, 2000). During this time, informative books written by medical doctors and geared toward youth, such as *Chocolate to Morphine: Understanding Mind-Active Drugs* (Weil & Rosen, 1983), were removed from drug education curriculum because they were considered to put too much emphasis on the importance of non-abusive drug relationships rather than total abstinence (Rosenbaum, 2000). These efforts proved America was re-committed to the zero tolerance or abstinence only drug education approach.

Today's socio-cultural and historical moments represent a novel legal stance on drugs, such as cannabis, by the way of cannabis legalization and liberalization which requires the careful analysis of different drug education approaches and how they fair against the new laws. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation will be to explore three different drug education approaches, including (1) zero tolerance or abstinence only, (2) harm reduction, and (3) health promotion and their health messaging contents, features, and links to leisure.

Zero tolerance/abstinence only approach to drug education

Contemporary Western society continues to embrace zero tolerance or abstinence only drug education approaches as the first line of defense against drug use (Ser Song, 2019). This is regarded as the most traditional drug education approach and suggests that with the correct drug-free messaging youth can be deterred from ever trying or experimenting with drugs (Rosenbaum, 2000). With this scope in mind, zero tolerance strategies to drug education and health messages portray marijuana users as pathological, deviant, dangerous, disconnected from conventional ties,

easily influenced by peer pressure, and filled with personality problems (Rosenbaum, 2000), leaving little to no room for the acknowledgement of recreational cannabis users or the reality that some young people may desire to use cannabis in/as leisure.

The foundation of abstinence only drug education relies on the assumption that if young people know the dangers of marijuana they will never be tempted to try it (Bachman et al., 1990). Abstinence-only programs have also been characterized by the utilization of misinformation and scare tactics to obscure youths' appetite for drug curiosity and the implementation of top-down information (Rosenbaum, 2000). The "top-down" information refers to the idea that young people have little if anything at all to contribute to drug education and, therefore, re-enforces the idea that the only appropriate decision is abstinence. Thus, those in favor of abstinence only education support educating youth about the dangers of drugs rather than on how to use drugs responsibly or how to make responsible informed drug choices (Dupont, 1996). Additionally, drug education campaigns that have instilled the "just say no" response to drugs have also presented youth with heavy doses of self-esteem and self-control education intended to fill any individual voids that would potentially put them at risk for using mind-altering drugs, such as marijuana (Rosenbaum, 1996). Beyond these attributes, the zero-tolerance approach also aligns with those who support the legal prohibition of drugs in society.

The zero tolerance or abstinence only approach to drug education is not only representative of a primary prevention approach it is also heavily reliant on law enforcement and positioning law enforcers as drug educators. Prohibitionists purport that prohibiting drugs can eliminate the widespread use of them and suggest that if currently illegal drugs were decriminalized or legalized there would be an increase in drug use caused by the increase in availability (Chen & Kandel, 1995; Dalgarno et al., 2021; Robins, 1995). Furthermore, those that

favor prohibition laws and zero tolerance education fear that any alternative (and more tolerant) approaches to currently illegal drugs would undermine the widespread social contract that opposes the use of drugs (Dupont, 1996). Prohibitionist policy supporters believe zero tolerance can effectively signal attention to the risks posed by brain-rewarding chemicals, such as cannabis, and encourage a widely accepted social contract among citizens wherein drugs are prohibited with full force of the criminal law (Dupont, 1996).

Zero tolerance/abstinence only messaging tactics and effectiveness

There are a range of messaging features, tactics and content that have been utilized in zero tolerance drug education and each yield varying degrees of effectiveness. Fear and threat features are commonly used in zero tolerance health communication related to drug use (Stephenson et al., 1999). Scare tactics and textual fear-based messages have been utilized in substance use prevention to create anxiety with the aim of provoking drug related behavioral change (Holtan, 2002). These features can motivate individuals to avoid engaging in a risky behavior by implying to the audience that they are responsible for personal and social prevention of negative health outcomes (e.g., “If you don’t participate in stopping AIDS, then you are part of the problem”; Guttman, 2000). Indeed, not having enough fear in health messaging can leave readers unmotivated to process the message (Witte, 1992a; 1994). However, extremely high levels of fear in messaging can create defensive responses, reactance, or simply get disregarded (Dillard, 1994; Witte, 1992a; 1994).

Nonetheless, effective fear and threat messaging exists and often includes two crucial components (1) perceived severity and (2) perceived susceptibility (Murray-Johnson & Witte, 2003). Perceived severity is the seriousness of the health threat, which takes into account severity of the harms that are believed to happen as a consequence of the threat (i.e., the harms related

with drug use). Perceived susceptibility refers to the likelihood that individuals will experience consequences associated with a health threat (Witte, 1992a; 1992b). In other words, susceptibility looks at the level of risk individuals face for potentially experiencing the health threat. Greater perceived severity and susceptibility are related to increased attention towards the message resulting in the motivation to self-protect against the health threat (Witte, 1998).

Health communication and drug education utilizing scare tactics and fear-based messaging was heavily reliant on moral appeals and exaggerations of the harmful effects caused by substance use rather than highlighting the real harms (Beck, 1998). Abstract concepts of danger such as the “fried egg” advertisements (i.e., “this is your brain, this is your brain on drugs” showing an egg being fried and burned), sponsored by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, suggested the effect of substance use is similar to the effect of cooking an egg (Rosenbaum, 2000). However, these advertisements were ridiculed by young viewers and did little to prevent cannabis use among them (Rosenbaum, 2000).

In terms of effectiveness related to fear-based messaging, Zimmerman et al. (2014) found mixed results related to marijuana attitudes, beliefs and intentions to use among a group of undergraduate students (age 18-21; n=243) who were exposed to fear-based messaging in a video Public Service Announcement (PSA) on marijuana prevention. Zimmerman et al.’s (2014) study revealed that there is a fine line between how threatening the message can be in order for it to be effective; they found that the combination of moderate (or higher) threat and framing cannabis use as a negative loss to one’s well-being proved to be counter-productive, while other combinations of threat and framing cannabis abstinence as a positive gain to one’s life were useful in reducing positive attitudes toward marijuana. Similarly, Hornik et al.’s (2008) evaluation of the United States’ 1999 to 2004 National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaigns’

scare tactics and fear-based messages had negative effects that led to weakened social norms against substance use as well as increased intentions to use marijuana. Although, according to Esrick et al.'s (2018) systemic review there are more positive and mixed results regarding effectiveness of fear-based messaging, the health communication images in their study represented a newer style, which provided accurate information and avoided communicating any direct commands to the audience. Additionally, none of the messages in Esrick et al.'s (2018) study displayed patronizing or moralizing attitudes towards substance use.

Similar to the rationale informing fear and scare based tactics, some anti-drug campaigns or messaging have relied on emphasizing the worst-case scenarios in terms of drug use. However, these are sometimes perceived as inauthentic and lead some drug users to create symbolic boundaries to distance themselves from the stigmatized personas that are depicted in the messaging (Copes, 2016). For example, 'The Montana Meth Project' and 'Faces of Meth Project' have served more of a role in shaping the public's perceptions of methamphetamine users than to accurately reflect who they are or what their real experiences are like (Marsh et al., 2017). Critics of fear-based and worst-case scenario messaging tactics suggest that scaring young people into drug avoidance increases the stigmatization around drugs and drug users and utilizes images that do not appear credible to those who are more familiar with drugs (Rhodes, 1990). Furthermore, scholars suggest that these tactics can have adverse effects that lead young people to use drugs as an act of rebellion, which is related to psychological reactance (Hansen, 1985; Power, 1989; Woodcock, 1986). Indeed, mass media ads and PSAs that rely on fear appeals can be risky because they can elicit psychological reactance to the message and, therefore, reduce the advertisements effectiveness (Shoenbachler & Whittler, 1996).

Another strategy for zero tolerance messaging includes autonomy and aspiration threats. For instance, the “Be Under Your Own Influence” drug education program wanted to reduce marijuana uptake trajectories among youth (Slater et al., 2006). Their messaging style was built with developmentally appropriate goals in mind. Therefore, they emphasized that the non-use of cannabis would support youths goals of autonomy and achievement or competence development, which are considered innate psychological needs that persist across the life course (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The messages posited that cannabis use would undermine one’s ability to plan for the future, achieve goals, become independent, and excel in other activities such as sports or creative pursuits. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)’s “My anti-drug” campaign was another example of using mass media prevention for youth and drug use relying on autonomy and aspiration threats (Slater et al., 2011). Studies diverged in terms of concluding the overall effectiveness of this campaign. Some studies found there were iatrogenic effects, meaning that there were harmful side effects to the results based on contextual or external factors, including the effects of psychological reactance or the “boomerang effect” (Hornik et al., 2008). A re-analysis of the campaign’s effectiveness supported iatrogenic effects only for younger but not older study participants (Scheier & Grenard, 2010). Also, one study that relied on regional field test methods found positive campaign effects (Palmgreen et al., 2007).

The “My Anti-Drug” campaign was later rebranded into the marijuana prevention campaign, “Above the Influence,” which continued to emphasize the negative consequences cannabis can have on autonomy and future goals (Slater et al., 2011). One study found that while awareness of the “My anti-drug campaign” was negatively associated with anti-drug attitudes, the rebranded “Above the Influence” campaign was positively associated with anti-drug attitudes (White, 2008). Additionally, Slater et al. (2011) found that exposure to “Above the Influence”

messaging predicted reduced marijuana uptake at the fourth and final wave of data collection that was measured by self-reports. However, the emphasis on drug non-use in relation to autonomy and achievement threats could also be interpreted as a threat to autonomy for young adults and college students that want to use cannabis in/as leisure and who argue that they are still working towards their achievements (i.e., graduate college) while also consuming cannabis in their free time. This kind of contemplation continues to shed light on how important it is to grasp a better understanding of the role leisure meanings play in terms of building appropriate drug education campaigns and messages for the young adult population.

Universal primary drug prevention strategies such as Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign and the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program are commonly known examples of zero tolerance (Cermak & Banys, 2016). Established in 1983 and still existing today, DARE, became the most widely used school-based substance abuse prevention program in the U.S., serving the mission to provide youth with information and refusal skills to live drug free lives (United States General Accounting Office, 2003). The delivery system enacted by the DARE program utilizes law enforcement officers as instructors of drug and violence-based education that empowers students to make decisions for living safe and healthy lifestyles free of violence and drug use (DARE, 2019). According to its mission statement, "D.A.R.E. envisions a world in which students everywhere are empowered to respect others and choose to lead lives free from violence, substance use, and other dangerous behaviors" (DARE, 2019).

Both Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign and the DARE program focused on creating drug prevention messages that mis-informed youth with exaggerated claims by pretending that there was no real difference between drug use and abuse, and thus stuck to the principle that the only decision one needs to consider with drug use is refusal. Such hypocritical

messages which were intended to curb drug experimentation resulted in youth rejecting and dismissing the messages (Rosenbaum, 2014). Scholars have critiqued the “top-down” structure and lack of personal decision making that characterizes zero-tolerance drug education campaigns, positing that once young people recognize they are being taught to follow directions, instead of how to make their own decisions, then they will feel betrayed and resentful (Brown, 1997 in Sloboda & Bukoski, 2006). This critique also suggests that as long as federal mandates force this “follow directions” pretense, drug education programs and policies will continue to fail drug abuse prevention among young adults (Brown, 1997 in Sloboda & Bukoski, 2006). In this regard, the DARE program was also criticized by students and youth who felt that this institutionally led initiative did not take their opinions into account; they reported that they felt like DARE cops “just wanted [youth] to do what they told [them]” and “like a lot of adults and teachers can’t bring themselves down to talk to students” or to care what they think (Wysong et al., 1994). Indeed, the results of six long-term evaluations of the DARE program, which compared intervention groups (students that received DARE) and control groups (students that did not receive DARE), found no significant impacts of DARE in long-term prevention of drug use (United States General Accounting Office, 2003). Some researchers even found higher drug using rates amongst students who were exposed to the school-based DARE education prevention efforts compared to those who were not exposed to the program (Rosenbaum & Hanson, 1998).

Thus, some have confidently concluded that zero tolerance drug education programs and messaging have been an enormous taxpayer drain with few demonstrative results (Kreft & Brown, 1998). Although, the intention of this approach is to educate society about the harmful effects of drugs and persuade people to remain drug-free and create a drug free society (Ser Song, 2019), the legalization of recreational/adult cannabis is presenting a new reality and

opportunity to move away from the traditional zero tolerance approach (Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health [CICMH], 2018). It is important to consider that the “abstinence only” education and the strict or punitive policies imposed on cannabis users have proven to be ineffective in reducing cannabis related harms (Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, 2018; Simons-Morton et al., 2010). Due to the differentiated cannabis laws and perceptions, anti-marijuana health communication can often fall short of its mission, as expressed by college students who criticized anti-marijuana ads for being more exaggerated and unbelievable than tobacco ads (Ginsburg & Czyzewska, 2005). Scholars have also reported that individuals who received an abstinence only message about marijuana were more likely to experience reactance than individuals who received a message promoting harm reduction (Slavin & Earleywine, 2019). The study conducted by Slavin and Earleywine (2019) also suggests that any anti-marijuana messaging will require considerable finessing for it to be productive, including more language that supports autonomy and individual decision-making. This further emphasizes how important it is to explore alternative options to zero tolerance and law enforcement drug education and messaging styles, such as harm reduction and health promotion.

Harm reduction drug education approach

The shift away from a law-and-order approach to drug prevention efforts involves prioritizing a public health lens for drug education where strategies such as harm reduction are used to support those who have developed or are at risk of developing a problematic relationship with substance use (Canadian Public Health Association, 2014). Scholars originally offered a narrow definition of harm reduction policies or programs as those that seek to decrease adverse health, social, and economic consequences of drugs use while the user continues using drugs (Single, 1995; 1997). Thus, this approach did not include any abstinence only programs. Instead,

harm reduction's foundational mission was reducing the harm of drugs rather than drug use *per se* (Heather, 1995; Lenton & Midford, 1996; Single & Rohl, 1997; Strang, 1993). As stated by Ernst Buning, "if a person is not willing to give up his or her drug use, we should assist them in reducing harm to himself or herself and others" (Buning, 1993). Drug education that is based on harm reduction presents an alternative to the zero-tolerance approach (United Nations International Drug Control Programme, 2000) that may fall under secondary prevention efforts. Harm reduction proposes that primary prevention efforts' fail to acknowledge drugs as normal and even beneficial in some cases, which leads to significant problems in terms of drug education and health messaging (Hathaway & Erickson, 2003). Therefore, the harm reduction approach advocates for education about drugs rather than education against drugs and takes into consideration the risks and benefits offered by the context in which the drug use takes place (Cohen, 1993; Hunt & Barker, 2001).

The view of harm minimization also renders drug use governable by choice, wherein the drug user is perceived as a consumer existing in a world of consumerism that is fully capable of distinguishing between which (drug) choices are advantageous and which are disadvantageous (O'Malley, 1999; O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). Harm reduction programs provide accurate information about drugs intended to benefit young people by making them more discerned in their drug use decisions through education that focuses on how to minimize harms associated with drug consumption, rather than focusing solely on the prohibition or abstinence of drug use (Cohen et al., 1990; Munro, 1996). Harm reduction relies on scientific standards of rationality and addressee's specific health problems with practical cost-benefit analysis (Erickson et al., 1997; Heather et al., 1993).

The National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse (i.e., the “Shafer Commission”), which issued its final report in 1973, strongly supported the decriminalization of cannabis and represented a congressionally established bipartisan commission that laid the intellectual groundwork for harm reduction (National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse, 1972). Thus, the idea of harm reduction has been floated throughout drug prevention discourses for some time. However, conversely to zero tolerance, harm reduction approach seeks to change drug policies to become more tolerable and less restrictive or punitive. Indeed, harm reduction aligns with liberal policies embracing ideals rooted in humanitarianism and libertarianism (Newcombe, 1987). Harm reduction, which is also known as harm minimization, has also framed itself as an approach that seeks to guarantee limited community damage (ACMD, 1994). Harm reduction proposals have called for: establishing needle exchanges for IV drug users to reduce the risk of infection spread; making cannabis, heroin, and LSD available for physicians to prescribe in treatment of other illnesses; reducing or abandoning drug testing in many settings (e.g., the workplace); reducing or eliminating law enforcement and other supply reduction efforts that seek to limit access to illegal drugs; reducing criminal penalties for drug sales; and removing penalties for drug use or possession and encouraging methadone treatments for those dependent on opiates (Dupont, 1996).

Harm reductionists posit that strict drug prohibition is a failed policy similar to alcohol prohibition during the 1920’s in the United States (Musto, 1995). Instead, the harm reduction approach is rooted in the public health tradition and desires to get government and other legal authorities out of the way of drug users (Dupont, 1996). Advocates of laws that incorporate harm reduction take a “public health approach to the problem of drug abuse rather than a moralistic, punitive one, which views such abuse as criminal in and of itself” (Fischer, 1997, p. 62).

According to this stance, illicit drug (mis)use is understood as an alternative lifestyle, or an irresistible compulsion driven by addiction rather than a criminal and deviant voluntary behavior. The mentality of harm reductionists shifts the zero-tolerance rhetoric of endangerment to highlighting the harms that arise from prohibitive policies. However, the comparative importance of harms between zero tolerance and harm reduction requires looking into the debates of laws and politics that are related to power, autonomy, identity, human flourishing, equality, freedom, and other interests (Harcourt, 2000).

The institutional loosening of anti-drug stances has been met with opposition from parents and other sources of authority that fear they are sending “mixed messages” to young people about drug use (Resnik, 1990). Nonetheless, regulations that have been introduced with the legalization of cannabis (e.g., taxation, public consumption bans, advertising restrictions, and minimal legal age) have proven to be effective in reducing drug use (Stockings et al., 2016). Furthermore, while it is important to be concerned about increasing drug use-related harms and related risk behaviors in the legalization era, it is also crucial for there to be formal recognition that not all young people’s cannabis use is harmful (Watson & Erickson, 2019). This kind of recognition can be fruitful towards developing programs and educational resources that include nuanced information about drugs beyond the limited explanation about how to be against drug use and users (Watson & Erickson, 2019).

Harm reduction favors meeting people ‘where they are at’ on their spectrum of drug use and connecting individuals with services to help them in the most appropriate way (Harm Reduction Action Center, n.d.) Thus, this approach acknowledges that drug users fall on a spectrum with two opposing ends (i.e., total abstinence and total dependence) marked by varying differences between each type of user that fall between the two ends (Harm Reduction Action

Center, n.d.). It is also important to note that harm reduction is not necessarily in opposition with abstinence as a possible strategy for reducing drug-related harm. The principle difference is that harm reduction gives priority to the immediate and practical goal of reducing the harms users face, which is particularly relevant for those who cannot be presently expected to end their drug use or who choose to continue engaging in drug use (Lenton & Single, 1998). According to Strang (1993), the “true champion of harm reduction” does not take a pre-determined position on drug use as necessarily being “good” or “bad” (p. 3-4). Instead, their response towards the drug use should be determined solely by the extent of observed or anticipated harm which results from the drug use (Strang, 1993). Many harm reduction policies, programs, and interventions share the following principles: avoiding exacerbating the harms caused by misusing drugs, treating drug users with dignity and normalcy, maximizing intervention options, prioritizing achievable goals, and remaining neutral towards drug legalization or decriminalization (Lenton & Single, 1998).

Harm reduction messaging tactics and effectiveness

Harm reduction education and messages also adhere to their own messaging tactics and style. Some of these tactics include reframing issues related to young people’s recreational drug use with a public health perspective, wherein, interventions such as the United Kingdom FRANK advertising (FRANK, 2021) seek to encourage youth who are current users to reduce their use and minimize their risk of harm (Fletcher et al., 2010). This is done by informing young people about drug related risks, such as mental health problems associated with cannabis use. Beyond enhancing young people’s knowledge of drug related risks, harm reduction strategies and messaging also have the potential to inspire young people to moderate their drug use by enabling a holistic approach, which motivates them to pursue alternative forms of recreation that

can build their self-esteem, foster positive relationships, nurture optimism for future aspirations, and connect young people with their local communities (Fletcher et al., 2010).

The most effective health messaging campaigns that follow the harm reduction approach are paired with non-judgmental, credible sources for young people and their parents (Fletcher et al., 2010). Evidence-based cannabis-specific harm reduction education resources match the well-established informal guidelines of sensible and controlled cannabis use adhered to by long-time drug users (Hathaway, 2004; Lau et al., 2015; Swift et al., 2000; Tatarsky, 2010). Thus, this approach prefers to take into account the lived experiences and insights from current drug users themselves when preparing educational drug materials. Harm reduction education and messaging suggests that one of the first weapons against cannabis related harms is information. This approach accepts that knowledge cannot guarantee behavior change. Nonetheless, the premise of harm reduction messaging is to offer the provision of accurate, empirically based, non-sensational, and timely information on the short- and long-term risks of cannabis that allows cannabis users to make informed decisions about their cannabis use and equips them with the ability to identify if/when their use is becoming problematic (Swift et al., 2000). The contents and language used in harm reduction messaging also aim to properly inform about drug related harms while simultaneously respecting people as a free individual who “will seek to reduce potential harms to [themselves] and others” (Hathaway & Erickson, 2003, p. 478).

Indeed, respect for civil liberties is an integral piece of harm reduction messaging (Erickson et al., 1997). Harm reduction messaging also appreciates that the effects of cannabis are variable and suggests that problematic effects may be mediated by numerous factors including dosage, method of use, drug experience, tolerance, concurrent drug use, drug expectations, and knowing how one’s personality interacts with the drug (Adams & Martin,

1996). In this regard, harm reduction incorporates Zinberg's (1984) notion of drug, set, and setting, which refers to (1) the pharmacology of the drug itself, as well as the dosage level (2) the "set," or psychological state of the user at the time of use, and (3) the setting where the drug use occurs, which includes geography, social group, and/or even the weather.

Specific cannabis related harm reduction messaging involves acknowledging that at usual levels of social usage, cannabis causes a sense of euphoria and well-being as well as altered awareness and a distorted perception of time, while simultaneously including information about safer cannabis use practices (Hathaway & Erickson, 2003). Scholars have argued that harm reduction-based education should be committed to providing health information that also reflects acute intoxication and acute cannabis effects, rather than focusing messaging efforts to promote a futile prohibitive education that completely avoids teaching young people how to manage cannabis effects safely (Morgan et al., 1993). Safer practices that are advertised through harm reduction messaging include attempts to repeal customary smoking habits of deep inhalation or breath holding which facilitates the deposition of particles without increasing the amount of THC that is delivered to the system (Morgan et al., 1993). Along these lines, some harm reduction messaging suggests that the respiratory harms related to cannabis use can be eliminated by eating cannabis or drinking cannabis tea (Adams & Martin, 1996; Compton et al., 1996). Although this recommendation may not be as widely accepted because figuring out dosage for oral consumption of cannabis is different and the onset effects also require more patience as they are less predictable (Adams & Martin, 1996; Compton et al., 1996).

Safer cannabis using practices also include tips for reducing adverse psychological effects by either not consuming it at all or limiting the amount of cannabis consumed, not mixing cannabis with other drugs, using cannabis in a safe environment with trusted friends, and being

aware that cannabis can exacerbate or precipitate schizophrenic episodes in those who are schizophrenic or are prone to psychotic symptoms (Swift et al., 2000). Additional safety tips that are commonly included in harm reduction messaging are related to discouraging the use of cannabis before operating heavy machinery, such as driving a vehicle post cannabis use (Swift et al., 2000).

Harm reduction messaging also acknowledges the perceived benefits of cannabis, such as its ability to provide relaxation and a ‘time out,’ which may also help explain continued use despite users simultaneously recognizing cannabis-related problems (Swift et al., 2000). This approach designs messaging that acknowledges many cannabis users can control their use without help (Reilly et al., 1998; Swift et al., 1998). However, it also posits that cannabis dependence increases with frequency and duration of use, suggesting that those who consume daily or near-daily represent the highest group at risk for becoming cannabis dependent (Hall et al., 1994). By preparing messaging that can speak to different types of cannabis users, including those who can and cannot control their use, harm reduction strategies promote different self-help materials. These self-help materials include using a cognitive behavioral approach, which seeks to modify or manage cognitions, such as irrational thought patterns, and their associated behaviors (Grenyer et al., 1995), aversion therapy, or the faradic, rapid smoking, and quick puffing of THC-free marijuana (Smith et al., 1988) and marijuana anonymous (MA) programs to help assist cannabis users regain control of their lives without marijuana or with reduced use (Swift et al., 2000).

Harm reduction-based education has in fact been effective with various populations, including young adults aged 18 to 28 years old and who have identified as heavy cannabis users (Fischer et al., 2012). However, the effectiveness of harm reduction programs have also been

called into question. Miller (2001) argues that harm reduction strategies lack understanding on a meta-ethical level. In other words, the approaches to minimizing risk do not consider the inequalities present across different illicit drug users' environments. Therefore, rather than enabling users to be safer about their drug use, harm reduction programs actually serve to reinforce the status quo around drug use (Miller, 2001). It is also important to note that measuring the effectiveness of reducing drug related harms is more challenging than measuring abstinence. Therefore, it is important for an evaluation to select a subset of harm reduction goals they would like to consider (Newcombe, 1992). Newcombe's measurements of harm reduction outcomes consider different drug related harms and categorizes them under various dimensions including, type of harm (health, social, economic), level of harm (individual, community, society), time (short, medium, and long-term effects), duration (temporary, permanent), and severity (mild, moderate, major; Hawks & Lenton, 1998).

The intention of harm reduction strategies is to present cannabis consumers with layers of safety measures, which begin with informing users that the most obvious way to avoid cannabis health-related harms is to abstain from consumption (Swift et al., 2000). However, the message designers are also cognizant that this is not necessarily acceptable or desirable for users who instead wish to minimize the risks associated with their cannabis use (Swift et al., 2000). Thus, one of the key challenges to cannabis harm reduction is developing appropriate health messages, which can be relevant for larger target groups. Scholars have suggested that it is important to analyze the drug normalization debate (i.e., drug use as a normal feature of leisure) and the harm reduction approach across different social contexts and cultures to create more tailored drug responses (Erickson & Hathaway, 2010).

Overall, harm reduction attempts to meet individuals who consume drugs, such as cannabis, at their current level of use and provide drug education and health messaging material that curbs their progression towards problematic use. Indeed, harm reduction focuses on reducing drug related harms versus reducing or eliminating drug use per se, nonetheless like zero tolerance this approach does uphold that abstaining from drug use is the safest way to avoid all potential drug-related harms. Alongside zero tolerance and harm reduction approaches there exist another alternative ideology that can be applied to drug education, namely health promotion.

Health promotion drug education approach

Similar to the harm reduction approach, the literature on health promotion also aligns with a public health perspective, and due to this alignment, often times health promotion and harm reduction are considered indistinguishable (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, 2014). Harm reduction, supply reduction, and demand reduction have all been organized under the umbrella of health promotion strategies that can be used to address substance use and related problems (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction, 2014; Here to Help, 2013). However, there are considerable differences in their foci and tone of messaging. Thus, in this dissertation the researcher sought to differentiate between the three aforementioned approaches which include, zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion.

Prevention efforts, such as primary abstinence only approaches, seek to delay, reduce, or eliminate drug use while secondary prevention efforts, such as harm reduction, emphasize personal agency over reducing substance related harms. However, the health promotion approach is concerned with improving health on a broader level by seeking to strengthen health, well-being, and resiliency, reducing stigma associated with substance use(rs), and narrowing down on motives why individuals experience harmful behaviors (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse

and Addiction, 2014). The WHO (1986) broadly defines health promotion as “the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health.” Similarly, Nutbeam (1985) suggested that health promotion enables people to increase their control over health determinants (i.e., lifestyle and living conditions that determine health status). Therefore, instead of approaching substance use from the perspective of trying to protect people from disease or harm, health promotion seeks to enable people to increase the control they have over their health whether they are using substances or not (Here to Help, 2013).

The goal of health promotion is to promote complete physical, mental, and social states of well-being. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion was introduced by the World Health Organization in 1986 and includes the foundational pillars that inform this health education approach (WHO, 1986). The health promotion pillars include: (1) building a healthy public policy, which includes coordinating the formulation of health, income, and social policies that foster greater equity; (2) creating supportive environments, which revolves around reciprocal maintenance – that involves taking care of each other, our communities, and our natural environment; (3) strengthening community action, which is centered on the empowerment of communities and enhancing their ownership and control of their own undertakings and destinies; and (4) reorienting health services, which is concerned with shifting the role of the health sector beyond its responsibility for providing clinical and curative services and into a health sector that operates from a broader interdisciplinary lens that includes social, political, economic, and physical environmental components.

Health promotion relies on a human approach that posits the human experience is complex and believes that the best way to improve health is to help people understand the complexity of the human experience and to give them skills to manage it (Here to Help, 2013).

Thus, it advocates for humans as actors in their own lives rather than victims. Health promotion appreciates that our choices and behaviors in life are influenced by a variety of factors including our biology and physical and social environments, which all shape our development and existence throughout the life course. Experts in policy and practice that choose to utilize a health promotion perspective emphasize focusing on health rather than illness, and advocate for empowering people, while simultaneously recognizing that health is multi-dimensional and also influenced by factors out of individual control (Hight, 2003). Building off the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, The University of British Columbia was created to guide health promotion efforts in colleges and universities. Both foundational charters recognize that health is an everyday lived experience that is created and shaped by the places where we work and play (The University of British Columbia, 2015; WHO, 1986).

Applying the health promoting way to young adults' risk behaviors has led to the development of health and education programs that address sociocultural processes associated with the engagement in risky behaviors, moving beyond information provision (Fitzgerald et al., 2002; Lowden & Powney, 1999). This approach prioritizes understanding risky behaviors, such as cannabis use, within the wider context of young people's lives and the social worlds they are a part of (Hight, 2003). Health promotion pushes back on traditional perspectives of viewing substance users as diseased or as individuals who are controlled by a substance, and instead emphasizes the "person first" as a more balanced approach taking into account a range of human factors from biological to environmental; this promotes understanding a "thinking and feeling human being" that "uses particular substances within certain contexts and for specific reasons" (Here to Help, 2013). Framing individuals who consume substances this way avoids the tendency of othering or characterizing all substance consumers as "addicts."

Health promotion acknowledges that humans have been using psychoactive substances for ages to promote health and well-being, but at the same time there is the recognition that these same substances have caused or have the potential to cause harm to individuals and the communities they are a part of (Here to Help, 2013). Indeed, one of the key features of wellness and well-being, which are the tenets emphasized in health promotion, is the prioritization of self-responsibility for the individual in making conscious health choices (Dussault, 2017). According to the health promotion perspective, a healthy community is one in which a high proportion of individuals are choosing to engage in health-promotion actions such as following the low-risk guidelines for alcohol use or cannabis use and are adopting safer consumption techniques.

However, there are considerable risks to relying on the promotion of self-responsibility in terms of cannabis use and the health promotion framework as marginalized and vulnerable people with problematic cannabis use may have difficulty in taking responsibility for their actions or making rational choices around their consumption habits (Subritzky, 2018). Nonetheless, the desired wellness and health outcomes can be achieved using a variety of motivational strategies and social marketing campaigns as well as increasing health literacy to increase the number of people who have the knowledge and skills to manage their personal health (Here to Help, 2013). From a health promotion perspective, drug education should prioritize developing health literacy (i.e., the knowledge and skills needed to manage substance use) rather than promoting an ideal lifestyle that people should aspire to live up to (Here to Help, 2013). Drug prevention efforts should focus on the prevention of harmful patterns of use, instead of the prevention of use all together, which can help sustain the development of healthy individuals and communities.

Health promotion messaging tactics and effectiveness

The health promotion approach and its related messaging style acknowledge that substance use can be potentially beneficial, as well as potentially harmful if it leads us to an unhealthy lifestyle, just as food and sex help humans survive and thrive they can also cause problems related to one's health, relationships, and/or sense of self-worth (Here to Help, 2013). Indeed, the health promotion model also informs us that the reasons for using various substances will influence the patterns we develop in terms of its use and the levels of risk we face in terms of potential harmful consequences (Here to Help, 2013). For instance, using a drug out of curiosity or for some other fleeting motive may result in experimental or occasional use, while using drugs for something such as alleviating chronic sleep problems, or mental health represent more strong and enduring motives that can lead to long-lasting and intense substance use. This also means that certain places, times, and activities also influence our substance use patterns and the likelihood of experiencing harm, which highlights the importance of social and cultural context of drug use. For instance, it is important to understand the leisure context and the role of drugs in/as leisure. Furthermore, health messaging that follows the health promotion perspective should be informed by careful research, target specific age groups and drug use patterns, set clear realistic goals, and seek to provide direct non-media information through various community levels (e.g., college campuses; Catford, 2001).

The role of young people in health promotion and the formation of drug education and health messaging should also be noted. Due to the multi-disciplinarity emphasis on involving various community members, the health promotion approach is interested in listening to young people's views about appropriate and effective health education (Highet, 2003). Thus, young adults are framed as partners in health promotion, whose views and choices regarding health can

be accepted as valid in their own right, recognizing that young people are competent to make and implement their own health related decisions (McQueen et al., 1992). Health promotion efforts discount the use of hypocritical messages that try scaring youth because they restrict the openness and honesty that is needed to promote message acceptance by younger target audiences (Oncheva & Donev, 2008). Thus, the messaging goals of health promotion involve going beyond providing information and include ways to develop decision making and increase levels of self-confidence (Oncheva & Donev, 2008).

Messaging features that fit under the health promotion approach focus more on choice (e.g., “the choice is yours” or “you are free to decide for yourself”) that are also known as a restoration postscript, wherein the message persuades the audience that if they make the right choice for themselves they will restore their freedom and not be controlled by a harmful behavior (Miller et al., 2007). This can significantly reduce the perceived threat to freedom and therefore diminish psychological reactance (Miller et al., 2007). Therefore, this messaging tactic offers a cost-effective resolution to reducing psychological reactance. Additionally, health promotion greatly emphasizes “responsible use” messages, which were initially introduced in alcohol education as an alternative to zero tolerance messaging (Milgram, 1996). Advocating for responsible use and informed drug decision-making also incorporates conceptualizations from the seminal work of Norman Zinberg, who asserted that contextual meanings are central components to marijuana and other drug use (Zinberg, 1984).

Indeed, Zinberg’s (1984) notion of ‘drug, set and setting,’ which were applicable to the harm reduction approach, are repackaged as ‘substances, environments, and individuals’ within the health promotion framework (Here to Help, 2013). ‘Substances’ refers to the regulation of substances, which is connected to supply regulation that ensures quality of substances and

appropriate restrictions. ‘Environments’ encompasses building social and physical contexts that encourage moderation and present stimulating but safe spaces for using substances. Lastly, the ‘individuals’ category is concerned with increasing health capacity and resiliency to develop active responsible citizens that are in control of their own decision making and health choices regardless of drug use. This re-iterates how important it is to include nuanced and contextual understanding of drug use in educational efforts (Grob & Dobkin de Rios, 1992). The emphasis on understanding context within drug education further illuminates the necessity for a deeper grasp of drugs such as cannabis in/as leisure.

Concrete numbers and reports related to health promotion effectiveness in terms of cannabis are still minimal and hard to come by as this approach was not entertained in the long history of drug prohibition. Although health promotion does offer an alternative to zero tolerance and a slightly different angle to harm reduction, health promotion has also been heavily contested and even considered a problematic concept (Naidoo & Wills, 1994). The multi-disciplinary nature of health promotion is what has made it problematic because it requires opposing thought schools to interact with one another, including different practitioners who are from diverse paradigms and carry differing beliefs, values, theories and ways of working (Bunton & MacDonald, 1992). For instance, divisions within a body of knowledge, such as medicine, psychiatry, or general practice, can perpetuate inter-professional differences that halt the effectiveness of a health promotion framework and its mission (Bunton & MacDonald, 1992).

It is important to recognize that health promotion is embedded within a socio-cultural web and thus coated with tensions in terms of differing value positions related to power, knowledge, responsibility and autonomy (Beattie et al., 1993). Thus, health promotion

approaches can be heavily impacted by social values and widespread ideologies which lend this approach subject to transformation under various socio-cultural processes and shifts (Lupton, 1995). This facet of health promotion is important to consider in light of the current cannabis legalization and liberalization trends in society, which may also have implications for understanding the role of cannabis in/as leisure.

Preparing drug education and messaging strategies for post-prohibitive future

Under the new realities of cannabis legalization and liberalization, it is useful to examine the complex relationships that exist between the government and the governed in terms of drug use and understand the role of policy experts and practitioners within this relationship (Mold, 2021). This chapter has reviewed three different drug education approaches and their respective health messaging tactics and effectiveness, particularly as they relate to governing young adults' drug related risks. It is important to review different health communication strategies considering that research has found health education messages often times have little impact on the risk behaviors of young people (Shucksmith & Hendry, 1998). Even when younger people are presented with accurate information about cannabis risks, they “don't care” about the health effects and continue to use (McKiernan & Fleming, 2017). Perhaps this is because young cannabis users have reported viewing cannabis as a natural drug that is widely used by most youth (George & Vaccarino, 2015; McKiernan & Fleming, 2017; Spackman et al., 2017).

Another popularly held and accepted cannabis-harm belief, that also diminishes the potential effectiveness of drug education, suggests that cannabis affects everyone differently, and thus, each individual selectively determines which degree of harm cannabis produces for them (George & Vaccarino, 2015). Formal health communicators, such as drug educators and health messaging designers, are battling against cannabis users' already formed perceptions of cannabis

related risks and benefits. Similar to other health behaviors, drug related risk perceptions can have an inverse relationship with actual health choices, meaning that if perception of risk decreases than engagement with that particular behavior increases. For instance, youth that perceive cannabis as more harmful are also less likely to partake in using cannabis (Boak et al., 2015; Volkow et al., 2014).

Furthermore, young people may find the continual exposure to drug-related risk messaging from official, formal entities unhelpful and confusing (Shiner & Newburn, 1997). Indeed, various groups of drug users and drug cultures remained unreceptive to the “just say no,” or abstinence only approach, as well as harm minimization strategies (Hendry et al., 1993; Parker et al., 1998; Plant & Plant, 1992; Shucksmith & Hendry, 1998). In the past, society and the health education messaging tended to portray young drug users as individuals alienated from their families, unable to resist peer pressure, attracted to risk and excitement, and having no respect for authorities (HMSO, 1995). However, the reality of young drug users is far more complex. The stereotypical claims othering drug users from conventional societal members only represent a minority of young drug users (Hendry et al., 1993; Shucksmith & Hendry, 1998).

Indeed, listening to young people is central to the drug policy process as well as day to day practice in relation to services provided for young people (Blackman et al., 2018; Highet, 2003, p. 29). This is especially important because so long as young adults regard “official” messages as unhelpful, inconsistent, and confusing, they will turn their attention towards alternative sources of knowledge, including what they learn from their day to day experiences and “local experts” such as older siblings, and friends (Highet, 2003, p. 182). It is indisputably important to keep in mind how different drug education approaches and their messaging features fair in comparison to the personal drug experiences of young people (Jones & Rossiter, 2001). In

a national survey conducted with college students in the UK, findings showed that the majority of college students look towards their peers and online forums for educational and informational materials on drug use (National Union of Students, 2018). Additionally, researchers have established that when young people find inaccuracies or inconsistencies between drug education and what they have personally experienced with drugs, they become deeply skeptical of all information from other official sources (Cohen, 2012; Midford et al., 2012). Therefore, it is important to understand where students are currently accessing advice or educational information related to drug use and if any of the information they access relates to the role of drugs in/as leisure.

Some of the drug related support provided to young adults, particularly from official channels such as U.S. higher education institutions, can be considered inadequate under the new reality of recreational cannabis legalization. The type of support offered to college students and young adults often targets those who have already developed problems with substance use, leaving behind a wide array of drug using youth (Harm reduction International, 2010; Werb et al., 2016). It is imperative to provide drug education services and content that is applicable to individuals who may not need treatment per se but who can nevertheless benefit from educational information about drugs (National Union of Students, 2018). This is particularly relevant because statistics show that globally nearly 90% of people who use drugs are not diagnosed with drug use disorders (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2016). Therefore, a large proportion of drug users can benefit from drug education tailored to different types of drugs users. This also reiterates the importance of understanding drug use(rs) on a spectrum of consumption patterns and motives and uncovering how leisurely or recreational meanings shape these differences.

Although it may be true that total abstinence should be everyone's desired relationship with drug use, it is not a realistic choice for some, and thus, there must be a more pragmatic rather than moralistic approach to cannabis consumption and its risks (Rosenbaum, 2000). By paying attention to the distinctions between use and abuse drug educators can provide youth with drug knowledge in a practical and pragmatic. A practical approach, therefore, includes the recognition of risk and pleasure within drug using experiences. The notion of pleasure and experiencing pleasure and excitement from drug taking has historically been absent in drug education materials (Moore & Valverde, 2000), even if that may be the "whole point of taking drugs" (Reith, 2005, p. 236). This is often avoided because of the fear that even mentioning pleasure within drug prevention may be encouraging (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). However, the governance and educational provision of pleasure and risk related to drugs can mirror the conversations surrounding sexually transmitted diseases and 'safe sex' discourses (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). Sex is recognized as pleasurable, making pleasure a warrantable motive to participate in it even if it presents risks in terms of unsafe sex, and encourages the provision of education about how to practice sexual safeguarding strategies (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). This is very fitting for the consumerist society and the neo-liberal era of freedom that we live in, which nurture and endorse the idea of pleasure as a reward, even in the form of drug-taking (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). Furthering our understanding of pleasure and leisure provides a more holistic psycho-socio-cultural response to young adult drug use within the era of post-prohibitive drug policy.

Then, this requires us, as researchers, along with other experts and practitioners, to create new strategies for learning about effective cannabis health education from young adults themselves. Then, we must utilize these insights from young cannabis users when designing

drug education and health messages. Indeed, learning how young adults perceive cannabis in/as leisure will be useful towards drug education efforts. The potential leisure connotations such as, pleasure or free choice can help us understand related risk-benefit calculations, and help experts differentiate between types of drug users and their motivations for use (e.g., occasional users only using on weekends, pairing cannabis use with other leisure activities, etc.). It will be through explorative studies such as this dissertation that we can gain information about drug related risks-benefits, and safeguarding strategies that actually resonate with younger adults' experiences. Scholars and practitioners alike can push themselves to dig deeper into the nuances that make up different cannabis use patterns and preferences, and therefore leverage the heterogeneity among the cannabis users for educational purposes. These types of efforts will aid in the creation of drug education approaches and appropriate messaging styles that are reasonable, relatable, and relevant to young adult cannabis users. Additionally, this study will be able to shed light on the role and potential usefulness of leisure meanings within drug education design.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leisure in its binary terms

Leisure can be characterized by several different factors and defined in a variety of ways. Indeed, leisure can be construed as time, activity or state of mind; additionally, it can represent a process (i.e., developing over time) and a situation (i.e., continuously situated and constructed in different contexts; Kelly, 1987). Leisure can be studied in a structural sense, whereby theory and researchers set parameters as to what can qualify as leisure (Kleiber et al., 2011). Alternatively, leisure research can take on a subjective approach, which allows each person to set delimitations of leisure context informed by their perspectives about what leisure is or how it can be defined (Kuykendall et al., 2015). Perceived freedom and free choice are also associated with one's ability to experience leisure (Jackson & Scott, 1999). Ultimately, leisure is not restricted to the activities one partakes in during their free time, but revolves around individuals' state of mind, perceived freedom of choice, and intrinsic motivation (Kleiber et al., 2011). Without all these components leisure cannot occur. Thus, there is a plethora of ways to define and study leisure and there are countless ways to distinguish between what qualifies as leisure and what does not.

Leisure is often explained with oppositional, binary terms, including, work vs. leisure, private vs. public life spheres, and labor/productivity vs. pleasure (Slater, 1998). Furthermore, there is a disciplinary desire to dichotomize what may constitute as good/normal leisure vs. bad/deviant leisure. Traditionally, the field of leisure studies relied heavily on the assertion of leisure and its goodness. Leisure has historically been credited for making society healthy, orderly, and more wholesome (Dumazadier, 1967; Kaplan, 1975; Rojek, 1999a; Stebbins, 1999). Leisure has been defined as an activity that is carried out in harmony with the main values

agreed upon by wider society (Kaplan, 1960). Associating leisure's goodness with societal outcomes relies on the "common belief that leisure is a positive experience accompanied by satisfying and pleasurable moods, emotions, or feelings" for the individual participating in it (Mannell, 1980, p. 77). The pleasurable underpinnings of leisure will be discussed throughout the dissertation because they have contributed to conceptualizing and distinguishing normative "good" leisure from "bad," deviant, and/or risky leisure.

Nash (1953) was one of the first leisure scholars to distinguish between "good" and "bad" leisure forms. He proposed that "bad" or deviant leisure behaviors cause injury or detriment to the self, while forms of good leisure are positive and involve creative processes that lead to personal growth. Following this classification, Curtis (1979; 1988) coined the term 'purple leisure.' This describes leisure viewed as a pleasurable use of free time by the participants involved, but as a negative use of free time according to wider societal standards. Stebbins (1982) also incorporated the concept of deviant leisure within his binary framework of casual and serious leisure. Casually deviant leisure forms are considered tolerable and undertaken for pleasure, whereas serious deviant leisure forms are pre-planned and constitute intolerable acts (e.g., murdering someone; Stebbins, 1982). The distinctions between tolerable and intolerable forms of deviant leisure behavior refer to the associated risk these behaviors could cause to the greater society (Stebbins, 1996). Tolerable casual deviant leisure is undertaken for pleasure and includes activities such as, watching sex (e.g. striptease, pornographic films), heavy drinking, gambling (excluding alcoholism or compulsive gambling), using of cannabis and the non-medicinal use of certain prescription drugs (Stebbins, 1996; 2014). However, extreme versions of these activities such as alcoholism or compulsive gambling are no longer considered tolerable casual deviant leisure instead representing social problems that can also wreck individual lives

(Stebbins, 1996). Leisure scholars have also used the term ‘taboo recreation’ when describing free time activities that challenge the social norms, laws, or beliefs in society (Russell, 2002).

Scholars have studied deviant leisure aspects in relation to a variety of activities such as, substance use among college students (Shinew & Parry, 2005), violent video game playing (Delamere & Shaw, 2006), the preparation and execution of criminal acts (Williams, 2017; Williams & Walker, 2006), participation in gangs (Stodolska et al., 2017), sadomasochism (Newmahr, 2010), the cultivation of cannabis (Boylstein & Maggard, 2013), auto theft (Drozda, 2006), and the “vampire” subculture (Williams, 2008). Throughout various deviant leisure studies, scholars have emphasized that numerous influences, including societal norms (Russell, 2017; Sullivan & LeDrew, 1999), media (Crabbe, 2006), and political agendas (Blackman, 2004; 2011), shape our understandings of deviant and normative leisure. The complexity of these intersections can offer knowledgeable contributions and practical applications related to free time-choice behaviors.

The following literature review chapter will focus on understanding the various discourses that have contributed to traditional deviant leisure conceptualizations, such as morality, criminology, pathology, and subcultural studies. Additionally, this chapter will discuss the contested tensions between risk and pleasure that are foundational to understanding (deviant) leisure (Berdychevsky, 2018). Indeed, leisure scholarship has the ability to contribute meaningfully towards understanding current social needs and addressing public health concerns related to risky topics such as sex and violence (Berdychevsky, 2018). The relationships between risk, pleasure and (deviant) leisure is also applicable to substance use and its connection to the health and well-being within contemporary society. Thus, this chapter will also shed light on the growing conversation of cannabis use in/as leisure. Additionally, the author will also make

connections between cannabis and (deviant) leisure under prohibitive vs. regulatory governance and the drug education approaches fitting under each ideology. Figure 1 represents a visual representation of the literature review chapter and its conceptual connections to leisure binaries, drug policies, and the health communication and drug education theoretical frameworks.

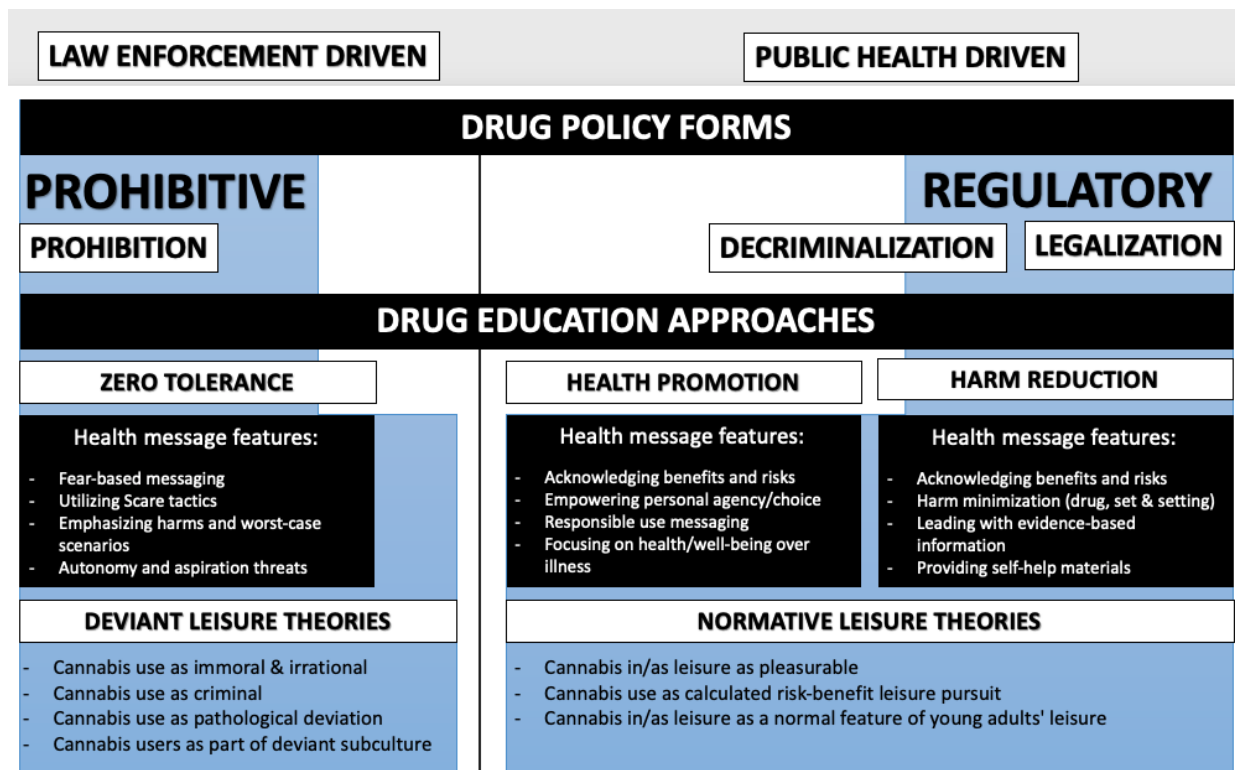


Figure 1. Visual representation of the literature review and theoretical framework chapter and their conceptual connections.

The features of normative and deviant leisure will be discussed at length throughout the chapter and their connections to drug policy, and drug education are visually presented in figure 1. This figure contrasts two different authorities and their response to young adults' drug use. The law enforcement driven response aligns with the traditional prohibitive legislation, such as the total prohibition of all drug use that narrows on drug abuse and zero tolerance education. The health messaging features within this educational style include fear-based messaging, scare-tactics, autonomy and aspiration threats, worst-case scenarios, and the overall emphasis on drug

related harms with no recognition of potential benefits. This response resonates well with the existing deviant leisure theories that claim drug use/cannabis use is immoral and irrational, criminal, pathological and characteristic of young adults who are members of deviant counter-cultural groups (i.e., deviant subcultures).

On the other hand, the public health driven response situated on the right side of the figure aligns with regulatory legislative actions such as the decriminalization and legalization of drug use. These regulatory statutes rely on harm reduction and health promotion drug education. The health messaging features of both approaches include acknowledging that drug use has both risks and benefits. Health promotion messaging places emphasis on empowering personal agency/choice, responsible use, and focusing on overall health and well-being over illness. Harm reduction messages promote minimizing drug-related harms, evidence-based information, and the provision of self-help materials. This side of the binary connects well with normative leisure conceptualizations that posit drug use/cannabis use is pleasurable, involves calculated risk-benefit valuations, and situated as a normal part of young adults' leisure. Understanding the division between the different governance and educational approaches from a law enforcement driven side compared to a public health driven side helps applies well to the binary debates existing between drugs in/as normalized leisure and drugs in/as deviant leisure.

Moral and rational aspects of (deviant) leisure

The social construction of deviant leisure relies on the language used to describe it and the sanctions enforced on it by the power structure (Franklin-Reible, 2006). Moral sanctions are a noteworthy example. The society that existed during the industrial era (i.e., under Fordism), created certain criteria to be adhered to in attempts to maintain order and “normality,” including following a set moral compass, which was required in order to stay in the paid employment

system (Rojek, 1999a). Indeed, it was during the Fordism period that capitalism began to take its shape as a multi-scope system seeking control over economy, culture, and morality within and beyond the leisure context (Rojek, 1999a). During the industrial times, working class leisure was designed to be regulated and contained so that it did not threaten the interests of capital nor the sensibilities of the ‘respectable classes’ (Bailey, 1978; Cunningham, 1980; Thompson, 1967). Those who did not adhere to the accepted leisure pursuits of the industrial era were characterized as belonging to an alternative leisure class of people who had non-conformist values, developed a lifestyle that prioritized sharing over personal wealth, and who believed in hedonism and self-expression over instrumentality and self-discipline (Rojek, 1999a).

Nonetheless, it was during the industrialization era that there were also increased controls set in place by employers to peel apart work time from leisure time (Rosenzweig, 1983). This allowed workers to seek out new after-work places to relax, such as the saloon (Rosenzweig, 1983). Furthermore, along with the emphasis on morality, there was an emphasis on rationality. Recreation and leisure scholarship was focused on defining the rational recreation movement, which arose out of fear that the “dark side” or unfavorable side of human nature would take over during one’s free time ruining societal members discipline and therefore threatening the established societal structure (Bailey, 1978). The rational recreation movement effectively contributed towards American prohibition (Malleck, 2008). Initially, alternative leisure forms such as saloon drinking represented “deviant” and “irrational” leisure that was not compliant with the quickly evolving and developing ideologies of capitalism.

As society evolved out of industrialization and into the modern era, the moralization of deviant leisure became increasingly investigated from a biological and medical lens rather than a theological, or religious lens, which also helped to demarcate “right” and “wrong” leisure in pre-

modern society (Rojek, 1999a). Leisure activities and behaviors posing a danger to the dominant modern social order prompted a search for scientific explanations to describe their inappropriateness, thus, giving rise to the medicalization of deviant leisure and the perceived moral wrongness (Williams, 2009). This perspective sustains that immoral leisure involves recreational pleasures, such as drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, and sunbathing because they present serious threats to one's health (Rojek, 1999a). These moral underpinnings however, have been critiqued by Williams (2008). The conceptualization of deviant leisure is heavily reliant on the historical positioning of leisure as a tool for moral reform (Williams, 2008). Thus, historically, deviant leisure has been described as leisure behaviors that violate criminal and noncriminal norms. However, with the sociological turn towards modernity, deviant leisure conceptualizations have received a fresh coat of paint, resulting in associating deviant behavior with medicalization (i.e., labeling behaviors as medical problems; Williams, 2008).

Ultimately, it is difficult to shake off traditional moral and rational underpinnings supporting the deviant leisure framework. Nonetheless, in Spracklen's (2018) re-thinking of deviant leisure, he highlights scholars' efforts to challenge the moral nature of deviance in deviant leisure. As scholars suggest there should be a more careful analysis and application to which unusual and unconventional leisure forms warrant designations of being immoral or pathological (e.g., Drozda, 2006; Galloway, 2006; Gunn & Caissie, 2006; Franklin-Reible, 2006; Williams, 2008; Williams & Walker, 2006). More recently, Swain's (2017) work on Khat-chewing among Somali diaspora in the United Kingdom highlights the interpretive nature of morality within deviant, or dark leisure. Swain (2017) encourages leisure scholars to go beyond traditional approaches of rigid universal ethical reasoning to explain morality, drugs, and deviance and instead to allow a case-by-case socio-cultural analysis of these behaviors. Still,

geo-political efforts such as the ‘War on Drugs’ have focused on emphasizing drug abuse to maintain the spread of moral accountability (Matza & Morgan, 1995). Although historically, various substances have been used in ritualistic form, in modern times both legal and moral order have constrained or all together banned the use of these substances (Goodman et al., 2007). Thus, moral and criminal ideologies have contributed to strengthening the understanding of drugs in/as deviant leisure, excluding the potential to understand drugs in/as normative leisure and properly analyze their pleasurable underpinnings and associated subjectivities.

Criminological and/or pathological aspects of (deviant) leisure

The studies within the fields of deviance and criminology are often rooted in the positivist philosophical orientation (Smith, 2008), which allows law to act as an objective truth formalizing the list of what constitutes (un)acceptable social norms (Weisberg, 2003). According to this perspective, anyone who breaks the law is in violation of the codified list of social norms and can, therefore, be defined as deviant (Blanco, 2016). This includes violating the list of socially acceptable leisure norms reinforced by legal entities (Blanco, 2016). The legal defiance of deviance and deviant behaviors present a binary situation, in which a leisure activity is either considered legal (i.e., normative/non-deviant) or illegal (i.e., deviant). Nonetheless, the reliance on legal codification of social norms is fraught with a great deal of inconsistency regarding what is considered illegal and what is considered “taboo” or “deviant” leisure (Blanco, 2016). This tension of criminological understandings related to legality of deviant vs. normative leisure is central to the governance of activities such as cannabis consumption as well. For instance, the de-criminalization and legalization of cannabis will also need to consider regulating illegal (deviant) vs. legal (normative) cannabis use within public/private recreational spaces as they do with alcohol (e.g., beaches, parks, stadiums). These kinds of nuanced considerations have not

received attention because the long-standing policy has mandated that cannabis use is by default problematic and illegal in all shapes, forms and places.

The criminological perspective analyzes illicit drug use on the basis of abuse and addiction discourses, fueling the governmental association of drug use with compulsion, misery, potential death and disease, and the end of personal freedom (Sedgwick, 1993). This approach, however, doesn't consider that cannabis use in/as leisure could be freely chosen and managed for its beneficial properties based on individuals' own personal judgement and prerogative. Additionally, the role of pleasure, which is inherent to the understanding drugs in/as leisure, was rarely discussed in the traditional criminology literature. Any mention of pleasure was considered problematic because it provides short-term gratification or excitement, particularly to the working class citizens that were considered to be seeking pleasure in order to compensate their otherwise boring, subordinated, and unfulfilling lives (Miller, 1958).

The criminal justice system has maintained a prominent role in the engineering and promotion of rational choice models in relation to risk behaviors such as drug use and sex (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). These models rely on the "felicity calculus," which assumes peoples' desire to avoid pain (e.g., receiving criminal penalty) would far exceed any potential pleasure produced by participating in offending behavior (e.g., drug taking; O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). The neo-liberal capitalist regimes within modern society worked towards solidifying criminal and social order by increasing the frequency of penal incapacitation and related sentencing punishments, as a way to regulate substance users cravings and addiction (Garland, 2001). Thus, rational choice governance suggests one should be in control of their pleasurable cravings/desires and that they shouldn't outweigh the risk of capture and punishment for the anticipated benefit (i.e., pleasure; O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). This model functioned

well in terms of shaping peoples' choices in the preferred direction and patterns of the authorities in charge (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004, p. 37). Beyond these features, criminological characteristics of deviant leisure and drug use often compliment the psychological perspective that portrays drug users as pathological.

Originally psychological models of deviance were most widely used to understand the effects of deviant behavior (Cohen, 1965). The field of Abnormal psychology and researchers such as Sigmund Freud have been influential towards understanding deviance (Freud & Strachey, 1976). Freud posited that all humans have the potential for criminal inclinations due to inadequate socialization that leads to flawed personalities and result in deviant behavior (Freud & Strachey, 1976). Mirroring the broader research within deviance scholarship, the research on deviant leisure has, in large part, considered participation in such activities to be psychopathological in nature (Conrad & Schneider, 1992). Indeed, traditionally, leisure scholars assumed that deviant leisure participation was a sign of psychosis for the individuals partaking in those behaviors (Williams, 2009). Various connections have been made between drug taking, psychopathology, and defective personalities.

Historically, discourses on drug use have been informed by the rhetoric of pathology or looking at drug users from the 'deficit' model (Barratt, 2011; Karlsson, 2010; Moore, 2002; O'Malley & Mugford, 1991), which suggests that "[illicit] drug use is inherently aberrant, as it is destructive to both health and happiness, and reflecting some kind of deficit in personality or social position" (Southgate & Hopwood, 1999, p. 308). This also means that the importance of understanding pleasure within drug taking experiences has been largely neglected in the fields of psychology and leisure as well (Russell, 2003). Instead, the psychological field often transforms the meaning of pleasure into 'positive emotion', 'impulse driven behavior' and 'hedonic tone'

(Moore, 2008, p. 355). Thus, overwhelmingly research has focused on impulsivity as a drug-prone personality trait that is heightened during one's younger life stages (Cyders et al., 2007; Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). Impulsivity is defined as the "predisposition toward rapid, unplanned reactions to internal or external stimuli without regard to the negative consequences of these reactions to the impulsive individual or to others" (Moeller et al., 2001, p. 1784). Furthermore, drug discourses from the psychology field have overlooked pleasurable realities of drug taking because it was considered as an 'unscientific,' un-quantifiable and 'frivolous' topic compared to other health issues (Coveney & Bunton, 2003, p. 161). This perspective was adopted in the governmental drug policy, which also tended to silence the possibility of pleasure as a motive for consumption and emphasized that substance consumption (within and beyond leisure) is a product of compulsory personalities, painful existences, and pathological defects (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004).

The pathology of deviant leisure pursuits such as drug taking is also linked to moral underpinnings. The most extreme perspective of the pathological deficit model confers that all drug use is inherently 'bad,' representing human deficiency (Zinberg, 1984). This purports that even adult use of psychotropic drugs presenting zero risk to the consumer or others is unacceptable based on the justification of morality (i.e., that it is morally wrong; Caulkins & Reuter, 1997). Due to these moral underpinnings of the pathological deficit model, cannabis users were previously classified as derelict, or deviant, and as belonging to the margins of society (Becker, 1963/2008; Lunze et al., 2015). Indeed, there are various alternative theoretical constructs which can be explored to understand deviant leisure and drug use in/as (deviant) leisure from sociological and subcultural outlooks.

Sociological and subcultural aspects of (deviant) leisure

The sociological lens reiterates that our understanding of deviance relies on the decisions made by individuals with political, social, and cultural power (Cohen, 2002). Powerful individuals structure society according to their vision, which includes labeling and categorizing behaviors and people they find undesirable as deviant (Cohen, 2002). Sociological understandings of deviant leisure can also be explained by the modern existential side effect of anomie or being in a state of normlessness (Durkheim, 1897; Simmel, 1971). Anomie represents the idea that some individuals become isolated when social norms that once worked to make them feel as valid members of society no longer resonate with them (Merton, 1968). Anomie signifies an internal state of mismatch between an individual, their circumstances and wider societal beliefs. According to the theory of anomie, cannabis smoking in/as leisure signifies the rejection of principles and norms held by wider society, and anomie or the lack of involvement in shared societal values (Akers & Cochran, 1985; Donovan, 1996). Indeed, learning about the disconnection between individuals and mainstream society is important for understanding sociological explanations of non-normative, deviant leisure lifestyles.

Rojek's (1995; 1999b; 2000; 2010) theory of abnormal leisure provided important contributions to deviant or dark leisure. Specifically, Rojek (1999b) introduced invasive, mephitic, and wild forms of abnormal leisure to the (deviant) leisure field. According to Rojek (1999b), abnormal forms of leisure are an outcome of late modernity and its existential conditions, including the rising alienation from others (i.e., feeling invalid within society). He coined the term invasive leisure to explain how and why some individuals depart or drift away from wider society and cultivate their own solitary recreational habits; demonstrating a retreat into private pleasures and practices and forming leisure habits that are associated with individual

obsessions (Rojek, 1999b). Excessive use of drugs and alcohol have been categorized as a form of invasive leisure in cases where the substances are used to escape the feeling of being less than others or feeling like a misfit in society (Rojek, 1999b). The invasive form of Rojek's (1999b) abnormal leisure framework represents the internal response to retreat from society, while the mephitic form represents an external response.

Mephitic leisure involves a rationalized pattern of resisting and rejecting the existential crisis of later modernity by engaging in disruptive activities with others, "equally it may involve regarding the self as truly authentic and judging the rest of society to be inauthentic and unreal" (Rojek, 1999b, p. 29). The most transgressive form of abnormal leisure form is considered to be wild leisure (Rojek, 1999b). Wild leisure is both sporadic and reliant on opportunity and is based around "contingent acts of transgression around the notion of limits in everyday life, rather than the formation of coherent leisure identities" (Rojek, 1999b, p. 31). Wild leisure patterns are a response to the Western cultural emphasis of Cartesian ideals that prioritize a rational mind over body (Rojek, 1999b). Thus, wild leisure is concerned with discharging surplus bodily capacities and energies normally suppressed under the modern social order (Rojek, 1999b). Wild leisure also represents a liminal response to contemporary life capturing Bakhtin's (1984) ideas of carnivalesque and transgression. These ideas refer to "unmasking" of oneself and existing free of "false claims and arbitrary ranks" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. x), which may apply to the bodily gestures/outcomes associated with cannabis in/as leisure. Rojek (1999b) and Pearson (1987) both emphasize the relationship between an individual's sense of invalidation and misuse of drugs in leisure. Equipping ourselves with knowledge about how one's personal identity interacts with the socio-cultural environment they exist within helps us to better understand the existence of subcultures and the leisure meanings associated with subcultures and drug use.

The field of psychology has long established the fact that individuals desire acceptance by other societal members (Hodges, 2014), and that culture is often formed by the desire for group cohesion and similarity (Mesoudi, 2009; Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Thus a subculture represents a form of deviation from some larger scale group cohesion to a smaller scale formulation of group social norms. Subculture theory is an alternative used lens for understanding deviant behavior (Becker, 1963; Clinard, 1974). Originally, subculture theory argued that the members of a subculture were deviant by default (e.g., Cohen, 1972), for instance a group of young adults who use cannabis in/as leisure in a state where cannabis is not legalized.

However, later conceptualizations expanded the thinking to consider subcultures as those groups of individuals who share a common sense of norms that that are not shared by mainstream society, whether they were norms that were deviant or not (Cohen, 1972). It was, therefore, suggested that subculture refers to having “distinctive shared values and cultural practices that are different from the mainstream” (Blackman, 2014, p. 496). The subcultural space is connected to mephitic pleasure and abnormal leisure activities such as drinking and smoking, taking drugs, vandalism, or even congregating around in a crowd and glaring at passers-by who represent authority and wider societal norms and values (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004; Cohen, 2002; Tucker & Matthews, 2001). This is because the leisure contexts are conducive to subcultures’ ability to be able to express themselves in their own unique ways and showcase their opposition to mainstream norms (Blanco, 2016). Leisure contexts also facilitate the formation of group identity that emphasizes the groups’ differences from the mainstream society (Hebdige, 1979). Furthermore, subcultures can be considered as a response to counter anomie, or the sense of feeling less belonging to the mainstream culture and instead more belonging to a subculture (Blackman, 2014).

From a subcultural analysis, cannabis use in/as leisure and those consuming cannabis together in/as leisure can be seen as being part of political opposition, signifying group resistance to the mainstream values (Pedersen, 2009; Sandberg, 2013). When attempting to understand the relationship between subcultural characteristics and the use of illicit drug use researchers must take into account the complexity of the human experience with its multitude of factors that affect drug use (Abadinsky, 1993; Lowinson et al., 1997; Petraitis et al., 1995; Zinberg, 1984). Additionally, drug studies must also take into account the researchers situatedness in the prevailing mainstream culture, which may paint a vastly different image of drug subcultures (Jessor et al., 1996; Smith & Deemer, 2000). This brings attention to the potential differences between the researcher and the researched within the analysis of subcultures and (deviant) leisure.

Opposite to subcultural understandings of deviant leisure, are arguments such as Katz's (1988) proposal that leisure pursuits deemed criminal, deviant, transgressive, wicked, naughty or non-normative can characterize everyone and that they are not qualities of particular groups of people. Not only have scholars argued that subcultural acts and affiliations are in fact widespread among all of us, but there has also been research to show how affiliations with certain subcultures are commonplace at different life stages and within different contexts. For instance, scholars have suggested that young people prioritize the quest for fun and excitement in their free time, resulting in perceiving the party subculture as normal feature of young people's leisure (Matza, 1964; Matza & Sykes, 1961). Foundational to this party subculture is the accepted and even anticipated use of alcohol and mood-enhancing drugs, which are increasingly promoted and distributed throughout the entertainment industry (Measham et al., 1998). Indeed, the future of drug subcultures and their relationship with mainstream society rely on the extent to which

people continually adopt accepting views towards the subculture (Golub et al., 2005). Society's ever-evolving hierarchical infrastructure constantly necessitates newer and more contemporary rhetoric about what constitutes (deviant) leisure and what are accepted societal norms related to pleasurable (and risky) experiences such as drugs in/as leisure. As modern society has continued to unfold it has started to incorporate consumptive and hedonistic meanings within deviant leisure understandings.

Consumptive and hedonistic aspects of (deviant) leisure

During the twentieth century and throughout the shift from industrial to modern society, work time began to decline from 60 hours of work per week to 40 hours (Goldman, 1984). However, productive output continued to increase bringing about the "consumer society" and the rise of mass consumption (Goldman, 1984). The protestant ethic represented the traditional model for hard work and the deterrent of gratification (Freidmann, 1960). This ethic started to erode as it started to be replaced by the ideology of consumerism, which made way for the hedonistic consumption of leisure (Freidmann, 1960). The past values of hard work, sacrifice, and delayed gratification were renounced with the introduction of consumptive practices highlighting pleasure, desire, self-enhancement, and instant gratification (Bauman, 2001; Bernardini, 2012; Hall et al., 2008; Hayward, 2013; Winlow & Hall, 2013, 2016). The consumptive and hedonistic elucidation of leisure also set a new tone for understanding the role of pleasure and drug use within contemporary (deviant) leisure pursuits.

This ideology of consumerism brought about new ways of conceptualizing (deviant) leisure time and activities. Society's transition towards postmodernity meant that leisure did not only account for non-work time, but also necessitated filling that time with activities that relied on purchasing what had just been produced in the workplace (Husch, 1991). Additionally, the

consumption of leisure experience or space-time began to signify an escape from consumers' day-to-day reality (Fine, 2010; Firat & Dholakia, 1998; Taheri & Jafari, 2012). Beyond escaping from the day-to-day work responsibilities and departing from regulatory authorities, leisure (and its consumption) became a time for the "freedom of choice to purchase the necessary goods" and to be able to satisfy "inner demands for self-expression" (Husch, 1991, p. 404). It was through this consumptive transformation of leisure space-time, that the use of drugs became an acceptable form of recreation and a private leisure choice allowing people to experience a momentary state of empowerment, self-control, and self-expression that is not as obtainable in other non-leisure spheres of their lives (Husch, 1991). Furthermore, opposite to the industrial era, leisure in the post-industrialist times no longer followed rigid, repressive, and sublimating codes of restraint. Instead, post-industrial leisure became wrapped in imagery suggesting attractions of hedonistic exploration, unchained by behavioral checkpoints (Gurr, 1989).

Contemporary post-modern society characterizes young people as being embedded within a culture of hedonistic consumerism that values leisure and the pursuit of pleasure through intoxicated state of being (Measham, 2004). In other words, young people are prioritizing experiential pleasure as a central feature to their pursuit of an altered state of consciousness (Duff, 2008), such as the experience of using drugs in/as leisure. According to Bauman (1997), post-modern consumer-oriented society seduced individuals into hedonistic leisure based on the "the true or imaginary pleasures of a sensation-gatherer's life" (e.g., consuming various drugs for their sought after pleasurable effects and new sensations, p. 92). Bauman (1997) suggests that these pleasure seeking and sensation gathering qualities represent a release from the oppressive demands of the 'puritan work ethic' that underpinned (pre)modern Western society. Now, being regarded as 'deviant' can be desirable for some people; for instance, substance use is no longer

deviant but conformist in certain leisure contexts (Hall et al., 2008; Raymen & Smith, 2019). This attitude reflects an increasing acceptance to be involved in dangerous and illicit behaviors because they encompass willful happiness and individualization (Bauman, 1997). Indeed, the use of recreational drugs has been connected to neoliberal capitalist strategies such as deregulation, instability, and hedonism (Hall & Antonopoulos, 2016; Paley, 2014). Cannabis consumption has also been characterized as a ‘hedonic consumption’ within postmodern times (Bruwer & Alant, 2009). Furthermore, there is an emphasis on hedonistic values among young adults, which has repeatedly been tied to cannabis use and the youth party culture (Brodbeck et al., 2007; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Spracklen, 2018). Perhaps, amongst the most commonly known forms of consumptive and hedonistic leisure practices is the participation in the night time leisure economy.

Night time leisure economy

The night-time leisure economy offers an ‘infantilized sphere’ promising *communitas* (i.e., equality and common humanity amongst humans), excessive hedonism, escapism, and liminality (i.e., being in-between one life stage and another) in safe environments that allow individuals to ‘temporarily shrink the harsh realities of adulthood’ arising from consumer society and its expectation to pursue immediate gratification (Ayres, 2019a). Being an infantilized adult represents an inability to plan for the future beyond everyday life (Bauman, 2003), thus, the cultural injunction of purchasing and consuming communality or the “good life” for the sake of enjoying the present day is produced by the capitalist consumerism and seeks to target youth (Featherstone, 2007). In many cases, consumers may not have any long-term goals for their experiential consumption, which means pleasure can be a short-term evaluation of their experience (e.g., the short-lived pleasure of euphoria from drug; Gumnerus, 2013; Koo & Lee,

2011; Ladhari, 2007). Some young adults who are enjoying the intoxicating pleasures of being “well hammered” from alcohol don’t look at the longer term effects of their drinking and health (Szmigin et al., 2008). According to Measham (2004), the night time leisure economy (and its activities) also represents an example of bounded play spaces, which are settings that include “the possibilities of pleasure, excess, and gratification” (p. 343). Bounded play spaces, such as night clubs, festivals, or tourist resorts, can be temporarily transformed into pleasurable landscapes with the help of drug use (e.g., Ibiza; Briggs & Tutenges, 2014; Hesse & Tutenges, 2008; Measham & Moore, 2009). These consumptions are central to the night-time economy that is centered around the ‘business of pleasure’ (Bailey, 1986), and which is mostly dominated by young people (Montgomery, 1998). Scholars have noted how substance use is apparent in all spheres of the night time economy as well as within other forms of contemporary leisure, such as gambling, sporting events, and music concerts (Ayres, 2019a).

Young adults seek libidinal pleasures offered by excessive hedonism and which are demanded by the cultural expectation to enjoy life day to day (Žižek, 2002). Nonetheless, these capitalist consumer choices and their pleasure-seeking appeal also bring about new contemplations related to one’s free choices and leisure. According to Bauman (2001), “the consumer market offers choice complete with the reassurance that the choice is right” because it is one’s own individual prerogative and one’s self-responsibility to deal with their choices (p. 25). Thus, those engaged in the night time leisure economy who may make choices that have harmful consequences (i.e., may be perceived as wrong choices) only have themselves to blame because they are receiving what they deserve (Hayward & Yar 2006; Hutton 2006; Nayak 2016). In this process they are also becoming recognized as flawed consumers (Hayward & Yar 2006; Hutton 2006; Nayak 2016). Thus, the use of substances within the night time leisure economy,

and outside of it, are often analyzed under the lens of calculated hedonism, or the careful calculation of risk-benefit/pleasure associated with drugs in/as leisure.

Calculated hedonism with drugs in/as leisure

Academic literature has increasingly focused its attention on the interactions between consumption patterns, time management, and health behaviors to better understand the cultural frameworks situating control and release (Quintero, 2009). In other words, how individuals conduct themselves in ways that either show they value control through some form of discipline or release through activities that allow for personal gratification of desire (Quintero, 2009). The freedom of pursuing pleasure within modern consumer culture is made possible by “calculating hedonism” (Featherstone, 1991; Jacoby, 1980, p.63). The concept of calculated hedonism has been explored by various scholars including, O’Malley and Valverde (2004) who suggest that calculating hedonism involves maintaining a balanced commitment towards market standards of success and achievement and participating in the enjoyment of the rewards of success (p. 38). Calculated hedonism, synonymously calculated pleasure, revolves around an individual’s ability to control their emotions and to be open towards a variety of sensations (Featherstone, 1991; Szmigin et al., 2008). There are numerous ways to talk about the pleasure and pain balancing act within substance use decisions. However, it is important to understand what young adults classify as the beneficial (i.e., pleasurable) effects of drug use such as cannabis in/as leisure and what aspects present risk (i.e., provoke pain, take away from pleasurable effects).

Ideas such as Measham’s (2004) ‘controlled loss of control’ and Brain’s (2000) notion of bounded hedonism purport there is a calculative risk-benefit moment that persists in the context of fitting alcohol or consumptive intoxication within leisure time activities. Sassatelli (2001) describes “tamed hedonism” as the channeling and management of personal gratification through

the proper exercise of consumer choice, meaning that various forms of consumption are expected as long as they exist within certain boundaries that do not result in adverse outcomes on the social position of the individual. For instance, there are cognizant decisions made related to avoiding risk in drunken situations, including being mindful of personal safety (i.e., making sure one has the ability to get home safely), health (i.e., minimizing hangovers), security (i.e., capability to defend oneself), and financial limitations (i.e., limiting money allocated for drinking; Measham, 2004).

Independent drug checking (e.g., using an unofficial at home drug testing kit to learn the contents of the drugs) is another safety precaution that allows drug consumers to take part in “enlightened hedonism,” where they can “carefully cultivate their pleasure to prolong their fun and avoid getting hurt” (Žižek, 2014, p. 4). Independent drug checking is an example of practicing a controlled loss of control when one wants to get intoxicated and alter their ordinary state of consciousness (Ayres, 2019a; Ayres & Taylor, 2020; Hayward, 2004; Measham, 2004;). It helps to make drug taking experiences “as safe as practicably possible,” while adhering to the social norms defining “acceptable intoxication and tolerated hedonism” (Taylor et al., 2020, p. 4). Thus, participating in drug experiences that have undergone independent drug checking offers a “controlled, risk-free hedonism that maximizes pleasure, while also offering an authentic experience” (Taylor et al., 2020, p. 8).

The use of illegal drugs represents an act of transgression fitting within the scripts of licit consumerism (Ayres, 2019b; Hayward & Turner, 2019), particularly as “controlled deviance has become healthy and conformist” (Hall et al., 2008, p. 168). According to Crawford’s (1984) cultural analysis of self-discipline, self-denial, and will power within Western culture and the Protestant Work ethic, individuals attempt to achieve health by having control over their habits

and bodily states. However, beyond these principles, Crawford (1984) also found that relaxation and release were alternative complementary pathways to achieving health, signaling that instead of control, which is connected to stress and anxiety, well-being could be reliant on contentment and enjoyment. Crawford's (1984) idea of release advocated for being able to indulge and gratify desires, thus, also connecting health to pleasure. Indeed, it is also warranted to understand the pleasure offered by these experiences as a naturally occurring health process, wherein pleasurable effects of experiences such as drug taking in moderation can provide enhancement to one's biological flexibility and complexity and provide health protection (Esch & Stefano, 2004).

While pleasure exemplifies the beneficial side of the drug use coin, there is noteworthy cost to over doing it, particularly from a neurobiological perspective. The theory of Allostasis explains how changes in the brains' reward system can result from the brains adaptation to repeated drug challenges or drug encounters that cause homeostatic (i.e., counter directional) responses over time; in other words, altering the reward function stability that balances the reward and stress neurocircuits (Koob & Le Moal, 2001; 2008; Sher & Vergés, 2016). Pleasure is the reward mechanism that can burden the brains adaptive response to follow a new "hedonic set point" in the opposite direction of neurological stability (Sher & Vergés, 2016). The modern social expectations enlist that pleasurable experiences or enjoyment must be as healthy as possible (i.e., pleasure to outweigh pain), otherwise only the consumers themselves are to blame (Žižek, 2014). The expectation that individuals are responsible of calculating control and release are also related to productivity in capitalism, wherein control is necessary for the manufacturing of productive personnel and release encourages the consumption ethic that is crucial to maintain the capitalist economic system (Crawford, 1984). It has been argued that the manipulation of pleasure is a central feature of the modern-day political economy, showing a crude underside of

the law, wherein legislation such as drug prohibition creates the desire to transgress across societal members (Žižek, 1989; 2003) because there is indeed pleasure in transgressing the law (e.g., consuming a drug that is illegal by authority standards; Katz, 1988).

Furthermore, the transgression of law can offer autonomous individuals a sense of community among others that know which rules are acceptable to break (Dean, 2004), which can also help explain how some illegal drug consumption in/as leisure has become culturally accommodated and accepted. Quintero's (2009) study highlights the importance of understanding the myriad of socio-cultural factors shaping drug use practices and experiences. For instance, it is important to consider how cultural ideals of control and release influence the expectations of one's age and how they should think about and address health-related matters while partaking in risk taking activities and rule-breaking (Quintero, 2009). Indeed, several authors have concluded that young people's choice to use cannabis in/as leisure can be considered a rational decision based on cost-benefit analysis; suggesting that cannabis users do not belong to a deviant subculture and are instead bound by mainstream society and live rather conventional lifestyles (Duff et al., 2012; Hathaway, 1997; Pearson, 2001; Shukla, 2005). However, there are many details to consider in terms of cannabis in/as leisure and the normalization of cannabis within contemporary young people's leisure spheres.

Cannabis in/as leisure

In Western culture, cannabis use has traditionally been studied from the perspectives of deviance (Hathaway, 1997), including the study of cannabis as a deviant lifestyle (Becker, 1953) and deviant leisure subcultures (Belhassen et al., 2007), criminology (Green et al., 2010), addiction (Haug et al., 2017). Additionally, cannabis had been studied for its impacts on mental and social health (Choi et al., 2016; Thornton et al., 2013). These perspectives often overlook the

role of psychoactive substances such as cannabis for altering the mind, bonding with others, and facilitating pleasurable leisure (Arnold, 1999; Goodman et al., 2007; Spracklen, 2011). Several scholars have found that overwhelmingly cannabis consumers report pleasure as a motive for their consumption (Duff, 2008; Webb et al., 1998). There are numerous studies confirming that cannabis plays a central part in leisure time-space (Belhassen et al., 2007; Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004; Schaub et al., 2010). Although we know cannabis is accommodated within leisure, deeper understanding of pleasurable and leisurely meanings have been largely underexplored and merit more attention.

Motives for cannabis in/as leisure

Classic cannabis studies have demonstrated that those who use the drug are not a homogenous group, and while most use recreationally, the motivations and practices vary (Becker, 1963; Goode, 1970). Indeed, there are many choices that go into one's cannabis use experience. Recreational cannabis users choose the setting and time to consume (Erickson, 1989; Hathaway, 2003; Zimmerman & Weider, 1977), as well as the peers or partners with whom they want to get high and the situations and moods most suitable for them to use cannabis, thus, instilling various informal rules for regulating their cannabis use in different contexts (Reinarman & Cohen, 2007). Furthermore, the cannabis strain can also play a large role in the choices made about cannabis consumption. This is notable considering that different strains have different effects, such as the sativa strain of cannabis, which is associated with more energetic effects, experiencing heightened senses, cerebral changes, optimism, creativity and stimulation, compared to the indica cannabis strain that is associated with heavy body effects, relaxation, sedation, pain relief, and aiding sleep (Medithrive, 2014). It is true that cannabis can have mood enhancing effects because of its euphoric (Ashton, 2001) and relaxing properties that are related

with boosting focus and productivity and encouraging anti-stress attitudes (Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2020).

In terms of cannabis strain and leisure preferences, academic studies diverge. One study found that the sativa strain was preferred in terms of work while the indica strain was preferred for leisure (Murphy et al., 2015), however, others have found the opposite wherein a larger number of respondents preferred the sativa strain over the indica strain within their leisure experiences (Gould et al., 2018). The differential variable can be related to the type of activity one is participating in. For instance, perhaps using cannabis in combination with leisure that requires more skill obtainment (e.g., learning to play a basketball), or creative leisure pursuits (e.g., playing a guitar) may necessitate different contextual cannabis in/as leisure aspects (e.g., entourage, strain) than other leisure activities that may be less active (e.g., watching TV). Additionally, there may be boundaries to which leisure settings foster positive cannabis experiences and which result in negative cannabis in/as leisure experiences. In some cases, this may mean avoiding cannabis use in/as leisure all together.

Lau et al. (2015) found that “cannabis use was usually reserved for leisure-time” and as a way to enhance other activities and stimulate creativity (p. 716). Thus, cannabis is often used when people are engaged in their other leisure activities (Moffat et al., 2009). Scholars have studied the relationship between cannabis use and leisure choices among young adults (aged 18 to 30) living in a country with liberal cannabis policy (Liebregts et al., 2015). The young adults were categorized as either “homebodies” who spent most of their leisure at home and/or with friends at their places or “gadabouts” who participated in more active leisure (e.g., going outdoors, painting, etc.). The majority of participants reported having no problem giving other things precedence over consuming cannabis; however, a handful of “homebodies” did report

neglecting other leisure activities in favor of consuming cannabis as leisure (Liebregts et al., 2015). The difference between young adults' relationship with cannabis was related to the centrality of cannabis in their lives and with what ease they prioritized cannabis within their leisure.

According to Osborne and Fogel's (2008) study, some individuals use cannabis primarily to enhance "leisure activities and manage the challenges and demands of living in a contemporary modern society" (p. 562). These claims are also supported by Gould et al. (2018), who detail that "the cannabis leisure experience is composed of motivations involving the management of stimuli," referring to the fact that (1) cannabis consumers are motivated by reducing and avoiding unwanted stimuli that are encountered in the demands of modern society, and (2) cannabis consumers immerse themselves in passive and active leisure pursuits to produce varying amounts of desirable stimuli (p. 125). Research has found that young people, in particular, pair their cannabis with leisure and non-leisure experiences. For instance, cannabis use has been complimentary to activities such as spending time in nature, contemplating existential questions, feelings of flow "through physical activities," and transforming various chores into more desirable activities (Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2020; Moffat et al., 2009, p. 92).

Within the realm of leisure Liebregts et al. (2015) found that some "interviewees regularly cycled while being stoned" (p. 149), emphasizing the enhancement potential or combination of leisure experiences offered to recreational cannabis users in their leisure space-time. Long term frequent cannabis users have reported relaxation and the enjoyment of music or TV as the most common activities accompanying their cannabis use (Hathaway, 2004). Occasional cannabis users have reported participating in activities such as being outdoors, while regular cannabis have a more selective lifestyle that includes music-oriented outings and

spending time at friends' places in the evenings (Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004). Social activity, or the act of socializing with others, has been one of the most preferred activities to pair with cannabis use (Gould et al., 2018; Lorente et al., 2005; Murphy et al., 2015). According to Dekker et al.'s (2009) study, cannabis use has the potential to enhance positive affect and social experiences. The social benefits of cannabis cannot be overlooked, plus they contrast the popular notions of drug use damaging interpersonal relationships. Although both social scenarios could be true we can contribute more knowledge by learning how young adults perceive recreational cannabis use and its leisure offerings and/or constraints.

Many cannabis consumers consider their use recreational (Shukla, 2005). However, there is significant discussion around the definitions and motivations of recreational vs. medical cannabis consumption. For instance, scholars studying cannabis use patterns have found that 85% of consumers who reported using cannabis medically also consider their use recreational (Pacula et al., 2015). Some cannabis consumers have refused to distinguish themselves as either recreational or medical cannabis consumers (Chapkis & Webb, 2008). According to Kamin's studies (2013; 2016; 2017) it is common for cannabis consumption to take place in a realm where medical and recreational intent overlap. Similarly, Dahl and Frank (2016) have noted the definitional challenges in separating medical and recreational cannabis use. Their study showed that cannabis consumers who defined themselves as medical consumers, tended to emphasize the relieving effect over pleasurable outcomes. There is certainly a gap in the literature in terms of addressing cannabis related harms while simultaneously acknowledging the beneficial properties of cannabis as related to the intersection between medical and recreational cannabis use and pleasure (Subritzky, 2018). This suggests there are important differences to address between recreational and medical cannabis use.

It is also important to consider how different relationships with cannabis develop because not all cannabis users take a liking to cannabis or its potentially pleasurable recreational effects from their first experimentation with it. There are different motivations for initiating experimentation with drugs such as cannabis, and why some people may become occasional or regular users of cannabis in/as leisure (Becker, 1963). According to Becker's (1963) ideas, there is a sequential ladder that structures the different kinds of cannabis use(rs). Becker (1963) posits that cannabis use or cannabis experimentations is not necessarily determined by psychological characteristics, and may instead be initially pursued because of curiosity, opportunity and the questioning/dismisall of social norms that classify cannabis as a harmful agent. Furthermore, the desired benefits and pleasures of cannabis use do not necessarily exist in the beginning experimental phases (Becker, 1963). These sought aftereffects only become motivation to consume cannabis once the user has learned to perceive and enjoy them which happens through a "learning by doing" process (Becker, 1963; Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004, p. 252).

The beneficial and pleasurable effects of drug use are also dependent on drug, set, and setting (e.g., companions in the drug using experience; Zinberg, 1984). Spending leisure with friends has been related to cannabis use initiation, while spending leisure time with school colleagues or a romantic partner has led to increased risk of progressive, continued cannabis use (Schaub et al., 2010). This suggests it is not the leisure activity itself that is related to changes in cannabis use, rather it is the social setting of cannabis users' leisure (i.e., the people they are spending their leisure with; Schaub et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the growing debate surrounding cannabis in/as leisure and its desired beneficial effects revolve around whether cannabis is characterized by deviant or normative understandings in our contemporary society.

Cannabis normalization debate

To understand cannabis normalization, it is important to first become acquainted with the argument of normalization as it relates to recreational drug use more broadly. Parker et al. (1998) coined the term ‘illegal leisure’ and posited that normalization is “concerned with how a ‘deviant’, often subcultural, population or their deviant behaviour is able to be accommodated into a larger grouping or society (p. 152). Normalization is “concerned only with the spread of deviant activity and associated attitudes from the margins towards the centre of youth culture where it joins many other accommodated ‘deviant’ activities such as excessive drinking, casual sexual encounters and daily cigarette smoking” (Parker et al., 1998, p. 152).

Normalization best explains changes wherein drug use becomes an integral part of young people’s leisure and cultural landscape (Parker et al., 1998). According to Measham (2004), the normalization of drug use among youth is not a pathological issue but rather a reflection of the shift to commodified pleasure within leisure-space-time. Parker (2005) has suggested that the normalization thesis is underpinned by six observations: (1) higher access and availability of drugs in contemporary society, (2) increased drug trying rates, (3) increased rates of regular drug users, (4) a degree of cultural accommodation, (5) drug trying and use extending into the adult population (i.e., not only a phase of adolescence), and (6) increasingly more liberal drug policies (Parker, 2005).

This perspective also suggests that young people from ‘all social and educational backgrounds become drug users’ (Parker et al., 1998, p.1), no longer reserving the label for only certain members of society and blurring the lines between deviant and normative leisure. Furthermore, researchers are suggesting drugs in/as leisure are being culturally accommodated as a feature of everyday life practices among contemporary young people; among both users and

non-users (Parker, 2005; Parker et al., 1998; Parker et al., 2002). It has been noted that since the 1990s “most adolescents and young adult [drug] users merely fit their leisure into busy lives and then in turn fit their drug use into their leisure and ‘time out’ to compete alongside of sport, holidays, romance, shopping, nights out, drinking and most importantly of all having a laugh with friends” (Shildrick, 2002, p. 157). Popular culture also promotes the commonality of drugs in/as leisure (e.g., in movies, music, TV shows; South, 1999), supporting the normalization argument. Since being introduced in the 1990’s, support for the recreational drug normalization thesis was evident (e.g., Coffield & Gofton, 1994; Hirst & McCamley-Finney, 1994; South, 1999). The conversation was also extended and applied directly to cannabis use in/as leisure.

Over the past 50 years, cannabis has underwent a major migration from being on the margins and fringe of society to becoming a mainstream fixture of it. This normalizing process is illustrated by the high use rates, social tolerance, and broader cultural acceptance of its use in many countries (Aldridge et al., 2011). The normalization position suggests that many frequent cannabis users live a ‘conventional’ life with professional obligations, thriving social lives, and find joy in active past times such as going out and participating in sports (Liebregts et al., 2015). Researchers have also postulated that the normalization thesis is closely tied to lifestyle, and more specifically to one’s leisure and drug consumption preferences (Frank et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2002). This perspective suggests that cannabis consumption can be a recreational activity used during free time that helps individuals to detach from stress, but which comes secondary to other leisure activities that they may want to engage in drug-free (Liebregts et al., 2015) or their non-leisure roles and responsibilities (Kronbaek & Frank, 2013; Osborne & Fogel, 2008; Shukla, 2005). Among long term frequent cannabis users, cannabis consumption increase was associated with having more personal freedom while decreased consumption was associated with having

more personal responsibilities (Hathaway, 2003). Regardless, the cannabis user is most equipped with knowing when, where, and how they obtain the beneficial properties of cannabis in/as leisure while trying to minimize or avoid the harmful ones.

Furthermore, according to Blackman (2004), the application of the normalization thesis to cannabis revolves around a combination of postmodern theory and Becker's (1963) 'outsiders' thesis, wherein cannabis use is perceived as something done for pleasure rather than as a result of a particular psychological trait. Scholars have also commented on cannabis tourism normalization. For instance, Keul and Eisenhauer (2018) utilize tourism worldmaking theory, including concepts from Bianchi's (2010) thesis that conceptualizes a 'critical turn' in tourism studies to explore cannabis tourism. The critical turn in tourism refers to how norms such as cannabis in tourism/leisure are cultural products of broader neoliberal management of spaces (Bianchi, 2010). The analysis of culture and cultural norms (e.g., legal cannabis culture) cannot be decoupled from the economy that they exist within (Bianchi, 2009). In conclusion, Keul and Eisenhauer (2018) propose that economic rationale has paved the way for challenging societal perceptions of cannabis use as deviant behavior and placed it more confidently on the normative side of leisure travel. These changes elicit more consideration about the role normalization and legalization have played in the departure from criminological approaches to cannabis use in/as leisure.

Cannabis' transition from the margins of society to the mainstream has diminished the relative effectiveness of criminal controls acting as gatekeepers for access into the cannabis subculture (Hathaway, 1997; 2004). Instead of the criminal controls, the normalization of cannabis has brought about the normalization of social networks of supply, wherein casual access, reciprocity, and sharing contribute to shared meanings of cannabis use and its normality

(Coomber et al., 2016; Hathaway et al., 2018). Indeed, tension has been building in terms of the relationship between cannabis prohibition laws and their intended outcomes versus their true impacts. The research connecting cannabis use to criminal offences and convictions (Bennett et al., 2008; Derzon & Lipsey, 1999; Fergusson et al., 2002) has been deeply flawed by the illegality of the drug, rather than the actual dangerousness of the associated acts (Liebregts et al., 2015). Increasing evidence shows that adult cannabis users are not involved in criminal activity outside of acquiring and using cannabis, despite what previous research has dictated (Bennett et al., 2008; Liebregts et al., 2015). This suggests that most criminal cannabis charges or penalties would not exist under a liberal drug policy that legalizes adult cannabis use (Fergusson et al., 2003; Pedersen & Skardhamar, 2010). The normalization of cannabis thesis has therefore shed light on various factors related to cultural accommodations and legal policies, as well as, ushering in the possibility of renewed approaches to drug education, which can also provide information on the role of cannabis in/as leisure.

Indeed, Western culture frequently addresses cannabis use from the perspectives of deviance, crime, and addiction (Gould et al., 2018), which has fueled the long-standing abstinence only/zero tolerance drug education approach found within the ‘war on drugs’ (Werb et al., 2018). However, researchers who are acknowledging cannabis as a recreational activity for young adults (Liebregts et al., 2015) and a normal feature of their leisure-time (Duff & Erickson, 2014) advocate for policies and education providing information about safer drug use practices (Lau et al., 2015). Thus, there must be a new discussion related to the governance and education of cannabis in/as leisure under the shifting socio-political climate of liberalization and legalization.

Conclusion

Drug use within leisure studies necessitates an understanding of various binaries, including deviant vs. normalized leisure, healthy vs. unhealthy leisure and risky vs. beneficial leisure. However, these binaries may not be as rigid as traditionally believed. Looking towards the future means that leisure sciences' understanding of drugs in/as leisure and cannabis in/as leisure should consider the blurred lines of such binaries and focus on the nuanced meanings of pleasure, benefit and negotiating risk. Furthermore, policy and prevention efforts can spend more time understanding the lived experiences of young people's intoxication as well as the social and cultural boundaries that shaped the relationship between 'individual self-regulation,' 'social regulation' and 'institutional regulation' (Fry, 2011, p. 69). This dissertation can be fruitful in this regard because it can provide insights on young adults lived experiences with cannabis in/as that can inform individual, societal and institutional responses. Cannabis consumption in/as leisure has the potential to contribute meaningfully to research and practice by providing rich understanding of the pleasurable benefits and associated/negotiated risks of cannabis use. Then, these insights can be used to inform drug education efforts, enhancing their relevance and provision of important information that addresses the recreational and leisurely properties of young adults drug use.

Indeed, there are qualitative research projects that have reported on the pleasures of drug use as seen and experienced by drug users (e.g., Bøhling, 2017; Fitzgerald et al., 1999; MacLean, 2005), however, these 'subjugated knowledges' are often considered less legitimate in comparison to the dominant drug discourses within the fields of medicine, psychology and epidemiology (Moore, 2008, p. 354). Leisure scholarship can help us expand our understanding of drugs and cannabis specifically in/as leisure that will shed light on the phenomenon's

multifarities. The psycho-socio-cultural approach of this qualitative research investigating cannabis in/as leisure meanings, associated risk-benefits, and reactions to drug education will help us “to think about drugs and behave in a more nuanced manner” (Hart, 2021, p. 50). Interpreting the contextual factors, such as leisure, through the qualitative methodological lens chosen for this study also helps us to understand that the experience of drugs “cannot be attributed to any single element” (Bøhling, 2015, p. 133), highlighting the multifaceted and complex reality of young adults’ cannabis consumption.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction to qualitative research

Qualitative researchers pursue research to study people's lives as they experience living it, capturing the contextual accounts of their experiences and interpretations along the way (Schultze & Avital, 2011). This subjective approach to understanding the human condition is in contrast to quantitative methods that quantify data and aspire to identify an objective truth (Atieno, 2009). Qualitative inquiry allows researchers "to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables" (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p. 13). According to Flick (2009), it has been increasingly used as a methodology due to the rise of postmodernism, which has brought about a 'pluralization of life worlds,' or "the diversification of the ways of living in one society" (p. 472). Thus, it is important to point out the relevance of using qualitative research to study cannabis use in/as leisure among young adults that are living in a society characterized by cannabis legalization and liberalization.

There is considerable value in studying how cannabis use manifests itself at the population level by using quantitative approaches. However, qualitative methodologies can help shed light on the depth and complexity of lived experiences in various contexts. Therefore, by employing qualitative methodology, which aims to collect more nuanced understanding, this research may be able to identify new relevant variables that have not yet been quantified in the study of cannabis use in/as leisure. Furthermore, activists and scholars acknowledge the power and role of thick qualitative evidence for creating change and prompting social justice (Denzin &

Giardina, 2008). Findings from this qualitative investigation may also inspire future qualitative works on sensitive topics in/as leisure.

Philosophical underpinnings of interpretivist qualitative research

Within the context of research, philosophy represents “the use of abstract ideas and beliefs” to inform the study of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). According to Merriam (2009), there are four different philosophical perspectives underpinning qualitative research, including the positivist perspective, interpretative perspective, critical perspective, and post-structural or postmodern perspective. This research utilized the interpretivist perspective that looks for the cultural and historical derivations that situate one in the social world.

This interpretive philosophical orientation also assumes that reality is socially constructed (McMahon, 1997). Thus, the interpretive point of view is also referred to as social construction, constructivist or constructionist and posits reality is not something “out there” to be proven or found (Tracy, 2019, p. 51). Instead, reality and knowledge are constructed and produced through communication, interaction, and practice (Tracy, 2019). Researchers who follow this perspective are also aware that they are not finding knowledge about reality but are constructing it when conducting their research (Merriam, 2009). In other words, the knowledge creation is always mediated through the researcher (Tracy, 2019).

This interpretivist paradigm relies on a relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology, naturalist methodology, and balanced axiology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), which will be briefly explained in this paragraph. Relativist ontology makes up the interpretivist philosophical orientation. A relativist ontology means that the situation studied has multiple realities and suggests those realities can be explored and meaning can be discovered or reconstructed through human interactions between the researcher and the subjects or research participants (Chalmers et

al., 2005). The assumption of a subjectivist epistemology reiterates the role of the researcher in making sense of the data or meanings derived from the data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This means the researcher is socially constructing knowledge, which also depends on the researcher's personal experiences within the natural settings investigated (Punch, 2005). Thus, the epistemological foundations of interpretivism consider the interactive processes between researcher and research participant in terms of the ways they interact (e.g., the dialogue they create, the questions that are asked and answered; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The naturalist methodology refers to the fact that researchers utilize interviews, discourses, text messages, and reflective sessions to gather data, making the researcher a participant observer in the interpretive research process (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Lastly, following a balanced axiology assumes that the outcomes of the research will not only represent the views of the participants but will also reflect the values of the researcher, therefore, encouraging one to present a balanced report of the findings (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This acknowledges that the findings utilized for creating new knowledge can be value laden and suggests researchers' values should be more explicitly stated within the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morgan, 2007).

The interpretivist paradigm also places emphasis on the skills of empathy or *verstehen*, which means "to understand" (Tracy, 2019). Empathy is made up of the following components: (1) seeing the world from the perspective of another human being, (2) being non-judgmental, (3) trying to understand another human being's feelings, and (4) being able to communicate understanding (Wiseman, 1996). An interpretivist understands that we can never truly see the world through another person's eyes. However, learning and practicing empathetic understanding is the way to get as close as possible to their reality and meanings (Tracy, 2019).

Interpretivism can also draw on hermeneutics, which seeks holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The hermeneutical aspects of interpretivism involve empathetically imaging participants lived experiences, motivations, and contexts which shape them and engaging in a circular analysis that alternates between the data (i.e., spoken and transcribed text offered by participants) and the situated scenes they are a part of (Schwandt, 2000). The interpretive paradigm prioritizes understanding the individual rather than universal laws. Thus, it emphasizes the importance of context for knowledge and knowing and posits that contextual factors need to be taken into consideration in any systematic pursuit of understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morgan, 2007). Indeed, there are several grounding facets of the interpretive worldview and aligning research design with these aspects is crucial for creating a thorough qualitative inquiry.

Phenomenological approach

There are several approaches to utilize in qualitative research, however, Creswell (2013) has identified five major types, namely, narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research. A phenomenological research approach focuses on common meanings across several individuals and their experiences of the studied phenomenon. As stated by Shirish (2013), “phenomenology is a school of thought that emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world” (pg. 26). This research follows the qualitative research procedures of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is a reflective study of experience that is concerned with how people consciously experience specific phenomenon (Tracy, 2019). Phenomenology is the study of “the structure, and the variations of structure, of the consciousness to which anything, event, or person appears” (Giorgi, 1975, p. 83). The goal of phenomenological research is to reach levels

of meaning beneath the surface and to 'read between the lines' to grasp implicit and intuitive dimensions of human understanding (Finlay, 2012). One of the most concerning issues of reaching this goal is the extent to which deeper dimensions of meaning are presented in the same way research participants expressed and how much is birthed out of a speculative turn of interpretation by the phenomenological researcher (Finlay, 2012). Along these lines, phenomenologists are also cognizant of the ways words, language, concepts, and theories can cause distortion or serve as mediators in terms of shaping and transforming the actual experience (Tracy, 2019). Nonetheless, phenomenological philosophers have committed to various modes of inquiry in order to discover complex and rich descriptions that can allow them to understand a phenomenon as close as possible to how it is concretely lived (Finlay, 2012). Improving understanding of lived experience through reflecting on lived meaning and essential traits leads us to become aware of practices that can change for better (e.g., health experts' interaction with young drug users) and encourage us to implement new discussions, which lead to discourse developments about various phenomena (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic phenomenology represents varying forms of phenomenology (Moran, 2000). The common thread between these different phenomenological thoughts is their concern with "how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). However, phenomenologists have diverged in their thinking. Indeed, each phenomenological approach has its own thoughts as to how much a researcher influences the research. Some phenomenologists believe researchers are capable of describing the lived experience or phenomenon and removing their influence in the research process, others suggest there is an crucial layer of interpretation to consider, meaning that researchers are interpreting the lived

experience and phenomenon, which is deemed an indisputable part of understanding participants lived experiences and meaning-making (Finlay, 2009).

Descriptive versus interpretive Phenomenology (i.e., Husserl vs. Heidegger)

Phenomenological inquiry welcomes ‘individuality and creativity’ (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1131). However, Husserl, who has become known as the father of phenomenology, and Heidegger, who was his student, conceptualize this creative pursuit of meaning differently. Broadly speaking, the phenomenologist concerns themselves with the world as it reveals itself to the human consciousness. Husserl posits that human consciousness, which gives breath to our reality, happens in an intentional way, unveiling a ‘life-world’ (Husserl, 1936; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004) or a “‘world of immediate experience,’ the world as ‘already there,’ and the world as experienced in the ‘natural, primordial attitude’” (Adams & van Manen, 2008, p. 5). Husserl’s study of human intentionality involves describing the way consciousness can “stretch out” or be “directed toward” objects that are internal such as images or memories and external such as relations and events in the world (Krueger, 2017).

Alternatively, his student, Heidegger believes human existence and our understanding of it is only possible by ‘being-in-the-world’ (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 37). This means “we experience a thing as something that has already been interpreted,” exemplifying the interpretational layer that makes up our ‘being-in-the-world’ (Finlay, 2009, p. 11). While Husserl suggested predispositions can be bracketed, which involves the act of setting aside assumptions about a given phenomenon and taken on a “natural attitude,” Heidegger finds our predispositions a crucial feature of our research process (Watson et al., 2008). The researchers’ assumptions and background is an important part of co-constituting knowledge of lived

experience and the meanings attached (Watson et al., 2008). Indeed, Heidegger set the tone for recognizing that researchers' preconceptions about the studied phenomenon are integral to the entire research process and findings (Lope & Willis, 2006).

Heideggerian Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Heideggerian Hermeneutic phenomenology moved philosophical inquiry away from the epistemological questions of knowing and consciousness central to Husserlian Transcendental phenomenology, and instead emphasized the existential-ontological features of lived experience (Koch, 1995). Where Husserl concerned himself with asking 'how do we know what we know?', his student, Heidegger, began asking 'what does it mean to be a person?' (Koch, 1995, p. 832). Heidegger (1962) did not seek to know ways in which 'being' could be understood. He claimed that understanding is inherently in the concept of 'being,' or in other words, 'being' is our way of understanding and experiencing life. An individual's concept of the world and their subjective experiences are inextricably connected to the contexts in which they are formed. Therefore, forming the concept of self in the world is only possible as 'Dasein' or by 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1962). Dasein or 'being in the world' can further be split into the possibility of either being oneself, (i.e. being authentic) or failing to be itself (i.e. making it inauthentic; Macann, 1993). Reflecting on Heidegger's work related to authenticity Crowe (2006) writes:

For Heidegger . . . there are two possibilities: "inauthenticity" and "authenticity."

One is characterized by complacency, distraction, and self-concealment, while the other is marked by commitment, struggle, and sober responsibility for oneself. One kind of life is, ultimately, a failure to "own-up" to oneself, while the other is a life of profound honesty. (p. 70)

Based on these epitomes, 'being' is our way of knowing about the world, whether we choose to do it authentically or not emphasizes the fact that Dasein/way of being involves the capacity to choose among several possible ways of being (Inwood, 1997). The feature of human existence that one cannot choose, however, is to be born or to be born in one situation rather than another. As Heidegger puts it, one is 'thrown' into the world (Inwood, 1997, p. 24).

Therefore, 'being' occurs through adopted understandings, made up of fore-structures that cannot be eliminated from one's mode of being but can be modified or corrected (Koch, 1995). The fore-structures are made up of (1) fore-having, meaning something we have in advance, (2) fore-sight, meaning something that we see in advance, and (3) fore-conception, meaning something we grasp in advance (Heidegger, 1962). Principles of 'historicality,' or the 'hermeneutic circle' illustrate the fact that we are grasping something (i.e., what it means to be) based on our background understandings (Heidegger, 1962). Our background understandings include (1) our background, or the culture we are born into, and (2) our pre-understandings, or the language and practices of the culture we are born into (Koch, 1995).

Accordingly, Heideggerian's (1962) hermeneutic circle characterizes the interpretive nature of being and offers a way of thinking about how to enter and individuals' conscious loop through analysis and interpretation of the individuals lived experiences. The hermeneutic circle of understanding is achieved by moving from pieces or parts of an experience to the whole of the experience; this movement is repeated back and forth for multiple iterations to increase understanding of meaning through words or texts used to explain it (Koch, 1996). In other words, it guides us to understand the contexts that build on each other and shape one's interpretation of their life and what it means.

Furthermore, Heidegger (1962) relies on the concept of ‘co-constitution’ or the idea that a person and their world co-constitute each other, which reinforces life as a self-interpreting act. This means that humans are situated in their worlds (Brenner et al., 2009). Therefore, understandings of life and the world are not determined by, nor are they free from, the world that one is a part of, as the world individuals are raised in and live in contributes to their complex understandings about how they act in the world, or their situatedness in the world (Brenner et al., 2009).

Similarly, the experientialist paradigm follows explorations into ‘the individual in the world,’ which is built off the ideals of Heidegger (1962) and ‘being in the world.’ It can also provide some epistemological support to Heidegger’s heavily ontological perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology. Experientialists rely on the differences and changes in individual-world relations (Watkins, 2000), and encourage us to look at the focal aspects that shape an individual’s awareness of phenomenon (Marton, 1986). Uncovering meaning relies on “empirical descriptions of qualitative differences in individual–world relationships, both within the same individual and between different individuals” (Watkins, 2000, p. 102).

Complementing Heidegger’s idea of the hermeneutic circle, the experientialists posit experiences are interrelated because the same aspects or parts of the experience may appear in a different combination of aspects or parts in different experiences of the phenomenon (Marton, 1996). Thus, learning and creating meaning about one’s reality or lived experience represent(s) a process built on an individual’s capacity to hold more parts or aspects of a phenomenon. For example, understanding the way an individual creates meaning of leisure is built on “having more ways of experiencing leisure in their awareness than they were capable of at some previous point in time” (Watkins, 2000, p. 103). This philosophical underpinning serves an important role

in understandings the meaning of drug/cannabis in/as leisure and the potential influence of accumulated drug experiences in previous leisure spaces-times. Therefore, leisure related meanings consider changes in the content and structure of internal relations formed between an individual and their leisure (Watkins, 2000), such as the relationship between leisure meanings and cannabis use.

This conceptualization can also be compared to Heidegger's (1962) idea of background understandings. In other words, the culture, language and practices we are born into that propel us into the world and inform our understanding of experiences, existence, and ourselves. Heidegger's phenomenological position purports that nothing, in a literal sense not one thing, can ever appear to be anything except when we, as humans, encounter it and it therefore gains its meaning in the context of human life. As expressed by Heidegger (1985):

It must be stated that the entity as an entity is 'in itself' and independent of any apprehension of it; yet, the being of the entity is found only in encounter and can be explained, made understandable, only from the phenomenal exhibition and interpretation of the structure of encounter (p. 217)

The role of the hermeneutic philosopher, thinker and researcher is identifying a new perspective or discovery about the way humans organize their thoughts or behaviors about the studied phenomenon. Most importantly then, hermeneutic phenomenology can be thought of as a guide to thinking. In this research it will be a guide to thinking about the meanings of cannabis use in/as leisure, as well as how this relates to cannabis related risk-benefits and (in)effectiveness of drug education approaches.

Data collection

Participants, sampling, and recruitment

The most important characteristic of the participants in the phenomenological study is to have experienced the phenomenon that is being explored (i.e., recreational cannabis use), and to be able to articulate personal lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). This study focused on emerging adults in the U.S who lived in states where recreational cannabis use was legalized. The sample included different genders, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and both college-attending and non-college attending emerging adults. Regarding the sample size, methodologist Robert Stake (2006) acknowledges an arbitrary rule that suggests many qualitative studies, or multi-case studies have either fewer than 4 cases or more than 15, while large scale qualitative samples include anywhere from 60 to 100 participants (Mason, 2010). More loosely calculated, Morse (2000) posits that the nature of the data and the theoretical tradition(s) being used in a study are what dictate its sample size.

Phenomenological sampling revolves around every participant having experienced the phenomenon under investigation and being willing to share their experience (Corben, 1999; Creswell, 2007; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). In this dissertation, the shared phenomenon was the use of recreational cannabis, which required recruitment through purposive sampling strategies. Purposive sampling is not focused on the people of study per se, but more extensively about particular events, incidents and experiences (Sandelowski, 1995). Indeed, purposeful sampling will be particularly useful because it seeks to obtain ‘information-rich cases’ that are ideal for the in-depth study of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015, p. 401). Information-rich cases can help uncover issues which are central to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002).

Researchers have suggested that purposeful sampling strategies such as criterion sampling (Moser & Korstjens, 2017) and snowball sampling (Kleinman, 2004) are particularly well suited for phenomenology studies. Criterion sampling requires all cases included in the study (e.g., individual participants) to meet some criterion that is useful for understanding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), ensuring that everyone participating in the study meets the criteria to be part of the study (Patton, 2014). The criterion for this dissertation involved being a user of recreational cannabis during the emerging adulthood life stage. Snowball sampling involves a reference system, wherein, one participant can refer someone they know to be in the study because they also fit the inclusion criteria (Streitron et al., 2004). In snowball sampling the researcher can start with a few information-rich interviewees and then asks them if they know additional contacts that are relevant to the study, creating a chain of interviewees based on referrals of people who know other people that would be good sources of information (Patton, 2014). This study will apply both criterion and snowball techniques of purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria to participate in the research included: (1) being resident of the U.S. (2) being between the ages 18 to 30, (2) having used recreational cannabis within the last 2 months, (3) not having a current involvement in the criminal justice system, and (4) being comfortable with the interview being audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The recruitment messages for this study were distributed via university professors (i.e., asked to send announcements to their classes), hard copy flyers posted around college campuses, towns, and posting to social media (e.g., reddit, Instagram, Facebook). In non-intervention-based research with drug users, it can be difficult to recruit participants when they are not associated with any routine clinical care (Braunstein, 1993) and who are often less willing or less accustomed to discussing sensitive and personal information (Lee, 1993). However, researchers

have suggested that better communicating the wider aims of the research and how participation in the research can benefit the drug user community and wider societal drug discourses helps participation (e.g., impact on drug policy, drug education; Barratt et al., 2007; MacNeil & Fernandez, 2006). Therefore, it was useful to emphasize the participants' impact towards drug knowledge and drug-related practices when recruiting participants for the study.

Table 1. summarizes participants' characteristics including information about their demographics as well as their cannabis use patterns. The ages in the sample ranged from 18 years old to 30 years old. Specifically, one participant was 18 years old, two were 19 years old, one was 20 years old, five were 21 years old, one was 26 years old, one was 27 years old, two were 28 years old, two were 29 years old and one was 30 years old. The average age of the sample was 24 years old, or mid-twenties. In total there were seven participants identifying as women, six participants identifying as male, and three participants identifying as genderqueer/non-binary.

All the participant resided in U.S. states where recreational cannabis was legalized. Majority of the participants were living in the Midwest (i.e., Michigan, Illinois; n=13). However, two participants were from Colorado and one participant was from Virginia. Ten out of the 16 participants were currently enrolled in college the rest were non-college attending young adults, although two of the six had already graduated. All but two of the participants were born in the U.S. and all did of the participants did grow up in the U.S. In terms of race/ethnicity, majority of the sample was white/Caucasian (n= 11). However, two young adults were Hispanic, two young adults were Asian, and one young adult was multiracial (i.e., African American and Asian). None of the participants were married, although six participants were casually dating, six were in an exclusive relationship and four were not dating or in a relationship. Majority of the

participants were employed or self-employed (n=12), three participants were out of work and not looking for employment, and one was out of work and looking for employment. The hours of leisure per week ranged from 5 to 40, on average young adults reported 24 hours of leisure per week.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

Name	Age	Gender	State living	College student?	Born in US	Grew up in US	Race/Ethnicity	Marital status	Current dating status	Employment	Hours of leisure per week
Cristina	28	Female	Michigan	No	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Not in relationship and not dating	Employed	5
Heather	19	Non-binary (she/her)	Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes	Asian	Never married	Casually dating	Out of work and not looking	40
Zach	21	Male	Michigan	Yes	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Exclusive relationship	Employed	15
Eileen	18	Female	Michigan	Yes	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Casually dating	Out and not looking	25
JR Ewing	27	Male	Michigan	No	Yes	Yes	Hispanic	Never married	Casually dating	Self-employed	40
Minea	21	Non-binary (they/them/theirs)	Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Exclusive relationship	Employed	12
Jerry	30	Female	Colorado	No	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Not in relationship and not dating	Self-employed	20
Danielle	28	Female	Michigan	Yes	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Exclusive relationship	Self-employed	30
James	19	Male	Michigan	Yes	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Not in relationship and not dating	Out of work and not looking	40
Dave	21	Male	Illinois	Yes	No	Yes	Asian	Never married	Casually dating	Employed	15
Jamie	21	Genderqueer (they/them/theirs)	Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Not in relationship and not dating	Employed	40
Emma	26	Female	Colorado	No	Yes	Yes	Hispanic	Never married	Exclusive relationship	Employed	20
Steve	29	Male	Michigan	No	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Exclusive relationship	Employed	30
Thomas	29	Male	Virginia	No	Yes	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Exclusive relationship	Employed	25
Luna	21	Female	Illinois	Yes	No	Yes	White/Caucasian	Never married	Casually dating	Out of work and looking	15
Phoebe	20	Female	Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes	Black/African American and Asian	Never married	Casually dating	Employed	17

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

Table 2. presents the participants' cannabis use patterns. Four participants were in the low use group reporting using cannabis one to two times a week (one participant reporting she has only used cannabis once in her lifetime). Four participants were in the medium use group, reporting using cannabis two to three times per week. Eight of the participants were in the high use group, reporting using cannabis four or more times per week. The young adults were also asked how many hours they were typically stoned on days that they did use cannabis. Five participants listed being high for one to two hours, six participants listed being high for three to

four hours, two participants listed being high for five to six hours and three participants listed being high for seven hours or more on days that they used cannabis. Additionally, participants were asked to share how they felt about their cannabis use patterns. However, one participant was excluded from this part because she has only used cannabis one thus, she has not developed any patterns of use besides the one incident. Most participants reported that they “never” felt their cannabis use is out of control (n=12), however, three reported they “sometimes” feel this. Eight participants said that they “never” worry about their cannabis use, while seven participants said that they “sometimes” worry about it. Majority of the participants said they “never” have wished to stop using cannabis (n=12), while three participants said that “sometimes” they have wished to stop. Finally, participants were asked how difficult they find it to stop using cannabis. Nine participants reported “not difficult,” four reported “quite difficult,” one reported “very difficult,” and one reported “impossible.”

Recreational cannabis use characteristics of the participants

Name	Age	How often do you use cannabis?	How many hours (hrs) "stoned?"	Cannabis use out of control?	Worry about your cannabis use?	Wish to stop cannabis use?	Difficult to stop cannabis use?
Cristina	28	4 or more per week (every day)	5-6 hrs	Never	Never	Never	Impossible
Heather	19	1 time ever (1 time in entire lifetime) - only used cannabis once in whole life	3-4 hrs	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Zach	21	1-2 times per week	1-2 hrs & 3-4 hrs (usually 2-3 hrs)	Never	Never	Never	Not difficult
Eileen	18	2-3 times per week	3-4 hrs	Never	Never	Never	Not difficult
JR Ewing	27	4 or more per week (every day)	7 or more hrs	Never	Never	Never	Not difficult
Minea	21	4 or more per week (every day)	3-4 hrs & 5-6 hrs	Sometimes	Never	Never	Not difficult
Jerry	30	4 or more per week (every day)	1 hr or less	Never	Sometimes	Never	Not difficult
Danielle	28	2-3 times per week	3-4 hrs	Never	Sometimes	Never	Not difficult
James	19	1-2 times per week (2-4 times per mos. & 2-3 times per week)	7 or more hrs	Never	Sometimes	Never	Not difficult
Dave	21	2-3 times per week	1-2 hrs	Never	Never	Sometimes	Not difficult
Jamie	21	1-2 times per week (2-4 times per mos. & 2-3 times per week)	1-2 hrs & 3-4 hrs (usually 2-3 hrs)	Never	Sometimes	Sometimes	Not difficult
Emma	26	2-3 times per week	3-4 hrs	Never	Never	Never	Quite difficult
Steve	29	4 or more per week (every day)	7 or more hrs	Never	Never	Never	Quite difficult
Thomas	29	4 or more per week (every day)	1-2 hrs	Never	Sometimes	Never	Quite difficult
Luna	21	4 or more per week (every day)	3-4 hrs	Sometimes	Sometimes	Never	Quite difficult
Phoebe	20	4 or more per week (every day)	3-4 hrs	Sometimes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Very difficult

Table 2. Recreational cannabis use characteristics of the participants

Interviewing on sensitive topics

Interviews are one form of qualitative methods that allow researchers to gain insights into people's experiences by asking open ended questions which participants respond to "using their own words" to give a personal account (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 79). The degree to which participants have control over the process and content of the interview is the quintessential factor differentiating between the three modes of interviewing known as, unstructured interactive interviews, semi structured interviews, and structured interviews (Cassell, 1980; Fontana & Frey, 1998; Morse, 2002).

One study applied three different interviewing styles to hermeneutic phenomenology methods, namely, think-aloud, stimulated recall and semi-structured (Lauterbach, 2018). The study conducted by Lauterbach (2018) showed that semi-structured interviewing can accomplish two hermeneutical interviewing purposes. Namely the exploration and development of rich understanding of phenomenon and engaging in conversation around the meaning of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). The semi-structured interview encourages more conversational interviewing style, which is more flexible than structured interviews and avoids being too unstructured wherein certain topics are not addressed (van Manen, 2016). Thus, the semi-structured interviewing style was applied in this dissertation. This interview style helped the researcher develop richer understanding of meanings through conversations with emerging adults.

An interview is a sensitive event, regardless of the studied topic, because it is a space to disclose information about the self that makes one vulnerable to emotional turmoil (Drury et al., 2007). Although this is true of all qualitative interviews, when designing an interview on a sensitive topic, there are additional considerations. Dempsey et al. (2016) detail various elements

to consider for qualitative interviewing on sensitive topics, which are further elaborated on in the following section. These elements include: (1) being flexible with time and location of interviews, (2) building rapport and connection with participants, (3) practicing therapeutic interviewing (e.g., being an emphatic listener and being comfortable with interview silences), and (4) planning, preparing and implementing an interview guide.

It is important to give participants as much choice about the environmental structure of the research interview, such that they can feel most comfortable. Given that the current global community is facing an entire shift in their concept of location and time under the existing pandemic situation, nearly all the interviews for this study were virtual. Synchronous online audio-visual interviews can be conducted on various platforms such as Skype, Google Hangouts and Facetime (Jenner & Myers, 2018). Another option is also Zoom Video Communications. Researchers have investigated (dis)advantages to using online video interviews. Some of the challenges that disfavor synchronous online interviewing include technical difficulties, issues with interview design, difficulty building rapport, inability to pick up on non-verbal cues, and potential problems with ethics (Adams-Hutcheson & Longhurst, 2017; Hanna, 2012; O'Connor et al., 2008; Seitz, 2016).

However, despite the challenging aspects, there are also various benefits to conducting online interviews in qualitative research. Researchers benefit from lower costs, being able to access participants more easily (particularly across different geographical locations, e.g., different states with legalized cannabis), increased safety and lowering the ecological footprint of having to travel to participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012; Oates, 2015). Participant benefits include safer and more comfortable interview settings and potentially greater confidentiality (e.g., not having to give out addresses or phone numbers; Deakin & Wakefield,

2014; Hanna, 2012). Additionally, researchers have found that synchronous online interviewing produces data that are just as reliable and in-depth as face-to-face encounters (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Furthermore, Jenner & Myers (2018) found that online platforms offer greater flexibility of scheduling and locations, making it more ideal for people with complicated schedules (e.g., young adults working or attending school). Thus, the benefits can outweigh the costs and the challenging aspects of video interviews can be mitigated.

Seitz (2016) shares several strategies for mitigating these challenges such as, confirming a stable internet connection, finding a room without distractions for both the researcher and participant, talking more slowly and clarifying more often, being open to repeating questions or answers when needed, and paying close attention to participants facial expressions. Furthermore, given the sensitive nature of discussing drug use, it is important to consider how the online platform fairs for this topic. Seitz (2016) suggests that online interviewing format is less suitable for deeply personal or sensitive topics. However, other researchers have not reached this conclusion. Jenner & Myers (2018) conducted researcher on sensitive topics and found that online interviewing did not produce inferior quality of data, instead it was the differences between conducting the interview in private or public spaces that impacted the information participants were willing to share. The sharing of deeply personal experiences and perceptions was not compromised in either private in-person or online interviews. Thus, the researcher made sure to ask participants to engage in the interview in a private space and similarly the researcher was alone in a room.

Regardless of interview context, building rapport is crucial for making participants feel comfortable and more willing to share their experiences. One way to build rapport is to reduce status differences between researchers and research participants. In order to do this, researchers

can share information about their personal lives and disclose why they have an interest in the research topic (Thompson, 1995). However, across research involving sensitive topics there are different levels of intensity and frequency of disclosure by the researcher (Lee, 1993). In this dissertation, the researcher informed participants that she is similar to them. The mirroring effect between researcher and participants is detailed in the positionality statement of the methodological chapter.

Along with researchers disclosing personal information, it is important to prioritize active listening throughout the qualitative interview. The participant is sharing their experiential expertise. Therefore, the researcher's sole focus should be listening to the participant (Smith et al., 2009). The interview process and its invitation for cathartic disclosure can also provoke new understanding of past or present experiences, which will only be captured by attentive listening (Birch & Miller, 2000). Therefore, the researcher is responsible for creating a space suitable for participants to relieve challenging emotions, and for providing relief and reinforcement upon listening to their experiences (Ashton, 2014). When interviewing an individual about a sensitive topic it is particularly important to fully concentrate on and prioritize their needs during the interview, which requires being flexible with the structure of the interview guide (Smith et al., 2009). Adjustments to the interview guide may include pacing questions, taking breaks, leaving painful discussions for a later time, and stopping interviews if they become too uncomfortable (Kavanaugh & Ayres, 1998; McSherry, 1995).

For researchers to dive deeper into information about the phenomenon, they can also probe into specific matters with their interview participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013). However, this also requires the researchers to listen intently and be ready to ask relevant follow up questions throughout the interview (Smith et al., 2009). Probing participants requires skillful

selection of probes and understanding the purpose of each question (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Probing can also highlight the importance of being prepared with an interview guide prior to meeting with participants. A helpful interview guide should be designed to incorporate flexibility yet still function as a guide for interviewers/researchers to go from broader issues to more specific and sensitive topics as well as equip the researcher with how to phrase the questions they want to ask (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The interview guide is attached to appendix A.

Utilizing photo elicitation

The interview process will also include projective techniques/photo elicitation. Photo elicitation as a method of interviewing means using photos within an interview setting (Hogan, & Warren, 2012). The photographs or imagery used in this technique are used as stimuli to solicit responses, reactions, and insights from participants of a study about a particular phenomenon (Collier, 1957; Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002). In the same way that structure of traditional interviews represents the different degree to which the researcher determines the direction of the conversation, the different types of photo elicitation adopt a variety of formats. There are three types of photo elicitation interviews including: (1) participant-driven (open), where participants bring any photo(s) they think are relevant to the phenomenon being studied; (2) participant driven (semi-structured), where the researcher provides the participants with a set of questions and asks them to select photos that align with the questions, and (3) researcher-driven (structured), where the researcher provides photos for the interview and they are used as stimuli to promote discussion (Bates et al., 2017). Scholars interested in exploring theoretical concepts have tended to use photographs selected by the researcher to map subjects of interest, and to focus participants' attention to these researcher-selected subjects (Harper, 1982, 1984; Schwartz, 1989; Weinger, 1998). Furthermore, photos can unravel the

various dimensions of ways of knowing (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998). Thus, this dissertation included researcher-driven photos that act as stimuli for conversations relating to drug education.

The use of photography (i.e., stimuli, imagery) transforms the verbal interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Lapenta, 2004), which is an important transformation in the setting of qualitative interviewing whose primary goal is a rich exchange of information (Lapenta, 2011). Furthermore, including photos within interviews allows the researcher to gain a “phenomenological sense” (Harper, 1986, p. 23) of what the content of the photos means to the participants and, therefore, allows people define issues or share concerns the way they see them (Berg & Lune, 2013). This also provides a better understanding and interpretation into the participants world and the way they exist in it (Bignante, 2010). Additionally, projective techniques are a qualitative research tool that also helps minimize researcher bias and which offers access into people’s perceptions (Levin-Rozalis, 2006).

The purpose of photo elicitation methods is to utilize images that are powerful and bring forth various emotions, memories, reactions and meanings that verbal conversations or methods cannot reach on their own (Suchar, 1989). According to Collier and Collier (1986), descriptive photographs can become charged with highly subjective meanings and values that are opened up only through ‘the projective interpretation by the native’ (p. 108). Thus, the intrinsic potential of photo-elicitation as an interview tool is its ability to help researchers gain an enriched knowledge of other people’s lives, opinions, knowledge, and behaviors. Photo elicitation interviews can also be an effective means for triggering a memory, providing meaning or clarity to a situation, evoking emotion, and peeling back multiple layers within a participant’s response (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002; Schwartz, 1989). Research has also shown that young people in particular can better share their personal narratives and stories with photo elicitation interviews compared to

traditional interviews (Epstein et al., 2006; Rasmussen, 2004; Smith & Barker, 2004). Overall, the strengths of using photo elicitation are that photos can enhance memory retrieval and provide participants with a more active role in the research project (Copes et al., 2018).

Utilizing this technique will be useful for uncovering meaningful insights into young adults' responsiveness towards different drug education approaches. This strategy was successfully adopted by Marsh et al. (2017) who showed methamphetamine users images of anti-meth campaigns as a way to explore their opinions about the advertisements and their effectiveness. The results showed that participants did what they could to distance themselves from those depicted in the shock-tactic anti-meth campaigns, by describing the physical difference between themselves and the people in the images. In this research study, the imagery was connected to learning about how the informants respond to different drug education messaging styles and approaches. Photo-elicitation will give the participants the opportunity to draw on a rich repertoire of their cognitive processing to interpret what it was that they saw (Bergmann, 1999). Photographs can potentially trigger important features of memory and allow access to new understandings of memories (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Thus, the participants drew on their own experiences with cannabis, and the previous exposure they have had to drug education to elicit meanings related to the optimization of drug education campaigns. Specifically, the drug education imagery utilized in this study showcased the three different drug education approaches: zero tolerance, harm reduction and health promotion.

The use of photo-elicitation in this dissertation can help establish new information about relevant and relatable messaging features that can spark changes in young adults' risk-benefit perceptions of cannabis as well as health and well-being related choices. Another layer of this probing involved paying attention for the connection between cannabis in/as leisure, related

harms-benefits, and drug education and leisure. The respondents can put their full expertise to use, and openly express themselves while maintaining concrete and explicit reference points based on the imagery (Collier & Collier, 1986). Indeed, there are various quantitative studies and measurements that generate statistical percentages to explain cannabis use, cannabis related risk-benefit perceptions, and score the effectiveness of health communication. However, in this study, the researcher utilized the photo elicitation portion of the interview in order to understand the various experiences and meanings that young adults draw upon when being exposed to different drug education approaches. This allowed the researcher to appreciate and understand participants' individual experiences with drug education and their responses to different messaging features. The common themes that emerged across participants when exposed to different drug education and health messaging styles can have useful implications for enhancing the effectiveness of drug education campaigns.

Details about the conducted interviews

Throughout the months of October and November 2021 recruitment and interviewing was simultaneously occurring. The interviews were conducted mostly online utilizing Zoom software, although two interviews took place in person. At the start of the interview, the researcher asked the participant to complete a short questionnaire that asked about their demographics and cannabis use patterns. The first part of the interview was largely a verbal dialogue guided by the researchers' semi-structured approach to questioning. Then, the second part of the interview was filled with dialogue provoked by the photo elicitation wherein participants were shown different drug education posters (i.e., posters reflecting zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion messaging; see appendix A). Most interviewees were only interviewed once, however, one participant partook in a follow up interview because there was

more information they wanted to share. The shortest interview time was 51 minutes and the longest was three hours (M=1.5 hours). All the interviews (online and in-person) were recorded using Zoom and securely saved to the Zoom cloud, this permitted the Zoom software to produce a first draft audio transcript.

The researcher re-listened to the recorded interviews and utilized a foot pedal to correct the transcript and ensure there were verbatim transcriptions. While correcting the transcripts it was also important to remove any identifying information about the participants (e.g., details about where they live, work, or attend school). Additionally, at the start of the interview the researcher asked each participant to select a pseudonym, which was used to refer to them throughout the interview and within the transcripts. Once the interviews were concluded the researcher transcribed them and began the data analysis process.

Data analysis

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

This research adhered to the steps of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009). IPA research is most commonly used as a study of the ‘individual’ persons. However, it was originally conceived as a study of ‘specifics’ that can be distinguished from the study of ‘things in general,’ or the nomothetics (Lamiell, 1998). It encompasses a qualitative approach, which is most suitable for research focusing on personal meaning and sense-making within a particular context and for individuals who share a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009, p. 124). An IPA researcher must approach the data analysis with two aims in mind. One aim is to try understanding their participants’ world and describing it, while the second aim is to develop an ‘overtly interpretative analysis,’ which positions the initial descriptions in relation to the wider socio-cultural and even theoretical context (Larkin et al.,

2006). Thus, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) lends itself well to Heidegger's phenomenology (Larkin et al., 2006) and follows hermeneutic tradition by recognizing the centrality of the researcher to the design, interpretations, and findings of the study (Smith & Barker, 2004).

IPA steps at the ideographic level (i.e., for each individual participant transcript) will proceed through the following sequence: (1) initial noting or exploratory commenting, (2) developing initial themes, and (3) clustering initial themes into super-ordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009). In the beginning step of initial noting, which is considered the most detailed step, the goal is to produce a complete set of notes and comments on the data focused on participants accounts of the experience. This step will focus on participant's descriptions of things that matter to them, or key objects of concern to them (e.g., relationships, processes, places, etc.) and the meanings or what those things are 'like' for them. Including more interpretive noting helps to understand how and why participants see things the way they do, and involves looking at their language and the context (i.e., their lived world) to draw connections between patterns that emerge in their experiences.

The second step of ideographic level analysis involves developing emergent themes, which help researchers to reduce the volume of detail without losing the complexity or the webs of interrelationships, connections, and patterns that were captured in the initial or exploratory notes. When developing the initial themes, the narrative becomes broken up and text with comments from the interviews appear to be fragmented under several themes. This step is a reminder that we work with parts of the whole or parts of the text, which are manually united under emergent themes, to better understand the whole and vice-versa so that the whole can help us understand the parts of text (i.e., a parallel into Heidegger's hermeneutic circle).

The proceeding and final step of ideographic level analysis requires developing maps of connections across emergent themes that fit together. This involves creating a list of all the emergent themes and then moving them around to create clusters of related themes. It is possible that some of the emergent themes will be like magnets pulling to each other, while others will represent opposite ideas. When forming clusters of emergent themes, also known as the creation of super-ordinate themes, it will also be worthwhile to examine the oppositional relationships between emergent themes; pushing the researcher to focus on differences within the individual transcripts as well as similarities. According to the ideographic commitments of IPA, each new participant can be treated as a new case with its own emergent themes. Therefore, the aforementioned steps will be repeated for each participant individually.

At the nomothetic level (i.e., across participants), the data analysis involves looking for patterns across participants, assessing how themes in one place can connect to other themes, identifying the most explanatory themes, reconfiguring and re-labelling themes, and mapping the ideas across research participants (Smith et al., 2009). This process is creative and guides research toward a more theoretical level, as new super-ordinate themes can be higher order concepts (i.e., built from theory) and, thus, unite themes across participants (Smith et al., 2009). Finally, based on Heidegger's interpretive practice, the conclusion of 'meanings' requires a mental exercise of moving from "observables" to "unobservables" and "connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue" between the data-driven patterns and their connections to theory (Miles et al., 2014, p. 256).

Coding and memos

There are two dilemmas facing researchers who engage in qualitative research. They are data overload and data retrieval (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data overload represents the

challenging task of retrieving the most meaningful material from the interview text and assembling words that belong together in a way that condenses the bulkiness of the entire text into analyzable units without losing what was originally shared. Data retrieval represents tagging the pieces of interview text that are most meaningful in a way that makes it possible to go back and find them later. This encourages one to purposefully highlight the text that is relevant to the research question and purpose. Text does not have its meaning simply by way of single words or phrases, instead, it occurs through data retrieval that represents a choice about meaning or which parts of the text are being tagged as meaningful within a certain context (Bliss et al., 1983).

Using conceptual frameworks and the study's research questions to guide the coding can be the best way to find the information most relevant for analysis and help minimize qualitative dilemmas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). There are three research aims investigated in this study related to cannabis in/as leisure, risk-benefit perceptions, and drug education optimization. Therefore, the data was read and combed through with a three-prong comb that hosts these three aims. Reading and coding the data with these ideas in mind can help researchers avoid contemplating 'what matters more, everything matters' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 55). By coding the portions of meaningful text, the researcher can pull out data in some organized fashion and cluster the segments that relate to one another and to specific research aims/question (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For instance, participants shared their experiences with previous drug education and recalled that the messaging always focused on potential loss of future school or work goals, without any acknowledgement of anticipated benefits of using cannabis in/as leisure. Then, portions of this text were coded to show as a new cluster connecting cannabis in/as leisure and drug education efforts. There are different kinds of coding styles that were implemented to show how different segments of text align with the research aims/questions.

Pattern coding represents explanatory or inferential codes. This coding style mirrors cluster or factor analysis in quantitative studies wherein researchers work with sets of variables that are organized into unique families clustered by similar actions or perceptions across participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The goal is to reduce large amounts of data into smaller analyzable units, while encouraging researchers to think of an elaborate cognitive map useful for understanding interactions and common themes, as well as shedding light on the direction of events or processes. In this dissertation the researcher constructed cognitive maps between young adults' perceptions of leisure well-being and associated risk-benefits.

Coding data and writing memos are concurrent analytic processes that contribute to the evolving understanding of a phenomenon (Weston et al., 2001). Memoring or writing memos is the "theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages ... it exhausts the analyst's momentary ideation based on data with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration" (Glaser, 1978, p. 83-4). In other words, "memos are sites of conversation with ourselves about our data" (Clarke, 2005, p. 202). They represent conceptual notes that often begin in the coding phase of analysis. However, they can extend to any aspect of the study, serving as a useful way to produce notes about personal researchers' position or feelings, methods of the study or something else substantive (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis steps of photo elicitation

The utilization and status of photos as qualitative data and related analytical implications have been called into question by scholars (Byrne, 2014). Some scholars have suggested that the use of photographs or images in social science research is simply a means to an end (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004). There are continuous debates surrounding the significance of images, their

intended audiences, and what established methodological frameworks exist for using them in social science research (Pauwels, 2010). The detailed discussions of coding photos are sparse and uncommon in the methodology literature (Rose, 2016). However, many researchers have decided to treat photographs and textual interview transcripts as one body of data and devise a coding system that includes both of them (Rose, 2016).

The overwhelming claim made by scholars suggests that there is little guidance on how to analyze combined visual and textual data (Frith et al., 2005; Gleeson, 2011), which leads many researchers to transfer methods of analysis designed to manage textual data in their analysis of images as well (Drew et al., 2010). The work of Gleeson's (2011) polytextual thematic analysis accounts for the exploration of more than one type of data set whilst working with the assumption that the data sets are linked. Thus, meaning is discovered by moving back and forth between the data sets rather than seeing them as separate. In this dissertation, the verbal conversation and visual stimuli and the responses they produce was treated as one data set as well. Therefore, the units of analysis relevant for this study will include responses to conventional verbal-only questions of the larger interview schedule and responses to the photo-elicitation phase.

In broad terms the analysis of the photo elicitation segments in this research required the researcher to focus on manifest and latent meanings of the visual imagery. Manifest layers of photo analysis can be defined as the apparent, surface-level meaning in photographs or the meanings that are "directly accessible to the naked eye" (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 482). The analysis of manifest content is reliable because it demarks a straightforward understanding of the photos where there is no need for inferences to detect the underlying meanings of data (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Manifest meanings relate to participants describing the actual literal subject and

perhaps what they like or dislike about it (i.e., drug education poster/flier) in terms of design, wording, colors and pictorial qualities. However, the photo elicitation analysis will also focus on latent meanings or the interpretations that are made from the photos going beyond describing the tangible aspects of the imagery (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Analyzing the latent layer involves looking at the “meaning underlying what is said or shown” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 482). The latent meanings consider how young adults are relating images back to their own lived experiences with drug use and drug education and what underlying motives influence them to respond to different imagery the way they do. Uncovering the manifest and latent meanings can help the researcher identify a range of factors that might influence a young adults’ responses to drug education and health messaging.

The analytical steps of this dissertation are framed around interpretivist thinking and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2003). According to the review conducted by Reid et al. (2018), there have been 14 published articles that have paired photo elicitation methods with interpretive phenomenological analysis from 2010 to 2018. Recent research that has combined photo elicitation (Collier, 1957) and IPA (Smith, 1996) include studies on self-concept in hoarding disorder (utilized participant selected/created photos; Kings et al., 2018) and the lived experience of older adult learners in higher education (Zakrajsek, 2020). Analysis of the photo portion of interview transcripts will also follow steps from this design as well as adopting the conceptual links between the textual and visual components of interviews outlined by Gleeson’s (2011) polytextual thematic analysis. Furthermore, Prosser (1998) drew attention to specific interview processes and emphasized the importance of having an audit trail that includes information on the photographs used (i.e., how the photographs were

selected) and the processes with participants, meaning how the researcher and participants used the photographs to facilitate in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The following section will outline the analytical steps applied to the verbal and photo elicitation portion of interviews, which have been informed by the qualitative research which has incorporated polytextual analysis (Edmondson et al., 2018). Each participant's transcript was scrutinized for themes in an iterative process that involved moving back and forward from text to images. The first step of analysis involved identifying blocks of text where the participants are discussing drug education and noting where in the text participants are highlighting qualities within the pictures. The next stage involved the creation of explanatory codes (a basic unit of meaning) that could be applied to the textual excerpts associated with the photogenic stimuli, which capture the interpreted meaning. The data analysis sought to create a shared list of codes that connect individuals' interpretations by associating the images they were shown and the descriptions they prompted (Bazeley, 2009). This approach meant avoiding separation of the analysis by method of collection (i.e., verbal interview questions and photo stimuli).

All coded textual data from both the photo elicitation and non-photo elicitation portion of the interviews was examined for their relevance towards one another by reviewing the text and visual data associated with each code to learn the meaning of the data. When different extracts of data, including either text from the photo or non-photo portion of the interviews, differed in meaning then codes were expanded (or alternatively collapsed if different codes represented a shared meaning). Deleting codes was avoided in case they became pertinent further down the process of analysis. Codes with similar properties were grouped into tentative themes which were refined in latter steps of analysis, where the theme's boundaries underwent further scrutiny of the photo and non-photo portions of the text that inform the themes. The coding process was

repeated for each participant individually and then the themes across the whole data corpus (i.e., across participants) will be explored. Both photo and non-photo elicited data was examined to explore the ways in which the data were divergent or convergent across individual participants and across the entire sample of participants.

Data analysis software

This data analysis used Atlas t.i. computer assisted data software. Using a computer software package for data analysis is particularly useful for coding in multiple dimensions, as it has the capacity for trees of codes to be created and manipulated and affords a rapid search of large amounts of text (Wagstaff et al., 2014). Albeit, it is important to recognize that the software is only a tool used to help sort data but not to do the analysis itself (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Rigor in qualitative research design

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) provoked heavy debate related to its methodological quality and validity (Chamberlain, 2011; Shaw, 2011; Smith, 2011a, 2011b; Todorova, 2011). However, IPA is not an exception in this regard, rather it is a reflection of the debates related to quality and validity that are relevant throughout all qualitative research methodologies (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002). In particular, qualitative research has been criticized for its inability to detail the process of analysis that leads researchers to their interpretations of the data and findings (Pollock, 1991; Clarke, 1998; Crist & Tanner, 2003). The overall goal of rigorous qualitative research is allowing readers, whether qualitative or quantitative in thinking, to more easily understand how the research evolved, progressed and transformed from raw data to emergent concepts and principles that are credible and defensible (Gioia et al., 2012).

Validity, trustworthiness, reflexivity, and ethics

Validity of the research refers to the ‘quality of the craftsmanship’ throughout the investigation, which is characterized by constantly checking, questioning, and employing theoretically based interpretations of the findings (Kvale, 1996, p. 241). Scholars have suggested that validity can be enhanced when researchers demonstrate that there is little known about the topic of interest, offering the possibility to contribute new understanding and guaranteeing the information is original, novel and un-explored (Field & Morse, 1992). The research on cannabis in/as leisure phenomenon is currently understudied in leisure scholarship, while the connections to drug education approaches are nearly nonexistent. Thus, this study offers novelty during a timely shift in drug policy from cannabis prohibition to legalization.

Validity is woven into methodological decisions and explanations. Researchers using phenomenology should justify and articulate the philosophical underpinnings of the phenomenological approach they are following (Priest, 2004). This helps researchers be able to better use and apply the method (Paley, 1997), avoiding misinterpreted phenomenological practices (Paley, 1998). Appraisal of the philosophical underpinning applied in the phenomenological research (e.g., Husserlian or Heideggerian phenomenology) increases the validity of the method and provides more soundness or rigor to the qualitative research (Corben, 1999; Koch, 1995). As stated by Lowes and Prowse (2001), “the omission of a clear statement about the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenological research results in the methodological confusion that may impact on the overall quality and rigor of the research endeavour” (p. 472).

Another important feature of validity in phenomenological research is transparency concerning the data analysis so that later “[the] reader can see what was done” in the research

process (Smith, 2011a, p. 17). Thus, creating a research audit trail permits one retrievable data and analytic accountability that allows transparent and evidenced research to be accurately judged for its quality and validity (Stanley, 2004; Wise & Stanley, 2006). Indeed, it is important to capture ‘intersubjectively reliable results’ and have high intersubjective reproducibility (i.e., that two people reading the same text would reach the same conclusions or categorizations; Kvale, 1996, pg. 181). Annotated transcripts are seen as useful ways to create an audit trail in IPA designed research (Vicary et al., 2016). Annotations in the transcript can provide explanations of terminology that was used by the participant and understood only by them and the researcher. Furthermore, the annotations can be used to connect a textual phrase of excerpt from the non- photo elicitation portion of the interview with something that was said during the photo elicitation section.

Auditing clarifies meaning and allows the researchers connections to be followed by others who were not primarily conducting the research but wish to repeat its methods or confirm the validity of its findings. In this dissertation, the researcher noted various steps in the research process that contribute towards building an audit trail including, detailed record of the places/channels through which the project was promoted (e.g., a list of all the places where posters were posted, professors who shared research study announcement), the dates/times of interviews and the various iterations of codebooks. Additionally, throughout the data analysis process, various renditions of conceptual mapping were preserved. The researcher also recorded various thoughts related to reflexivity. Specifically, the researcher deeply contemplated the co-creation of knowledge about recreational cannabis use (i.e., story sharing and interpretation between interviewer and interviewee).

Generalizability is not the purpose of phenomenology, thus rather than focusing on generalization this method is concerned with contextualization (Kvale, 1996). The findings related to cannabis use in/as leisure can represent a reliable contextualization of the phenomenon, which captures the interpreted world of the participants and the researcher. Interpretivists have argued that in a study of socially constructed structures and processes there should be no expectation to produce transferable results that apply to a larger audience (Gioia et al., 2012). Thus, by default inductive qualitative research necessarily involves an idiosyncratic act because it seeks to learn about behaviors, processes, perceptions, etc., made by a unique individual within a unique context. However, audiences learning the in-depth qualitative accounts of unique individuals and context requires having a trustworthy research process.

In qualitative research, establishing trustworthiness can be achieved through researcher credibility (i.e., researchers describing and interpreting their own experiences) and dependability (i.e., being able to follow the decision trail or decision-making process of the researcher throughout the study; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thus, it was crucial for the researcher to describe their point of view or the experience they had throughout the interview process and how they decided on the appropriate steps to conduct the research from beginning to end (e.g., sampling, recruitment, interview questions, interview follow up, etc.). The researcher's decision-making is interwoven throughout this chapter specifically.

Reflexivity has also become one of the prime measures for securing credible, trustworthy, and non-exploitative research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). It is a requirement of good qualitative inquiry that pushes researchers to self-scrutinize the lens through which they view and understand the studied phenomenon (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2006), as well as the interpersonal and institutional powers that play out in the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). The

researcher in this study will be peering through two sets of glasses. Through one set of glasses the phenomenon of recreational cannabis is colored by the researcher's identity as an emerging adult living in U.S. states where recreational cannabis is legalized. However, the other lens of glasses adopts a more institutional view because the researcher has been studying recreational cannabis academically and preparing for a career in academia. The researcher is an insider to the participants life stage and the use of cannabis within this life stage. However, they have also interpreted the findings with the academician lens they have developed in their pursuit of a PhD.

There is an expectation that reflexive researchers will pay more attention to their own history and how it influences the way in which they interpret what research participants are sharing (Berger, 2013). Reflexivity is an ongoing internal dialogue and evaluative critical self-reflection (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Pillow, 2003; Stronach et al., 2007). Indeed, the hermeneutic orientation of this qualitative research requires being "deeply reflexive and engaged" because the "the interpreter is himself implicated in the process of interpretation" (Dahlstrom, 2013, p. 92). According to Heidegger (1962) a reflective journal is also a useful way in which a hermeneutic circle can be engaged, allowing researchers to move back and forth between the parts and the whole of the text. Thus, it is important for researchers to track their reflexivity throughout the entire research process.

Reflexive journaling is one way to help make biases and assumptions visible throughout the process, raising researchers' self-awareness (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2006; Ortlipp, 2008). Researchers have also advocated for the use of reflexive journaling to move from descriptive to interpretive analysis, which is an essential feature to IPA (Vicary et al., 2016). Journaling includes recording real time thoughts, feelings, reflections and connections to literature and

published works during the process of data analysis. Constantly reflecting on the research process can also help researchers to practice ethical investigations.

Ethical issues that concern the research project include, worthiness of the project, competence, informed consent, benefits, costs and reciprocity, harm and risk, honesty and trust, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, research integrity and quality, and the use and misuse of results (Miles et al., 2014). When considering the worthiness of the project one must ask if the proposed research contributes in some greater way to a broader domain than the researcher's funding, publications, or career opportunities (Miles et al., 2014). Indeed, this research can have a meaningful impact on the public health response to legalized recreational cannabis, and particularly in terms of how drug related risk-benefits are communicated to young adults in the U.S. The ethical issue related to competence, require researchers to ask themselves if they have the required expertise to carry out a quality qualitative research project (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher who conducted this dissertation has previously completed a pilot study on the topic of drugs in/as leisure with college students. Additionally, the researcher has accumulated two years of experience as a research assistant and produced two journal publications.

The ethical concept of informed consent refers to the freely given consent of participants to be in the study, meaning that their participation is voluntary, unforced and that they are aware of what their participation in the study involves (Miles et al., 2014). The provision of an informed consent or information statement will be included in the application for the study's approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Ethical concerns of benefits, costs, and reciprocity refer to what the participants are gaining from being involved in the research project (Miles et al., 2014). One study found that injecting drug users (IDU) participating in non-

intervention research did so for benefits such as economic gain, citizenship, altruism, personal satisfaction, drug user activism, and to receive information (Fry & Dwyer, 2001).

In this dissertation participants benefited from knowing that their experiences and perceptions of recreational cannabis will be useful for the wider society. Specifically, they were informed that their lived experiences can contribute towards developing more evidence-based policies and practices in drug policy and drug education. Harms and risks are an additional ethical issue that highlight the potential harms related to participating in the research (Miles et al., 2014). Participation in this study did not present any additional or unique threats to the participants because confidentiality was guaranteed. Also any young adults currently involved in the criminal justice system were not recruited in this study. Therefore, there was no additional threat to security for them.

Guarding the information collected in any given research involves privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Miles et al., 2014). Privacy relates to the control over access to information and keeping the information protected. Confidentiality refers to the agreements with research participants about what can and can not be done with the information they give. While anonymity concerns itself with erasing any identifiers that could potentially indicate who provided information, or i.e., participated in providing data in the study. The researcher protected the data on a password protected computer. They also asked for permission from the participants about using de-identified information in conference presentations and academic publications.

The ethics related to use and misuse of results suggests researchers' should contemplate if they are using the results or findings in any wrongful or hurtful way, or if their use of findings is helpful and to whom (Miles et al., 2014). The findings from this study will be helpful to understand what kind of cannabis related meanings are currently occurring in a country where

post-prohibitive society seems to be inching closer in terms of cannabis legalization. Specifically, this research will be helpful towards understanding how leisure meanings, perceptions of risk-benefit and responsiveness of different drug education approaches exists under the current socio-cultural climate of increasing cannabis legalization.

Positionality

Positionality refers to the positioning of the researcher in relation to the socio-cultural and political context of the study and participants involved in the study (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The factors that make up a researchers' positioning, or positionality, can include gender, race, age, immigration status, personal experiences, linguistics, belief systems, biases, political orientations and emotional reactions toward participants (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Finlay, 2000; Padgett, 2008).

Positionality affects the research in several ways. A researcher's position influences how much information respondents are willing to disclose and what kind of information they are willing to share (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Participants are more likely to share information with those who they think will sympathize with them. Additionally, the researchers' worldview is influential in their positionality and throughout the entire research process. Beginning with the language that they use to construct their world and pose their research questions, as well as, the lens they use to filter information received from participants and which shape the conclusions in their study (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006).

Researchers who have an inside position into the phenomenon under study are 'insiders' into the group of participants, meaning that they are studying something that is familiar to them, which can have several advantages for the overall research design. It can facilitate an easier entry into recruiting participants, an earlier start in knowing about the topic of study, as well as, a

better ability to understand nuanced reactions of participants (Padgett, 2008; Kacen & Chaitin, 2006). However, there are also dangers with being an insider, or with bringing the researcher into the researched because to some extent it can block hearing the participants voices (Cloe et al., 2000). As illustrated by Finlay (2000) who shared, ‘I had to guard against assuming that my participants and I shared the same language ... if I failed to do so, I might have missed the point’ (p. 537). The balancing act then relies on how well a researcher can use what they are familiar with about the phenomenon so that it leads to potentially deeper meanings, while not imposing on the experiential expertise of the participants (Pillow, 2003).

The sole researcher of this project is seeking to learn about other human beings and to understand cannabis in/as leisure among present day emerging adults/college students in the U.S. In doing so, the researcher must not fail to recognize who they are, who they are studying and what their position is in relation to those individuals that are participating in the study. So who is the researcher for this study? The researcher is a white woman, in the emerging adulthood life stage, who was born in Eastern Europe and raised in the Midwest region of America. In many ways, the researcher mirrors the participants she interviewed. For instance, the researcher has spent the previous 8 years in the college context and transitioning through the emerging adulthood life stage. Having the shared experience with participants (e.g., being an emerging adult, having personal experiences in the college scene with substances) can enhance the researchers’ willingness and ability to go places in the research data collection that others would not go (Berger, 2013).

Also, the researcher’s cultural background/identity largely shapes her understanding of the world in a dynamic and multi-cultural way. More specifically, her understanding of the world lies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, rooted in both the modern, individualistic Western

hemisphere, as well as the more traditional collectivist East. Being born into this life experience and cultural circumstance highlights how important different socio-cultural and political systems are in shaping understanding of our existence and the meanings we attribute to experiences and behavioral choices. Having immigrated to the United States at a young age, the researcher was often perceived as a white American born woman with no connection to foreign culture or language. However, in her family life, the researcher also spoke a different language and immersed herself in a non-American culture and customs daily. The bi-cultural and bi-lingual nature of the researchers' life also led to negotiating her cultural identity. In other words, shifting between when to speak English, and therefore, tapping into a more Western thinking brain, as well as when to speak her native Eastern European language that brought about thinking that is more traditional. This type of difference in thinking can be particularly evident in the reaction each culture has towards the topic of deviant leisure, in particular cannabis use in/as leisure that is the focus this research. Although stigma, taboo, and inequitable handling of substance use is prevalent in both cultures, the Western thinking brain seemed to have a more open-minded approach to the use of recreational cannabis and the creation of socially just drug policy and useful drug education.

Conclusion

This project focused on emerging adults' interpretations of cannabis in/as leisure, cannabis related risks and benefits and drug education approaches (i.e., zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion). The methodology for this study follows Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology to understand meanings that make up phenomenon. The study incorporated purposive sampling and data collection utilizing in-depth one on one interviewing and photo elicitation methods. The participants of this study are situated within the constantly

changing socio-cultural contexts they are a part of while actively constructing and shaping their social worlds and can, therefore, discuss their lived experiences (Alderson, 1995). The role of the researcher was to create a comfortable and engaging environment for conversation to flow.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

RESEARCH AIM ONE

The first research aim of this project seeks to explore links between recreational cannabis use and leisure and understanding how U.S. emerging adults construe recreational cannabis use in/as leisure. The data related to research aim one suggests there are four experience textures, or four overarching themes that help explain the ways in which emerging adults understand and experience recreational cannabis use in/as leisure.

Specifically recreational cannabis use in/as leisure relate to meanings of (1) leisure as a state of mind, (2) leisure activity, (3) pleasure, and (4) free time, which are underlined by various structures (see figure 2). This figure is a visual heuristic that represents the phenomenological essence of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure based on the lived experiences of the participants in this study. The idiographic and nomothetic layers of analysis served to determine which meanings explained textural and structural descriptions of cannabis in/as leisure.

Phenomenological Meanings of Recreational Cannabis use in/as Leisure

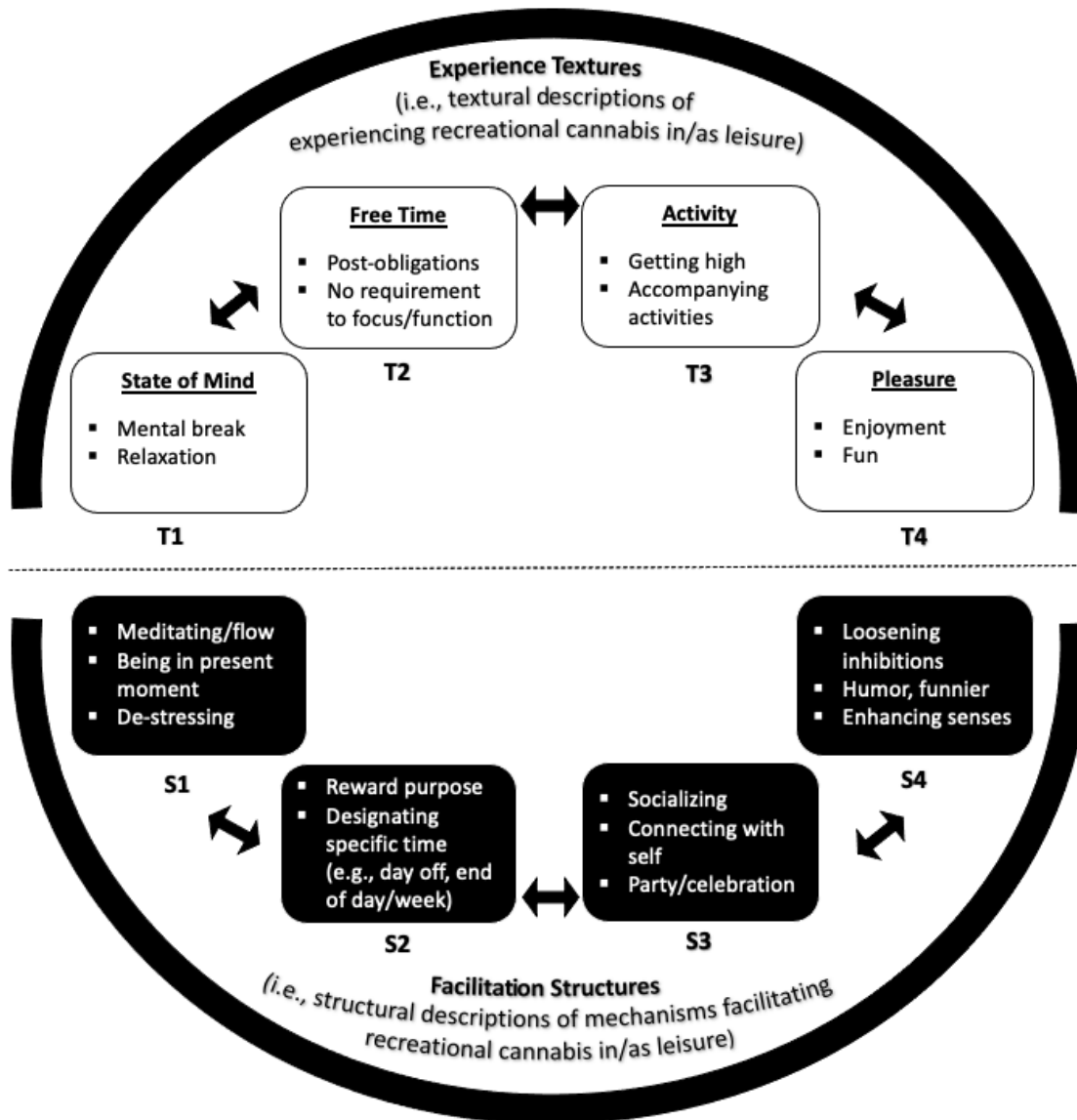


Figure 2. Phenomenological meanings of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure

The participants descriptions of “what” it means to experience recreational cannabis in/as leisure is pictured in the first (top) half of the circle (i.e., the textural descriptions of experiencing T1- leisure state of mind, T2- free time, T3- leisure activity, T4- pleasure). The arrows between these textures are included in the figure to acknowledge that descriptions were hard to pull apart

and artificially separate into one distinct texture. Throughout the individual transcripts and across participants multiple leisure meanings were expressed simultaneously. Pictured in the second (bottom) half of the circle are the contextualizing mechanisms showing what facilitates participants leisure meanings, or “how” leisure meanings appear in the consciousness, through which frames of reference (i.e., the facilitation structures S1, S2, S3, and S4). Similar to the textural essences, structures which were also overlapping, and the separation is not clear cut. The polygamous nature of structural elements identified to represent recreational cannabis in/as leisure meanings illuminates the complexity of this phenomenon.

Structural essences from the bottom half of the circle underline their matching textural essences from the top half of the circle, providing a composite textural-structural understanding of the essence of cannabis use in/as leisure. As outlined in the figure: leisure state of mind (T1) is underlined by factors including meditating/flow, being in the present moment, and de-stressing (S1); free time (T2) is underlined by mechanisms including reward purpose and designating specific time; activity (T3) is underlined by contextualization’s such as socializing, connecting with self, and party/celebration setting; and pleasure (T4) is underlined by facilitators such as loosening inhibitions, humor/making things funnier, and enhancing senses.

This visual represents the stitched fabric combining participants lived experience of recreational cannabis in/as leisure meanings and the researcher’s integral and interpretive analysis of these accounts (as well as the researcher’s own positionality including, being an insider/outsider experience with the phenomenon). The textures and structures showcase the multiple moving parts that shape the lived experiences of U.S. emerging adult recreational cannabis users and their leisurely motives and outcomes of use. Thus, this section will unpack

the four experience textures (i.e., leisure state of mind, free time, leisure activity, and pleasure) as well as their underlying structures.

The textures of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure state of mind and the underlying structures

The participants expressed how recreational cannabis use in/as leisure represented an experience where they could take a break from thinking or mental states that consume much of their day-to-day routine. Heather (19 yo) shared, recreational cannabis use can “just get your mind off of it, and it's just, off of things in your life.” Similarly, Zach (21 yo) explained, “if I wanna just not think and feel nice for a little bit...there's the mental, where I kind of, I don't think as much so it's really nice to just kind of like shut off my brain for a little bit.” Participants discussed how recreational cannabis use offers them the leisure experience of taking a mental break from thinking about being productive as well. For Danielle (28 yo), “[recreational cannabis] just helps” because “[her] brain is really active,” due to her pursuing law school/being a law student. Danielle (28 yo) shared that some days she is working/studying from “9am to like 9pm,” which “is a pretty long day to just be doing work constantly.” Thus, her productive expectations make it “really easy for [her] brain to like want to think about all the things [she] has to do” around the clock. Recreational cannabis can put her in a leisure state of mind where she gets a mental break from this. Similarly, Emma (26 yo) stated:

I would say [cannabis is] definitely something I use for leisure because I do have a hard time just like relaxing, I guess, I always feel like I need to be productive and if I'm not productive enough then I'm not doing good in life.

Recreational cannabis use was also described in terms of leisurely mental states, such as relaxation. Several participants shared how “leisure wise, you know, [cannabis is] a way to

unwind and relax” (Phoebe, 20 yo). Comparably, for Jerry (30 yo), she “definitely look[s] at weed as a relaxing thing...[she] personally use[s] it for leisure and for relaxation.” Zach (21 yo), shared, “I do just feel like nice when I smoke...it feels like really good because I can just relax.” Similarly, for Danielle (28 yo) “[cannabis] does help with like relaxation and being able to like enjoy things and slow down a little bit more.” For Eileen (18 yo), recreational cannabis use can provide the relaxation her mind needs after focusing on her schoolwork, stating, “I think [cannabis is] like, it's a nice way to relax and like connect with your friends and just like calm down after like 15 credit hours at the University, like it's a hard school [i.e., referring to R1, one of top schools in USA].”

The textural descriptions of experiencing recreational cannabis use in/as leisure state of mind are supported by various structural mechanisms, including, the acts of meditating, being in the present moment, and allowing oneself to de-stress. The experience of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure state of mind (i.e., mental break and relaxation) can be achieved through meditating while high. Emma (26 yo) states, “so I’d say, like, cannabis, for me, is like a nice leisurely, just let go kind of like, a, you know I use it in like a meditative state.” Emma (26 yo) further elaborates and makes a connection between meditating and flow state by explaining:

[Cannabis] like I said, I think it just helps dissolve the, it helps any judgment that I have on myself just kind of dissolve, which is why I think [cannabis] puts me in a meditative state, because, when you look up the word meditation and you talk about meditation you're supposed to come to it with no judgment, and that means of yourself, of what's going on around you, you're supposed to just kind of really get into that flow state and I think flow state is what makes anything great happen, you know, because that's where

your passion and all those things just come about, and I think all that for me, the judgment, the anxiety, the anything around me that I'm feeling it just all dissolves.

Along with accounts of meditation and flow, Eileen (18 yo) remarks that when she is using recreational cannabis, she is "[able to] kind of like separate [herself] from what [she's] doing during the day" because when "[she's] high then like [she's] not focused on worrying about my assignments" and she is "[not] worrying about things in general," instead, "[she's] just like in the moment, having a good time." In similar fashion, Danielle (28 yo) shared, "using [cannabis] helps me just kind of like focus on what's in front of me...not be so stressed about all the 50,000 things I still have to do." This feeling of separation and 'being in the moment' allowed them to experience a leisurely state of mind. Shifting one's mental energy away from stress represents another mechanism for experiencing recreational cannabis use in/as leisure state of mind (i.e., relaxation and mental break). Luna (21 yo) remarked, "I definitely would see cannabis as like something that can like take the edge off or like, you know, make me, I guess, like, de-stress." Danielle (28 yo) explained:

[Cannabis is a way to] just like de-stress and decompress, which is nice, it's just like helpful to chill...like my partner, we like to do that [i.e., use cannabis] as like a way to de-stress together, like it is just like fun, he's a high school teacher, so his job is pretty stressful as well, so we both really like that piece of it.

Participants described recreational cannabis in/as leisure state of mind (i.e., mental break, relaxation) and explained the different ways this experience is facilitated, specifically, through mechanisms such meditating, focusing on the present moment and de-compressing/de-stressing. Indeed, these textures and structures reflected experiencing a separation from the mindset of

daily demands and productivity. Similarly, participants also expressed meanings related to experiencing recreational cannabis use in/as free time as a temporal break from productiveness.

The textures of recreational cannabis use in/as free time and the underlying structures

There are various ways in which participants described recreational cannabis use in/as free time. For example, Eileen (18 yo) suggested, “[recreational cannabis] almost makes time go by slower, so [recreational cannabis] like extends the amount of free time that I have and it's just nice.” The altered perceptions of time illuminate how recreational cannabis use be defined as free time experience.

Participants also described using cannabis “only during [their] free time...when “the rest of their day is completely clear” and they “have done everything that [they needed] to do for the day done” because they know “damn well [that attending to obligations] won’t happen when [they’re] high” (James, 19 yo). Even when friends ask James (19 yo) to “smoke with them and stuff like that... unless [he’s] done everything that [he] need[ed] to do for the day [he] won't join.” Dave (21 yo) shared that he is “definitely one of those people where [he] will not smoke until [he is] done completely” with the day’s tasks, and he and his friends “have a lot of like the leisure time...when [they’re] literally all done studying” because they “prefer to be focusing on school and then when [they’re] done with everything...[they] can goof off a little” and smoke recreational cannabis together. Heather (19 yo) reflected on her one and only recreational cannabis use experience, remarking, “definitely that experience was very reserved for my free time, and it was like a total ‘try something new’” experience that was only afforded in her free time when she had no obligations in sight.

Participants textural descriptions of cannabis in/as free time also involved using cannabis when there was minimal requirement for focus and function. Emma (26 yo) shared that it is

important to reserve her recreational cannabis use for “after [cosmetology] school or after everything that [she has] for the day is just done.” Emma (26 yo), explained that “with the line of work that [she does] as a cosmetologist” she “really want[s] to be like extremely on point, especially because [she is] using scissors and [she is] using chemicals.” Thus, Emma (26 yo), stated:

I don't usually like to mix those two things like work and marijuana, to me, I just can't really focus as well because, again, I think my brain just associates relaxation and like time to just unwind with cannabis.

James (19 yo), shared, “when I get high I don't, I cannot focus, I cannot, I cannot stay like on one topic and I get way too like energetic to where I just can't sit down and do homework” (James, 19 yo). Similarly, Zach (21) shared “I already have ADHD, so if I tried mixing weed with that [i.e., obligations that require focus], that would not work.” Another participant, Dave (21 yo), shared that using cannabis any time before work “would be really bad for him because [he doesn't] really focus on it [i.e., when high],” although he has “tried like so many different [cannabis] strains...it doesn't work, [he] can't work when [he's] high,” thus, it's important to restrict use to free time when he doesn't need to focus on work. Heather (19 yo) explained that she “could not function” and she “could definitely not work on that [i.e., cannabis edible she tired].”

The textural descriptions of recreational cannabis use in/as free time are informed by various structural mechanisms, including, utilizing cannabis as a post-productivity reward and designating specific time of use (i.e., reserving use for the end of day or week). Zach (21 yo) explained, “I try to use [cannabis] as more of a reward than an escape...like, I took an exam the other day and then I did really well so I was like ‘yay, it's time to get stoned.’” Likewise, Luna

(21 yo) described how recreational cannabis in/as free time can be manifest “as a reward” when she’s had a packed to do list and gotten through it. Luna (21 yo) elaborated:

So, let's say, like, the last couple days I've been really intensely studying, I have been at the library a lot, you know, today, I was at library all day and then I went and took my exam at 7pm, I come out of my exam at 8pm and in my head I'm like 'great, on my way home like I'm going to stop, buy some blunt wraps [to roll the cannabis with] and then I'm gonna go home [and smoke],' and I see it as like it's [i.e., cannabis is] my reward.

For Dave (21 yo), it was important to not “use cannabis as like a complete reward system where every time [he] finish [his] work, [he] smoke[s]” because “[he doesn't] want to smoke every single day,” therefore, he reserves his cannabis use for “a really nice like wind down to the end of the day,” usually occurring at night.

Recreational cannabis in/as free time was facilitated by designating certain times for cannabis use. For Emma (26 yo) an open day or day off was the perfect timing for recreational cannabis use in/as leisure, as she stated, “if it's like a day off where I don't have much to do...I definitely smoke a joint then.” Zach (21 yo) shared, “I normally smoke at night and it's like a couple hours before I go to bed so probably two or three [hours before bed]... in my free time. Danielle (28 yo) reserved recreational cannabis in/as leisure free time by using it at the end of the day in a similar way she reserves other substance use in/as free time, she stated:

[I see weed as] recreational, I'll use it like at the end of a day...it's not like every day, which is [another reason] why I think it's recreational... it's kind of just like with drinking or anything like that, like, you'll have a glass of wine at the end of the day, you'll have a glass of wine with friends and things like that, I think those are pretty synonymous with my usage [of cannabis].

For Emma (26 yo), using recreational cannabis in/as free time involved reserving use for the end of the day and was also related to other leisure connections/structures (e.g., flow), specifically, she shared:

I [can] just kind of be in my own state and flow and be free from anything around me, and I think that's why I like to save it for the end of the day is because I don't have to deal with anybody, I don't have to really talk to anybody and if I do have people around while I'm smoking it's usually somebody who I know is also able to get into that [meditative, relaxed state] with me, you know?"

Jamie (21 yo) also described reserving cannabis as “kind of like ‘a relaxing on a Friday night after a long week’ sort of thing,” which has also evolved into “like a weekend thing,” where Jamie is “relaxing with friends after a long week.”

Participants expressed various descriptors to explain meanings related to recreational cannabis in/as free time (i.e., consuming post-obligations and when there are no requirements to focus or function optimally) and different ways this experience is facilitated, specifically, through mechanisms such as using cannabis as a reward and designating time to use cannabis (e.g., day off, end of day, end of week). Indeed, these free time textures and structures signify a departure from obligatory tasks or activities. Thus, it is also imperative to understand how participants described recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity.

The textures of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity and the underlying structures

Participants described recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity encompassing the experience of being high and the experience leading up to that point. Jamie (21 yo) shared, “I

enjoyed just like the experience of being high on it on its own.” Luna (21 yo), reflected beyond the “getting high part” and explained:

I see smoking as an experience because, I, like, you know, if I’m going to hang out with one of my friends, the reason I like the rolling a blunt instead of, you know, just taking an edible is because we’re going to go by the blunt wraps, we’re going to come back, we’re going to, I’m going to hand grind my weed and just like, that’s going to take a minute, then I’m going to like put it in the wrap, you know, it’s like a whole process of rolling it, then like you light it and you’re passing it and you’re like, the conversations you’re having as you’re smoking are different versus when you’re just like sitting and talking, like, I don’t know it’s a whole experience of like smoking, it’s not just the ‘getting high’ part I guess that I enjoy too.

In similar fashion, Emma (26 yo) shared that she “enjoy[s] smoking joints, [and she] enjoy[s] smoking out of a bong because [she] think[s] it’s like an art. Emma (26 yo), elaborated that recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity makes her think, “‘oh like what a beautiful time this is, to just sit, relax, me and my weed,’ you know, like I don’t have anything else to do, this is beautiful, like I find beauty in that.” Another participant, Cristina (28 yo) states, “I think [cannabis] does relax you at times, so instead of feeling that urge to be on the go and need to do something, it’s an activity you know a few times a week.”

Recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity was also described as in terms of accompanying other leisure activities. Indeed, participants paired their recreational cannabis use with a range of leisure activities, including, going to restaurants/food places (Eileen, James, Luna), cooking (Danielle), participating in a book club (Jerry), bowling (Dave), coloring in a coloring book (Luna), going to a concert/music festival (Luna, Danielle, JR, Phoebe), going to a

theme park/amusement park (e.g., six flags; Phoebe), hiking (Jerry), listening to music/listening to friends play instruments (Dave, Phoebe, Zach, Luna, Danielle), walking dogs (Jerry), watching movies/TV shows (Dave, Jamie, JR, Phoebe, Eileen, Minea, Danielle), taking a bath (Jerry, Emma), working out (Jerry, Emma), and doing yoga (Emma). To illustrate recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity, specifically in terms of accompanying other activities, Danielle (28 yo), described:

We'll [i.e., participant and friends or partner] make a dinner, like, we'll make a meal together and sometimes we'll go out to eat but it's also just like really fun to be able to like divvy up that work [cooking together] and then we'll all just like really enjoy our food at the end of that day.

For Luna (21 yo), experiencing recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity can be depicted as “watch[ing] [her] favorite show and like text[ing] one of [her] friends or like you know color[ing in] like [a] coloring book or just whatever.” Both Jerry (30 yo) and Emma (26 yo) talked about enjoying recreational cannabis use in/as activity while taking a bath. Jerry (30 yo) said, “I like smoking in the bath too, it’s like one of my favorite things,” and Emma (26 yo) shared, “honestly, I love to take a bath with candles and just like sit there and soak and smoke a joint.”

The textural descriptions of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity are facilitated by various structural mechanisms, including, connecting with the self, socializing with others, and situating the activity within party or celebratory contexts. Recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity was shaped by being in solitude or having the opportunity to connect with the self. Luna (21 yo), “associate[s] weed with a lot of different fun activities that [allow her] to get in touch with like [her] inner child and things like that and so [she] use[s] it recreationally” on

her own for self-connection. Luna (21 yo), elaborates how being solo provides her the opportunity to hang out with herself, she shared:

My cannabis use is, definitely, I would categorize as recreational, I guess, for me, like, I really focus on trying to get, create like a relationship with myself and kind of like a friendship with myself, so, one way I've done that is through the use of cannabis...so, let's say like one night you, instead of like going out and hanging out with your friends, like you see it, [you see] hanging out with yourself as like a hangout instead of just like 'oh I'm gonna be alone in my room today [as if it's a negative/bad thing],' i'll be like 'oh like I'm going to smoke a little bit, I'm going to like listen to like some frequencies and like meditate.

Alternatively, recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity was also often underpinned by the notion of “hanging out” or “chilling” with others. Minea (21 yo) stated, “I am very rarely ever like hanging out with people and sober, so, it's, the same, same old, you know, if I'm hanging out with people we're going to smoke because it's always making hanging out more fun.” Along these lines, Eileen (18 yo) shared, “[my friends and I] just like sit in a circle and just talk and laugh.” Another participant, Dave (21 yo) shared, “I'm a very social creature so I don't really like smoking on my own...it's a very social thing with some other people...once I'm smoking, I'm really only going to be doing one thing and that's probably hanging out with people.” For Jamie (21 yo), recreational cannabis use represented “like a fun little house activity like social experience,” that they engaged in with the other people they were living with at the time.

Additionally, recreational cannabis use in/as activity was often framed in the context of parties, celebratory events, or special occasion settings. Dave (21 yo) discussed how recreational cannabis use in/as activity is emphasized as part of congratulatory events when a fraternity

brother gets a job because in his fraternity house there are a lot of college seniors “getting jobs at places like PepsiCo...and Google.” Dave (21 yo) stated, “so if they do [enjoy to] smoke [cannabis], me and Bob [i.e., other roommate] we’ll smoke them out... to celebrate things, especially because it’s nice to unwind and like being able to give that to someone [to congratulate them].” For Phoebe (20 yo), recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity pronounced itself as part of familial religious celebrations. Phoebe (20 yo) talked about her Aunt Jamie’s “cannabis cooker edible tincture machines,” which she bought for “make[ing] [cannabis] gummies and cannabis butter to make edibles.” Phoebe (20 yo) explained, “so it was Easter when she [i.e., Aunt Jamie] got it, so, we all celebrate and the whole family was stoned because she was trying out the edibles, so, and it was really funny, but yeah aunt Jamie tried that out.”

Several participants talked about recreational cannabis use in/as leisure activity in the context of birthdays and parties. Jerry (30 yo) described her friend, “Becca’s 30th blunt birthday,” which “kind of like revolved around weed,” where people were “smoking the whole time” and “like cooking.” Jerry (30 yo), recalled “there [was] just people in the living area that were smoking and drinking the whole time and the [birthday party] title was around blunts.” Danielle (28 yo) also discussed recreational cannabis use in/as activity “on [her] birthday” when she “went to the Jonas Brothers concert.” Danielle (28 yo) shared:

I took like two [cannabis] edibles, and I was like this is my treat for the day, like I would get super high and then go watch the Jonas brothers, like my birthday, I’m gonna have a fucking day, absolutely [I use cannabis for celebration].

Likewise, Luna (21 yo) contemplated her future birthday plans, stating that “instead of like a really crazy party...where people are drinking, [she’d] rather have it just be like vibey and like, you know, have people be smoking and like play music and cool lights and stuff like that.”

Additionally, there were descriptions of recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity underpinned by the party context generally, beyond the birthday party realm. Cristina (28 yo) shared, “I definitely will say for every event and party there’s weed around.” Similarly, JR (27 yo) stated, “people just whip out a [cannabis] joint at a party the same way they whip out vials for [alcoholic] shots, you know.”

Participants expressed meanings related to recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity (i.e., experience of getting high, accompanying activities). Recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity was facilitated by various contextual properties including, connecting with self, socializing with others, and using cannabis within party/celebratory events. Indeed, these activity textures and structures suggest that recreational cannabis can be desired as a tool for experiencing a good time, which renders further investigation into pleasure meanings.

The textures of recreational cannabis use in/as pleasure and the underlying structures

Recreational cannabis use in/as pleasure was often described in relation to fun and enjoyment. Jamie (21 yo) stated, “I definitely do think [cannabis] can be, yeah, like a fun experience.” According to Danielle (28 yo), with recreational cannabis use, “things are just more enjoyable right? things that are already really enjoyable, it’s just like turning the volume up I think a little bit is how I would describe that.” Similarly, Minea (21 yo) stated, “[cannabis] makes my leisure time more fun.” When probed further about how cannabis makes things “more fun,” Minea (21 yo) shared, “like the enjoyment of being high, like things just feeling better, like I can watch something and I can appreciate it for being like stupid, instead of like frustrated at it or something, it is hard to pinpoint.” Luna (21 yo), described that when she “get[s] high [she] choose[s] to do activities that are very much just like purely for pleasure.” For Luna (21 yo) recreational cannabis in/as pleasure is part of “trying to have fun like every single day,” because

“not everything you do needs to be for this, like, big purpose.” Furthermore, Luna (21 yo) explained that pleasure represents mixing recreational cannabis use with “little activities that you did when you were a kid that you found pleasure in” (e.g., coloring in coloring book, dancing) that bring out “[her] inner child,” and which “makes [her] feel creative and fun.” Ultimately, Luna (21 yo) suggested that recreational cannabis in/as pleasure and associated activities are “helping [her find enjoyment] more at the end of the day” rather than “being on [her] phone and going on Instagram.”

The textural descriptions of recreational cannabis use in/as pleasure are facilitated by various structural mechanisms, including making things funnier/taking things less seriously, loosening inhibitions and enhancing senses. Danielle (28 yo) described how recreational cannabis use in/as pleasure occurs due to removing the seriousness out of things. Danielle (28 yo) shared:

With like friends, like, it's just like funnier and we can like laugh at each other and have like fun, not that we can't [have fun] without [cannabis], but I think [cannabis] just like facilitates that process a little bit easier, like dumb shit is fun at that point, yeah, which is kind of nice like, it's fun, it feels like almost, not like childlike, but like a little bit that tinge of like things are just simpler and more funny and it doesn't have to be like anything like highbrow or too serious it's just like, dumb-friend-like fun.

Likewise, Phoebe (20 yo) discussed how “you just kind of see the world in a different lens when you're high...your mind is, you can't help but laugh and you're in your favorite place so, it just elevates your mood to a different level.” Another participant, Eileen (18 yo), shared that “the strains [i.e., cannabis strains] that [her and her friends] use are kinds that just, like, make

everything funnier” contributing to recreational cannabis in/as pleasure. Danielle (28 yo) shared that getting high makes “everything a little bit funnier and just easier to take in.”

Several participants talked about the sensory enhancement, as stated by Luna (21 yo), “ultimately, [cannabis] also just enhances a lot of your senses.” Jamie (21 yo) felt similarly, sharing, “[cannabis] definitely does impact my senses and, you know, in a positive, enjoyable way.” Indeed, recreational cannabis in/as pleasure was facilitated by enhancing senses as well as loosening inhibitions. Jamie (21 yo) suggested, that similar to “the group context and alcohol,” which “lower[s] your inhibitions...so that you're less stressed and you overthink things less...that continues to be like really appealing for [them in terms of] getting high... [cannabis is] kind of loosening up social interactions.” Jamie (21 yo) also explained:

When it comes to like being physically affectionate with friends, like this one particular friend because he and I have both talked about, you know, like a physical touch and just like things like that, and he and I have both, you know, like agreed that we'd like enjoy that and we'd like to like incorporate that into our lives more often but that we both tend to like overthink, you know, like ‘oh no, like am I being too much?’ [i.e., when trying to show physical affection], you know, ‘is the other person uncomfortable with this?’, and so, sometimes we'll get high for like the explicit purpose of just like being able to cuddle while watching TV... when it comes to like physical affection specifically, um, it makes kind of like new experiences less intimidating and so then once we've kind of like done something while we were high then it's less intimidating to do it while we're sober.

Along these lines, it was noted that “[cannabis] does help intimate relationships a little bit because you can just be dumb together and it's fun.” Zach (21 yo) also explained how cannabis impacts physical or bodily sensations, such as sex. Zach said, “physically things, like sensations,

feel better so like sex feels really good.” Additionally, participants shared examples of enhanced auditory or music-related experiences supporting descriptions of recreational cannabis in/as pleasure. Zach (21 yo) stated, “listening to music feels really nice, you just like close your eyes and listen to it.” Another participant, Luna (21 yo) illustrated the following sensory enhancement:

I love like before, or like, at concerts I definitely would want to, you know, bring some weed to like smoke there, or I go to a lot of festivals, so, um, I always would like roll a couple blunts just to have them, like, so at your favorite set [i.e., at festival at the stage with favorite artists], like, when you're with your best friends and you're like wow like I've been listening to this artist, how long now? and you smoke a little bit and like, yeah, it is just the experience of smoking in the crowd and you're like watching, like, these lights and your favorite artists right there, you're listening to your favorite songs, but then also, like, it does enhance like the music, it sounds so incredible, it's like, even just, like when the wind blows in your face.

Some participants talked specifically about heightening the sense of taste. Danielle (28, yo) remarked that her recreational cannabis use “makes food taste better so like, why am I not going to do that?” Similarly, Steve (29 yo) commented, “I mean definitely taste...stuff sometimes tastes better when you're when you're stoned” and Zach (21 yo) agreed that “food tastes really good.” Luna (21 yo) also shared a taste-related example, explaining:

So, if, let's say, like, I am going to have, like, my favorite food with my friends or something, like, I will be like' guys like we have to smoke before we go eat at this restaurant because like the food is, it's going to be such a good like meal if I, if we're like a little high before.

Participants shared meanings related to recreational cannabis in/as pleasure (i.e., enjoyment, having fun) and explained the different ways this experience is facilitated, specifically through mechanisms such as making things funnier, enhancing senses and loosening inhibitions. Indeed, these textures and structures suggest recreational cannabis in/as leisure can be characterized through pleasurable meanings.

This section covered recreational cannabis use in/as leisure textures (i.e., state of mind, activity, free time, and pleasure) and their underlying facilitation structures (e.g., meditating/flow, being in present moment, de-stressing; socializing, connecting with self, situating cannabis within celebratory context; using for reward purpose, reserving for end of day/week and occasional use, utilizing in time where minimal focus/function/interaction is required; and making things funnier, loosening inhibitions, enhancing senses). The structural essences were siloed into specific textural descriptions for the sake of analysis and presenting a coherent interpretation of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure for U.S. emerging adults (e.g., S1 underlying T1; S2 underlying T2, etc.). However, the accounts of lived experience surpass structural boundaries because some structures are intertwined with one another and work in conjunction to paint the textural essences of the phenomenon. Thus, multiple meanings intermingle synergistically to reflect the complex nature of recreational cannabis in/as leisure.

RESEARCH AIM TWO

The second research aim of this project seeks to investigate cannabis risk-benefit perceptions of U.S. emerging adults and possible linkages to leisure meanings. The data related to this research aim reveals various textures, or dimensions characterizing emerging adults' risk-benefit perceptions and the underlying structures that inform or support these textures (see figure 3). Additionally, leisure meanings are interwoven throughout some of the textural-structural presentation of data, as well as in the concluding section of these findings that highlight the calculations and negotiations of cannabis risk-benefits.

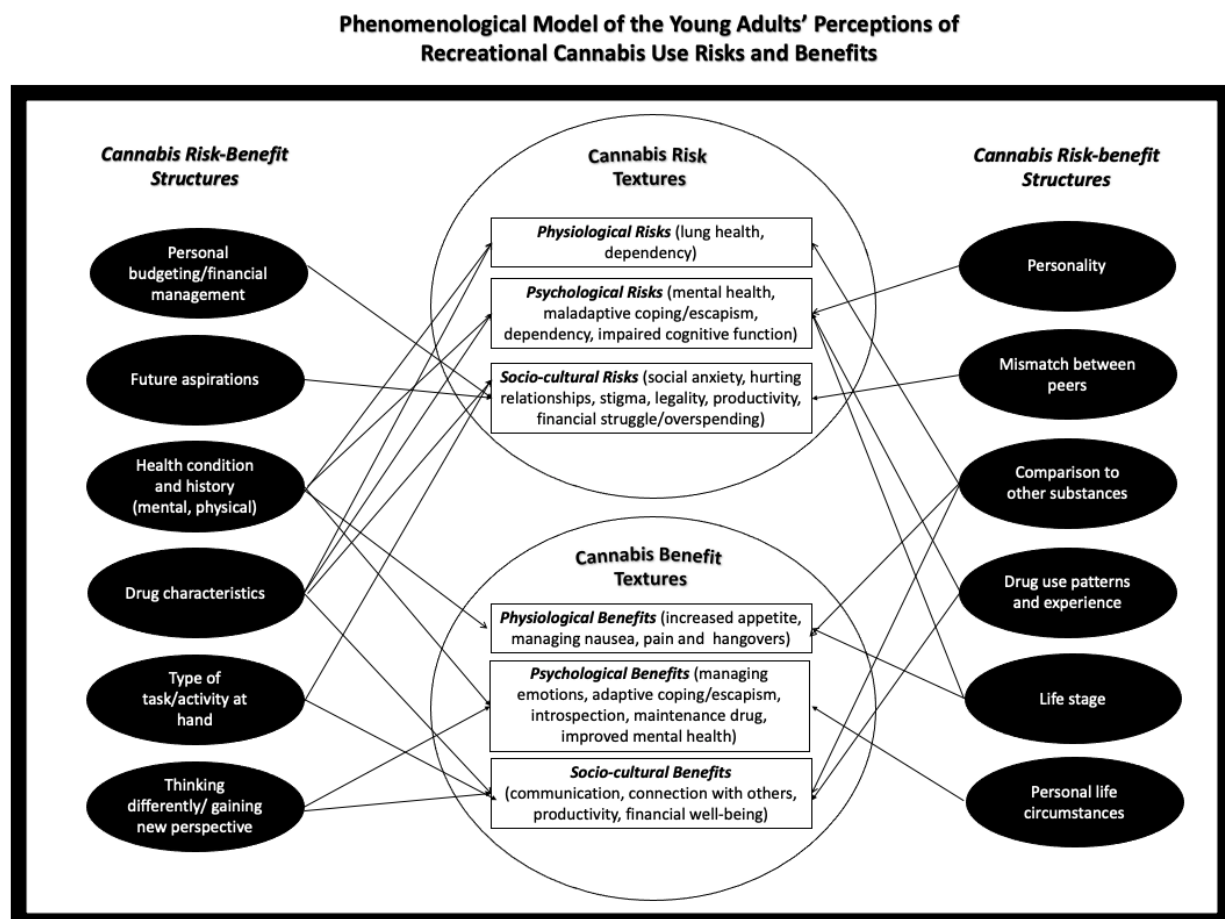


Figure 3. Phenomenological model of the young adults' perceptions of recreational cannabis use risks and benefits

The figure displays the textural dimensions and underlying structures that together create the essence of the phenomenon (i.e., risk-benefit perceptions of recreational cannabis use among young adults). The top centered circle in the figure presents cannabis risk textures including, perceptions of physiological risks (i.e., lung health, dependency), psychological risks (i.e., mental health, maladaptive coping/escapism, dependency, impaired cognitive function), and sociocultural risks (i.e., hurting relationships, stigma, productivity, and finances). The bottom centered circle in the figure represents the cannabis benefit textures including, perceptions of physiological benefits (increased appetite, managing nausea, pain, and hangovers), psychological benefits (i.e., managing emotions, adaptive coping/escapism, introspection, maintenance drug, improved mental health), and socio-cultural benefits (i.e., communication, connection with others, productivity, financial management). In some cases, the risks and benefits mirror each other very closely. For example, cannabis was perceived as a socio-cultural risk in terms of hurting interpersonal relationships, however, on the other hand cannabis was also perceived as a benefit to interpersonal relationships by helping to create deeper connection between people. This highlights how multi-faceted cannabis risk-benefit perceptions are and invites a follow up discussion to understand how leisure meanings may contribute towards these assessments.

The structures or factors informing and supporting the perceptions of cannabis risk-benefits are presented on the left and right side of the figure in the horizontal oval circles. The arrows/lines indicate which structures are underlying which specific textures. The figure also shows how the same structural elements can intermingle with several textures (i.e., structures underpinning one texture could underlie other textures). However, the specific structural meaning is nuanced for the specific texture which it informs. For instance, the life stage structure informs both psychological risk texture and physiological benefit texture, but it manifests itself

in different ways. In terms of the psychological risk, participants expressed that being in the young adulthood life stage could make one more susceptible to experiencing mental health risks. Alternatively, being an older adult or in a later life stage informed perceptions of how cannabis could be beneficial towards managing physiological aging pains and experiencing recreational activity. Indeed, this figure and the web of structures and textures shows the complexity of the phenomenon. Another important aspect to point out is that multiple different structures could inform the same textural horizons (e.g., drug use patterns and drug use characteristics inform various psychological risks, some even informing the same exact psychological risk). Furthermore, it is important to note that as is the nature of qualitative research and Hermeneutic Phenomenology in particular, these textures and structures are subjectively interpreted based on the researcher's understanding of the participants answers reflecting their own lived experiences.

Physiological risks of recreational cannabis use and corresponding structures

Emerging adults suggested there are various risks to one's physiological health due to the use of recreational cannabis use. According to Phoebe (20 yo), "definitely biological functions are at risk," such as "your heart and your lungs." Several participants re-iterated the potential risk for lung damage. For Jerry (30 yo), she "can definitely feel it on [her] lungs from smoking," and she is constantly reminded of this respiratory risk because she "[works] out regularly, like five days a week." According to JR (27 yo), "there's tons of risks to weed, risk number one would be the health... smoking weed can definitely be a little bit heavy on your lungs." Similarly, Steve (29 yo), stated that "smoking anything can't be very good for your lungs." This is similar to Eileen's (18 yo) assessment that "inhaling things into your lungs that aren't meant to go into your lungs is like obviously not great for you." Luna (21 yo), shared that "you need to be self-aware" about the risks to lung health and "not be like 'oh, like my lungs are probably looking

super amazing after I've been smoking all these blunts." Explicitly, Luna (21 yo) "noticed that when [she] smoke[s] a lot of blunts, [she has] a lot more phlegm and stuff."

The cannabis risks to physiological health, such as lung functioning, were supported by various structures including the evaluation of lung risk comparative to other substances, as stated by Dave (21 yo), who shared, "I know, smoking in general, like, even obviously cigarettes have a negative impact [on your lungs] because you're smoking a lot of other chemicals."

Additionally, emerging adults talked about the lung risks by reflecting on the drug characteristics (e.g., cannabis form and method of consumption). For example, Jerry (30 yo), shared, "I don't smoke blunts at all, but [smoking joint] paper[s] and taking rips from [the] bong I can actually feel it in my lungs." JR (27 yo), shared that he knows people who "have really damaged their lungs from dabs [i.e., cannabis wax form], they do high temperature dabs," and in hindsight "they realize that low temperature [dabs] was the way to go," but now it's too late, and "their lungs are damaged for life." Luna (21 yo), reflected on her cannabis consumption over the past year and stated, "I've been rolling a lot of blunts and it's not great for like my lungs." Therefore, she has decided she needs to:

Buy a bong [i.e., a glass piece to smoke cannabis flower out of] because [she] used to have one and it was much cleaner, and you also don't end up smoking as much then because it's not like a large quantity in one place [like it is in a blunt].

Additionally, Luna (21 yo) reflected on her experience of using cannabis in oil form when she went through a "dab pen phase [i.e., vape pen]," that "really messed up [her] throat." During that time, she "had really bad tonsillitis" but she "just kept hitting it [i.e., the vape pen] because [she] didn't realize [she] was getting it from the [weed] pen." Luna (21 yo), shared that once she

“stopped [using the vape pen, she] was fine, so, [she’s] not using those anymore” to help her lungs out.

In terms of physiological risks of cannabis, emerging adults mostly focused on the damage caused to their lungs. These risk perceptions were attributed to various structures, such as the drug characteristics (i.e., cannabis form, method of consumption). Beyond physiological lung harms, emerging adults expressed substantially more remarks related to the potential risks cannabis causes one’s psychological health.

Psychological risks of recreational cannabis use and corresponding structures

Emerging adults reflected on a diverse set of psychological risks that cannabis can have. Thus, the psychological textural dimension can be grouped into and explained by various horizons (i.e., mental health, maladaptive escapism, dependency, and cognitive functioning), which are all supported by aligning structures.

Mental health

Mental health characterizations pertaining to the overarching psychological risk texture were described in terms of overthinking, anxiety, paranoia, depression, and schizophrenia. James (19 yo), said that with cannabis he’s experienced “overthinking and had like a whole, several, religious crises, existential crises, within the span of eight minutes... so like, yeah, there's that risk of overthinking it and worrying.” Heather (19 yo), shared being high and thinking “[about] what was going on in life” which was “just really intense” and created “a lot of anxiety” (Heather, 19 yo). Indeed, “you do hear of some people getting like anxiety and paranoia and stuff like that [when they use cannabis]” (Cristina, 28 yo). Certainly, “weed can sometimes be a little psychedelic... [thus causing some] people [to have] bad trips and, or, like feeling trapped”

(Heather, 19 yo). For Phoebe (20 yo), she reflected on the back-and-forth nature of her cannabis use and anxiety, stating:

I'll do it recreationally right? and sometimes I get anxious, like, I'm like 'oh I'll have a good time [using some cannabis] right?' and I'm having a good time sober and then as soon as I spark up it's like 'dang now I'm really anxious now I wish I hadn't [used cannabis]', so in some settings it could be fun recreationally but sometimes I get a little anxious.

Danielle (28 yo) shared an experience “where one of [her] friends was like ‘I want to try this stuff [i.e., cannabis], can I do that with you?’” and Danielle, was excited to do this with her because “[she] love[s] this [i.e., cannabis],” but her friend “had a pretty strong negative anxiety reaction.” Along with anxiety, “depression...it’s actually [a risk too]” as well as “if you smoke weed...you’re at risk for schizophrenia” according to Phoebe (20, yo). Notably, “every substance has a benefit, like, a pro and a con...with pot obviously, there is that like anxiety and depression piece [that presents a risk]” (Danielle, 28 yo).

Indeed, different structures influenced the various perspectives of mental health risks, such as reflecting on personal mental health/state of mind, life stage, previous cannabis use experiences, drug use patterns and drug characteristics. For instance, Minea (21 yo) suggested how individually, or “situationally” mental health needs to be assessed, otherwise there could be a greater risk for undesirable cannabis use outcomes. Minea (21 yo) explained:

Situationally, if I was like with a friend and they're like 'oh I'm about to head out,' and I know they're not probably in a good mental space, I probably wouldn't want to offer to smoke with them and be like 'Oh, you want to like smoke and go home alone with your

thoughts?’ like especially when I know they don't smoke a lot, that’s not something that I would do.

According to Phoebe (20 yo), “some people don't take cannabis as well as others, especially those with mental health issues or those who have anxiety [prior to cannabis use],” she thinks they “definitely should be weary of cannabis and health effects.” Emma (26 yo) also reflected on a friend’s personal mental health history and the irreconcilable damage caused by cannabis. Emma (26 yo) stated, “[my friend] was diagnosed with schizophrenia when we were 19 and it had a really negative effect on him, but I don't think he was ever aware of the fact that he was at risk for having schizophrenia ever.” In this conversation Emma also suggested that if the friend knew they were at risk for such mental imbalances perhaps he wouldn’t have ever tried cannabis and other drugs. Indeed, it was noted that life stage could make some more susceptible to negative mental health outcomes. Danielle (28 yo) suggested:

I think people tend to not take that part sometimes very serious, especially around like the mental health piece, especially young adults, just like 18 to 24 is kind of like the danger zone for, like, if you're going to experience pretty severe mental illness...you would usually only see that come out [around that life stage], I think if more young adults knew that [then] they would use things [i.e., drugs like cannabis] more responsibly, or maybe less frequently.

Emma (26 yo) shared that current mental health could be exacerbated with the use of recreational cannabis, thus, leaving little room for someone to enjoy the potential leisure meanings. Emma (26 yo) shared that, “if you're in this low depressive state with your energy...and you're just putting all this THC in your body, and you're just feeling slow and groggy it's because you don't feel good, you're not in a good mental state.” For others, their previous experiences with

cannabis repeatedly produce the same negative mental health outcomes, thus perpetuating their perceptions of the psychological harms. Jerry (30 yo) shared that she's talked about cannabis to a friend that has anxiety because she thought it might be beneficial for her mental well-being but "[her friend] has always been like 'it gives me so much anxiety, I've had all these terrible terrible experiences with it.'"

Beyond the individual factors shaping perceptions of mental health there are structural elements of cannabis use patterns (e.g., frequency of use, amount consumed, time of day and setting of use). Danielle (28 yo) talked about her experience as a "therapist so, [she] know[s] that's true" that anxiety and depression can be a risk based on people's consumption patterns because:

When clients come and [she's] like "how high is your drug use?" especially around like marijuana, if they're using from the time they wake up to the time they go to bed, obviously that's gonna be an issue, like they can't really function, they can't really get out of bed as much, they're moving slower.

In the past, Emma (26 yo) had experienced negative mental health when over-using cannabis around the clock. However, Emma (26 yo) shares that she has "changed that [cannabis use pattern] ...[and] only really smoke joints...after school or after everything that [she has] for the day is just done so that [she can] just sit and chill and get creative with art or just simply relax." For Emma (26 yo) to avoid any undesirable mental health states, she has situated and reserved her cannabis use in/as leisure, rather than extending use to non-leisure time-space-context.

Indeed, sometimes it was a combination of the cannabis use pattern (e.g., amount used) and drug characteristic (e.g., cannabis form, method of consumption) that informed perceptions of psychological cannabis risks. For instance, Jerry (30 yo) shared:

When I do wax or heavy edibles I definitely get in a state, like, I feel like I push myself to a state of paranoia...like to just see how far I can get to that limit and then I'm like well I'm here right now, like, going in front of a mirror and be[ing] like my face is melting, and it's like, 'oh you just took 100 milligrams of chocolate,' like something's going on in your body that you're not consciously seeing straight, yeah, so those are like the disadvantages...I'll take 60 to 100 milligrams of chocolate and just like veg the fuck out, but then I know kind of, like, you know, well I'm gonna push myself to get there and like it could go smooth and it could go bad.

Another drug characteristic that could impact mental health outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression) “could well be based on the [cannabis] strain that they’re smoking...maybe [people] just need help finding the right thing for them” (Cristina, 28 yo). Certainly, for Zach (21 yo), he likes to “know what to expect when [he’s] smoking because sativa’s [i.e., cannabis strain] make [him] anxious and lately hybrids [i.e., cannabis strain] have been making [him] anxious too, so that's not fun.” Indeed, participants commented on how important drug characteristics, such as cannabis strain, were in order for them to experience recreational cannabis as enjoyable leisure that fosters a positive and beneficial state of mind as opposed to an anxious or depressed state of mind.

The data shows that mental health specific risks (e.g., overthinking, anxiety, paranoia, depression, and schizophrenia) represent some of the potential psychological harms of cannabis use. Furthermore, these mental health risks are supported by various structural elements (e.g., personal mental health/state of mind, life stage, previous cannabis use experiences, drug use patterns and drug characteristics). Another branch of the psychological risk texture is represented by descriptions of escapism, which is supported by aligning structures as well.

Maladaptive Escapism

Some people characterized the psychological risks of cannabis use in terms of harmful escapism. Although, within the benefits section, there were also positive perceptions towards recreational cannabis use and adaptive coping meanings. Nonetheless, in this risk section participants described maladaptive coping and harmful disassociation from reality. Jamie (21 yo) expressed that one of their “main concern[s] is about [cannabis’] potential for escapism...[cannabis] helping you feel better without necessarily like addressing the root causes of your issues.” Jamie elaborated that they have friends who use cannabis to “just kind of try to feel better temporarily when they could be doing more to just get out of the situation that's causing the stress.”

Luna 21 (yo) suggested that using cannabis as a means for “just trying to escape yourself,” represents the negative escapist connection. Danielle (28 yo) echo’s the attributes of maladaptive coping by stating:

People can use [cannabis] as like a replacement, as like a coping mechanism specifically, without ever having any other healthy or productive means to deal with stress, like if that is someone's only outlet and there's no processing of feelings and there's no communication or friendship, or like those things, like, if it's used in place of all these other good coping mechanisms, obviously that's going to be a pretty big drawback.

For Minea (21 yo), there was a period when cannabis use took over as negative escapism, which resulted in losing the pleasurable appeal of recreational cannabis in/as leisure. Minea (21 yo) shared that “when [they] first [were] promoted to manager and [they were] also not in classes [i.e., not working on school pursuit they enjoyed, only working job for money],” then “it [was] easy to depend on cannabis” to cope with the job, thus, even when “[they’d] smoke in [their]

leisure time it would just not be enjoyable because it was more like smoking to cope [rather than smoking to experience desirable leisure meanings].”

Another facet of harmful escapism provoked by recreational cannabis use encompassed descriptions of disassociating from reality. In other words, it “could become dangerous” to be “so extremely high” that one is “getting out of touch or just losing touch with reality” (Emma, 26 yo). Similar to the coping descriptions which showcased legitimate and illegitimate forms of recreational cannabis for coping, disassociating from reality was described as a slippery slope between meaningfully “chang[ing] reality” versus “masking” reality. Luna (21 yo) explained:

You can use weed to really change your reality but when you're changing your reality it's about truly changing it [which would be positive], and not like, just putting a mask over it and being like ‘no, things are great,’ but not thinking about why you might be feeling sad when you're not high, you know, or thinking about like ‘wait, why do I feel unfulfilled,’ or things like that.

For Jamie (21 yo), after they would get high, they found themselves likely to “dissociate [i.e., disconnect from reality] like the day after, or like a few days after.” Although Jamie (21 yo) explained that this disassociation “wasn't like the worst thing in the world, it was inconvenient,” thus, Jamie (21 yo) “paid attention to how often [they] experienced that [disassociation] side effect.”

The psychological risks characterized as escapism (e.g., maladaptive coping and dissociation from reality) are supported by various structural elements. These structures mirror some of the pillars underpinning other characterizations of psychological risks (e.g., mental health), including reflecting on personal circumstances, drug use patterns and drug

characteristics. Emma (26 yo) reflected on her life circumstances during adolescence and talks about negative escapist cannabis use, sharing:

[Cannabis use was a] problem for a short time for me during, you know, like I said in my teenage years [because] I was just dealing with a lot and didn't really know how to deal with it alone, and so I would disassociate with it [because this was one way to deal with life circumstances].

For Minea (21 yo), the new personal circumstance related to workload combined with drug use pattern (i.e., frequency of use) resulted in a negative cannabis coping use. Specifically, when Minea (21 yo) was working “in like the 40-to-50-hour week range “cannabis was used to cope with the increased workload and they began “smoking like an insane amount”. Drug use patterns such as frequency or amount smoked were also discussed in relation to the time of day using cannabis (i.e., pre or post obligations). Luna (21 yo) remarked, “you hear about laziness a lot” in terms of cannabis risks, which can be true “if you just smoke all the time,” because cannabis “does slow you down and it does help you relax...[but] I guess, again it goes back to the escapism.” Participants suggested that recreational cannabis use may be charged with leisure meanings related to feelings of relaxation and taking a rest from a task-demanding life (or week). However, there appears to be a thin divisionary line between cannabis use and leisure meanings in regard to using cannabis as *running away from* vs. *recharging after*. Luna (21 yo) further illuminates this connection by explaining:

It's not the weed that forced you [to be lazy, escape tasks] it's you choosing not to get your work done or you choosing to smoke before you finish your homework...I guess, again it goes back to the escapism because when you use [cannabis] to escape like the fact that I keep thinking about all my stressful tasks I need to finish, you can escape it,

you know, but then later when you're not high anymore you're going to be like 'wait, damn, like I really messed up because now I have one hour to finish all these assignments that are due tonight.

Furthermore, drug use patterns (e.g., dosage or the amount taken) combined with the drug characteristic (e.g., strain) results in a person's inability to "really function, so it kind of does take you away from reality for that period of time" (Heather, 19 yo). Specifically, for Heather (19 yo) the cannabis use experience was "really time consuming," because for "like three hours [she] was solidly high [and] maybe like four or five hours it was fuzzy, kind of the height [of the high] either wearing off or kicking in." Plus, it also "took [her] like the entire weekend to really process everything that happened because it was so intense" (Heather, 19 yo). Thus, the escapist description of disassociating from reality could be supported by the drug use pattern and characteristics, which resultantly "could just take [you] away from a lot of other things in your life" (Heather 19 yo). This highlights the importance of utilizing the leisure realm of life to fully immerse in cannabis use experience and avoid potential perils of escapism creeping into demands of daily life and obligations.

For other participants it was the cannabis form and method of consumption (e.g., cannabis flower, edible, pens) that provoked risky escapist moments. Luna (21 yo) explains that with cannabis edibles it can be "harder to control how high you get," therefore, "sometimes you get really really baked and you need to sleep for four days." Alternatively for Emma (26 yo) it was having a pen that she "was constantly hitting...just because it was there," and during the time she used cannabis in this form/method of consumption she "was just like not in touch with reality as much because [she] was just constantly smoking it." Even more so, "in [her] opinion...with concentrate [i.e., form of cannabis inside pen] it's obviously a much higher

dosage,” making it harder to “control how much you're smoking” versus how you can control that “with like [cannabis form of] flower.” Thus, making it easier to escape and potentially develop maladaptive coping mechanisms.

The participants accounts show that escapist risks (e.g., maladaptive coping means, disassociating from reality) represent some of the potential psychological harms of cannabis use. Still, it is important to acknowledge that the data also shows how escapism relates to benefit perceptions as well (explained in the benefits section). In this section, however, escapist risks are supported by structural pillars that are similar to mental health structures, including, personal life circumstances, drug use patterns, and drug characteristics. Another branch of the psychological risk textures is related to cannabis addiction or dependency, which is supported by the affiliating structures.

Addiction/Dependency

Participants described that there is a risk for “dependency,” or “building like a psychological dependence to [cannabis]” (James, 19 yo). While these descriptions are subsumed in the psychological risk section, it is worthwhile to note that the addiction texture is related to both psychological and physiological mechanisms. With cannabis addiction or dependency, “the main risk is just becoming a stoner and just being high all the time and not really doing anything,” basically, letting cannabis take over and “becoming somebody who doesn't do anything [else] ever” (James, 19 yo). Although, “weed isn't like inherently addictive...as with anything you could get addicted to it...[and not] wanna go without it any day or anytime...that could definitely be problematic” (Heather, 19 yo).

Indeed, for some people cannabis can “become a problem because they constantly have to smoke no matter what activity they're doing” (Emma, 26 yo). For James (19 yo), he “wouldn't

say there's any downsides" to his cannabis use currently, but he does get "nervous about becoming that total stoner who just is high all the time and doesn't do anything, [and] isn't productive." The risk of dependency was also described in relation to "that [experience of] instant gratification," and compared to "social media... it's the instant gratification that they get from it, that's really the addiction, is like that moment" (Emma, 26 yo). The participants highlighted similar concerns in terms of the cannabis risk texture of addiction or dependency.

The textural descriptions of addiction or dependency were grounded in structural factors as well. For instance, one's personality or personal disposition toward addiction was noted by Thomas (29 yo). According to Thomas (29 yo):

Everyone has a different personality and there are people, like my brother is a great example, my brother has an addictive personality, you know, my brother will avoid paying a bill to buy an eight [of cannabis], you know to just scrounge by, you know...but I think it is just a matter of personality because he, you know, for me, it's about separation, what's important, what's more important [than the substance you consume] and some people can't do that... you know, I think to some degree it can [depend] on what we're doing like if we're doing meth and heroin and crack there's a certain level of addiction to that but with marijuana I think, you know to some people, you know demons are demons are demons.

Another structural component of addiction was the drugs' characteristics, specifically the cannabis form and method of cannabis consumption. Emma (26 yo) posits that "the vape thing is really a problem," because "it's just like always there and you could do it." Emma (26 yo) elaborates that "having it accessible like that is part of what's creating addiction because it's not

necessarily the effect of like cannabis or anything, it's the sucking motion and the breathing motion" that people may be getting hooked on.

Indeed, young adults recognized and described the textural dimension of psychological (and physiological) harm characterized by addiction or becoming dependent on cannabis. This characterization was then underlined by the structures such as personality or personal disposition towards addictive tendencies, as well as the drug characteristics such as the cannabis form and method of consumption. The final branch of the psychological risk texture is related to cognitive functioning, which is supported by relevant structures.

Cognitive functioning

Young adults commented on cognitive function in terms of cannabis slowing them down and making them impaired. According to Thomas (29 yo), cannabis "slows you down, you know, it's impairment, you're not thinking two steps ahead of you like you normally would be." It was a noted risk that "if anyone wants to drive impaired [they] shouldn't" instead they should "cab everywhere" when they're high. (Cristina, 28 yo). It was also suggested that "there's always a risk when you're being intoxicated that something bad is going to happen because your inhibitions are impaired and your ability to perceive reality is different" (Eileen, 18 yo). This kind of impaired inhibition is also connected to increased "risk taking" as described by Jamie (21 yo). More specifically, Jamie (21 yo) explains "a lot of my friends like to go, like, monkey around, climb on stuff, climb trees...they definitely do get less and less cautious when they're doing that while they're high...so that can be a harm." The cannabis impairment might also represent moments where "your emotions are so heightened...[and] your moral compass is just more blurred...[so] you kind of give in to like what you kind of actually want to do but like refrain from doing" when not under the influence (Heather, 19 yo).

Additionally, young adults talked about the possible negative impact cannabis has on one's cognitive ability of remembering (i.e., memory loss). Jerry (39 yo), explained, "it's not like I have lost actual whole years of my life, I just feel it's like stoner memory, like, little things and I definitely think I relate that to weed." For Heather (19 yo), when she was high "[she] felt like just [her] brain was functioning so different...[which] was really annoying and also kind of scary." Heather (19 yo) elaborated on this feeling sharing:

It was so hard to remember things and have a conversation because I couldn't remember the previous sentence I said and the things that I was talking about, like, I was trying to explain this concept to my friends and I, just, it was so hard to explain what I was trying to explain and it was so frustrating... like I couldn't even remember what I was talking about like 20 seconds ago.

Young adults' acknowledgement of risks to cognitive functioning were underlined by different circumstantial factors influencing impairment and memory related to drug use patterns (e.g., scenario/setting of drug use, history of cannabis use). For instance, after Eileen (18 yo) commented on the fact that cannabis alters one's inhibitions and causes impairment, she shared that "you just need to know how to balance those risks and kind of counteract them by knowing your limits and making sure [you're] in a safe space with people that you trust." Jamie (21 yo) echo's some of Eileen's (18 yo) response by sharing a story about a friend who was unaware of the circumstance they were put in, which presented "a safety issue." Jamie (21 yo) explained:

I had one friend who was given a [cannabis] edible without being told that it was an edible, so, like yeah he was given candy at a party and he thought it was just regular candy and then he went to drive home and like, that's when the edible hit...while he was driving and, so, he was like very concerned about that in retrospect, it's a safety issue.

Another circumstantial factor was related to one's history of cannabis use. Jerry (30 yo) reflected on the memory loss risk and shared that "she's been smoking weed every single day probably since [she] was like 15, so [she has] 15 years of just smoking consistently, [and she] definitely see[s] it" as a big factor that impacts her ability to remember things.

Participants described how cannabis poses a risk to one's cognitive functioning (i.e., becoming impaired, altered inhibitions, memory loss), showcasing the final textural dimension of psychological harm. The characterization of cognitive functioning risks was informed by drug use pattern structures (e.g., scenario where drug use impairment is happening, length of drug use history).

The textural descriptions of psychological risks and their underlining structures were rich in nuanced meanings; thus, it was important to further break down the psychological textures into various characterizations (i.e., mental health, escapism, dependency, and cognitive functioning) and pair the appropriate structures with each characterization. Indeed, emerging adults did not ignore the intra-personal risks they are presented with when consuming cannabis, including the physiological and psychological risks. However, they also noted the inter-personal risks cannabis could invoke on them related to socio-cultural factors.

Socio-cultural risks of recreational cannabis use and corresponding structures

Emerging adults reflected on the variety of socio-cultural risks that cannabis can have. Specifically, participants talked about cannabis risks related to interpersonal factors (e.g., social anxiety when under the influence, harm to personal relationships, stigmatizing social identity, and wider societal standards (e.g., legality, productivity/professional goals [work, school] and financial management). All the socio-cultural categories characterizing the two-overarching

textural themes (i.e., interpersonal factors and wider societal standards) are supported by underlying structures.

Steve (29 yo) shared that sometimes when he is high in social situations, he experiences social anxiety. Steve (29 yo) shared:

Sometimes if I get put in like a social situation like, you know, I've smoked way too much and I go into a place full of a bunch of people then yeah...that's when the anxiety kicks in, but usually no, most times it makes me feel better.

Phoebe (20 yo) expressed a similar feeling because “sometimes it's, like, if [she] talk[s] [while high she] get[s] a little nervous because it's like [she's] stoned [she] can't...[so] in social settings it's where it's negative sometimes.”

Young adults indicated that cannabis did impact some of their personal relationships as well. For instance, Dave (21 yo) shared that “[cannabis] definitely kind of messed up some of our relationships [i.e., friendships]...especially early on, when we first started smoking it caused a lot of ripples.” Similarly, when JR's (27 yo) friends learned that he started using cannabis, “they quickly black sheeped [him].” According to Phoebe (20 yo), one of her “ex-friends,” “offended [her],” because she made exaggerated claims that for Phoebe “everything has to be about weed,” and although Phoebe stated, “yes, I'm a stoner...[still] not everything has to be about weed.”

There were also descriptions related to the societal stigmatization surrounding cannabis users, and what cannabis may mean for their social identity. Phoebe (20 yo) suggested that “the con or the risk of weed” is that some people can be “rude” or “judgmental,” about one's choice to use cannabis. She elaborated on the fact that “there are social risks... [such as] a lot of social stigmas with weed and how it, you know, ‘weed makes you dumb’ (Phoebe, 20 yo).

Nonetheless, Phoebe (20 yo) did not “take offense to it because people are people, [she’s] going to do what [she] want[s] regardless.” Indeed, Heather (19 yo) echoed these remarks sharing that people might “think badly about other people” who are engaging in experiences they themselves don’t engage in or are less familiar with, such as recreational cannabis use.

Beyond the socio-cultural risk textures and structures related to interpersonal factors (e.g., social anxiety, personal relationships, stigmatizing social identity), participants commented on how recreational cannabis use impacted their status in terms of wider societal standards. Participants talked about risks related to their social standing in terms of legal implications. Dave (21 yo) described potential legal risks related to “campus smoking.” Dave (21 yo) shares that smoking on campus presents two-fold risks that could legally impact his social standing:

(1) Even though I’m the legal age of 21, so I can technically own a certain amount and smoke it recreationally, not everyone I’m with is [meeting these legal requirements] and not everyone I know who does smoke is [of age]...[and] (2) if you do get caught on campus smoking there's a strike and then you have to like write a paper or something and then there's a second strike and then you get actually in trouble with the university.

Participants also noted risks to productive outcomes such as getting obligatory things done, taking care of professional and educational goals, and managing finances. In terms of finishing obligations, JR (27 yo) shared, “I have been stoned to a point where I’m like, ‘I’ll get to this later on...[thus, cannabis] does hurt my productivity, I’ve been much more productive in the past being sober than I have being stoned.” For Phoebe (20 yo), there have been risks to her educational obligations. Phoebe (20 yo) explained:

I don’t know sometimes even I convince myself when I’m high, like ‘oh, you know, this assignment is only 20 points, you can make up the extra credit,’ so, there's a downside,

sometimes weed will do that and sometimes I'll just be convinced like...go get a snack and watch a movie or something because you know you're stoned off your ass.'

In terms of professional goals, Dave (21 yo) emphasized the risk of combining work with cannabis stating that "[he] would never show up to work high because [he doesn't] really want to lose [his] job... [he] support[s] [him]self financially for the most part, so work is very serious to [him], and obviously so is education."

Related to productivity and work outcomes, some participants expressed that "financially, [cannabis] could have some issues" (Danielle, 28 yo). According to Cristina (28 yo), "definitely, people could get in a hole for sure, money wise," because of their cannabis use. JR (27 yo) "buys [cannabis] as a wholesaler," and sells it to others, thus he shares experiences he's witnessed where "people who've bought weed literally have called [him] back, like, the next day wanting more of it." JR (27 yo), elaborated stating, "I got people that hit me up like actually hit me up every day for a half ounce [of cannabis], I'm like the F**k are you guys doing?" In this explanation, JR (27 yo) is questioning some cannabis consumers financial decisions and how they are "blowing through that much money and that much weed on a daily basis." Young adults' detailed different dimensions of the socio-cultural risk texture (i.e., risks to relationships, social stigmatization, social-legal standing, productivity, and financial management). These diverse textures represent cannabis risk connected to interpersonal factors and wider societal standards, which are supported by a range of structures.

Socio-cultural risk texture describing social anxiety is underpinned by structures such as drug use patterns (e.g., amount of cannabis consumed) and the tasks or activities at hand. For instance, Phoebe (20 yo) stated that "recreationally speaking" she likes "to go out" and "to dance", indeed, she likes to "be energetic" but "sometimes if [she] smoke[s] too much weed

[she's] like 'no, I want to sit on my butt with a bag of chips right now.' Thus, overconsumption of cannabis can cut out her desire and ability to socialize with others. Additionally, Phoebe (20 yo) shared that the activity at hand impacts her ability to reduce the social anxiety she sometimes feels from cannabis. She explained:

If I have something to focus on while I'm stoned it kind of relieves my anxiety [in social settings] ...like if I'm playing a video game with friends, or if I'm like watching a movie with friends...if I'm focused on something [i.e., focused on some kind of activity while in social group].

Furthermore, socio-cultural risk textures involving harmful consequences related to social relationships and social identity/stigmatization are underlined by different structures such as mismatch between social peers' experiences and attitudes towards cannabis. Participant's discussed various cannabis mismatches between friends as a cause of disconnecting social relationships. For instance, Dave (21 yo) reflected on earlier years when him and his friends first started using cannabis and talked about how different friend group members branched into different drug use patterns (e.g., frequency of use) and the ways in which they would position their cannabis use alongside other responsibilities. Specifically, Dave (21 yo) explained the separating views in his friend group sharing that,

People would just smoke during class right in between class and periods and things like that and that caused a lot of arguments, because some people were like well my school comes first or my work comes first, like I'm not going to show up to work high...so I got into a lot of arguments with people about things like that...[because cannabis was] something new and that's something that we have access to now, like why don't we just

do it all the time, where a lot of us were like we don't want to do that because it's jeopardizing who we're going to be and who we might become in the future.

The mismatch in drug use patterns was also evident in Thomas' (29 yo) comments. Thomas (29 yo) shared that his "tolerance is quite high," and in [his friend group there are not a lot of people that smoke as [he does], [he] tend[s] to smoke a lot [while] other people only [take] a couple puffs and they're f**ked out of their mind." Thus, Thomas (29 yo) concludes that "there are some [social] hindrances," in the different tolerance levels amongst his friends. For JR (27 yo), different drug use patterns were discussed in terms of a previous relationship. JR (27 yo) shared about "a girlfriend [he] was dating one time, and she did not like how much [he used] cannabis," although she also used cannabis it was "only at nighttime before bed," and [he] was like a 'all day everyday type of guy,'" regardless if it was "morning, night, [he was] getting high, and that was a big turnoff to her."

Additionally, the divide between social peers could be a mismatch in terms of how one can handle their drug use. As Thomas (29 yo) stated, "I have so many stories of people not being able to handle their shit and when you don't handle your shit you make it somebody else's problem and that's the first rule of drug use is 'you do not make it somebody else's problem.' In this case, Thomas (29 yo) was talking about mixing cannabis and other substances. Nonetheless, he made it clear that people "lose friendships" because "they're a mess [under the influence]," and it interferes with others who can take care of themselves and have fun while being under the influence. Another participant discussed the ways in which mismatched drug use patterns and experiences (e.g., non-users v users' knowledge of cannabis) could inform the potential risks to social identity. Heather (19 yo) explained that stigmatization of cannabis users can be shaped by "less of an open-minded person... like, if you're closed off to weed but it's completely just

because people say it's bad but not because you actually really think it's bad or like have done the research.”

Structures informing socio-cultural risk textures related to wider societal standards (e.g., legal standing, productive output, and financial management) include career goals, assessments of tasks which can(not) be completed high, drug characteristics (e.g., strain) influence on productivity, and the impact of drug accessibility (e.g., cost) and personal budgeting. The potential for socio-legal sanctions were salient due to future career aspirations. Danielle (28 yo) is a law student who shared that she does not want to risk going “into stores [i.e., cannabis dispensary’s] just because [she’s] hopefully going to be a federal employee [working in law] one day, [she’s] just paranoid about that because it's not federally legal.” Similarly, Jamie (21 yo) described pursuing a career as a high school teacher and shared, “I have concerns about me purchasing weed [if it] would like impact future employability things like that, and so I try to like err on the side of caution with that and just like not buy it myself.” Although cannabis is legal in the state they live in, and they are both of legal age they do not want to risk any record of buying cannabis that could jeopardize their future careers.

Participants detailed what could impact potential risks to productivity and emphasized that the type of task and the drug characteristics mattered. For instance, JR (27 yo) shared that if he has to do “something that's like very mundane and your tedious, like day to day, like obligation,” if he’s already “too stoned,” he might get “lazy [where] all [he] want[s] to do is like eat food, maybe binge a show, get more high, like, [not] worry about any of [his] obligations whatsoever.” Similarly, Steve (29 yo), shared that if he is already under the influence of cannabis

It's hard to think when [he's] writing [as a local sports journalist] or going to do any work, it does kind of bring [him] down more...[because] most of the time after [he] smoke[s] [he doesn't] want to go out to rake leaves or do something.

Luna (21 yo) talked about how school tasks often “require a lot of mental focus,” thus she makes sure “to get everything done [and then smoke] ... instead of doing it beforehand.” However, Luna (21 yo) noted that other “things on [her] to do list,” can be completed while high, for instance, “[she] like[s] running errands high.” Productivity was also shaken based on drug characteristics such as the cannabis form. According to Jerry (30 yo), she “[doesn't] do wax [i.e., type of cannabis form] if [she] ha[s] to be like mind productive... it does not benefit [her], it puts [her] in a state of like a zombie.”

Finally, young adults also talked about the risks to finances. For Zach (21 yo), this risk was evidently an issue people faced when they mis-budgeted their own monies. Zach (21 yo) explained, “I definitely have friends that are like ‘I’m really poor, I work all the time but I don’t have any money’ and I’m like ‘you spend \$200 a week on weed that's why.’” Danielle (28 yo) suggests financial troubles can also be connected to drug characteristics such as how accessible cannabis prices are in different areas. Danielle (28 yo) shared that “regionally [cannabis] can be super expensive or super inexpensive depending on where you live so, more or less accessible.”

The textural descriptions of socio-cultural risks involved harmful effects related to their interpersonal sphere (e.g., personal relationships, social identity/stigmatization) and wider societal standards (e.g., socio-legal outcomes, productivity, and financial well-being). The underlying structures of these risks were informed by differing experiences and perceptions of cannabis use, as well as consideration for one’s future aspirations. Threats to productivity and financial wellness were influenced by the type of task and drug characteristics (e.g., cannabis

form, cannabis cost). Indeed, emerging adults reflected on the various external risks cannabis could cause. Overall, young adults described the physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural risks presented by cannabis, however, this is only one side of their views. They also described their perceptions of cannabis benefits ranging across physiological, psychological and socio-cultural dimensions.

Physiological benefits of recreational cannabis use and corresponding structures

Young adults endorsed recreational cannabis use as a beneficial tool for various physiological outcomes, including hunger and gastrointestinal functioning, alleviation of pain, and recovery from other forms of intoxication. For instance, participants shared that “[weed] helps with appetite issues” (Zach, 21 yo).” In fact, Jamie (21 yo) had a conversation with their voice coaching therapist where the therapist said to Jamie, “you know you're talking about having eating difficulties and like I'm not advocating for you to do weed but if you did do weed that might be helpful.”

It was also noted that “there are some pretty cool benefits [to cannabis] ...[like] it helps with pain (Zach, 21 yo). Cannabis can potentially “make people who live in pain feel better” (Cristina, 28 yo). Specifically, Cristina (28 yo) explained that “[cannabis] make[s] [her] body not feel pain as much...[which] sounds funny cause most people think like ‘oh you’re high you can’t focus,’ but for [her] it takes [her] mind off intense pain [so that she can focus on other things].” Danielle (28 yo) shares that her friends’ mom “is using [cannabis] for back pain.” Plus, “sometimes you know with [pain from] menstrual cramping, cannabis helps a ton” (Emma, 26 yo). For Minea (21 yo) cannabis “makes it hurt less when [they] have like 80 cuts and 20 burns on [their] hands at work [as a restaurant manager].” Also, besides the benefits related to the gastro system and pain relief, cannabis was discussed as a helpful tool for recovering from other

forms of intoxication, such as alcohol consumption. Dave (21 yo) explained, “if we go to the bars one night...[and the next day] if we smoke in the morning the rest of the day I'll be fine because [cannabis will] just like clear my hangover almost instantly...the headache and stomachache will go away.”

Textural descriptions of cannabis' physiological benefits were backed by various structures, including one's personal health (i.e., presence of illness), life stage, and comparison to other substances (e.g., pharmaceutical alternatives). In Cristina's (28 yo) case, she is living with Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS), which is a genetic condition “[where her] connective tissue [is] breaking apart over time [i.e., making her weaker]...[her] joints and stuff are very loose so if you pull on them, the tendons and ligaments in them are almost non-existent...[and] the effects on [her] body [are] just getting worse over time.” Cristina (28 yo) shared her personal health condition to explain why cannabis helps her physiologically:

One of the things I deal with is this chronic pain and just like I was explaining to you earlier weed just takes the focus off my pain so much...when I'm so wore out from dealing with the pain all day I get so tired if that makes sense? like even individual limbs, like a foot...[and the cannabis takes away] maybe 10% [of the pain].

Cristina (28 yo) also shared that due to her personal health condition, “[she] get[s] nausea a lot [because] the gastro system is really affected [by EDS] and [weed] makes [her] be able to eat.”

Based on another participant's story, life stage was deemed an important factor influencing perceptions of cannabis' physiological benefits. Danielle (28 yo) shared how her “best friend's parents' use cannabis as they're aging” for two-fold reasons (i.e., pain relief and recreational), “(1) because [they're] getting old and [their] joints f**king hurt and (2) [they] also just like want to chill out and watch TV at the end of the day.” Based on this example, Danielle (28 yo) stated:

Watching that [i.e., friends' parents use of cannabis] I'm like, yeah, I could see that being a total move that I make, of like 'sure I'm gonna age and it's gonna suck and things are going to be harder to move around so I'll help that with this [i.e., use cannabis to help potential body aging pain subside]."

Additionally, cannabis was discussed by Cristina (28 yo) as a better alternative to "paid meds," who "would rather smoke weed than take pills all day." Cristina (28 yo) explained why and how she finds cannabis more beneficial for pain:

[EDS] bodies metabolize medications differently so we're part of this rare disease group or whatever, so for me personally that pain med would probably work 30 minutes whereas for other people they say 'oh take another one in 6 hours,' like we [people with EDS] spit things out really quickly...so for weed to like smoke it, and it instantly is affected [i.e., affecting the body] and to last, like that's another thing that benefits me, personally.

Indeed, even when discussing the potential benefits of cannabis in terms of hangovers, there was a comparison of how other substances made one feel physiologically. Danielle (28 yo) shared, "I prefer [cannabis] to like drinking because there's no hangover...[I] have a ton of fun and then [don't] wake up and feel like I'm going to die because I'm vomiting, or I have a headache [like from alcohol]." This illustrates cannabis benefits in terms of experiencing enjoyable and pleasurable leisure experience compared to other substances in/as pleasurable leisure, which produce more undesirable aftereffects.

The textural descriptions of physiological benefits involved positive outcomes related to appetite and the mitigation of nausea, pain mitigation and hangover recovery. The underscoring structures of these benefits revolved around one's personal health condition, life stage (and

associated growing pains), and comparing the physiological effects of cannabis to other medications and substances. Young adults discussed some potential biological benefits, however, they also discussed numerous cannabis psychological benefits.

Psychological benefits of recreational cannabis use and corresponding structures

Recreational cannabis use was perceived as an aid for various psychological outcomes. The positive psychological outcomes involved managing emotions, adaptive coping, or escapism, engaging in introspection that leads to personal growth, learning moments, and identity developments, and improving mental health. According to Cristina's (28 yo) account, cannabis can be used "to reset," for instance, "if you had something that made you sad or angry or whatever, and you felt you just couldn't really get out of that emotion, another good alternative [is] to smoke and kind of sit there and breathe." Cristina (28 yo) highlights that "[weed] can be a mood booster." Similarly, for JR (27 yo) "[cannabis] alleviates some of [his] tension when [he] feel[s] aggressive or [he] feel[s] tense, it definitely lightens it." This cannabis benefit showcases the important role of leisure meanings in terms of recuperating from negative feelings/emotions or resetting one's energy.

Along these lines, participants also explained the potential beneficial role of cannabis in terms of coping with circumstances or using recreational cannabis as positive escapism. Jamie (21 yo) explained, "there's definitely instances where it's like, you know, [someone might be] stressed about something that nothing can really be done about it and, like in that scenario [cannabis is] helpful [as a coping technique/escape]." Luna (21 yo) noted that escapist connections to cannabis use represent a tango between psychological risk-benefit. Luna (21 yo) suggested "it is very easy to use [cannabis] as a crutch or just like a distraction...[and] there is that line of using it to kind of help yourself [cope with something]," which could represent the

positive escapist connection. These claims showcase how recreational cannabis connects with successful leisure coping strategies that help one temporarily escape the mental environment of their day to day life (and challenges), without leading to detrimental mental abandonment.

Recreational cannabis was also described as a tool that helps one “get more in touch with [their] emotions” and for introspective learning moments (Luna, 21 yo). Specifically, Luna (21 yo) explained, “instead of just trying to put the feelings away, like, sometimes [using cannabis] might make you cry a little in the moment because you're thinking [and confronting those feelings], but that's not negative, it's like you're learning from that experience.” Luna (21 yo) elaborated quite extensively on the potential introspection offered by cannabis:

I really love this quote...it's a quote by Alan Watts, he said ‘once you get the message, hang up the phone,’ and he was talking about like psychedelics and things like that, so it's kind of, like, you know, I’m saying, all these positive things that weed has done for me, like when I go outside and I’m walking down the street to my class, I feel like I recognize like ‘oh my gosh the trees look so much more green today’...I notice the world around me more...not even just when I’m high, but like...what I’ve learned from my high experiences but that doesn't mean [that when] you want to see the world in a beautiful way you have to be high, like, no, that shows you that you're capable of feeling this pure like bliss...you're capable of that, that wasn't the weed...it just like brought that out of you...you take what you learn from that experience and now really apply it to every aspect of your life.

Introspective qualities related to personal growth and identity transformation were shared by others as well. Phoebe (20 yo) remarked, “[a cannabis] benefit overall [is that] weed kind of shaped me to who I am... kind of changed my personality and kind of changed my outlooks on

life.” Comparably, Heather (19 yo) talked about a friend who “felt like the weed really showed her what she needed to be seeing...[the friend] really reflected and thought about things and learned a lot about herself [while under the influence].” For Minea (21 yo), cannabis played a role in “their whole like life journey,” specifically their gender identity. Minea (21 yo), shared, “my gender identity was stemmed mainly from like support of friends and marijuana use and, I’m trans and I’m on hormones and that [i.e., decision to start using hormones; embrace my gender identity] was also like stemmed from that [i.e., cannabis].”

Furthermore, participants talked about how recreational cannabis use improved mental health outcomes, including, reducing anxiety and depression, and eliminating the risk of relapsing or turning back to past addictions/dependencies. Emma (26 yo) shared that “[she] deal[s] with anxiety, so [she] think[s] [cannabis] takes away the anxiety from [her] reality.” Similarly, Dave (21 yo) remarked, “[cannabis] definitely helps psychologically with me from like stress and anxiety.” Depression-wise, James (19 yo) shared:

I’ve been diagnosed with major depressive disorder for years now and [cannabis] makes me happy for a few days, and it makes me forget my problems and makes me forget they existed and I’m happy about stuff and life’s not a problem when I’m high.

Steve (29 yo) talked about using cannabis “as like a maintenance drug.” He explained:

I’ve almost got like four years of just smoking cannabis now...[cannabis] helps me stay clean and partly sometimes I don’t like saying I am clean because I know I smoke but I don’t even really count that anymore [because] it’s like I’m looking at the hard drugs and prescription drugs, that’s what it started with [for me] in high school [it] was pills and all sorts of stuff and then it just gradually got worse and then it was IV heroin at the end and crack... a lot of times when I’m not smoking that’s when I can get like cravings and stuff

for other drugs and [cannabis] kind of just keeps all that at bay I feel like...it just seems to help a lot.

The textural descriptions of cannabis' psychological benefits were informed by various structures such as one's personal life circumstances and their experiences/history with mental health, including reflecting on how one feels in their own skin (i.e., feeling normal or not). James (19 yo) talked about his personal life circumstances growing up sharing, "I had a really rough high school experience, and I would do a [cannabis] edible on like Sunday and I would be just happy with life until about Thursday." For Cristina (28 yo), "[she] grew up kind of like a super depressed person, even way before cannabis use," and therefore, shared that cannabis is more helpful rather than hurtful to her mental health. In Emma's (26 yo) case she reflected on growing up with her mom's mental health difficulties:

When I was younger...[there was] a lot more instability in my life and cannabis brought stability to me...because my mom deals with bipolar, [and] I soaked up her energy and I think I was on a manic state for a long time... now that I know what mania is...[and] cannabis it was what helped me to cope with that a lot more... it was what helped me, you know, when I felt nothing else could.

Emma (26 yo) also suggested that "people with bipolar two, anxiety or depression or ADHD" might "use cannabis as their only kind of medication and some use it in addition to the medication they're already taking." Emma (26 yo) shared:

[For people struggling with mental health issues] the benefit [of cannabis] is that it balances them out, it gives them that happy medium of feeling "normal" ... to kind of just coast and be okay and be able to communicate with other people to just simply

socialize without feeling like alienated or as if you know they're weird or in their head or whatever.

Participants also reflected on their personal mental health and self-image, or how they felt in their own skin and the ways in which cannabis helped them. Steve (29 yo), stated, “I didn't like how I felt normally... when I was younger up till years ago...I didn't like how I felt in my own skin, pretty much all the time.” Thus, for Steve (29 yo), being sober “never worked [because he] always end[ed] up relapsing... [he] always found a way to [do drugs] and it was always worst stuff [e.g., pills, heroin]...[cannabis] is how [he's] maintained [not relapsing] the longest.”

Additionally, another structure was following certain drug use patterns, such as reserving cannabis for occasional leisure use, which helped inform perceptions of beneficial mental disconnection. Jamie (21) shared:

[I noticed that] if I did weed more than like once a week then I would experience it [i.e., too much dissociation from reality], but if it was like you know, a week, a week and a half in-between then I didn't, so, I was kind of like, okay I'm going to do weed like no more than once a week, and that was kind of my rule that I set for myself, and so, then it became, like, yeah, like a weekend thing.

Furthermore, psychological cannabis benefits were informed by structures related to thinking differently or gaining new perspective, which helped facilitate introspection and positive psychological re-appraisals. Luna (21 yo) talked about cannabis and thoughtfulness generally:

I feel like [cannabis] makes you think a lot, it makes you think about yourself, think about the people around you...I guess when I'm having these introspective thoughts it's helping me get more in touch with who I am... it makes me aware of what's going on,

and then awareness is just what pushes you to understand yourself better, understand the world better, your friends better.

Minea (21 yo) shared, “psychologically I’ve been like way way mentally healthier since I started smoking [cannabis]...it’s like [when I smoked cannabis] I was like, ‘oh I think some dots are connecting.” Indeed, “weed makes you think a lot...makes you think about your life” (Phoebe, 20 yo). When sharing this comment, Phoebe (20 yo) related thinking about her “innermost self” to one of Kid Cudi’s song lyrics which reads, “the lonely stoner seems to free his mind at night.” According to Cristina (28 yo), “when you’re high you can think better almost, your brain’s like more free.” Participants shared that the positive psychological outcomes specifically relied on cannabis’ ability to help one gain new perspectives. Danielle (28 yo) explained, “you do feel slightly more creative, or you think a little bit more Meta and big picture [when high] ...I have had those moments where like you have a good deep talk and you're like ‘what about that, what about that.” Cristina (28 yo) shared:

High or not high, I’m always thinking but like maybe I think of different ways to do the things [when I’m high] or come up with different solutions or something like while I’m sitting in bed and I’m just stoned.

James (19 yo) talked about how he’s contemplated a previous relationship and how it ended, and “when [he’s] sober [he’s] thinking like ‘oh it's my fault or it's my problem that this happened.” However, when using cannabis, he gains a different perspective. He explained:

My last ex-boyfriend was like really shitty to me and I’ll get high [and] I’ll be like ‘man F**k him,’ like, honestly, he was just awful, whereas when I’m sober...I don't sit there [thinking] like ‘yeah he's shitty’ when I’m sober it's more of a sad thing...when I’m high

it's kind of a joke, it's kind of like 'well that f**king happened and that sucks but it's not my fault.'

Danielle (28 yo) shared that when she is using cannabis and "just like decompressing, thinking about [her] day," when she is high she might be like "look at that [i.e., something that happened in her day] a little bit different or sometimes [it's] easier to let harder things go and to have a more balanced perspective of it." For Luna (21 yo), one perspective she has learned to take on from her "high experience," is related to feeling her "inner child." Luna (21 yo) suggests, "it's just very healing, like, when you think of yourself as like that little child, your childhood self." She elaborated:

Your inner child is basically the most purest form of yourself... so, I'll give you like a little example for you to understand what I mean by 'my inner child,'... when I think 'okay why, do I feel hurt like when my friend said this?... then I'll take that comment and I'll truly break it down, like, when did I first feel that kind of feeling? what do these words really mean? like I'll pinpoint it and a lot of times, it'll come from like a time in your childhood when you felt sad or when someone said something to you that triggered you and so now this comment triggered that emotional response...so inner child is like when I picture my little, like, seven year old self in my head and I go and give her a hug and I'm like 'no, that person who said that to you, like, don't listen to them, you know, they're not the types of people that you want to be around anyway, gravitate towards those people who like make you feel good'...the more you get in touch with your inner child the more free you become because when you're a child you had no care in the world, like, you just were yourself, you didn't think like 'oh, if I do this, like, people are gonna think I'm weird.'

The textual descriptions of psychological benefits involved positive outcomes related to managing emotions, adaptive coping/positive escape, engaging in introspection, and improving one's mental health (including resisting relapse to other dangerous substance use). The corresponding structures of these benefits revolved around personal life circumstances, personal experiences/history with mental health and previous addictions, following certain drug use patterns, and gaining new perspectives. Young adults expressed their perceptions of cannabis' benefits related to internal factors ranging from physiological to psychological outcomes. However, they also discussed ways in which cannabis can present socio-cultural benefits.

Socio-cultural benefits of recreational cannabis use and corresponding structures

Young adults described perceptions of cannabis' socio-cultural benefits related to interpersonal factors (e.g., enhancing communication, connecting with others), and wider social expectations (e.g., fulfilling work/school responsibilities, being productive member of society, working towards personal financial growth). Interpersonally, cannabis benefits included improved conversations. Heather (19 yo) shared, "my friend who was high with me, I feel like we had really good conversations and we were really honest with each other." For Danielle (28 yo), her and her partner "talk about [their] day [and] hang out... which [they] can do that sober but it's also just helpful [and] easier sometimes to do that while high." Danielle (28 yo), suggests, "like it's sometimes easier to have harder conversations."

It was also noted that "[cannabis] does help friendships in a way, because it's like a different way for [friends] to connect" (Eileen, 18 yo). In other words, "[cannabis] kind of makes [Eileen, 19 yo] feel more connected with [her] friends." According to Jamie (21 yo), their friends use cannabis for various reasons but one friend that they are particularly close with, will "do

[cannabis] sometimes as a social thing [and] sometimes [as a way] to get closer with [Jamie].”

For Luna (21 yo), cannabis has strengthened the relationship with her sister. She shared:

Smoking has literally just made our relationship so strong, anyone who knows me and my sister just knows of us as being like the same exact person...there's people who love weed, yes, but then we love weed but we don't talk about it...so we connect on that.

Phoebe (20 yo) claimed, “[cannabis] kind of did shape [her] friendships in a way...”

Specifically, she explained that she’s made friends with others who also enjoy using recreational cannabis. Phoebe (20 yo,) stated:

“I have some friends who I have today because [of] weed, I mean not only [because of weed]...we get past weed and we’re friends now...[but] one of my best friends from here [i.e., from university] we both smoke weed and so it took off from there and we've been good friends ever since.”

In JR’s (27 yo) case, “[cannabis] brought [him] together with a ton of people...that [he’ll] never forget personally.” For instance, JR (27 yo) “[has] met random strangers, smoked joints with them, maybe ate edibles with them, and had long conversations and [they] became friends for a long time or at least acquaintances.” Dave (21 yo), “[has] a lot of social anxiety” so “[cannabis] helps [him] calm [his] nerves down a lot,” so he can “interact how [he] would normally.” In other words, Dave (21 yo) noticed that “with smok[ing] [he] was able to actually be comfortable...[meeting] new people in [his friend] groups.” Indeed, these examples are ripe with connections between cannabis use and interpersonal leisure meanings, specifically, the beneficial role of recreational cannabis for meaningful engagement with others (friends and strangers) and for socializing.

Beyond the described interpersonal or relational benefits, cannabis was discussed in terms of fulfilling wider societal standards or expected roles. Often, when substance (mis)use is discussed, it is assessed in terms of the potential damage and problems it can cause to one's social/daily obligations and their social standing, in terms of educational attainment and productive outputs. However, Cristina (28 yo) suggested that one benefit of cannabis involves being able to be a cannabis consumer and still meet societal expectations. She explained:

I was the friend of the friend group that everyone thought 'oh no what's going on with Cristina because she's smoking weed...I still got good grades I got like a's and b's, I was in sports, I was like the first one to go to college and graduate and got my life together and I remember my friends' mom said something like, 'I never would have guessed you would have been the first friend to get your life together,' and I'm like you guys just because I smoke weed didn't mean that I wasn't going to make it.

Furthermore, for some participants cannabis was perceived as a helpful tool for completing productive tasks related to housework, work, and/or school. Phoebe (20 yo) shared, "weed will just get to your innermost thoughts and just bring them out like, 'hey you need to get this shit done and you're stoned but you're going to do it anyways.'" Thomas (29 yo) is a salesman, who explained that sometimes he "would smoke and go back to selling and would be more on it." Specifically, Thomas (29 yo) shared, "I don't want to get high [at work] but I just need to kind of focus, so, I'll go to the bathroom 'puff puff puff' in the bathroom [using cannabis vape pen] and go back to work and then at that point I'm a lot more productive." According to Jamie (21 yo) they have a friend that uses cannabis to make doing homework more "tolerable." They said:

There'll be a lot of times where [my friend will] be like 'I can't do my homework, I can't do any work'...and then he'll be like fine I guess I'll go do some weed and do my

homework and then he does some weed and he does his homework and he's like 'okay, fine this is tolerable.'

Minea (21 yo) shared similar sentiments, stating, "[cannabis] more so makes the same amount of productivity more tolerable...most of the time it's like if I smoke then the work that I do and the effort that I'm putting in will be like less strenuous on me." Indeed, participants shared that even housework can be positively impacted. Cristina (28 yo) said, "I'm remodeling my house, so I definitely like to smoke weed while I'm like painting walls or the other day I was ripping up carpet, definitely [cannabis] makes it more enjoyable." Indeed, for some participants it was evident that cannabis use could be situated strictly for leisure meanings, while for others there were also work/productivity related meanings associated with recreational cannabis use.

The textural descriptions of cannabis' socio-cultural benefits were facilitated by various structures. Socio-cultural benefit textures describing interpersonal factors were facilitated by structures such as letting one's guard down and re-framing or gaining new lens and becoming more aware of one's desired social connections. Luna (21 yo) shared, "sometimes, [she's] afraid to be vulnerable with people and stuff but then...[she] feel[s] like when you're high it makes you put your guard down a little bit and just open up more." Zach (21 yo) expressed similar sentiments, stating, "if I'm smoking with friends there's some benefit because I mean we all look stupid so it's fun to like let your guard down a little bit and just, like, hang out, so there's a social benefit to it." Heather (19 yo) explained "I think my friend...saw a really different side of me...I felt comfortable enough to be around her, and so I felt like she just saw a lot more of who I am." Participants described the ways in which cannabis use provided opportunities for social recreation wherein people could enjoy each other's company and express themselves more authentically than they normally would in sober non-leisure life realms.

Other participants shared how cannabis provoked different perspectives, which positively impacted their interpersonal communication and social connections. For instance, Steve (29 yo), reflected on his long-term relationship with his partner:

With people that are together for quite a while you know it can get dicey at times and like tension and stuff but when we smoke it seems that you just forget about all that, you don't get all upset about things that much and I just think it kind of helps tone things down and level things out...and [helps] look at it a different way, without the emotion being in it.

For Luna (21 yo), cannabis provided her new perspective in terms of increased awareness about the kinds of conversations and relational connections she wants to acquire in her life. She shared:

You start thinking like... 'is this person like really a good friend to me?' or 'am I doing myself like a disservice when I spend time with people who are, you know, talking about themselves and about other people in this way?' Yesterday I was hanging out with my roommate and this guy that she's seeing and I was smoking, they weren't, and then we were talking and I was like 'guys, I'm very thankful for this conversation, because I recognize that there's three types of people: there's the people that talk about other people and that's like the lowest way of thinking (type 1), then there's the people who talk about things and things that have happened, or like memories (type 2) and then there's the people who talk about ideas (type 3)' and that's like the highest type of conversation for me (i.e., type 3) and so I feel like when I didn't smoke, I wasn't that aware to recognize that, like, how come all these people are only talking bad about other people? Now, if I'm in a setting where that's happening or where something kind of rubs me the wrong way, I feel like [I recognize it] because weed makes you a little more hyper-aware.

Beyond the structures supporting interpersonal factors, there are structures underlying beneficial textures related to wider societal expectations (e.g., fulfilling scholarly/work roles, being productive, increasing financial wealth). These structures include comparing cannabis to other substances, taking into consideration the task at hand and drug use patterns and characteristics. In terms of fulfilling societal markers (e.g., growing personal wealth), some participants compared cannabis to other substances they have consumed, and the overwhelmingly negative impacts they experienced with the other drugs. Steve (29 yo) previously discussed being addicted to other “harder” drugs, such as heroin. He shed light on how cannabis compares to heroin in terms of being able to acquire and build wealth/financial management:

I don't know compared to what I did before [i.e., other drugs] I can actually save money, I was never able to save money, any money I got it was gone, like, right away so, nothing compares to that [and] that's why I look at [cannabis] way different because I've seen what roads other drugs have taken me down...it's hard to reference [cannabis] to anything else because it seems not nearly as bad.

Cannabis was also compared to other substances and the impact they can have on meeting the socio-cultural expectations of productivity. Thomas (29 yo) said that after using cannabis “[he] would sell better, [he] would close more deals, just as you would if you were you know taking an Adderall and getting shit done...it has the same kind of effect [on him].” Furthermore, the utility of cannabis for productivity was structured around the kind of task at hand. Minea (21 yo) shared:

If I have to do something that is like monotonous... [cannabis] makes things that I don't need to be sober for but still need to do a lot more tolerable... a great example is like if I'm ever at work [and] gotta do dishes, I'll smoke a bunch and do dishes and it's like

‘wow the water is so warm, I’m having a great time,’ and if I was sober I probably wouldn’t be having as much of a good time.

Jerry (30 yo), also reflected on fulfilling her job roles as a waitress and the tasks at hand as well as the way she was taking cannabis (e.g., cannabis form, dosage). She stated, “I would take edibles at work and be fine as a server... [but] I could never go over like 10 milligrams [i.e., dosage of cannabis edible] if I was up on my feet and like interacting with people.” Indeed, the drug use patterns and/or characteristics were salient to understanding potential benefits to socio-cultural expectations of productivity for others as well. Phoebe (20 yo) shared:

I have to be careful when it comes to productivity, not only the strain...the potency, how much I smoke too really matters...[and] I’ll have different methods, like different ways of how I smoke, like sometimes it will be a one hitter, sometimes it’ll be a bowl, sometimes it will be like a whole wrap or blunt ...so sometimes I’ll get stupid high [and] not be able to do shit...but sometimes I’ll just smoke a little and just get a lot of shit done.

Zach (21 yo) also remarked that “for certain people definitely sativa’s [i.e., cannabis strain] help a lot with like productivity and focus.”

The textural descriptions of socio-cultural cannabis benefits were two-fold, one part included interpersonal factors such as enhanced communication and connection with others (both friends and strangers). The second benefits branch related to meeting wider societal standards and cultural expectations such as personal wealth management, educational obtainment, and productivity outcomes.. Structures related to interpersonal factors included letting one’s guard down and gaining new perspectives. The structures related to meeting societal expectations revolved around comparing outcomes of cannabis use to other substances, taking into

consideration the types of tasks at hand and being mindful of drug use patterns and characteristics.

This research aim was intended to capture the essence of recreational cannabis risk-benefits based on the lived experiences of U.S. young adults. Thus, based on the data analysis this section provided a textural-structural composite image of young adult's perceptions of both cannabis risks and benefits across physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural domains. Additionally, throughout the data there was noteworthy reference towards the ways in which cannabis risk-benefits are calculated and negotiated by young adults, including the role of leisure in this balancing act.

Calculating and negotiating cannabis risk-benefits

Beyond findings that showcase the risk-benefit perceptions, young cannabis users discussed calculating the pros-con's ratio associated with cannabis risks and benefits. Jamie (21 yo), shared, "[cannabis] definitely has a high pro to con ratio." When asked if cannabis is more beneficial or harmful to her quality of life, Phoebe (20 yo) stated, "overall, to answer that question, I'd say there's more benefit." Thomas (29 yo) explained that "everything's got their form of risks...there's risk to everything, you know, it's about cause and effect, what's the cause and how does it effect, well, getting high makes me f**king feel great and it makes me quite happy." Heather (19 yo) offered the following disclaimer, "weed can be beneficial in some circumstances, but it just needs to be like the right set, the right setting, the right dosage, like, it needs to be pretty calculated."

Eileen (19 yo) "[has] big aspirations for [her] future," and she has worked hard to get accepted into to a top University in the U.S. Indeed, "[she] came in with 45 credits and [she] want[s] to go to med school and [she's] taking 15 credits a semester, doing research [and] on

track to like four point (4.0) the semester.” Cannabis risks have not interfered with these ambitions, but “if [she] start[s] to feel like it is [becoming negative] then [she] know[s] what [her] priorities are and will adjust [her] behaviors to make sure that [she’s] meeting them” (Eileen, 19 yo). With that said, young adults noted that “weed is not as bad as everyone makes it out to be as long as you're safe with it, [cannabis] could be like pretty beneficial for a lot of people” (Dave, 21 yo).

Strategies and negotiations of cannabis risk-benefits involved various mechanisms related to leisure motivated meanings and tactics. Danielle (28 yo) shared:

I will have to take a break [from cannabis when] applying for jobs because I have to become a federal employee...but I think once I secure a job I'll immediately go back [to cannabis use because] I just enjoy it and the recreational component.

Dave (21 yo) shared that he uses his “leisure time or free time [to] moderate how much [he] actually end[s] up smoking. In other words, “leisure [is] a measurement for how much [he] smoke[s], because, if [he has] less leisure time than [he’s] smoking less but if [he has] more leisure time [he] might be smoking more” (Dave, 21 yo). In order to uphold the pro-con ration, Jamie’s (21 yo) friends have suggested that they “stick to doing [cannabis] when [they’re] having a good time already, if you're having a bad time [and start to use cannabis] ...it can be very overwhelming but also [it] can be harder to regulate [your cannabis use].” This advice suggests that reserving cannabis for an enjoyable leisure experience can be crucial to learning how to have the most optimal and beneficial form of cannabis use.

In this section, young adults shared their own evaluations of cannabis risk-benefits. However, it is also crucial to learn how they assess more formal health communications’ claims of cannabis risks and/or benefits. Thus, the following findings section will present young adults

previous experiences with cannabis drug education and their responsiveness to different drug education approaches and health messaging styles. The forthcoming findings section will also discuss how young adults perceive the potential roles of leisure meanings within drug education and their responsiveness towards it.

RESEARCH AIM THREE

The third and final research aim of this project is concerned with investigating how young adults respond to different drug education approaches and their messaging and their links to leisure as well as the potential usefulness of including leisure meanings in drug education generally. This project explored young adults' reactions towards health promotion cannabis education, harm reduction cannabis education and zero tolerance cannabis education.

Additionally, this research aim seeks to understand young adults' previous experiences with and exposure to drug education as well as any potential connections between how they respond to drug education and the perceptions of cannabis in/as leisure. The data related to research aim three will be organized and presented in terms of the textural dimensions and structural factors corresponding with each drug education approach. Firstly, the section will cover the textures and structures pertaining to young adults' reactions towards health promotion cannabis drug education.

Textures and structures describing emerging adults' reactions towards health promotion

Young adults shared their reactions towards health promotion approach and the messaging features which mold it. The researcher interpreted and categorized textural dimensions in terms of the appealing and unappealing facets captured under three main themes (1) portrayal of cannabis use(rs), (2), cannabis users' self-governance of decision making and (3) neutrality towards cannabis use(rs). For each textural theme there are supporting structural factors (see figure 4).

Textures related to portrayal of cannabis use(rs) are shaped by individual structures (e.g., reflection of use motives), interpersonal structures (e.g., dialogue about drug use with others), institutional (e.g., how portrayal of cannabis users fits in health care settings, how cannabis

use[rs] been presented in previous drug education campaigns), and socio-cultural/political structures (e.g., how [un]healthy substance use norms are formed across different cultures, the role of cannabis legalization). Textures encompassing the descriptions related to cannabis users' self-governance of decision making are shaped by individual structures (e.g., prerogative to consume cannabis not changing, mindful and responsible deliberation of cannabis use practices, developmental life stage) interpersonal structures (e.g., peer pressure) and institutional structures (e.g., cross-national approaches to drug education). Finally, textures revolving around the messaging neutrality towards cannabis use(rs) is shaped by individual structures (e.g., personal characteristics, health status), interpersonal structures (parent-child drug conversations, cannabis [non]use in peer group), institutional structures (e.g., comparison of risk prevention education for other behaviors), and socio-cultural/political structures (e.g., politicians' public disclosure of previous cannabis use, the impacts of drug policies).

Phenomenological Display of the Emerging Adults' Reactions Towards Health Promotion Approach to Cannabis Education

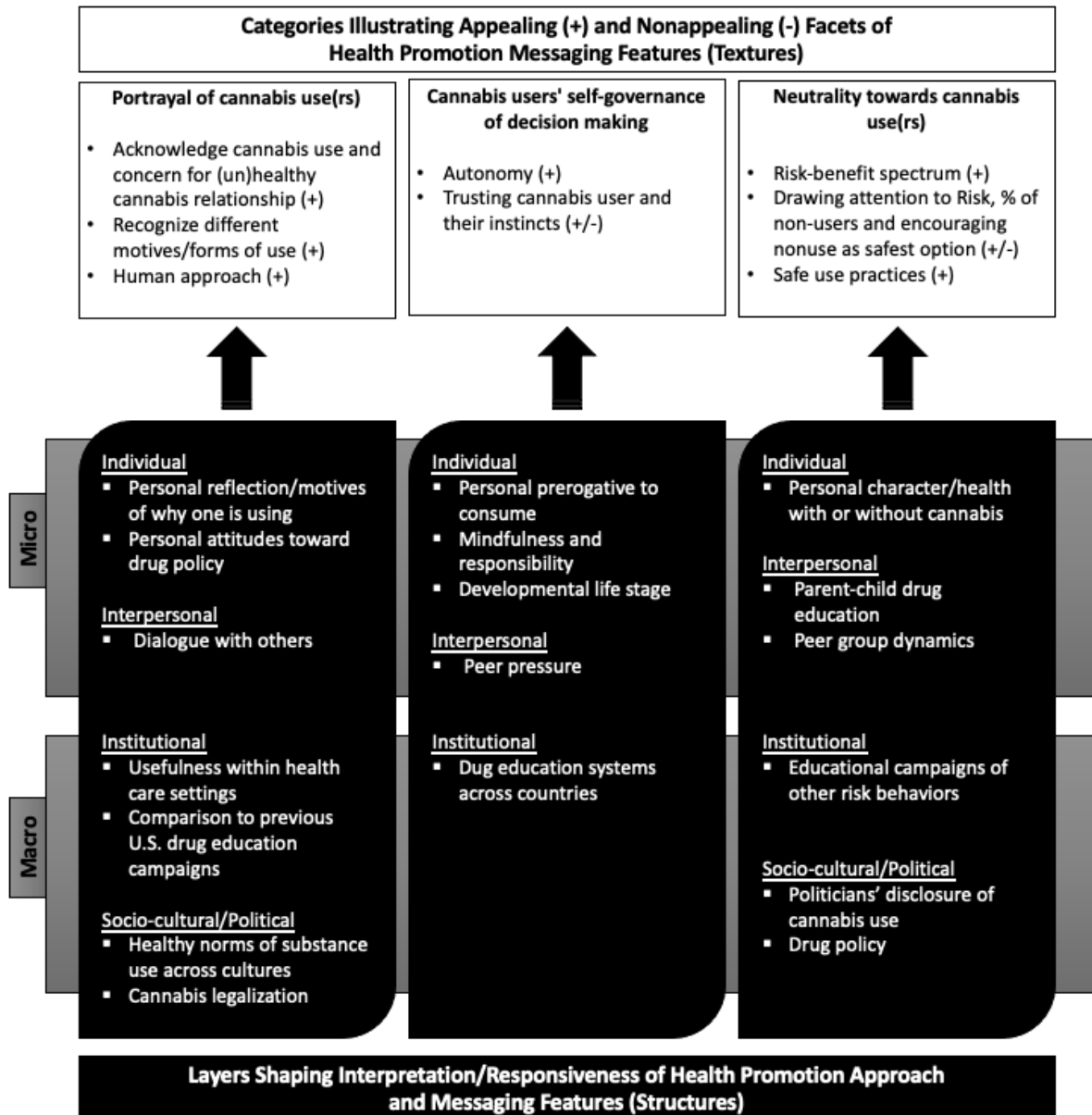


Figure 4. Phenomenological display of the emerging adults' reactions towards health promotion approach to cannabis education

Portrayal of cannabis use(rs) texture and supporting structures

Participants discussed how the health promotion posters depicted cannabis use and cannabis users in ways that were appealing to them. Specifically, young adults found the health promotion approach appealing because “at least [it] acknowledges that people are going to use marijuana” (James, 19 yo). It “acknowledges, you know, ‘hey you if you use it, like here's some things to look out for’” (James, 19 yo). Furthermore, there is recognition of different kinds of cannabis use and different motives (e.g., recreational, medical). According to Emma (26 yo), the health promotion messaging “does a really good job at all of that, like, implying the recreational, implying the medical use, implying that it's okay to experiment, I think that [health promotion messaging/posters] hit it on the head.” Thus, the health promotion approach was applauded for recognizing (non)leisure provoked motives of use. Another participant, Jerry (30 yo), shares that “seeing this [health promotion approach/messaging on posters] could help people,” specifically by listing different uses of cannabis, “like ‘the [messaging about] medical use for short term nausea,’ some people probably don't even know that.” Zach (21 yo) echoes that the health promotion messaging includes and goes beyond leisure related motives, showing “it's not just used for fun it's also used for like ‘chronic pain,’ or for ‘ritual purposes.’” For Emma (26 yo), it is important the poster is recognizing the outcomes of cannabis use and the role they may play in terms of cannabis in/as leisure use. Emma (26 yo) shared:

[The messaging on the poster says] ‘sloths move slow to save their energy,’ what I got from that was kind of, like, I was talking about with the leisure, I think it's nice to use cannabis during leisure because it gives me time to kind of slowdown from being extremely proactive all the time, so, that's my take from that one.

Minea (21 yo) shared “very pro [attitudes toward] having an understanding of, situationally, what is appropriate [with cannabis use],” thus the health promotion poster “is a very good way to represent it [i.e., appropriate uses for cannabis] and hav[ing] [the information] digestible for people that might not understand the use of cannabis or what [cannabis users] would be using cannabis for.” Additionally, the health promotion approach acknowledges that cannabis users are still interested in their own health, even while choosing to use cannabis. James (19 yo) underlined, “[these health promotion posters are] acknowledging that there's health, keyword there: health, and so [the poster says] ‘an opportunity for healthier relationship with cannabis’ ... I kind of see that as being like a positive.” Plus, it avoids portraying cannabis users as criminals, instead humanizing the experience. Emma (26 yo) stated:

This is also approaching me as if I’m a human being and not just some freakin’ criminal...the language behind using any type of drug is usually ‘you’re criminal because you do this,’ but, instead I feel like this is approaching me as if I’m a human who has curiosity and wants to know ‘what do I do [to use cannabis in a healthy/appropriate manner]?’ I like this approach.

Young adults discussed the appealing facets of health promotion approach and messaging features in terms of how they portray cannabis use(rs). Specifically, this textural theme included portraying cannabis users in a humanly manner (i.e., non-criminal) and as individuals concerned with using cannabis in a healthy and appropriate manner, as well as acknowledging that cannabis use(rs) motives span across a wide spectrum (e.g., medical, recreational). These reactions were informed by young adults’ reflections of micro (i.e., individual, interpersonal) and macro level (i.e., institutional, socio-cultural, political) structures.

According to Minea (21 yo) the health promotion's portrayal of cannabis use(rs) is linked to personal reflections and personal motivations of use. Specifically, on an individual level cannabis users may ask themselves, "are you wanting to smoke because of Blank or blank?" like 'do you want to smoke because you had like a long day and you're tired?'" Furthermore, individually, participants decide if they are motivated to use cannabis for multiple reasons, perhaps it is not "just purely medical or purely recreational," sometimes, "the line blurs," based on Thomas' (28 yo) accounts. Similarly, Cristina (28 yo) suggested that individuals are personally motivated by different cannabis use outcomes. She explained:

I have something called Ehlers-Danlos syndromes (EDS) it's a genetic condition, and you know one of the things I deal with is this chronic pain [thus cannabis serves 'medical' purposes/relief]...and then I guess like on a recreational level like kind of just a comforting thing, like when you go somewhere or maybe like on a boredom level.

Alternatively, Danielle (28 yo), explained that she was personally motivated to use cannabis purely for recreational purposes because "it's not for anything like medicinal purposes [for her]." Danielle (28 yo) elaborated that she has medication prescribed from doctors for any diagnosed alignments "like this stimulus [she]'ll use during the day to help retain focus [for her ADHD]... so [she] use[s] [cannabis] purely for recreation." Furthermore, James (19 yo) suggested that the portrayal of cannabis use motives connects to individual experiences such as "your previous experiences in life and how you view pot." James (19 yo) elaborated stating, "I'm somebody whose entirely in favor of all drugs being legalized...being somebody who thinks that it's okay [to legalize cannabis], I think my personal use of it would be different from somebody who thinks that it's not okay [to legalize cannabis]."

Participants shared how interpersonal dialogues sometimes elicited understanding of different cannabis use motives and the possibility of fostering a healthy cannabis relationship. Reflecting on these conversations informed their positive reactions towards the health promotions portrayal of cannabis use(rs). Jerry (30 yo) describes an example related to her dad, stating:

“I explained to my dad how smoking could be beneficial if he experienced any pain and just having that like open conversation with him and like click differently in his head...I was trying to explain to him like it doesn't have to be how I use it as recreational...it could definitely benefit you in a medical way.”

In terms of messaging about having a healthy relationship with cannabis, Emma (26 yo) was reminded of drug education information others have shared with her, specifically:

The advice that [she's] gotten from so many people, even before [she] ever like dabbled with[cannabis]...[the advice] was always like ‘oh you need to make sure you're in the right setting, you need to make sure you're with the right people,’ you know, ‘ you need to make sure you're in the right mindset.

In terms of macro level structures, the allure of health promotions portrayal of cannabis use(rs) and their concern for healthy cannabis use was juxtaposed to previous mass drug education campaigns. Danielle's (28 yo) positive reaction towards health promotion is compared to previous drug education narratives that failed to offer any knowledge about a potentially healthy and unhealthy continuum of cannabis use. Danielle (28 yo), stated:

Think of like ‘DARE’ and ‘TEAM’ right [i.e., drug education programs]? it was about scaring people and making people fearful, it [was] very fear based, so like, how can you have a healthy relationship when fear is in the mix? Those two are opposite things.

The attractiveness of health promotion messaging features was also discussed in relation to socio-cultural norms. Specifically, the comparison revolved around healthy and unhealthy consumptive leisure norms. Danielle (28 yo), explained:

Thinking particularly of alcohol and cannabis, I think you can have healthy relationships with those things as long as you kind of understand that there are healthy norms introduced right? Like, Italy is a drinking culture of like ‘we drink with meals’, right? ‘we [Italians] don’t just drink to get hammered, we drink as like a leisure activity’...versus in America, we have like the different culture of binge drinking and parents are very much [preaching] ‘don’t do this’ ...you never really learn healthy behaviors...like what’s a more American thing than to be like ‘you’re either not doing it [i.e., not consuming substances at all] or you’re 100% doing it’ [i.e., over consuming] and it’s terrible.

Additionally, there were connections to policy, such as the legalized status of cannabis. This was particularly salient to the messaging acknowledging both healthy and unhealthy cannabis use.

Heather (19 yo) shared:

Cannabis legalization is related to that opportunity for a healthier relationship with cannabis...because now that it’s legalized you have safer ways to get cannabis and to do cannabis and before since it was illegal there were a lot of unsafe ways and like it could be laced with something, or, there’s so many issues when things aren’t legalized and when there’s just a huge [societal] stigma around things, there are just more issues with it.

Participants commented on the appealing ways in which health promotion approach and the messaging features portrayed cannabis use and users’ (i.e., accounting for various motives of use, avoiding criminal portrayal, and acknowledging [un]healthy cannabis relationships). The

reactions characterizing this textural theme were supported by participants reflection on micro and macro level structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., self-contemplation/personal motives of why one is using, personal attitudes toward drug policy), interpersonal factors (i.e., dialogue with others about use motives and tips for healthy practices), institutional factors (i.e., usefulness within health care settings and comparison to previous U.S. drug education campaigns), and socio-cultural and political factors (i.e., socio-cultural consumptive leisure norms, cannabis legalization). Beyond the textures and structures related to health promotions portrayal of cannabis use(rs), participants also shared their reactions about self-governance and decision-making related to cannabis use.

Cannabis users' self-governance of decision-making textures and supporting structures

Participants reacted towards health promotion messaging about cannabis users' personal decision making and self-governance. Instead of health promotion "coming off in a way that [is] like 'don't do that,' it's coming off more [like] it's 'okay [if you want to use cannabis but], think about it.'" (Minea, 21 yo). Reflecting on this messaging, Minea (21 yo) said, "I like being handed trust [with my choice to use cannabis]" Danielle (28 yo) also explained:

This messaging gives more autonomy to people...[it's saying] go with what feels correct and what feels safe and like a smart decision to make, I think that puts the ownership back on the person...[which is important because] kids [i.e., young people] are going to use [cannabis], we want them to use it responsibly and wise and smart, trust your instincts on those things [i.e., cannabis related choices], I think that's kind of like the same message in line with [health promotion].

Indeed, several participants found messaging about instinctual decision-making appealing. According to JR (27), "definitely [he]'d say, 'use your instincts,' [messaging on the poster]

[because] if you feel it's no good [then] don't do it [i.e., don't use cannabis]." In fact, "it can actually apply with everything too, like, you should always go with your instincts" (JR, 27 yo). Thomas (29 yo) added that "your sense of judgment...can be better than what you're told [by others]...if you're educated and you're educated the right way then your instincts are going to be a lot sharper...you'll know right from wrong." Heather (19 yo), remarked that "if someone says 'just take more, take another hit [of cannabis],' you know what's best for you and it's really important to trust yourself and trust your own intuition." According to Emma (26 yo), learning to look out for one's best interests is a "topic of discussion stating to unfold now with our generation." Emma (26 yo) elaborated, "we've learned over the years...what it means to trust your gut and what it means to not self-betray, so [she] think[s] those are really good points [that the health promotion approach includes]."

However, there were also mixed feelings about the health promotion messaging encouraging one to trust their own instincts and decision making. Zach (21 yo), reacted with unsureness stating, "if something in your guts telling you not to smoke then you don't smoke, but I guess it depends." Jamie (21 yo) also shared a mixed response, explaining:

I feel like if someone is new to a situation [i.e., like new to using cannabis] they might kind of be like, 'I have no idea what to do here,' but I also do like that it's kind of putting faith in the reader, they're kind of like, 'you can make informed decisions,' 'you can figure out what's healthy for you,' and it's not just like 'Oh, you know, you're clueless'...so, I kind of have mixed feelings about that."

The health promotion messaging about cannabis decision making and self-governance of use were mostly deemed appealing. Specifically, several participants favored the messaging about trusting one's instincts and the encouragement of autonomous decision making. These textures

were supported by micro (i.e., individual, interpersonal) and macro (i.e., socio-cultural) level structures.

The appeal of self-governance messaging was supported by individual factors, such as one's prerogative to pursue cannabis regardless of the intentions behind messaging, one's ability to practice mindfulness and responsibility, and one's developmental life stage. Zach (21 yo) emphasized, "[there are some] people who just want to do it and it doesn't really matter if they're told not to because they're going to do it anyway, so, it's better if they're more educated about it instead of not educated." According to Phoebe's (20 yo) response, "[this messaging] could make someone consider their use or whether they should use it or not...[but] some people are like 'no I am who I am, I'm going to smoke weed whatever' ... it's very individualistic." One could consider the role of leisure meanings in connection to individual choice and prerogative to use recreational cannabis because leisure is intrinsically motivated. Furthermore, this could shed light on the distinctions between freely chosen controlled recreational cannabis use and out of control mindlessly chosen cannabis use, nuancing the good and bad ends of the spectrum.

Indeed, the messaging of self-governed decision making connects with individual choice psychologically through mindfulness and responsibility as well (e.g., controlled loss of control). Emma (26 yo), underlined, that "the entire intention behind [health promotion messaging] is to be mindful behind your decisions... overall [it] is teaching just be smart, be wise, use your instincts, here's the facts and do what you want with it." Thus, this approach may lend itself well to acknowledging free leisure choice while also cautioning users about potential harms or troubling use. Emma (26 yo) stated:

I think having that small information right there [i.e., messaging about the effects of cannabis edibles], I think it's saying, 'be mindful,' without saying be mindful...[because

if you] keep eating that edible and don't be mindful about it, you're going to see what's going to happen [bad or negatively].

The efficacy of encouraging instinctual and autonomous decision-making was also contemplated in terms of brain development. Zach (21 yo), stated, “if your brains not fully developed your instincts aren't always correct.” Zach (21 yo) considered how the frontal lobe in the brain is only fully developed at 25 years old, thus you could be “making decisions [that] you don't understand what the consequences are fully.”

The favorable reactions towards messaging that talked about personal decision making and self-governance were also shaped by interpersonal factors, such as peer pressure. JR (27 yo) explained:

[Regarding the ‘use your instincts’ messaging] “I do [like it] actually cause I think people typically use [cannabis] out of peer pressure...for instance, I’ll peer pressure the F**k out of [my sister] to smoke some weed... and she does [want to use cannabis but]...she gets random drug tests [at her job] so she gets all paranoid about it but she loves getting high, I [just] think people are peer pressured a lot of times...like...my cousin tried giving me a [cannabis edible] brownie the other day and I took a bite of it, and I was like ‘no, I’m not eatin’ this, [and] he’s, like, ‘why not? just eat it’ and I’m like ‘no I’m not eating it, I can taste it off this first bite how f**king terrible this is gonna be.’

Additionally, participants reactions were impacted by macro level structural factors, such as cross-national drug educational strategies and their approach to personal cannabis decision-making messaging. James (19 yo) compared the Canadian drug education system to that of the U.S., remarking:

I don't know how the Canadian drug education system works, but I would definitely say if I saw [messaging about using your instincts] on an American poster I would take that as a negative thing because...[U.S. drug education system] would be like, 'well use the instincts that we just spent 18 years drilling into your skull'...[whereas] in the Canadian context they're actually probably hav[ing] more honest drug education.

James (19 yo) goes on to further elaborate that "it feels like in America, they sit there and brainwash you into [thinking that by] 'smoking pot once you're going to murder your family with an axe,'" thus there is a lack of well-rounded or holistic education informing one's instincts.

Participants commented on the health promotion approach and messaging features encouraging independent and instinctual cannabis decision making. The reactions characterizing this textural theme were informed by influential micro and macro structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., personal prerogative to consume, tapping into mindfulness and responsibility, and considering one's developmental life stage), interpersonal factors (i.e., peer pressure), and institutional factors (i.e., drug education systems across countries). Indeed, this textural category was both welcomed and questioned by young adults. Another textural theme yielding favorable and unfavorable reviews revolves around health promotion and endorsement of neutrality towards cannabis use(rs).

Neutrality towards cannabis use(rs) textures and structures

Young adults discussed the appealing and unappealing facets of health promotion approach in terms of neutrality of the messaging. Specifically, participants reacted towards information about avoiding cannabis use vs. teaching safe use, social norm messaging about the percentage of cannabis (non)users and the messaging about cannabis risk-benefits. According to James (19 yo), "you can read [health promotion messaging] as being neutral-educational, where

it's like, we're not going to discourage you from using [cannabis] and we're not going to encourage you [to use cannabis]...it's just [saying] here's some information about [cannabis].” Similarly, Thomas (29 yo) shared that “they’re informing the right way,” for instance, “with [cannabis] edibles, they’re telling [me] ‘how to use edibles,’ not telling me ‘don't use edibles.’” Heather (19 yo) claimed that “people are going to be curious and want to try [cannabis] so you might as well tell people how to have a safe good experience instead of telling people to abstain.” Dave (21 yo), agreed with this thinking, and shared that:

It seems like they're not necessarily against cannabis usage, but they're talking mainly about how it can affect you and if you're going to choose to use it then you should be safe about it...I don't think it's good to have posters necessarily say[ing] you shouldn't be smoking marijuana...[these health promotion posters] simply state facts... so I don't mind these [posters].

Participants shared that ‘safe use’ messaging was more appealing than ‘don’t use’ messaging. However, the health promotion approach did mention that not using cannabis can be the safest option, which young adults responded less favorably towards. Phoebe (20 yo) “agree[s] cannabis isn’t the best thing in the world, [she] agree[s] with that part, but [she] do[esn’t] agree with not using it period.” Similarly, Jerry (30 yo), stated “I get the message, its saying obviously it's safer not to [use cannabis], [but] it’s safer to not do a lot of things, if you're worried that a tree’s gonna hit you, you shouldn't go outside.” Indeed, these perceptions encourage more realistic conversation about how some behaviors may be pursued for (non)leisure with the full recognition that they may not be the healthiest or safest. Messaging positing cannabis non-use is safest appeared “fear driven” and “kind of outdated in the way of its thinking” because it’s like “being told, ‘oh this person ruined their entire life, their relationship, all this stuff all because

they smoke cannabis” (Emma, 26 yo). This leaves little room for understanding how cannabis may be negotiated as a part of one’s leisure realm, while they still maintain their other life realms (e.g., work, relationships). Indeed, James (19 yo) agreed that the promotion of cannabis avoidance as a safer choice “[is] kind of fear mongering.”

Furthermore, one of the health promotion posters involved social norms messaging notifying readers that statistically cannabis consumers are a marginal group, meaning that there are more cannabis abstainers than users. Cristina (28 yo) read the poster messaging that stated, “if you don’t use cannabis, you’re part of the pack,” and then said, “that’s like kind of indicating that’s not accepted [to use cannabis].” According to James (19 yo), this messaging is “kind of making it feel exclusionary of stoners...it kind of implies that it's not a good thing [to be someone who uses cannabis] ...and it's almost like social out casting.” This might ignore the reality of recreational cannabis within leisure contexts where both cannabis (non)users are present and engaging in common social situations. However, Jamie (21 yo) shared that they “feel very positively” about the social norm messaging “because [they] feel like it's definitely easy to have a sense of like ‘Oh, you know, everyone's doing it [and] I’m missing out if I’m not doing it.’” Thus, Jamie (21 yo) considered the facts about percentage of (non)users “very valuable information.”

Neutrality towards cannabis use(rs) was also showcased in the health promotion messaging about cannabis risk-benefits. Nonetheless, according to some young adults, the risk information appeared injected with an abstinence tone. For instance, Heather (19 yo) said, “I think the third one [i.e., third message on the poster] is very abstinence-oriented, like, just ‘don't try it at all, don't do it at all because it has these negative effects [i.e., risks].” James (19 yo) commented that “[some of the messaging is] saying, like, ‘oh it's a lot of bad shit’ ...[but] at least

they acknowledge [that] ‘using [cannabis] for socializing’ [can be] beneficial.” According to Emma (26 yo), outlining the cannabis risks was “constructive and if [she] were a teenager reading this [she]’d be like’ hmm, those are all things I maybe didn’t consider so I’m glad they’re out there.’” Emma (26 yo) also said, “it’s giving you all the points [about cannabis risk-benefits]...you can see how it could be harmful and how it can be unhealthy, and it’s showing both unhealthy and healthy way of going about using cannabis.” Additionally, it was appealing that risks and benefits were presented on a spectrum. Danielle (28 yo) stated:

There is a spectrum, right? there is always going to be the different points on the spectrum of like ‘why that’s a potential benefit, why it’s a potential harm’...you have to like weigh your respective factors for why you would want to do these things, and even though you know it’s a benefit, you should still be taking the harms serious, I think that this [approach] frames this in a way that’s helpful.

Young adults commented on the neutrality towards cannabis use(rs) within the health promotion approach and messaging features. Specifically, this textural theme included discussing the (un)appealing facets of ‘don’t use’ vs. ‘safe use’ messaging, social norms marketing and presentation of cannabis risk-benefits. These textures were informed by micro (i.e., individual, interpersonal) and macro level (i.e., institutional, socio-cultural, political) structures.

Individual factors, such as personal health status, were connected to participants reactions of ‘don’t use’ vs. ‘safe use’ messaging. According to James (19 yo), some of the messaging was providing generalized rather than tailored considerations. James (19 yo) explained, “for me, it’s safer to use cannabis...my anxiety stops being a problem and it becomes funny, and, so, I get that [this messaging is] more of a generalization.” Other participants pointed out that one’s personal character traits can inform applicability of risks. Zach (21 yo) explained,

The things that [this poster] lists about cannabis [negatively] affecting [i.e., risks], that's just you... it's ultimately you that's going to affect your relationships and your physical and mental health ... though, there are obviously drugs [that] you take it once and you're f**ked forever, but I don't think weed's one of those.

Jerry (30 yo) offered a similar analysis of the messaging and suggested that an individual's well-being with or without cannabis can play an important role in the interpretation of risks.

Jerry (30 yo) said:

I think you could also look at these [risks presented on the poster] and just blame cannabis...like you smoke weed once and your relationship is sour and then you're just going to be like 'well it's because of weed' or 'I'm not healthy (e.g., mentally) because I smoke weed'...that could just be a blaming game but I think that's a lot more to do with what's going on in your brain.

Cristina (28 yo) shared a similar explanation when reading the poster risk messaging about 'using cannabis to fit in.' Cristina (28 yo) said, "I don't think that's an actual issue with cannabis I think that's the issue with the person [wanting] to fit in?...the problem is the human... that's like a psychological effect I think instead of the cannabis."

The interpretation of 'don't use' and risk messaging reminded Danielle (28 yo) of risk prevention on an interpersonal level between parents and their kids. Danielle (28 yo) explained:

It's kind of like a parent being like 'I said no,' and a kid being like 'well why?' [and the parent saying] 'it's because I said so'...versus...giving people access to information and resources...[and the parent saying] 'hey, this is why I'm saying no'...it's easier...to accept a 'no' if I know the reasons behind it, or the logic behind it, but if someone says

‘no [don’t do this]’, I feel no obligation to follow that...if you're not gonna explain your reasoning, ‘F**k off’ kind of a thing.

Eileen (18 yo) reflected on how within her friend group there are both cannabis users and non-users. Thus, based on her interpersonal dynamics she appreciated the information sharing how many people are non-users (i.e., social norms messaging). This illuminated that friends can spend valuable leisure time together in a mixed group of recreational cannabis (non)users. Eileen (18 yo) said, “there are some people in my group who don't smoke but they just like to hang out with us, and that's fine, if they don't want to [use cannabis] that's their choice and we respect that.”

Macro level structures also influenced responses regarding the messaging of neutrality towards cannabis use(rs). For instance, Dave (21 yo) reflected on the accessibility and quality of cannabis drug education available online. Dave (21 yo) stated:

I didn't know if [cannabis] was going to affect me negatively so I did do a lot of research [when first starting to use]...sometimes you're going to find those articles that are just like surface level [saying] ‘oh yeah cannabis is fine,’ or ‘cannabis is really bad for you,’ [instead] you have to find more scholarly articles where you're actually reading the research done by people, and not just some random blog post.

The wrestling between ‘don’t use’ vs. ‘educating about use’ was also compared with other health education campaigns. Minea (21 yo) shared that “gen Z made fun of those like ‘stop! know the real cost’ smoking Ads so much because they were just so ‘in your face’ or they'd be like ‘only stupid idiots smoke.’” These kinds of campaigns left little room to understand why people may use substances in/as pleasure or for relaxation, condemning people as irrational and impulsive and failing to account for the human’s nature as a pleasure seeker. According to Zach (21 yo),

[Messaging emphasizing don't use cannabis is] very similar to the abstinence only sex Ed...everyone has sex, they just hide it and they don't know what they're doing, whereas if you're educated you don't have to hide it...and you know the risks, so you're safer about it.

Additionally, socio-cultural and political factors such as drug policy and behavior modeled by famous figures impacted neutrality messaging responsiveness. For instance, Phoebe (20 yo) stated, “obviously don't use crack, but cannabis is not on that level...where it's like don't use it at all, because shoot, even our 44th President smoked cannabis and has openly admitted it so it's not like you shouldn't use it period.” Indeed, more neutral education could potentially better compete with the vast number of resources and streams of information pouring from the internet, wherein people learn about and see celebrities and successful figures using cannabis. For Thomas (29 yo), drug policy plays an important role in the ability to speak neutrally and equip target audiences with educative messaging. Thomas (29 yo) talked about Portugal's drug laws and the decriminalization of all drugs, which has also involved the government “educat[ing] everyone.” Thomas (29 yo) suggested with decriminalization people can “do heroin if [they] want, but [they also learn] here's what it does to you,’ and then people...don't actually want that to happen to [them] so [they're] going to stay away’ ...it's the lack of education [in the U.S.]”

Participants commented on the health promotion approach and messaging feature of neutrality towards cannabis use(rs). The reactions characterizing this textural theme were shaped by micro and macro level structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., personal character/health with or without cannabis), interpersonal factors (i.e., parent-child drug education, peer group dynamics), institutional factors (i.e., educational campaigns of other risk behaviors), and socio-cultural/political factors (i.e., politicians' cannabis use, and drug policy).

Overall, young adults' responses towards health promotion approach were categorized texturally under three themes (i.e., portrayal of cannabis use(rs), self-governance and decision making, and neutrality towards cannabis use(rs)). However, the young adults were also shown examples of harm reduction approach and messaging features. The responses towards harm reduction will be discussed in the following section.

Textures and structures describing emerging adults' reactions towards harm reduction

Young adults shared their reactions towards harm reduction approach and the messaging features shaping it. The researcher interpreted and categorized textural dimensions in terms of the appealing and unappealing facets captured under two main themes (1) information-driven features and (2) the emphasis placed on risk minimization for cannabis use(rs). For each textural theme there are supporting structural factors (see figure 5).

Textures related to information-driven messaging features are shaped by individual structures (e.g., experiences with cannabis use), interpersonal structures (e.g., informal transfer of cannabis education between people), institutional (e.g., usefulness of messaging feature in health care settings), and socio-cultural/political structures (e.g., impacts of [non]prohibitive drug policy on drug information shared to public). Textures related to the messaging emphasis on risk minimization for cannabis use(rs) are shaped by individual structures (e.g., potential to create internal monologue, personally relating to different safe use tips, connection with personal cannabis use motives, tailoring risk reduction tips to individual cannabis use levels) interpersonal structures (e.g., dialogue with others about reducing harm) and institutional structures (e.g., comparing risk minimization tips to other risk behavior prevention campaigns), and socio-cultural/political structures (e.g., previous U.S. leaders decisions surrounding drug education).

Phenomenological Display of the Emerging Adults' Reactions Towards Harm Reduction Approach to Cannabis Education

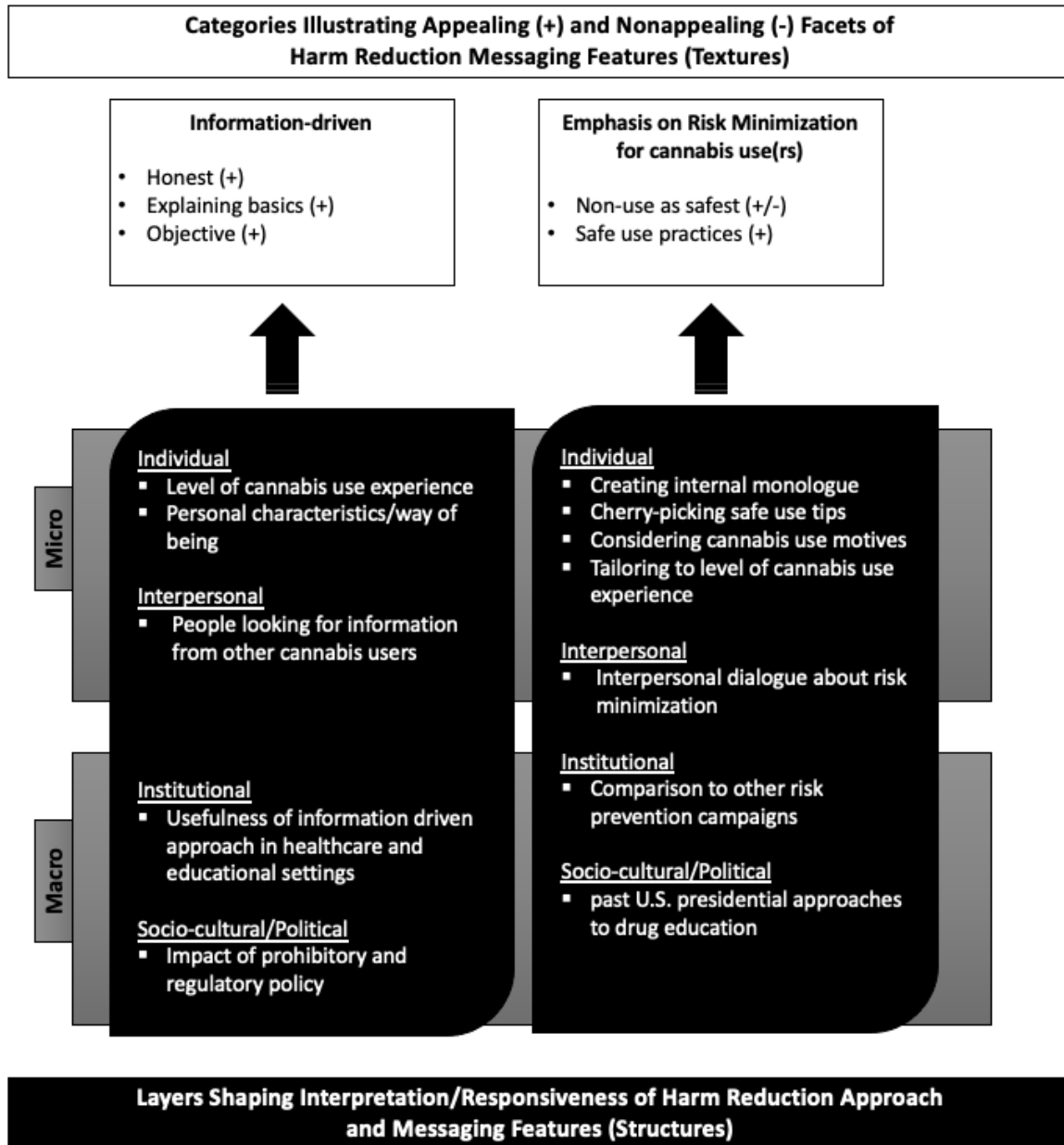


Figure 5. Phenomenological display of the emerging adults' reactions towards harm reduction approach to cannabis education

Information-driven texture and supporting structures

Participants remarked that harm reduction “seems informative” (JR, 27 yo) or “appears informational” (Cristina, 28 yo). This approach is letting you know “here’s how you’re going to use [cannabis], [so] if you [are] going to use it [you can] be an informed consumer (Danielle, 28 yo). Harm reduction messaging was also deemed “very thorough in terms of the...it covers the very basics of cannabis” (Phoebe, 20 yo). Indeed, harm reduction “kind of explains everything you would need to really know about [cannabis] to get the broad subject” (Steve, 29 yo). The information driven messaging features are “[telling] you some of the side effects that could happen and what you could expect [from using cannabis]” (Steve, 29 yo).

Harm reduction messaging was also described as “helpful” and “factual” (Danielle, 28 yo). Moreover, “there’s a little bit more concrete facts [in this approach], like [the messaging that] said ‘[waiting to drive after] the six-hour waiting period’” (Danielle, 28 yo). The messaging is “approaching [cannabis use[rs]] as humanly as possible and very honest” (Emma, 26 yo). Indeed, when cannabis education takes on a “humanly” approach it may allow us to understand the multifaceted nature of recreational cannabis use, including the potential leisure connections such as relaxation, leisure state of mind and pleasure that motivate some users. It avoids relying on negatively biased information and instead looks at providing more objectively based information. Dave (21 yo) explained that the information-driven harm reduction messages were:

Educating people about what [cannabis] is like in honesty, because some people will try to paint it in more negative light, [but] this [approach] seems pretty objective...[the harm reduction messaging discusses] this is cannabis, this is how it works, this is the information you need to know’.”

The textural theme encompassing the appealing information-driven messaging features of harm reduction (e.g., honest, objective and through explanation of the basics) were supported by micro (i.e., individual, interpersonal) and macro structures (institutional, socio-cultural, political).

In terms of individual factors, young adults commented on how the informative appeal could fluctuate based on the level of cannabis use experience one has. According to Heather (19 yo), “this [approach] is very friendly for people who are new to weed...[the posters present] really good advice especially for your first time.” JR (27 yo) agreed, stating “if I was a newbie smoker or user, this would be very informative for me.” In other words, “the [cannabis] basics” presented are particularly useful for “someone who’s a beginner [cannabis user]” (Phoebe, 20 yo). The information-driven nature of harm reduction and the presentation of risks was also considered “very much up open to interpretation” based on personal characteristics and the way one lives their day-to-day life (Luna, 21 yo). This interpretation was also connected to how cannabis in/as leisure meanings might manifest themselves differently across people. For example, a harm reduction poster informed readers that cannabis could make one feel sedated, but Luna (21 yo) suggested:

It's really up to you, like, each person...[for example] my roommate...always [has] a busy schedule, so, with her, like, let's say she were to smoke a lot I think she would maybe think of it as being, like, a little sedated...I think maybe someone who is always on the go if they smoke, they may feel almost like forced to be relaxed and so since they're not used to that it doesn't come naturally they feel almost like sedated, but then for me, like I love chilling, I like just hanging out and not like being forced to do stuff always...like my way of being is probably more relaxed [so I wouldn't feel sedated].

Other participants considered the information-driven features appealing for interpersonal dialogue and how “this is the type of advice [they] would give someone who's doesn't smoke but [is] interested in it [i.e., in maybe trying it]” (Luna 21 yo). Indeed, JR (27 yo) reflected on his interpersonal encounters with others who are new cannabis users, and who have asked him for more information about cannabis. JR (27 yo) explained:

I've had so many adults ask me tons of questions about [cannabis]... like, ‘well, what do you recommend, I've heard about Indicas and Sativas [i.e., cannabis THC stains], What are those?’ and I'm just thinking to myself, like y'all are in your late 60s and you have no idea at all about this recreational drug that's been around since you were kids.

In JR's (27 yo) example it is evident some people are learning about recreational cannabis use and potentially exploring cannabis in/as leisure later in life, which could be because of the shifting social and legal legitimization. In this case the people could have been looking for information and advice about what leisurely outcomes different strains provide (e.g., looking for strains to provoke more relaxed non-active state or strains for more energizing activities).

Participants also commented on the macro level structures that shaped the responsiveness towards information-driven messaging textures. Specifically, the harm reduction approach was pictured in healthcare and educational institutions. Emma (26 yo) expressed that “this is the kind of the conversation that [she] would want to have with a doctor.” Similarly, Minea (21 yo) suggested:

[The information-driven nature of harm reduction is] just very positive, like if someone handed this [to me] in a doctor's office or something, I would very much get the impression [that] they're helping me, giving me actual helpful advice...giving me all the necessary information.

For Eileen (18 yo), harm reduction “lays all the information out in a very readable way [and] it kind of looks like something that [her university’s] central student government would produce...but it is informative.”

Beyond the institutional factors, the participants also commented on how policy shapes interpretations of information- driven messaging. Dave (21 yo) suggested that “as [U.S.] States begin to legalize [cannabis] more of this [kind of messaging] should be [available] [i.e., information-driven messaging].” Danielle (28 yo) reflected on the messaging which read “long term side effects [are] largely unknown,” which she considered to be a “really helpful thing to have in there,” representing the honest informational messaging. However, Danielle (28 yo) wished there was even more information explaining how prohibitory drug policies restricted research on recreational cannabis use and its effects. Danielle (28 yo) stated, “I think largely it's been illegal for so long that people weren't able to do research...like that's a huge problem...we haven't been able to get adequate data on it.” Indeed, the lack of research prevented any nuanced information about cannabis and what one might anticipate from their experience. Danielle (28 yo) pointed out how “pre-legalization” information about cannabis use provided “a totally different experience with drugs” compared to getting information about “something that’s regulated [i.e., post-legalization].” Danielle(28 yo) shared:

You could have been using pot mixed with f**king basil back in the 90s, no one would have known right? Like it could have been watered down and that altered the experience versus having something fully regulated with all the ingredients listed on it.

Participants commented on the harm reduction approach and messaging features information-driven style. The textures of this theme were discussed in relation to micro and macro level structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., level of cannabis use experience),

interpersonal factors (i.e., people looking for information from other cannabis users), institutional factors (i.e., usefulness of information driven approach in healthcare and educational settings) and socio-cultural/political factors (i.e., impact of prohibitory and regulatory policy). Additionally, young adults shared their reactions concerning the harm reduction approach's emphasis on risk minimization, representing a second textural category with supporting micro and macro layer structures.

Emphasis on risk minimization texture and supporting structures

The harm reduction messaging focused on providing readers with information about minimizing risks of cannabis use, which also included information that abstaining from cannabis was the best way to avoid cannabis risks. According to Minea (21 yo) “starting off with ‘don't’ [i.e., ‘don't use’ messaging on poster]” is “very aggressive” and may not be “hitting the right target audience.” James (19 yo) suggested, “I'd get rid of the ‘don't use’ part or at least put it lower [on the poster], or [be] more open about it, like not as rigid on the ‘don't use’ part.” Heather (19 yo), pointed out that “[this approach] is like focusing on the risks and kind of fear based like ‘just don't do it,’ [but she does] think it has good information.” The don't use messaging does not necessarily account for people who are choosing to use cannabis, negotiating the risks-benefits, and situating their recreational cannabis use in/as leisure for the anticipated beneficial outcomes. Thus, young adults were more attracted to the ‘safe use’ portions of the messaging.

Indeed, there was support for the emphasis on risk minimization, which offered valuable safe use tips. For instance, Heather (19 yo) shared:

I like this one because yeah, it says that ‘if you don't use it at all there aren't going to be any risks,’ but if you are going to use it these are the things that you should do so you're safe.

Similarly, Eileen (18 yo), shared that “[harm reduction] lays out ways that you can be safe about [cannabis use] without making it seem too judgmental... like ideally, it would probably be best to not do it, but that’s just not the choice [she’s] making for [her]self.” Harm reduction “talks about the risks, but if you're going to choose to do this [i.e., use cannabis], here’s how to minimize the risk” (Danielle, 28 yo). According to Danielle (28 yo), the harm reduction way of addressing risk is “more helpful... [it’s saying] if you're going to use [cannabis] safely here's how to do it...how to reduce harm.”

Steve (29 yo) responded to the risk minimization tips suggesting that “vaping and edibles are likely safer than smoking.” Steve (29 yo), said, “I can't believe they would actually say that [because] a lot of times when you see things like this [i.e., drug education messaging] they don't encourage doing it at all.” However, “this [kind of harm minimization information] is cool because it’s explaining to you what [cannabis] really is... a lot of times people are just curious [but] they don't know anything about it so they're going to figure it out on their own” (Steve, 29 yo). Indeed, harm minimization revolves around the need to “educate, because a lot of times people are doing the wrong stuff because of a lack of education...[for example] how many times has someone smoked salvia thinking it was weed because someone sold them salvia and they didn't know the difference” (Thomas, 29 yo). Thus, the emphasis on risk minimization was applauded for offering “very specific, good advice” (Jamie, 21 yo), including, “explaining how it’s used, what you should do and when you should avoid it...[and learning] when to avoid [using cannabis] is very important” (Dave, 21 yo).

The textures categorizing reactions towards risk minimization messaging (e.g., reactions towards ‘non-use’ vs. ‘safe use’ strategies) were shaped by micro (i.e., individual, interpersonal) and macro (institutional, socio-cultural, political) structures. Individual structures revolved around encouraging personal contemplation of which safety practices are best fitting for the person. Thomas (29 yo) explained that the risk minimization messaging “reads like it’s trying to develop an internal monologue inside of the person...which is how you create any type of character change, any type of mindset switch.” Thomas (29 yo) elaborated:

[Change happens by having an] internal monologue, [which means] stopping yourself before you do something you're trying to work on and having that conversation with yourself...to me, that's what this stuff [i.e., drug education] is for, developing those internal monologues and those internal conversations to help you kind of work through things.

Steve (29 yo) agreed that the risk minimization connects with people on an individual reflective level by encouraging personal contemplation of cannabis related choices because:

It's saying, you know, choose how strong the products you want or [choose] using cannabis in ways that don't involve smoking and it's like actually telling you things that you can do and try rather than ‘you shouldn’t do this, you should do that.’

In other words, it offers more of a catalogue of safe use options that each individual person can pick and choose from. The harm reduction tips one might adhere to “depends on the person” (Dave 21 yo). For instance, in reaction toward harm minimization messaging that suggested “decrease use,” Dave (21 yo) expressed:

I don't think you should be smoking every day, but that's just a personal thing, if you're able to do it then I don't see an issue with it, as long as you're like safe and you're doing it in a manner that you're comfortable with doing.

Luna (21 yo) underlined that recreational cannabis and its leisurely meanings are like a “healing” experience for her but that she recognizes “maybe it's not the best for [her] lungs if [she] smoke[s] too much...maybe for [her] motivation [she] need[s] to stop smoking during the day or only should smoke at night...[so she has] little like boundaries for [her]self.” Indeed, participants remarks reflect the uniqueness of cannabis use per each individual and the ways in which risk minimization messaging is received; the same risk management tips that work for one person may be less well received by someone else. For instance, if someone using cannabis to relax or “heal” (i.e., adaptive escapism/coping) they may reserve cannabis use for weekends/after work week, which helps them to decrease their use or not interfere with motivation. However, for someone who is using cannabis for pain management there may be a more fitting safe use/risk minimization tip that still allows them to reap the physiological benefits. Danielle (28 yo) suggested that with emphasizing ways to reduce risk or use safely:

You can make a better choice for what you want because people use cannabis for different reasons...[for] some people [the reason] is purely pain management...for some people [cannabis] is a purely recreational thing, or the people in the middle...the circle within the Venn diagram of both.

The emphasis on harm minimization messaging was also analyzed in terms of individual factors, such as cannabis use experience, or its reach across cannabis (non)using audiences. Jerry (30 yo), said:

I feel like it had too much information on it that could be confusing if you were reading it and had no idea about cannabis...they're trying to get [people to understand] reducing your risk but then if you read this as a nonsmoker in any single way, I don't know what it would lead you to do.

Thomas (29 yo), stated that “it just feels like it's reading to two different demographics, people that are already smoking and people that haven't smoked...it's kind of hitting both parties and it's kind of half-assing both things.” Thomas (29 yo) expressed the need for different harm minimization resources with tailored risk reduction strategies specific for “someone who’s not used to [cannabis] or is new to smoking weed” and a separate one for “someone who is [already a user] trying to cut back, trying to quit.” Indeed, whether someone is experimenting with cannabis in/as leisure for their first time, or they have situated recreational cannabis use as a common fixture in/as leisure their safety guideline needs would be different. For instance, tips for first time users might include telling them to use cannabis within social settings with people they are comfortable in case of adverse effects vs. more experienced users may benefit from tips that highlight being in safe setting and good mindset to be able to experience introspection and leisure state of mind when using cannabis solo.

It was also noted that risk minimization messaging was appealing because of its usefulness in the interpersonal context as well. The dialogue about cannabis risk minimization between people could help avoid serious problems. Emma (26 yo) reflected on “a friend who smoked weed at a very young age and mixed with other things, and then was diagnosed with schizophrenia.” Emma (26 yo) explained:

I don't think he was ever aware of the fact that he was at risk for having schizophrenia and I think had somebody talked to him and been honest about it rather than

criminalizing him, he would probably still be alive right now, but the family and the background that he came from was that old way of thinking, like ‘absolutely, do not smoke weed, do not do this, do not do that.’

The abstinence only messaging within the interpersonal context and lack of access to risk minimization information (e.g., “thinking about family's mental health or maybe sticking to do one drug at a time”) led to an irremediable outcome for Emma’s (26 yo) friend.

Additionally, young adults mentioned ways in which macro level layers shaped their reactions towards the harm reductions risk minimization messaging. The harm minimization messaging suggesting cannabis avoidance as the safest practice reminded Dave (21 yo) “of the DARE posters [i.e., abstinence only drug education campaign] and the alcohol things they'd teach [in school-based risk prevention and education programs] when [he was] younger...like even sex education, [suggesting that the safest option is to] abstain from sex.” The fact that harm minimization strategies moved beyond ‘don’t use’ advice to include safe use practices was also discussed positively in comparison to previous U.S. governmental approaches to drug education. Emma (26 yo) shared:

[The messaging is saying] don't smoke it if you don't want any of the effects, like cool, I think that's obvious but it's also not [saying], like, ‘do not use,’ like, ‘you're a thug if you use marijuana,’ you know what I mean? Like how America has approached it, specifically Nixon [U.S. president] who we've so famously heard.

Participants commented on the harm reduction approach and messaging features emphasizing harm minimization strategies. The reactions characterizing these textures were shaped by to micro and macro level structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., creating internal monologue, cherry-picking safe use tips salient to each individual, considering cannabis

use motives and tailoring to level of cannabis use experience), interpersonal factors (i.e., interpersonal dialogue about risk minimization), institutional factors (i.e., comparison to other risk prevention campaigns) and political factors (i.e., past U.S. presidential approaches to drug education).

Overall, the young adults' reactions toward harm reduction approach and messaging were categorized under two textural themes (i.e., information-driven and emphasis on harm minimization), which were each presented with their supporting micro and macro structures. Indeed, there are various parallels between reactions towards health promotion and harm reduction, which will be explored in the discussion chapter. However, the final drug education approach and messaging features reviewed by young adults was the zero tolerance. Thus, the following and final findings section will review the textures and structures related to zero tolerance drug education approach.

Textures and structures describing emerging adults' reactions towards zero tolerance

The young adults shared their reactions towards harm reduction approach and the messaging features shaping it. The researcher interpreted and categorized textural dimensions in terms of the appealing and unappealing facets captured under two main themes (1) fear-driven features and (2) the unbalanced account of cannabis risk-benefits. For each textural theme there are supporting structural factors (see figure 6).

Textures related to fear-driven messaging features are shaped by individual structures (e.g., demographic characteristics, knowledge, and experience of using cannabis), institutional (e.g., usefulness of messaging feature in health care settings, comparison to previous cannabis prevention campaigns), and socio-cultural/political structures (e.g., propaganda related to drug policy and education). Textures encompassing the descriptions related to the messaging of

unbalanced cannabis risk-benefits are shaped by individual structures (e.g., personal cannabis use experiences, each individual's desired outcomes of their cannabis use) interpersonal structures (e.g., assumptions about older generations' views towards cannabis) and institutional structures (e.g., usefulness of messaging feature in healthcare and educational settings).

Phenomenological Display of the Emerging Adults' Reactions Towards Zero Tolerance Approach to Cannabis Education

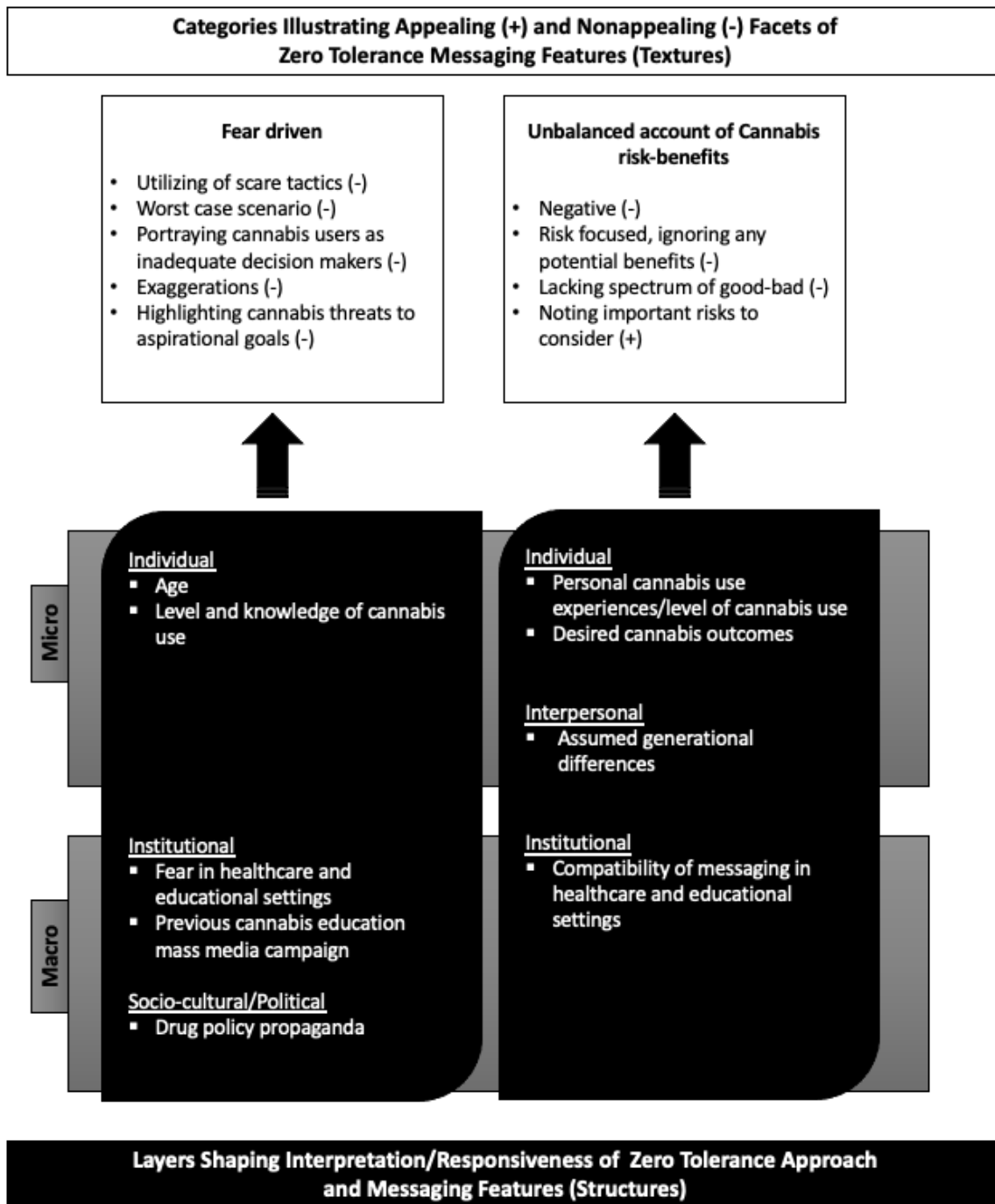


Figure 6. Phenomenological display of the emerging adults' reactions towards zero tolerance approach to cannabis education

Fear-driven texture and supporting structures

Zero tolerance and its fear driven messaging can be characterized as an approach that “definitely seems very, very, anti-weed” (Eileen, 18 yo). Specifically, “[the message creators] just want to go to the extreme [i.e., highlighting worst case cannabis scenarios; because] they’d rather try to get you shifted away from doing it” (Steve, 29 yo). Thomas (29 yo) noted “this is all them just trying to push their opinions on me, it’s scare tactics.” Another participant, Danielle (28 yo) shared that zero-tolerance relied on “scare tactics,” focusing on ‘the worst-case scenarios... without any of the ‘neutral’ case scenarios, or ‘best case’ scenarios; it’s all negative.” Indeed, the ways in which participants described zero tolerance showcased how this approach left little to no room for interpreting and discussing the calculated hedonism or diligent deliberation of cannabis risk-benefits within one’s leisure. According to this approach, leisure and recreational cannabis use have no place in its worst-case scenario depictions.

James (19 yo) agreed that this approach “alludes back to what [he] was talking about, with the [exaggerated claims that because of cannabis you will] ‘murder your family with an axe,’ like, all it is, is, negative, negative, negative.” According to Thomas (29 yo) the zero-tolerance fear-driven messaging is, “like [saying] ‘you’re going to get an STD [i.e., sexually transmitted disease], ‘your penis is gonna fall off,’ ‘you’re gonna have tons of babies... [in other words] ‘look at all the bad stuff that happens.”

Furthermore, young adults reflected on the fear-driven nature of zero tolerance by discussing how the messaging portrays cannabis users as deficient or unsuccessful. Emma (26 yo) shared that “the perspective of [zero tolerance]” is suggesting “you’re a low life if you smoke weed, like you’re a loser’...like, you’re just ruining your whole entire life.” Phoebe (20 yo) commented that the messaging was exaggerating threats to aspirational goals because “it’s not

like weed is like the worst thing in the world, I mean, you can smoke weed and still be a successful person.” This comment illuminates the possibility that some people may choose to use cannabis as a leisurely break from being productive without cannabis actually interfering or jeopardizing one’s productivity. However, the zero-tolerance approach does not allow for this kind of reality, instead focusing on the potential wreckage to one’s well-being and aspirations. According to Thomas (29 yo):

If [this messaging] were saying ‘there are bigger choices than heroin’... that would mean a lot because heroin is really f**king high up there [in terms of damaging one’s well-being], [but the messaging says] ‘there are bigger choices than weed,’ well, no shit there are bigger choices than weed, eating breakfast is more important than smoking a bowl... to me [this messaging is] try[ing] to talk to me like I’m stupid and you’re not going to get anywhere with this.

The textures categorizing unfavorable reactions towards fear driven messaging (e.g., reactions towards scare tactics, worst case scenario, inadequate decision-making claims and threats to aspirations and well-being) were shaped by micro (i.e., individual) and macro (institutional, socio-cultural, political) level structures. At the individual level participants questioned how the messaging interacts with different age demographics. Thomas (29 yo) suggested zero tolerance is an approach that is “try[ing] to market to a younger demographic to grab them before they have the critical thinking” and begin to recognize the messaging as “f**king stupid.” Danielle (28 yo) feels strongly about the ineffectiveness of fear-driven messaging specifically for the young adult and adolescent populations. Danielle (28 yo) shared:

When we treat young adults like kids it immediately makes them tune out...because they are adults, that is the whole point of this entire thing... [if your messaging is] pandering

to like 18 and above then treat them like they are 18 and above, they can vote and go to war...[and] if it's teenagers they feel the same, they're just baby adults, they're people who think they're adults and aren't legally...[by] infantilizing people you're never going to get the outcome you want, it's just going to make people do the whole like boomerang thing, right? you tell me I can't so I'm going to do it even more, I think that is always what happens when you infantilize people, and this is [messaging is] just stupid as f**k. Indeed, the unproductiveness of infantilization and potential boomerang effects could be even greater when thinking about the connection to recreational cannabis in/as leisure, where people may feel a threat to their leisure free choice as young adults who are upholding their other priorities/responsibilities.

Considering the individual factors, participants also talked about how the messaging could resonate differently based on one's knowledge and level of cannabis use. According to Thomas (29 yo), the messaging responsivity can be different based on how many cannabis use experiences one has had. Thomas (29 yo) claimed "everyone [is] going to experiment [with cannabis], but now all of a sudden, they're basing all their stuff off of this [i.e., fear driven zero tolerance messaging]." Thomas (29 yo) elaborated:

This is counterproductive because as someone that doesn't know anything about marijuana...they're going to think about all these things [driving fear on the poster and begin concluding] 'oh my God I'm coughing, I'm going to have lung damage because that poster that I read on the wall there,' and it's kind of cycling or exacerbating the freak out.

Similarly, Steve (29 yo) suggested that for individuals with more experience overcoming or avoiding the potential harmful outcomes (e.g., losing motivation for other priorities) this messaging may be ineffective and unrelatable:

A lot of people would laugh at [this poster]...I just find it as a joke because I know I smoked pretty much all through high school and I still graduated with honors so it's like a lot of it doesn't seem very true.

Furthermore, on a more macro level, participants shared how institutional (e.g., healthcare settings, previous mass media drug education campaigns) and political (e.g., propaganda, presidential leadership) can impact the interpretation of the fear driven messaging in the zero-tolerance approach. Danielle (28 yo) shared:

It's not shocking to me that this is from a collegiate health Center [*looking at the source of the poster*] because so much of collegiate health centers are like 'don't do this'...and I'm like have any of you talked to a college student? like ever in your life? they are not kids that you can scare, they're adults with brains and the ability to critically think about their choices, you trying to scare them, is only going to make them take you less serious.

The reactions towards fear driven messaging were also shaped by comparisons of past zero tolerance mass media campaigns. Specifically, Zach (21 yo) remarked that the messaging "reminds [him] of that commercial...in the early 2000s or maybe the late 90s, where it was this girl that was on the couch and she's like deflated." This commercial was part of the 'Above the Influence' campaign depicting a younger girl who's lost her motivation for life and is flat and lifeless on the couch, all because she started to use cannabis.

Accounting for political influences, participants shared that the messaging "isn't informative...[instead it's] a propaganda thing" (Thomas, 29 yo). Emma (26 yo) shared, "I don't

think this is driving awareness as much, I think this is driving like that same way of thinking from freakin' President Nixon...like the war on drugs and stuff.” Moreover “with the consideration of [the] idea of cannabis not being criminal this is propaganda to be like ‘you're a loser if you smoke so just don't do it because all these bad things” (Emma, 26 yo). Fear driven messaging of zero tolerance was interpreted as a tool used to promote or publicize a particular point of view (i.e., prohibitory cannabis policy). James (19 yo) concurred stating, “I feel like it's falling under the American propaganda thing because this one is just like here's all the negative shit.” Plus, “they didn't talk about anything back in the day, I don't know...[they'd just] put you away somewhere [i.e., send you to jail for doing drugs]” (Steve, 29 yo). The propaganda is tied to criminalizing and punishing cannabis users rather than understanding a spectrum of use motives and outcomes, such as leisure motivated recreational cannabis use that exists within law-abiding citizens lives.

Participants commented on the zero tolerance and messaging features fear-driven style. The reactions characterizing this textural theme were discussed in relation to micro and macro level structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., demographic factors like age, level and knowledge of cannabis use) and institutional (i.e., applicability of fear in healthcare and educational settings, previous cannabis education mass media campaign) and political factors (i.e., , drug policy propaganda). The participants also shared their reactions concerning the zero-tolerance approach's unbalanced account of sharing cannabis risk-benefits, covering a second textural category with supporting micro and macro layer structures.

Unbalanced account of cannabis risk-benefit texture and supporting structures

Young adults commented on how risks and benefits messages were presented in the zero-tolerance approach. Phoebe (20 yo) remarked that the messaging “hit the nail on the head” in

terms of “put[ing] all the risks out there on the poster” because “it’s the truth.” Phoebe (20 yo) also commented that “when you put all the risk into perspective like that... it would definitely stop people from smoking weed as much.” JR (27 yo) shared a similar response, stating, “this is all true like it's true, [cannabis] definitely has its effect on some people, I was telling you earlier like the cons of smoking.” Heather (19 yo) stated:

I understand where this poster is coming from because people do need to know the risks and I think it does a good job of highlighting all the important risks (e.g., mentally, physically, consent)...so I still appreciate what it's trying to say.

Although the presentation of risks was applauded, several participants noted the lack of information for safe cannabis use and the acknowledgement of potential benefits. Heather (19 yo) explained:

It's important that you know the risks so you know what could possibly happen, but I think it should inform people more about how to combat those risks and how to make sure things like that don't happen to you because...people have really good experiences [with recreational cannabis] too if the circumstances are right.

For Emma (26 yo) there was an evident lack of balanced information. Emma (26 yo) said, “this has such a negative connotation on it and it's just saying all the problematic things that come with [cannabis use], rather than like a good, healthy balance between the good and bad that could come from it.” Indeed, these posters provided one-sided information such as sharing that cannabis could provoke paranoia, without any recognition that for some it can also provoke leisure state of mind outcomes like relaxation. If both sides were presented people would be more equipped with a holistic understanding and reflect on which side their experiences may fall.

Danielle (28 yo) pointed out that the unbalanced messaging of risks-benefits compromises “informed consent” related to cannabis decisions because it doesn’t include “knowledge and knowing the whole spectrum of there's good and bad, there's helpful and there's not helpful [cannabis use].” Eileen (18 yo) also stated that “[zero tolerance messaging of unbalanced risk-benefit] could do a better job of highlighting the fact that there are some benefits to [cannabis].” Eileen (18 yo) expressed the unbalanced risk-benefit presentation ignores that “people who do [use cannabis] aren’t just like stupid and throwing away their lives for nothing, which [she] feel[s] [is] kind of the point that it conveys [without mentioning benefits].” Additionally, it was noted that the unbalanced account of risk-benefits failed to nuance the experience. Heather (19 yo) shared that “if you’re educating people on what could happen [in terms of cannabis risks]” it’s important to avoid risk generalizations saying “yeah ‘this is going to happen to you no matter what whenever you try weed,’ because that's not really true.”

The textures categorizing reactions towards unbalanced cannabis risk-benefit messaging (e.g., useful risk information to be aware of, lack of providing safe use practices and non-acknowledgement of potential benefits) were connected to micro (i.e., individual, interpersonal) and macro (institutional) level structures. Dave (21 yo) commented on the role of individual factors. Dave (21 yo) said, “cannabis, in general affects everyone a little bit differently so it's good to have generalizing statements [i.e., about risks on posters] but at the same time I don't really agree with a lot of them because while they apply to me, they might not apply to other people.” Additionally, participants considered how level of cannabis use (e.g., being non-user v. user, rate of use) could impact the reactions towards unbalanced cannabis risk-benefit messaging. For instance, Danielle (28 yo) explained:

I think any anyone who is currently using cannabis would see this and be like ‘F**k off,’ I think they are just going to be like, ‘yes, I know that there are risks and I’m using it so clearly the benefits outweigh the risks to me,’ I think the people who are already using [cannabis] aren't going to care about this and people who aren't using and who are choosing not to use [cannabis] I think probably know that these things are true to some extent, and that maybe is part of why they're not using...like whose mind are you trying to change? I don't think it's effective in doing so.

Participants considered how the messaging reads for different frequencies of cannabis use (e.g., heavy users, occasional users). Phoebe (20 yo) stated, “you don't have to use weed all the time, I mean I think this [unbalanced risk-benefit messaging] is more for like a heavy user I guess you could say or someone who struggles with pot.” Similarly, Zach (21 yo) explained, “this [i.e., list of risks] isn't going to happen to anybody unless they're abusing weed...if you smoke all the time.” Heather (19 yo) also remarked:

I get what they're saying [i.e., listing risks] but I think like if you're using [cannabis] from time to time [or] even if you're using it like every day in a safe way and it actually benefits you, I don't think there's really that much wrong with it... like for me personally I know that me doing weed every day would not be a good choice for me...but if it benefits someone else and they do it every day in a safe way then like that's cool.

Furthermore, participants noted that what reads as risks on the drug education may be in fact desired outcomes for the cannabis consumer. For example, the zero-tolerance approach highlights cannabis risks related to having slower reflexes and impaired focus, concentration, and memory. However, Minea (21 yo) points out that, “[they] wouldn't necessarily look at those [as] risks [because] they’re kind of desirable in some situations.” This showcases the potentially

desired leisure motives of use determined by each individual, wherein some people may use cannabis specifically to dis-engage and slow down from their otherwise heavily focus-driven life obligations. For instance, Minea (21 yo) shared:

I'm focused all the time, like sometimes I want to smoke and not be focused...so it's a lot of like 'oh I'm smoking so I'm doing it in a situation where you want to be relaxed,' and like if you want to be relaxed and you want to like not have your memory, those are desirable in a lot of instances.

Interpersonal factors shaping reactions towards un-balanced risk-benefit messaging were shaped by assumptions of generational attitudes towards cannabis. Danielle (28 yo) said “this [messaging] feels like the most boomer-y thing [i.e., created by people from older generation], like this is like clearly from people who hate pot, these are people who hate pot and don't want anyone to use it, this is like not from the land of reality.” Heather (18 yo) also stated that this unbalanced risk-benefit messaging is “an older adults’ way of trying to appeal to a younger population.” This kind of thinking completely negates the fact that older adults are also living through cannabis legalization era and may very well be in favor of balanced risk-benefit approaches which include potential leisure-driven meanings.

The participants also shared how macro level factors such as the potential usefulness within institutional settings (e.g., healthcare settings, schools) shaped responses to the un-balanced risk-benefit messaging. Minea (21 yo) said,

I think this would be good if I went into [University health center] and told them that I smoke and they're like 'Oh, please read this,' like if they handed me this, I'd be like okay, 'this is cool, this information checks off a lot of really good boxes,' I feel like everyone should like at least be aware of this [i.e., list of risks].

According to Heather (18 yo) and Minea (21 yo) the zero-tolerance unbalanced risk-benefit messaging is “something that would be in a middle school or in a high school [classroom].”

Participants commented on the zero-tolerance approach and unbalanced cannabis risk-messaging features (i.e., useful risk information, lack of information on safe use and failure to include potential benefits). The reactions characterizing these textures were informed by micro and macro level structures. These structures include individual factors (i.e., personal cannabis use experiences/level of cannabis use and desired cannabis outcomes), interpersonal factors (i.e., assumed generational differences in attitudes towards cannabis), and institutional factors (i.e., compatibility of messaging in healthcare and educational settings).

Overall, young adults’ responses towards zero tolerance approach were categorized texturally under two themes (i.e., fear-driven information, unbalanced account of cannabis risk-benefits). Participant’s responses varied across the three drug education approaches and messaging features they were exposed to. However, they also had the opportunity to share what attributes they think would be important for cannabis drug education moving forwards. Additionally, they commented on the potential role that leisure meanings can play within cannabis drug education.

Suggestions for future cannabis drug education and the role of leisure

Participants shared some potential improvements to cannabis drug education and the potential usefulness of adding leisure meanings to cannabis drug education. Luna (21 yo) sees “cannabis evolving in a very socially accepted way,” and is becoming commonplace in leisure settings including, “like a little coffee shop in Chicago that has THC infused drinks...[and] like California [where] there's so many bars and things like that, that already have implemented [cannabis infused products].” Thus, as the commercialization of cannabis grows there will be

wider societal integration of cannabis in/as leisure and cannabis within leisure settings, thus there is also a greater need for cannabis education that recognizes these leisurely motives and contexts of use. Dave pointed out that “the majority of people who smoke do it like for leisure and when they have downtime, so [he doesn’t] see why they wouldn’t add things like that [to drug education].” Similarly, according to Zach (21 yo):

The people who use [cannabis] recreationally outnumber the people who use it medically and so those [recreational users] are the ones looking at the posters, who need that information because if you use it medically, hopefully, you’ve seen a doctor at least once that has told you the risks and benefits.

Luna (21 yo) brought up points about parents who might be using cannabis in/as leisure and who would benefit from a “poster that was literally geared towards parents” and talked about “how to safely use cannabis as a parent...like how to stash your weed so that your kid doesn’t find it [and] how to talk about [cannabis] to your kids so that you don’t feel like you’re like sneaking away to smoke.” Luna (21 yo) suggested this was important because “there’s a lot of judgment in society about parents and like moms specifically using any substances.” Although “it’s so normalized for the mom of the family to just drink a glass of wine at the end of the night it’s really not normalized for them to smoke.” As emerging adults are transiting into adulthood, they may take on more adult roles like parenthood but still want to use recreational cannabis in/as leisure. Thus, Luna (21 yo) posited that future parents need to be equipped with more information and perhaps met with less stigmatizing societal evaluations.

Indeed, including the leisure meanings and discussion of recreational cannabis use “would be really beneficial both for reducing stigma around weed use and also for helping to educate people about the risks” (Jamie, 19 yo). Indeed, Eileen (18 yo) reflected on the fact:

Some people who don't smoke weed don't understand at all why people do, and it could be good [to include leisure meanings in drug education] just to like get a little bit of empathy across there because it's just better if you understand it [i.e., what cannabis use is; what risk-benefits there are] and [then] still choose that it's not something for you than if you just don't understand it whatsoever.

Additionally, along with all of the potential cannabis risks, leisure meanings play an important role in the potential benefits. As stated by Dave (21 yo):

When you add all of these [risks]...[e.g.] negative psychological effects on your brain, etc., it takes away from the fact that a lot of people just do it because it's just a nice social thing to do when you're at leisure, like [you have] nothing to do, [so you're] smoking a little bit...I don't think there's an issue with adding those guidelines or just information about people leisurely smoking because I think a majority of people who do smoke are doing it for leisure.

The inclusion of recreational cannabis in/as leisure and its rendering as a potential benefit would present a more holistic image of why cannabis consumption exists. Luna (21 yo) said she “like(s) knowing pros and cons...(she) want to know, both sides of everything.” Thus, she thinks it is important for drug education messaging to include “the pros and cons of using it recreationally like for mental health.” Indeed, this would nuance cannabis education as well because currently “we talked about weed in such a general way” (Luna, 21 yo). This is especially important because “most people if they're presented with messaging that only talks about the cons, they're going to recognize that is one sided and incomplete information and they're going to be more likely to disregard it” (Jamie, 21 yo). Similarly, Heather (19 yo) suggested that “if someone is going to be truly educated about a topic, they need a really well-rounded education about the

topic and if you're only providing them with negative information or positive information that's really one sided.” Thus, “[she] think[s] there should be as much information on both sides as possible...including both positives and negatives.” In this case, Heather (19 yo) was suggesting that recreational cannabis in/as leisure would be one of the positives that need to be included in the drug education messaging.

When taking health class in high school, Minea (21 yo) remembers taking in all the risk prevention information “with a grain of salt...because they were always like ‘oh wow look at all this bad stuff that happens if you do anything.’” However, Minea suggested that:

If they were to actually give a nuanced approach with this kind of education, [and] be like ‘oh yeah it works for people [recreationally], [like] people drink as a social thing, people smoke for various [recreational/leisure] reasons, etc,’...that it makes it more credible and easier to take seriously.

Recognition of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure can also lead to positioning leisure as a protective factor that helps curb the slippage into problematic or troublesome use. For instance, James (19 yo) claims it is helpful to let people know:

Make sure you've done everything that you need to do for the day so that you don't get high and then realize that you have shit to do and then you can't do it because you're high and then you have problems, [so messaging should say] ‘make sure that you've done everything that you need to do for the day,’ ‘make sure that you're in like a good social setting’...like acknowledging that you're going to use cannabis and then being like ‘okay now here's how you optimize it, here's how you can best use it.

Luna (21 yo) also discussed that it is important to equip cannabis users with detailed guidelines, which help them curate enjoyable recreational cannabis in/as leisure experiences. Luna (21 yo) shared:

I would probably like if they had you know, some benefits and then they also had like a warning sign and were like, you know, 'proceed with caution,' cannabis can be anxiety provoking for some people...[so] how can you limit this or like, what can you do to kind of like, control that? because like, if someone wants to use cannabis with their friends, but then it makes them a little anxious, like, I think it's okay for them to use it if they learn like why it makes them anxious and stuff because it can still be fun...the same as when you want to have a drink with a friend...like, oh, I can't have a drink because [I'm] like allergic to gluten and can't have a beer or something... I think you should still be able to have that experience [thus you might get a gluten free beer/drink].

Luna (21 yo) goes on to give a specific example with cannabis. She explained:

Some of my friends were like, oh, like, I don't really like [cannabis], it makes me anxious to smoke...I'll be like, Okay, well, have you tried, you know, like an edible, that's 50%, CBD 50% THC because like, a lot of times having a lot of the THC without any CBD is what makes people feel anxious. But when you have that CBD in there, your body relaxes, so then like your mind actually can enjoy the high... that's something we need to kind of be doing going forward is focusing on that kind of information for people because like cannabis is becoming a widely used thing.

Danielle (28 yo) envisioned creating leisure related safety guidelines that could compare to the way people think about enjoying their recreational alcoholic beverages. Danielle (28 yo) explained:

If you do like the glass of wine at night, like, if you can give a comparable guideline [for cannabis] like ‘here's how we could use this realistically...[in other words] you're not going to drink on a Tuesday how you would on a Friday or Saturday, your cannabis should be something comparable to that’ like maybe you use lower levels [of cannabis] on the week right? A glass of wine with dinner, [would translate to being] like half an edible with dinner versus [having] like two [cannabis edibles] on the weekend kind of a thing...giving people comparative guidelines would be like a helpful way of [framing] ‘Oh, if this is going to be recreational, how can I think of it in this way?’

Indeed, participants noted the ways in which including leisure meanings could improve cannabis drug education. Specifically, young adults noted that majority of cannabis users might not be in contact with a health professional about their use because they engage in recreational cannabis within their leisure. Thus, they need relatable information that speaks to their experiences. Furthermore, young adults expressed that leisure meanings represent some of the sought-after beneficial aspects of cannabis use and therefore should not be overlooked in the risk-benefit pillars included in cannabis drug education. Lastly, participants described how leisure could serve as a potential protective factor by offering leisure inspired safe use tips (e.g., wait to use at the end of the day/after work is done, different use patterns for weekdays vs. weekends).

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Discussion of the phenomenological meanings of recreational cannabis in/as leisure

The findings from research aim 1 shed light on the phenomenon of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure. The participants shared the various leisure meanings they attribute to recreational cannabis use and the mechanisms that make these meanings possible, which are showcased in the composite textural-structural essence statement (i.e., figure 2). The textures and associated structures reflect meanings connecting recreational cannabis use to various normative leisure definitions including state of mind, free time, activity, and pleasure. These perspectives offer new leisure connections to drug use that challenge the traditional deviant leisure meanings defining drug use as immoral and irrational (Malleck, 2008; Rojek, 1999a) and psychologically problematic (Russell, 2017; Williams, 2009). Additionally, these findings help us understand cannabis users as normative mainstream members of society. Thus, pushing back on claims that their leisure represents a disconnection from societal expectations (Rojek, 1995, 1999b) or requires a membership to abnormal leisure subcultures (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004).

Relying exclusively on the deviant leisure lens to understand recreational cannabis user(s) limits our scholarly expedition into the complex cave of potential normative leisure meanings. However, it is important to understand the potentially positive and normative leisure meanings of cannabis use because non-medical cannabis legalization is becoming more commonplace across the U.S. and internationally. Indeed, this dissertation uncovered the connections between recreational cannabis use and normative leisure definitions, contributing to the growing normalization drug debate as well (Measham, 2004; Parker, 2005). Specifically,

participants described how they experience recreational cannabis in/as leisure state of mind, free time, leisure activity, and pleasure.

Cannabis in/as leisure state of mind

Participants in this study shared how recreational cannabis symbolized an intentional mental break from their otherwise busy and productive lives. This was motivated by one's personal free choice and pursued with a sense of control (Henderson et al., 2001). Participants also described recreational cannabis in/as leisure as a relaxed mental state. Indeed, "leisure is most essentially a position of relaxation [and] of faithful openness to immediate reality" (Kleiber, 2000, p. 83). Recreational cannabis in/as leisure state of mind revolved around meditation, being in the present moment, and de-stressing. Leisure scholars have reported how meditation and being in the present moment offer stress relief (Choe et al., 2014). These leisure meanings have typically been associated with things like leisure-time physical activity, outdoor recreation, health tourism, social leisure, spiritual leisure, cultural dancing, and pet ownership (Iwasaki et al., 2010). However, this study found that recreational cannabis could be another leisure tool for freeing the mind and de-compressing.

Furthermore, the participants in this study shed light on the potential outcomes of cannabis in/as leisure state of mind and reaching a flow state. The participants' descriptions follow textbook definitions of flow theory, which highlights temporality, intrinsically motivated concentration, and a productive loss of self-consciousness that can involve self-growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997). The participants also noted that this can manifest as a collective flow experience representing a shared enjoyment and social solidarity (e.g., using cannabis in/as leisure state of mind with one's partner; Kleiber, 2020). Beyond the leisure state of mind

dimension, participants reflected on how their recreational cannabis use was situated in free time leisure meanings.

Recreational cannabis in/as free time

Participants drew connections between recreational cannabis use and free time leisure meanings. According to the seminal works of Brightbill (1960), leisure as free time represents a division between work and non-work time. This kind of boundary was discussed by several participants who shared that recreational cannabis use happens post-obligations and is reserved for end of the workday, end of the work week (e.g., on weekends), or during days off from work. Fratila and Berdychevsky's (2020) research also shed light on college students' use of cannabis in/as free time, wherein students differentiated between time that they would use to consume recreational drugs like cannabis and time for their other responsibilities (e.g., schoolwork, job).

The participants in this study remarked that it was important to save recreational cannabis use for their free time because they were not required to focus or complete important tasks then. Indeed, it is during free time that "[the individual] 're-creates'... so that [they] may be refreshed...to resume daily obligations, whatever those may be" (Ap, 1986, p. 167). Additionally, young adults talked about framing cannabis in/as free time as a reward for completing tasks or meeting their goals (e.g., using cannabis after passing a difficult exam). Indeed, under the economic ideals of capitalism free time is often viewed as something that one must work for, or something that has to be earned (Russell, 2017).

Participants also noted that cannabis use created a feeling of time extension, in other words, making time go slower and making it seem there is extended leisure or free time. This is in juxtaposition to existing travel leisure (i.e., tourism) literature about "time compression" effect on sexual risk-taking while on vacation (Berdychevsky, 2016; Thomas, 2005). These 'time

compression’ studies suggest people are progressing rapidly in terms of sexual risk-taking activities because they are trying to make the most of their temporary disconnection from day-to-day life (Berdychevsky, 2016; Thomas, 2005). However, the temporal alterations attracting recreational cannabis users suggest an opposite reality which doesn’t necessarily related to ‘fast’ drug risk-taking but rather the feeling of having a prolonged non-work time where they can rest and relax or enter a state of flow. It was important for participants to use their free time as they wish and therefore sometimes recreational cannabis use was considered their leisure activity of choice. Thus, offering insights into the connections between leisure activity meanings and recreational cannabis use.

Cannabis use in/as leisure activity

The findings from this study suggest that for some, the act of getting high represents a non-work leisure activity (e.g., rolling cannabis joint). According to leisure definitions leisure activity is something non-work related (Russell, 2017) pursued for its own sake and for fun (Freysinger et al., 2013). Leisure definitions fundamentally revolve around the intrinsically motivated nature of leisure as a free choice (Russell, 2019) and representing an “uncoerced behavior” (Stebbins, 2005, p. 350). The participants also shared insights into how recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity is used to accompany their other leisure activities (e.g., cooking, eating, going to concerts, etc.). Other scholars have also highlighted recreational cannabis as an enhancement for other leisure activities (Osborne & Fogel, 2008), which involves careful consideration of immersing oneself into “passive and active leisure pursuits to produce varying amounts of desirable stimuli” (Gould et al., 2018, p. 125).

Leisure has also been defined as an activity pursued individually or collectively (Fairchild, 1970), which reflects the participants stories about using cannabis on their own as an

activity for self-connection as well as using cannabis in/as leisure activity with others. Indeed, some people enjoyed using recreational cannabis to “hangout with [themselves]” and build a relationship with themselves. This reflects the potential usefulness of recreational cannabis in/as leisure activity for identity work, or the exploration and formation of identity (Lavie-Ajayi et al., 2022; Fraila & Berdychevsky, 2021). Additionally, recreational cannabis was also discussed as an activity central to social gatherings such as parties, celebratory events (e.g., congratulating friends on job offers), or special occasions (e.g., family holiday gatherings like easter). Other research studies have also discussed the situatedness of drug use as a leisure activity within social settings including weddings (Hansen et al., 2001), concerts, bars, nightclubs, raves, and dance parties (Palamar et al., 2022). Indeed, it appears that recreational cannabis is interpreted as a leisure activity and it is pursued for a variety of reasons, including for pleasure.

Recreational cannabis use in/as pleasure

The young adult cannabis users in this study described recreational cannabis use as a pleasurable experience (i.e., fun, enjoyable). Indeed, this study found recreational cannabis use fits leisure meanings that refer to participation in freely chosen activities for enjoyment (Stebbins, 1997) and describe the natural human condition of a pleasure seeking (Esch & Stefano, 2004). This study adds a qualitative account to quantitative leisure findings that have found college students are motivated use drugs to have fun (Shinew & Perry, 2005). Plus, these pleasure-focused findings help us distinguish between drug use in/as leisure for pleasure versus for sport leisure performance (Thorpe, 2012) or medical purposes. According to the participants, recreational cannabis use is pleasurable because it makes things funnier and takes the seriousness out of things. Leisure has been connected to ludere (i.e., to play, a play on ideas, word play; McGhee, 1999). For instance, the pleasurable outcomes of recreational cannabis use in/as leisure

can reflect a playful way to recuperate or relax from the demands of professional life roles or adult responsibilities. Thus, recreational cannabis in/as pleasure could “provide oneself (and possibly others) with amusement, humor, and/or entertainment” that is less easily obtained outside of their leisure (Barnett, 2007, p. 955).

Participants also shared that they experienced pleasure through recreational cannabis use due to loosened inhibitions and enhanced senses. The psychological literature has often relied on understanding the pleasurable aspects of drugs use as ‘impulsive behavior’ following a ‘hedonic tone’ (Moore, 2008, p. 355), wherein the pleasure-seeker disregards how the consequence of their impulsivity could negatively impact themselves or others (Moeller et al., 2001). This study found that young adult cannabis users considered the pleasurable aspects as an intentional leisure lubricant rather than an impulsive craving. Specifically, in terms of facilitating intimate/sexual closeness desired by all parties involved. Additionally, similar to other studies (e.g., Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2021), the participants in this research shared that recreational cannabis use was pleasurable because it enabled heightened sensations related to touch (e.g., sex in/as leisure experience), taste (e.g., food leisure experiences) and sound (e.g., music leisure experiences). Investigating the pleasurable qualities of recreational cannabis use disputes the belief that studying pleasure in drug taking is ‘unscientific’ and ‘frivolous’ compared to other health issues (Coveney & Bunton, 2003, p. 161). Instead, this study suggests it is time to consider revising the current public health approach towards recreational cannabis use and recognizing cannabis for pleasure (Room, 2014). Indeed, all the various leisure meanings associated with recreational cannabis use (e.g., pleasure, activity, free time, leisure state of mind) play an important role in furthering our understanding of cannabis use.

Adding socially just leisure meanings to the current cannabis conversations

This study contributes to the growing cannabis normalization debate that suggests drug use has become commonplace in young people's leisure and cultural landscape (Parker et al., 1998; Measham, 2004). Specifically, the normalization thesis suggests young adults are fitting their drug use within their leisure and alongside other components of their busy lives. The literature suggests that young adults are using drugs for leisure to take a 'time out' (Shildrick, 2002). Similar to Liebrechts et al. (2015) study, participants in this dissertation shared how cannabis use represents a leisurely way to distance themselves from their otherwise ordinary and mainstream lives. Thus, the normalized leisure meanings offered by this study are also useful for challenging the long-standing deviant leisure characterizations of recreational cannabis use(rs).

It is important to move beyond deviant understandings to shrink the presence of criminal controls acting as gatekeepers into the cannabis culture (Hathaway, 2004). This is crucial because the criminal, law enforcement approach has completely ignored the potential leisure motives of use and instead used deviance (and deviant leisure) explanations to oust specific social groups (e.g., African American and Hispanic communities; Bourne, 2008). Indeed, under the prohibition framework and throughout the widespread "war on drugs," mandated drug-related sentencing minimums were racially charged, disproportionately impacting non-white Americans (Heath, 1996). The designation of deviant/normative leisure and the enforcement of un-equal consequences showcases how leisure is shaped by those in power and represents a tool of racecraft (Mowatt, 2019). Thus, this study suggests moving beyond the traditional deviant leisure framework, which has shortsighted and impeded us from a productive and just conceptualization of the healthy/beneficial and unhealthy/harmful spectrum of leisure behavior.

Considering the growing cannabis legalization, it is especially timely to relentlessly advocate for equitable policies in the cannabis industry (McVey, 2017) that support the de-pathologized and de-criminalized image of recreational cannabis users (Walker, 2022), and further understand their leisure connections. The participants in this study discussed the leisure meanings and outcomes of their recreational cannabis use. These meanings (e.g., state of mind, free time, activity, pleasure) reflect the anticipated benefits, rather than (criminal) pathologies that need to be corrected or punished. Indeed, learning the anticipated benefits (i.e., leisure meanings) substantiates growing drug discourses of ‘calculated hedonism’ (O’Malley & Valverde, 2004) or ‘controlled loss of control’ (Measham, 2004) that highlight the interplay between negotiating cannabis in/as leisure risk-benefit perceptions to achieve the pleasurable leisure outcomes. This means the psychoactive leisure consumption (i.e., recreational cannabis use in/as leisure) is situated within certain boundaries of time (e.g., weekends), space (e.g., parties), and with desired company (e.g., supportive friends; Measham, 2004, p.319). This knowledge is particularly useful under the political framework of recreational cannabis regulation and especially for the current young adults who are the first modern cohort to live under such cannabis liberalization and commercialization.

This new reality represents an opposite image to cannabis prohibition discourses. Under the prohibitory regulations, recreational cannabis use has been explicitly framed as deviant, criminal, harmful, life-reckless and void of any potentially desirable leisure qualities (e.g., pleasurable, and social experience). Now, we may be facing a new conundrum where the commercialization of recreational cannabis may overly simplify and glamorize the leisure meanings for profitable gain. Leisure consumption (e.g., alcohol intoxication) has already been marketed as a freely chosen purchase of momentary empowerment, self-control, and self-

expression that is not as obtainable in other non-leisure spheres of their lives (Husch, 1991). Drug use has also been framed as a form of commodified pleasure in the leisure sphere of contemporary society (Measham, 2004). Perhaps this is no surprise because “the so-called consumer economy and the politics of corporate capitalism have created a second nature of man which ties him libidinally and aggressively to the commodity form” (Marcuse, 1969, p.14).

Thus, the wider public may be largely lacking the nuanced image of what recreational cannabis use in/as leisure entails (i.e., rapidly switching from learning about cannabis criminality to the modern-day marketing of cannabis as a favorable cultural commodity). Although cannabis use has been around for centuries, the modern economic system has overseen regulating and presenting its risks and benefits. For the entirety of modern society therefore, cannabis has been criminalized and deemed unacceptable and un-beneficial. However, now, some of the modern-day governing bodies have decided to un-hinge cannabis use from the ‘don’t use’ rhetoric and depart from the unjust law enforcement approach in order gain profitable tax dollars off its consumption (Crépault, 2018). We will have to keep a close eye on how governments, and public health sectors, specifically, minimize the commercialization effects seeking to incite consumption (e.g., widespread marketing billboards; over-selling or exploitation of leisure meanings in advertisements).

In this study participants did provide meaningful insights that nuanced how recreational cannabis use operates as leisure and within leisure, which can shed light on the ways in which leisure meanings are self-regulated. This contextualized understanding of cannabis use in/as leisure offers a look into the ‘drug wisdom’ young adults have accumulated from their experiences (Parker, 2005, p.210). This wisdom helps them negotiate the downsides of psycho-active substance use, while preserving the anticipated pleasurable and other positive leisure

outcomes (e.g., leisure state of mind, separation from work time, and enjoyment of the leisure activity). This study suggests that leisure scholars have an important dialogue to contribute towards the prevention and intervention sciences (e.g., shaping drug education messaging; Weybright et al., 2019). Indeed, “leisure sciences would benefit from intentional collaboration to “pull” from prevention science and “push” out leisure research” (Weybright et al., 2019, p. 406) representing an intermix of leisure meanings with other drug discourses. Indeed, leisure scholars should collaborate with critical drug researchers across various fields including cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, criminal justice, critical race studies, women’s studies, psychology, public health, and addiction studies (Walker, 2022) to advance the effectiveness of drug education and understanding.

Specifically, leisure scholarship can contribute meaningfully to the scholarship on drug use and pleasure, which is accumulating knowledge on pleasure as an intrinsically motivating factor for drug consumption (e.g., Duncan et al., 2017; Thompson & Coveney, 2018; Walker, 2017; Askew, 2016; Bunton & Coveney, 2011; Holt & Treloar, 2008). Indeed, this study can contribute to the existing pleasure and drug narratives by also showcasing the interconnectedness of pleasure meanings with other leisure outcomes (e.g., leisure state of mind, free time, and leisure activity). Together, leisure and non-leisure researchers could create a more complicated but useful model of what cannabis use represents on a spectrum of motivations to use and the (un)anticipated or (un)desirable outcomes (i.e., the range of helpful to harmful; desirable to undesirable).

Discussion of the phenomenological model of cannabis risk-benefits and associated leisure meanings

The second aim of this research project was to understand the emerging adults' perceptions of cannabis risk-benefits and potential connections to leisure meanings. The participants in this study expressed a range of cannabis risks and benefits spanning across physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural textures. Additionally, the characterizations of cannabis risk-benefits were supported by various structures informing their views of beneficial and harmful designations. The textural-structural phenomenological model of cannabis risk-benefits is displayed in figure 3. This model adds to the growing conversations about cannabis as a non-deviant (leisure) act with potential beneficial properties (Gould et al., 2018). Although cannabis may have been offering beneficial aspects for centuries including, recreational enjoyment, cannabis research influenced by prohibition has predominantly focused on the risks (Hathaway et al., 2022). Thus, the potential benefits of cannabis have been discarded as “anecdotal” and often considered “irrelevant to science” (Hathaway et al., 2022, p.173).

However, this study qualitatively explored young adults' perceptions of cannabis risks and benefits, investigating both ends of the continuum and interpreting the various connections to leisure meanings. The findings from the young adults' perceptions of cannabis risks and benefits can be framed using the bio-psycho-socio-cultural health model (Lindau et al., 2003) and the leisure well-being model (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic well-being; Carruthers & Hood, 2007). The following section will explain how young adult recreational cannabis users perceive the risks and benefits to the biological/physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural domains of health and well-being.

Recreational cannabis risks related to physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural health and well-being

Previous research on cannabis risks to physiological health include psychomotor impairment (Hunter et al., 1998), and damaging respiratory effects, such as chronic bronchitis and histopathological that could lead to cancer (Tashkin, 1999) among others. Indeed, participants in this study contributed to the existing harm perception literature about potential risks to physical health in terms of lung health. However, based on the participants descriptions there were considerably more risks discussed in terms of psychological health, illuminating the connections between recreational cannabis use (in/as leisure) and ill-being (i.e., the harmful effects on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being).

Existing research has found that cannabis use can lead to increased negative affect (Bovasso, 2001), which can hurt one's ability to experience happiness in/as leisure (i.e., hedonic well-being; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Specifically, in this study participants described the negative affective connections related to using recreational cannabis as an avoidant or maladaptive coping mechanism. Indeed, leisure literature has suggested some substance use forms represent a self-suppressive "escape from self," wherein people that are in troubled situations are motivated to engage in leisure that detaches them from disturbing elements of the self (Stenseng et al., 2012). Additionally, participants acknowledges that recreational cannabis (in/as leisure) can result in negative mental health outcomes such as overthinking, anxiety, paranoia, depression, and schizophrenia. Existing research has placed emphasis on cannabis risks to mental health (e.g., increased anxiety, depression, psychosis; Allen et al., 2017).

However, the findings from this study help us to nuance and understand what structural factors are perceived to increase susceptibility to negative mental health outcomes because of

recreational cannabis (in/as leisure). The participants shared that personal mental health/state of mind, life stage, previous cannabis use experiences, cannabis use patterns (e.g., frequency of use, amount consumed, time of day and setting of use), and drug characteristics (e.g., cannabis form, method of consumption) all influence the likelihood for experiencing negative mental health. For instance, it was expressed that if someone is already experiencing a depressive state, they might experience further mental health harm from recreational cannabis use in/as leisure.

Additionally, participants in this study discussed the negative psychological impacts of recreational cannabis use (in/as leisure) in terms of impaired cognitive functioning (e.g., feeling slowed down, impaired inhibitions and memory loss). Indeed, it is important that young adults recognized cognitive functioning risks like impairment because public health experts are heavily focused on curbing the impaired operation of heavy machinery while high (e.g., drugged driving) under the new context of legalization (Miller & Huffman, 2018). Therefore, studies like this equip them with knowledge about how young adults perceive various cognitive functioning risks, which can be leveraged in public health messaging as well. Additionally, the connections to leisure meanings can help messaging become even more relevant and relatable to youth (e.g., suggesting to cannabis users that they wait several hours to drive after using cannabis in/as leisure, or to call a cab if they are engaging in cannabis and other drug use in party context).

Furthermore, participants in this study discussed the ways in which recreational cannabis (in/as leisure) can present risks related to cannabis dependency or addiction. While, this was classified under the psychological risks branch of data analysis, the reality combines both psychological and physiological effects of addiction. The participants shared that they want to keep their recreational cannabis use practices controlled and functional to avoid potentially developing an addictive relationship with cannabis. This shed light on how drug users are often

concerned and cautious about using recreational cannabis in ways that avoid labeling them as addicts (Askew & Salinas 2018). Indeed, in this study participants pointed out that it was important for them to be able to enjoy leisure with/without recreational cannabis use and be able to maintain their productive lives by situating recreational cannabis in/as leisure.

Beyond the physiological and psychological risks pointed out by participants, this study found that young adults also perceive various socio-cultural risks related to recreational cannabis use. The socio-cultural risks involved interpersonal factors such as social anxiety, harm to personal relationships and stigmatizing social identity. Indeed, cannabis users have been traditionally cast as members of deviant (leisure) subcultures with counter-cultural values (Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004) and the propensity for damaged relational well-being (Hayatbakhsh et al., 2009). The participants in this study also expressed socio-cultural risks related to wider meeting societal standards (e.g., legality, productivity/professional goals [work, school] and financial management). These socio-cultural risks uncover the potentially damaging effects of recreational cannabis in/as leisure towards eudaimonic well-being, or the young adults' capacity to reach their fullest human potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Thus, the potential harms to social well-being could result in the floundering versus flourishing outcomes during the emerging adulthood life stage (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013). Although the young adults shared a wide array of potential cannabis risks, they also reflected on the list of potential benefits provided by recreational cannabis (in/as leisure).

Recreational cannabis use benefits related to physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural health and well-being

Participants shared the ways in which cannabis offers physiological benefits in terms of pain alleviation, increased appetites, and recovery from intoxication of other substances in/as

leisure (e.g., alcohol hangover). Indeed, Leneghan (2010) found that cannabis was often used as a tool for alleviating the comedown of other drugs such as ecstasy in/as leisure. Additionally, participants in this study compared cannabis use to other consumptive leisure, like drinking for fun and pointed out that recreational cannabis offers a less physically taxing leisure choice. Indeed, some scholars have pointed out that in comparison to alcohol cannabis is deemed “less hazardous and more functionally adaptive because the rewards outweigh the known risks” (Hathaway et al., 2022, p.171). Literature on physiological cannabis benefits has also accounted for pain management and the treatment of diseases, such as epilepsy and multiple sclerosis (Keyhani et al., 2018). The conversations around these potential physiological and therapeutic benefits are still in the earlier stages. However, this study provided qualitative accounts of this health construct and the role of recreational cannabis and its situatedness within one’s leisure.

Similar to the cannabis risks section, participants spent the most time discussing the beneficial psychological outcomes of recreational cannabis use (in/as leisure). Their explanations suggest positive connections between recreational cannabis in/as leisure and both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Participants commented on the connections between hedonic well-being, recreational cannabis use and leisure meanings such as “feeling happy” (Nail et al. 1974) and experiencing a high level of positive emotion and low levels of negative emotion (i.e., Diener, 2009). These findings also support other studies of cannabis effects on positive psychological outcomes that suggest recreational cannabis use improves mood (e.g., Green et al., 2003). Furthermore, participants perceived the introspective qualities of recreational cannabis use as beneficial because it provided them the opportunity to learn about themselves and gain new perspectives that helped them grow. These claims shed light on the connections between recreational cannabis in/as leisure and eudaimonic well-being outcomes

such as personal growth (Keyes & Waterman, 2003). Scholars have suggested that cannabis use can “serve as a guide to psychic areas which can be re-entered without it” (Solomon, 1966, p.446 in Hathaway et al., 2022). Similarly, within this study, participants appreciated that they could take what they learn when high and apply it to their life thereafter, without the need to be high to carry on the same enlightened perspective. These findings were also related to Fratila and Berdychevsky’s (2021) study that uncovered how recreational drugs in/as leisure shaped intrapersonal existential authenticity, including meaningful self-reappraisals and self-expression.

Participants in this study also shared the psychological benefits of using recreational cannabis in/as leisure for positive escapism or adaptive means for coping with life stressors. The participants in this study explained how recreational cannabis in/as leisure helps one to relax and “reset,” for temporary moments during stressful times. This connects with existing leisure scholarship suggesting leisure provides “alternative ways of looking at a problem and ways of coping with a stressful situation” (Caltabiano, 1994, p. 28). Indeed, leisure coping is a powerful mechanism for health and well-being, encouraging people to engage in self-protection, self-restoration, and personal transformation (Kleiber et al., 2002). Additionally, the young adults in this study reflected on the beneficial aspects of recreational cannabis (in/as leisure) in terms of mental health and dependency. Specifically, for one participant cannabis served as a maintenance drug to keep at bay cravings for other drugs. This potential benefit is garnering increased attention (psychologically and pharmacologically) as a “a deliberate substitution strategy,” wherein people may substitute drugs such as opioids for cannabis (Hathaway et al., 2022).

The young adult cannabis users also shared the ways in which they view recreational cannabis (in/as leisure) use beneficial towards socio-cultural domains of their health and well-being. With the growing normalization debate some scientific literature has reported on the

positive social roles of cannabis in/as leisure (e.g., Spracklen, 2011). In this study participants elaborated on the ways in which cannabis facilitated meaningful conversations with others, promoted vulnerability and letting one's guard down to get to know others differently and making stronger connections with others (both strangers and friends). This also re-enforces the interpersonal tenet of existential authenticity in the phenomenon of recreational drugs in/as leisure (e.g., bonding with others, breaking down boundaries between people; Fratila & Berdychevsky, 2021).

Additionally, participants talked about how cannabis is beneficial in terms of meeting wider socio-cultural expectations. Specifically, recreational cannabis use and associated leisure meanings were not considered an interference or threat to eudaimonic well-being aspects such as, mastery and purpose in life (i.e., pursuing education/work; Newman et al., 2014). Thus, recreational cannabis use was an activity (with leisure meanings) which could exist in one's life without detrimental impact on their societal roles. In fact, for some it seemed to boost productivity (e.g., improving focus, making obligatory mundane tasks more enjoyable), adding to the findings from Fratila & Berdychevsky (2020). Cannabis was also viewed as beneficial in terms of meeting societal expectations because it offered a more cost-effective option compared to other drugs that cause more financial ruin.

Indeed, the young adult cannabis users in this study discussed both cannabis risks and benefits. Their responses were explicitly and interpretively connected to leisure meanings, which offers a novel contribution. Specifically, it is important to further develop non-demonizing knowledge of cannabis use(rs) considering the growing cannabis legalization. Thus, this study builds on the discursive shift moving cannabis from the margins to the mainstream and sheds light on understanding how cannabis users calculate and manage the herbs risk-benefits.

Managing the (un)healthiness of recreational cannabis (in/as leisure)

It is important to acknowledge that participants in this study calculated and negotiated cannabis risk-benefits based on various use motives. For the majority, cannabis was explicitly for recreational or leisurely use. However, for some participants their recreational use was combined with other motivations including self-medicating for pain and/or mental health and utilizing cannabis as a maintenance drug to stay away from other “harder” drugs. Indeed, recent literature suggests that it is far more complicated to separate “recreational” from “medicinal” uses in practice (Kiepek & Beagan 2018) because the “recreational/medicinal” divide has more to do with ideological distinctions and policy efforts rather than the use-value attributed to these distinctions by cannabis users themselves (Walker 2017).

Regardless of recreational, medicinal, or combined ‘recreo-medicinal’ motives of use, participants in this study concluded that recreational cannabis pros outweighed the cons for them, supporting the growing reports of lowered cannabis risk perceptions (e.g., SAMHSA, 2021). Some researchers have attributed the lowered cannabis risk perceptions to the increasing legalization around cannabis (Schulenberg et al., 2021) and the normalization of cannabis in/as leisure (Measham, 2004). Scholars have suggested that there is a growing acceptance of cannabis as a relatively “normal” consumptive, leisure, and self-expressive lifestyle choice (Corva & Meisel, 2021). The participants also expressed that they would continue to monitor and use recreational cannabis (in/as leisure) in such a way that ensures perceived benefits offset the perceived harms, which also contributes to this growing normalization theory.

As participants designated and calculated which cannabis features present risks and benefits, they often mentioned the influence of various structures such as drug characteristics (e.g., cannabis form, method of consumption, dosage, etc.), personal circumstance or mental

state prior to cannabis consumption, and settings (e.g., being around others they feel safe with, leisure context). Thus, reflecting Zinberg's thesis that claims the beneficial and pleasurable effects of drug use rely on the drug, set, and setting (Zinberg, 1984). Furthermore, the findings from this study contribute towards the discourse on 'tipping points' in young adults' perceptions of leisure (un)healthiness (Weybright et al., 2019), specifically in relation to recreational cannabis use in/as leisure. Indeed, social messaging and programs promoting healthy leisure should be more tailored to help young adults engage in leisure that best supports their overall well-being (Agans et al., 2022), including the impacts of various leisure behaviors on their hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Thus, this dissertation provides important insights into the perceptions of recreational cannabis risk-benefits and the self-regulating acts, which highlight how the beneficial (i.e., healthy, positive well-being) leisure outcomes are maintained by cannabis users themselves.

This study also uncovers the potential role of leisure meanings as protective factors, which are used to block out or minimize the risks of recreational cannabis use. For instance, young adults shared that they use the amount of free time they have as a way to moderate their cannabis use. For instance, some young adults shared that recreational cannabis in/as leisure happens in their free time after their work or other obligations and can be renounced as a leisure activity to let other things take precedent (e.g., quitting cannabis when having a job interview that drug tests). Additionally, the participants shared that it was important to reserve cannabis use when they are already feeling good rather than using cannabis when they are having a difficult time in life/throughout their day because that can make it trickier to regulate their cannabis use in/as leisure. Indeed, these leisure tools are important for meeting modern social expectations suggesting enjoyable consumption (e.g., recreational cannabis use in/as leisure) must be as

healthy as possible (i.e., pleasure must outweigh the pain), otherwise only the consumers themselves are to blame (Žižek, 2014).

This study complicates one-sided arguments of cannabis as all bad or all good. Plus, it provides details about how recreational drug users situate perceived drug risks in relation to the circumstances of use (e.g., leisure contexts), rather than relying only on the pharmacological characteristics of the drug (Rödner, 2006). Previous prohibitory society has used policy to criminalize cannabis users and position cannabis use as a deviant leisure affair that provides zero positive experience, which also lacked any acknowledgement that pleasurable outcomes can be managed in relation to risks. However, this study provides detailed information about the cost/benefit analysis people make in terms of their recreational cannabis choices and experiences. Specifically, studies like this dissertation provide a qualitative account to understanding quantitative findings such as the Global Drug Surveys' "Net Pleasure Index," wherein recreational cannabis use was reported as offering most pleasure for the least cost (lower than only MDMA and LSD, and nearly consistent with mushrooms; Winstock 2014).

Furthermore, with studies like this we can radically expand the scientific knowledge-making practices and traditions surrounding drug use. We can consider "drug use as experiments taken with an end in mind, with the deployment of particular sources of information, and with particular effects" (Walker, 2022, p. 309). Specifically, we can understand the function of pleasure and leisure outcomes as the end goal in mind, consider leisure protective factors as important sources of information for managing risk-benefit, and recognize leisure meanings as potential effects of recreational cannabis use. These findings can help develop useful spectrums of cannabis risk-benefits and associated leisure meanings. These can be leveraged in drug education to paint a more holistic image of recreational cannabis use effects on the health and

well-being of individuals. Thus, this paper adds to the discourse that has largely been dominated by focusing on the adverse and biomedical effects of cannabis and the absence of any leisure meanings.

Discussion of the optimization of drug education and connections to leisure messaging

The final aim of this research project was to explore emerging adults' views of the effectiveness and appeal of drug education approaches and understand the potential usefulness of incorporating leisure-related messaging in cannabis drug education. The composite textural-structural phenomenological displays (i.e., figures 4, 5, 6) showcase the emerging adults' categorization of the different messaging features for each approach. In the health promotion approach emerging adults discussed the portrayal of cannabis use(rs), information about cannabis users' self-governance, and the messaging features related to the neutrality towards cannabis use(rs). In the harm reduction approach emerging adults discussed the information-driven messaging features and the messaging emphasis on risk minimization for cannabis use(rs). In the zero-tolerance approach emerging adults discussed the fear-driven messaging features and the messaging of unbalanced cannabis risk-benefits. The participants also provided insights related to the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and socio-cultural/political layers that shape their responsivity towards the different cannabis drug education approaches and their evaluations of the (un)appealing messaging features.

Phenomenological understanding of health promotion cannabis education approach

The health promotion approach yielded mostly favorable opinions. One category of favored messaging features revolved around the positive ways in which health promotion messaging portrays cannabis use(rs). Specifically, young adult cannabis users described this as a "human approach," which avoids criminalizing recreational cannabis use. Indeed, the health

promotion framework is guided by the principles of designing healthy public policy that centers on equity (WHO, 1986), which includes considering the complexity of the human experience (Here to Help, 2013). This also encompasses the fact that health behaviors exist in relation to where/how we work and play or recreate (The University of British Columbia, 2015). Young adults also liked that this approach acknowledged cannabis users as individuals who are concerned with making conscious health decisions (Dussault, 2017), regardless of if their cannabis use motives were leisure based or not. Indeed, the participants discussed that cannabis users individually reflect on and engage with different motives of use, ranging from recreational to medical (e.g., to relax, to alleviate pain). The participants also suggested that individual views regarding drug policy play a role in the appreciation of how health promotion portrays cannabis use(rs) (e.g., if one supports cannabis de-criminalization/legalization they are more likely to appreciate the recognition of different cannabis use motives and health-conscious cannabis consumers).

Beyond the individual factors, young adults suggested that the health promotion approach portrays cannabis use(rs) in a way that resembles drug education conversations between people interpersonally and informally. This includes conversations about different motives of use and safe use practices. Indeed, research shows that drug knowledge is often transferred informally and horizontally, between individuals (Zinberg, 1984). Participants also compared the portrayal of cannabis use(rs) to previous drug education campaigns, like DARE, which was focused on instilling fear and left little room to consider drug users concern for (un)healthy cannabis use or different motives of use. Indeed, there is growing scrutiny of the ineffectiveness of previous rigid drug campaigns and a greater push towards ‘sensible drug education’ that fits with the drug

normalization thesis and recognizes recreational cannabis use as a culturally accommodated modern-day leisure choice (Blackman et al., 2018).

Socio-cultural/political factors, such as healthy cultural norms around consumption in/as leisure and cannabis legalization were also noted in connection with the portrayal of cannabis use(rs) in health promotion materials, particularly for reducing stigma of recreational cannabis users and providing them with tips to cultivate safe use practices. This connects with other studies that have investigated the relationship between cannabis use and leisure choices in countries with liberal cannabis policy. Within these political contexts, researchers have identified that (un)healthy relationships with cannabis can be affected by the centrality of cannabis in their lives and the positioning of cannabis in their leisure (e.g., giving precedence to other leisure over cannabis vs. neglecting all other leisure activities in favor of consuming cannabis; Liebrechts et al., 2015). Indeed, this kind of information can be leveraged in health promotion and inspire the inclusion of leisure messaging within the approach.

Another category of appealing health promotion messaging features revolved around cannabis users' ability to self-govern their cannabis use. This is noteworthy considering that the modern-day consumer leisure markets (e.g., night life sectors) are promoting and encouraging individual pleasure-seeking prerogatives, with the caveat that one must be self-sufficient in avoiding potentially harmful consequences (Bauman, 2001; Nayak, 2016). Participants emphasized that the health promotion messaging features recognize an individual's mindfulness and self-responsibility surrounding their recreational cannabis use. This fits with the health promotion's acknowledgement of young people as competent individuals who can implement their own health related decisions (McQueen et al., 1992). Plus, the young adults commented that for some individuals, no matter what they might be told by a drug educator, they will still choose

to use cannabis. This can be especially relevant to people as they have personally determined how they want to situate their recreational cannabis use in/as leisure and who are choosing to use regardless of potential health compromises (e.g., lung health) if they are avoiding damaging effects to their other life domains (e.g., relationships, productivity).

It was also noted that not all cannabis users should be trusted with their own cannabis decision-making, especially if their brain has not fully developed. This decision-making messaging feature was considered on an interpersonal level. According to the participants the health promotion messaging about personal decision making represents a useful way to combat peer pressure. Indeed, health promotion approach goes beyond information provision to enhance decision making by increasing levels of self-confidence (Oncheva & Donev, 2008). In terms of socio-cultural/political connections, young adults recognized that the trust instilled in cannabis users' decision making was different across nations (e.g., Canada vs. USA). It was mentioned that in the U.S. there has been limited drug education depicting cannabis users as capable decision makers who know when and how to use recreational cannabis responsibly. On the other hand, participants suggested that the Canadian drug education system offered more honest information. Part of this information could revolve around the recognition that people are motivated to use recreational cannabis for the anticipated leisure benefits (e.g., pleasure). Nonetheless, traditionally, the consideration of responsible pleasure-seeking has largely been absent in risk prevention about drug use for the fear of not encouraging drug abuse, even if the pursuit of fun is often the main motivating factor (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004; Reith, 2005).

The final category of health promotion messaging features revolved around the neutrality towards cannabis use(s). The young adults appreciated that this approach includes a spectrum of risks and benefits, which was deemed more favorable than one-sided drug narratives. Indeed, the

health promotion approach posits that psychoactive substances have both the potential to promote health and well-being, as well as the potential to cause harm to individuals and the communities they are a part of (Here to Help, 2013). The health promotion approach was described as ‘neutral-education’ non-judgmental by the participants in this study. Although there were mixed reactions towards the social norms information (i.e., information about the percentage of [non]-cannabis users) and the provision of ‘don’t use’ and ‘safe use’ practices (i.e., including non-use as the safest option). Specifically, some participants found it appealing to include statistical information about the rate of cannabis consumption while others did not like this feature. Similarly, some participants found it important to include ‘don’t use,’ while others felt it hurt the messaging effectiveness.

Young adults may consider that they have sorted out why they are choosing to use cannabis (e.g., for leisure outcomes) and be resistant towards messaging that attempts to situate their leisure choices as (non)normative, especially under the legalized context. Nonetheless, including both ends of the spectrum is an important facet of health promotion, which seeks to develop health literacy recognizing the uniqueness of each person and their lifeworld (Here to Help, 2013). The health promotion approach values offering tailored drug information that considers the complexity of individual realities (i.e., building skills to help individuals manage their substance use). This approach avoids drug information provision centered around a model healthy lifestyle that is supposed to fit all.

Participants commented on how the presentation of risks and ‘don’t use’ vs. ‘safe use’ could apply differently to each person. Specifically, participants shared that an individual’s baseline health and well-being without cannabis would impact the applicability of risks and how they respond to the messaging. Indeed, researchers have found that often cannabis-harms are

individually determined, meaning that people perceive cannabis as a drug affecting everyone differently, and thus, everyone identifies their own degree of risk/harm as a result of the cannabis use (George & Vaccarino, 2015). The generalized and/or one-size-fits all messaging can diminish the potential effectiveness of drug education, as mentioned by the participants in this study.

The non-judgmental neutrality-focused messaging was also evaluated at the interpersonal level, and it was noted that the presentation of social norms – i.e., how many people are (not) using cannabis, could be useful for peer dynamics where there are a mix of cannabis (non)using friends who enjoy their leisure together. However, the incorporation of ‘non-use/don’t use’ messaging was deemed unfavorable by others who considered this social out-casting and they viewed such messaging as similar to interpersonal drug conversations between parent-child, wherein the parents tell a kid not to do something ‘because [they] said so.’ The neutrality messaging features were also deemed favorable considering the multitude of drug education offered in the informal online space. Specifically, participants commented that sometimes when searching for drug education online they are faced with heavily biased sources that are either emphasizing all the good or all the bad about cannabis use. Additionally, the neutrality was compared favorably to the tone used in other risk prevention campaigns and health education (e.g., cigarette use, sex education) that were deemed ineffective when they were too heavily slanted towards risk. The findings in this study suggest that health educators need to include the anticipated benefits or pleasurable effects of activities such as sex and drug use. This is important to make the messaging more relatable to young people who are engaging in the risk to experience the pleasure.

Additionally, on a socio-cultural/political level, participants considered how the neutrality of health promotion matches what they have seen in terms of public figures disclosing their previous cannabis use (i.e., re-enforcing that there can be safe experimentation). Non-prohibitive drug policy was also discussed as a policy option which would be able to better endorse the neutral toned messaging and allow for educating the public about safe use. The cannabis legalization framework represents a judicial stamp of approval for freely pursuing pleasure through recreational cannabis use (Hathaway, 2022). However, our health educators have been training and professing under an entirely different legal framework until now, wherein, the pursuit to use cannabis for pleasure was secretly hidden in close knit smoke circles.

Health promotion is often shaped and built by interdisciplinary practitioners who come from diverse paradigms and carrying differing beliefs, which helps to shed light on the combined ‘don’t use’ and ‘safe use’ neutral messaging strategy (Bunton & MacDonald, 1992). The health promotion approach may also be inviting towards other social science experts that can help contextualize recreational cannabis use during the legalization era. Traditionally, leisure scholars have not been invited to this interdisciplinary table. However, they should be pulling up their chair because leisure messaging can play an important and useful role in the curation of health promotion and other drug education approaches especially in the era of recreational cannabis legalization, liberalization, and commercialization. The harm reduction approach is another drug education approach and is often considered a sister approach to health promotion, offering similar and unique messaging features. Thus, young adults were also exposed to the harm reduction drug education approach.

Phenomenological understanding of harm reduction cannabis education approach

The participants in this study shared their perceptions of (un)appealing harm reduction features, and most of their evaluations indicated favorable opinions towards the messaging. Participants evaluated this approach positively because of the information-driven messaging. Specifically, young adults pointed out that harm reduction offers honest and objective cannabis education and paints a thorough image of the cannabis basics (e.g., this is what cannabis is, this is how it works). Since its inception, harm reduction has relied on scientific standards of rationality (Erickson et al., 1997; Heather et al., 1993). Rather than endorsing a moralistic, punitive approach to drug (mis)use, this approach has looked towards public health solutions grounded in evidence-based solutions (Fischer, 1997).

The participants claimed that the responsivity towards information-driven messaging features could vary based on the level of cannabis use experience (e.g., being a new cannabis user). Additionally, the non-biased information about cannabis effects could still be interpreted differently based on the person's character and lifestyle (e.g., information about cannabis making one feel sedated may be interpreted as desirable leisure outcomes, such as making one feel relaxed). Thus, showcasing how leisure meanings may manifest themselves in the interpretation of cannabis information. The information-driven messaging features related to recreational cannabis use can benefit from offering more nuanced understanding of how young adults personally view (un)healthy leisure (Agans et al., 2022). Participants also discussed the ways in which they envision information-driven messaging useful for interpersonal dialogue with others about cannabis use (e.g., exchange of information between more experienced users and less experienced users). The evidence-based nature of harm reduction can be leveraged within informal conversations about sensible and controlled cannabis use, which matches guidelines of

use adhered to by long-time cannabis users (Lau et al., 2015; Tatarsky, 2010). Indeed, this may include guidelines related to recreational cannabis use and associated leisure meanings cultivated by long term users (e.g., different leisure outcomes based on the different types of cannabis strain).

Additionally, young adults commented on the potential usefulness of information-driven messaging within healthcare and educational settings. The messaging feature was deemed helpful and considered necessary information to share through formal channels (e.g., doctors office, student government). Indeed, the harm reduction approach has been characterized as a non-judgmental, credible way for young people to learn about cannabis use (Fletcher et al., 2010), which may be why it was endorsed in official settings as well. Participants also talked about the importance of providing more information-driven messaging and boosting cannabis research because of socio-cultural/political factors, such as cannabis legalization and normalization. Indeed, scholars have suggested that drug policy and educational provision is moving towards an optimal equilibrium between severe temperance-based reality (i.e., the prohibition of any substance use) and legalization without restriction, reaching middle ground with a ‘true’ harm reduction model of cannabis “legalization with strict regulation” (Adinoff & Cooper, 2019). This regulatory approach necessitates drug education information that acknowledges and leverages leisure meanings to keep up with the commercial sector that may be advertising the legal high in/as leisure for profitable gains.

Beyond the information-driven qualities, participants discussed the risk minimization messaging features. The harm reduction approach focuses on addressing health behaviors with practical cost-benefit analysis or the acknowledgement of risk-benefits (Erickson et al., 1997; Hathaway & Erickson, 2003), which was observed and appreciated by the participants because

this opened the dialogue to then discuss safe use tips. Indeed, some participants had an issue with ‘don’t use’ verbiage that suggested not using was the safest option. However, once they moved passed that tip, they seemed impressed with the provision of information about minimizing harms. They found the nuanced information about healthy/unhealthy or good/bad cannabis practices important (e.g., learning when one should avoid cannabis use, healthier methods of consumption through vaporizing or ingestion). The risk minimization or ‘safe use’ messaging considered that even whilst being exposed to the risks some people will continue to choose using recreational cannabis for various reasons, including experimentation and leisure meanings. This feature of harm reduction is reflective of the growing literature on ‘calculated’ hedonism, which posits young adults are likely to pursue drug experiences in their leisure and perform a cost-benefit analysis (Measham, 2004). This involves employing risk minimization strategies that allow them to experience more pleasure (i.e., anticipated enjoyment) than ‘pain’ (i.e., risk; Szmigin et al., 2008).

Participants deemed risk minimization messaging favorable because it encouraged personal contemplation of which safe use practices or harm reduction methods are most appropriate for each individual person. As stated by one participant, harm reduction encourages an “internal monologue” that allows cannabis users to identify if and/or when their cannabis use is turning problematic and which supports them in making informed decisions to address those harms (Swift et al., 2000). Participants also underlined that there are leisure motivated meanings, including “healing” aspects of recreational cannabis use that they want to preserve while still being mindful of the risks. Harm reduction is advantageous in this regard because it does not ignore perceived benefits of cannabis, such as its ability to provide relaxation and a ‘time out’ (Swift et al., 2000). Nonetheless, some participants point out that harm reduction was spreading

itself too thin in terms of trying to provide risk minimization strategies to (non)using audiences. Indeed, harm reduction seeks to meet cannabis users “where they are at” on their spectrum of drug use (Harm Reduction Action Center, n.d.). However, participants suggested offering more tailored safe use tips that fit new and experienced users (e.g., different information for someone preparing for their first time using recreational cannabis vs. a long-term recreational user who is well-versed in the anticipated beneficial leisure outcomes). Therefore, health educators need to continue offering and expanding tailored lower-risk cannabis use guidelines (LRCUG), which are chiefly developed for non-medical use (i.e., for the pursuit of recreational and leisurely outcomes; Fischer et al., 2022). These tailored educational resources should recognize a continuum of experiences with recreational cannabis use and be constantly updated as new evidence becomes available (e.g., including the leisure meanings offered by this dissertation; Fischer et al., 2022).

Beyond the personal management of risk, the risk minimization messaging was deemed useful for interpersonal conversations as well. Specifically, participants shared that this messaging feature could be leveraged in the family unit, wherein family members talk more openly about how to avoid problems due to cannabis use (e.g., talking about how family mental health could cause problematic outcomes). Indeed, harm reduction campaigns have been utilized as useful ways for parents and kids to talk about cannabis use (Fletcher et al., 2010). However, there is still a pressing need for family-oriented cannabis educational resources in the legalized context, which are also based on the inputs from young people and how they might prefer to have these conversations (Jenkins et al., 2021) a gap that this study addresses. On the socio-cultural/political level, the risk minimization messaging suggesting cannabis avoidance was once again compared to previously widespread abstinence only drug campaigns (e.g., DARE).

However, the fact that risk minimization strategies moved onto to talk about ‘safe use’ was viewed more favorably compared to previous U.S. presidential approaches to drug use, such as Nixon’s, ‘just say no’ campaigns.

It was evident that young adult cannabis users wanted a more comprehensive and robust drug dialogue that offered them the possibility to continue using cannabis in a way that preserved the fun or leisurely qualities while avoiding or minimizing the harmful aspects (Žižek, 2014). Both the harm reduction and health promotion approaches considered cannabis risk-benefits and left some space for leisure meanings to be included. However, the final drug education approach that young adults were exposed to focused more on the potential risks. Namely, the zero-tolerance approach provided a significantly different style and was less welcoming towards cannabis in/as leisure meanings.

Phenomenological understanding of zero tolerance cannabis education approach

Majority of the participants in this study ranked zero tolerance as the least favorable approach with the most unappealing messaging features. This supports the growing evidence that suggests health educators need to move away from abstinence-only cannabis education to effectively connect with young people (Bruno & Csiernik, 2020). The participants were turned off by the fear-driven messaging features. Specifically, they disliked the ‘anti-weed’ tone of the messaging, as well as the emphasis on worst-case scenarios. Additionally, young adults did not appreciate the depiction of cannabis users as inadequate or unable to reach their aspirational goals.

The reactions towards this approach were influenced by individual layers. For instance, some participants commented that this approach must be geared towards a younger demographic that have yet to recognize how exaggerated the negative claims are. Indeed, the nature of this

approach is to drive people away from drug use by portraying them (e.g., cannabis users) as pathologically deficient, deviant, and detached from a normal societal footing (Rosenbaum, 2000). However, other participants remarked that this approach would make younger people “tune out” the messaging content because it is infantilizing. In other words, these messaging features are not fitting for the 18 and up demographic because they are failing to recognize the young cannabis users as capable and responsible decision makers who can manage their fun. The abstinence-only health experts are making these presumptions and trying to discourage drug use, however, those in the ‘business of pleasure’ have a different prerogative with young people (Bailey, 1986). The night-time leisure economy offers an ‘infantilized sphere’ that targets young people and their desire to ‘temporarily shrink the harsh realities of adulthood’ by encouraging the pursuit of instant gratification through substance use (Ayes, 2019a). Thus, the fear-driven messaging is not only rejected by young people, but it fails to provide young people with any knowledge or resources to help them navigate substance use in safe ways (Slemon et al., 2019), and specifically within their leisure lives.

The fear-driven messaging features also seemed to lack nuanced information in terms of different levels of cannabis use experience. For instance, some participants commented that they have a longer history of cannabis use and have been able to manage their other life responsibilities without significant cannabis interference to their well-being and aspirations. Therefore, they created distance between themselves and the stigmatized personas that are depicted in the fear-driven messaging (Copes, 2016). The fear-driven messaging features were also compared to previous zero-tolerance campaigns (i.e., ‘above the influence’ campaign) and demarcated as propaganda efforts that ineffectively dissuade cannabis use. Indeed, abstinence-only mass media campaigns have been utilized to fuel ‘the war on drugs’ propaganda by creating

and distributing frightening drug narratives (Buchanan, 2015). The ‘My anti-drug’ campaign (Slater et al., 2011), Nancy Reagan’s “Just Say No” campaign, and the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) campaign are widely recognized scare-tactic attempts in the U.S. (Cermak & Banys, 2016).

The unbalanced account of cannabis risk-benefits was another category of messaging features disliked by most participants. Although, some young adults recognized the importance of listing the risks, the majority did not appreciate how one-sided this information was. Specifically, participants disliked the emphasis on risks because it painted an incomplete image of cannabis use, ignored leisurely meanings and connotations, and only provided the extreme ends of cannabis use spectrum (i.e., cannabis use disorder) (Jenkins et al., 2021). Participants commented that on an individual level this fails to acknowledge the fact that risks are unique to the individual and the cannabis choices they make. Indeed, previous research has found that for zero-tolerance messaging to be more applicable to its targeted audience, it needs to pay more attention to supporting autonomy and individual decision-making (Slavin & Earleywine, 2019).

Participants also commented that zero tolerance messaging needs to consider the frequency of use and acknowledge that susceptibility towards risks may be dependent on rate of consumption (i.e., certain risks only applicable to those abusing or over-using cannabis in/as leisure). Indeed, leisure scholars have found that the perceived (un)healthiness of some leisure behaviors has less to do with the actual activity and more to do with the moderation of engaging that activity (Weybright et al., 2019), which could apply in the case of recreational cannabis use as well. Furthermore, participants remarked that the risks presented in this messaging may be desirable outcomes for some (e.g., slowing down and becoming impaired may represent a desired leisure state of being existing outside of other life obligations).

Additionally, young adults reflected on wider factors that might shape the risk-oriented messaging. For instance, some participants commented on how they perceived this approach as something which was curated by older generations or older adults who were viewed as disconnected from cannabis use. However, research suggests that some older adults are embracing recreational cannabis legalization like younger adults (Lau et al., 2015). Thus, the participants' viewpoints suggesting that zero tolerance is representative of an elderly generation illuminates an overly simplified assumption regarding older adults. This ignores that they might also be seeking alternative drug education approaches (i.e., non-zero tolerance), which move beyond risks and incorporate anticipated benefits informing on how to safely use cannabis as a controlled and responsible recreational activity (Lau et al., 2015). Finally, young adults suggested that the zero-tolerance approach may be most useful in the secondary educational institutional settings (e.g., middle school and high school) wherein presenting cannabis risks lay a foundational awareness of drug knowledge. Indeed, it is useful to continue providing risk-information through this institutional context. However, researchers are also suggesting that zero tolerance needs a serious re-vamping to promote social justice and healthy adolescent development for all young students (Magor-Blatch, 2011).

Overall, the young adults in this study responded most negatively towards the zero-tolerance education approach because it was viewed as the least relevant to them as current cannabis users. Indeed, the zero-tolerance approach may be the least compatible with the current trends of cannabis legalization and normalization. Considering these socio-cultural accommodations and political frameworks, young adults are presented with several consumer choices, including the possibility of legally get high for fun. Thus, it is timely and fruitful to discuss the potential role of leisure messaging in cannabis drug education.

The potential roles of leisure messaging in drug education

Participants commented on the potential usefulness of leisure messaging (i.e., the inclusion of leisure meanings and leisure related outcomes) to improve drug education approaches. Leisure related information has been leveraged in some zero-tolerance messaging targeting younger adults, specifically college students. For instance, the University of Illinois offers an Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Response Program (2019), which outlines various health risk missions (i.e., ways to prevent substance misuse). One such health risk mission is the prevention of substance use by ‘encouraging healthy use of leisure time through recreation and other activities (i.e., leisure as a diversion/distraction from engaging in substance use). Although the potential linkages between drugs and leisure are recognized, young adults who are seeking drug-related pleasure may not find other leisure activities as a comparable substitute. Accordingly, in this study, participants suggestions revolve around leveraging leisure messaging in alternative ways to abstinence-only drug education approaches.

Indeed, leisure messaging pushes cannabis educational resources beyond drug education philosophy that dichotomizes cannabis use choices into either non-use or addictive/dependent use (Jenkins et al., 2021). Participants in this study suggested majority of people using cannabis are using for recreational and leisurely motives, and those who are using for medical purposes are learning about cannabis education from their healthcare providers. Therefore, they claimed educational resources need to expand on recreational cannabis risk-benefits in ways that are salient to the ‘majority’ of cannabis users who use for fun and for the anticipated leisure outcomes. Plus, as participants mentioned there is a growing need for a wider perspective of cannabis in/as leisure because of the growing commercialization and increasing consumer choices surrounding recreational cannabis (e.g., cannabis cafes, bars, etc.).

Thus, participants noted that leisure messaging could help current cannabis users or those interested in experimenting with cannabis use become more cautious of risk-benefits in ways that are relatable to their motives of recreational or leisurely use. Participants also suggested that there should be more guidelines to help people curate optimal, enjoyable recreational cannabis in/as leisure experience. This included encouraging cannabis users to reflect on what their leisure use motives and goals are, as well as equipping them with tools for avoiding slippage into problematic or troublesome use. For instance, the existing works on lower-risk cannabis use guidelines (LRCUG, e.g., Fischer et al., 2022) could update their materials to reflect protective leisure meanings offered by participants in this study. The participants suggestions include waiting to use cannabis post-obligations, being in a good social setting and finding the right cannabis strain that offers an enjoyable leisure/relaxed state of mind (e.g., a strain that is 50% THC and 50% CBD). This fits well with public health departments that are moving beyond the zero-tolerance approach and acknowledging the differences between substance use and problematic use (Jenkins et al., 2021). According to Jenkins et al. (2021) these differentiated definitions suggest that substance use involves different types of drugs (e.g., caffeine, alcohol, cannabis) used for various reasons (e.g., to relax, to feel good), which may or may not lead to problems based on how someone is using the drug and how often. On the other hand, problematic use is defined as substance use that leads to negative health and social consequences.

Additionally, participants expressed that leisure messaging could help reduce the stigmatization of people who are choosing to use cannabis in/as leisure. They stressed that it is important to include information about choosing to use cannabis in/as leisure in health communication. Indeed, scholars like Kozlowski (2020) have advocated that youth have an

ethical and human right to accessing health-related information and harm reduction-oriented messaging about substance use that prioritizes the “rights of youth,” including their choice to use substances. Their choices, therefore, need to be acknowledged, rather than sabotaged and dismissed. This is especially important to consider in relation to leisure, which is fundamentally grounded in the idea of feeling free and free choice (Russell, 2019). The shifting socio-political landscape has legalized recreational cannabis as non-criminalizing freely chosen leisure activity for those of legal age. It is imperative now more than ever for drug education to reel back in the long-lost pleasure and leisure meanings into the health discourse (Moore, 2008; Houborg, 2010). This means creating and providing holistic information about cannabis that is useful for young adults choosing (non)cannabis use.

This study suggests that post-prohibitive drug education can more effectively connect with those who do choose to use recreational cannabis in/as leisure by providing more recognition of pleasure in their educational resources. Discourses on drug use and public health have largely neglected the study of pleasure (Bunton & Coveney, 2011). However, including pleasure in public health messaging targeting young adult drug users can address this pleasure-deficit and make the messaging more salient to those using cannabis for leisurely outcomes.

Indeed, future cannabis education can mirror sexual education and the ways in which sex educators are increasingly being trained to openly discuss minimizing harm and maximizing pleasure (Naisteter & Sitron, 2010). To this regard, sex is recognized as a pleasurable act even through it presents risks such as unsafe sex, therefore, people are equipped with educational resources that teach them about sexual safeguarding strategies (O’Malley & Valverde, 2004). However, the implementation of pleasure meanings in the cannabis education context requires considerable caution due to cannabis commercialization. There are public health benefits to

recognizing recreational cannabis use in/as a disciplined pleasure (Bunton & Coveney, 2011). However, other public and private actors are eager to exploit the pleasure seeking and instant gratification potentiality of recreational cannabis use (Crépault, 2018). Thus, this study suggests carefully considering how to incorporate leisure meanings and pleasure in drug education materials which can fair reasonably against those who are in the business of pleasure for profit.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

(De)limitations and future research directions

The delimitations of this chosen qualitative design include its inability to create generalizable results. The findings produced by this study are specific and pertain to emerging adults living in the U.S. states where recreational cannabis use is legalized. Therefore, these findings may not be transferable to individuals who at a different life stage or who are living in the states with non-legalized cannabis use or outside of the U.S. However, generalization is not the goal of phenomenology because this research design requires a homogeneous sample with the purpose of building ideographic and nomothetic understandings. Indeed, future research should continue to investigate the research questions asked in this study with non-emerging adult populations, non-Western cultural contexts, and states/countries with different (non)prohibitive cannabis policies (e.g., decriminalized states). Another delimitation of this study is the final demographic make-up of this study (i.e., overwhelmingly white/Caucasian), which does not help address the inequities in drug policy and education experienced by non-white people. For instance, it is important to expand our knowledge of how drug education approaches like zero tolerance have negatively impacted African Americans and how different drug education approaches may be perceived by African Americans (Bell, 2015). Although the study was open to recruiting people of all racial/ethnic backgrounds, there was only one participant who identified as multiracial (i.e., African American and Asian). This limitation can be addressed with future research purposefully recruiting non-white populations.

Additional limitations include memory decay and social desirability, which could impact the quality of information shared by the participants. Memory decay was minimized by only

interviewing emerging adults who have had a recreational cannabis use experience in the previous two months. Social desirability was mitigated by the researcher's purposeful building rapport with the participants, explaining the importance of this study, and encouraging participants to feel comfortable and share their authentic responses. Another limitation is the researcher's similarity to the research participants in this study (e.g., being in the emerging adulthood life stage). For instance, the researcher's own personal experiences as an emerging adult and their personal knowledge of recreational cannabis use may have affected the interpretation of the participants' voices. Furthermore, considering positionality, it can be useful to consider the insider-outsider continuum in terms of life stage. In this dissertation the researcher is studying an identity group they are a part of (i.e., emerging adults). Therefore, they are insiders in collaboration with other insiders (Herr & Anderson, 2014). However, hermeneutic phenomenology is defined as a methodology that produces new knowledge and science through co-creation (i.e., exchange of ideas and interpretations between the researcher and the researched). Thus, the similarity serves as an analytical resource rather than a limitation in this research design. The researcher also practiced self-awareness and reflexivity (i.e., reflexive memo-ing throughout) as well as maintaining an audit trail to curtail any over emphasis of the researcher's lived experiences in terms of proximity to the life stage and phenomenon.

There are additional methodological decisions that might have limited this research study, which could be altered in future studies utilizing different methodologies or investigating the phenomenon of recreational cannabis use from a different vintage point. For instance, following the phenomenological approach meant that this study did not employ a theoretical framework to conceptualize the project and frame the investigation of specific theoretical constructs. However, other studies might rely on theoretical constructs to build deductively guided research.

Additionally, this research selected three distinct drug education approaches, each with their own unique messaging features (e.g., zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion). Future research can benefit from including different health communication approaches to further expand knowledge on how to effectively communicate risks and benefits and leisure meanings of drug use choices. Another limitation includes the research design decisions related to the photo elicitation portion of the study. The photo elicitation in this study was utilized to prompt conversations about (in)effective drug information with participants. Specifically, a handful of drug education posters were selected by the researcher to represent three different drug education approaches, which were created by official institutional health communication channels (e.g., university health centers, regional public health departments, etc.). However, these were selected among hundreds of different options. Therefore, if someone else was constructing this study they may have chosen different images to represent the same three distinct drug education approaches. Future research projects could benefit from investigating young adults' reactions towards informal drug education sources as well (e.g., online websites created by drug users for drug users).

Practical implications

This study offers several practical implications especially because this research was conducted with the first U.S. cohort/generation of emerging adults experiencing cannabis legalization. First, this research provides important insights related to building socially just drug education policies and educational cannabis resources. Instead of relying on the outdated law enforcement/zero tolerance approach, this study suggests recreational cannabis use is pursued for pleasure. This represents an important departure from the misguided assumptions of cannabis use as a criminal behavior or cannabis users as criminal people. Historically, certain groups of the U.S. population

(i.e., non-white communities) have been severely disadvantaged and targeted for their drug use behavior without any consideration of the drugs in/as leisure meanings. Furthermore, leisure meanings can be useful to transform and update drug education that fails to acknowledge the role of pleasure in drug use (i.e., the pleasure-deficit). This can be advantageous for enhancing risk communication strategies seeking to create tailored and targeted drug education resources relatable to different types of drug use and users (e.g., experimental/one off drug users, occasional drug users, etc.). Plus, the addition of leisure meanings can serve a more fruitful purpose in health promotion efforts that are concerned with curating holistic health information, which recognizes the potentially beneficial and harmful spectrum of drug/cannabis use (i.e., leisure meanings can be leveraged to show when it can be helpful/hurtful). Studies like this can join others that encourage complementing the current public health frameworks with more comprehensive understanding of the spectrum of well-ness and the ‘self-ownership of individual health’ (e.g., Subritzky, 2018; Blackman et al., 2018). Expanding the field of health communications to encompass knowledge on the potential usefulness of drugs in/as leisure meanings can lead to more open discussion, inspiring drug user reflexivity about their motivations to use and anticipated outcomes.

Indeed, this study can be utilized to create and develop novel approaches to cannabis education that move beyond zero-tolerance and are fitting for the legalized cannabis era that no longer requires abstinence or threatens cannabis users with as many legal repercussions. The reformed drug education approaches (i.e., those including leisure meanings) can be applied to college health classes, along with the conversations that currently exist about safe sex and safe drinking practices (e.g., prevention of binge drinking, alcohol-related harms). The study findings can also contribute towards the development of parent-child drug conversations (i.e., how

parents teach their kids about recreational cannabis use and prepare them for situations where they may be presented with the opportunity to try cannabis). These conversations are especially crucial for millennial parents that are going to be raising children during the cannabis legalization era, which presents the opportunity to use cannabis for leisure legally. This also relates to the parental use of cannabis in/as leisure and the need for health communication information that helps parents learn how to safely use recreational cannabis and/or discuss their use of recreational cannabis with their kids. Older adult generations can also benefit from the incorporation of leisure meanings and the associated risk-benefit connections because although they may have lived a large portion of their lives under prohibition, they too may be interested in the legal leisurely uses of cannabis. Furthermore, health professionals can benefit from updated health training materials preparing them to work with patients that are using recreational cannabis in/as leisure and helping them to overcome potential stigmatization of such behaviors. Then, they can more effectively help their patients avoid problematic use or aid in their patient's cannabis use reduction or quitting goals. Lastly, the information from this study can be passed along to those in the business of pleasure (e.g., dispensaries, cannabis cafes, etc.) that could further impart knowledge of safe use practices to recreational cannabis users.

Conclusion

This dissertation represents a novel attempt to understand why young adults in the U.S. use recreational cannabis and specifically which leisure meanings they experience through recreational cannabis use. The study found that recreational cannabis use can be explained by various normative leisure definitions including state of mind, free time, activity, and pleasure. The participants in this study shared that cannabis use was accommodated into their otherwise mainstream lives, supporting and growing the knowledge of other studies that have concluded

similarly (e.g., Liebrechts et al., 2015; Shildrick, 2002). The normative leisure meanings associated with recreational cannabis in this dissertation provide a useful argument for pushing past deviant leisure theories to understand risk behaviors more holistically (Malleck, 2008; Rojek, 1999a; Williams, 2009; Blackshaw & Crabbe, 2004). Doing so provides leisure scholars with the opportunity to approach drug behaviors in/as leisure with a socially just lens. Additionally, it equips leisure scholars with a comprehensive arsenal to collaborate with scholars across multidisciplinary fields that are investigating drugs with a focus on pleasure and the anticipated benefits (e.g., leisure meanings) that drug users seek in their experiences.

This study also explored the U.S. emerging adults' perceptions of cannabis risk-benefits and shed light on the links to leisure meanings. Young adults described cannabis-related risks and benefits in the biological/physiological, psychological, and social-cultural health domains. Emerging adults' perceptions of cannabis-related risk-benefits also contribute towards the growing normalization thesis that situates recreational cannabis use as a normal feature of some young people's leisure (Gould et al., 2018; Corva & Meisel, 2021) and recognizes a deliberate calculation and negotiation of cannabis risk-benefits (Measham, 2004). The risk-benefit perceptions shared by young adults in this study push scholars and practitioners to look beyond the bio-medical understandings of cannabis use outcomes and expand to other health domains, including psycho-socio-cultural well-being. Furthermore, this study found that cannabis benefits are ripe with leisure meanings. Specifically, there were several connections drawn between the recreational cannabis use and its beneficial and harmful qualities conceptualized through the leisure well-being model (i.e., hedonic and eudaimonic well-being outcomes; Carruthers & Hood, 2007). Additionally, leisure meanings themselves surfaced as protective factors that helped to minimize risks of the anticipated benefits (e.g., using cannabis post-obligations to be

able to relax vs. during or before obligations when one must focus on specific concentrated tasks). Indeed, the participants' stories showcased that recreational cannabis in/as leisure can only be experienced as enjoyable leisure if the consumption is as healthy to one's overall well-being as possible (Žižek, 2014). Thus, recreational cannabis use in/as leisure would not be deemed a worthwhile pleasure if it were to overpower their bio-psycho-sociocultural health domains. These valuable insights can be effectively leveraged in the enhancement of drug education.

This study advanced knowledge on the optimization of drug education approaches based on the U.S. emerging adults' responsiveness towards three different drug education approaches (i.e., health promotion, harm reduction, and zero tolerance). Young adults shared positive reactions towards the non-judgmental portrayal of cannabis users, attention to self-governance of cannabis use and neutral tone of messaging offered by the health promotion approach. As for the harm reduction approach, emerging adults appreciated the usefulness of information and risk management strategies. In both health promotion and harm reduction approaches, some young adults were un-supportive of the suggestion that cannabis avoidance would be their safest cannabis choice. Young adults were least impressed and responded most negatively to the zero-tolerance approach because of its fear-driven appeals and overwhelmingly one-sided narrative that focused on cannabis risks, avoiding any potential benefits. The drug education portion of this dissertation also explored the potential roles of leisure messaging in communicating risk-benefits to young adults.

This study suggests that health communication efforts can benefit from adding leisure meanings, such as pleasure, to the educational drug resources targeting young adults. This can help fill the current pleasure-deficit gap in drug education knowledge (Bunton & Coveney,

2011), which is problematic considering the reality of recreational cannabis use motivations in the context of cannabis legalization. Leveraging these leisure meanings can also help minimize the psychological reactance common in health communication (i.e., the motivational state of negative affect/cognition that people experience when they feel messages are posing a threat to their freedom; Quick, 2012). Specifically, leisure messaging can work most effectively if added to the harm reduction type drug education styles, such as lower-risk cannabis use guidelines (LRCUG, e.g., Fischer et al., 2022) and health promotion approaches that recognize that psychoactive substances can be used to enhance health and well-being, as well causing harm to health (Here to Help, 2013). Leisure messaging is least compatible with zero tolerance approach that has traditionally promoted leisure as a diversion or substitute to substance use (e.g., Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Response Program, 2019). Indeed, the zero-tolerance approach is not concerned with equipping current cannabis users with safe use rhetoric that recognizes the pursuit of cannabis for pleasure. However, considering the growing cannabis legalization trends, researchers and public health professionals need to be able to entertain the possible positive health and wellness outcomes of recreational cannabis (Corva & Meisel, 2021). Moreover, leisure meanings and the calculated and negotiated risk-benefits can also be used in drug education to inform cannabis users on how to avoid problematic cannabis use as they are exposed to the growing commercialization trend of cannabis use for pleasure.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE & MATERIALS FOR PHOTO ELICITATION

While the interviews progressed in a free and natural flow of interaction between the participant and the interviewer the researcher also made sure to probe and ask about specific topics as listed below.

Introduction questions

- How did you hear about the study?
- What made you interested to participate in the study?

Research aim 1 - Recreational cannabis use and leisure

What do you think about recreational cannabis use?

Potential probes:

- In your opinion, is recreational cannabis use a leisure activity? Why or why not? Can recreational cannabis use be a part of some other leisure activities? If yes, which?
- Why do you use cannabis?
- When do you use cannabis?

Research aim 2 - Risk-benefit perceptions of recreational cannabis use

What do you believe are the benefits of using recreational cannabis?

What do you believe are the harms of using recreational cannabis?

Potential probes:

- What are benefits to using cannabis within your leisure?
- What are the harms associated with using cannabis within your leisure?
- Does cannabis present a risk towards what you consider to be the best version of yourself?
- Does cannabis offer a benefit towards what you consider to be the best version of yourself?
- Does cannabis present a risk towards your life satisfaction or quality of life?
- Does cannabis offer a benefit towards your life satisfaction or quality of life?

Research aim 3 – Drug education and recreational cannabis use

Which kind of drug education approach is most useful in terms of preventing people from developing a problematic relationship with cannabis?

Potential probes:

- What drug education (if any) have you experienced in the past?
- What kind of information could be included in drug education to reduce chances of developing a problem with cannabis?
- Do you think talking about leisure can be useful in drug education? If yes, how?

In the drug education portion of the interview the researcher will also show the participants different images representing three different drug education approaches (i.e., zero tolerance, harm reduction, and health promotion), **the following questions will be asked while students are also being exposed to each of the images:**

- What are some of your initial thoughts about this drug education poster?
- What do you like about this poster?
- What do you dislike about this poster?
- How does this poster relate to your personal experiences with cannabis?
- What are your reactions towards the creator of the poster (i.e., the source from where the poster comes from)?
- Do you think this poster would be effective in terms of informing young adults about cannabis related risks?
- Do you think this poster would be effective in terms of informing young adults about cannabis related benefits?
- Does any of the information on this poster talk about the use of cannabis for recreation or as a leisure activity?

After being exposed to all the images students will be asked the following questions:

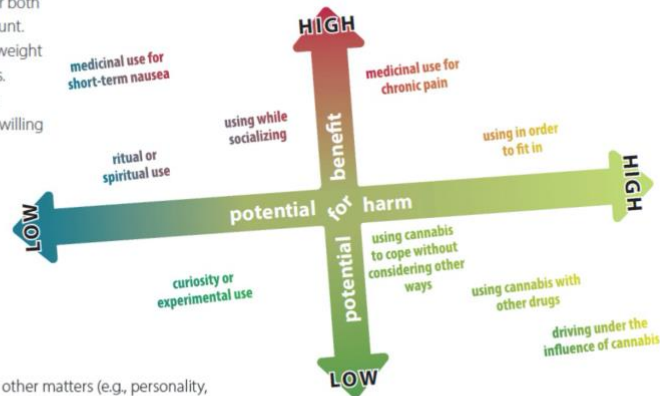
- Now that you've seen all the different drug education poster styles, can you pick out a favorite?
- What about your favorite poster makes it your favorite?
- Which poster do you like the least?
- What about your least favorite posters makes it the least appealing choice?
- Do you think it's important to talk about people's leisure in drug education messaging?
- In what ways would you incorporate information about leisure if trying to prevent people from developing a problematic relationship with cannabis?

Concluding questions

- Would you like to add anything else?

HEALTH PROMOTION IMAGE #1

Benefit and harm are not binary opposites on a single continuum but co-exist like two intersecting continua (see diagram at right). Prospects for both benefit and harm should be taken into account. Those who use may at times assign greater weight to perceived benefits than to possible harms. Awareness of this will help avoid a simplistic response detached from meaning for those willing to take risks in regard to cannabis.



The reasons a person uses cannabis as well as other matters (e.g., personality, health status, previous experience, present mood, relationships, setting) along with rate and mode of intake (e.g., eating, smoking) all factor into the benefits and harms the individual experiences.

HEALTH PROMOTION IMAGE #2

 SLOTHS MOVE SLOW TO SAVE THEIR ENERGY Wait to feel the effects of cannabis before deciding to use more. It can take 30 minutes to 2 hours to feel the effects of edible cannabis. If trying an edible product, sample a small amount first and wait to see how you react. Plus, if you're under 19, it's still illegal. START LOW. GO SLOW. KNOW THE FACTS. USE YOUR INSTINCTS. www.hamilton.ca/cannabis 	 OWLS WATCH AND LISTEN BEFORE THEY MAKE A MOVE The glasses are just for fashion. Be sure to check your point of view about cannabis. Make health choices using facts not beliefs. It is safer not to use cannabis, but if you choose to use, investigate ways to reduce risk to your brain and body. Plus, if you're under 19, it's still illegal. BE WISE. KNOW THE FACTS. USE YOUR INSTINCTS. www.hamilton.ca/cannabis 	 WOLVES TRAVEL IN PACKS Hey, wait for me! If you don't use cannabis you're part of the pack. 4 out of 5 Ontario students report not having used cannabis in the last year. Using cannabis often can affect you: • Relationships • Physical and mental health • Ability to make good decisions Plus, if you're under 19, it's still illegal. JOIN THE PACK. KNOW THE FACTS. USE YOUR INSTINCTS. www.hamilton.ca/cannabis 

HARM REDUCTION IMAGE #1

The 6Ds of Best Practice for Cannabis Use in Youth

Protect your brain
Be smart about
cannabis use

FOR THOSE UNDER AGE 25, MARIJUANA SLOWS
AND INTERFERES WITH BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

1

Don't Use

Abstaining from use is the best way to prevent adverse effects of cannabis.



2

Delay Use

Delay use as long as possible. While the "gold standard" is to wait until age 25, any delay in using cannabis can reduce the potential for harm.



3

Decrease Use

Using less and less frequently will reduce the risk of adverse effects.



4

Don't Use & Drive

Avoid using prior to driving to lower your chances of a vehicle collision and fatalities.



5

Don't Smoke It

Vaporizing cannabis is easier on the lungs than smoking.



6

Careful Dosing

When using edibles, remember that the effects are delayed by 30-60 minutes. Edibles are the most common cause of cannabis overdose.



Anastasiya Shyshlova PharmD Candidate
Michael Beazely BSC, PhD

References available upon request at mbeazely@uwaterloo.ca



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HARM REDUCTION IMAGE #2

Cannabis 101

For recreational or medicinal use. Also known as marijuana, pot, bud, and weed.



How it's Used

- Inhaled starts working within 10 min and effects lasts 2-4h (but can be up to 24h)
- Edibles start working at around 1h and effects last 4-6h (but can be up to 24h)
- Vaping and edibles likely safer than smoking

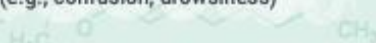
When to Avoid

- Pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Personal/family history of psychosis
- Several hours before driving
- Allergy to cannabis
- Under age 25



Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)

- Makes some people high
- Stimulates appetite
- More cognitive side effects than CBD (e.g., confusion, drowsiness)



Cannabidiol (CBD)

- Does not make people high
- Many potential medicinal uses



*Cannabis has hundreds of other ingredients with unknown effects

What to Watch For

Side effects are higher for cannabis than most prescription medicines

Very common (10-30%)	Common (1-10%)	Uncommon but serious (<1%)
Intensely happy/uneasy	Impaired memory, confusion	Intense/prolonged vomiting
Sedation/relaxation	Blurred vision/visual hallucination	Loss of motivation
Difficulty speaking	Loss of touch with reality/self	
Numbness	Problematic cannabis use (e.g., difficulty cutting down, continued use, despite harm)	
Disconnected thoughts		
Muscle twitching		
Changes in heart rate/blood pressure		

Long term side effects largely unknown



Reduce Harm

- Avoid driving for several hours after use
- Vaporizing/edibles preferred over smoking
- Keep away from children, especially edibles
- Delay age of first use as long as possible

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<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/marijuana-cannabis.html> 64: 111-120f
 Content by Kelly Grindrod, MSc, PharmD; Michael Beazely, BSP, PhD. Design by Adrian Poon, BA

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HARM REDUCTION IMAGE #3

Cannabis & Your Health

10 WAYS to Reduce Risks When Using

Cannabis use is now legal for adults, but it does have health risks.
If you use non-medically, you can make informed choices for safer use.

Delay using cannabis as late as possible in life, ideally not before adulthood.



Avoid using if you're pregnant, or if you or family members have a history of psychosis or substance use problems.

Choose low-potency products — those with low THC and/or high CBD content.

Stay away from synthetic cannabis products, such as K2 or Spice.

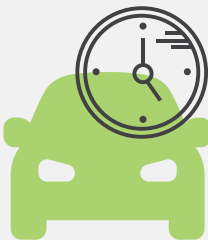


Use cannabis in ways that don't involve smoking — choose less risky methods of using like vaping or ingesting.

If you do smoke, avoid deep inhalation or breath-holding.

Occasional use, such as one day per week or less, is better than regular use.

Don't operate a vehicle or machinery while impaired by cannabis. Wait at least 6 hours after using. Remember that combining alcohol and cannabis makes you more impaired.



Your actions add up. The more risks you take, the more likely you are to harm your health.

Not using cannabis at all is still the best way to protect your health (unless you use with a medical recommendation).

*When using cannabis, be considerate of the health and safety concerns of those around you.
Don't hesitate to seek support from a health professional if you need help controlling your cannabis use, if you have withdrawal symptoms or if your use is affecting your life*



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IN SUBSTANCE MISUSE

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HARM REDUCTION IMAGE #4

Safer Cannabis Use

Not using cannabis is the best way to avoid the risks to your health, especially if you are young or at risk for mental health problems. Consider waiting to use. The longer you wait to use cannabis and any other drug (including alcohol), the much less the risk. If you consider using, follow these tips:

QUESTIONS?

AC Umbrella Project
umbrellaproject@algonquincollege.com

For more info on cannabis legalization:
algonquincollege.com/umbrellaproject



Umbrella
Project

AC | Student Support
Services

ZERO TOLERANCE IMAGE #1

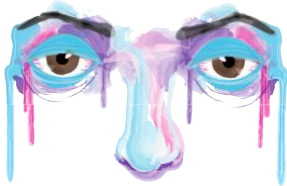


ZERO TOLERANCE IMAGE #2



Impaired focus, memory, concentration, and ability to learn

Increased chances of negative psychological reactions (anxiety, paranoia, disturbing thoughts)



Slower reflexes, altered perception, impaired decision making (consent)

Increased chances for lung damage, respiratory infections, and cough (when smoked)



Greater frequency of cannabis use increases the likelihood of developing problem cannabis use (Dependence in about 10% of users, 30% of daily users)

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana

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APPENDIX B: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Socio-Demographic Profile Survey

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to share your important perspective on the meanings of recreational cannabis use and its links to leisure.

Your identity will be kept confidential and the information requested here will help me interpret and put in context the insights that you will share with me during the interview. Please feel free to skip any question.

Please state below a fictional name that you are choosing for this interview:

I will refer to you by this name throughout the duration of the interview and this will also be the name I will use in any report of the results when quoting or referring to your responses.

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your gender? _____

3. What state are you currently living in? _____

4. Are you a college student? ☐ Yes ☐ No (If not, skip next question)

5. What is your current year in school?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Graduate
- ☐ Other _____(please, specify)

6. Were you born in the United States? ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Did you grow up in the United States? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. What is your racial or ethnic background?

- ☐ White/Caucasian, not of Hispanic origin
- ☐ Black, not of Hispanic origin
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian/Native Alaskan

☐ Other _____(please, specify)

9. What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Never married
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced/Separated
- ☐ Widowed

10. What is your current dating status?

- ☐ Exclusive relationship
- ☐ Open relationship where both partners can see other people
- ☐ Casually dating, but not in a relationship
- ☐ Not dating and not in a relationship

11. Are you currently...?

- ☐ A full time student
- ☐ A part-time student

12. Are you currently...?

- ☐ Employed for wages
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Out of work and looking for work
- ☐ Out of work but not currently looking for work
- ☐ Unable to work

13. On average, how many hours of leisure do you have per week?

14. Where did you learn about this study?

- ☐ Social media post
- ☐ Flyer posted on campus, local shops, etc.
- ☐ Announcement in a college class
- ☐ A friend/personal contact who already participated in study
- ☐ Other _____

Cannabis Specific questions

15. In terms of frequency....

1. How often do you use cannabis?

Once a month or less (0) 2–4 times a month (1) 2–3 times a week (3) 4 or more times a week (4)

2. How many hours were you “stoned” on a typical day when you had been using cannabis?

Less than 1 hour (0) 1 or 2 hours (1) 3 or 4 hours (2) 5 or 6 hours (3) 7 or more hours (4)

16. During the past year...

3. Do you think your use of cannabis was out of control?
never/almost never (0) – sometimes (1) – often (2) – always/nearly always (3)
4. Do you worry about your use of cannabis?
never/almost never (0) – sometimes (1) – often (2) – always/nearly always (3)
5. Do you wish you could stop the use of cannabis?
never/almost never (0) – sometimes (1) – often (2) – always/nearly always (3)
6. How difficult do you find it to stop, or go without cannabis?
Not difficult (0) – quite difficult (1) – very difficult (2) – impossible (3)

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA - CHAMPAIGN

Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism
College of Applied Health Sciences
104 Huff Hall
1206 South Fourth St
Champaign, IL 61820



Information Statement Regarding the Research

Aiming “High” in Young adulthood and College: The Meanings of Recreational Cannabis Consumption

Introduction

The main goal of the study is to understand the experiences of young adults participating in recreational drug consumption. We would like to invite you to participate in this project. The following information is to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.

What will you be asked to do?

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by one of the researchers, and that interview will be recorded. Recording the interviews is important so we can get a better understanding of your experiences. The interview will take approximately 1-1.5 hours and will be in whichever meeting place you choose. After the interview, we would be happy to give you a written copy of your interview so you can give us comments about it. However, you don't have to do this part if you don't want to.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated with this project are small, and are not greater than the risks you have in your regular daily life. Some questions in this study may bring about sensitive topics or memories, such as the ones related to motivations for, experiences with, or outcomes of the recreational drug use. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer with no negative consequences, and you may stop participating at any time without penalty. If any of the questions upsets you or makes you feel uncomfortable, please let us know. We will understand. We can take a break, meet another time, or stop the interview.

What are the relevant resources available to you?

This is a research study that involves questions related to sensitive topics that may cause distress. As researchers, we do not provide substance abuse or mental health services and we will not be following up with you after this study. However, we want to provide every participant in this study with contact information for available clinical resources, should you decide you need assistance at any time.

Will your identity be kept be confidential?

The results of the study will be sent to scientific publications, scholarly conferences, and the press. However, no names or other identifying information will be given in any research report. Hence, your information will be kept confidential and you will be protected to the extent provided by the law. Although this interview is confidential, we ask you not to reveal identifying information about friends and acquaintances that may be using drugs. Furthermore, because this study will be utilizing Zoom videoconferencing there a various layers of confidentiality and privacy that this service offers. For more information please read the Zoom Video Communications ‘Security Guide’ (link: <https://d24cgw3uvb9a9h.cloudfront.net/static/81625/doc/Zoom-Security-White-Paper.pdf>) and the ‘Zoom Privacy Statement’ (link: <https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html>). Also, please consider that no participant in this study can be currently involved in the criminal justice system.

Who do you contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions, you may contact Iulia Fratila at 734-233-1493 or via email fratila2@illinois.edu or Liza Berdychevsky at 217-244-2971 or via email lizabk@illinois.edu.

Who do you contact about your rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 217-333-2670 or e-mail OPRS at irb@illinois.edu.

Please make sure that you have read all the information, asked any questions, and gotten answers. You will be given a copy of this form for you to keep.

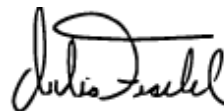
We thank you very much for considering this request. Please refer to the following statements.

I have understood this letter and voluntarily agree to participate ☐ Yes ☐ No

I give permission for the interview to be recorded and saved as an audio file ☐ Yes ☐ No

All my questions about participating in the research have been answered ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature of the Researcher Conducting the Interview:



Date: _____

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS
RECRUITMENT FLYER

AIMING “HIGH” IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD: THE MEANINGS OF RECREATIONAL CANNABIS USE

Participants Needed!

If you are:

- ❖ Between the ages 18-30
- ❖ Not currently involved in the criminal justice system
- ❖ Living in a state where recreational cannabis is legal
- ❖ Have used recreational cannabis within the past 2 months

Please contact our research team!

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Recreation, Sport and Tourism
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ILLINOIS
Office for the Protection
of Research Subjects
Approval Date: October 28, 2021
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RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello,

My name is Iulia. I am a Ph.D. Student in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. My research study is titled, "Aiming 'High' in Young Adulthood: The Meanings of Recreational Cannabis Use."

If you are currently between 18 to 30 years old, not currently involved with the criminal justice system, and have used recreational cannabis within the last two months, please allow me to invite you to participate in a study that explores the meanings of recreational drug use.

In this study, I am looking at the use of cannabis in various leisure contexts and as a leisure experience in itself for (non) college attending young adults. I am interested in exploring both risks and benefits associated with recreational drug use, as perceived by U.S. young adults.

If you agree to participate, you would partake in an individual interview (taking approximately 1-1.5 hours) in a place and during the time convenient for you. Your permission would be asked to audio record the interview. Recording the interviews is important so we can get a better understanding of your experiences. However, no names or any other identifying information would ever be shared in any research report and only the research team will have access to the recordings. In other words, I would like to emphasize that your responses will be confidential.

Your participation would be much appreciated and extremely important, as it would provide valuable insights for understanding recreational drug use among young adults and designing effective health and drug education programs for the young adulthood life stage.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration!

Iulia Fratila