Why Everybody Can’t Get Stoned

The Role of Gender and Ethnicity in Mediating the Differentiated Normalisation of Marijuana use

by

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ABSTRACT

WHY EVERYBODY CAN’T GET STONED?
THE ROLE OF GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN MEDIATING THE DIFFERENTIATED NORMALISATION OF MARIJUANA USE

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Aim: To examine the role of gender and ethnicity in shaping attitudes towards the “normalized” (Parker et al., 1998) use of marijuana. Method: Survey and interview respondents were recruited from undergraduate classes at three Canadian universities. Findings: Gender and ethnicity are mediating factors that often exclude women and Pan-Asian students from participation in marijuana-using groups. Interviews with users and non-users illustrate differentiated access to assuming an identity consistent with normalized use. Despite the presence of social-cultural accommodations for sensible marijuana use among white men, a large segment of women and Pan-Asian youth view marijuana as contradictory to their ascribed identity, and thus abstain from its use. Those who participated often did so in unique ways that highlighted their gendered and/or ethnic identity. Non-users were more likely to view white men’s marijuana use as unproblematic, when compared with use by all other groups. These disparate levels of stigma were partially attributed to the media’s portrayal of conventional marijuana users as ‘white’ and ‘male’. Conclusion: The lack of ‘available’ marijuana using identities for women and Pan-Asian students supports the theory of “differentiated normalization” (Shildrick, 2002). The differentiated patterns of normalization highlight the importance of gender and ethnicity in determining the boundaries of subcultural groups. These findings can inform the work of public health professionals by highlighting the role of gender and ethnicity in the development of harm reduction programs focused on youth marijuana use.
Keywords: Marijuana, Subcultures, Gender, Ethnicity, Intersectionality, Identity, Normalization, Differentiated Normalization.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

The ‘session’ starts in the usual way: a head nod from a friend, a whiff of something pungent, a hand signal indicative of a toke, or a quick “want to go for a smoke?” In the backyard, behind the trees in the park, in a basement, or in someone’s car, a young person is offered their first hit of the night. The experience is all too common among Canadian youth. Marijuana use has become so ubiquitous that a party rarely seems complete until a joint has been lit. The omnipresence of marijuana among particular groups of young people has reached a point where sensible use of the drug has been described as “normalised” (Parker, Aldrige, & Measham, 1998) for western youths.

Other young people, however, are rarely invited to join. They often watch from side-lines as their friends freely explore the euphoric effect of marijuana’s psychedelic properties. Even when invited, they politely refuse. On the face of it, the decision to abstain is personal, whether based on health, appreciation for the law, or simply a desire to not be intoxicated. However, having been one of those who often joined the circle, I could not help but have a nagging feeling that particular types of people were rarely present. It was not until years later that I began to notice that I was often the only racial minority in the group, and my female friends rarely partook.

Upon re-reading Parker’s theoretical description of “normalised” cannabis using groups, I was reminded of David Muggleton’s (2000) frustration with Hebdidge’s (1979) description of Punk culture, which contradicted Muggleton’s own experiences of being a punk. Much like Muggleton, I found Parker’s theorizing of marijuana-using groups to be inconsistent with my own experiences as I recalled them. The white and masculine nature of marijuana-using groups I knew did not resemble the post-racial and post-gender descriptions of youth culture that are at the core of the normalisation thesis (see Parker et al., 1998). Far from feeling conventional, I often found my experiences to be closer to Park’s (1931) description of “the marginal man…whom fate has condemned
to live in two societies and in two cultures” (p.101), and who must thus struggle to negotiate the differences in the two. Even when I established myself as an insider in marijuana-using groups, I rarely felt at ease. It was as if a part of me never belonged. My observations about differences in types of participants in marijuana-using subcultures began my interest in the present research.

In recent years, marijuana use has received substantial attention in theoretical discussions about the role of structure and agency in drawing the boundaries of acceptability. While marijuana use may be becoming a ‘normalised’ activity for many otherwise conventional or law-abiding youth (Parker, Williams, & Aldrith, 2002), the same level of acceptance does not extend to all (e.g. Haines-Saah et al., 2014). In their discussion of identity and marijuana use, Hammersley and his colleagues (2001) suggested that research needs to ask “when, and how is cannabis use normalised?” (p. 144). These questions have received considerable attention in the past two decades (cf. Pennay & Measham, 2016). The question of ascribed identities in the process of normalization, however, still remains largely unanswered.

The homogenized conceptualization of marijuana-using groups is part of the larger debate about the role of structure in theorizing subcultures. Scholars of youth culture have often been at odds between the modernist understanding of subculture, which emphasizes structural constraints in participation, and the postmodern emphasis on the fluid construction of identity through conspicuous consumption (Blackman, 1995). It is apparent that there is a need for a closer examination of the cultural determinants of identity, such as gender and ethnicity, and on leisure-time consumption choices made by youth (Carrington & Wilson, 200).

This dissertation explores the complex ways in which agency and structure shape the relationship between conspicuous consumption and subcultural participation. Through interviews conducted with undergraduate students exploring the gendered and ethnic dimensions of marijuana use, this work contributes to the literature on “differentiated normalization” (Shildrick, Simpson, & MacDonald, 2007). Although the role of social class has received some attention in the normalization literature,
influences of gender and ethnicity have not been fully analysed. To contribute to the larger body of scholarship on the normalization process, I will examine ways that female and Pan-Asian students are variously restricted from marijuana-using groups.

**Why Marijuana?**

Although the boundaries of subcultures can be investigated with reference to a wide variety of consumption behaviours, marijuana use has long been a prominent marker in shaping the boundaries of conformity and rebellion (Becker, 1953). Marijuana is the most discussed plant in history. Whether condemning it or praising it, all ancient societies have had to negotiate the place of marijuana in their culture (Rubin, 1975). Its fibre has been used to hang criminals and power navies; its seed has been used to illuminate dark nights and give flavour to food; its leaf has turned sorrow of death and pain of childbirth to blissful ecstasy and comfort (Chopra, 1969). Although it was first used by Persians and Indians to make nets for hunting and ropes for sailing, the effect of its sticky residue soon became part of both cultural and religious ceremonies. Later on, as Islam came to dominate most of Asia and banned alcohol; marijuana, in the form of hashish, took centre stage at gatherings. Its role was so central to the life of seventeenth century Europeans that Christiaan Huygens, the celebrated physicist and inventor of the pendulum clock, saw it as a necessary component to life, should life ever be found on another planet (Bryson & Matthews, 2003).

Despite its frequent use over the centuries, current attitudes in the western world can be traced back to marijuana’s initial introduction to American society (Dufton, 2017). Around the time when Brooklyn and Manhattan were joined to form the modern City of New York, the cosmopolitan port of New Orleans was well on its way to gaining a reputation as a city of leisure, where those frequenting the brothels of the red-light district of Storyville were treated to a new exclusive music named “Jazz.” In an era where music, when present, took centre stage, jazz was often played in the background of bordellos where the men’s attention was typically elsewhere (Stokes, 1993). This new class of entertainers required a drug that combated boredom and
exhaustion while not dulling and incapacitating the senses. Many found that marijuana seemed to do just that (Gioia, 2011).

Moota, as the drug was known in the city, soon became popular not only among musicians, but the audience as well, as it made the music sound more imaginative and unique. Marijuana spread to New York City when the large population of black immigrants from the south brought jazz music with them to the dance halls of Harlem. By the mid-1920s, “tea-pads” outnumbered the many speakeasies that existed at the height of the prohibition era (Booth, 2005). Tea-pads were places of refuge for marijuana aficionados who wished to enjoy it in peace and tranquillity.

At about the same time (1923), marijuana became illegal in Canada without any public debate in the Parliament, beyond a vague reference to a ‘new drug’ that few had used, or even seen (Carstairs, 2006). Newspaper articles condemning the drug linked it to black men who used it to corrupt white women. A similar fear of sexual corruption and ethnic intrusion in the United States and Britain appeared to have collectively linked marijuana to confluence of gender, racial minorities, and deviant behaviour (Dufton, 2017).

From its initial introduction to the western culture, marijuana use has received an unrivalled amount of praise and denouncement (Sloman, 1998). Use of marijuana during leisure became an identifying aspect of a cultural shift that unified the races in their love of jazz music and introduced an entire generation of young white people to black culture. “Jazz,” Stanley Crouch (2008) writes, “predicted the civil rights movement more than any other art in America,” (p.6) and there would not have been a jazz scene without marijuana (Crouch, 2004). Later, marijuana use became synonymous with the hippy culture of the 1960s, and thus cemented its status as a drug of choice for bohemians and those who rejected the status quo (Lee, 2012).

The detail of the story is well documented in Marihuana: The First Twelve Thousand Years by Ernest Abel (2013) and does not require recounting here. The important point to be made is that marijuana is more than just another drug. Rather, it is a cultural artefact, the use of which has shaped various cultural movements and drawn
the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion over time. The primary focus of this dissertation is the study of these boundaries as they apply to women and Pan-Asian students.

**Thesis Outline**

Chapter 2 develops my theoretical perspective, drawing on recent literature on understanding of individual identities as the result of interplay between structure and agency. I suggest that subcultures act as arenas of identity development by constructing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion through participation. Chapter 3 reviews the emerging literature on the differentiated normalization of marijuana use with reference to constraints imposed by gender and ethnicity. Chapter 4 outlines my methodological assumptions and describes the study, with particular attention to the conduct of the interviews and sensitizing concepts informing the analysis.

Chapters 5-7 present the research findings with emphasis on how differentiated normalization is shaped by the interaction between gender and ethnicity. The discussion and conclusion in Chapters 8 and 9 provide an overview of the contribution of this work to the literature in subcultural studies and drug normalization, including a discussion of the implications of this research for drug policy and prevention programs aimed at youth.
Chapter 2. Theorizing Subcultures: Consumption and Constraint

Introduction

Since the latter decades of the 20th century, the bulk of scholarship on marijuana-using groups has focused on the connection between identity formation and marijuana-using subcultures (Pennay & Measham, 2016). The normalization thesis has envisioned a post-modern world where decisions to use marijuana are based on interactions between any given situation and an individual’s understanding of the self (Parker et al., 1998). However, recent scholarship on marijuana-using subcultures suggests that gendered and ethnic identities continue to govern the boundaries of normalised participation (e.g. Hathaway, Mostaghim, Kolar, Erickson, & Osborne, 2016; O’Gorman, 2016). Thus, studies of marijuana usage habits and attitudes now view consumption, identity, and subculture as interdependent.

Connections between identity and subcultures have a long history in sociological scholarship on consumption. Veblen (1899) coined the terms conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure to describe how social class is demonstrated through the expenditure of resources on non-utilitarian goods and activities. Leisure-time practices in particular, have been conceptualized as a social space where identities are formed through subcultural interactions and consumption patterns (Kelly, 1983).

The connection between subcultures, identity, and consumption is developed further in the literature on the production and reproduction of culture and social identity as interdependent entities (Giddens, 1992; Sennet, 1997). While subcultures form identities through the enforcement of norms of conduct and the establishment of authentic participation based on ascribed identities, resistance to these boundaries by marginalized populations has come to redefine subcultures. Cushman (1995), for example, conceptualizes music as not simply a “static cultural object” which is passively consumed, but “an active code of resistance and a template for formation of new individual and collective identities” (p.91-92). Similarly, Gilbert (2007b) depicts cigarette smoking as a leisure activity and tool of identity construction for women.
Thus, various forms of leisure-time consumption allow young people to become part of something larger than themselves where meanings are negotiated through a dialectic process. This larger “something’ has traditionally been ‘subcultures’” (Williams, 2006a, p. 174).

The framework I outline in this chapter synthesizes key work on subcultural theory to offer a nuanced understanding of the term in relation to the roles of structure and agency in determining the boundaries of participation. Since studies of subculture have often focused on examining identities in order to determine the nature of participation, the present discussion on subculture is followed by a theoretical understanding of self as both constrained and fluid.

Unpacking “Subculture”

With the possible exception of class, the term subculture is perhaps the most contentious term in sociology. At their core, subcultural studies are concerned with actions and habits of a social group that is both distinct and related to the dominant culture (Blackman, 2005, p. 2). As a concept often used across sociological paradigms, subculture has found prominence at the forefront of debates concerning youth (cf. Blackman, 2004, 2007; Cohen, 1972).

The concept of subculture finds its roots in the Chicago school of sociology, which first began to map social locations of “subcultural groups” within its host city (Palmer, 1928, p. 73). Led by Park and Burgess, the Chicago school rejected the dominant psychological explanations of the time and instead focused on ethnographic study of everyday life (Downes & Rock, 1982). Having been influenced by the work of Simmel on “creativity,” Chicago school sociologists began exploring youths’ lived experiences and their participation in urban social groups, or subcultures (Bulmer, 1984; Burgess, 1923; Polsky, 1967; Shaw, 1930).

The post-war era in Britain gave rise to an interest in the study of youth and their subculture(s) that went beyond the focus of American researchers on the causes of delinquency and crime. Cohen’s (1955) concept of “status frustration” was extended by
Downes (1966) and other studies of subcultures as a form of resistance to the dominant culture. Young (1971) examined how marijuana laws serve to distance and unify users against the imposition of larger group norms. Cohen’s (1997) study of East London working-class youth further emphasized class conflict. He argued that for generations of working-class people, the links of historical and cultural continuity were being weakened and replaced by “imaginary” relations mediated through subculture (Cohen, 1972, p. 94).

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham systematically explored social class as the central theme of youth cultural analysis. Youth subcultures were conceptualized as a reaction: “first, to the ‘parent’ culture (e.g. working-class culture), second, to the dominant culture” (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, & Roberts, 1976, p.15) which shaped the working-class deviant youth style (cf. Blackman, 2010; Gelder & Thornton, 1997; Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). CCCS’s contribution from a Marxist perspective was demonstrating how style unified working-class youth in defiance of class segregation and alienation (Muggleton, 2005). Subcultural identities were expressed through styles that reimagined items from the dominant culture and contextualized them as a form of resistance (Willis, 1978). For example, the skinhead look was interpreted as the reassertion of working-class forms and values that unified generations of working-class people (Cohen, 1972).

McRobbie and Garber (1976) criticized the CCCS for a neglect of females in subcultural studies. They argued that more attention must be paid to the “complementary ways in which girls interact among themselves and with each other to form a distinctive culture of their own” (p.219). Willis (1977) used the term counter-culture when discussing youth work experiences in Learning to Labour. Blackman (2005) prefers ‘youth cultural forms,’ noting that the literature on subcultures too often overlooks the regional differences by homogenizing the practices of youth. The concept of ‘status position’ is used to indicate that factors such as class, gender, violence, and intellectual capacity all have an influence on social status (Blackman & France, 2001). Others criticized a lack of ethnographic data and unconvincing use of theory that raises
nagging questions about the actual meaning of youth cultures for participants (Dorn & South, 1982). Related work by Martin (1981) reconceptualised subculture as people’s attempt to deal with the meaninglessness of their lived experiences through the creation of symbolic order.

Despite these criticisms, CCCS was still dominant in subcultural studies well into the 1990s (Beezer, 1992). The demise of punk, however, meant that attention was diverging from the visible and audible ‘spectacular’ youth cultures (Cohen & Ainley, 2000), and toward the lived experiences of ordinary youth. Thus, new emphasis on the mundane followed Willis’ (1977) earlier study of working-class culture as instilling “lads” with pride in doing heavy manual labour. Similarly, McRobbie (1978) studies female “bedroom culture” (See also Lincoln, 2004) characterized by the consumption of pop cultural artefacts and styles reflecting traditional female roles as domestic labourers.

**Studying Gender and Ethnicity**

Early feminist work in youth cultural studies focused on what Muggleton (2005) termed the ‘three Ps’: “pleasure, production, and post-structuralism” (p.212). Consumption for personal pleasure, for example, explains female participation in a dance culture that also imposes traditional views of elegance, control, and conformity on women (McRobbie, 1984). By re-appropriating dancing and norms of conduct on nights out, women derive pleasure from their sexuality by resisting patriarchal standards of behaviour. (cf. Mungham, 1976; Nava, 1992). Participation in the dance scene, argued McRobbie (1984, p. 149), gave them a sense of confidence and protected them against sexual discrimination by providing them with a lifestyle which rejected traditional feminine roles.

Later work by subcultural theorists sought to foster research that more fully recognized the complexity and heterogeneity of female experiences as more than passive recipients of dominant ideology. As active participants in the clubbing subculture, Pini (2001) argued that women are creators of their own narratives. Rejecting the use of the term as a pre-defined category, she called for a fluid definition
of “women” which recognizes the importance of individual differences and the role of agency in forming identity.

Like gender, race and ethnic identity formation was never a focus of the CCCS’ early work (Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998, Muggleton, 2005). Jones (1988) mapped out the “parameters and dynamics” of race as a social and political category in a study of young white men who listened to reggae music (p. xxvi). Their acceptance by the reggae subculture as fans of Bob Marley greatly blurred the boundary between ‘authentic’ and ‘outsider’ (Jones, 1988; Griffin, 1993). Other studies in that era noted that the use of patios in some groups of white youth was viewed as authentic within a context of cultural borrowing (Hebdige, 1987; Hewitt, 1986; Gilroy, 1987). Research emanating from the CCCS and other studies more explicitly researching race and gender accordingly contributed to opening the space for examining subcultures through a postmodern lens.

**Post-Subcultural Theory**

In post-subcultural studies (cf. Bennett, 2005; Bennet & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003; Stahl, 2004) the term postmodern is best conceptualized as a path rather than as a destination. Postmodern theory rejects essentiality. In particular, dualistic notions such as structure and agency, gender and ethnic binary, and authentic and inauthentic subcultural participation are rejected in favour of more encompassing and interactive ones (Keeney, 1982). Rejection of objective principles of modernity launched postmodernism as a consciousness-raising effort (Leary, 1994) that replaced the quest for objectivity by tasking the researcher to interpret gestures and interactions as dependent on time and space (Gonzalez, Biever, & Gardner, 1994; Lynch, 2000).

A postmodern approach to the study of subculture rejects the existence of absolute truth in favour of relative and ever-changing conditions that (re)shape socially constructed realities of interaction (Rapmund, 2000). Traditional structural determinants such as class, gender, race, and religion have been replaced by individual determinants manifested through group membership and patterns of consumption.
Specifically, traditional indicators of identity have been replaced by group membership in leisure subcultures and collective meaning construction through consuming practices. With reference to substance use, Duff (2003) argues the relationship between consumption and identity formation within a post-structuralist framework can explain higher rates of some drug use by youth.

Post-subcultural studies point to the coexistence of myriad groups and styles that allow for a fluid transformation from one style to another, a process Polhemus (1996) called “style surfing.” Since subcultural style is no longer “articulated around the modernist structuring relations of class, gender, or ethnicity… a new kaleidoscope of styles” (Muggleton, 2000, p.48) has emerged (see also Chambers, 1990). As opposed to a form of resistance, subcultures are reconceptualised as “free floating” and without meaning, other than facilitating personal experiences (Redhead, 1993, p.17).

Melechi (1993) argued that participation in drug-using subcultures is about escape where the self is lost. The whole subculture attempts to vanish as a form of resistance. Appeal to strictly hedonistic values is more common. In these accounts, individual passions are found in meretricious presentation, intoxication, and hedonism as a form of self-expression where drugs allow young people to “implode with the pure joy of individualist consumerism” (Blackman, 2005, p.10). Other recent studies have replaced the term subculture with terms like “(neo)tribes” (Bauman & May, 2001; Maffesoli, 1995; Straw, 2001), “scenes” (Kahn-Harris, 2004; Peterson & Bennett, 2011), and “lifestyles” (Bennett, 1999; Hathaway, 1997b; Miles, 2000). These new terms contribute to the literature by advancing theoretical discussions and empirical study of the ways young people interact in groups.

According to Shield (1992), the “modern persona” is a fluid one that (re)shapes itself through participation in “site specific” (p.16) group gatherings. Being able to move from one group to another means groups are not static but rather dependent on continued interaction (Bennett, 2005). According to Bennet (1999; 2005) (neo)tribes are distinct from subcultures in so far as they are fluid. The new tribal ethics is not bound
by location, kinship, or shared core-beliefs and identities. Rather than a rigid adherence to unified definitions of self, neo(tribal) participation is based on contextual and temporal definitions of self and the situation. The term refers to a certain feeling or state of mind expressed through styles of consumption. Maffesoli (1995 argued that (neo)tribalism is not merely narcissistic individualism, but rather a means of resistance against cultural norms. Noting drug use is central to tribal experience, Malbon (1999) borrowed the term “oceanic experience” to describe experiences characterized by one or more of these sensations: “ecstasy, joy, euphoria, ephemerality, empathy, alterity, release, the loss and subsequent gaining of control, and notions of escape” (p.107). Thus, drug use as part of the tribal experience is where the individual forms of resistance reside.

Some academics studying night-time economy prefer the term “scene” (e.g. Harris, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Shank, 1994). The term is often used to distinguish ‘stereotypical’ or commercialized venues of leisure and consumption from those less known, independently owned, and exclusive venues that cater to those ‘in-the-know’ who celebrate diversity, respect, and uniqueness of various consuming scenes (Hadfield, 2006). The term first gained prominence in the study of music scenes. In his study of rock culture in the United States, Straw (1991) used the term ‘scene’ to describe the interconnectivity of musical styles around the world that fostered the emergence of international music culture.

Straw’s (1991) view of the global “music scene” anticipated the formation of “aesthetic communities” (Hesmondhalgh, 2005) informing later work by Anderson (2009b) on drug use within night-time economy. Anderson made a distinction between the use of drugs in popular venues where consumption is commodified and in underground venues where consumption is reserved for members of a subculture. In popular venues, Anderson (2009a) suggests, commodified consumption is often dangerous for women and ethnic minorities, while in underground venues, consumption is reserved for those who are part of the “underground scene” (p.920). These underground venues showcase muted masculinities and desexualize participants’
interaction while mitigating for racial differences. In these venues, music and experience overshadows traditional markers of difference. Shared interest in the ritual creates a warm atmosphere of acceptance, intelligent discussion, and expression of various forms of sexuality and ethnic behaviour (Anderson, 2006). For example, sexist behaviour, racist comments, hyper-masculine practices, and exclusionary talk is condemned and often punished. Therefore, women and ethnic minorities often feel welcome to participate without having to guard against discriminatory behaviours or unwanted sexual advances (Kavanaugh & Anderson, 2008). Hadfield (2006) also points out that while drug consumption in night-time leisure is an indicator of social privilege and therefore conspicuous consumption, the less-conspicuous use of intoxicants by working-class or less privileged youth in “holes in the walls” allows for the kind of collective identity construction that has given rise to the English punk scene, US Jazz scene, and Rave scenes in the western world.

Dissatisfaction with the rigidity of the concept of subculture gave rise to use of the term ‘lifestyle’ to describe the process of personal expression through individualized consumption (Bennett, 2005). Miles (2000) defined lifestyle as both an “active expression of a way of life” and an “outward expression of identity” (pp.16-26). From this perspective, lifestyle is an expression of agency that is shaped by existing social divisions (Savage, 1992; Crompton, 1998). Consumption is conceptualized as a way to “do identity,” allowing young people more freedom to move in and out of temporary communities defined by particular tastes or sense of style. In applying the notion to marijuana users, Hathaway (1997b) argues that marijuana consumption no longer requires participation in deviant subculture. Rather, otherwise conventional users now make decisions regarding their marijuana use based on their personal lifestyles. Likewise, abstinence from marijuana use has been shown to be associated with particular types of lifestyle rather than signifying an appeal to conventionality (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013). The term is useful for it allows for the insertion of agency into our interpretations of subcultural participation, since lifestyles are individualized but subcultures are not.
Shortcomings of the Postmodern Turn

More recent work has called for more attention to the structural inequalities, based on class, race, and gender that mediate patterns of consumption (Søgaard, 2017). Since most studies have focused on middle class white male youth, they do not address the complex interplay between gender, race, class, and identity construction. From this perspective, terms like ‘(neo)tribe’, ‘scene’ and ‘lifestyle’ suffer from limitations similar to the concept of ‘subculture.’ Use of the terms like (neo)tribe suggest more malleability of the boundaries of a group, but offers little guidance on how boundaries are studied. Furthermore, in some respects the concept of the “tribe” is more rigid than subculture; and fails to capture elements of large subcultures that have remained coherent and cohesive (Muggleton, 2005).

Conversely, use of the term ‘scene’ has suffered from its common usage in non-academic forums. As a term describing particular localities of music, scene has come to mean a geographical location for phenomena with little theoretical explanation (Grazian, 2009; Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Straw (2001, p.248) noted that the term describes a subculture in which boundaries are fluid. Thus, any preference for its use is arguably stylistic.

The concept of ‘lifestyle’ puts more focus on consumption while neglecting structure. Bennett (1999) reconciled the role of structure by suggesting that consumerism is a way of offering the individual “new ways of negotiating such issues” (p. 607). While the focus on consumption prioritizes choices made in the market economy; it tends to overlook the ways that structural determinants such as class, gender, and race constrain choice (Blackman & France, 2001). Whereas young people may be ‘free’ to express their identity through lifestyle choices, there are structural and cultural constraints that shape behaviour. The ‘lifestyle’ concept also fails to offer any guidance as a tool for theorizing collective group resistance.

Carrington and Wilson (2004) have pointed out that contemporary post-subcultural studies places little attention to issues of ethnicity “in and between
subcultures” (p.71), when these cultures are no less stratified than those of older adults (cf. Bose´, 2003; McRobbie, 1991; Roberts, 2014; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). Whereas focus on consumption can explain how certain youths from different social backgrounds can express similar values through shared membership of a particular subculture (Muggleton, 2000), it tends to overlook the ways that social inequality and discrimination often serve as barriers to full participation. Furthermore, post-subculturalists’ focus on middle class youth has neglected the role of “street corner society” (Whyte, 1943) in the socialization of the “largest and most complex youth subcultures” through leisure-time behaviours (Davies, 1992, p. 103).

In summary, to distance themselves from the CCCS, post-subcultural theorists have played down the role of structure in favour of the agency. As Blackman (2005) has contended, it appears that gravitation of subcultural theory towards individualistic understanding of young people has led to its over-preoccupation with the “particular, either in terms of ‘dysfunctionalism’ or celebratory hybrid pleasure” (pp. 16-17).

(Re)Inserting Gender and Ethnicity in Subcultural Studies

Contemporary research on youth subculture has provided a better understanding of relationships and pathways that shape their life experiences, thereby challenging assumption of postmodern homogeneity (cf. MacDonald et al., 2001; Nayak, 2004; Pilkington & Johnson, 2003). Youth subcultures are noticeably heterogeneous. Their boundaries are governed by structural factors like class, gender, and ethnicity. Hollands (2002), for example, argues that a rise of income amongst middle class youths has meant demands for safe and upscale nightlife entertainment, which is unavailable to low-income youth. Bose´’s (2003) study of young blacks and Asians in Manchester demonstrated how economic disadvantage and racism have excluded many youth from the city nightlife. These restrictions led to “collective problem solving” (p.175). Other UK studies (cf. Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 2000; Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2005) note exclusion and resistance, as excluded youth attempt to legitimize their own distinct cultural presence within leisure spaces.
The influence of gender on use of leisure and consumption has been studied by subcultural theories in recent years (cf. Paechter, 2007; Pascoe, 2007). Gender roles are reinforced in playgrounds through exclusion of girls from ‘boys’ activities,’ and by punishing deviation from hetero-normative practices. Female exclusion from leisure and consumption has been noted with tobacco use, a habit still associated with the tough and ‘risk-taking’ nature of masculinity (Amos & Bostock, 2007; Nichter, Lloyed-Richardson, Flaherty, Carkoglu, & Taylor, 2006). While boys avoid smoking in ways considered feminine, girls tend to view it as a fashion accessory that needs to be managed so as not to portray a flamboyantly masculine image (Stjerna, Lauritzen, & Tillgren, 2004; Gilbert, 2007a, 2007b). When viewed as symbols of resisting hegemonic masculinity, young women use both tobacco and alcohol to express a sense of tough femininity that challenges the position of boys as the only risk takers (Denscombe, 2001; Leyshon, 2008). These studies question the freedom of choice assumed by most post-subcultural perspectives on consumption. These choices are always constrained by structural factors. Therefore, the characteristics of the early work on subculture are still central to our understanding of cultural choices of young people (Bose’, 2003).

A more nuanced understanding of subculture is required to recognize structural forces and the fluid ways in which social constraints are continuously (re)negotiated. This type of theorizing has often focused on the constraints of identity in decisions made regarding consuming behaviour and subcultural participation. The work of Goffman and Bourdieu about identity formation conceptualizes the self as being both fluid and constrained in a way that benefits discussions of youth cultures (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In the next section, I examine the concept of identity and the complex interaction between agency and structure in construction of the ‘self’.

**Theorizing the Constrained ‘Self’**

Conceptualizing identity as “a key element” of subjective reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 173) argued that identity is formed as a result of an intersubjective dialectical relationship between the individual and society (also see Mead, 1934). This
process leads to the legitimization and crystallization of both the identity and the structural factors involved (Dunn, 1997). Although the dialectic nature of social positioning suggests that identities are neither fixed nor categorical, one can nonetheless speak of socially-constructed identity types that are ‘available’ to an individual (Barrett, 1999; Cameron, 2007; Sidnell, 2003).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) suggest that identity types are constituted through the “creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings” (p.594) in a process called “indexicality.” For Goffman, a person’s ‘indexical’ self is made up of various selves. The theme of multiple selves is first discussed in Goffman’s (1952) paper “On Cooling the Mark Out.” After the initial manipulation by the con artist, the victim of the con is consoled or “cooled down.” This cooling down process is when the mark is reassured by “seek[ing] comfort in one role for injuries incurred in others” (p. 461). Goffman argues that this regular retreat to ‘other selves’ for consolation suggests that a person is made up of “multiple, loosely-connected selves” (Branaman, 1997: p. xlviii). The Goffmanesque self is amorphous: its existence is temporal, its boundaries are constrained by structures, and the individual is an active agent of its adoption.

One of the most important aspects of Goffman’s (1959) conceptualization of the self is that it is not created by the actors. Instead, the Goffmanesque self is a pre-existing identity or role, which is chosen and modified by individuals based on their perceptions or definitions of acceptability and normality. For Goffman, behaviour becomes normalised so far as it does not exceed the threshold of what is considered to be acceptable risk taking (Misztal, 2001; Cosgrave, 2008). Accordingly, the decision about which role an individual chooses to adopt depends upon the collective representation and constraining influences of socio-cultural forces and structures.

The idea of self as indexical and based on structural determinants of identity is best described by Goffman (1959) in his discussion of dating habits. Goffman uses an example of a young middle-class American girl who “plays dumb” on a date. Goffman argues that the point is not that the girl manipulates the situation but that she is a young, middle-class American girl. This is significant because Goffman is arguing that the role the
A note of caution is necessary here. The argument is not that agency has no role to play in the young woman’s decision. The point is that that performance, while agentic and fluid, is based on social definitions of gender roles and mating habits. It is conceivable that the girl in the example might choose to play a different role, for example that of an enlightened woman who celebrates her intellect. However, this ‘role’ is also a socially defined performance that is not created during the interaction but rather chosen and modified to fit the situation. In other words, in Goffman’s view, the self is malleable so long as it is supported by regional definitions of acceptable behaviour. This definition, in turn, depends upon constraints of available resources, or what Bourdieu (1984) calls “species of capital” (also see Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014).

According to Bourdieu (1972/1977), identity development is constrained not only by economic resources, but also by cultural and social capital. Cultural capital includes those sets of knowledge which are valued within a particular group. These can either be the set of embodied knowledge that exists within an individual, or they can be material objects which indicate authenticity and signals social position within the group. Social capital, on the other hand, includes resources based on group membership, relationships, and networks of influence and support. These sets of knowledge and resources form the bases of the type of identities available to an individual. For example, authentic participation in marijuana using groups requires knowledge of acceptable regional behaviour, access to the drug, familiarity with codes of conduct, and status as a user (see e.g. Becker, 1953).

Under Bourdieu’s understanding of the self, the nature and quantity of one’s available roles or styles of behaviour become repertoires of identities through habitual practice (Bell, 1984). These practices then form a series of autonomous fields of interaction that organize practices and the perception of practices (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu’s *habitus* is not only the internalized embodiment of external social structures, but also the structure that produces individuals’ external habits and actions.
Thus, *habitus* is the bridge that connects lived experiences to the structural factors that have framed those experiences. Although both Goffman and Bourdieu hint at the interplay between structure and agency in determining individual action (see e.g. McNay, 1999), the former is less explicit about the role of structure and the latter is less forthcoming about the role of agency (Johnston-Guerrero, 2016).

Various species of capital are partly governed by ascribed roles and identities based on social class, gender, and ethnicity. Hancock (2007) suggests there are three approaches to studying class, gender, and ethnicity: unitary, multiple, and intersectional. While the unitary approach focuses only on one category of difference, the multiple approach recognizes several, though their relationship is static. The intersectional approach recognizes the fluidity that defines the relationship between categories. Intersectionality is thus the most insightful approach to understanding the complex ways in which class, gender and ethnicity interact in constraining the availability of resources and, by extension, the availability of socially acceptable roles.

The complex relationship between social subjects and the resources that constrain them can be resolved through the “relationality principle” proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 598). They argue that constructed identities are both deliberate and habitual. They are both the result of individual negotiation and distributed agency where identities are formed as the result of intersubjective interaction (see also Hutchins, 1995). This conceptualization of self, blurs the line between individual decisions and ascribed roles and thus removes the false dichotomy between structure and agency that has long plagued identity theorizing (cf. Ahearn, 2001). From this perspective, identities are neither rigid nor fluid, rather they are obtainable or “available” based on resources and social definitions (Cameron, 2007).

The concept of the self as a distributed agent allows for a more detailed understanding of self-development from a performative perspective, in the sense that individual roles can be communicated through performances such as consuming behaviour. Youths’ participation in consuming groups and hedonistic activities are based on both personal agency and structural forces. Thus, successful social
relationships depend on formation of identities harmonious to the acceptable level, content, and method of consumption.

This conceptualization of self as both agentic and habitual helps explain the complexity of subcultural boundaries. The relationality principle sees boundaries of participation in consuming groups as both restrictive and malleable where participation depends upon both social definitions of individual roles and resistance practices of the participants based on individualized definitions of ‘self’. While participation in conspicuous consumption is not fully restrictive, it is also not entirely fluid. The process of decision making is further complicated by the degree of importance the individual assigns to past experiences, future pathways, and their evaluation of the merging situation (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Thus, the projection of an identity depends upon a complex process of definition-making based upon a pragmatic evaluation of the present situation, future goals, and individual internalization of past interactions.

Chapter Summary

Subcultural theory has become a significant tool in the study of youths’ experiences in marijuana-consuming groups (Blackman, 2005). The study of subculture, however, has been plagued with debates about the role of structure in determining the boundaries of participation. While post-subculturalist terms such as scene, lifestyle, and (neo)tribe have come to define the fluidity of subcultural boundaries, the constraining forces of identity still play a central role in determining the limits of authentic participation (Bennett, 2011; Sweetman, 2004). The extent of the malleability of subcultural boundaries, therefore, has often been operationalized in terms of the fluidity of individual identities (Kjeldgaard, 2009).

Debates about the role of structure and agency in identity development have come to characterize current discussions of the relationship between the self and decision-making (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In this chapter, I argued that these studies would benefit from a more nuanced understanding of the self, based on an interplay
between agency and structure. By rejecting the false dichotomy between habitual and conscious decision making, this conceptualization of self recognizes the individualization and responsibilisation of globalized youth while at the same time being cognisant of the role of structure in limiting the boundaries of individual choices.

The restriction of the role of women and ethnic minorities in certain leisure fields is a good example of such situations. Women have been traditionally excluded from leisure activities either through formal sanctions or lack of available resources (Haluza-Delay, 2006; Lee, Dunlap, & Edwards, 2014). Many leisure activities are closed off to certain ethnic groups by similar means (Giltner, 2008; Smalley, 2005). For example, as marijuana use has shifted over time from a marginalized to a normalised behaviour within certain contexts, the structural influences of gender and ethnicity continue to make ascribed identities a salient factor in drawing the boundaries of normalised use. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature on the role of gender and ethnicity in constraining non-problematic participation of women and Asian students in marijuana-using groups.
Chapter 3. Differentiated Normalization: Constraints of Gender and Ethnicity

Introduction

As mentioned before, identity formation during subcultural participation is closely associated with consumption. Young people’s engagement with illicit drugs, especially cannabis, has gained a prominent position in theorizing about youth subcultures, consumption, and identity development (Parker, 2005). Research suggests that cannabis has undergone a dramatic rise in consumption rates in western nations since the early 1990s (UNODC, 2016). The use of this substance has become so prevalent that almost half (43%) of the adult population in Canada has tried it, with the prevalence rates slightly higher among university undergraduates (Rotermann & Langlois, 2015). Recent studies of the attitudes and behaviours of Canadians also show that public attitudes regarding cannabis use have softened, with a majority of Canadians (63%) favouring proposed changes for legalization (Angus Reid Institute [ARI], 2017, November 30). A similar trend in drug consumption has given rise to a discussion about the normalization of recreational cannabis use in western nations such as the United Kingdom (Parker et al. 1998).

This chapter reviews the recent literature emerging on differentiated experiences in marijuana-using subcultures. Specifically, I begin with a short overview of the normalization thesis and its historical predecessors. This is followed by a review of the relevant literature on the differentiated normalization of marijuana use, with specific reference to the constraints of gender and ethnicity in establishing the boundaries of non-problematic marijuana-using identities. The literature presented suggests that women and ethnic minorities must negotiate their gendered and ethnic identities when making decisions about consuming marijuana.
Differentiated Normalization

The term normality was first applied by Lindesmith (1938) in relation to study of drug consumption. Lindesmith emphasized the role of individual narratives collected through qualitative research in understanding young people’s contextual conceptualization of drug use without reducing them to symptoms of psychological inadequacy. This laid the ground work for interpretative understanding of drug use in the mid-20th century. Most notably, Becker’s (1963) *Outsiders* was heavily influenced by Lindesmith in its understanding of drug use as an ordinary activity pursued in hedonistic social groups.

In the 1990s, Howard Parker and his research team (1998) furthered Becker’s work by offering the ‘drug normalization’ thesis as a way of explaining non-problematic use of certain drugs by ordinary youth (See also Hathaway, 1997a; 1997b). For Parker, changes to availability of drugs and trying rates was a “barometer of change” in socio-cultural behaviours and perspectives (Parker., 2003, p. 943). The evidence put forward by Parker et al. (1998) consisted of quantitative data pointing to a large number of young people who have tried marijuana, including the frequency and regularity of their use, and a description of the socio-cultural changes that have accommodated their consumption.

Since the publication of the work of Parker and his colleagues, the normalization thesis has been debated, with a variety of studies from around the western world supporting the proposition that certain types of drug use have become normalised (e.g. Newcombe, 2007; Taylor, 2000). However, the normalization thesis has also been widely contested, creating “divisive sides” (Measham & Shiner, 2009, p. 501). Critics of normalization have suggested that the original thesis is not only exaggerated and over-simplified (Shiner & Newburn, 1999), but also “destructive” since it imposes its own “metanarratives” on young people lived experiences (Shildrick, 2002, pp. 45-46). Although critical of the normalization thesis, many scholars preferred to revise rather than reject the concept by offering “differentiated normalization” as a more refined solution which can account for the various ways in which marijuana has become
normalised for different types of people (cf. MacDonald & Marsh, 2005; Measham, 2004; Shildrick, 2002; Shildrick et al., 2007).

The term “differentiated normalization” was first applied by Shildrick (2002) in her study of drug use among working class youths. In a study of youth in a Teesside town, Shildrick (2002) divided the youth into three groups: the first were “ordinary” youth who were not part of a recognizable youth culture and had the least drug using experience. The second group were those “spectacular” (p.36) youth who were committed to particular subcultural style and used drugs recreationally. The third group were the “trackers” who dressed in a style reminiscent of ‘Ali G’, with tracksuits and large chains forming the bulk of their fashion. Unlike the other two groups, the ‘trackers’ spent most of their time on the street. Most trackers were from working class neighbourhoods and belonged to the lower socio-economic sector of the society. The choice of drugs and the negative consequences that were often associated with their use set them apart from the rest of their cohort. Use of drugs by “trackers” was more likely to be stigmatized by others and was also more likely to lead to legal sanctions as compared to the other two groups. Other research on various working class or ‘Chav’ subcultures suggests that there exists a very clear relationship between socio-economic factors and patterns of drug normalization (see for e.g. Martin, 2009, Miller & Miller, 1997). These studies highlight the importance of social structure in young people’s participation in drug-using groups.

More recent literature has focused on the role of other structural factors such as gender and, to lesser extent, ethnicity in the normalization process. Given that the focus of this study is on the role of gender and Pan-Asian ethnicity on marijuana use, in this chapter I take a closer look at the body of literature that demonstrates the effect of gendered and ethnic identities on drawing the boundaries of ‘normalised’ marijuana-using groups.
Gendered Patterns and Experiences

Drug use is a form of consumption that provides opportunities for both men and women to present traditional and non-traditional expressions of self (Smith, Thurston, & Green, 2011). The role of recreational drug consumption has been suggested to be one of the key elements of gendered identity formation (Measham, 2002). In a normalizing context, gendered leisure activities, including use of marijuana, are socially constructed and negotiated through interactions among individual agency, group dynamics, and situated normative beliefs about femininities and masculinities (Anderson, 2001; Miller, 2002; West & Fenstermaker, 1993). The resulting behaviours and attitudes serve to reinforce these differences so that particular activities and related behaviours are constructed as masculine or feminine pursuits (Connell, 2005; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Studies of ‘club drug use’ among youth suggest that men and women use drugs for different purposes (Fandrich et al., 2003). For example, while men use drugs as a way of enhancing their own experience of the night, women are more likely to use it as a form of enhancing their “club-babe performance” (Measham, 2002, p. 355), or for body weight management through dancing (Curran & Robjant, 2006). Furthermore, whereas men consume recreational drugs as a means to total intoxication, women are more likely to stress the importance of control (Boys, Marsden, & Strang, 2001). This is also reflected in men’s glorification of over use in contrast to the shame and guilt that women associate with over intoxication (Henderson, 1997).

Studies of young marijuana users also point to the gender dimension of use (Magid, Colder, Stroud, Nichter & Nichter, 2009). Cannabis use does not only seem to be more common among males, but smoking marijuana is generally counter to dominant forms of femininity available to adolescent girls (Haines, Johnson, Carter, & Arora, 2009, p. 2033). These gendered expectations are reinforced through socio-cultural definitions of problematic use.

As public policy discussions continue to evolve, the rhetoric on marijuana as presented in the media has not changed significantly in the last twenty years (Stringer &
Maggard, 2016). News coverage is highly gendered. Women who use illicit drugs tend to be portrayed as naïve and vulnerable to moral corruption. Those with children are presented as morally questionable, discrediting their competence as mothers (Haines-Saah et al., 2014; Reid, Greaves & Poole, 2008). Common to such narratives is the assumption that women who use drugs are lacking in agency. Those under the influence of marijuana during sexual assault are portrayed as being “duped” and sexually exploited or blamed for their use of the drug (LeBeau, 2009). In contrast, male cannabis users are granted agency in their use and related criminality (Grucza, Agrawal, Krauss, Cavazos-Rehg, & Bierut, 2016).

By contextualizing individual decision making within the larger social field that modifies and constrains available choices, differentiated normalization conceptualizes drug use as a social process where women are influenced, and also influence, the context of their consumption (Fitzgerald, Mazerolle, & Mazerolle, 2013). Within social context, the perceptions of drug users are partly a function of the gender roles assigned to them (Shildrick, 2006). One’s level of acceptance in a given context is further contingent on factors including gendered roles, peer and social networks, and gendered norms of conduct.

**Gendered ‘Roles’**. The role of women as caregivers makes drug use more problematic (Van Olphen, Eliason, Freudenberg, & Barnes, 2009; Simpson & McNulty, 2008. Marijuana-using mothers and mothers-to-be are often labelled as deviant (Dahl & Sandberg, 2015). Men who are fathers or fathers-to-be, however, are granted more leniency (Acker, 2006). Their marijuana use may even be perceived as a sign of a relaxed attitude that is beneficial for childrearing (Miller, 2002; Reid et al., 2008).

In studies on attitudes towards cannabis use, females used less due to concerns about behaviour as perceived among their peers and fear of ridicule (Miller, 2016; Monk & Ricciardelli., 2003). Males more often discuss drug experiences fondly, bragging about hangovers, being sick, or even being hospitalized (Measham, 2002). Girls and women are perceived as having less control over the effects of the drug (Shiner, 2013). Female users feel more vulnerable to sexual advances and more often
question their capacity to make responsible decisions while intoxicated (Higgins et al., 2015).

While drug consumption can affirm gender norms, it can also subvert them. Individual agency allows for different ways of ‘doing gender’ within the context of social constraints (Holmes, 2007). The pursuit of intoxicating leisure can serve as a way to challenge dominant expectations and norms (Wiley, Shaw, & Havitz, 2000; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). Marijuana use, for example, can serve as a form of resistance to gender stereotypes. With girls, the use of the drug often reflected a sense of rebelliousness against traditional feminine views that excluded women from intoxicating leisure (Mahalik, Lombardi, Sims, Coley, & Lynch, 2015). The use of cannabis allows females to challenge feminine norms of respectability and moderation. Female users and dealers defy expectations of hegemonic masculinity by learning the skills of the culture. They establish themselves as insiders by smoking as much as their male peers and demonstrate their masculine coolness by preparing joints and bongs (Bäckström, 2013; Deutsch, 2007; Miller, 2002).

Marijuana use also facilitates a less masculine expression of self. For example, young men are shown to use marijuana to counter masculine sanctions against emotional expressions (Connell, 2005). They use the drug as a way of freely expressing their emotions under the cloak of intoxication (Dillabough, Wang, & Kennelley, 2006). Espousing androgynous values, cannabis culture emphasizes peace, solidarity, personal growth, hedonism, creativity, relaxation, and a light-hearted perspective (Holm, Sandberg, Kolind, & Hesse, 2014). Male users also subvert hegemonic masculine expectations by assuming less aggressive mannerisms in social interaction, including intimate encounters (Blackman, 2007; Dahl & Heggen, 2014; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). Although both men and women negotiate gendered roles through use of marijuana, the high prevalence of use among men often means that women are dependent on male friendships for gaining access to marijuana using groups.

**Peer and Social Networks.** Drug using behaviour is largely initiated and maintained through association with drug-using peers (Mehta, Alfonso, Delaney, &
Ayotte, 2014; Akers, 1998; Sutherland, 1939). Relationships and social networks play a crucial role in negotiating behavioural norms and social sanctions around drug use (Becker, 1963; Gourley, 2004; Pennay & Moore, 2010; Pilkington, 2006). As the number of marijuana-using friends increases, so does the likelihood of using marijuana, regardless of gender (Dahl, 2015).

Whereas friendships during childhood and preadolescence are generally segregated by gender (Mehta & Strough, 2010; Gulbrandsen, 2003), other-gender friendships begin to form in adolescence and continue into emerging adulthood (Poulin & Pedersen, 2007; Bukowski, Sippola, & Hoza, 1999). Research on the role of gender in the development of marijuana use has found that male peers tend to have more influence (Poulin, Denault, & Pedersen, 2011; Bahr, Hoffman, & Yang, 2005; Andrews, Tildesley, Hops, & Li, 2002), and females are often introduced to marijuana by male friends or partners (Amos, Wiltshire, Bostock, Haw, & McNeill, 2004; Warner, Weber, & Albanes, 1999). Thus, female patterns of cannabis use tend to be closely linked to the use patterns of male partners and friends. Use among males, however, is more often associated with same-gender friendships (Wade, 2008; Kulis, Marsiglia, & Hecht, 2002; Michaelieu, 1997). Attitudes favourable to drug use are often formed and reinforced as the result of participation in drug using groups that legitimize and normalize particular types of use (Fitzgerald et al., 2013).

The dependency of women on male peer networks for establishing legitimacy and access to the drug means that women have less opportunities to use in female-only groups and are at a disadvantage in establishing feminine ways of using (Magid et al., 2009). This often means that feminine behaviours are punished. For example, while excessive use by men and the resulting attitude is seen as masculine, feminine expression of intoxication is seen as inauthentic (Anderson, 2001). Thus, through control of social networks, ‘norms of conducts’ are established and transgressors are punished.

**Norms of Conduct.** Gendered expectations are apparent in marijuana-using groups. Men often dictate the norms of acceptable behaviour (Miller 2001; Courtenay,
This gendering of boundaries has meant that habitual, and even occasional use by females is often described as inappropriate for ‘nice’ girls (Miller, 2001). Amos and Bostock (2007) observed that while males used marijuana to “fit in,” females’ expectations differed. Female marijuana use was commonly avoided due to a greater emphasis on maturity and responsibility and to avoid stigma associated with promiscuity.

The use of cannabis is often embedded within a masculine framework (Dahl & Sandberg, 2015), which provides opportunities for male bonding that excludes participation by girls and women. Females experience fewer rewards and less peer pressure to use drugs, while male abstinence is often looked at as “wimpy” or feminine (Mehta et al., 2014). Similar boundaries have also been noted around the use of alcohol and other illicit drugs (Vaccaro, 2011; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Nayak, 2004; Holmila & Raitasolo, 2005).

Males also act as gatekeepers to cannabis using groups by controlling the distribution and supply. Traditional gender roles and heteronormative expectations raise questions of safety for females buying cannabis. Males being in the position of ‘provider’ have opportunities for cultivating dependable relationships with dealers, thus pushing females to the periphery of marijuana-using groups (Amos et al., 2004; Hathaway, Mostaghim, Erickson, Kolar, & Osborne, 2018; Hunt, Joe-Laidler, & Evans, 2002). Whereas males’ use of cannabis is often described as normal, females’ use is often described as out of place, or threatening to men (Erickson & Murray, 1989; Gomberg, 1976; Dahl & Sandberg, 2015; West & Fenstermaker, 1993).

Norms and conventions that regulate behaviour are central to the conceptualization of any given location as appropriate for marijuana consumption. Literature on the settings and spaces in which young people use cannabis is scarce (Goncy & Mrug, 2013; Mennis & Mason, 2012). The limited amount of research which has been done suggests that locations of consumption are highly gendered. Warner and colleagues (1999), for example, found that females preferred to use marijuana indoors, citing reduced exposure and a lowered risk of stigma or loss of social standing. Males
were, by contrast, more comfortable taking risks like using cannabis in public. Women were also less likely to use marijuana during school hours (Finn, 2006) or during parties where large number of users and non-users interact (Dunlap, Johnson, Benoit, & Sifaneck, 2006). Gendered locations of drug use have also been found among ecstasy and cocaine users, and middle-class women who drink alcohol alone (Ames, 1985; Gourley, 2004; Matchan, 1990).

In sum, cannabis use has largely been conceptualized as a masculine activity, excluding women’s legitimate participation in marijuana-using groups. Consequently, the stigma associated with marijuana has less to do with drug use per se than with the identity of the user. Female marijuana users are often stigmatized as their use is seen as a threat to the social and moral status quo, thus making use a risky business. Women who use marijuana often do so either as a form of entrance into the world of male sociability or as a way of resisting social constraints imposed upon them. These attitudes are maintained through male-centred social networks and masculine norms of conduct.

Likewise, leisure participation has often been limited by boundaries observed around race and ethnicity (Floyd, 1998). Despite considerable attention to the problematic drug use in ethnic studies, relatively little has been said about ethnicity and normalised marijuana use (Carrington & Wilson, 2004; Williams, Ralphs, & Gray, 2017). Some available evidence points to the exclusion of ethnic minority youths, especially those from Pan-Asian backgrounds, from non-problematic participation in marijuana-using groups.

**Ethnicity and Drug Use**

Ethnic identity develops through a complex process of meaning association within an ethnic group and its customs and traditions, which correlates with an increased sense of belonging (Phinney, 1996). Recent literature suggests that consumption patterns have become an important aspect of ethnic identity formation (Moloney, Hunt, & Evans, 2008; Pahl & Way, 2006; Espiritu, 1992). Research on drug
use amongst ethnic minorities living in western worlds has shown a correlation between patterns of drug use and young people’s ethnic identity (Johnson, et al., 2015).

Research is divided on whether ethnic identity is a protective or promoting factor in substance use behaviour. There is some evidence of links between higher self-esteem, academic success, and having a positive conceptualization of ethnic identity amongst Asian students (Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; Umaña-Taylor, 2004). Having a positive ethnic identity means that Asian students often label themselves as smart, obedient, and destined for success (Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006). This view of self, some have argued, may protect against substance use by reducing the effects of adverse social conditions, such as poverty and living in a violent area (Kulis, Marsiglia, Kopak, Olmsted, & Crossman, 2012; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). It is possible that a positive ethnic identity increases resilience against pressures to engage in substance use and thereby reduces vulnerability.

These results are contradicted by other work suggesting that a strong association with an ethnic identity increases the likelihood of using substances (Unger, Ritt-Olson, Soto, & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2009; Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Jarvis, 2007; Bui & Thongniramol, 2005). These inconsistencies may be due to lurking variables like gender, generation status, and conflicting measures of ethnic identity that do not capture the minutiae of lived experiences. For example, Kulis and his colleagues (2012) found that the protective aspect of ethnic identity held more strongly for boys and first-generation immigrants than for girls and third-generation individuals.

The interplay between ethnic identity, minority status, and substance use calls for a more intensive investigation of the construction of identity within the context of constraints imposed by social divisions. Understudied populations include those from Asian backgrounds (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997). Recent US population surveys indicated that marijuana use was lowest among middle class Asian youth (Johnson, Van Geest, & Cho, 2002; CDC 2004; Yang & Solis, 2002). Beyond generalizations of broad patterns observed in statistical data, information on the role of Asian identity in
marijuana use decision-making is rather scarce (Lalander, 2017). Those of Asian ethnicity have been neglected in favour of White, and, to a lesser degree, Black, and Hispanic youth culture (Hunt, Moloney, & Evans, 2011; Soller & Lee, 2010). This group is understudied in part due to its status as one that does not use or abuse substances (Hunt & Kolind, 2017).

In the present study, Pan-Asian students constituted the largest segment of those identifying as visible minority. The next section overviews the literature most relevant to the analytic foci of my research. The research presented focuses on the role of marijuana in ethnic identity formation, westernization, and resistant to traditional definitions of ‘Asianness.’

**Constructing Ethnic Identities.** Social constructionist researchers argue that ethnicity is not constant but emergent, situational, and fluid (Song, 2003, Espiritu, 1992). Nagel (1994, p. 152) defined the social construction of ethnic identity as “the ways in which ethnic boundaries, identities, and cultures are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities.” The meaning and location of these boundaries are continuously shaped and (re)negotiated through individuals’ participation in social networks, culture and religion, and through their consumption choices (Hunt et al., 2011; Nagel, 1994).

Emphasizing choice and agency in the construction of identities does not deny historical contexts of ethnic conflict, formally-instituted discriminatory policies, and other external forces that may constrain availability of attainable choices. Song (2003) explained that social pressures to conform to an ethnic group’s norms can be a powerful external constraint in an individual’s construction of identity, so much so that not adhering to such scripts can be perceived as rejection or betrayal of the ethnic group, resulting in shame, anxiety, and social isolation.

Several studies have shown that ethnic identity is contextual and temporal (cf. Kaufert, 1997, Kerwin & Ponterotto, 1995). This contextual approach to ethnic identity is what Barth (1981) termed “situational identity” (p.19). Rather than being linear, the situational identity is one that crosses borders between various identities (Renn, 2003).
This conceptualization of ethnic identity can shed light on the differences in Pan-Asian youth’s participation in marijuana-using groups. For many of these youth, drug use can be a cause of anxiety that jeopardizes their “authenticity” as an “Asian” youth, while for others, drug use can mean a rejection of these sources of constraint in favour of the host culture and their new, westernized identity.

**Westernization and Asian Identities.** Ethnic identity research has traditionally been tied to scholarship on immigration and assimilation (Moloney et al., 2008). Acculturation and acculturative stress occur as a result of assimilation to new norms of the host country and its social norms and customs. Changes in substance use patterns are thereby the product of conflicting social norms (Gutmann, 1999).

The theory of acculturative stress views substance use as a coping mechanism to reconcile conflicting cultures (Gutmann, 1999; Pahl & Way, 2006). Since many young immigrant youth feel a discrepancy between their parents’ cultures and the new customs and traditions of their host culture, using drugs can provide relief from anxiety and stress related to assimilation (Ja & Aoki, 1993). Thus, substance use can be viewed as the result of a state of “in-between,” in which the children of immigrants feel as though they do not quite fit into either culture (Moloney et al., 2008).

Among Asian Americans, an identity crisis was linked to common stereotypes of Asians as abstainers (Hunt & Kolind, 2017). Asian marijuana users report dual identities dependent on the context and the audience. While some see their drug use in positive terms, and thus as a sign of their assimilation, others equated their drug use with a loss of their culture of origin, leading to fear of stigmatization and of losing or selling out their Asian culture and family’s traditions, thus experiencing identity crisis (Mantovani & Evans, 2018). This disjuncture often resulted in shame and anxiety. Some users questioned whether they had become westernized and lost their culture, identity, and heritage.

Acculturation sometimes transcends ethnic boundaries, especially amongst working-class Asian youth. Studies of working-class South Asian youth have found that they talked, dressed, and carried themselves in ways that modelled California Latino
and African American youth (Bui & Thongniramol, 2005). In areas where violence and hostility are normative, interracial tensions are high, and poverty is dominant, many Asian youth assimilated by adopting the dominant culture of street life, presenting themselves in such a way as to garner respect and discourage aggression (Lee & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Their substance use choices reflected this macho image: alcohol and marijuana were the preferred drugs of choice due to their association with a “hard” image, while club drugs were eschewed as their use induces a state of perceived weakness and loss of self-control (Warner, 2016).

More contemporary literature on use of drug among Asian university students is more equivocal. Contemporary literature on youth culture has shifted attention to the role of consumption in the shaping and re-negotiating of ethnic identity and substance use (Hunt & Barker, 200; Miles, 2000). In contrast to acculturation perspectives, these scholars argue that commodities play an integral role in negotiating ethnic boundaries for individual and group identity (Hunt & Kolind, 2017). As a result of globalization, through the use of the Internet, modern youth have ready access to new developments in music, style, dance, and drugs, which they can incorporate into local cultural aspects, creating unique identities not constrained by geographical limitations (Moloney et al., 2008). Research on marijuana use amongst middle class Asian youth suggests that, just like women, use has become another way by which youths’ negotiate their identity and establish new definitions of ‘Asianness’ (Zapolski et al., 2017).

Negotiating Ethnic Roles. Those who view substance use as incompatible with the image of a ‘good’ Asian student and describe their drug use as incompatible with their culture of origin, resolve the disjunction by maintaining multiple context-dependent identities (Williams et al., 2017). Those proud of this disjuncture described themselves as defying expectations (Hunt et al., 2011). Separate social networks are often established to maintain a non-drug using identity for their family and Asian friends who would criticize users’ ‘westernized’ behaviour, and a drug-using identity for their White and non-Asian friends (Bhattacharya, 2002).
Amongst those who use drugs as a way to negotiate their ethnic identity, there is a clear preference in using marijuana, particularly in the form of hollowed out cigars. The use of marijuana by this method facilitated positive impression management among some Southeast Asian youth (Lipperman-Kreda & Lee, 2011). For example, participants in Soller and Lee, Battle, Lipton, and Soller’s (2010) study, stated that because blunts burn slower, they allow smaller amounts of marijuana to be enjoyed by a larger group of people, thus establishing marijuana use as part of their repertoire of activities during leisure-time participation. Additionally, the skills required to roll blunts have become a source of pride and social identity, which in turn establishes their authenticity (also see Timberlake, 2013). From this perspective, marijuana use may be a valid resource for resisting the marginalization and unjust structures influencing the identities of user and non-users.

Despite aforementioned studies that highlight the role of Asian identity in decisions regarding marijuana use, the marijuana using experiences of individuals of Pan-Asian ethnicity, especially those from middle socio-economic classes, have largely been omitted from scholarship of identities, consumption, and youth culture (Jayakody et al., 2006; Williams, et al., 2017). Some evidence suggests that substance use, particularly marijuana, reinforced social meaning and ethnic group bounds amongst users while establishing social boundaries and facilitates group membership and self-expression of identity (Lee, Law, Eo, & Oliver, 2002; Fletcher, Bonell, Sorhaindo, & Rhodes, 2009). Like the consumption of specific foods, cars, and clothing, marijuana use can serve to either undermine or enhance an individual’s “Asianness” (Hunt et al.’s 2011; Yang and Solis, 2002).

Chapter Summary

Drugs and their associated behaviours are resources that shape identity construction and perceptions of the self (Soller & Lee, 2010). The dichotomized nature of the debate that has dominated the subcultural discussion in general, and the normalization thesis in this instance, has obscured the dialectical relationship that exists
between structure and agency. A differentiated view of marijuana normalization addresses the complex interaction between individual choice, structural determinants, social interaction, and identity construction (Fitzgerald, et al., 2013; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Pilkington, 2006; Laub & Sampson, 2003).

Embracing the behaviours and meanings of the dominant drug culture can be an important tool for positive identity construction for disadvantaged and marginalized youth (Lee et al., 2002). However, adopting such cultures can also reinforce their marginalization, increasing their vulnerability and likelihood of being labelled (Lalander, 2017, Nagel, 1994). The ability of youths to negotiate their identity depends upon factors that allow them to individualize choice. Many such factors exist, including the level of support and available resources, family, peers and school, gender, poverty, formal labels and policies, ethnic governance, contested authenticity, and stigma (Peterson, 1997).

The data presented in this chapter point to the importance of the role of gender and ethnicity in decisions regarding marijuana use. Despite available data, the complex ways in which ethnic and gendered identities interact to inform marijuana-using habits and attitudes remains relatively unexplored, especially in a Canadian context (Sznitman & Taubman, 2016).

In this project, I used data gathered on attitudes of Canadian university students towards marijuana and marijuana users to address this gap. Interviews were conducted with undergraduate students taking introductory classes in the social sciences at three universities in Alberta and Ontario, which represented different regional and demographic characteristics. Students were recruited at the University of Toronto (in Canada’s largest city) and two smaller universities in “small-town” rural areas: the Camrose campus of the University of Alberta and the University of Guelph. The focus of this work is to investigate the complex ways in which gender and ethnicity act as boundaries of acceptability in reference to marijuana use. The next chapter lays the methodological ground work for this investigation and presents the study.
Chapter 4. Methodology: Descriptive Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

Studies of marijuana-using subcultures have long been interested in the analysis of individual narratives through the study of socially-constructed knowledge (e.g. Lindesmith, 1938; Becker, 1963; Parker, 2005). This form of knowledge is the result of the historical process and socialization, and it is also distributed throughout the society as the result of the division of labour (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Some scholars suggest that the method best suited to clarify the foundations of interpretative knowledge is a purely descriptive one (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). While employing descriptive methodology can shed light on nuances of interaction, it requires attention to the process of research with particular emphasis on the role of power and authenticity in conducting interviews and interpreting their findings. The nature of descriptive approach also requires reworking methods of evaluating rigour that recognizes the subjective nature of qualitative studies.

This chapter begins with a short discussion on epistemological questions about type of reasoning in descriptive and qualitative research. This overview is succeeded by discussion of the challenges and nuances of conducting qualitative research, and attention to the process of interviewing itself. Using ideas from Goffman’s (1974) Frame Analysis and more recent literature on active interviewing, I will discuss the process of conducting interviews. This chapter ends with a description of the current study and the method of analysis employed.

Descriptive Methodology

A descriptive methodology is employed when the aim is to question initial assumptions by uncovering different aspects of experience and the different structures of meaning involved in the life-world. An interpretive approach suggests that perceived reality is socially constructed through a dialectical process. Thus, humanity can only be
understood through their own description of their perception of reality (Hoffman, 1993). The contextual nature of reality necessitates a more holistic approach to the study of social sciences, which can be achieved through a qualitative approach to research (Guba & Lincoln, 2004, pp. 19-20).

**Qualitative Reasoning**

Qualitative research can best be defined as any descriptive and analytical method the aim of which is not to quantify a particular experience, but rather to understand it within its contextual and natural setting (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative researchers are thus more interested in conceptualization and exploration rather than positivistic quest for causality, although this has often meant an inductive approach to research where theory emerges from the data. There is some debate in the literature as to the usefulness of this approach (cf. Popper, 1963; Vickers, 2011). The criticism mainly revolves around generalizability of these data. It has been suggested that lack of theory testing leaves little room for replicability and generalisability. On the other hand, the deductive approach has been criticized as being too rigid and self-imposing (Hyde, 2000).

This debate presupposes that a researcher must choose between inductive and deductive reasoning. Although rules of scientific rigour differ between the two, they are not mutually exclusive. The distinction made between the two is at times overly inflexible and impractical (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The pragmatic approach to methodology combines both methods, thus increasing the dependability and quality of the results. Morgan (2007) argues that since most ‘grounded’ researchers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) often begin with a theoretical assumption or subjective understanding of their research project and others are not one directional in their approach; the former is rarely purely inductive, while the latter is often not exclusively deductive. Thus, research would benefit from a dialectical relationship between inductive and deductive theoretical development, a method termed ‘abduction’ (Reichertz, 2010).

Thus, as Patton (1991) notes, qualitative researchers can adopt both inductive and deductive processes during the conduct and analysis of their project. The researcher
can begin with an inductive process where he/she allows patterns to emerge from the data; but once patterns begin to emerge, a more deductive approach can be employed to verify and elucidate what appears to be emerging. Thus, it is more practical for a researcher to exercise deductive and inductive approach during different times in the research process. One suggested proposition is “pattern testing” (Campbell, 1975). This procedure requires presence of two competing theories, one of which can emerge from the data itself during the process of analysis, while the other can drive from the literature. For example, while normalization thesis is the dominant theoretical discourse in discussing changes to the patterns of drug consumption amongst youth, differentiated normalization offers a competing alternative that challenges aspects of the original thesis. The process of analysis is thus a pragmatic approach that allows for both inductive and deductive reasoning (Yin, 1994; Hyde, 2000). The process of constant comparison, according to Patton (1991), can accommodate this flexibility by adding theory to the process of comparison.

The addition of theory to the comparative process, however, requires rethinking the original grounded theory model. Hood (2007), for example, warns against confusing grounded theory with the generic inductive qualitative model. She suggests that grounded theory’s focus is not only on theoretical sampling and constant comparison of the data, but also on the development of a theory that emerges from the data. It is this “Troublesome Trinity” which distinguishes grounded theory from other inductive approaches to qualitative research (Hood, 2007, p.163). Timmermans and Tavory (2012) propose the process of ‘phenomenon revision’, ‘defamiliarisation’, and ‘alternative casing’ as a way to include abductive reasoning into the process of grounded theory. They suggest that while the sociological lens, honed by theoretical understanding, can inform the initial stages of analysis; defamiliarisation allows for rethinking of situations that are, due to their habitual nature, often overlooked or taken-for-granted. Thus, continuous revision of the initial assumptions increases richness of abductive reasoning through inclusion of often overlooked social processes. Through the application of various theoretical perspectives to an observed phenomenon,
researchers are able to advance already established theories or synthesize new explanations for a phenomenon. Thus, through close examination of the data and their “casing” from differing theoretical perspectives (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 177), the process of grounded theory can benefit from abductive reasoning not as a compromise, but as a central tenet of theory development.

Despite debates about line of reasoning when doing grounded theory, it is clear that constant evaluation of the data and their application to theoretical tools at the researcher’s disposal can be beneficial in advancing theoretical explanation of a phenomenon. Therefore, the current research design borrows the process of constant comparison from the grounded theory research. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 105) describe in four stages the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory. This method is desirable as it “combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981: 58). In other words, the researcher not only records and classifies a social phenomenon, but also compares this phenomenon across categories. Through a process of inductive analysis, the researcher allows patterns, themes, and categories, to emerge out of the data, rather than imposing them. The patterns are then compared to the chosen theories and their applicability is continuously evaluated.

Thus, analysis of interviews mainly involves identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data while constantly evaluating what is really significant and meaningful in the data (Patton, 1991; Campbell, 1975). Discovering relationships between the categories begins with analysis of initial observations and continues throughout the research process, by continuous refinement of the category coding. This process of constant comparison allows for new topological dimensions and relationships to be discovered (Goetz and LeCompte, 1982).

**Evaluating Rigour**

Two of the most important challenges for research are establishing the reliability and validity of findings. Reliability as a measure of the quality of research can easily be
conceived within the framework of quantitative research. However, since the value of qualitative research stems from its ability to generate ideas and provide temporal and contextual explanations, existence of reliability within qualitative research is meaningless and could indicate “that the study is no good” (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 552). This assertion does not imply that qualitative studies do not need to be measured for their attribute, but rather that the differences between the two paradigms necessitate a different conceptualization of tools of measurement (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Instead of “reliability,” some authors have suggested “dependability” or “trustworthiness” as more appropriate terms for establishing the rigour of a qualitative study (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stiles, 1993). It is suggested that since validity cannot exist without reliability, the demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 317). Validity, however, is not clearly defined in qualitative studies (Golafshani, 2003). The interpretative nature of qualitative studies seems to necessitate a reworking of this positivist term as well. It can be argued that reliability depends upon establishing confidence or “credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Stiles (1993) proposed that credibility and trustworthiness can be achieved through a dialogue between the prevailing theories and models of interpretation, and unbiased observation and interpretation that could challenge researcher’s initial assumptions, theoretical orientation, and conceptual presuppositions (see also Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the process of interpretation requires a constant dialogue with the participants to ensure that the meaning they wished to convey is properly understood by the researcher. The credibility of a particular explanation is further enhanced when similar observations across various studies lead to similar explanatory models.

The line between the methods of determining credibility and dependability described above is not well defined and there are no standardised methods by which they can be tested. However, there seems to be a consensus that a good qualitative study is one that is triangulated in the larger sense. This constructionist approach to qualitative research would benefit from the use of a variety of methods, each of which
would shed light on a particular part of the constructed universe (Johnson, 1997). Furthermore, (re)interpretation of these results by various researchers at different times and locations can further enhance the credibility of the research findings.

**The Interview Situation**

The main goal of this research project is the study of the ways in which individual identities limit normalised participation in marijuana-using groups. The study of identity has gained prominence in social science investigation in recent decades. The discussion has taken many different forms in many different fields, ranging from political science to sociology and from marketing to health sciences. The diversity of studies in this area has not facilitated much consensus (Bamberg, 2007), but most contributors agree that the constructionist perspective provides a common framework (De Fina et al., 2006; Van De Mieroop & Clifton, 2012). Identities are thereby understood as being fragmented and fluidly constructed across different intersecting discourses, practices, and positions. Rather than a ‘true’ stable self, constructed identities are conceptualized as indexical and occasioned performances (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

As something temporarily constructed and fluidly negotiated between interlocutors within a group or social space, identity exists both at ‘proximal’ and ‘distal’ levels (Zimmerman, 1988). Identifying as an interviewee or interviewer, undergraduate or graduate student (as in the present research) are situated roles in the interview interaction. So-called ‘transportable’ identities, such as gender and ethnicity, further shape the interaction in a variety of ways because participants may act more or less ‘male’, more or less ‘academic’, and more or less ‘ethnic’, depending on what they are doing and with whom they are doing it (Schiffrin, 1996, p.199).

Situated identities tend to be multiple and fluid (Bucholtz, 1999). The fluid nature of identity calls for the use of research methods which seek not to quantify experience, but rather understand it within its contextual and natural setting (Patton, 2002). The “active interview” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) approach is one particularly
well suited to exploring narratives of knowledge and experiences as situated forms of ‘identity work’. The semi-structured nature of active interviewing is a flexible approach to the research question that allows for emergence of themes and concepts that were previously unrecognized while at the same time providing a theoretical framework around which research interests are loosely based.

**Conducting “Active Interviews”**

Active interviewing allows the interviewer to manoeuvre more freely by avoiding what Bourdieu (1993) described as the misleading neutrality of a structured interview guide. The active interviewer adopts a flexible approach in anticipating and responding to identity work. The interview is a dynamic, meaning making encounter, as opposed to a search and discovery mission. Rather than acting as a passive recipient of knowledge, the interviewer’s role is to engage the interviewee by probing certain linkages and anticipating responses. This approach facilitates obtaining richer narratives by acknowledging the role of agency in identity work throughout the interview process. Maintaining an adherence to the dynamics of everyday talk and interaction, the interviewer’s insider status (or otherwise) shifts and shapes frames throughout the interview encounter (Goffman, 1974). The reflexivity required in active interviewing has prompted intense scrutiny of the interview encounter with particular attention to the role of power dynamics in the co-creation of interview data.

**Power Dynamics.** In an interview with French Television (TF1), Foucault (1977/1993) demonstrates how the power that exists during the process of interview is multidirectional between the interviewer and the interviewee. During the interview, power takes many forms and directions, continuously shifting between the interviewer and the interviewee. The power dynamic then becomes a constant negotiation of a power structure in which both actors constantly try to equalize their respective authority.

The power of the interviewee drives from his/her insider access to knowledge otherwise inaccessible to the interviewer. The interviewee’s privileged position is counteracted by the power of the interviewer’s authority as recognized seeker of
knowledge and ‘expertise’. In social scientific research, this power dynamic is no more apparent than in the process of gaining consent. While consent gives the interviewee the power to shape the interview, it also implies a shifting of power in the surrender of certain rights to privacy.

Power is exercised differently in different types of interviews (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Fontana & Frey, 2000). Unstructured interviews afford the greatest power to the respondent to control the direction of the questions and the tone of the interview. This can derail the interview away from the intended research, but it can also illuminate areas of inquiry previously unknown (Vähäsantanen & Saarinen, 2013). The interviewer can control the direction of the interview through active listening and responding to various verbal or physical cues in a way that allows for flexibility within an established framework. This process of active listening requires the researcher to not only pay attention to verbal cues, but also to body language, and then to respond in an empathetic way that can sometimes mimic the tone or mood of the participant.

In relating their experiences and attitudes through narratives, social discourses surrounding gender, age, and ethnicity often play a role in shaping the power dynamic (Sandelowski, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Davies & Harré, 1990). Female interviewers, for example, sometimes encounter male resistance (Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2003; Taylor & Rupp, 2005), which led Lohan (2000) to adopt different gender identities when asking men questions about domestic labour. Responding to the sexualisation of the female interviewer by male participants is another challenge in some interview encounters. Presser (2005) for example, was so taken back by the unwanted sexual touching of her participants that she stopped wearing makeup and ‘feminine’ clothing to interviews.

Men also report challenges when interviewing men. In their interviews with men about their health, Oliffe and Mroz (2005) encountered some reluctance on the part of the participants in responding to questions about their health concerns, requiring them to challenge assumptions based on social norms of what men talk about. Women interviewed by men, may conform to certain gender roles assuming lesser status
(Ramazanglu & Holland, 2002; Reinhartz & Chase, 2003). For example, in his study of non-normative sexual behaviours, Tannen (1990) found that women interviewed by men are more likely to downplay the extent of their involvement in non-traditional sexual practices in order to conform to traditional views of female sexuality. Gendered interview encounters are not always problematic. For example, Arendell (1997) found that men are more likely to be candid about their health with female doctors.

Age differences between the interview participants can also be a hindrance or a benefit. Having older interviewers, in one study for example, was found to facilitate asking naïve questions and playing ‘devil’s advocate’ to generate richer data (Ikonen & Ojala, 2007). In a previous study of marijuana users, we found that close proximity in age between the interviewer and the respondents could be beneficial for establishing rapport (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013).

The cultural context shapes the interview by establishing the discursive resources that are used to form narratives. For example, in their study of East-Asian drug users in San Francisco, Soller and Lee (2010) examined the ‘cultural language’ respondents employed when discussing their marijuana-using habit. Their habit of using emptied-out cigarettes to roll ‘blunts’ was interpreted as a method of avoiding the stigma associated with marijuana use in East-Asian culture, for it allowed them to act as if they are smoking cigarettes (an activity that is much less stigmatized in those cultures). Floyd (1998) cited cultural differences as one of the main challenges to better understand how leisure is conceptualized within Black communities. For example, he found that lack of participation in swimming had less to do with financial resources, as previously theorized, than lack of cultural resources that could be directly linked to segregation practices in the United States. Floyd (1998) points out that previous studies had discounted the historical experiences of black people and had simply failed to ask the right questions or interpret the answers of the participants from a racialized perspective.

Power can be mitigated through what Bourdieu (191972/77) has referred to as the “artful improvisations” (p.5) that shape interaction. The process of creating reality with words requires an artful creation of a spontaneous image or identity that facilitates
the power imbalance (Garfinkle, 1967). In other words, the researcher must play the role that is best suited for gaining richer data. Some might say that this is deceitful, and it very well might be, since all non-hierarchical positions might not be possible at all (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Thus, certain techniques used by professional interviewers such as police officers might be beneficial (Hathaway & Atkinson, 2003). Furthermore, these improvisations are not unique to the interview situation. We imitate attitudes, behaviours, and even speech patterns of those with whom we interact on a daily basis to establish empathy during a conversation (Pardo, Jay, & Krauss, 2010).

Although the conclusion to the discussion on ethics of improvisation is not required here, it is salient to reflect upon the power dynamic that exists during the interview and be conscious of its influences. For example, since feminist researchers are especially attentive to the ways that interviews are shaped by power dynamics, they emphasise reflexivity during the research process (Campbell & Bunting, 1991; Fahy, 2002; Aléx & Hammarström, 2004). To minimize the objectification of the interviewee the call for reflexivity requires that the researcher reflects upon his/her role within the discursive circumstances of the interview encounter (Wilkinson, 1988; Long & Johnson, 2000; Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). Since the researcher’s assumptions and theoretical approach can shape the interpretation of individual narratives, reflexivity is useful in enhancing credibility by accounting for the researcher’s biases and beliefs. Reflection often starts with a process of dissatisfaction or frustration on the part of the interviewer (Taylor, 2004) or as the result of an unexpected response to a question (Buckner, 2005).

Reflexivity may include lines of inquiry that challenge interviewees’ accounts. Little attention has been paid to the ethics of disagreeing with a participant. Although Hammersley (1994) discusses the ethics of power structure during the interview and points to the importance of not imposing narratives on interviewees, these discussions are more abstract than the mundane question of what an interviewer should do if a respondent says something that is out of tune with previously gathered empirical data or that seems unauthentic.
Bourdieu sought to challenge the “false consciousness” of his working-class respondents by offering them alternative interpretations during interviews (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992). Minchiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1995) demonstrated how richer data could be gained by playing devil’s advocate or posing straw man questions. In Campbell’s (2003) interviews with male police officers, she often disagreed with and challenged sexist comments to open up new avenues for meaningful discussion. In his study of British Serbs, Pryke (2004) found that disagreeing with the racist tone of some interviewees was a helpful tactic for delving deeper into their attitudes. Pointing out that other interviewees shared their attitudes also encouraged his respondents to be candid about their views.

**Authenticity and ‘Truth’**. The fluid nature of interviews raises the question of how do we know that a particular narrative is ‘truthful’. Whereas Impression Management researchers have endeavoured to uncover “truths” through different interview techniques (Barnhart, 1994; Smith, 2006), qualitative research declared a moratorium on the conventional distinction between the cynical and the sincere. Notwithstanding studies that assume the actor manipulates the presentation of his/her ‘true’ self (Arkin, Wegner, Arkin, & Robert, 1980; Snyder, 1987; Leary & Kowalski, 1990), as I have argued previously, self is best conceptualized as being without essence, thereby removing the distinction between the real and the imaginary. Thus, the truthfulness of an account is less important than its claim to authenticity.

The interviewee is free to construct his/her story as part of a performance in which the interviewer colludes in the process of establishing a narrative. In this sense, stories are *authentic* rather than ‘true’. For example, in his study of geriatric men, Nunkoosing (2005) relates the story of a particular participant who he suspected was being economical with truth when he said he visits the gym every day. More important than establishing ‘the truth’ was his inspection of the cultural narratives that had shaped the interaction. Therefore, identity research is interested in individual interpretation, group narratives, and experiences that are authentic.
Authenticity can be compromised when interviewers’ questions challenge the identity of the interviewee. For example, in a study of mothers who had re-entered the workforce after childbirth, Wiersma (1988) found that their answers were initially mechanical and lacked authenticity, sounding like what she termed “Press Releases”. Snow and Anderson (1987) reported that homeless people often resort to ‘fictive storytelling’ to distance themselves from the stigma attached to being homeless. Similar ‘too good to be true’ narratives have been observed among mental health patients who feel the pressure to be a ‘success story’ (Yanos & Hopper, 2008).

The distinction between authenticity and truth was a point of contention between Glaser and Strauss. While Glaser was interested in uncovering truths, Strauss sought to better understand the “symbolic universe” that is created through interaction, thus erasing the divide between external and internal world (Strauss, 1993 p.27). In this sense, the researcher is a passionate participant in the interview process which is conceptualised as a reflexive situated performance. Thus, interviews need to be understood as performances that depend upon the immediate situation.

Interview performances as conceptualized by Goffman (1974) are governed by the structure and process of interaction that define the particular experience. People’s understanding and reaction to a situation depends upon their answer to the questions, “what is going on here?” (Goffman, 1986, p.8). Frames of interaction are subject to interpretation, based on implicit understandings that these frames exist. Framing can help in triangulation of the data by making sense of events in ways that “highlight a collective set of values, beliefs, and goals for some sort of change” (Martin, 2003, p.733).

Frame analysis suggests that interviewees are not just passive receptacles of knowledge, but rather active contributors to the process of interpretation. While frames are influenced by the structural factors that manage the situation, individual agency is essential in interpreting and internalising frames. Hence what is being communicated during the interview process is a uniquely constructed interpretation of events that
considers all past experiences that have led the individual to the moment of the interview.

Frames shape our experiences of a given situation, allowing agency in interpreting, resisting, and coping with that situation. The framing of interviews shapes their nature and content. In the present study, the interview is recognized as an interactive setting for negotiation of identity. As Bourdieu (1999) noted, the job of the interviewer is to empathize with the interviewees by recognizing the social conditions that have shaped them and their interpretation of the interview. This aim is achieved by reducing the symbolic distance between the interviewer and the interviewee through “methodical listening” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 609). This posture combines “display of total attention to the person—which may lead to controlled imitation” with a sociological eye that pays close attention to the manifestation of power. For example, Aléx and Hammarström (2007) reflect upon their experience with a Sami woman who ended the interviews by remarking that the interviewer is a “good Swede”. Although this was at first interpreted as a kind gesture, the obedient nature of the interviewee’s responses indicated a more complex power dynamic. While the comment can be interpreted as a show of compliance, it can also be interpreted as meaning that she had access to an ethnic heritage that was not accessible to the interviewer as a Swede.

In summary, interviews are arenas where the interviewer and the interviewee work together to build a narrative. This narrative depends both on what has been said and on the context under which it is said. The researcher is responsible for analysing these responses while remaining true to the respondent’s lived experiences. To illuminate the selfhood and emotions of those interviewed in ways that are authentic and empowering requires understanding of the complex mechanisms that shape the interview process. What follows is a description of this study and its method of analysis with respect to the aforementioned complexities. The focus on identity in this research required particular attention to the role of the researcher in co-creating narratives.
Sample Characteristics

Of those who participated in the survey (n=1850), 68% were female. Their ages ranged from 18-28 years old, though most were younger first-year students as reflected by the mean age of the sample (18.6 years). Although most participants (75%) were born in Canada, they represented a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Of those not born in Canada, a large majority (76%) were born in East or South East Asia. Of those who responded to questions regarding their family income, more than half (58%) reported household income in the high range (more than $75,000), as compared to one-in-five who reported lower income ($15,000-$35,000) and about a quarter reported middle income ($35,000-$50,000). Close to half (48%) reported financial support for their schooling came mainly from parents. The rest supported themselves through part-time jobs, loans, or scholarships.

Forty seven percent of participants had used marijuana, the vast majority of whom had first tried it in high school. Close to eighty percent of those who had used it, had done so within the last year; close to two-thirds of whom had used at least once in the past week. The majority of users (82%) reported using less than one joint per “session.” Most (77%) said they find it ‘easy’ or ‘very ‘easy’ to obtain. Only a third of users surveyed reported having spent more than $50 on marijuana within the last month and close to a quarter (27%) who ever used it, said they rarely buy their own. When asked about their attitudes towards marijuana, sixty four percent of respondents said that “marijuana use is okay if it does not interfere with personal responsibility.”

Of the 133 interview participants, 15 attended the University of Alberta, 58 attended the University of Toronto, and 60 attended the University of Guelph. A majority (N=75) of participants were female, and 41% identified as Pan-Asian and only

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1 See tables 4.1-4.3.

2 See Appendix A for a list of interview questions.
3 were Black or Hispanic. Most of the interview participants were ages 18-19 (92%). Nearly half (n=63) had not used cannabis. White males were significantly more likely to be marijuana users than any other group.

**Reflexivity**

As mentioned before, being attentive to potential power dynamics and imbalances calls for reflexivity on the part of the researcher and openness to strategies that address these challenges. To break the ice, interviews began with “what” and “why” questions, which are often easier to answer, before moving on to questions about values and beliefs. This allowed building rapport before asking questions that might challenge interviewee’s identity (Price, 2002).

Probing of certain narratives about gender and ethnicity proved delicate at times. As a visible minority male, I was able to relate to participants on a variety of levels. This was sometimes advantageous for encouraging more candour among non-white students who appeared to be self-censoring responses. These were often obvious in reluctant pauses and broken sentences, or reluctance to elaborate on a passing comment. It was also useful in navigating cultural backgrounds that shaped the narratives. Anti-western views in some communities, for example, are closely tied to stereotypes of marijuana users. Sharing my own experiences with the Iranian community, where marijuana use is seen as a sign of westernization, was a useful strategy for probing similar attitudes.

My status as a visible minority proved helpful for establishing rapport and probing questions on ethnicity. For example, non-white students sometimes sought to reassure me that their parents are not stereotypically “conservative,” but rather that their attitudes reflect their cultural background. I was able to reassure these students that I, as one who was raised in an immigrant family, did not judge them nor their parents’ outlook. Whereas my own parents are no doubt aware of my cannabis use, I go to certain lengths to keep it far from view. In interviews with non-users and with female students, different tactics seemed appropriate. These included validating their
perspectives and experiences by noting their consistency with previous respondents. I was cautious to not ‘over-share’ or impose a certain narrative. I often did not share an experience until similar sentiments or experiences were conveyed by the participants. The point of sharing was thus not to encourage reflection of a situation that had not yet risen, but rather to give ‘permission’ for an experience to be fully conveyed without the fear of judgement.

Framing the interview as a non-judgmental interaction encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences. I sought to build rapport by establishing commonalities and responding empathetically to comments or questions. Disclosure of my status as a user during interviews was a useful tactic when students appeared hesitant to freely share their use experiences. This hesitation was apparent when disclosure was accompanied by the common assertion that they are “good students” and not “pot-heads.” Qualifying remarks made by users included those of a varsity athlete who noted his high GPA, or a regular user who highlighted her extracurricular activities. Others who were hesitant to answer questions about use were gently reminded of the purpose of the interview being not to judge but better understand student attitudes and experiences. Those who answered sheepishly and cautiously were reassured that I was not about to judge them on their use.

Some hesitancies were noted among non-users also, indicating choosing not use required more conscious effort (see also Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013). Non-users often remarked at the outset that they have no moral or ethical objection to its use. I in turn responded that many other interviewees were non-users and that their experiences and attitudes as non-users were equally important for the purpose of my research.

Although much has been written about interviewing women and ethnic minorities (cf. Spradley, 2016), little has been said about conducting interviews with white men (Spates & Gichiru, 2015). In the present study, I found that white male students were the group most challenging to interview. In general, white male students tended to suggest that use is common and needed prompting to reflect on the experiences of others. Consequently, most white men claimed that gender and ethnicity were not
influential on smoking habits. When asked how the experiences of women and minorities might differ from their own, this was a typical response:

I am not really sure...like I don’t think it would matter much...I think, you know, everyone just does it... Like you know those who want to do it do it and if you don’t, you don’t...I really couldn’t tell you. (Male, 19, Guelph)

Others similarly commented that use was “everywhere,” and equally distributed in all groups.

To further probe their responses, I asked interviewees to reflect on the makeup of the group with whom they use. The vast majority of white men admitted that they did not know of any Pan-Asians, especially Asian women, who smoked marijuana. Asked to explain the discrepancy in their experience, white male students often dismissed it as “random” or unique to their own experiences. Other white men attributed differences in using habits to individualized differences between groups. In saying that women and/or ethnic minorities “just don’t like it” or that “maybe they are just not that into it,” white men were often reluctant to recognize gender and ethnicity as mitigating factors in decisions to smoke marijuana.

Those who were willing to “take a guess” on the nature of the experience among non-white, non-male subjects were reluctant to generalize. Not wanting to “stereotype,” white male students seemed cautious about coming across as “sexist” or “racist” in their remarks. Consequently, they often sought to qualify responses when asked about experiences of others. Disclosing similar attitudes shared by previous respondents was a way of giving respondents my ‘permission’ to be candid. These responses were further qualified with terms such as “I could be wrong,” “I am not sure,” or “I’ve never thought about it,” as a way to avoid further reflection or evade the question altogether.

While women and Asian students were able to reflect on socio-cultural constraints that limit their individuality, white men were often reluctant to recognize the importance of social categories in personal decisions to smoke cannabis. Seeing gender and ethnicity as irrelevant, they often couched their responses in terms that
established their status as individualized agents unaffected by societal norms. This lack of reflexivity proved difficult to overcome and highlights the importance of paying closer attention to the way in which those who operate within the habitus can reflect upon the field of operation. In this study, interview analysis is mainly focused on the experiences of non-users, women, and ethnic minorities.

**Interview Analysis**

Qualitative research is unique in that data analysis usually begins at the data gathering stage (Maynard & Pervis, 2004; Neuman, 2000). I conducted an analysis of interviews for all three sites. The analysis of interviews involved identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data while constantly evaluating what is significant and meaningful (Patton, 1991). This process began with analysis of initial observations and continued throughout the research process, by continuous refinement of the category coding. These categories were based on empirical evidence, theory, and the context of the interview.

**Sensitizing Concepts**

The category coding and analysis employed three sensitizing concepts from work by Hammersley *et al.* (2001) and Jenkins (1996) on marijuana and identity: self-perception, stigma avoidance, and the attitude of ‘others’. These concepts have proven useful in studying the role of identity in decisions made around consumption.

**Self-perception.** Shifting from a deviant subculture to more main stream activity suggests that use of marijuana signifies identity and group membership in complex ways (Hammersley *et al.*, 2001; Hathaway, 1997a; 1997b). Identifying as a ‘user’ or ‘non-user’ is something different than disclosing if one has or has not used. I also asked about the differences (other than use itself) that separated users from non-users of the drug. Posing questions hypothetically allowed for some detachment and for deeper probing of the attitudes of students towards themselves and others.

**Stigma Avoidance.** The use of cannabis still carries a certain risk of stigma, the management of which requires the user to have rules about negotiating conflict
(Hathaway, 2004). Through control of information and understanding of the subtleties of ‘regional behaviour’ (Goffman, 1959), users must participate in impression management. Despite more tolerant attitudes, many users hide their use from certain individuals (e.g. parents, family members, and co-workers). Asking how, where, and with whom students smoke marijuana facilitated analysis of ‘differentiated normalization’ and investigation of how stigma is apportioned along ethnic and gender lines.

Attitude of ‘others’. Another important aspect of normalization is the degree to which drug use has gained acceptability among the non-using population (Parker et al., 2002; 2005). As Taylor (2000) pointed out, acceptability is primarily determined by the attitudes of non-users, as opposed to whether users perceive their use as ‘normal’. Studying the attitudes of non-users in the student population is an innovative aspect of the present study that will contribute to the literature on social accommodation of cannabis among Canadian youth. “Would you ever date someone who smokes marijuana?” was a question asked to allow for further probing of the complex ways in which the boundaries of acceptability are drawn.

**Analytical Procedures**

The process of analysis required looking for similarities and differences in students’ attitudes and experiences by identifying common themes and negative cases. Although computer programs such as NUDIST are useful in organizing qualitative data, I employed a method I had used previously which had proven to be useful. Each transcript was printed and photocopied. Quotes were then cut out and organized along categorical lines. Although some quotes initially fell in a number of different categories, these categories were further refined to reflect the themes emerging from the data. Similar strategies have been used by others (McNulty & Fincham, 2012; Richards & Morse, 2007). Respondents were categorized according to use patterns: regular users, occasional users, and abstainers/previous users, and further analysed with reference to gender and ethnicity. Each category was analysed internally and compared to others for similarity and differences. Under ‘reason for use’, for example,
I identified three main sub-categories: ‘default option/curiosity’, ‘cultural requirement’, and ‘coping mechanism’. Some sub-categories were unique to particular (sub) groups. Some, for example, were unique to female respondents: ‘entrance to male subculture’ and ‘rebellion against traditional femininity’. Similarly, non-white students identified ‘fitting in’ or ‘rebellion against westernization’ as reasons either to use or abstain. Each subcategory was further divided along thematic lines. For example, some themes present in the ‘use as default’ group included: ‘rite of passage’, ‘use by significant others’, ‘hedonism’, and ‘peer/family influence’. The search for similarities and differences within each group and between groups was thereby empirically and conceptually guided by the method of constant comparison. This process required a constant dialogue between theoretical explanations and the actual data to connect explanatory tools to empirical materials (Patton, 1991; Dey, 1993) through a theoretically controlled process of rule formation for determining what data could be grouped together (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The Study

The data were derived from a three-campus study of undergraduate students at Canadian universities (see Hathaway et al., 2016). The first stage of data collection involved an online survey of students taking criminology and other social science courses at the University of Guelph, University of Toronto, and University of Alberta, Augustana campus. The survey questions were based on previous studies that had established reliability and validity of the questions (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013).

Surveys were conducted with both users and non-users about drug use and attitudes towards drugs. Students who consented to participate were asked to complete a 20-30 minutes survey hosted by a Canadian certified secure site (FluidSurvey). At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they wished to participate in a one-on-one, hour-long interview about the use of marijuana. In total, 1850 students participated in the survey (a response rate of two thirds). A small incentive to complete the online survey was provided (i.e., a 2% bonus mark or $10 voucher).
Those who consented to be followed up for interviews were contacted by phone or email by a graduate assistant. Of those contacted, 133 agreed to participate in a one-hour semi-structured interview, for which they were paid a $20 honorarium. These interviews were conducted in a private office for confidentiality reasons and transcribed at the three sites by a research assistant at each site. I conducted and transcribed the interviews at University of Guelph. Ethics approval was granted for all three sites by respective Ethics Approvals Boards.

**Chapter Summary**

In summation, the job of a social constructionist researcher is to give full expression to the lives of those whose stories he/she is telling. The content is not enough; the researcher must give shape and context to these stories he/she has helped creating. My aim here is to tell the stories of those university students who chose to participate in these interviews. These stories are used to form an understanding of the complex ways in which identity is practiced and conceptualized for these students. I make no claims of generalisability *per se*. These observations and their explanations, however, combined with similar interpretation of other researchers exploring similar questions, can advance theoretical and empirical understanding of marijuana using habits, attitudes, and experiences of young people. These explanations need to be understood as contextual explanations of a particular experience. My findings are presented in the following three chapters. The analysis is organized based on gender, ethnicity, and the interaction between the two. Each chapter is further divided along the aforementioned sensitizing concepts.
Chapter 5. Marijuana and Gender Identity: “You Can’t Smoke Weed, You’re a Girl”

Introduction

While studies show that male marijuana users consume more, and more often, gender differences in use patterns are relatively unexplored (Leatherdale, Hammond, Kaiserman, & Ahmed, 2007). The literature review in Chapter 4 cited studies showing that women who take part in male oriented leisure have difficulty gaining legitimate access and are often stigmatized for their participation. Some women nevertheless participate either by adopting masculine roles or as a form of resistance to hegemonic masculinity.

The focus of this chapter is on how gender identities shape the boundaries of normalised marijuana-using subcultures. My analysis of the experiences of female marijuana users begins with survey data. Gender differences are thereafter examined in detail through analysis of interview questions that focus on female users’ self-perception, stigma avoidance strategies, and observations on the attitudes of ‘others’.

Gendered Characteristics of the Sample

In the total sample of 1850 students, two-thirds (68%) were female. Nearly half of the sample (47%) said they had used marijuana, and the use rate was higher among males (55% vs. 43%). Male students were also more likely to report having used other recreational drugs, such as cocaine and mushrooms. Female marijuana users were slightly less likely to have used it within the last 12 months (82% vs. 79%). Of those who had smoked, male students on average reported heavier use on “a typical day.”

Among regular users (at least once a week), male students were more likely than women to identify as “pot-heads” (25% vs. 14%). Male students were also more likely

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3 See tables 5.1-5.3
to report having missed deadlines, or been late to work as the result of their use (38% vs. 28%) and less likely to have tried to cut down or stop using cannabis (47% vs. 57%). Female students were more likely to identify external factors such as parents, significant others, and legal sanctions as reasons for abstaining. By comparison, male students were more likely to cite cost or personal responsibilities as reasons for not using.

Male abstainers were more likely to say “marijuana use is OK if it makes you feel good” (26% vs. 14%) and more likely to “hang out” with people who are users. When asked about supply, male students were more likely to report that they have “very easy” access to the drug (52% vs. 44%). Female users were less likely to have bought it from a dealer (17% vs. 34%), and more likely to have “someone else” purchase it for them (54% vs. 41%).

In sum, male students were more likely to use marijuana and more likely to have access to marijuana-using groups. Women were more likely to cite attitudes of those close to them as their main reason for abstaining. Use was seen as more problematic by female abstainers, and those young women who consumed were less likely to identify with marijuana-using identity. Female users were also more likely than male users to see their own marijuana use as problematic.

To investigate the nuances of these gendered differences, I conducted interviews with users and non-users. In the smaller sample of students who were interviewed (N=130), 70 respondents identified as either occasional or regular cannabis users; and male students were more likely (24% vs. 15%) to be regular consumers (use more than 3 times a month). My findings are consistent with past research documenting the gendered normalization of marijuana use (e.g. Dahl & Sandberg, 2015). The following analysis examines gender differences with particular attention to the experiences of both female marijuana users and non-users. The analysis focuses on the role of gendered identities on decisions regarding marijuana use.
Gender Identity

Gender differences in the normalization of the use of marijuana call for a closer inspection of the ways it is conceptualized by youth. For women, one critical aspect of gender identity construction is in their choices regarding participation in marijuana-using groups (Measham, 2002). In the present study, few women (n=11) echoed the responses of male students by suggesting that marijuana use is “commonplace,” as part of “partying” or “having fun.” As expressed by one 18-year-old female student, when asked why she first used marijuana, the question itself seemed confusing. She responded: “I am not sure what you mean. Like I didn’t really have a reason for smoking it. It was like drinking or whatever…just something to do.” For this group, marijuana use was often seen as unproblematic, and an expected behaviour for “normal kids who are not very conservative.”

For some young females, first-time use is viewed as a “rite of passage” into an adult culture where personal freedom was coupled with responsibility for one’s own decisions. Marijuana use is seen by these users as a way to take control of their own lives and to make ‘grown up’ choices, independent of their parents. As suggested by this female student, for example:

[Being in university is] like that time in your life that you are more independent and free to do anything you want. When I came to university, I started questioning things my parents had told me [about dangers of marijuana use], but I started seeing tons of smart people smoking it… [I wanted to] try it and see what the big deal is. (Female, 19, Guelph)

For these users, freedom and new opportunities made marijuana part of the “university experience.”

When asked, these women dismissed gender as a mitigating factor in their decision to use. They often commented that marijuana use has become so commonplace that it is not exclusive to any groups or a particular gender. One 19-year-old female
from Toronto, for example, seemed perplexed by the question, asking “why should that [her gender] matter? It’s not the 1950s anymore.” Others noted that in their experience, marijuana use is as common amongst women as it is amongst men. Some, however, noted that they have an “open minded” or “very liberal” group of friends, and that their experiences might not be reflective of the experiences of others.

Whereas these female students saw their marijuana use as “no big deal,” it was evidently meaningful to some female regular users (n=6) as a way to demonstrate that they can “hold their own.” These women often commented that their use was a way to show their ability to “party like the guys” or to demonstrate that “men and women are not different.” A handful of users linked their first time use to “sexist comments” made by male friends or siblings who had said “weed is not for girls…so [they] smoked to prove them wrong.” Others used marijuana as a way to distinguish themselves from women who “buy into” gender roles and thus abstain “because they think girls shouldn’t be doing it.” Responses like the ones above suggest that marijuana use by some is viewed as a form of rebellion against cultural constraints.

For most female occasional users, marijuana was viewed as a gateway into male society. These females commonly gain access to marijuana-using groups through their male friendships or “just hanging out with the guys.” Many of the occasional users commented that although they sometimes use on their own or with other female friends, their use was mostly linked to use by their boyfriends. These female students often noted that using marijuana had brought them closer to their boyfriends, allowing them to share experiences that strengthened their relationships. These experiences included watching “weed movies” or “silly comedies,” being in the “same state of mind as him,” or generally sharing a “moment” or having a “good night.” A small number also commented that marijuana use enhanced their sexual experiences with their partners.

Others were more circumspect, suggesting that their use was entirely contingent on appeasing their male partners. “If my boyfriend doesn’t do it again,” one 18-year-old female respondent commented, “I don’t think I will ever use it…it’s really not my
thing.” These women associated marijuana use with masculine leisure that they enjoy as part of their relationship. The following example best illustrates these sentiments:

It’s not that I am forced or anything. But it’s just one of those things… I wouldn’t go see an action movie with myself or with my girlfriends but if my boyfriend wants to go, I go with him to make him happy. It’s the same idea. (Female, 18, Toronto)

Those who only used with a male partner to appease him were less likely to identify as “marijuana users,” since users often “smoke alone” or “buy it for themselves.”

Many female students (73%) who identify as occasional users still often viewed it as a “guy thing” in the sense that regular patterns of consumption and heavy use is perceived as masculine. For example:

If girls smoke, it’s usually like a hit or two off the joint or something, like they don’t get totally wasted but like guys… are different… [They] smoke it more often and more of it than girls. (Female, 18, Toronto)

Others similarly noted that “most pot heads are men.” For many marijuana-using women, marijuana use was a male activity, in which they nonetheless participated. One 19-year-old user, for example, attributed her regular use to her commonly “enjoying guy things… I think I should’ve been born a man.” Most regular users acknowledged their outsider identity, observing that they are often one of the only females in their marijuana-using circles.

By contrast, about one-third of those who used occasionally saw marijuana use as a “normal” or “acceptable” activity, which was independent of gender identity. Seeing it as an acceptable part of any party or gathering of young people, these women often couched their decision to use or abstain as dependent on the situation, rather than their gender. For example, many did not use while drinking, or if they planned to go out to a club as the effect was seen as undesirable and “just [did not] set the right mood.” Echoing the responses of their male counterparts, these women saw marijuana use as
another intoxicating substance, similar to alcohol, which has “its own time and the
place.”

Despite these converging attitudes, females commonly lack access to marijuana
and lack opportunities to use it. One student noted that although she is more open to
smoking marijuana than her boyfriend, he is more often invited to use it at parties
because she is not seen as “one of the guys.” Others observed that women are often “not
invited to go smoke…guys just whisper it to each other before disappearing to the
backyard or whatever.” When men were asked about this behaviour, they often said
they thought women “aren’t into it,” “wouldn’t want to do it,” or that they simply
“never thought about it…it was always just the guys I guess.” Others noted that
marijuana use is often a male bonding experience, stating that the inclusion of women
would take away from their enjoyment of the high, or just the “feeling of generally
being with the boys and messing around.” Those men who invited their girlfriends or
female friends to join were often “made fun of” and were seen as “trying to get laid.”
These views meant that men were often reluctant to invite their female friends, since
they feared being stigmatized by other male users.

Females’ lack of access to marijuana-using groups often means that they do not
know how to use marijuana, or how to enjoy the high. When asked why they abstain,
over three-quarters of respondents cited their lack of access to marijuana-using groups
as a contributing factor to their abstinence. These women often commented that they
“wouldn’t know where to begin” or “how to do it.” For many, it had simply “never
come up” since they did not “hang around” with anyone who used marijuana. One 19-
year-old student, for example, said she does not use marijuana because she “wouldn’t
know how to smoke it…or how bongs, pipes, or whatever work or where to get them
from.” Others similarly noted that learning how to use requires “knowing someone who
does it.”

A lack of access to trustworthy marijuana-using groups also means a lack of
access to the drug itself and dealers. As mentioned above, female users often received
their marijuana as a gift or bought it from male friends who know dealers. This often
meant lower rates of use since they did not want “to keep bothering people to get [them] weed.” Female users with access to male using groups had concerns about safety when using with men, who sometimes have ulterior motives. Receiving drugs from men for free was noted by some users to be “risky” for raising “sexual expectations,” much like accepting a free drink at a bar.

Even when women knew of dealers, purchasing their own supply was challenging. As some female respondents suggested, purchasing from a dealer could be problematic since “most dealers are guys” and it is unsafe to meet with “strange dudes in a back alley or a basement.” Some female participants who used male dealers said that they felt “uncomfortable” returning to the same dealer after being offered free cannabis in exchange for sex, and thus lost their “connection.” When women do have access to trusted male suppliers, they sometimes act as brokers for their female friends and classmates to provide them with safer and easier access. Those who had access through female friends often recognized that it is a “cherished” situation and saw themselves as “lucky” to have such connections, indicating that their experiences are uncommon.

Because marijuana is often seen as a masculine activity, a normalised marijuana-using image is unavailable to many women. Many of the female users who were interviewed perceived themselves as outsiders in marijuana-using groups. Lack of access and lack of participation means that marijuana use remains a perilous activity requiring close attention to the management of stigma.

**Stigma Management**

Both men and women in our study observed that they experienced a certain amount of stigma associated with marijuana use. Those women who saw marijuana use as “no big deal” or part of growing up often commented that stigma associated with marijuana use was mostly associated with over indulgence. Similar to their male colleagues, they saw sensible use of marijuana as mostly unproblematic, so long as they could fulfil their personal and school obligations. For these women, management of
stigma was mostly dependent on managing use alongside other obligations. As one 20-year-old female user explained, for example:

“As long as you are getting your work done and you know aren’t high all the time no one really cares if you are doing it...It’s about that balance...like drinking or you know whatever else...just don’t overdo it.”

The unavailability of legitimate ‘front stages’ for a large number of women, however, often means more stigma for female marijuana users. Because women are “supposed to be pure” and “lady-like,” marijuana use is less acceptable for them. As one female student suggested, for example:

Social stigma [associated with marijuana use] kind of follows you... It'll effect how you are viewed. The general opinion of women who smoke marijuana is usually pretty...low class, like, you know, they are not a trustworthy person. (Female, 18, Toronto)

Others also stated that their use is more likely to be talked about and viewed as a feature of their personal identity. One 19-year-old female, for example, said that being labelled a user is “more detrimental to our reputation.” Others similarly observed that using women are often “judged more harshly” or are typified as “potheads” even if they do not use as often as men.

For female users, opportunities to use with other female users are often limited since “girls aren’t that into it.” Certain stereotypes were noted among those who use with men, who may be seen as “tom-boys” or undesirable to males. As one male user commented:

[T]hey are like one of the boys....like they are usually not the, you know, typical hot ones...Like they dress like guys and like the same type of movies and jokes and stuff...Like I don’t know, they are just like one of the guys I guess...I don’t look at them as girls. (Male, 19, Toronto)
Female regular users also noted that they often keep their use a secret from men they wish to date so to preserve their “feminine” image. One 19-year-old female user, for example, said that she often pretends “like I have never done it…I don’t want them to think I am a pothead…I only show them my girly side [laughs].” Successful impression management required these women to protect their femininity while using marijuana.

Accordingly, female users are more often conflicted than males are about their marijuana use, and often struggle to reconcile their feminine identity with that of a marijuana user. This sense of conflict is apparent in the following excerpt from an interview with a female student who often found use incompatible with other aspects of her life:

“It’s hard…I would smoke it more often and stuff but like, except for a couple of friends from [back home] I really don’t have anyone else to smoke with…I just feel like, because it is like a guy thing, I just like have no place in it…I mean, like, I don’t feel like I belong, there is more judgment for girls…I wish there was like a girl version of a pot-head [laughs]. (Female, 18, Toronto)

It is apparent that female users pay a higher price and face more stigma for assuming the identity of ‘marijuana user’. Negative perceptions of marijuana use by females require particular attention, in their management of stigma, to where, with whom, and how marijuana is used.

**Where to Use?**

Whereas male students are more likely to use in public settings as long as it does not “bother other people,” over two-thirds of females said they often use in private to keep their use a secret. The stigma associated with female marijuana use meant that they were more concerned than males about controlling the location of their use and avoiding unwanted attention. Some female respondents commented that use in private means less chances of being “caught” and thus less chances of punishment by parents. Their responses indicate that there is a double standard. Keeping use a secret from
parents, for example, is often easier for males. Some female students observed that their parents were more “lenient” with their brothers and did not monitor them as closely, making it easier to hide their use.

Importance of keeping use away from ‘others’ was also reflected in the responses of those women who prioritized “anonymity” over particular locations. Stigma associated with marijuana use meant that some private places might also be undesirable. Their primary concern had less to do with location *per se*, than with “running into someone familiar.” As one user explained:

> It’s not really location I guess but you know keeping it away from people who might know me or my parents…Like if I am at a private party but someone is there who knows my parents or something, I wouldn’t smoke it. But if I go away on a trip, I would smoke it around people in public because, like, nobody knows me. (Female, 20, Guelph)

Others similarly noted that the anonymity of being “away from home,” “living on campus,” and using in places where it is “unlikely to run into someone who knows me or my family” had allowed them more freedom to smoke in public, although most still preferred private locations.

Moreover, almost all females said they were more inclined to use in private for safety and security. Fear of being “hassled” by campus security often means that those who use in public often go to “out-of-the-way places” to smoke. Being intoxicated in “hidden away” public places, some females suggested, could mean “running into guys you don’t want to run into,” or “ending up in situations that are just not safe.” Some users shared their fear of being assaulted while high since “there is no one there to help them.” Comparing it to alcohol, female users in general were wary of smoking in places where intoxication could mean higher chances of sexual assault. As one 19-year-old female user explained: “It’s like getting drunk, you have to watch out…You don’t want to be getting drunk with people you don’t trust…or in places that no one can see you.”
More generally, however, lack of access to marijuana often means fewer choices about where to use. Most occasional female users commented that since they do not have their own “stash” they are often at the “mercy of whoever it is that has it.” Accordingly, abstinence for some female students was attributed to lack of places they see as safe to use. This further leads to their exclusion from marijuana-using groups. The enduring stigma against female marijuana use also requires discretion in choices of with whom to use.

**With Whom to Use?**

The proper management of stigma requires choosing who to use with, and who else should know. In addition to the stigma against using drugs *per se*, female students noted an associated stigma attached to having too many male friends. Some said they had to hide their use and their association with male friends who use. One female user stated:

> I only go out with [male friends] at night and I try to, you know, go after they go or like pretend like I am not with them…I don’t want other people to see me going behind the rez at night with a bunch of guys…it just looks weird…people might think you know like: “what is she doing with them back there?” (Female, 19, Guelph)

Some female users seem to wear different ‘hats’ at different times, having separate groups of friends who should never meet. Those who openly and frequently use with male friends may have fewer female friends and thus find themselves excluded from “girly things” like “going dancing” or being invited to the “girls’ nights.”

Users and non-users in our study shared the view that the risks of marijuana use are greater for female users. Most students agreed that women must be more responsible than men when using marijuana. “As a woman,” for example, they must guard against men who take advantage of females in an intoxicated state. Similar precautions are required when drinking alcohol. The comparison was often made, as in the following example:
To me it is the exact same thing as alcohol…If you wouldn’t get drunk with certain people because you are worried something might happen, then don’t get high with them…As a girl you have to think about these things. (Female, 19, Guelph)

Precautions against using with men they were not familiar with, meant that they often had to refuse invitations to join “smoking sessions,” and thus they were more likely to be excluded from marijuana-using groups. This can also contribute to aforementioned perception that women are often “not up for” having a smoke at a party, and thus they are less likely to be invited to join.

Those women who had female friends who also used, found using with other women to be more “relaxing” and “chill,” than using with men. They commented that while they enjoy using with men “once in a while,” it is often more enjoyable to use with other women. One 19-year-old female user, for example, said that she can “let her guard down and not worry about people around me wanting to sleep with me, or judge me because I am getting high.” Others also mentioned using with other women means they can enjoy “girly things” and “be [themselves]” when high. When asked to elaborate, they remarked that since feminine behaviours such as “laughing out loud,” “wanting to just hang out and chat,” “watching romantic comedies,” and “talking a lot” was often stigmatized in male using groups, it was “nice to not have to follow guys’ rules and just be girls.” Using with men, some commented, could also raise sexual expectations and “ruin friendships.”

Over a quarter of female occasional users, however, said they preferred smoking with men. For these women marijuana use with males was “easier” since the “smoking crew” were loosely connected and required little social commitment. “You can go in and out of them,” One 19-year old, who said she prefers to smokes with male friends, mentioned, “you don’t have to like hang out all the time or all night, you can just get high and then leave if you want.” Another 18-year-old student said “with girls it’s really cliquey….guys just don’t care, its whatever.” Comments like the ones above
suggest that marijuana-using groups for females are more tightly-defined as compared to men. Some female students, for example, observed that although guys always invite “anyone, especially any guy,” to join; female users are less likely to invite someone they do not know or are not “close friends with.”

The association of marijuana with masculinity and the stigma associated with female use requires women to be subtle and vigilant about with whom they use and with whom they share their status as a user. Desire for anonymity and stigma management was also reflected in women’s methods of consumption.

**How to Use?**

Effective stigma management requires choosing how to use. Gender differences were noted in the method of consumption. Male students were more likely to use pipes and bongs and females more often said they prefer edibles such as marijuana cookies or brownies. Being reserved for more “serious” (i.e. male) users, bongs and pipes were deemed “harsher” (read: masculine) than joints. These methods produce too much smoke and have stronger effects. As one female user explained:

> I know a lot of girls who don't like smoking bongs. They just...don't like the idea of it. They like to smoke joints... [It] doesn't get you nearly as high as a bong. The guys that I smoke with are much more consistent smokers, so they just have themselves under control. (Female, 18, Toronto)

Joints were also thought to be more “feminine.” When asked to explain, most women said they “don’t know” why they think that way, “it’s just how [they] see it.” But few explained that they thought the act of smoking a bong or a pipe was “ugly” and “guyish.” Others said it just “looked wrong.”

As noted previously, indeed some female users (n=9) sought to challenge gender norms and expectations by smoking marijuana “like a man.” They took pride in their ability to “empty a [bong] chamber” as a sign of authenticity within marijuana-using groups. A few female bong users (n=5), however, commented that they prefer bongs for more practical reasons. They said it requires less marijuana to “get high” and is thus
more economical. Most women who used smoking equipment differentiated their paraphernalia from those owned by “potheads” by emphasizing that “it’s a small one.” They often described their bongs or pipes as “girly,” “cute,” or “pink” thus feminizing their use. Similar attitudes are also noted elsewhere (e.g. August, 2013).

Other than using methods, males and females differed in their food and alcohol consumption as a way to manage the effects. Over three-quarters of women mentioned strategies before or after marijuana consumption to manage the effect and reduce intoxication. These included not inhaling after the first few “puffs,” eating after using, and avoiding use of alcohol. By contrast some male students drank and avoided eating afterward so as to lengthen and enhance marijuana’s effects.

In addition to taking measures to manage the effects, female users’ use patterns were often found to differ. In particular, male users are more likely to report using marijuana while studying or working. Far fewer female students reported having used the drug before going to class or while studying. Female users more exclusively reserved their marijuana use for recreational activities away from work and school. Female students are more likely to avoid a pattern of using marijuana in the daytime during work hours.

Female users tend to be more cautious in their choices of how to use and not use marijuana. Their use of stigma management techniques is more apparent than in our interviews with male students. Female regular users often either used by adopting masculine identities, or in feminine ways thus rejecting the masculine nature of marijuana. Gender differences in where, when, and how to use reflect important differences in societal reactions and the attitudes of others.

**Attitudes of Others**

The degree of normalization of marijuana use for females is partially determined by non-users’ attitudes. Female students in our interviews more often cited both formal and informal sources of control. Those who did not use were more likely than male students to mention authority figures such as police and campus security as reasons for
abstaining. The fear of sanctions by campus police appears more palpable for females due to the associated stigma. As one female student explained:

Like you almost expect guys to break the rules. Like if guys get a drinking ticket, they post it on their door but if girls get it they try to keep it very quiet...I don’t know how to describe it. Like as a girl you almost feel like you get judged harsher than guys for breaking the same rule. (Female, 20, Toronto)

Female users are more likely to be viewed as “different” for having transgressed social norms demanding their observance of obedience to authority. Seven female students, for example, spoke about their feelings attending mandatory alcohol and drugs awareness training at two different universities as part of each university’s sanction against their underage drinking or marijuana use. These students often said that women “took the class more seriously,” “felt more ashamed for having to go to class,” and “tried to keep it a secret” as compared to men with similar sanctions. Male students, when discussing their disciplinary sanctions, often dismissed it as “unimportant,” “not a big deal,” or “a slap on the wrist.” When asked if they felt any shame or guilt for having been sanctioned, female users were more likely to answer in the affirmative. Male users, by contrast, often found it a humorous experience and a “good story.” Thus, it seems that female students are more likely to conceptualize sanctions against consumption in negative terms, as compared to their male peers.

The greater stigma against using drugs for women is evident in terms used by non-using male students who referred to female users as “unconventional,” “untraditional,” “promiscuous,” and “atypical.” One non-using male, for example, commented that while use by males was commonplace from an early age, the same could not be said for females. He observed: “the girls that did smoke it in high school [were], you know, different...they were rebelling... [And] against social norms...good girls didn’t smoke.” For some male non-users, however, marijuana use by women was acceptable “since guys do it all the time.” Some of those (n=18) who found it
irresponsible said that it is equally irresponsible for both genders. Although they recognized that women are often judged more harshly and stigmatized for its use, they attributed the differences in attitudes to sexist stereotypes that “should change.”

The level of acceptance of marijuana use by partners in intimate relationships shows gendered attitudes as well. Most female students (over 90%) were accepting since “almost every guy smokes weed,” and those who were less accepting were often “okay” with it, as long as use was kept away from them. Female students who refused to date a marijuana user typically perceived it as a sign of immaturity that was not an attractive quality in a potential life partner.

By comparison, male students more often (63%) shared the latter view that marijuana users are unsuitable for dating. This attitude was shared by both non-users and male users. For example, one 18-year-old male user said although “pothead girls are tons of fun… [He] wouldn’t be too serious with them… [they’re] little flaky [and] different.” Users and non-users of both genders shared the view that female users tend to be a certain “type of girl.” Women are expected to be more “responsible” and “mature.” One male user, for example, objected to his girlfriend’s use because:

Girls should be more mature than guys I guess…I would be looking for someone who is more mature and adult than I am [laughs]. (Male, 19, Camrose)

Some men who accepted marijuana use by female partners said it was acceptable only when they use together. Citing the overrepresentation of men in marijuana-using groups, they said use of marijuana elsewhere might mean infidelity, or at least be perceived in that way. By contrast, none of the female marijuana users in our sample objected to use by male partners.

Stigmatization of female users for participation in a masculine activity was also apparent in the attitudes of some non-using female peers. Some female abstainers said that female marijuana users are often thought to be promiscuous and “slutty,” or “a certain type of girl.” One non-using female, for example, said that she is not comfortable allowing her boyfriend to “hang out with pot head girls” as she does not
fully trust them. Others similarly commented that female users are more likely to “sleep around” or not be in committed relationships. These women often commented that they are not inclined to be friends with those women who smoke as it would be detrimental to their reputation and could mean break up of their relationship with their boyfriends. Others noted that marijuana-smoking women just “don’t fit in” with their group of friends or are too interested in “partying,” “getting high,” or generally acting immature. Differences in attitudes could be partially due to representation of female marijuana users in popular culture.

**Gendered Media Depictions**

Gendered portrayals of marijuana users in popular movies and television have redefined the image of male users as conventional and marijuana use as a “typical” activity. By contrast, as observed by many female interviewees, normalised depictions of female use are rare. For example, one female user noted that even in a show about a “female dealer [referring to *Weeds*]…almost all of her clients are male.”

Another observed that whereas male users are often portrayed as “bad boys” and objects of female sexual desire, “women have been taught by the media to, you know, do what you are told, do it the way we tell you to do it, and do it now or you are a bad girl and no one wants a bad girl.” This double standard found in many media depictions problematizes female involvement in marijuana-using groups.

Participants commented that female marijuana users are often represented as “unladylike,” atypical, or “strange.” Some complained that when women are involved in marijuana-using groups, they are often on the margins and their presence feels like it is the punchline of the joke. Furthermore, marijuana’s association with female promiscuity has remained a constant theme in media depictions. As one interviewee observed, for example, Samantha in *Sex and the City* is the only character who uses marijuana and she is labelled as “the slutty one of the group.”

Few female participants noted that female characters in movies about marijuana users are typically objects of sexual desire rather than participants in the using group. Female characters who are “stoners” are portrayed as unfeminine. An interviewee
noted, for example, Donna, the “resident Tomboy” in That 70s Show, was the only female character who regularly “got high.” Jackie, the more feminine of the two characters, is the one that becomes “giggly and stupid…she doesn’t seem like a regular user.”

A further source of stigma found in media depictions is the portrayal of marijuana use as dangerous for women, which stereotypes female users as risk-takers or irresponsible. One female user attributed her roommate’s negative attitudes to marijuana to “misinformation” perpetuated by the media. She recalled a conversation illustrative of these stereotypes:

“My roommate…was like: “Don’t you think that it’s weird that you are hanging out with bunch of guys all the time?”…I was like: “what the fuck are you talking about? Like are you asking me if I am scared that my friends might rape me?”…That’s how the media portrays it…that these guys are out there to get you high and rape you. Well most guys who smoke weed are just chilled, they don’t want to drug you to rape you or anything.” (Female, 19, Toronto).

Association of drug use with sexual assault was also apparent in the observation that news articles about female marijuana users mention their drugs use “to make it seem like they were to blame, too.” One 18-year-old female student, for example, noted that media “makes it seem like it was her responsibility to not get high…like the guy wasn’t to blame, he was just high, she should’ve known better.” Comments made on social media seems to reinforce these double standards and suggest that the marijuana-using woman “had it coming,” or was “asking for it.”

Double standards present in the media closely resemble the attitudes of some students. Gendered perceptions and experience of stigma may be partly attributed to negative portrayals in the media depicting female users as atypical and “bad.” Furthermore, by putting the onus of responsibility on women when intoxicated, they portrayed marijuana-using women as victims of their own decisions. The Reefer
Madness mentality seems to be more enduring in female depictions than recent portrayals of use among men.

**Chapter Summary**

Marijuana use by women is perceived to be more “different” and problematic than use by men. Gendered forms of stigma, risk, and lack of social capital serve to limit access to marijuana-using groups. Non-users tend to be more accepting of male users in peer groups and intimate personal relationships. Marijuana use by females is more closely connected to male friendships and intimate relationships, or a conscious statement against norms of femininity. The existence of women who respond to internalized gendered standards of behaviour by policing the boundaries of female drug use further reinforced the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

In sum, for many women, marijuana is far from “normalised.” Their decision to use or to abstain is a performative expression of gender identity. The need to challenge gender boundaries around drug use in society makes marijuana use a qualitatively different experience for females. The stigma associated with female marijuana use as an unconventional and rebellious activity means that female marijuana users need to be more discreet about how, where, and with whom they use, in comparison to their male counterparts. While use by men was seen as “normal” by non-using peers, female users were seen as “different” and more “rebellious” than female abstainers. Furthermore, use by women was seen as more problematic in intimate relationship than use by men.

The next chapter examines the role of ethnicity in shaping students’ attitudes and marijuana use behaviour. To further demonstrate the concept of differentiated normalization, I illustrate the differences in experiences and attitudes between white and Pan-Asian students with particular attention to the role of ethnicity in determining the boundaries of “normalised” marijuana use.
Chapter 6. Ethnic Identities and Marijuana Use: “Only Coconuts Smoke Weed”

Introduction
Leisure participation is often limited by boundaries observed around race and ethnicity (Carrington & Wilson, 2004). Literature cited in chapter 4 demonstrated that immersion in the adopted culture is often difficult for immigrant youth. Conflicting cultural norms can result in many youth adopting “situational identities” (Barth, 1981) as a way to ‘fit in’ with western subcultures while retaining their ethnic identity (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). These conflicting demands impact the participation of ethnic minority youth in leisure groups.

Contemporary work in leisure studies has highlighted the role of consumption and leisure participation in development of ethnic identities among middle class racialized youth (Hunt & Barker, 2001; Miles, 2000). The use of marijuana in particular is noted to define group membership, establish boundaries of inclusion into various subcultures, and facilitate self-expression of ethnic identities (e.g. Fletcher et al., 2009; Soller & Lee, 2010). These observations shed important light on the phenomenon of differentiated normalization of marijuana use (Pugh & Bry, 2007). To better understand the experiences of Canadian youth, this chapter examines the role of ethnicity in attitudes towards the use of marijuana among university students.

Ethnic Characteristics of the Sample

In the total sample of 1850 students, 51% were white. Most (87%) who identified as non-white were Pan-Asian students, more than half (56%) of whom were born in Canada. Of those who identified as Pan-Asian, 46% were from Central Asia.

4 See table 6.1 and 6.2 for more details
(India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan), 21% were from South-East Asia, 8% were from the middle-east, and 24% were from East-Asia (China and Japan). Pan-Asian students were less likely to have tried marijuana as compared to whites (25% vs. 59%), and those who had used were less likely to have used in the past month (49% vs. 81%). Middle-Eastern (32%) and South-East Asian (34%) students were more likely to have used marijuana as compared to Chinese and Japanese students (15%). White users were more likely to self-identify as “pot-heads” (11% vs. 7%); and report the use of other drugs compared to Pan-Asian students. White students less often had negative attitudes towards the use of cannabis by others. They were more likely to perceive use as “okay if it makes you feel good” (22%) compared to Middle-Eastern (17%), South-Asian (15%) and Chinese (10%) students, and also more likely to associate with those who use. Pan-Asian students reported use by siblings (15% vs. 65%) or parents (4% vs. 79%) far less often. Pan-Asian students were also more likely to report being dependent on their parents for financial support (56% vs. 16%) and more likely to live with parents (40% vs. 28%).

In sum, the survey data show Pan-Asian students use less often and have less access. Pan-Asian students as a group had more negative attitudes towards marijuana use and were less likely than whites to associate with users. Our in-depth interviews with students shed further light on the different experiences and attitudes between the two groups.

In interviews conducted with 133 students, 60% were white. The majority of non-whites were from Pan-Asian backgrounds (N=53), nearly half of whom (n=23) were South-East Asian (from Pakistan and India) and the rest were from China and Japan. White interviewees were more likely to have used cannabis before, and white users were more likely to identify as “regular” users (use more than 3 times a month).

The aim of this chapter is to examine the differentiated normalization of marijuana use with specific reference to ethnicity. The data from our interviews shed new light on how ethnicity influences attitudes of users and abstainers. The following analysis examines ethnic differences with particular attention to the role of Pan-Asian identities on decisions regarding marijuana use.
Self-Perception

What is the role of marijuana use in identity formation? And what is the role of ethnicity in shaping the boundaries of social tolerance and decisions to use? The responses of white students, especially white men, in this sample tend to indicate that marijuana use for many is the “default option” (also see Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013). The decision to use, for the first time, is often characterized as being “no big deal” or simply part of growing up, at least for those who go to parties. As one 20-year-old white male student put it: “I don’t know why I used it…. Someone gave me a joint and I smoked it at a party. I didn’t really think about it.” Others said that its use is common in their group of friends and thus it seemed “harmless,” and “just something to do while we are sitting around.”

The normalization of marijuana use by youth appears to have progressed to the point that, for many, choosing not to use is perceived as more rebellious. One 19-year-old white student, for example, commented that he has always wanted to be “different” from other “sheep who walk around following other people… they think it’s cool, it’s not, and it’s just a conformist thing to do.” Another student said that he was tired of “every fucking person getting high and acting like they are a revolutionary…want to be different? Don’t smoke weed then” (Male, 18, Toronto). The perception of marijuana use as plebeian was apparent in the view of those who saw it as a “fad” that “everyone is doing without knowing why.” Others attributed their abstinence to “thinking for [themselves],” not wanting to be “like everyone else,” and a general desire to differentiate themselves from “hordes of people who get high every weekend.” One 19-year-old Pakistani previous user said that he had started using in high school as a form of rebellion against the conservative and religious nature of his community. He said he stopped using “after coming to university and seeing how common it was…it just didn’t feel the same way.”

For many, marijuana use was contradictory to their image as an “upstanding” young adult. Students in our study who abstained from using often expressed their decision in terms that highlighted their dependability as compared to many peers they
know. Equating marijuana use with immaturity, some commented that their abstinence is part of their “image” as “mature” and “responsible” young adults. The following two examples are reflective of the sentiment of this group:

To be honest I am always the more responsible person…I think smoking pot or getting trashed would’ve been very bad for [my] image as a dependable person. And now in university, it’s the same thing. The girls in the house call me their “university mom.” (Female, 19, White, Toronto)

Big reason I don’t smoke is because of who I am. I was always mature and responsible and doing drugs is just not something I do…it’s just not me…I like being the mature sober person. When I look at my friends who are stoned and make a fool of themselves it makes me sad that they don’t see how stupid they look. (Male, 20, Indian, Guelph)

For others, the primary reason for abstinence related to social obligations such as responsibilities to family or to work, being part of a sports team, or wanting to set a good example for younger siblings.

While many cited legal and health concerns as primary motivators behind their decision to abstain, further probing of responses often led to greater emphasis on maintaining an image that precluded use of drugs. They commented that although underage drinking and cigarette smoking are against the law, “they are not as stigmatized as marijuana use,” and thus not harmful to their image. Others noted that while underage drinking was “expected,” marijuana use was “different” as it was associated with being “lazy,” “getting addicted,” or simply being “a bad kid.” The common use of alcohol among adults whom they “looked up to” also meant that alcohol consumption was less likely to be associated with being a “trouble maker.” For most white respondents, choosing to abstain from marijuana use was primarily a personal decision that signified individuality and responsibility in calculating risk. For these
students, abstinence was part of an image that was independent of their culture, religion, or social status, unlike for most Pan-Asian youth.

For many Pan-Asian youth, the choice to use was partially viewed as a way of fitting in with “white” youth culture or asserting their commitment to traditional cultural values. For example, one 17-year-old male student from India recalled that when he came to Canada he had no friends and “couldn’t really speak English that well, so smoking pot was a way into the Canadian culture… [He] made a lot of friends that way.” Other users characterized marijuana use as something that served to differentiate them from other Asian youth who are more “traditional” and have not assimilated into the “Canadian culture.” Some users saw abstinence to be more common amongst new immigrants “who still act like they are back home…they are stuck in the old ways.” For these users, marijuana was a sign of modernization and establishment of their identity as a “Canadian” youth.

Perceptions of marijuana use as a westernized activity was also reflected in the attitude of some Asian non-users. Marijuana use has been characterized by over three-quarters of Asian abstainers as a sign of “westoxification” (Al-e-Ahmed, 1962), and non-white users sometimes are perceived as being “white-washed.” One student from Pakistan, for example, reported being criticized by his brother for becoming “too white” after his use was discovered. Whereas use of marijuana was “expected” of white youths, it is associated with deviant behaviour by many ethnic minority students. A non-using participant from India remarked: “it is usually the coconuts [white on the inside with brown skin] who smoke a lot of weed…normal brown people don’t smoke much pot.” Others commented that although some Indian youth smoke marijuana, they are usually the “gangster type,” “atypical,” or “bad kids” who engaged in other forms of deviance or criminal behaviour. These responses are representative of the majority of Pan-Asian abstainers’ perception of marijuana use a deviant and “white” activity.

Some white users also noted ethnic differences, suggesting that marijuana use conflicted with the stereotypical image of an Asian youth. Certain stereotypes are reflected in responses that conflate the image of a “good student” with the Asian youth
who is “hardworking,” “studious,” and “sober.” As one 19-year-old white student noted, for example, “the stereotype Asian kids who get straight A’s don’t really smoke it.” Whites, on the other hand, often did not associate marijuana use with poor school performance. When asked if there was a difference between users and non-users beyond the use itself, for example, whites often observed that “some of the smartest people I know smoke weed,” or “lots of my friends smoke weed and get straight A’s.”

To further probe these responses, I asked Pan-Asian users if they thought marijuana use was sign of their westernization. Although they mostly rejected the term as it carried negative connotations, some agreed that their use of marijuana allowed them access to white leisure spaces that would have been inaccessible to them otherwise. Particularly, for those Muslim students whose religion forbade drinking alcohol, marijuana was a substitute so as not to feel “left out.”

Some Asian students commented that perception of users as westoxified constituted a further perpetuation of racist stereotypes that exclude Asian youth from everyday leisure activities. They saw the perception of users as westernized to be “ignorant” and “close minded.” One 18-year-old Indian user, for example, said that marijuana use “doesn’t mean I am westernized...It’s just a way of having fun...Maybe it’s not acceptable back home but I don’t live there...I am still Indian but I am also Canadian.” They often complained that those who see their use as westernized are “pigeonholing” other Asian students who “don’t want to be like a caricature of a good Asian kid, just studying and never going out to have fun.” Some participants also noted that marijuana use was common among Asians “way before white people started doing it.” For these students, marijuana use was a recreational activity that they mostly enjoyed with other Asian youth, void of any ‘white’ connotation.

Self-perception is closely tied to social images of ‘users’ and their associated characteristics. I saw marked differences between white and Pan-Asian students in the way they distinguished between sensible users and those whose use is problematic. White students often characterized the differences between users and non-users in terms suggesting that users are more “open-minded,” “easy-going,” or “liberal.” This
distinction makes it easier to differentiate between a “user” and a “pot-head” whose use is problematic. Non-problematic use was described as “occasional,” “safe,” and sensible. Most white students commented that so long as use does not interfere with other obligations, “it’s not a problem…smoke as much as you want.” Comparing it to alcohol, one white student noted that just like she is a “drinker” but not an “alcoholic,” she is a marijuana “user” but not a “pot-head.” These views are in line with research that suggests the notion of the “sensible” marijuana user is beginning to emerge in western cultures (cf. Parker et al., 2002; Duff & Erickson, 2014). As two participants observed, for example:

People who use crystal meth or crack, like you can tell they are usually different…they are druggies…with weed I feel like everyone smokes it. Conservative kids smoke it…the drop out kids in downtown Guelph smoke it…it’s like everyone is doing it. (Female, 19, Guelph)

Someone who tries Acid or Crack is different than someone who smokes weed…I feel like smoking weed is like going beyond the boundaries but just a little…like it won’t destroy your life. (Male, 18, Toronto)

For many Asian students, the connotations were more negative. One Asian student, for example, pointed out that positive definitions of marijuana use do not exist in Chinese culture. He said:

I think it’s more of a cultural thing… in Canada it’s like you can try it, but it doesn’t really affect you. In Hong Kong, if you have it, then they think you’re going to get addicted. That’s the consensus I guess…it’s like any other drug, like you are a druggy…most people don’t look at it as harmless, the way Canadians do. (Male, 20, Toronto)
Other Asian abstainers offered similar responses, not distinguishing between occasional users and those who abuse the drug. Those who used were often seen as “addicts” whose drug use will eventually “catch up” with them. Non-problematic use, one 18-year-old Indian student said, “is viewed as a myth by people like my parents…they think if you are using then you are abusing it…like if they see me with weed they think I need to go to rehab.” Similarly, a 23-year-old student from Japan observed that the “perspective [on] people who are smoking [marijuana in Japan] is the same as [other] addicts…they are all druggies.” Some Asian abstainers saw marijuana as a “gateway drug” that although not problematic per se, is indicative of a “risk taking attitude” that could lead to addiction and other problems.

The definition of non-problematic use of marijuana by whites suggests it is viewed by most as being “different” from harder drugs. White students are more likely to view the drug benignly, particularly as compared to other illegal drugs. Weed was often viewed by whites as “harmless” and “not really a drug.” White respondents often commented that marijuana is different from other drugs because its consumption is common and non-addictive, while its effects were “manageable” and short lasting.

The distinction between hard drugs and soft drugs like marijuana is less pronounced for Asians than for their white peers. When asked if they thought there was a difference between marijuana and other drugs, most Asian abstainers did not make a distinction, “a drug is a drug” was a common response. One 18-year-old student from India, for example, pointed out that marijuana is considered comparable to heroin or meth in Indian culture. Others also noted that with the exception of alcohol and tobacco, all intoxicating substances are considered drugs and thus are seen as “very bad.”

When asked to reflect on differing attitudes about marijuana and marijuana users between whites and Asians, Asian respondents often commented that a lack of access to a marijuana-using subculture meant less exposure and more stereotypical attitudes, which in turn exaggerated the differences between users and non-users. Most attributed their perception of marijuana to their parents’ view of the drug. These children of Pan-
Asian immigrants reported that their families would strongly disapprove. Pan-Asian students said that their parents’ negative attitude is the result of their lack of experience with the drug and its users. One 19-year-old Indian female student explained:

“[My parents] just believe everything they hear or think from back home…like they’ve never met anyone who smokes weed or even seen it but they think it is bad because that’s what they’ve heard.” (Female, 19, Toronto)

Thus, for many Asian youth, perception of marijuana use depends on the degree to which their parents are “Canadianized.” Those Asian students who saw their parents as more accepting often commented that their parents have been in Canada for many years, and their adoption of the culture makes use acceptable to them. One student from India, for example, said:

A couple of my uncles who have been here for a while and went to university here are cool with it... and I think, you know, if they knew I smoked, they’d be cool with it. But my parents grew up in India, so they are not very cool with it...

That’s just how our culture is. (Female, 20, Guelph)

These attitudes converged with the narratives of some white students who attributed their parents’ accepting attitude towards marijuana to their parents’ prior experiences with the drug and those who use it.

The role of life experience in softening attitudes towards marijuana is also apparent in the response of non-using Asian students who shared the normalizing attitudes of peers. A non-using student from India whose parents are strongly against marijuana use made the following observation:

If you are not dependent on it, then whatever…you know. Like I think people should live a happy and healthy life. And if weed makes you happy and healthy, then great, enjoy it…I’ve seen lots of pot-smokers who do well in school and don’t really have any problems. (Female, 19, Guelph)
Other non-users also viewed the drug as inoffensive and “harmless” if used “responsibly.” Although they often said “it is not for [them],” they “respected” other people’s choices to smoke. These students said that they prefer the Canadian value of autonomy that permits people to “do their own thing if they are not hurting anyone.”

When asked about potential consequences of marijuana use, whites rarely mentioned serious consequences for using. Those whites who used, especially the men, saw little risk in being found out beyond general embarrassment. For example, they often commented that “people finding out” is “not a big deal,” and said that it was a reasonable risk to take. Many shared the view that most people would not be “surprised” if their status as a user was revealed.

**Differences among Pan-Asian Students**

Although Pan-Asian students shared similar views on marijuana and those who use it, there were clear differences between Pan-Asian students in their attitudes towards the drug. Those from South-Asia (India and Pakistan) seemed less concerned with the use of marijuana as compared to their East-Asian (Chinese and Japanese) counterparts. South-Asian students, especially men, were more likely to use the drug and more likely to have positive attitudes towards it in comparison to all other Asian students. When discussing the role of marijuana, some commented that although it is “looked down” upon “as a drug”, its presence in their culture and history makes its use less problematic than other drugs. Some Muslim (n=6) students from these regions remarked that their parents and friends would be more forgiving of marijuana use than alcohol use. As one Pakistani student explained:

“It’s not like my parents will be happy that I smoke weed, you know? But alcohol is seen as dirty but weed isn’t like that...people have been smoking weed in my country forever so you know they know it more...they see it as bad but not as harmless.” (19, Pakistani Male, Toronto)
Similarly, some (n=8) Indian students commented that the religious nature of marijuana and its common usage in traditional ceremonies distinguishes it from other drugs. Although those for whom alcohol was not forbidden by their religion were unanimous in saying that alcohol use is more common in large gatherings than marijuana, they nonetheless saw marijuana as a “special” or “unique” drug that carried less stigma than other types of drugs such as opium or cocaine. Often used in the form of hashish or as an edible, for some marijuana is part of their cultural life. Some Hindu students, for example, pointed out that as children they were offered “milky drinks mixed with weed.” Those who had grown up in India and Pakistan often saw use of hashish by “older guys” or “those from lower classes” as “commonplace,” unproblematic, and “no big deal.”

Although accommodating attitudes to marijuana use were present, they did not fully extend to recreational use in Canada. Use of marijuana by these youth still carried a certain amount of stigma, as marijuana was often associated with “uneducated,” uncultured, and “those from villages and small town.” Use by those from “upper castes of society,” as one 19-year-old Indian student put it is seen as a betrayal of parental “culture and sacrifices they have made to immigrate to Canada…my parents would say if we wanted you to be using weed all the time we would’ve stayed back in India.” Although about half of non-using Indian and Pakistani students we interviewed indicated they tolerated marijuana use by others, they nevertheless saw it as a “negative point” or “something that you really shouldn’t be doing.” For some it was simply too low-class activity while for others it was a cultural artefact of the past.

The perception of marijuana users being a “certain type of people” was also apparent in the attitudes of East-Asian users of other drugs, such as ecstasy and cocaine. Some of these participants viewed cannabis as a “poor man’s drug.” Because marijuana in most East-Asian countries is often associated with “working-class youth,” these interviewees described marijuana users as “lower-class,” “unsophisticated,” or “trashy” compared to users of other substances. Chinese respondents in particular often observed that “poor kids or homeless people” often use marijuana in China. One 18-
year-old international student from Hong Kong, for example, said “rich kids use other drugs…like E or MDMA or whatever…weed is for street kids who can’t afford better drugs.”

For Chinese students in particular, marijuana seemed to carry the greatest amount of stigma. These students were least likely to smoke marijuana and were least likely to be accepting of its users. When asked about cultural attitudes towards the drug, they often commented that drug use in general is often treated harshly in Chinese culture. The job of a Chinese youth, as one 18-year-old student put it, is to “be successful in school…our parents don’t expect us to work or pay for our own education, but they expect us to be good at school,” and smoking marijuana stood in contrast to those expectations. When probed further, it was clear that it was not only marijuana but all intoxicants were often looked down upon. “Having fun,” as one 19-year-old student from China put it, “is generally looked at suspiciously…like you could be doing something more productive than getting drunk or high or whatever…if you are not in your room studying then you are wasting time.”

A small number of Chinese students compared the stigma associated with drug use to the role of opium in Chinese cultural history. “Opium,” one 20-year-old Chinese student observed, “is sort of looked at as a bad part of our history…it really destroyed our culture…it made drugs a big taboo in the [Chinese] society.” The humiliating and denigrating historical depictions of the Chinese in western media characterized an entire racialized group as habitual users of drugs and intoxicants in general. These caricatures, one participant from China observed, have been “ingrained in our mind” and have shaped the Chinese perception of drug use and intoxicants in general. Others attributed this stigma to rarity of marijuana use in general Chinese society. In fact, marijuana use seems to be so taboo in China that almost all Chinese participants commented on their lack of experience with the drug and those who use it. This lack of experience, it was suggested, has led to negative perceptions about its users.

Although there are diverging degrees of stigmatization experienced by Pan-Asian students, many minority youth in our study suggested marijuana’s risks far outweighed
the benefits which might come from its enjoyment. According to one student from Pakistan, “[marijuana use] is just not worth it.” Others said that although marijuana is “probably not so bad,” the stigma and punishment associated with it far outweighs “any good feelings that might come with it.” Negative perceptions of marijuana and its associated risks have implications for impression management and stigma avoidance. The focus of the next section is on differences between whites and Pan-Asian users in managing the stigma associated with marijuana use.

Stigma Management

The use of cannabis today still carries a certain stigma, the management of which requires the user to have ‘rules’ about negotiating conflict and minimizing risk of stigma (Hathaway, 2004). Despite increasing tolerance in different social settings, many users still hide their use from certain people (e.g. parents, family members, and co-workers). To better understand the ethnic dimension and management of stigma, where, how, and with whom people choose to smoke cannabis are important questions to empirically address (Hammersley et al. 2001).

Where to Use?

Negotiating stigma for many marijuana users means keeping use a secret from some people that they know. In discussing changes to their marijuana-using habits, white students from smaller towns where anonymity is rare often reported greater freedom since they left for university to experiment with marijuana and other substance use. One student’s response was representative of the experiences of many in her situation. She explained:

You can be yourself…people judge you less; and also not everyone knows who you are. So it’s nice to have that, you know, freedom to do what you want without being judged, to be a pothead or whatever. (Female, 19, Guelph)
For others, moving to a smaller and more conservative community to attend university meant less access and more stigma, and therefore less drug use. To illustrate, a former user who had relocated to a smaller town for university complained that:

…it is tougher to get, and not everybody will have the opportunity to like talk…and kind of meet with people who use it…the negative connotations will continue to grow…and build upon itself. [For] a lot the students in small towns…there is not as much [opportunity to use]. (Male, 20, Camrose)

Most Pan-Asian youth in our study said they face greater stigma due to lack of relative anonymity, even in larger cities. Living in tightknit communities where families participate in cultural and religious events in ethnic neighbourhoods means more chances of being caught. Being “outed” by community gossip is a feared source of embarrassment, disapproval, and punishment by parents. For these youth, social sanctions carry greater risk than legal ones as they rarely ever mentioned legal risk as a reason for abstinence and dismissed it as unimportant when asked directly. When asked about perception of formal sanction, they often commented that “police doesn’t really care,” and is unlikely to arrest them for it. One Chinese student, for example, commented that her use might have negative consequences that can affect her private and public life. She expressed concern that if her use was discovered by her church, she could not only lose her friends, but also any prospect of employment through other members of the congregation.

As compared to whites, especially white men, who commonly reported using in public places if it “doesn’t bother other people,” Pan-Asian students were more cautious about using marijuana. More often living with parents precludes using at home for a large segment of this group. The availability of privacy is cherished by those who wish to use in relative anonymity. For example, one Indian student who lived on his own confided that his place has become the “weed house” or safe “sanctuary” for using marijuana with his friends. My interviews with Asian users, as compared to their white
peers, suggest they have more problems finding places where they can “smoke in peace.” To avoid detection there is also greater pressure to secure the loyalty of the trusted few who know about their marijuana use.

**With Whom to Use?**

Successful management of stigma requires choosing the right audience and social activities in which to participate. Asian students often kept their use a secret from their parents. Consistent with the findings of Cheung and Cheung (2006) in Hong Kong, respecting the traditional values of their parents represented Asian youths’ commitment to their families ahead of their own personal interest. Some abstainers, for example, commented that although they would like to “try it sometime,” they rather not “risk putting [their] parents through the shame of it all” if they got caught. One Indian student, for example, stated that her use would cause “problems” for her parents, because they attend Hindu temples and rely on that community for business. Another 20-year-old male noted that although marijuana use is unlikely to affect his grades in school, it would “really disappoint [his] parents…they would never be able to show face in the community” if anybody sees him doing it. Others also noted that use by children has led to marginalization of parents and their subsequent departure from the community.

Asian students were more likely to mention parents and family members as the primary people from whom they keep their use a secret, as compared to whites, who often strived to keep their use a secret from formal authority figures such as teachers, bosses, and professors. White students rarely mentioned parents without further probing. When asked if they keep their use a secret from parents, most white students were nonchalant. Although they preferred to keep use away from their parents, they saw their use as an “open secret” that their parents “don’t really care about.” as in the following example:

I really don’t go out of my way to hide it [from my parents]…like I wouldn’t light up a joint in front of my mom
[laughs]… but like if they found out, whatever, they get mad for a few days and then it blows over. (Female, 19, Guelph)

Other white students, especially white men, commented that punishment is likely to be “light” and insignificant if their parents were to find out about their marijuana use. Punishment could range from getting “yelled at,” “getting a talking to,” or parents “might not call for a few days.” These students often noted that they are financially independent from their parents and are thus “left alone” to live a life of their own.

Asian students were more likely to keep marijuana use a secret, even from close friends. They more strictly limit use to private spaces that are far from prying eyes. For some of these students, marijuana use should not only be hidden from parents and other adults, but also from peers who might “gossip” about them. One participant, for example, noted how he does not smoke with other “brown guys” because “you never know who they know or who they’ll tell” (Male, 18, Guelph).

Compared to their Chinese peers, Indian and Pakistani students were more likely to prefer smoking within their own ethnic group. Those who mostly used with other Pan-Asian youth said they prefer to smoke with other ethnic students who understand the imperative of keeping use a secret. For members of some immigrant communities, aversion to greater stigma often restricts the social circles of those with whom users smoke marijuana. For many of these students, management of stigma also required managing how and when they used.

**How to Use?**

Over two-thirds of Pan-Asian users in our study said that they preferred rolled marijuana to smoking bongs or pipes; most did not distinguish between blunts or joints. Some expressed a preference for blunts (hollowed out cigars), because cigars are less conspicuous and easier to explain than being caught with rolling paper.

Pipes and bongs are said to be more difficult to hide and have a lasting odour. The need to keep lighting them also attracts unwanted attention. Furthermore, bongs and pipes remind them of their disregard for parents’ expectations. As one 20-year-old
Chinese student explained: “Asian people feel more guilty when they have bongs at their place” (Male, 20, Guelph).

Blunts or joints were seen by Asian interviewees as more discrete and less stigmatized, being suggestive of non-problematic use. When discussing smoking paraphernalia, Asian users often commented that owning a “bong” or a “vaporizer” was an investment that suggested commitment. Furthermore, for many, owning paraphernalia was a sign of over-consumption, which many saw as problematic and indicative of dependency. Controlling the dosage and intensity of subsequent effects was also linked to preference for smoking blunts and joints. Restricting use to early evening was another strategy employed to avoid detection, especially for those who lived at home:

We usually like to smoke in a parking lot before going out to the movies or the club or whatever…then I don’t smell like it when I go home you know…like I am not high when I walk through the door and my mom sees me. (Male, 20, Toronto)

For many Pan-Asian students, the ‘sensible’ use of marijuana was contradictory to use in professional settings. Pan-Asian students were more likely to avoid use during school hours, which tended to be viewed as irresponsible behaviour. Marijuana, according to a majority of these students, was seen as being strictly for partying, or something only to be used with trusted friends. “Going to class high,” as one Indian student put it, “is just plain stupid… [and] irresponsible.” Others perceived use at school as a betrayal of their parents’ investment in their education. “As an immigrant kid,” one 18-year-old Chinese student explained, “you feel responsible to do well in school… smoking weed in school is not a good way to pay back our parents who sacrificed a lot to be here.” Smoking cannabis during school hours was also characterized as further reinforcing stereotypes about ethnic minorities. To illustrate:

Brown people…they get judged more. Like you don’t want to go to class high, because maybe the prof already judges
you because you are brown or whatever, so then this will add to his stereotypes. (Female, 19, Toronto)
The same observations about double standards and discrimination faced by non-whites in the workplace were made by other students. In the experiences of some users, marijuana use is not equally accommodated.

Differing degrees of stigma management by users is an indication of the way in which youth ‘do ethnicity’ while consuming cannabis. Pan-Asian students are more likely to hide their use from others. Accordingly, these students had more rules about how, where, and with whom they smoked, as compared to their white counterparts. The greater risk of being “outed” means they must be more discreet due to the ever-present threat of disapproving others.

**Attitudes of Others**

One important aspect of the normalization thesis is the degree to which marijuana use is accepted, or at least tolerated, by non-using peers. At the time this study was performed, although a majority (70%) of Canadians supported proposed changes to marijuana laws, support for law reform was far from universal within certain demographics, especially recent immigrants to Canada (Leyton, 2016). Among the students in this study, it is noteworthy that those who supported stricter marijuana laws were almost exclusively from Pan-Asian backgrounds. Consistent with the cultural views of their parents, about a third of Asian users expressed some unease about legalization.

Relaxed attitudes towards marijuana use at parties is one indication of a normalizing tendency that includes non-white, non-using peers. One student stated:

It doesn’t really matter to me…like I find people usually go outside or, you know, just away from people, so it doesn’t really bother me…I get nervous sometimes if…we are somewhere where we can get caught like…in the car. But, you know, half the time I don’t even know if someone is
smoking it or not at a party, because they never smoke in front of other people. Like…I have never been standing around and someone just lights a joint…I don’t know what I would do…probably walk away. (Male, 19, Toronto).

Others made a distinction between small and large parties, preferring to join those events where marijuana use is “part of the scene” but on the margins, as opposed to events where it is the exclusive focus of the gathering. They do not leave a large party if use is apparent. But, as stated by one South East Asian student: “I don’t go if I know that everyone smokes there… [If] it is a stoner party type of deal” (Female, 19, Guelph). A small percentage (about a quarter) were less forgiving, citing health concerns due to second-hand smoke and fear of being arrested. Some types of parties were either avoided or attended later on “when they are done smoking.”

Another indication of the attitudes of others is the degree to which marijuana use is accepted in close personal relationships. As compared to white students, there is less tolerance of use by an intimate partner. Some white non-users tended not to problematize all use per se, as illustrated in the following examples:

I don’t really care. It’s her life. As long as it is not hurting our relationship, then yeah I would be okay with it…Like if she is high all the time or if she is you know not hanging out with me because she wants to get high then no…but if she just wants to smoke a little here and there then I don’t care. (Male, 18, Camrose)

I couldn’t care less…I am attracted to guys who are doing something with their lives, and who are…doing well in school and are healthy and like work out and stuff. So yeah if he smokes weed but has all those other qualities then I don’t care. Because it means that weed is just a part of many things that he does. But like I wouldn’t date a guy who is
stoned on his sofa 24/7…that would be no fun. (Female, 18, Guelph)

Parental approval of dating partners was evidently more important to Pan-Asian respondents. A vast majority of white respondents did not mention parental approval of their intimate partner unprompted in their dating choices. When asked, none mentioned parental disapproval of marijuana use as a reason for not dating a suitable mate. More conservative views about drug use in immigrant families, make dating constraints stricter for Asian students who saw marijuana use as conflicting with their parents’ worldview. As one Indian student, for example, exclaimed:

Are you kidding me? Absolutely not. My parents would kill me, and like what kind of life would that be with someone like that? You can’t date someone who is not on the same level as you…who doesn’t understand how important family and social relationships with your community are. And smoking weed just wouldn’t fit into that. (Female, 18, Guelph)

Dependency of these students on their parents, and stigma associated with “disappointing” their parents meant that Asian students were often more concerned with ensuring that their partner’s behaviour was “in line” with parental expectations. To illustrate important differences in attitudes that contribute to differentiated attitudes towards marijuana, the influence of racialized media portrayals of marijuana users was commented on by some of our respondents without being prompted.

**Ethnic Media Depictions**

Reflecting attitudes noted in more recent literature (e.g. Orsinin, 2017), our respondents often commented that mainstream media is softening the image of the “pot-head,” as suggested by depiction of non-problematic use in some movies and television shows. Some of these students noted that the use of marijuana by various public figures and its presence on various television shows where it is consumed by otherwise law-abiding and “normal” characters has reduced the stigma associated with marijuana use.
One participant said Obama’s reported use of marijuana had convinced his mother it need not be problematic. Some users commented that the “fun” and “non-problematic” way in which marijuana has been portrayed in movies and television shows has helped to change image of marijuana in recent years. Some non-users similarly stated that although they do not know many users, they have positive attitude because of “movies and stuff about pot heads having fun and being like normal people,” as one 19-year-old male student put it.

Pan-Asian students observed that this accommodation does not extend to all. The differentiated normalization of marijuana in the media is reserved for whites and especially white males. Asian students rarely cited media portrayals of marijuana use as positive or pertinent to them. In discussing negative attitudes associated with Asian marijuana users, few Asian respondents commented on absence of non-problematic marijuana-using Asians in both western and eastern cinema. As one student pointed out, with the possible exception of Harold and Kumar, there are no positive images of Asian marijuana users. Others also noted that although white marijuana users in popular western movies and television shows are often portrayed as “normal,” Asian users are typically “gangsters,” “delinquents,” “villains,” or addicts.

Some also said that Chinese and Indian movies often portray marijuana users in “stereotypical” ways. They noted that although drug use has become more common than before, it is usually exclusive to “spoiled rich kids,” “criminals,” bad students,” or those with “mental problems.” Some Asian students also observed that although marijuana use by public figures in the west is often framed as “harmless” and “fun,” public figures who use in Asia are often severely punished. One Korean student, for example, noted that although marijuana use is common among some South Korean celebrities, “the ones that are caught…they can’t come back on the air anymore.” The absence of positive portrayals in the media can be a potential contributor to the noted lack of cultural acceptance and tolerance of marijuana use in many immigrant communities.
Chapter Summary

Despite more open attitudes towards marijuana than their parents, for many Pan-Asian students marijuana remains a “white” drug, the use of which requires negotiating their ethnic identities. Furthermore, the association of marijuana with harder drugs like cocaine and heroin makes use a risky business. In short, the image of a normal user is not available to a majority of Pan-Asian students.

The lack of a non-problematic marijuana-using image means that Pan-Asian users are more discreet about where and with whom they use. Furthermore, they are less likely to use during school and work in comparison to their white counterparts, and more likely to employ methods that control dosage while raising the least amount of suspicion.

Pan-Asian abstainers are more likely to view marijuana use as problematic in comparison to white non-using students. Although Asian abstainers are tolerant of marijuana use at big parties, they are more likely to avoid social situations where marijuana is used, and less likely to “hang around” with those who use. Pan-Asian abstainers are also less likely to date someone who smokes marijuana in comparison to their white counterparts. They were also more likely to cite parental attitudes towards the drug as a major factor in their decision to not date marijuana users.

As marijuana is considered to be a “white drug” and a “male drug,” it is evident that Asian women are restricted most significantly by cultural stigma and constraints around its use. The focus of the next chapter is on the intersection of ethnic and gender identities on Pan-Asian women’s decision to use (or not use) marijuana and the attitude of others towards their use.
Chapter 7. Intersectionality and the Question of Normalization: “Brown Girls don’t Smoke Weed”

Introduction

By treating social characteristics like ethnicity and gender as separate categories that do not interact, non-intersectional perspectives tend to overlook the cumulative dimensions of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Studies about intersection of gender and ethnicity explore the ways they interact to shape individual lived experiences. As an area of study, intersectionality is anti-categorical in that it seeks to represent the lived experiences of marginalized populations as a process of active definition-making constrained by the compounding effect of structural forces, such as gender and ethnicity (Choo & Ferree, 2010). So far, in discussing experiences of women and Pan-Asian students, I have focused on experiences that are common among members of each group. However, Asian women share experiences and attitudes that are unique to their lived experiences, and these narratives set them apart from both white women and Asian men.

Few studies have focused on differentiated normalization of marijuana with specific reference to gender or ethnicity (cf. Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Haines et al., 2009; Shildrick 2002, Moloney et al., 2008). To date, no study has qualitatively examined the intersection of gender and ethnicity with respect to the conspicuous consumption of marijuana amongst Asian women. Available quantitative data suggest that marijuana use is lowest among Pan-Asian women (e.g. Wallace et al., 2003). The perceptions and experiences of Pan-Asian female students in this sample provide a compelling alternate discourse on the relationships between structural determinants of identity and marijuana use. From this view, the constraints of cultural and gender identities compound to exclude these women from marijuana-using groups.

In this chapter, I analyse the experiences of Pan-Asian women to shed light on the unique cultural constraints that frame their participation in marijuana-using
subculture(s). After a brief summary of the relevant quantitative data, this chapter begins with analysis of unique cultural constraints that shape Pan-Asian women’s experiences and attitudes towards marijuana. This is followed by a discussion of the role of media in shaping attitudes about marijuana use.

Characteristics of the Sample

Of the total sample of 1850 students, nearly one quarter (23%) were Pan-Asian females, about a third (36%) of which were Canadian-born. As seen in the tables below, they were distinct differences between Pan-Asian women and other groups. Asian women were less likely (21%) to have tried marijuana than other respondents. Those who used it, were less likely to have used marijuana in the past month (28%). Pan-Asian female users were also less likely (6%) to identify as a pothead than their peers. Asian women were the least likely demographic to use other substances, including alcohol, cocaine, and tobacco.

Asian female respondents were less likely to have “easy” or “very easy” access to marijuana (60%), and users were less likely to have purchased their own supply directly from a dealer. A majority (85%) of Pan-Asian women who stated that they used in the past 12 months, reported having spent less than $10 a month on marijuana.

Pan-Asian female abstainers were least likely (9%) to approve of marijuana use by others. Asian females were most likely to “hang out” only with abstainers (65%). These female students were also more likely to report being dependent on their parents for financial support (78%) and were the most likely demographic to live with their parents (63%).

Low trying rates and frequency of use by Asian women, combined with their limited access as compared to others, is indicative of the underrepresentation of these

5 See tables 7.1 and 7.2.
women in marijuana-using subcultures. Furthermore, Pan-Asian women are most likely to have negative perceptions towards marijuana users. These two factors combined point to differentiated normalization of marijuana use among this group. To shed further light on experiences of Pan-Asian women, I conducted interviews with a subset of respondents.

Of the 73 females who took part in interviews, 21 identified as Pan-Asian. Of this group, 6 had tried marijuana, and only 2 used it regularly. As the result of unique cultural constraints, experiences of Asian women pointed to more extreme negative attitudes than those observed in other groups.

Far from considering marijuana use as a universally available leisure activity, Asian women were the group most attentive to constraints imposed by gender and ethnicity, and they often reflected on the advantages of being male, white, or both without prompting. Whereas Pan-Asian women perceived the use of drugs by others to be “normal” and “expected,” most of these women perceived themselves as outsiders and were consequently more conscious of their status among peers. In conversations with Asian women, they often discussed their gender and ethnicity as important compounding factors in their decision to abstain.

Pan-Asian women’s view of acceptable marijuana use as “masculine” and “white” was indicative of their recognition that certain perceptions of drug consumption are among the privileges that accrue to “other people.” Although Asian women shared many of the concerns raised by white women and Asian men, their experiences with cultural norms governing the boundaries of acceptable feminine leisure practices were more extreme and explicit, as discussed below.

**Exploring Gender and Ethnicity as Cultural Constraints**

Before discussing the responses of those Pan-Asian women who attributed their abstinence to cultural constraints and parental demand, it is important to note that a small portion of Asian women in this study appeared uneasy with attributing their abstinence solely to societal forces. Among non-users, a handful of Pan-Asian women
perceived loyalty to cultural values as conflicting with their own aspiration of becoming “well-educated” and “independent” women. Thus, they were generally supportive of young people’s right to choose to participate or to abstain from marijuana use for reasons other than “your parents tell you not to do it.” These two non-using Asian female students seemed to be speaking for this group when they explained:

If you are not smoking it because you just don’t want to, then that’s great, good for you. But if you are not smoking weed because that’s what your parents told you you’re supposed to do, then you are not being an independent thinker and that really bothers me. Women in my community seem to fall in that category a lot…I think that just devalues even your university education. (Female, 19, Guelph)

I think it is important for it to be a personal decision…it doesn’t matter if you smoke or you don’t so long as you are doing it because you don’t want to or…because you want to…I think the point is that you have to make that decision and not let your parents or friends or whatever force you into it. (Female, 20, Toronto)

By dismissing external factors as reasons for abstinence, these Pan-Asian women differentiated themselves from other women in their communities by emphasizing their autonomy, and thus characterized their decision as coincidental to parental expectations.

Abstaining from the use of drugs on account of parental expectations was even viewed as a disadvantage by some of these women, insofar as it perpetuates the stereotype of “the typical [Asian] girl…blindly following the wishes of [her] parents.” This conflict between personal choice and cultural or parental expectations was evident in statements by non-users who mentioned that their parents are not as “controlling” over decisions like choosing a career or picking a husband. Parental disapproval of all
drug use in this group tended to be positively regarded. For example, when discussing the “controlling” nature of ethnic parents, one student commented that:

It’s not like they are doing it to be controlling...Like parents don’t go out of their way to tell you what to do for kicks you know?...It’s not like they tell you to, you know, not drink or smoke because they don’t want you to have fun...It’s just they want what’s best for you, and they know that smoking weed is not the best thing...I really don’t think it’s them controlling me you know? (19, Female, Guelph)

To avoid being labelled as “just another [Asian] girl” who lacks agency, some respondents chose to justify their abstinence to white friends by citing other factors, such as school commitments or health concerns.

The fear of “judgment” from others as a consequence of their abstinence, combined with these Asian women’s insistence that convergence of their attitudes with their parents is coincidental, differentiates the narratives of Pan-Asian women from white men. White men often attributed their abstinence to individuality without mentioning parental wishes unprompted, while these Asian women often alluded to parental wishes impetuously. When white men were asked if their parents’ attitude mattered in their decision to use marijuana, they often dismissed it as unimportant or they suggested that it carries very little weight. Similar differences in attitudes reported elsewhere were viewed as indicative of conceptualization of individualization as ‘abnormal’ and a form of resistance by Asian women against ‘cultural orthodoxy’ that limits their freedom (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2002; Suzuki, 2010). These attitudes are qualitatively different than attitudes of unproblematic individualization celebrated amongst white men (see also Kalof, Dietz, Guagnano, & Stern, 2002).

Despite the evident conflict with the modern views that some Asian women espoused, large majority of Asian females still tended to perceive the use of marijuana as a sign of heterodoxy, which is at odds with their gender and ethnic identity and related parental expectations. Compared to their white male peers, Pan-Asian women
more often cited intense cultural and familial restrictions, as opposed to individual ones, as critical to their decisions to not engage in drug use. Most Pan-Asian women tended to perceive the use of marijuana as deviant for themselves, which they characterized as being at odds with the identity of an “Asian woman” as they understood it. Although some Asian female respondents recognized that it “sounds sexist” and “culturally specific”, they also noted that “it is just the honest truth” and that “it’s just the way things are.”

When asked why they chose to abstain from using marijuana, many Pan-Asian women found the question humorous and acted as if the answer was obvious. For these women, marijuana use seemed simply “out of the question.” One 19-year-old female respondent laughed and said “are you kidding me? Brown girls don’t smoke weed. That’s just how it is.” Others also found the question equally absurd, saying that use was “unbecoming,” “white,” “masculine,” or “just not appropriate” in their culture. These attitudes are reflective of the role of cultural demands and expectations in shaping Asian women’s marijuana-using decisions. More specifically, when asked about their experiences with cultural norms, Pan-Asian women cited differentiated conceptualizations of maturity, westernization, rebellious and social consequences, and stigma associated with marijuana use in romantic partnership as important contributing factors to their decision to abstain from recreational marijuana use.

**Maturity.** When asked about different roles played by men and women in Asian families, a major difference mentioned by almost all ethnic female respondents was the double standard around expected youth behaviour. In particular, it seems the Western cultural expectation of youthful immaturity is largely unavailable to Pan-Asian females. Most notably, many Pan-Asian female respondents reported that they avoid leisure activities that were perceived as ‘masculine’ and/or ‘white’ (read: immature). For Asian men, some commented, alcohol and drug use are seen as stress relievers that may even facilitate harmony in the family. The status of men as “breadwinners” means that some women see men’s intoxication as their “reward for going out and making money.”
contrast, Asian women are often expected to deal with stress through “more mature” outlets such as “talking,” “cooking,” or “exercising.”

Non-using Asian respondents often saw marijuana use as a “childish” and “juvenile” activity that they “honestly have no time for.” As some Pan-Asian women put it, marijuana users were thought of as “stuck in their teens” or “goofs.” Although others often “turned a blind eye” on the same behaviour by men, Asian women were often expected to “know better.” One 19-year-old female Chinese student summed up the matter by saying:

Guys can get away with it more…they are expected to goof around and be immature…women are expected to help them mature…that’s just our culture…we have to be the grownups.

The tenor of these responses by Pan-Asian women indicates that they are often held to higher standards of behaviour which they express through maturity.

Although white women also perceive themselves as being held to higher standards of maturity than men, ethnic women are held to even higher standards. The immaturity of youth is seen as something for “white girls” who have the privilege of breaking taboos without serious social consequences. When asked why they thought marijuana use is more common amongst white women, Pan-Asian women saw their white counterparts as more independent from parental demands and expectations of maturity. Many of white marijuana-using women agreed, remarking that discovery of drug use by their parents would be “bad,” “problematic,” or “embarrassing,” but not “devastating” or “end of the world,” as they are given some leniencies to explore youthful activities.

Thus, while high expectations of maturity seem to govern the risk-taking calculation of all women and ethnic minority youth, Pan-Asian women are held to higher standard. For most Asian women, maturity imposed by cultural constraints seems to be synonymous with their ethnic femininity. Thereby immaturity was often viewed as a sign of disloyalty to cultural expectations.
Westernization. The perception of marijuana use as contradictory to cultural norms and exceptions became increasingly evident in discussions with Pan-Asian women about westernization. Many Pan-Asian abstainers saw Asian female marijuana users as westernized and “white-washed.” Since many of the ethnic men in our sample had commented on the “white” nature of marijuana use, I became interested in what distinguished experiences of ethnic women from their male counterparts in terms of westernization.

Although a handful of respondents said that boys in a “good family” are held to the same standards of responsibility to cultural expectations, most ethnic women commented that perception of marijuana use as a westernized activity imposes more of a constraint on ethnic females. Whereas substance use by men might be viewed as “just a phase of experimentation,” the same indulgences by women were perceived as a threat to cultural norms. Many female respondents remarked that their brothers and male cousins enjoyed relative “freedom” to forge their own paths and make forgivable mistakes.

The role of women as “cultural keepers” (Aziz, 2000) in Asian communities often means that westernization for women is viewed as a significant problem and is thus stigmatized (Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Pan-Asian women in this study commented on their role in this regard when answering questions about their experiences with westernization. Some of these respondents observed that Asian women are often at the forefront of cultural celebrations and they are responsible for the implementation of traditional values at home. “If it wasn’t for women” one Indian female student suggested “men wouldn’t even know what to do on various holidays or how to cook traditional food…they would eat pizza all the time.” Others similarly viewed the role of women as “boss of the home,” “in charge of domestic duties,” and responsible for “protecting” cultural values ranging from general attitudes to specific norms and customs.
Furthermore, respondents often commented that women are expected to attend to their parents later on in life. Westernized Asian women, however, are seen as not being “family oriented” and thus unlikely to help when parents enter their senior years. Some students commented that when parents in these communities retire, women are expected to “take care of them” and provide them with emotional support, while “men just pay the bills.” Similar attitudes are observed in other studies of Asian families (e.g. Glen, 1985). Thus, the presence of westernized attitudes of individuality for women in these Pan-Asian families, means the loss of an emotional labourer who is seen as essential to a happy retirement. These responsibilities often mean that Asian women see the adoption of westernized cultural values as more stigmatized for themselves as compared to Asian men.

‘Westernization’ and ‘immaturity’ were also often couched in terms of rebelliousness to general cultural attitudes and expectations. Most Pan-Asian women often used these words in conjunction with each other when describing marijuana users, as in: “[being] rebellious and immature” or “immature people who just want to act white.” While male rebelliousness is expected and even celebrated, female rebelliousness in these communities is often punished. One student stated that being rebellious “is good…and a sign of being a grown up” for many white youth and ethnic minority men, but noted that the same was not true for women in her culture, where being a rebellious woman “means that you are without any real family…the nail that sticks out gets the hammer… [So] you don’t want to be different” (Female, 19, Toronto). When asked about their reasons for abstaining from drug use, some female Asian students noted that their behaviour was consistent with the submissive nature of women expected in these cultures. As one 18-year-old Indian student of Toronto put it:

Asian Girls are much more likely to just believe authority. They are more likely to not question what they are told to do…Because women have always been lower than men in society. Like some guys are much more likely to be rebellious…They are more likely to ask questions and be
independent. But girls are sort of taught that for them to be
good girls they need to listen to other people and do what
they say.

Accordingly, most Asian women suggested that their use of drugs would be viewed as a
sign of rebelliousness and thus “inappropriate.”

Although Pan-Asian men and white women feel cultural pressure to conform to
social expectations and abstain from using marijuana, women in Asian communities
perceived the consequences for breaking this rule as more severe. Expected
punishments by parents included removal from school, loss of privileges such as going
out or dating, or being “kicked out of the house.” One Pakistani female explained that
although her brother’s drug use had been largely forgiven by their parents and led to
very little punishment for him, her use would be dealt with sternly: “[My parents]
would send me back to Pakistan…to discipline me…that would be devastating for me
and my family.”

Furthermore, Asian women often commented on the familial burden of being an
ethnic woman. They saw themselves as inhabiting the role of a ‘representative’ of their
family. For Pan-Asian women, conforming to socio-cultural expectations is an
important quality in their family’s ability to “keep face” in the community. Among
these women, a rebellious attitude is seen as a sign of having parents who have failed in
their responsibility to raise daughters who are “obedient” and “sensitive” to cultural
norms (i.e. abstainers). In the words of one 19-year-old Indian student of Toronto,
parents in Asian cultures “really keep an eye on the girls…it’s about family honour.”
Similarly, other respondents mentioned not wanting to “embarrass” or “hurt” their
parents, or their concern with maintaining their family’s “reputation” as reasons for
abstaining.

Accordingly, stigma associated with rebelliousness was seen not only as a
punishable offense by the community reflective of not only an individual moral failing,
but also a failure of parenting. The same community reaction is likely to be less severe
in case of boys, since their decisions are often attributed to individual choice rather than to parental qualities. As one 19-year-old Chinese student of Guelph explained: “with [Chinese] guys they say “oh well they did their best,” like sure you should control your son but it’s not so bad if you can’t. But if you can’t control your daughter you are not a good parent.” Others similarly observed that parents attach greater significance to transgressions by their daughters than their sons. Female students in Pan-Asian communities often found that their parents “put a lot of pressure on girls to be good,” as one Indian student put it. Others also observed that their parents are more likely to talk about their success and failures, as compared to those of their brothers’. When asked about this double standard, most Pan-Asian men agreed that although their parents expect certain codes of conduct, women are held to higher standard and have “more rules to follow,” as one 19-year-old Pakistani student put it. On account of this double-standard, Pan-Asian women see themselves “responsible” for protecting the “standing” of their parents.

In a community where the social standing of parents depends partly upon raising good girls to be good wives, a young woman’s use of marijuana could have negative consequences for her siblings as well. One student said the reason she did not use marijuana was to “protect her sister,” even while equivocating that she does not “buy into” such cultural restrictions. An occasional-using Asian woman was similarly concerned that if her drug use were to have been discovered, it would lead other community members to label her parents as being “bad at parenting” for having raised a “drug addict,” and she believed the resulting social stigma would be passed down to her siblings. Some Asian female students commented that rebelliousness by Asian female friends in their community has led to negative social consequences including the forced breakup of an engagement or job loss for siblings of the rebellious individual.

Accordingly, leisure practices that are seen as nonconformist are not only problematic for young Asian females, but they can also have negative consequences for their families. These consequences are often more severe in the case of Asian women as compared to those of white women and Pan-Asian men. The negative stigma associated
with marijuana use and its social consequences makes it a precarious leisure activity for many Pan-Asian women. These negative attitudes are also reflected in discussions about romantic partnerships.

*Romantic Partnership.* The role of community attitudes in Pan-Asian women’s decision to abstained or hide their marijuana use is also evident in discussions about marriage and romantic partnership. Since marriage is a “big thing in [Asian] cultures,” the attitudes of potential partners and their families towards marijuana use played a significant role on female users’ decision to disclose their drug use, especially to their boyfriend and his family. In discussing potential consequences of her marijuana use, one Chinese user said that if her use were to be revealed in their church it might mean the end of her relationship with her boyfriend because his parents would no longer approve of her as a romantic partner. She was concerned her marijuana use could also have further consequences, since “no family would want their son to marry a girl who is a pothead.” One Indian user said that she kept her marijuana use a secret from her boyfriend until he asked her to smoke with him. Pan-Asian women’s concern over the social implications of disclosing their drug use thus seems to be a contributing factor to their risk calculating behaviour.

Although marijuana-using white women also faced negative stigmas from some men, it was less consequential since they seemed less concerned with marriage. When discussing dating habits, they would often remark that “it is just dating” and “it’s not like we are getting married.” Asian women, by contrast, often framed their answers in terms of long-term relationships and their marriageability.

Pan-Asian women were more concerned with their future role as “wives” than their white counterparts. Non-using Pan-Asian females saw their role as future wives and mothers as inseparable from cultural expectations of behaviour. “I am going to be a mom,” one Indian student said, “and what kind of example would it be for them if I disregard my own culture?” I asked another Asian student why she thought men, as future fathers, are not held to the same standard. She laughed and said “well I guess it’s
because I have to teach him how to be a good husband, don’t I? I think it is women who usually shape a family and train guys and their kids to act right.” Asian men similarly commented on the role of women in relationship as “protectors” of cultural expectation and future mothers who are expected to raise “good and cultured kids,” while keeping their husbands “in line.”

Much like their white counterparts, non-using Asian women were more forgiving of marijuana use by their partners. Although boyfriends’ drug use habits were to be kept away from parents and family gatherings, ethnic women often did not see their partners’ drug use as problematic *per se* “if they have everything else in order.” All non-using ethnic women insisted that their partners would have to stop if they married and had children. These attitudes were reflective of the views of more conservative, albite *tolerating*, white women.

In sum, in communities threatened by westernization, including Pan-Asian communities, marijuana use by women is perceived as a betrayal of cultural values. The perceived necessity of responsibility of young women to be “mature” and “obedient” limits not only women’s access to marijuana, but also to a legitimate marijuana-using identity. Although marijuana use by Asian men and white women is frowned upon and can lead to stigmatization and its associated consequences, women in Pan-Asian communities see the stigma associated with their use as more extreme and unlikely to be forgiven because they are seen as repositories of community values. Accordingly, ethnic women’s marijuana use within a relationship is qualitatively more significant, and potentially more risky, than it is in the case of white women and Pan-Asian men.

The unique cultural constraints and experiences of these Pan-Asian women led to my curiosity about why people hold these views. When the Pan-Asian women respondents were asked how the boundaries of cultural constraints that they were describing were drawn, most attributed these attitudes to vague notions of tradition and religion, called it common sense, or said they “don’t know.” Some, however, commented on the role of media in shaping the boundaries of acceptable Asian female behaviour.
Media Representations

As mentioned in the previous two chapters, Pan-Asian students and women have commented on the white and masculine nature of marijuana use in popular media. Although depictions of non-problematic marijuana-using females and ethnic minority males were rare, there were few examples that they could rely on. Pan-Asian women, by contrast, said they felt “invisible” not only in weed movies, but also in other aspects of both eastern and western media. Their experiences are detailed below.

Although white women respondents discussed the invisibility of authentic marijuana-using females in western cinema and television, their experiences were noticeably different. Some Asian women remarked upon the recent changes in Hollywood culture in which white women’s diversity of experiences are now beginning to be represented more fully. Academic literature on “chick fizzes” has pointed to a shift in the zeitgeist to the point where women’s authentic experiences and substance use has come to be more acceptable than the 1930s-1980s mentality where substance use was exclusive to “bad” women (cf. Ferris & Young, 2008). Although female marijuana use in particular is still rare in popular western media, shows like Sex and the City and Absolutely Fabulous have depicted white middle class female alcohol use as acceptable, thus celebrating intoxication instead of punishing it (Arthurs, 2003).

Ethnic women are largely excluded from popular media (Brasfield, 2006). If present, some Asian women commented that they are often portrayed as “subordinates” and objects of male “dominance” and “abuse.” These women are typecast as victims of their culture and as lacking agency. Two Muslim female students, for example, complained that news programs on Muslim women’s experiences often objectify them by focusing on male perspective and themes of male dominance. When Pan-Asian women are present in the media, they are often represented as “caricatures” or stereotypes. Mindy from The Mindy Project, for example, was seen by some of the Indian interviewees as a stereotype of an Indian woman, “obsessed with getting married” and continuously seeking the approval of her parents and white men.
Some South-East Asian female respondents also observed that Bollywood has influenced the image of a “brown girl” globally. One South-Asian woman respondent observed that Indian cinema often stresses the primacy of women’s traditional roles as “wives and mothers.” These respondents noted that depictions of drinking and using drugs, for men, is coded as “edgy” and “cool” in some contemporary Bollywood action movies, whereas women are rarely depicted in a similar manner.

In more modern Bollywood movies, some South-Asian women observed, women are sometimes granted the freedom to pursue leisure activities or even indulge in light drinking, but only if they do not forget their roles as “mothers” and “good women.” One 18-year-old South-East Asian female student, for example, observed that “good women,” when drinking, “always talk about finding a husband” or “how bad they feel that they are not with their kids.” In most Bollywood films, some South-East Asian respondents noted, most female characters who consume drugs and alcohol are presented as “bad” and “westernized” femme fatales. The behaviour of these characters is considered “unfeminine,” “unacceptable,” and “offensive” to traditional values, and they are usually punished for it.

In sum, more often than in eastern media, western media privileges white men and, more recently, some white women, by depicting them as sensible consumers of intoxicants. These depictions put Pan-Asian women at a greater disadvantage with respect to how intoxicant consumption is coded and stigmatized, since western media often ignores them and Bollywood’s influence on a large segment of the Pan-Asian community has reinforced the ‘good girl’ stereotype as “traditional,” “obedient,” and “sober.”

Chapter Summary

In comparing the experiences of Pan-Asian women to other groups I studied, it became evident that the perception of marijuana use is qualitatively different for these women. The intersection of both gender and ethnicity compound the stigma associated
with marijuana use and thus excludes Pan-Asian women from normalised participation in marijuana-using groups.

Although white women and Asian men also faced cultural constraints, their experiences were qualitatively different than Pan-Asian women. What seems to distinguish the experiences of Pan-Asian women from those of white females and Pan-Asian men is that transgressive behaviour by Pan-Asian females is often perceived as more extreme and thereby the punishment for it is more acute. In this context, while marijuana use by Asian men and white women is often seen as a betrayal of a culture, it is often forgiven if use does not extend to adulthood. Use by young Asian women, by contrast, can have severe consequences.

The following chapter offers a summation of the findings with specific reference to broader theoretical discussions of differentiated normalization of marijuana use and its relation to individual identities. Furthermore, I will draw attention to theoretical implication of role of identity in drawing the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of leisure subcultures.
Chapter 8. Discussion: Normalization, Identities, and the Question of Subcultures

Introduction

The scholarly understanding of the relationship between youth culture, identity, and drug consumption has received renewed theoretical attention in recent years. Postmodernist scholars discussing leisure consumption habits among youth have replaced the term “subculture” with terms such as “scene,” “life-style,” and “(neo)tribe,” signalling the fluidity of “style surfing” (Polhemus, 1996) practices among youth (e.g. Kahn-Harris, 2004). Others have questioned the extent to which this aspect of postmodernity has spread, pointing to structural barriers affecting those in less privileged positions, such as women and ethnic minorities (Ball et al., 2000, Leyshon, 2008).

In the area of youth drug consumption, discussions surrounding the normalization of certain types of drug use as the result of postmodernity have become representative of this larger theoretical debate between tribalism and structural barriers as the dominant forces affecting youth culture and identity formation (cf. Duff, 2003; Hutton, 2010; Pearson, 2001). The existence of diverse patterns of use based on the structural determinants of identity has brought about the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of constraining effects of gender and ethnicity on the normalization process. These observations have led to a discussion about the differentiated normalization of marijuana use (Shildrick, 2002).

The present study contributes to the debate on the connection between youth drug use, identity, and subculture by expanding Goffman’s understanding of the ‘self’, modified in light of the Bourdieusian theory of practice, to focus on the availability of personas, rather than their authenticity or fluidity. To this end, this chapter is divided into two sections. First, by summarizing the parallels and differences in young people’s experiences with marijuana, I provide supporting evidence for the differentiated normalization of marijuana in Canada, and constraining roles of gendered and ethnic
identities in the process. This section ends by introducing “available identities” (Cameron, 2007) as a useful analytic tool in discussing the complex ways in which structure and agency interact to shape young people’s identities. Second, using availability of identities as a sensitizing concept, I comment on the implications of the aforementioned findings on theoretical debates about subcultures and the malleable nature of their boundaries.

**Cannabis Using Identities**

According to Becker (1953), a successful transition to regular cannabis use requires users to associate with subcultural groups that transform both their conceptualization of marijuana and those who use it. Becker’s work was groundbreaking for two reasons: first, it pointed to the normality of deviance through social interaction and socialization; and second, he insisted that cannabis use does not need to be problematic (i.e. lead to addiction). These observations were further advanced by studies focusing on drug intake as “calculated hedonism” (Featherstone, 1991) or “controlled loss of control” (Measham, 2004). Through the work of Featherstone and Measham, marijuana users are best envisioned as rational decision-makers who calculate the risks and benefits of use in the context of other aspects of their lives. The normalization thesis is best representative of this argument, whereby sensible marijuana use has become part of the process of ‘growing up’ for otherwise law-abiding youths. According to this thesis, individualization and responsibilisation have come to replace structural sources of control. We can therefore understand non-problematic marijuana use as a ‘choice’ which has no serious consequences for the identity of the user (Parker *et al.*, 1998).

The role of marijuana use in establishing boundaries of social identity, however, has been a contentious area of theoretical discussion about identity formation and normalised drug use (see e.g. Shildrick, 2002). The constraining influences of structural determinants of identity have been shown to be aggravating factors in the process of normalization (Pennay & Measham, 2016). The aim of this project is to present
empirical data that can contribute to the debate about differentiated process of normalization, based on gendered and/or ethnic identities.

In the group of young Canadian university students interviewed, there are three distinctive types of narratives used to explain drug using habits. One group, consisting mostly of women and Pan-Asian students, commented on the apparent contradiction between marijuana use and their gender and/or ethnic identity, and thus abstinence became a necessary component to their harmonious presentation. A second group saw their marijuana use as contradictory to their ascribed identity, but nevertheless used marijuana as a means to enter the world of white masculine leisure and to challenge gender and cultural expectations. A third group, consisting of mostly white men, understood their choice to use or abstain from using marijuana as unproblematic and normal, based on individualized decisions.

This section of the chapter examines the implications of these narratives in the context of the normalization of marijuana use and its association with identity work. Two broad themes are presented and each is discussed in more detail:

1. The normalization thesis’ dependency on postmodernity obscures the impact of traditional patterns of inequality in marijuana-using subcultures, and thus ignores differentiated patterns of normalization.

2. Differences in marijuana-using habits are indicative of the complex ways in which identities are negotiated and internalized within the constraints of structural forces.

**Differentiated Normalization**

Sheldrick’s differentiated normalization argument emphasizes the dual roles of structure and agency in young people’s decisions regarding the relationship between their drug use and their identities. Young (1971) and Messerchmidt (1993, 1997) have demonstrated the similar complex ways structure and agency interact to constrain or permit the adoption of various deviant identities. This is not to suggest that the normalization thesis is not a useful analytic concept. Parker and his colleagues (1998)
are partially correct in asserting that marijuana use has moved from “the margins to the centre of the youth culture” (p.12) to the point where “drug-wise” youth negotiate risk and avoid stigma by using “sensibly.” What the differentiated normalization argument adds, however, is that the process is more complex and nuanced than first imagined.

The results of this study confirm the “differentiated normalization” argument present in the literature (Shildrick, 2002). It is apparent that ‘doing drugs’ is another way in which young people ‘do gender’ and/or ‘do ethnicity’. These results suggest that marijuana normalization does not only depend on how to use but also who is using.

The accounts of white men contributed to the evidence collected elsewhere, suggesting that for some, low levels of social risk tend to be associated with marijuana use (e.g. Ramsay & Partridge, 1999). Similarly, the accounts of some women and Asian students provide support for normalization, insofar as they are often accepting of use by men, and especially white men. However, this acceptance did not extend to women and Pan-Asian students. Why not?

Unlike white men, women and Pan-Asian students do not possess a certain degree of social privilege which includes the appropriate repertoire of identities by which to accommodate normalised marijuana use. Although white men are able to negotiate the risk associated with marijuana by adopting a ‘sensible’ marijuana-using identity, the same privilege was not available to women and Pan-Asian students. Accordingly, these groups saw marijuana use as risky for them rather than as a deviant activity for all. Normalised marijuana use is accessible only to those whose prescribed gendered and ethnic identities are harmonious with the sensible use of the drug. For others, marijuana use remains a stigmatized activity.

In these discussions, there were many striking parallels to subjects’ understanding of their identity. Most salient were comments pointing to the adoption of various “white” or “masculine” roles that allowed the subjects to consider their access to the marijuana as legitimate. For many women and ethnic minority students, the choice was often between not using marijuana or to risk being stigmatized for acting masculine or white. Although some subjects could pass as un-stigmatised marijuana
users, the internal conflict between marijuana use and gender and/or ethnic identity proved to be a source of inner strain and turmoil, and also a source of anxiety over hiding their marijuana-using identity.

Cultural influences on youths’ drug using behaviours were often couched within discussions about parental demands, familial loyalty and familial obligations. Pan-Asian students in general were more likely to attribute their attitudes towards marijuana users and experiences with the drug to the stigmatization of cannabis use in their parental culture. Although East-Asian Confusionist principles (Triandis, 2001) and the tribal-community cultures of Central-Asian can be viewed as the main contributors to the collectivistic nature of these families, Chuang and her colleagues (2018) suggest that this type of analysis is too simplistic, in the sense that it obviates socio-cultural changes that have shaped Asian countries over the past half century (see also Chuang, 2009).

A more nuanced understanding of parent-child relationships is presented by Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (1977, 1995 & 1997), which emphasizes the interactions which exist between individual identities and parental demands. Going beyond the collectivistic understanding of Pan-Asian communities, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model recognizes the complexity of combining traditional cultural demands with modern emphasis on individuality and self-reliance. Studies of Chinese parents, for example, suggest that homogenous views of Chinese parenting styles as authoritarian is orientalist in its approach (see for example Liu & Guo, 2010; Su & Hynie, 2011). Studies of this kind suggest that Asian parents teach self-reliance and independence in culturally specific ways (Chao, 1995). This subtle conceptualization might account of the positive influence of Asian parenting style on Pan-Asian students’ academic success (Chao & Tseng, 2002).

In this study, we saw a certain amount of individuality in Pan-Asian students’ decisions regarding their marijuana use. Many of those who attributed their abstinence to parental attitudes were quick to point out that they have independence in choosing their career, whom they date, or “what [they] do with their lives.” For many, parental
demands for abstaining from marijuana use were couched within greater parental concerns for their success rather than authoritative attitudes reflected in stereotypical views of Pan-Asian parents. Similarly, those who used marijuana in ways that highlighted their ethnicity did not see parental demands as a constraint. For many of the users we interviewed, the precautions they took in managing the stigma associated with use were seen as reasonable. It would be an oversimplification to attribute differences in consumption patterns to a lack of individualistic attitudes. Rather, these students’ identities were to a certain extent individualistic, although in culturally contextual ways.

The tension between ascribed roles and marijuana-using identities described above is important for the theoretical conceptualization of normalised drug-using behaviour. Previous research on marijuana-using attitudes has pointed to the importance of distinguishing between “normalization” and “normification” (Goffman, 1963) in understanding the internalization of stigmatized attitudes (Hathaway, Comeau, & Erickson, 2011). The roles adopted by women and ethnic minorities who used marijuana are indicative of normification, rather than normalization. This is most evident in the ways in which they internalized stigmatized attitudes about themselves.

As Measham and Shiner (2009) suggest, this nuanced understanding of the interplay between structure and agency requires a more complex conceptualization of identity theories in sociological analysis. Theoretical discussions about the interplay of agency and structure in forming identities are useful tools in order to not only move beyond binary explanations dependent on structure or agency, but also to produce a holistic understanding of their interaction in shaping individual identities.

**Marijuana Use and the Question of Identities**

The disagreement over the fluidity and rigidity of identities reflects a very real tension between agency and structure that finds itself reflected in the lives of very real people. In the present study, for example, the constraints of identity put upon young women and Asian youth meant that their use of marijuana was often viewed as
insensible or wrong; the internalization of these deviant identities excluded the subjects from imagining their marijuana use as normalised. Marijuana use by women and Asian students, however, is indicative of the fluid ways in which boundaries can be negotiated through resistance to cultural norms. Through their differentiated use of marijuana, many women and ethnic minority students established ‘new’ marijuana-using identities that were harmonious with being a young woman, an Asian youth, or both. The cultural constraints of gender and ethnicity shaped the social landscape of these youth to such a degree that they also determined their experiences of normalization.

The discussion of privilege and the normalization of marijuana along identity lines echoes the distinction between ideal types of romantic, modern and post-modern selves. The main dividing feature between the three is in their treatment of the essential qualities of the self. The romantic self is not sovereign, but rather it is tied to socio-cultural forces that dictate the roles available to it within society. The modern and postmodern understanding of the individual’s conceptualization of essential qualities, however, is more nuanced. The postmodern rejection of essence as a discursive phenomenon sets it apart from the modern self, which recognizes the contradictions between the expected roles imposed upon it by a social structure, and the struggle of the subject to cope with these expectations while maintaining their individuality.

One interpretation of these findings is that most white men’s drug-using identity closely resembles the postmodern self, in that it rejects the existence of essence altogether. Their view of right and wrong is contextual; their performative identities need to be harmonious with the context of the situation only; and their decisions are individually framed so that risk and responsibility combine to determine the temporal boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

The experiences of Pan-Asian students and white women, suggest this explanation of the self is far from universal. Some women and ethnic minorities accepted their socially defined (i.e. Romantic) identity, while others framed their decisions in modern terms, as a way to maintain individuality in the face of role(s)
imposed by social structures. Non-using Asian women were most aware of ‘who they are’ and what their role(s) entailed.

An alternative explanation is that white men are also playing a socially constructed role, one that can be modified, but is nonetheless predefined, and thus they are no freer than others to forge their own path independent of structural influences. Thus, white men, similar to women and Pan-Asian students, continuously negotiate their identity with pre-defined roles imposed by social structures and expectations. When condemning the inauthentic behaviour of women, for example, white men were indicating that acceptable behaviours exist which they are aware of but women are not. This explanation seems more plausible, and it also more closely resembles the reality of the situation. After all, if white male’s identities were completely fluid, then it would not be possible to speak to the extent of their social acceptability. Furthermore, if male using identities were contextual and temporal, it would have been impossible to speak of marijuana use as the ‘default option’.

It is also clear that structural identities are not fully constraining. The attitudes of marijuana-using women and Asian students were indicative of fluidity in terms of adaptation and resistance. These students are able to negotiate their ethnic identity and their marijuana-using identity by controlling how, where, and with whom they use marijuana. Many redefined marijuana-using identities to fit their own ascribed roles by using marijuana in their own unique ways.

What is important to note is that all young people are trying to play a role that best fits their agentic values. For some, this role is easily achievable and pre-defined. For others, the role is unavailable and must be defined through social resistance. Thus, marijuana use may be understood in this context as one of many factors in an ongoing process of identity negotiation in which conspicuous consumption becomes the arena of self-development. What is needed is a theoretical tool robust enough to explain the complexity of the situation.

It is clear that traditional structural determinants of identity such as gender and ethnicity, can make normalised marijuana-using roles unattainable to any given
individual by dichotomizing marijuana-using “appearance” and expected “manner” (Goffman, 1961). Pan-Asian women’s dismissal of inquiries into why they do not use marijuana, for example, is indicative of their recognition that a marijuana-using ‘role’ is simply outside of their schemata of performances in their “backstage,” or their ascribed “manners.” Similarly, use by women who see their marijuana use as a challenge to hegemonic gender roles is indicative of their recognition that they need to construct normalised marijuana-using identities for themselves in order to harmonize their performance with their socially defined roles. White men’s nonchalant drug use, by contrast, is indicative of their ability to adopt a pre-defined persona that is acceptable to both users and non-users of the drug.

It is important to note that the actions of those who adopted the identity of ‘others’ are not disingenuous, and neither are the actions of those who do not use marijuana to preserve their socially-prescribed identities. The former resist identity ascription through the adoption of roles which allow them to participate in a socially-acceptable definition of marijuana use, while the latter are playing the role that was ascribed to them to avoid stigmatization and its associated stress. Lack of access to the drug, lack of expertise and ‘know-how’ in using marijuana, and lack of non-problematic identities to fully participate in marijuana-using groups means that female and Asian youth lack the social and cultural capital necessary to participate in a normalised way.

The structural barriers as the result of lack of various forms of capital affecting women and Asian youth can be conceptualized as a lack of ‘available identities’. Cameron (2007) uses the concept of available identities in his discussion of disability narratives. However, he does not expand on the concept, nor does he define it fully. In the following section I provide a more holistic definition of the concept and situate it within aforementioned theoretical discussions about identity formation.

**Available Identities.** It is apparent that the notions of flexibility and fluidity need to play a major role in defining aspects of youth identity. However, fluidity does not mean traditional structural determinants such as gender or ethnicity are rendered
impotent. At the same time, the rigidity of the ‘authentic identities’ conceptualized by impression management scholars does not fully represent the complex ways in which identities develop and their membership is (re)negotiated. It is clear that opportunities, or lack thereof, and individual choices based on past experiences, future goals, and temporal definitions limit the creative role of the individual in identity construction. Constraints that frame individual decision-making are defined by various forms of capital and pre-existing cultural narratives based on traditional definitions of gender and ethnicity. I propose ‘available identities’ as a theoretical tool worth deploying in negotiating the nuances of the interaction between agency and structure.

The concept of ‘available identities’ borrows from Goffman and his discussion of impression management and represents a Goffmanesque self that he never fully articulated, but hinted at as his career developed. It also rests on Bourdieu’s conceptualization of *habitus* by signalling the role of agency within a constrained field that considers not only just various forms of capital, but also the role of audience in legitimizing those resources.

The concept of ‘available identity’ highlights the role of “temporal authenticity” in the process of performance (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In other words, the concept of available identities rejects concerns with authenticity altogether, in favour of temporal presentation. The harmonious and successful presentation of any given persona or ‘role’ depends upon the internalization of the chosen blueprint and is therefore always temporarily authentic so long as the blueprint is available. The act of presentation is neither fully based on structure nor is it fully dependent upon agency; rather, it is developed as a continuous dialogue between the two. Therefore, while Goffman is correct in asserting that individuals choose various roles from their backstage, the availability of these schemata of performance is limited by the resources available to the individual. Therefore, while the performance itself is fluid and agentic, the number of *normalised* performances is limited by boundaries of ascribed identities. In other words, while the self can be fluid, the extent of this fluidity depends upon the quantity of legitimate front stage personas that are *available* to the individual.
The strength of the concept of identity availability lies in its malleability, in the sense that it represents both fluidity and constraints. While individuals can construct their identities by choosing various pre-defined roles, the identities available to any given individual are not static, and their number is not infinite. Available identities as a theoretical tool is reflective of social constructionist theory in its recognition of the important role of biological constraints. It is also in line with Butler’s (1993) post-structuralist conceptualization of gender as a performance that is shaped through the “reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performers ‘will’ or choice” (p. 234). In this sense, although identity is a performance, it is not as voluntarily as symbolic interactionists would suggest (e.g., Holmes, 2007). Thus, ‘available identities’ is not necessarily a new concept but rather a barometer meant to gauge the fluidity and constraints of individual identities based on the interaction between structure and agency.

For many of my participants, gender and/or ethnicity played important role(s) in determining the availability of socio-cultural capitals. This availability in turn, determined the availability of normalised marijuana-using roles. While white male students were able to adopt non-problematic marijuana using identities, the relative lack of socio-cultural capital for women and Pan-Asian youth often meant lack of access to acceptable regional behaviours, lack of access to the drug, and the greater stigma associated with its use. Those who adopted white and/or masculine roles were often stigmatized as inauthentic. Female and Asian students simply lacked the backstage, or identity blueprint, upon which they could build their performance. Thus, the role of a normalised marijuana user was simply not available to them. In this sense, marijuana normalization can be understood as a process dependent upon the availability of normalised marijuana-using identities based on pre-defined gendered and ethnic roles.

To summarize, normalization theory depends on postmodernity to such a degree that it ignores the complex ways in which identities are developed, negotiated, and created within a cultural stage in which transportable identities remain a powerful force for defining the roles available to individuals. It is clear that the development of the
‘self’ depends upon the dialectic between structure and agency. This relationship is best conceptualized in terms of ‘available identities’. This concept helps us conceptualize the process of differentiated normalization by providing the theoretical tools necessary to investigate the role of structure and agency in the normalization of recreational marijuana use amongst various populations. It is these differences in available identities that lead to differentiated normalization of marijuana use based on gender and ethnicity.

As I mentioned in the opening chapter, the discussion of differentiated normalization and its association with identities is reminiscent of the division that has dominated subcultural theories for close to two decades. The conceptualization of the self as a presentation drawn from a repertoire of available identities is in line with the aforementioned studies that have aimed to bring structure back into subcultural analysis. In the next section, I use these findings and theoretical insights to shed further light on the question of subcultures.

**Are Subcultures Still a ‘Thing’?**

In conceiving of youth behaviour through the availability of personas, this work contributes to the ongoing debate in the literature regarding the term ‘subculture’ and its usefulness as a theoretical tool. The study of youth subculture was initially mostly concerned with social class and the authenticity of participation. The postmodern attitudes prevalent in the literature since the latter decade of the previous century, however, criticized the classical understanding of subculture, as advanced by CCCS, by favouring agency over structure in determining drug-using behaviour (e.g. Bennett, 2005; Muggleton, 2000). Consequently, terms such as ‘(neo)tribes’, ‘scenes’, and ‘life styles’ came to describe the fluid and flexible ways in which youth move in and out of various groups with no sense of belonging (e.g. Shield, 1992, Anderson, 2009b).

More recently, studies of deviance in youth culture have (re)turned towards an interest in how the structural forces that bound identity can restrict the fluidity of postmodern terminology, thus reawakening an interest in the original CCCS proposal (e.g. Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Hollands, 2002). These scholars argue that the post-
structural theories of youth subcultures became a postmodernist hegemony which were rightly criticized for their lack of attention to obvious structural factors (e.g. Paechter, 2007; Pascoe, 2007). Recent critics have questioned the extent of the individualization and the responsibilisation of risk, arguing that structural influences such as gender, class, and ethnicity are vitally important in understating the consuming choices of young people (Bose´, 2003).

In this study, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion vis-à-vis marijuana-using groups partly resemble the CCCS conceptualization of subcultures as being confined by social structure. At the same time, it is hard to deny the fluidity by which some users moved into and out of social groups or sought to redefine the boundaries that excluded them. In other words, the situated choices of youth are neither fully structurally determined, nor are they fluid.

It is clear that structural determinist arguments are too simplistic to explain deviant youth behaviour. However, post-structuralist views also throw the cork out with the champagne by envisioning all adolescents’ lived experiences as post-racial and post-gender. The best solution is probably a pragmatic one, in which participation in subcultural groups can be understood as being shaped by the interplay of agency and structure. Through this interplay, various identities become available, and the boundaries of authenticity are drawn and re-drawn dynamically.

This understanding is different from the original CCCS model in its recognition of the individual as an agentic subject, but it is also different from the post-structuralist model in its recognition of the role of social structures in determining the boundaries of acceptable choices made by the individual. The observation that individuals have a greater ability than previously thought to redefine social situations and thus to extend subcultural boundaries is indeed new to post-industrial society. This observation owes some debt to the trend towards globalization that has freed many youth from regional constraints on information and ideas (Martin, 2009; Moloney et al., 2008). ‘Available identities’ allows for understanding of these boundaries of subculture that, although
neither fully ‘stylistically spectacular’ nor ‘tightly-defined’ (Clarke, 1982), appears to be temporarily definable and thus temporarily constrainable.

Similar to available identities, this is not a new idea *per se*. After all, Clarke (1979) recognizes that although masculine and working-class cultures have been defined, their definitions are subject to negotiation by those within the groups. The aim here is to highlight the nuances of the discussion so as to avoid the pitfall of dichotomy. Thus, in here I side with those who caution against use of terms such as ‘scenes’, ‘lifestyle’, and ‘(neo)tribes’; the usefulness of the concepts is not clear and their theoretical contribution lacks explanatory power in discussing lived experiences of marginalized populations. The term ‘subculture’ is sufficient, so long as it is understood that subcultures are contextual and temporal, and that their boundaries change.

In sum, despite the claim of some postmodernists, race and gender still play a significant role in constraining the lives of many young people (Dawson & Bobo, 2009). Changes to social zeitgeist as the result of resistance movements since the 1970s should not be confused with the eradication of structural forces of constraint. Beyond their theoretical implications, these findings have practical implications for policymakers, equality advocates, and public health professionals.

**Policy Implications**

The argument for the differentiated normalization of marijuana has ethical implications. Gender and ethnicity are often seen as protective factors in reducing risk associated with drug use and are thus often framed in positive ways (Pugh & Bry, 2007). However, when large segments of a privileged population in a society participate in an activity, being excluded can have negative consequence on marginalized groups. These consequences can include a loss of socio-cultural capital and further feelings of disenfranchisement.

Canada has seen a gradual increase in incidents of racism and sexism over the past decade (Leber, 2017; Meyer, 2015). This study’s examination of how structural factors constrain subcultural participation can inform the work of equality advocates
and makers of social policy. Post-structuralist views of a post-racial and genderless world are often interpreted by some policymakers, and even some American supreme court justices (Roberts, 2014), as evidence supporting the elimination of programs which empower women and ethnic minorities, on the grounds that the racism and sexism that necessitated them no longer exists (Bambra, 2004; Lopez, 2010; Dawson & Bobo, 2009; Pomerantz, Raby, & Stefanik, 2013). The results of this study contribute to the body of literature that highlights the continued existence of discriminatory forces, and calls for more work to be done to combat socio-cultural discriminatory practices and hegemonic ideologies.

These findings can also contribute to the work of public health professionals. As cannabis has become legal in Canada, the character of its regulation is likely to be a hot topic of discussion in this country for years to come, making the management of problems associated with marijuana use even more central to the public health discourse. This research shows that Pan-Asian and female youth often feel structurally removed from discussions about marijuana. This feeling of exclusion can limit their ability to provide insight during the developmental stages of harm reduction programming and policy implementation. Taking these findings into account, successful preventative policies must take a more holistic approach to harm reduction (Barrio et al., 2007).

One proposed harm reduction model that has been shown to be successful in addressing the needs of ethnic minority communities is the “community participatory model,” which emphasizes cultural sensitivity and community support in the implementation of harm reduction techniques (Blume & Lovato, 2010). Through active collaboration with the community, this model proposes the implementation of community-driven and culturally-relevant approaches to harm reduction based on shared knowledge and pragmatic dissemination of information (O’Fallon & Dearry, 2002).

The greater stigma associated with marijuana use in Pan-Asian communities, and especially in Chinese families, calls for programs which facilitate open, honest, and
consistent communication between parents and youth. Successful harm reduction programs need to be sensitive to cultural attitudes and opinions, while recognizing the socio-historical differences that have shaped these views. In addition, successful intervention must also be informed by the aggravating role of gender in shaping the community’s perception of marijuana and its users. Culturally-relevant harm reduction programs can thus successfully negotiate the complex ways in which marijuana’s legalization will impact ethnic minority youth and their families.

Chapter Summary

This chapter used data gathered through interviews and surveys with Canadian university students to contribute to the debates on normalization, identity, and subcultures. The data presented indicate that agentic choices combine with individuals’ ethnic and gender identities to determine participation in, or abstinence from engagement in marijuana-consuming subcultures. This is best represented in the differentiated conceptualization of marijuana use and the privilege of normalization accrued to white men.

In light of these findings, I argued for the concept of ‘available identities’ as a means by which boundaries of subcultures could be studied. By modifying Goffman’s understanding of the nature of ‘authentic’ identities to accommodate the lens of the Bourdieusian theory of practice, the term “available” allows for the conceptualization of identity as semi-fluid, and thus provides a theorized basis by which individual agency can be understood to operate at times within structural constraints. As such, while an individual can choose from a set of identities, the choice is generally limited to socially-defined categories with varying degrees of stigma or advantage attached to them.

The symbiotic relationship between identity and subcultural participation means that the same structural constraints that limit the fluidity of identity also govern subcultural boundaries. Despite some recent post-subcultural discussion in the literature, the evidence presented in this study indicates that the modernist
interpretation of subcultures is more representative of the reality of marijuana-using groups. Although the nature of subcultural groups has changed since their initial conceptualization, they remain influenced by structural determinants of identity, such as gender and ethnicity. It is best to not discard the term ‘subculture’, but rather to modify it to meet the current realities of interaction. This understanding of subculture can also inform policymakers and public health professionals interested in intervention programs targeting youth.

The data presented here also need to be understood as limited and only a contribution to a larger body of literature that has shaped both public and academic discourse on identity development, subcultures, and normalization of marijuana. In the following chapter, I discuss the limitations of this study and plans for future research.
Chapter 9. Summary, Limitations, and Future Research

Summary

It has been over three quarters of a century since Whyte (1943) first drew our attention to the importance of mundane lived experiences, and over a decade since Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) raised the alarm about the lack of scholarly attention to the lives of ordinary young people. However, there are still limited data that can contribute to the development of a holistic theoretical approach capable of explaining the intricacies of youths’ ordinary lived experiences. The broad aim of this research is to contribute to this ongoing theoretical debate about the role structure and agency play in the life of young people in Canada. The primary question of this research project was “for whom has cannabis become normalised?”

The results of this study lead to three broad conclusions about identity and marijuana use. First, the adoption of a non-problematic marijuana-using identity is more nuanced than first suggested. Second, the management of the stigma around drug use is more complex for women and ethnic minorities than it is for white men, and these subjects pay special attention to the fact that they are ‘doing’ gender and ethnicity while using marijuana. Third, recreational drug use is not universal among western youth: a large segment of young people abstain because they see marijuana use as contradictory to their individualized or prescribed identity.

These results contribute to larger theoretical discussions about identity and subcultures. Although no single study can fully answer any theoretical debate, the data indicate that the solution to the problem must be pragmatic in nature and must also avoid the pitfall of dichotomy. I suggest the concept of ‘available identities’ as a theoretical tool to highlight the constrained fluidity of young people’s experiences. This dissertation’s contribution is to caution against those cultural theorists who, in their haste to describe consumer culture, overemphasize its fluidity and ignore its constraints. The lives of the young people who participated in this research continue to be constrained by structural forces that impose predefined roles. These restrictions call for
more work to be done in mitigating the factors that have marginalized a large segment of the population. Furthermore, an understanding of the differentiated use of marijuana requires particular attention be paid to the role of gender and ethnicity in the creation of harm reduction programs for youth.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations on conducting online research necessitates care in interpretation of the quantitative results (Lefever, Dal, & Matthiasdottir, 2007; Van Selm & Jankowski, 2006). Nonetheless, the results are consistent with previous surveys where close to half of the participants reported having used marijuana, and use was lowest amongst women and ethnic minorities. Despite these consistencies, some notes of caution are required when interpreting the qualitative results.

Firstly, social science students are more likely to be liberal and they are more likely to resist against ‘traditional demands’ than their peers in business, the sciences, and engineering (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Although the survey’s respondents studied a variety of disciplines, over three quarters of interviewees were in the social sciences or humanities. This means that their attitudes might be more liberal than the attitudes of all students across the disciplines.

Secondly, it is important to note that this project does not include an analysis of class for two important reasons. On one hand, the role of class as a determinant of attitude has been previously explored, and concluded that differences are only apparent in the context of non-university students living in poverty (e.g., Shildrick, 2002). The context of our sample excluded this demographic by definition. On the other hand, while the role of economic capital in the study of leisure and subcultural participation has dominated the field for decades, the role of cultural and social capital in this process, especially in the context of marijuana, remains relatively unexplored.

Lastly, a majority of the Pan-Asian respondents of this study were either born in Canada or had immigrated here over a decade ago. Long-term residency in Canada could mean a greater tolerance of westernized values amongst this group, as compared
to recent immigrants. Although our participants commented on the role of westernization in stigmatizing marijuana users, these sanctions might be more extreme among recent immigrants or international students.

Accordingly, future research needs to focus on experiences that shape the lives of recent immigrants and those youth from lower socio-economic classes who were not represented in this study. Furthermore, studies interested in identity formation would benefit from longitudinal research on children and adolescents who are beginning to negotiate their identity. Lastly, more research into other consuming habits of young people, and the role of structure in constraining consuming choices, can contribute to the development of a theoretical approach that recognizes the complexity of young people’s lived experiences.
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Appendix A: Follow Up Interview Schedule

Demographic information:
Gender/Age/Ethnicity/Year/Program

Self-Perception:

- Do you use cannabis?
  - Why or why not?
    - How much cannabis do you smoke each month?
    - Do you consider yourself to be a cannabis user?
      - How do you define a user?
      - Do you think being a “user” carries any negative stigma?
        Why?
      - Is being a marijuana user similar to being a drug user?
        What are the differences?
    - Do you consider yourself a pot-head? Why? Why not?
      - What are some connotations associated with being a pothead?
    - Do your parents view of marijuana effect your perception of it?
      - Does it matter to you if your parents find out you smoke weed?
    - Where do you get most of your information about marijuana from?
    - Does its legal status effect your decision to consume?
      - Why or why not?
    - Where do you usually use cannabis?
      - Do you think the setting in which you use cannabis is important? Why?
- Do you usually get together with friends just to use cannabis or is it part of larger group of activities? If so, what are these activities?
- Are there places that are not appropriate for cannabis use?
- Does freedom to use cannabis affect your decision to attend a certain party or event?
- How does marijuana use fit in your overall lifestyle?
  - How important is it to you to be able to have a steady supply?
  - Would it matter to you if you could not access marijuana anymore?
  - How do you ensure that there is a steady supply at hand?
- Do you feel there are differences beyond marijuana use itself that separated users from non-users? (e.g. do users share an outlook on life that allows them to relate to one another differently than with nonusers?)
- Is there such a thing as responsible or sensible cannabis use?
  - If so, how do you define that?
  - If not, why not?

**Stigma Avoidance:**
- How do you or your friends usually obtain cannabis? How easy is it?
  - What are some rules to follow when trying to obtain?
  - Are there certain type of dealers you would not buy from? Why?
  - What are some challenges with accessing marijuana? What are some solutions?
  - What are some things in a dealer that would scare you away or make you not want to buy from them?
- How have you managed to keep cannabis use a secret from those who should not know?
- What problems have arisen as a result of keeping this part of your life hidden?
- What rules do you follow to avoid being caught?
- Why and with whom do you smoke cannabis?
- How do you decide who should or should not know about your use?
- Do you think there is a difference between responsible and irresponsible use?
  - Do you schedule your use around school/work?
  - What are some good reasons to smoke marijuana?
  - What are some bad reasons to smoke marijuana?
  - Why do you use marijuana?
  - What are some behaviours associated with marijuana use that you would consider risky or irresponsible?
- Do you think there is a difference between cannabis and other drugs?
- What do your parents think about marijuana use? Why?
  - Why do you keep your use a secret from parents?

Perception of ‘others’:
- Why don’t you smoke marijuana?
- Why have you stopped smoking cannabis?
- Do you think there are responsible ways of smoking marijuana?
- What are your general attitudes towards marijuana/marijuana users?
- Do you have many friends who use marijuana?
- What are your opinions regarding laws associated with marijuana?
- Would you be bothered if people are using cannabis at a party you are attending?
- Would you be bothered if your friends use cannabis around you? Why or why not?
- Would you date someone who uses cannabis?
- Do you think marijuana use is ok for some but not for others?

Other issues of importance that have not yet been discussed…?
Table 4.1 Total Sample: Drug Using Habits and Attitudes (N=1850)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you used marijuana before?</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used alcohol before?</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used tobacco before?</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used cocaine before?</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used MDMA before?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used marijuana within the last year?</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you used marijuana within the last week?</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a typical day when you use marijuana, do you usually use more than 1 gram of marijuana per “session”? (Count 2 joints, 20 puffs, or 10 bong or pipe hits)</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you spent more than $50 on marijuana within the last month?</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.3 Total Sample: Marijuana Supply (N=869)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Marijuana</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I grow my own.</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A close friend who is connected to a larger supply network (buying on your behalf).</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend or acquaintance who buys on your behalf.</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dealer/Seller-Known to me.</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dealer/Seller-Unknown to me (not known on a personal level).</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A family member who is connected to a larger supply network.</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A gift from a friend (not purchased).</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1: Gendered Characteristics of the Sample: Drug Using Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Female (n=1258)</th>
<th>Male (n=592)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I have used marijuana before”</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have used ecstasy before”</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have used mushrooms before”</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana is “Easy” or “Very Easy” to obtain</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Female (n=541)</td>
<td>Male (n=326)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I identify as a pot head”</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have missed deadlines or been late to work as the result of my marijuana use”</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have tried to cut down or stop using marijuana in the past year”</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I buy my marijuana from a dealer known to me”</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I buy my marijuana from a friend or acquaintance who buys on my behalf”</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3: Gendered Characteristics of the Sample: Non-Users’ Attitudes and Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Female (n=717)</th>
<th>Male (n=266)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Marijuana use is ok if it makes you feel good”</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My parents are the primary reason for my abstinence”</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Significant others in my life are the primary reason for my abstinence”</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Legal Sanctions are the primary reason for my abstinence”</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cost of marijuana is the primary reason for my abstinence”</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Personal obligations are the primary reasons for my abstinence”</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Most of the people I hang around with are abstainers”</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.1 Ethnicity Characteristics of the Sample: Drug Using Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Whites (n=944)</th>
<th>Pan-Asian (n=752)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I have used marijuana before”</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have used ecstasy before”</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have used mushrooms before”</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana is “Easy” or “Very Easy” to obtain</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more of my siblings has used marijuana before</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or both of my parents have used marijuana before</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have used marijuana in the past month</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I identify as a pot-head”</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.2 Ethnicity Characteristics: Non-Users’ Attitudes and Opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Whites (n=759)</th>
<th>Pan-Asians (n=564)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I do not use marijuana and I do not have a problem with others using marijuana responsibly.”</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I do not use marijuana but I do not view marijuana users negatively.”</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I do not smoke marijuana and I lose respect for someone who does.”</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My parents are the most important influence in my decision to abstain.”</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My religious community is the most important influence in my decision to abstain.”</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Marijuana use is ok if it makes you feel good”</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the people I hang around with are abstainers</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.1: Intersecting Gender and Ethnicity Characteristics. (N=1850)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have used marijuana before</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have used cocaine before</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have used alcohol before</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have used tobacco before</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have easy/very easy access to cannabis</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana use is ok if it makes you feel good</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most or all of the people I hang around with are abstainers</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents are my primary source of income</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live with my parents</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.2 Intersecting Gender and Ethnicity: Marijuana Users’ Experiences (N=745)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have used marijuana in the past month.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-identify as a pot-head.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchase their drug from a dealer directly.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan-Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>