Grounded Theory: The Moral Order of Cannabis Hemp in Canada

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Introduction

Cannabis legalization is coming to Canada in 2018. The Liberal government in Canada has promised to follow through on their campaign policy of legalizing cannabis after seeing a strong demand from the public for a change in drug laws. The troubling reality is that it has taken the Canadian government a suspiciously long time to draft legislation that continues to operate off an ambiguous, speculative, and unsubstantiated framework. The present paper argues that CBC and CTV News are agenda setting outlets in the context of cannabis legalization in Canada. To understand our moral order, this paper explores the media representation of laws, rules, and regulations being drafted and the research being conducted for cannabis legalization. The proposed legislation excludes critical information every Canadian citizen needs to know about the cannabis hemp plant, information that empowers the public, discredits the government's discourse on cannabis, and threatens the agendas of many corporations and industries.

Methodology

This study uses grounded theory to explore media representations of the upcoming cannabis legalization in Canada in 2018 (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ashley, 2014). The two Canadian national media corporations selected were The Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) and the CTV Television Network. The research process began by selecting one of either a local, provincial, or national analysis of the media articles informing the public on cannabis legalization news in Canada leading up to official legalization. This study uses a national analysis, which allows it to cast a net over the whole country, as opposed to being limited to a phenomena in a specific area. Grounded theory was first developed in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* which refocused the practice of qualitative inquiry. Glaser is a research sociologist at the University of California Medical Centre and Strauss was

emeritus professor of sociology at the University of California, San Francisco when they published their book. Previous books on methods of social research have concentrated mainly on how to legitimate theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that this suggests an overemphasis in current sociology on the verification of theory, and results in a de-emphasis on the previous level of discovering what concepts and hypotheses are important for the area that one wants to research (p. 1-2). The running theme in Glaser and Strauss' (1967) book is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research (p. 2). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) agree that grounded theory means, "to read carefully through the data and uncover the major categories and concepts and, ultimately the properties of these categories and their interrelationships" (p. 308). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued a systematic qualitative analysis had its own argument and was capable of generating theory. Strauss' position is that process is fundamental to human existence therefore engaging in processes overtime creates our structures. Strauss felt subjective and social meanings are connected with our use of language; the construction of action was problematic for him. Glaser, on the other hand suggested, "middle range theories consisted of abstract renderings of specific social phenomena that were grounded in data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 9). Glaser is saying that the phenomena is separate from the research in that it can be found regardless of who performs the research, whereas Strauss argues that the researcher will always be bringing parts of their own processes into the structure. In order to generate theories around cannabis legalization in Canada, Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend, "To generate theory that fills this large order, we suggest as the best approach an initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data of social research. Then one can be relatively sure that the theory will fit and work" (p. 3-4). The data of social research in this study are cannabis articles published by CBC and CTV news that were selected for a systematic coding process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Charmaz, 2014; Ashley, 2014). This study replicates Glaser and Strauss' in the sense that theories are unearthed from an explicit analytical treatment of the data. This study is a

version of Glaser and Strauss' "explicit analytic treatment" that will produce theoretical analyses on the control, truth, and ambiguity around cannabis in Canada (Charmaz, 2014, p. 5). The defining components of grounded theory practice include: simultaneous involvement in data collection and analyses, creating analytic codes, labels, and categories from data as opposed to preconceived logically deduced hypotheses, and using the constant comparison method by making comparisons during each stage of the analysis, memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps (Charmaz, 2014, p. 7-8).

In order to gain insight and understanding on cannabis legalization in Canada, articles from CBC and CTV were selected using the keywords marijuana, cannabis, and pot (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The date range for the articles is from 7 Mar. 2017 to 23 Jan. 2018 with CBC having a range from 25 Mar. 2017 - 23 Jan. 2018, and CTV having a range of 7 Mar. 2017 – 19 Jan. 2018. Overall, 62 articles were selected from CBC and 55 from CTV for a total of 117. The articles covered a variety of topics including health, distribution, corporatization, regulations, rules, risk, uncertainty, confusion, and rights surrounding the upcoming cannabis legalization in Canada in 2018. After the articles were read over and selected, they were color coded using analytical, literal, and descriptive codes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The coding consisted of identifying meaningful sections in the textual data from the articles and giving each of them a code or label (Hesse-Biber, 2011, p. 309). Coding this way located key themes such as corporatization, villianization, risk, and evidence.

The coding process began by highlighting and marking anything that was relevant to the relationship between health, cannabis, and regulation and writing down memos during various stages of the coding (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Afterwards, names and codes were applied to the underlined sections of importance (Hesse Biber & Leavy, 2011). All the articles were read over and coded using the following labels in Table 1:

Table 1

Label/Code	Colour
Corporations/Business/Money/Tax/Control	Red
Keywords/Language/Perception	Green
Medicine/Health/Safety/Rights	Blue
Alcohol/Tobacco/Drugs	Orange
Products/Commercialization	Pink
Uncertainty/Confusion/Criminal/Fear	Silver
Rules/Regulation	Purple
Pharmaceutical Industry	Yellow
Legalization/Legitimate	Black
Stigma	Gold
Awareness/Education/Feedback	Ink
Risk/Driving	Highlighter Pink

Table 2 illustrates how these codes and labels were applied to the data, there are literal, descriptive and

analytical codes in the excerpts:

Table 2

Code	Excerpts
Red – Corporatization, $, Tax, Business, Control	Shares of marijuana-related companies sold off Thursday amid industry uncertainty in the wake of the release of the federal government's legislation aimed at legalizing recreational marijuana	People who grow at home often do so to offset the high cost of buying cannabis, and doing so allows people the freedom to cultivate their own strains suited to their needs
Blue – Health, Medicine, Rights, Safety	"When you're on your medication you're not impaired, and that's the main message of today" she added. "You're impaired when you're not properly taking your medication"	People who grow at home often do so to offset the high cost of buying cannabis, and doing so allows people the freedom to cultivate their own strains suited to their needs

Code	Excerpts
Green – Keywords, Language, Perception	The reality is <u>marijuana is already an issue</u> | Edible cannabis products often contain <u>THC, the psychoactive substance</u> that makes consumers feel <u>"high"</u> | She also said young <u>marijuana users will develop a disinterest in learning that may damage their education. They don't necessarily follow through and finish their homework – they don't necessarily absorb that education like they might otherwise do</u>
Gold – Stigma	Rebecca Eckler explained that openly talking about the subject <u>would lower the stigma around recreational pot use by parents</u> | It's socially acceptable for parents to talk openly about drinking alcohol, given that drinking is legal, but it's not <u>yet socially acceptable to talk openly about smoking marijuana, given that recreational use is still illegal</u>
Silver – Uncertainty, Confusion, Criminal, Fear	Shares of marijuana-related companies sold off Thursday <u>amid industry uncertainty</u> in the wake of the release of the federal government's legislation aimed at legalizing recreational marijuana | The major risk, as Bar sees it, is the legislation has yet to be tabled and the regulatory framework, to be set out <u>by the provinces, is still up in the air</u>
Purple – Rules, Restrictions, Law	Shares of marijuana-related companies sold off Thursday amid industry uncertainty in the wake of the <u>release of the federal government's legislation aimed at legalizing recreational marijuana</u> | He added that the city will also have to consider <u>amendments to bylaws</u> for retailers, as well as the <u>rules for people growing</u> marijuana at home to make sure we're ready as a community for July 2018.
Orange – Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs	Local 625 business manager Rob Petroni looks forward to his members taking advantage of this new agreement and using alternatives to <u>highly addictive opioids</u> | That training will include the ability to offer customers advice, the way <u>NSLC</u> employees currently do when it comes to <u>wine</u> suggestions | Nova Scotia restricts countertop displays of <u>cigarettes</u>

Code	Excerpts
Black – Legalization, Legitimacy	Shares of marijuana-related companies sold off Thursday amid industry uncertainty in the wake of the release of the federal government's legislation aimed at <u>legalizing</u> recreational marijuana | Medical users fear <u>legalized</u> recreational pot may leave them behind in puff of smoke
Highlighter Pink – Risk, Impaired Driving	They've acknowledged that the issue of curbing <u>drug-impaired driving</u> and enforcing prohibitions will be a challenge | People who are willing to take the <u>risk of being impaired</u> in the workplace, they're probably already exercising that today

Table 3 is an example of the difference between the literal and descriptive/analytical codes:

Table 3

Code =>	Keywords/ Language	Medicine/ Health/Rights	Alcohol Tobacco Drugs	Uncertainty Confusion Fear/Criminal	Pharmaceutical Industry	Legalization, Legitimate	Corporate structure/ Money, Tax
Keywords (Literal) =>	Marijuana, pot, weed, drug, youth, young people, experts	Medical, patient, safety, health, medicine, medicinal, rights, medication	Alcohol, beer, wine, cigarettes, hard bar, tobacco, hard drugs, drugs	Uncertainty, confusion	Pharmaceutical, pharmacy, prescription, prescribed	Legalization, legalized, legal, legitimate	Any company name ie Shoppers Drug Mart, Loblaw's, Aphria, MedReleaf, money, revenue, profit, deals, agreements, taxes
Sections Descriptive\ Analytical =>	Substituting one drug for another	Continued commitment to public health	Like Ritalin and Adderall, known as study drugs	the lottery aspect makes it difficult to plan	Absence of the pharmaceutical industry	Looks forward to a legitimate legalized industry	See the incentive for something they aren't able to patent

After these labels were in place, the articles were again reviewed with memo writing in order to generate those four key themes (Charmaz, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The theme of corporatization was generated by seeing the red code on all the articles reviewed between CBC and CTV as well as being a dominant recurring topic connected to other codes in the

discourse; this concept embodies various codes such as red, yellow, orange, blue, and purple. The theme of risk was derived from the discussion in the articles of risk itself, this umbrellas the codes blue, orange, silver, purple, highlight pink, and ink. The theme of villainization was uncovered using a comparative analysis between the literature review and the discourse from the articles, which embodies the codes green, blue, silver, orange, and yellow. Finally, the theme of evidence was created by investigating the truth claims from the articles, some of those claims were lack of industry research, real health impacts on our young people including a potential effect on brain development, cannabis being poisonous for pets, and cannabis being an intoxicant regardless of the user. This embodies the codes blue, orange, red, ink, highlight pink, and purple.

Corporatization is a main theme to elaborate on because the corporate red code appeared on all of the articles reviewed and was by far the most frequent. The red label was used for any segment pertaining to topics of money, tax, corporations, business, companies, institutions, and control. Articles that had red codes typically had purple codes along with them indicating the presence of proposed legislation, rules, and regulations. Villainization is also an important theme to expand upon. The green keyword of marijuana or pot also showed up on all the articles, which contains critical implications around public perception and control. Evidence and risk play interconnecting thematic roles that reinforce corporatization and villainization.

__Findings__

The key to understanding this subject is found by recognizing the foundation that society is operating on. One of the first rules of building a good home is to make sure you have a strong foundation. If you build a home on a weak foundation it won't be able to sustain a lot of growth. Buildings need to have strong foundations in order to stand the test of time, survive natural events, and grow as its people need it to; our society is the same. We cannot continue to operate off information

that purposefully excludes vital facts about the topic. Transparency, critical thinking, and access to information are tools we can use to develop a strong foundation; continuing to build from a weak foundation will only lead to control, confinement, and more limitations. For this paper, a weak foundation recognizes cannabis hemp as marijuana, an ambiguous drug that ensnares society's deviants, harms the brains of youth, and threatens public safety. A strong foundation recognizes cannabis hemp both as a historical medicine with an impeccable safety record and as a valuable versatile natural resource that we all have the right and freedom to use properly.

Joseph Gusfield, an American Sociologist, studied the phenomena of drinking and driving and played a key role in discovering how society constructs what is a problem and what is moral behavior. Gusfield's (1981) book, *The Culture of Public Problems: Drinking-driving and the symbolic order,* introduces both cultural products, such as drinking and driving, and structural relationships, such as public action. He shows that the raw data of existence, the cultural analysis, doesn't necessarily match up with an ordered, consistent, and understandable set of rules, the imagined or abstract social structure (Gusfield, 1981, p. 17, 63). There is a dramatic discontinuity between the two levels of social life: theory, policy, and abstract, and reality, actions, and social action (Gusfield, 1981, p. 17). This means that the theories, policies, and abstracts being constructed and put into place are not influencing public behavior in ways it is intended to, for example the criminalization of drug use doesn't prevent millions of people from using drugs. The status of a phenomenon becomes a problem or a matter of conflict as interested parties struggle to define or prevent the definition of a matter as something public action should act upon (Gusfield, 1981, p. 10). Instead of solving or perfecting a public problem, which is the goal of creating theories and policies, people tend to perform maintenance on it leading to a mutually accepted level of risk. The interaction between the elements of ownership, causal theories, and political responsibilities surrounding drinking and driving is the central focus of Gusfield's book (1981). Human situations and problems have histories; they have not always been represented and recognized as they

are today or will be in the future (Gusfield, 1981, p. 4). Mental disorders, *cannabis usage*, and

homosexuality are examples of the same behavior being accorded different statuses overtime for

specific agendas (Gusfield, 1981, p. 4, <u>emphasis added</u>). Gusfield's (1981) quote on policies around

drinking and driving can be adapted for this paper to exemplify the situation mimicking cannabis

legalization,

> Lastly, it is part of the framework of "facts" about *cannabis hemp* that they have become
> public wisdom. They constitute the believable and accepted body of knowledge for a
> large number of people who have personal knowledge neither of all *the nutritional,
> industrial, and medicinal hemp facts* described nor of the scientific knowledge *about the
> endocannabinoid system[1], empirical medicines, or cannabis hemp* alluded to in the
> *scientific community*. The "facts" of *cannabis hemp* are not esoteric. They are known by
> scholars in the field, practitioners in *medical cannabis* programs and traffic safety
> organizations. They constitute the working assumptions of journalists and policymakers
> who write about, speak about, or create policy toward *the relationship between cannabis
> and citizens*. They are the "facts" which make up the knowledge of *cannabis hemp*,
> which interested and informed citizens believe to be <u>the </u>reality (p. 31; italics represent
> words substituted by author).

The facts about cannabis hemp are based off a weak foundation that refuses to holistically recognize

the plant and its capabilities. People who don't know much or anything about this subject accept the

discourse with little to no resistance even though they lack an understanding of all the parts. A main

difference between drinking and driving facts and cannabis hemp facts is that cannabis facts are being

distorted in order to shape public perception; the discourse around cannabis has largely excluded the

most important factors. There are three processes that create truth: how we are brought up, what we see

around us, and the way in which we are educated – if we are given false information and are not

educated properly, many people will lack the ability to reject the misguided truth they've been given

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[1] "The endocannabinoid system (ECS) represents a vital physiological neuromodulatory systeminvolved in the regulation of homeostasis. It is present in all mammals, birds, amphibians, and fish. Due to its distribution throughout the brain and spinal cord, the ECS plays a significant role in regulating a long list of physiological processes including regulation of stress and emotions, digestion, nociception ie. pain, cardiovascular and immune function, neural development, synaptic plasticity and learning, memory, movement, metabolism, energy expenditure, inflammation, appetite regulation, sleep/wake cycles, thermogenesis and psychomotor behaviour." (Sinclair, 2016, p. 107-8). Mechoulam et al (2014) first discovered the ECS in the 1980s and 1990s.

(Simpson, 2014, p. 207). With cannabis hemp, this results in the construction of a public problem using intentional tunnel vision.

Social Control in Canada: Issues in the Social Construction of Deviance, edited by Schissel and Mahood (1996) is helpful because it is not about deviance, it's about social control and society's tendency to identify and control the behavior of certain citizens. *Social Control in Canada* (1996) states that the morality and its attendant rules that underpin this control are not givens, they change depending on historical period, social context, or socio-economic power (p. 3). Discourse theorists focus on language and communication systems as fundamental forms of social construction, they see language and communication systems as powerful forces of social control that create systems of order and discipline (Schissel & Mahood, 1996, p. 17). Poststructuralist theories believe that language, and its attendant definitions of deviance and crime, are constructed according to the needs of those in power during specific historical periods (Schissel & Mahood, 1996, p. 17). Language and knowledge systems change with shifting historical periods, this is important to consider with cannabis because in the early 1900's suspect policies were enacted in Canada and America with no public debate or consultation that altered the language and knowledge systems surrounding hemp in order to advance certain agendas (1923 Canada Drug Policy & 1936 USA Marijuana Tax Act).

Corporatization

For this paper, corporatization is a process where modern medicine is merging with corporate capitalism mainly through the introduction of rules, policy, regulations, and the control of public perception; corporate capitalism concentrates solely on market competition and generating profits. It largely enforces a patriarchal and hegemonic culture where one way of interpreting reality dominates all others. It can lead to privatization, where only one or a handful of companies are given the authority to control and distribute products and resources to the public. In the beginning of the 1900s medical

professionals and other medical interest groups started designing medicines to serve their own focused economic and social interests. When people who disagreed tried to speak out they were discredited, ostracized, and cast off as deviants or villains. Out of this corporate history emerged a pharmaceutical industry that has prescribed chemicals, radiations, and poisons as medicines; chemotherapy, opiate painkillers, and synthetic anti-depressants are commonly used today regardless of their neurotoxic, addictive, and harmful qualities (Simpson, 2014). This has become normalized and has put Canada into the midst of an opiate and healthcare crisis. In the case of cannabis hemp, this is a medicine we can all grow and use, there is nothing else on the planet that even begins to have the potential to solve both our health issues and the wide range of problems plaguing the world (Simpson, 2014; Herer, 1998). The interplay between the red, yellow, purple, and orange codes brought out an interesting possibility to monitor. Cannabis hemp may be at risk of becoming corporatized like the pharmaceutical industry, the alcohol industry, and/or the fossil fuel industry; the same industries that fought hard for years to prohibit cannabis from public use in the interest of market competition and generating profits.

The orange, green, and red codes showed that placing cannabis in the same discussion as alcohol and tobacco and controlling the language and keywords used in the discourse around cannabis can create the perception that it needs to be handled in a similar fashion as hard drugs: controlled and regulated. Operating off the foundation that cannabis is a drug or a controlled substance that is threatening the nation's youth allows the government to behave in this authoritative fashion by assuming the role of guardian parental figure that protects an irresponsible public. The purple codes appear frequently illustrating policies that need to be implemented, new laws that need to be drafted, and more rules and regulations required to achieve the government's stated goals. One writer reports the Canadian government was dedicating $525 million over 5 years to assist in legalization to Health Canada, Public Safety Canada, and the Canada Border Services Agency, they will also dedicate over $247 million over five years to assist policing and border efforts around legalized marijuana (Aiello,

2017). The kind of education campaign the government is promoting in these articles aligns with corporatization and the need for regulation, which justifies their goal of protect and control and further fuels the public's belief that this is something threatening. If there's a weak foundation here that's a lot of money and resources being spent on it – we have to ask important questions as to why this is being considered, who is benefitting from it, and if it is rational behavior in terms of risk and reality.

The rules and regulations are often coded silver as cloudy or uncertain, and they seem to benefit the few of those who are in a position to run cannabis companies; it can't claim to be inclusive due to the strict regulations that are being proposed. The majority of CEO's running cannabis companies are white males that often come from other sectors of business, which can have the effect of promoting, justifying, and reinforcing the status quo so the existing authority remains unchallenged. The problem here lies in what is being left out of the articles that corporatization would see as a threat. The fact that cannabis hemp is more accurately defined not as a drug but as a resource plant – the medicinal resin the plant produces, that is commonly defined as the drug, is merely one of the thousands of by-products the plant can make that countless people have empirically stated can reduce their suffering. This medicinal resin is what corporations are clamouring to get control over. To put it simply, there aren't any 'drugs' in nature that you can run your entire economy off of in an earth-friendly, sustainable, and diverse fashion (Herer, 1998). Defining cannabis as a drug is a main obstacle that severely restricts and prevents people from understanding and realizing both its true potential and their own freedom to use it. Defining it as a drug doubles as a tool for corporations to create control and make profits; the controlled substance language was created in the first place to protect the big industries threatened by this plant such as the pharmaceutical industry, the fossil fuel industry, the alcohol and tobacco industry, and the cotton industry. Now that the truth is slowly emerging the codes indicate a scramble by these industries to switch over, create rules, and spread misinformation on cannabis that will keep them in

power. One thought to keep in mind is, do we want to privatize and give another one of our planet's resources over to corporate control?

The whole structure being proposed, the rules the regulations, the process is seemingly designed to make profits for a few people who are in control of these cannabis companies hence the red and purple codes appearing together often. The less information about cannabis the public can access and understand the easier it is for corporations to acquire the right to distribute and sell cannabis. We are in fact capable of producing this resource ourselves, there are holy books and scriptures that encourage the plant's usage as it can detoxify both our bodies and the planet; we can do this on our own relatively easily.[2] The rules, restrictions, and control of language spread around cannabis has prevented the public from rediscovering this rational answer to a lot of our major problems.

These codes indicate cannabis legalization is about generating money. Cannabis can be so profitable people are distracted from the bigger issues at play. Generating tax revenue for the government, profits for all the companies, speculation on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX), and news releases from the United States on cannabis policies are all codes that are interconnected. Provincial governments signing deals with companies for guaranteed product, companies signing international deals with other country's medical cannabis programs, and greenhouses growing tomatoes, herbs, and other vegetables are switching to cannabis indicating that they are all following the money. The codes indicate lawyers and courts will wade through the tensions of rules against rights in the different contexts of life such as driving, working, tenants, childcare, etc.; more stress for an overburdened court system. It appears these rules and regulations are created so certain groups can be in a good position for

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[2] Kanabosm is an ingredient in the holy anointing oil (Old Testament). Buddha ate a diet consisting only of hempseed before he became enlightened (Buddhism). Traditional Chinese Medicine has utilized the entire hemp plant in medicine. Ganja (Rastafarian) is used as a sacred sacrament to communicate with God. The Holy Bible refers to herbs and leaves as medicines for healing (Genesis & Revelation). The Zend-Avesta (Zoroastrianism) lists 'bhang' as a top medicinal plant and the God Shiva (Hinduism) is said to have brought hashish as a sacred medicine; all these translate to or are referring to the cannabis hemp plant (Herer, 1998, p. 71-2; Simpson, 2014).

legalization, not necessarily to fulfill the stated goals of keeping it out of criminal control and protecting youth and public safety. One writer reports experts have warned that the proposed model will not achieve these goals (Kirkup, 2017). The codes suggest the existing culture and wealth of knowledge that cannabis communities have such as Mom and Pop growers, medical growers and users, compassion clubs, and activists are being diminished. Overtime this may change but the initial proposed rules and regulations place these groups in a disadvantaged position.

Corporatization effects the public's education and awareness surrounding cannabis. Bill Blair, Canada's legalization task force point man, states he wants young people to be able to make informed choices in a regulated environment. His education campaign will focus on the health and safety risks of marijuana use and drug-impaired driving; no evidence is ever listed substantiating the claims about marijuana use, health and safety, and harms and risk; there is always a speculative word attached such as potential[ly], might, may, unknown, could etc. Gusfield (1981) explains the risks of drinking and driving that can mirror cannabis, "neither have consumer groups played more than a peripheral role in safety legislation and virtually none in information gathering" (p. 39). If corporations are making good money they won't have any reasons to perform research that will negatively affect their business, the pharmaceutical industry refusing to research cannabis is a perfect example. Blair's goal of Canadian's making informed decisions in a regulated environment can't be met if corporations are not responsible for their consumers having adequate knowledge and access to research about what they are consuming. That appears to be exactly what is unfolding; the codes express the alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceutical industries, those which played a major role in keeping cannabis illegal, are moving to control and regulate access for the public. Instead of being touted as a versatile natural resource it's being displayed as an ambiguous social problem that needs to be controlled; this sustains the status quo and justifies the claims that municipalities, provinces, police forces, landlords, and employers will need more financial support, resources, and time to not be overwhelmed by the legalization of cannabis.

People are getting into this industry mainly for economic interests, an important question to address is who is going to be granted the right to control and distribute? The discourse is few versus many, that rules, restrictions, and ambiguity lead to control and profit for few and that transparency, fact-based policy, and accessible information lead to freedom and empowerment for the public. The Manitoba province received 100 pitches from businesses hoping to sell cannabis, yet they are only going to select 4 that will then run hundreds or dozens of retail locations (Plowman, 2017). Police state that if Health Canada does not approve them, unregulated dispensaries are a risk to public safety (Hamilton, 2017).

Villainization

Villainization is a process that combines the control of language and the use of ambiguity to shape what the public perceives to be threatening. This is done intentionally in the interest of controlling the public's behaviour. Villainization magnifies and exaggerates the risks and harms surrounding debates in the hopes of creating a fearful-vulnerable-feeling public that seeks protection. With cannabis, there is a separation between the health and the high. The articles separate CBD with health and THC with high.[3] Language used describing THC often has "psychoactive" attached containing implications that THC has the potential to activate a psychotic episode or turn someone into a psycho or a deviant. This creates the impression that CBD is more for therapeutic use and THC is recreational and risky. There are concerns that THC levels are higher than they ever have been in the past, this ambiguity allows the government to attach concerns that they don't know the potential health impacts on brains and they can't use past studies to justify current cannabis arguments; the public needs to wait for new research to be conducted before they can make claims or enact fact-based policies.

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[3] THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (Cannabidiol) are two commonly identified cannabinoids in cannabis. THCV, CBG, CBC, THCA, and terpenes are lesser known cannabinoids; all the cannabinoids work together synergistically to produce the entourage healing effect (Sinclair, 2012, p. 113).

The empirical evidence presented in the articles is stated but not explored, it's read over with no follow up thought; interestingly the focus shifts to ambiguity. For example, the following blue codes appeared, "it helps them go to sleep. It helps them ease physical pain." and "It was really just to stave off some of the withdrawal symptoms, which can be quite debilitating" people are reporting that this plant helps with serious forms of suffering; the conversation instead shifts to debating the legitimacy of their claims such as addiction specialists are skeptical and more study is required (Kane, 2018). In these articles, opioid addiction, trauma, and chronic pain are three areas where clear empirical data exists showing cannabis use as helpful. The fact that this is an effective treatment is swept under the rug; medical users fear the proposed framework. Articles will list opiate deaths and explore the fentanyl crisis but fail to include cannabis' overdose deaths – zero – and cannabis' effectiveness in a lot of the same areas opiates are used for. All these narratives don't fit that of a villain therefore they are either distorted or left out of the discourse.

The following is an example of distorting the facts to create fear. In two articles writers discuss veterinarian groups claiming THC can put dogs and our pets in life-threatening medical crisis (Stackelberg, 2018; CTV, 2018). These statements are used as a scare tactic; grapes, onions, and avocados can also be life-threatening to dogs. The tunnel vision is on cannabis as the villain. Veterinarian groups use language that shapes perception, their claims have villain-like terms: overdose, toxicity, death, life-threatening, medical crisis (Stackelberg, 2018; CTV, 2018). It is more a reflection of the owner's responsibility if their pet has ingested something they shouldn't have, instead the focus shifts to cannabis as the problem, the threat to our domesticated pets, and how it is necessary to regulate it.

The codes include doctors' and experts' claims that there is a lack of research on the medical applications of cannabis, they cite questions about risk and its effectiveness as a health product; this is a highly controversial claim coming from health care professionals (Omand, 2017; McLeod, 2017). One

article coded a professor of family medicine stating there are few benefits for producers to conduct the research because it could seriously harm profits, they include alcohol and tobacco in medical discourse to discredit cannabis, and they repeat the commonly occurring line of 'more study is needed' (Omand, 2017). There is a health expert claiming it is just "substituting one drug for another" (Kane, 2017). These are reinforcing the controlled substance narrative that villainizes cannabis.

Using the keywords marijuana, pot, dope, and weed is a form of villainization itself as it can reinforce the effect that this is not that serious of a topic when it is vital to understand. The effect of language in the conversation plays a very important role in forming the public's perception, for example using the term 'marijuana' embodies the connotations of joke, drug use, high, and stoned where as using the term cannabis hemp invokes a neutral air of food staple, therapeutic medicine, and industrial farming. The cannabinoids within the resins of the cannabis plant are the most medicinally active substance known to man.[4] It is these cannabinoids interaction with each of our personal endocannabinoid systems that produces the 'high' or healing depending on which foundation your standing on: weak or strong | villain or saviour. Boyd's quote on Canadian policy reinforces the villainization of hemp through the use of ambiguity, "in 1923 marijuana was added to the drug schedule with no debate in Parliament or evidence that it was a dangerous drug" (Boyd, 2017, p. 54). The old pharmacopeia's from the 1800s used hemp in the treatment of over 600 medical conditions, in 1923 Canada effectively removed the most medicinal plant from medicine (Herer, 1998; Boyd, 2017). The high from cannabis discussed in the media articles is deliberate; everyone who smokes it attains the same high, this stance requires explaining.

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[4] "Farmers and the general public did not even know what marijuana was at the time. The words marijuana and high were used to discredit the hemp plant and make the public at large afraid of its use for medicinal reasons and recreational purposes. The propaganda and scare tactics the system used said marijuana was a dangerous and deadly new menace. Marijuana is simply potent strains of hemp and the word marijuana is just one of over 400 slang terms used worldwide to describe the hemp and/or cannabis hemp plant. Marijuana is not a drug, it is just different forms of the hemp plant's genetics, which can produce large quantities of medicinal resins with a very high content of cannabinoids that do the healing" (Simpson, 2014, p. 78-9, p. 3).

All of this is problematic because as Howard Becker's (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* revealed, people have to go through a specific process in order to learn how to use cannabis. This is an individual process that plays a part in how the user experiences the high, overtime it becomes a learned activity (Becker, 1963). When taking this into account, the high can't be generalized for everyone the same way, there exists hundreds of genetic varieties of cannabis hemp that each person can react differently to. Cannabis was mostly smoked or ingested as an edible, recreationally and medicinally. Everything changed when the Phoenix Tears method was discovered: extracting resins from the buds of indica strains of female hemp plants and activating them medicinally for ingestion and topical use, a term coined decarboxylation.[5] In the past, and presently, due to the fact that this method is not approved by Health Canada, ordinary citizens who have tried to bring this information out or who have used this method for healing have been criminalized, villainized, rejected, and ridiculed. Those who have valuable knowledge, insight, and experience in this critical area are ignored. These articles on legalization are missing significant information that can help and empower each and every citizen. Activists' roles are greatly diminished to the point where they are quiet or silent, this bodes well for corporations who want a misinformed public, regulation, and control. Ricky Logan Simpson (2014) rediscovered the correct way to consume cannabis hemp as a medicine and performed thousands of medical miracles in Canada in the early 2000's. Simpson (2014) took this issue to every single institution and group with authority – the Canadian Cancer Society, the Dr. David Suzuki research foundation, Anne McLellan (the Public Health Minister in Canada at the time), Health Canada, CBC, CTV, Global News, Cannabis Culture, the NDP, the Conservatives, the Liberals, The Canadian Medical Association, and even the United Nations – he was ignored by all of them. If

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[5] Simpson (2014) used this method for over a decade to cure both his own and thousands of people's health problems that the medical system had no answer for, all free of charge; he often cured terminal cancers and alleviated chronic pain and debilitating conditions.

someone makes another ground breaking discovery of Simpson's magnitude in a regulated

environment, the institutions who control the knowledge and information will villainize and suppress it

if it threatens their profit margins.

<div align="center">**<u>Evidence</u>**</div>

Becker (1963), covers cannabis use and the culture of deviance that enshrouds it. He claims the

normal development of people in our society can be seen as a series of progressively increasing

commitments to conventional norms and institutions (Becker, 1963, p. 27). Regarding control and

enforcement, he says that the control of behaviour is accomplished by affecting the perceptions people

have of the to-be-controlled activity, and of the possibility or feasibility of engaging in it (Becker, 1963,

p. 60). Through controlling the perceptions the public has on a certain behaviour, people will grow to

see that specific activity only through their filter. It is possible manipulation can occur in order to

advance a hidden agenda; when the majority of the public perceives cannabis to be a recreational drug,

all its other uses remain concealed. Becker (1963) states that these perceptions arise in social situations

in which they are communicated by persons regarded as reputable and validated in experience, in other

words persons who have authority (p. 60). Through this authority the public comes to conceive of the

activity as distasteful, inexpedient, or immoral, and therefore does not engage in it (Becker, 1963,

p. 60).

Public health experts claim this model of legalization won't keep marijuana out of the hands of

youth, which is the main goal of legalization (Kirkup, 2017). There are also claims coded from doctors

and experts about potential harms to the developing brains of children (Karstens-Smith, 2018).

Countries such as Jamaica provide contradictions to these codes.[6] If mothers who smoke cannabis

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[6]   Hayes et al.'s (1991) research studied 59 children of mothers who used marijuana while pregnant and mothers who
were non users over 5 years; they concluded there was, "no significant differences in developmental testing outcomes
between children of marijuana using and non-using mothers except at 30 days of age when the babies of users had more
favorable scores on two clusters of Brazelton Scales: autonomic stability and reflexes" (p. 120).

while pregnant are proven to have healthy babies then these truth claims in the articles are not substantiated; a noted trend Boyd and Carter (2012) exploited in their media discourse study titled *Killer Weed: Marijuana Grow Ops, Media, and Justice*. These codes speak to the media continuing to use ambiguity; building off a weak foundation where public perception is controlled by those with authority and used to push hidden agendas.

Fairly steep penalties and punishments for driving while high are coded in the articles as agreed proposals even though there is no government approved roadside testing technology for cannabis impairment. Quebec has a zero tolerance policy for drug impaired drivers; arrest and suspend license for 90 days (Otis, 2017). This echoes Boyd's (2017) research; in 1925 Canada enacted policy that allowed vehicles to be confiscated by police/drug enforcement agencies if drugs were found in them. There is research that states cannabis simulator studies and cannabis on road studies show no significant effects of marijuana on car control and that risk-taking behaviour was reduced after marijuana treatment (Kalant et al., 1999, p. 176-177). The articles do not recognize any of this information, instead they place cannabis into the same category of impairment as alcohol.[7] They do this in order to alter the perception that cannabis impairs in a similar fashion to drive up fear and justify their claims. Interestingly, alcohol effects differed from cannabis in that speeds increased and control effort decreased, resulting in poorer tracking performance and increased risk (Kalant et al., 1999, p. 180). Drivers who are under the influence of cannabis compensate for it by not overtaking, by slowing down, and by focusing their attention when they know a response will be required (Kalant et

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[7]   A complicating factor in determining marijuana impairment on driving ability is 80% of the time, when cannabis is present, alcohol is also present. It is well known that alcohol increases accident risk. The combining of alcohol and cannabis make it difficult to determine, from epidemiological studies alone, how much contribution cannabis makes to accident risk. A second complication in data interpretation is that young, socially risk-taking males are overrepresented in accident fatalities. This is the same group who is overrepresented among cannabis users. Therefore, there will be an overrepresentation of cannabis users in accident fatalities whether or not the cannabis actually affects driving (1999, p. 173).

al., 1999, p. 188). That does not align with alcohol's discourse of increasing risk taking behaviour, regardless, cannabis shares the same discourse.

Various institutions are coded operating off that weak foundation to make claims that convince the public they will require more resources, money, and control to deal with an incoming crisis. Evidence shows Canada is battling an opioid dependency and overdose crisis; cannabis hemp's historically documented medical applications proves it provides the same reliefs without addiction and risk of overdose. Dr. O'Shaughnessy (1843) worked for the British government studying the hemp plant's usage on animals and humans in India, he states that he was encouraged by the results he saw, "no hesitation could be felt as to the perfect safety of giving the resin of hemp an extensive trial in the cases in which its apparent powers promised the greatest degree of utility" (p. 363) and "I have no hesitation in saying, that in the cases in which the opium treatment is applicable, hemp will be found far more effectual" (p. 369). Fast forward to the present and medical cannabis users in these articles are coded agreeing with Dr. O'Shaughnessy, they are saving the health care system thousands of dollars by choosing cannabis over opiates, yet they feel like they are being punished by the system (Ubelacker, 2017). Ignoring the evidence on cannabis requires severe tunnel vision on the part of the media, it seems O'Shaughnessy's work and empirical data are not being considered very seriously even though both are vital to the subject.[8]

When the claims from these articles are coded they seem to raise more questions than they answer, this is a common theme for cannabis legalization in Canada; overcomplicating something quite simple. This form of ambiguity arises and is reinforced by the different groups who have conflicting interests and are competing to perform research that will benefit their various agendas; the codes

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[8]   The Siler Commission (1930) study, the Schafer Commission (1972), and the Report of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission (1893-1894) are all government-backed studies that agree cannabis is not a narcotic, its use is not a problem and those who use it should not be criminalized (Herer, 1998, p. 29).

indicate for the past century the majority of research in medicine has been done for money, not for health. When there are so many different groups with authority scrambling to get their piece of the pie ambiguity serves them well because the public doesn't truly understand the implications and ramifications of what is going on. There are many truth claims being circled by key groups with authority the public is supposed to trust. The truth claims distort from the evidence and they don't address or fulfill the stated goals the government originally set out, we need to ask who benefits from this?

The separation between therapeutic use and recreational use is troublesome because the media is defining cannabis the wrong way and neglecting key facts in the discourse. Cannabis currently falls under the category of a drug and therefore people who use cannabis according to the 'evidence' are associated with drug users, risk takers, deviants, and criminals. Another dialogue is defining cannabis use as a therapeutic medicine that gives people relief and is more associated with veterans, the elderly, and people suffering from debilitating medical conditions such as terminal cancer or chronic pain. Mechoulam et al. (2014) writes about the endocannabinoid system discovered in the 1980s and reports on the therapeutic effects individual cannabinoids such as THC can have. Sinclair (2016) agrees, stating THC is important in achieving analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, neuroprotective, muscle relaxant and anti-emetic pharmacological activities (p. 112). The media deliberately tunnels this focus wrenching THC away from its evidence; instead the codes strongly suggest THC is the enemy, and that harm from this drug is impending.

Risk

Elaborating on the theme of risk Mythen (2004) shows how Ulrich Beck has consistently maintained that contemporary western society is embedded in a culture of risk which has profound impacts on the nature of everyday life; the concept of risk unlocks and defines the essential

characteristics of modernity (p. 6, 12). Furthermore, Innes (2003) claims regulation involves the use of law to manage risk that results from aspects of economic life and it is the mode of social control routinely employed to manage the activities of markets, firms, businesses, corporations and industries. As a form of social control, regulation clarifies a number of fundamental dimensions of how control is enacted for example, the very use of the word regulation signals an allowance of the activity subject to control (Innes, 2003, p.135-6). The real risk uncovered through these codes is the risk of losing the use of risk as a form of social control and power.

In the majority of cases the risk that comes from using cannabis hemp is a direct result of the deeply flawed war on drugs and its drug policies and drug laws surrounding cannabis in the past century. Becker's (1963) quote agrees, "Actual use can be dangerous, for arrest and imprisonment are always possible consequences" (p. 61). The risk does not come from the actual plant itself, it comes from the criminalized drug policies that were put in place for control.[9] Becker (1963) outlines a key term describing this, "Rules are the products of someone's initiative and we can think of the people who exhibit such enterprise as moral entrepreneurs" (p. 147). Uruguay and Portugal serve as examples of different moral entrepreneurs – decriminalization – where shifting public perception around drugs from criminal to health has lowered the average drug use rates. This isn't mentioned due to the fact it would contradict the proposed risk-based framework.

One article illustrates how Ontario adolescents are drinking, smoking and using cannabis and other recreational drugs at the lowest rates since the late 1970s (Ubelacker, 2017). An alarming trend shows one percent used illicit fentanyl in the previous year, which is directly tied to overdose deaths across the country (Ubelacker, 2017). There is still an emphasis by the federal government on

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[9] Cannabis does not produce addiction, at least in the sense that alcohol and the opiate drugs do, the user experiences no withdrawal sickness and exhibits no uncontrollable craving for the drug. If the user could not access it, there would be obvious physical and mental signs of frustration. This may be considered presumptive evidence that there's no true addiction in the medical sense associated with the use of cannabis (Becker, 1963, p.43-4).

protecting youth from cannabis legalization. Risk is used as a method to justify the claim of legalization threatening youth. This article also claims cannabis legalization will alter the countries positive trends (Ubelacker, 2017). It states legalizing cannabis might send the message to young people that it is OK to be using cannabis or it is OK for more people to be using it (Ubelacker, 2017). Recreational use of ADHD drugs, known as study drugs, more than doubled to 2.3 percent from 1 percent (Ubelacker, 2017). It is a phenomenon when the discourse tunnels in on protecting youth and mitigating the risk of getting high with cannabis when opiates like OxyContin, Percocets, Xanax, Prozac, and Vicodin are capable of getting one dangerously addicted and high and synthetic chemical compounds such as Ritalin and Adderall are prescribed and taken by our nation's youth daily without nearly as much risk scrutiny.

It seems there is a creation of risk around cannabis because there isn't any proven risk found or presented about the plant in the articles, therefore it has to be created. For example, cannabis use is believed to be habit forming by Health Canada. This is a form of fear mongering; watching reality TV, eating sugar, drinking coffee and eating fast food can all be habit forming. They don't mention addiction or anything with a more serious tone, only ambiguous driving risks. Boyd (2017) displays evidence that the government will use risk and policy to push hidden agendas, in her example racist agendas, "The Opium and Narcotic Drug Act in Canada in 1922 was strengthened due to racial hostility and discrimination towards Chinese men" (p. 54). With cannabis hemp in these articles, there is a creation of risk using the ambiguity around 'the drug' for corporate agendas – risk to developing brains, risk to our roadways, risk to our pets, etc. The actual risk may be the loss of using risk as a form of control and power over public behaviour.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In conclusion, this study reviewed and coded 117 media articles published between CTV News and CBC and found corporatization and villainization to be central themes in the discourse of cannabis legalization in Canada. Ambiguous social problems can lead to corporatization because they require authoritative control. Villainization applies ambiguity along with keywords and language usage to distort the facts and tunnel public perception on cannabis in the interests of hidden agendas. The evidence and risk utilized in the media reinforces the corporatization and villainization of cannabis. Boyd and Carter (2014) state that the evidence provided by the media reporting on drug related stories does not substantiate their claims, it is clear that speculation is a feature of many reporters' statements (p.183-4). As is the risk around driving high, there is widespread agreement that this is a serious issue, however the actual risks are not presented. Cannabis is placed in alcohol and drug discourse and not much more explanation is needed; it will intoxicate you. These truth claims deflect the focus away from other major problems such as the type of foundation society is operating on. There are expert voices in the discussion that have an authoritative and widely accepted knowledge, however, their expertise comes from other areas and institutions that don't necessarily pertain to cannabis. This results in an absence of actual expert cannabis knowledge. We need to stop using cannabis as an ambiguous political football that serves corporate interests. If the media unified the historical facts of the plant's usage and the unbiased studies on consenting human patients without corporate oversight the public would soon realize the agendas that have been pushed on them this past century, the amount of harm these agendas have caused, and why this proposed model of legalization is troublesome. The public must become aware of the serious damage that this misinformation has caused us all. It is essential that we change over to a strong foundation that can sustain each and every one of us along with the environment; set this plant free and return the right to use it back to the people.

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