

**An exploration of the gendered constructions of ‘stoner’ identity on a Western Cape campus.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

Master of Social Science in Gender Studies



Faculty of Arts  
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University of the Western Cape  
WESTERN CAPE

## Declaration

I declare that “**An exploration of the gendered constructions of ‘stoner’ identity on a Western Cape campus**” is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: Natasha Carmen Brown

Date: May 2018

Signed



## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the God of my understanding for guiding and for surrounding me with positive beings. Thank you to all of the students who participated in this study. I could not have done this without your openness to share your experiences with me.

To my family and all of the women in academia and beyond who have supported me throughout my life, I thank you.

To my sister-friends, my tribe, my cheerleaders: Monique van Vuuren, Karin Chinnian, Tigist Shewarega and Renee Titus, thank you for your positivity and motivation and for being the voices which urged me on when my own was silent.

To Chad Brevis, my friend and brother who was always willing to be my second pair of eyes.

To my supervisor, Prof. Lindsay Clowes: thank you for your patience, kindness and continuous support throughout this journey. Mere words cannot do justice to how much I value your encouragement, even in times when I felt like giving up.

A special thank you to Celeste Fortuin who held my hand through the last stages until the end. You are the embodiment of, sister, friend, feminist and mentor.

*"...And when you reach the other side of this journey, always remember that the hand that constantly held yours was your own" Author Unknown*

## **An exploration of the gendered constructions of ‘stoner’ identity on a Western Cape campus.**

### **Abstract**

This study employed a social constructionist understanding of ‘identity’ to identify key markers of gendered ‘stoner’ identity and to consider how gendered ‘stoner’ identity is performed on a Western Cape campus. The aim was not simply to consider how they see themselves, but also how they are considered through the lenses and perception of non-smoking students at campus. In trying to understand the gendered experiences of ‘stoners’, this research was grounded in a feminist theoretical perspective and feminist methodological approaches to explore gendered constructions of ‘stoner’ identity at this Western Cape campus.

The data for this study was collected through conducting two focus group discussions, and six semi structured, in-depth interviews with six male and six female students from a range of locations across campus. The participants in this study who smoke marijuana/weed did not reject the term ‘stoner’, rather, they claimed this identity, labelling themselves ‘stoners’. My research shows that ‘stoner’ identities both transgress and reinforce normative femininities and masculinities

Keywords: identity, ‘stoner’, weed, feminist, gender, performativity, marijuana culture, sub-culture, space, class, language, signalling identity.



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background of the study and Rationale

When I started this study, marijuana and the use of marijuana was illegal in South Africa. What is interesting to note is that dagga (marijuana) was only made illegal in South Africa in 1928 (King, 2011). In 2017, this changed as the constitutional court ruled that marijuana<sup>1</sup> for medical and personal use should be legalized. Even though marijuana was illegal until recently, many of the people I have worked with have studied and lived with dagga, and even Presidents have felt that euphoric rush after a few puffs of a joint. Dockterman (2013) writes that both ex presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama admitted to smoking marijuana earlier in their lives. This illustrates that even people who we consider to be the most powerful men in the world engaged in the behaviour of smoking weed. In recalling my own experiences of smoking weed, it was never something I did habitually, but rather it is and was something I would engage in with a few friends whenever we wanted to be 'naughty', have a good laugh, or even just a good cry with each other. However, my smoking of weed was for occasional use. My friends and I never saw ourselves as 'stoners'.

There has been a wide variety of terms used for marijuana and smoking marijuana by writers, historians, 'stoners and non-'stoners' at different times over the years. Previous writers and historians have used the term 'cannabis', 'marijuana', 'hemp', 'pot', or 'weed'. While a common term for cannabis exclusive to South Africa is dagga, according to an online website called Learn About Marijuana (2013), cannabis is also known as, grass, dope, Mary Jane, hooch, hash, joints, brew, reefers, cones, smoke, mull, buddha, ganga, hydro, yandri, heads, cheese and green. For the purpose of my study, I will use the term 'weed' interchangeably with the term 'marijuana' as it was one of the most commonly used terms among the participants in this study.

A few years ago, while tutoring a first year module at the University of the Western Cape campus, I discovered that, unlike myself and my friends, there were a number of people on campus who smoked dope regularly, and who claimed a 'stoner' identity. They saw themselves as part of a growing community. In this study I explore student understandings of 'stoner' identity and the community emerging through that shared identity. It was my assumption that a 'stoner' identity has to do with a range of linked behaviours and practices that make up a way of life, in which ideas, artefacts, behaviours and persons are intimately bound together in one acknowledged community.

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<sup>1</sup> There are a wide variety of names for marijuana. In this study participants use a wide range of terms as synonyms for marijuana. These include weed, cheese, Mary Jane, milk, dagga, pot, dope, grass, purple haze.

While it seemed to be a dominant perception that marijuana smoking was a central signifier of 'stoner' identity, it was also my perception that those who self-identify as 'stoners' have a multiplicity of ways of performing gendered 'stoner' identity displayed through patterned behaviour, though, for example, clothing, accessories, music, language and even hairstyles that are different for male and female students. Marijuana, at the genesis of this study, was illegal. However, that is currently in the process of changing. In this section, I bring attention to the fact that while the use of marijuana has been criminalized, it has not stopped people from using it. I then highlighted all of the different terms used for marijuana like, 'pot', 'Mary Jane', 'dope', 'grass', 'weed' and so on. In the next section I go on to contextualize the use of marijuana.

I started this section by giving insight to the background and rationale of the study. The background of this study was informed by my own experiences as a tutor at the University of the Western Cape and just having general conversations with students.

### **Contextualizing the University of the Western Cape**

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) has a history of creative struggles against oppression, discrimination and disadvantage. Among academic institutions, it has been in the vanguard of South Africa's historic change, playing a distinctive academic role in helping to build an equitable and dynamic nation. UWC's key concerns with access, equity and quality in higher education arise from extensive practical engagement in helping the historically marginalised participate fully in the life of the nation.

In 1959, Parliament adopted legislation establishing the University College of the Western Cape as a constituent college of the University of South Africa for people classified as "Coloured". The first group of 166 students enrolled in 1960 were offered limited training for lower to middle level positions in schools, the civil service and other institutions designed to serve a separated Coloured community. In 1970, the institution gained university status and was able to award its own degrees and diplomas.

In its mission statement of 1982 UWC Objectives, the university formally rejected the Apartheid ideology on which it was established, adopting a declaration of non-racialism and "a firm commitment to the development of the Third World communities in South Africa". In 1983, through the University of the Western Cape Act of 1983, the university finally gained its autonomy on the same terms as the established "white" institutions.

The campus is situated close to the Northern suburbs of the Western Cape and is favourably situated



close to public transportation routes. This University is the academic home to a student population of approximately 22 000. This number consists of around 16000 undergraduate students and around 6000 postgraduate students. While the Western Cape has three official languages, namely English, Xhosa and Afrikaans, the medium of instruction at this University is English.

### **Contextualizing the use of marijuana**

There is a lot of evidence of people smoking marijuana in the past. Although the earliest reference to the hemp plant is found in Chinese texts as early as 2700 BC, European discoverers arriving in what they labelled 'The New World', first noted the plant in 1545 AD. It was believed that during this time the ancients only grew the plant for hemp in order to make clothing, rope and other objects. However, an interesting discovery was made in 2008 of a stash of marijuana found in a 2700 year old grave in the Gobi Desert (Viegas, 2008). This discovery provided proof that while marijuana and marijuana smokers might have been given different names over the centuries, the newest term 'stoner' being one of them, the culture of growing, cultivating and smoking of marijuana has had a long history, as I discuss below.

Native Americans have traditionally used marijuana in the smoking of the 'peace pipe', which is passed down from shaman to shaman generationally. In India, marijuana has been used in Ayurvedic and Indian medicine for more than three thousand years. White (1996, 8) argues that "The spiritual aspects of cannabis are considered so profound in South Asia that many religious groups including Buddhists, Naths, Shaivites and Goddess Worshippers have incorporated it into meditation practices, as a means to stop the mind and enter into a state of profound stillness also called Samadhi".

Even in Islam, the use of the hemp plant was not prohibited by Mohammed, even though alcohol was. Roskind (2001; 76) maintained that "many historical groups of Muslims considered hemp as a 'Holy Plant'. Medieval Arab doctors used hemp as a sacred medicine which they called among other names kannab". The use of cannabis is even found in ancient Greece. In a historical study, Van der Merwe, (1975:77) stated that "according to Herodotus cannabis was an integral part of the Scythian cult of the dead wherein homage was paid to the memory of their departed leaders". Speaking on the inculcation of Arab cannabis culture to the South African culture, Peltzer and Ramlagan (2007,126) argue that:

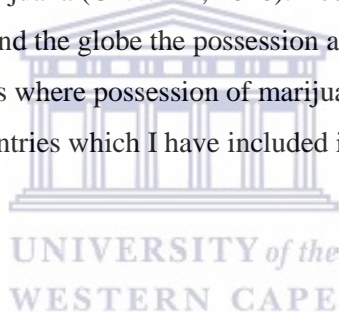
Cannabis is not indigenous to southern Africa, having probably been introduced into the Mozambique area in pre-colonial times by Arab traders many centuries ago. It was adopted by the Khoikhoi as a valued intoxicant and herbal remedy that was chewed or boiled, and was traded from the Xhosa communities living in the eastern parts of South Africa.

The smoking of it began after the introduction of the smoking pipe by the European colonialists. It was not until 1928 that cannabis became illegal. While theorists have explored and found the use of marijuana in ancient cultures, it still remains one of the most used, contested and controversial substance used to date (Hutchings, 2002).

In this section, I discuss the history of marijuana, from both a historical viewpoint, as well as how marijuana has been used for religious purposes for a very long time. It is also suggested that there was a period in history where the use of marijuana was not seen as illegal. In this section, the long history of marijuana suggests the contemporary contestation around marijuana is a recent phenomenon.

### **Modern use of Cannabis Globally**

Cannabis is a plant which has also been used medicinally. Cannabis occurs globally and offers massive medicinal, industrial, agricultural, ecological, and socio-economic benefits (George, 2015). In 2010 it was recorded in the World Drug Report that between 119 million people and 224 million people above the age of 18 used marijuana (UNWDR, 2010). Today however, despite extensive use of marijuana, in most countries around the globe the possession and smoking of marijuana is illegal, with the exception of a few countries where possession of marijuana in small amounts is legal. Brant (2014) mentioned the following countries which I have included in the below table.



**Table:1**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Summary of legal use of marijuana</b>
<b>Colombia:</b>	Small amounts of up to 22 grams are OK for personal consumption. However, selling it remains illegal. You are allowed to grow up to 20 plants for personal use.
<b>Costa Rica:</b>	It's a bit of a grey area. Cannabis is illegal but there's widespread smoking throughout the country. Police officers do not arrest people carrying enough for personal consumption, yet no amount has been outlined as a minimum for possession.
<b>Czech republic:</b>	Possession of up to 15 grams for personal use or growing up to five plants is a police caution. Medical use of the drug on prescription has been legal since April 2013.
<b>Ecuador:</b>	Having a small stash of under 10 grams for personal use is legal.
<b>Jamaica:</b>	Growing, selling and using cannabis is illegal. However, the government passed a motion in 2013 to decriminalise the drug if a person was found with a small amount.
<b>Netherlands:</b>	Cannabis products are only sold in "coffee shops" and possession of up to 5 grams for personal use is OK. Other types of sales and transportation are illegal.
<b>Norway:</b>	In Norway, there is a sliding scale approach to cannabis possession. Less than 15 grams is considered "for personal use" and could see you fined between 1,500-15,000 kroner (£140 - £1,500). Carrying more is considered "dealing" and punished much more harshly, including jail.
<b>Peru:</b>	Possession of under eight grams is considered legal for personal use.
<b>Portugal:</b>	It became the first country in the world in 2001 to legalise the use of all drugs, and started treating drug users as sick people, instead of criminals. However, you can be arrested or made to go into rehab if caught several times in possession.
<b>Romania:</b>	Medical use is legal under certain conditions.
<b>Spain:</b>	Growing the plant on private property for personal use, and consumption by adults in a private space, is legal. But buying or selling any quantity of cannabis is a criminal offence. Possession and consumption in a public place is illegal and punishable by a fine.
<b>Switzerland:</b>	Growing up to four plants is legal. But sale or transport is illegal.
<b>Uruguay:</b>	A law has been passed legalising cannabis but won't into come into effect until 2015. The new law says that buyers must be 18 or older, residents of Uruguay, and must register with the authorities. Authorities will grow the cannabis that can be sold legally.
<b>USA:</b>	Colorado and Washington state have legalised marijuana for recreational use, while some of the other states permit medical marijuana.
<b>South Africa</b>	Illegal (The use of medical marijuana was legalized in February 2017)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/29834450/where-in-the-world-can-you-legally-smoke-cannabis>

It has been reported that the use of cannabis has increased in South Africa since the 90s (Peltzer and Ramlagan, 2007). Lakčević (2015; 1) stated that "South Africa is a major producer and global supplier of cannabis, despite prohibition being actively enforced". A report from a UN agency shows that around eight percent of South Africans use the recreational drug, twice the global average of four percent" ( UNODC, 2010). While the use of medical marijuana in South Africa was only recently approved by law-makers, the overall possession of marijuana whether in small or big quantities is still illegal. Marijuana users and their quest to have marijuana legalized in South Africa has seen the rise of a political party dedicated to this goal: The Dagga party of South Africa. The main goal of this organisation was the legalisation of marijuana in South Africa. It was formed in 2009 but failed to take part in the 2014 national elections because of shortage of funds (Gaye, 2014). However, while it is registered and recognised as a political party by the Independent Electoral Committee, it is not a serious contender for political power.

While it has recently changed, when I conducted the data gathering for this study, the policy around marijuana was found in the Illicit Drug(s) and Trafficking Act 140, of 1992, which stipulated that the possession and dealing of cannabis was illegal (Steynvaart, 2014). This has generated situations where people using it for religious, medicinal and recreational activities get arrested and prosecuted. The policy, however, has been unsuccessful in the aim of stopping people from using cannabis. As highlighted by Lakčević (2015;67) "A few researchers suggest that prohibitionist drug (particularly cannabis) policies constitute a violation of basic human rights". This notion is based on the premise of self-determination, which implies, according to Ostrowski, (1990, 19) "a right to engage in any action which is peaceful; which does not deprive others of their right to free action." This, as indicated earlier, has changed with the High Court in South Africa ordering the decriminalization of marijuana for personal and medical use in South Africa in 2017.

### **Problem statement**

Studies on the uses of marijuana address the issue either from the perspective of marijuana as being harmful, as a substance that has a link to criminal activity, while other studies view marijuana as a gateway drug. There are also studies that see the use of marijuana as a trigger for all sorts of social problems. Over the last few years, however, some studies have emerged where writers look at the use of marijuana as helpful and detailing its health benefits, while a few studies have looked at the effects of marijuana use on identity. Many studies exploring student behaviours on university and college campuses focus on substance usage and look at discourses of risk in relation to sexuality and substance usage, neglecting the complexity in which these practices are linked to identity and gender

construction (Halbrendt et al, 1996). Other studies have also looked at the use of marijuana amongst the youth and adolescents, but none have looked directly at performativity of gendered 'stoner' identities. This study, however, aims to gain greater insight into the ways that students who self identify as 'stoners' understand their identity, how this identity is performed and signalled and how it is gendered, not from a discourse of risk, but from a point of view that understands identity as performance or as something that we do.

### **Research Question**

This study aims to explore gendered constructions of 'stoner' identity on campus.

How is 'stoner' identity performed on campus?

What are the key markers of 'stoner' identity?

How is this 'stoner' identity gendered?

These questions were explored at the University of the Western Cape campus. As previously stated, when I began this study smoking and selling marijuana was illegal and this has meant I had to make a special commitment to ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of my participants. In my commitment to ensure anonymity, all participants' names were changed and given pseudonyms. The exploration of the gendered nature of 'stoner' identity was approached through the themes of: what is 'stoner' identity, spaces that are associated with 'stoners', how 'stoner' identity is performed differently to Rastafarianism, Gendered as Identity in 'stoner' identity and Intersectionality in 'stoner' culture.

These emerging themes provided a lens for looking at the gendered nature of the 'stoner' identity and how this identity is socially constructed. This meant using theoretical frameworks that showed how identities are socially constructed and that identities do not operate in isolation from each other. Social constructionist theory fulfils the criteria of the specific analytical framework and will be instrumental in understanding how 'stoners' made meanings of their experiences. The social constructionist theories which suggest that identity is not a fixed process, but as a process of becoming. Hall (1993:1) argues that:

instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact...we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within not outside representation.

This ties in with Butler (1990) and West and Zimmerman (1987) theories that identity is a performance that we achieve through a series of repetition.

The theoretical framework was also steered by intersectionality work that focuses on how social identities intersect. Hill Collins (2005:208) argues that “One can use the framework of intersectionality to think through social institutions, organizational structures, patterns of social interactions, and other social practices on all levels of social organization”. The social constructionist theoretical approach I used was informed by an intersectional analysis

### **Outlining the Study’s Structure**

My thesis commences by explaining my theoretical framework and use of a particular interdisciplinary perspective. In Chapters 1 and 2, I explain how and why I draw on various disciplinary influences and themes in existing studies within the humanities as well as the social sciences. In Chapter 1, I discuss the rationale and background of the study and give an overview by contextualizing the use of marijuana. I state the problem of the study. In Chapter 2, I therefore contextualize this study against the academic terrain. I discuss writings that were divided into seven different themes.

Chapter 3 describes and rationalizes the research design and methodology. How methodology and methods are connected to theoretical frameworks often lacks explanation in certain social science studies. This study strives to make constant analogies between how I proceed with my research and choose particular methods and what the consequences and implications were regarding theoretical framework. In forging these connections, I pay attention firstly to the wider importance of qualitative research and compare it with quantitative studies that can provide statistics, number and trends on marijuana use in subcultures, while qualitative research can provide a richer description of the human and social implications of these tendencies.

Within the bounds of employing qualitative research methods, my interest is rooted in qualitative feminist approaches that have emerged. Feminist qualitative research was employed as a methodological framework, as this framework was more acceptable in my attempt to emphasise the voices and experiences of the research participants, and not only my own as a researcher.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I discuss the themes that emerged from the research. Chapter 4 covers understandings of the identity ‘stoner’, what my participants meant when they claimed a ‘stoner’ identity and how it intersects with various socio-political issues such as gender, race and class, and how language, clothes and location are expressions of class identity. In this chapter, I discuss under the theme of ‘stoner’ and identity: ‘Stoner’ Identity as Behaviour, ‘stoner’ identity as collective experience and ‘stoner’ identity and the influence of popular culture and media. I then move on to discuss the second theme, spaces that are associated with ‘stoners’ and how these spaces are

gendered, and thirdly, how ‘stoner’ identity is performed differently to Rastafarianism.

I then move on to Chapter 5 and, as a sub-theme of gendered ‘stoner’ identities, I consider the gender and division in ‘Stoner’ culture: the case of buying and selling weed, which is followed by a discussion on intersectionality in ‘Stoner’ Culture: Class and Gender. Last but not least, under the final theme, I explore style and language as expressions of ‘stoner’ identity.

The Conclusion provides a summary of the research findings and recommendations based on the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5.





## **Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework**

The literature review that follows is broken down into four parts. I begin by outlining some of the key ideas around identity and how identity is understood in different ways by theorists and critics. I also look at how these understandings have changed over the last few years. Next, I review research on intersectionality as an approach to understanding the complexity of multiple identities like gender, race, class, religion and sexuality. My review of the literature then moves on to consider writing on marijuana in three bodies of work, namely marijuana as harmful or helpful, smoking marijuana as a social problem and last but not least, smoking marijuana as patterned behaviour. Most of the research I reviewed was framed within a quantitative framework which focussed on a statistical analysis. Not many qualitative studies have been conducted on 'stoners' and identity performance although there are one or two exceptions, such as the work by Joffe & Yancy, 2004; Wilson, 2008; Sznitman and Zolotov, 2015). The literature review also shows that there is a space to open further debates around marijuana consumption and how it intersects with class, race and culture.

### **Writing on Identity**

Questions of identity have been interrogated since the time of French philosopher Rene Descartes. It was Descartes (1637, 19-20) who coined the philosophical phrase "Cogito ergo sum" which translates into English as: "I think therefore I am". While Descartes' term places emphasis on the importance of the mind and thought, others disagreed, suggesting it is our actions and patterned behaviour that leads to our identity formation. David Hume (1985, 55-57) disagreed with Descartes' belief in an innate self which can be reasoned and experienced in isolation, arguing instead that "[...] the self is experienced only through perceptions and is derived principally through one's interactions with others: 'Where am I, or what? ... I dine, I play backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends.' "

As a critique to Descartes, feminist theorists such as Butler (1988), in her theories on identity, contrast Descartes' notion of "I think therefore I am". What Descartes suggested is that it is merely our minds and thoughts that matter. For Descartes, our bodies have no relevance in who we are or how we become. Descartes' famous saying on existing would also suggest that things like race, gender, ethnicity and religion are irrelevant to being and becoming. Butler's argument, on the other hand, proposes that a human being becomes a person through performative acts that get coded and read by others within social contexts. Learning through behaviour occurs within socialization that identities (Butler writes about gender identities) are produced through repeating these behaviours so that they come to feel natural or innate without being innate.



According to Mohanty (2005,104) "[a]n identity is created against a social background that tries to make social interaction meaningful, understandable and well-organized by categorizing people in various ways." In other words, people use identities to locate themselves in relation to others in specific social contexts. One does not take on an identity in a vacuum, but in relation to others in our surroundings. The nature of identity is expressed as a social phenomenon and a dynamic feature of social life. The understanding that "who we are" is socially constructed permits us to account for the fact that how we view ourselves and how others see us is not socially static; and because identity is socially constructed, it can be unconstructed. For example, if one moves out of different social settings, one takes on other expressions of identity.

If our identities are socially constructed, then they are not neutral. In fact, our gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and class identities can play significant roles in determining whether we have social, political and economic power. It also comes to shape how we get that power, and how, when and where we can use it. These identities fundamentally shape our life experience; how we are treated; who we meet and become friends with; what kind of education and jobs we get; where we live; what opportunities we are afforded and what kind of inequities we may face. Identities are constructed within specific social contexts, which ascribe meaning to these identities. If race did not matter in the social context, then we would not use race as a marker. According to SAHO, (2011) South Africa is heir to a legacy of autochthonous livelihoods (see, most famously, the Khoi and the San) as well as Bantu immigration; slavery; colonisation; settler economies; and liberation movements. These histories have all had a drastic effect on the makeup of South Africa's population. Thus, race and class are, like gender: an expression of a person's identity. Within the South African context, race, class and gender have very particular meanings and those meanings shape life experiences.

Many theorists over the last few decades have agreed that identity is the pivotal concept linking social structure with individual action and how it relates to others (Berger and Luckmann (1966, 132), Hogg and Abrams (1988, 2), Deng (1995, 1), Kowert and Legro (1996, 453), and Jenkins (1996, 4). This approach understands a sense of community; worldview or collective consciousness is established within communities and cultures because of actions or patterned behaviour. This sentiment is also reiterated by (Burr, 1995) who agrees that our identity originates not from inside the person but from the social realm. If our identities are socially produced then they are, as noted earlier, not expressions of neutral relationships but expressions of socially constructed inequalities

In viewing identity, social constructionist theorists like Kirk and Miller (1998) write that social construction refers to how we make sense of the world and how we identify and create social groups that we align ourselves with, or against, and how certain groups are privileged groups over others; this

is because we all understand ourselves within our social contexts (Kirk and Miller, 1998). In addition, we also understand how it is relational to the existing social hierarchies within a specific social context. Within unequal social contexts, fixed notions of identity can shape how groups access power. This implies that people learn to classify themselves and are simultaneously seen by others who encounter them as members of that group and since these observers are also influenced by the constructed norm, the classification is usually an unconscious act.

Jackson and Hogg (2010: 548) further suggest that "a social constructionist perspective conceives that personal identity is established within the perception of self as derived from thoughtful reflection on communicative interactions between oneself and others from the societal environment". What Jackson and Hogg's perspective refers to is how the manner in which we present ourselves to other people is shaped partly by our interactions with others, as well as by our life experiences. Viktor Gecas expounds on this by stating that "[...] our perceptions of self are coloured by our beliefs and backgrounds as well as how others perceive us (Gecas, 1982: 4-6). In other words, how we view ourselves does not just end with what we see in the mirror, but through the influence of other people's opinion of ourselves. Our self-concepts may be so influential that we end up internalizing them. For example, we are labelled in certain ways by others, perhaps informally in terms of our behaviours (e.g. how we walk, talk, dress) or more formally in terms of our race and class. Along with repeatedly being labelled and evaluated by others, we also then self-label and internalise those labels. Likewise, how we view ourselves is also shaped by societal norms and the continued reinforcement of those norms.

Alexander Wendt (1992: 397) suggested that the defining characteristics associated with identity are "relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self". In contrast with this, and in support of the ideas of writers like Butler, it has been argued by others like Fearon (1993), and Yates (2013) that the concept of identity has progressively been viewed as something contested and fluid, rather than static and given (Lawler as cited in Davis 2010). What makes identity complex, they suggest, is that it is multiple, intersectional, fluid, shifting and changing. This complexity is explained further by Fearon (1993: 2):

[...] as we use it now, an 'identity' refers to either (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and (alleged) characteristic attributes or expected behaviours, or (b) socially distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or (a) and (b) at once).

Fearon suggests that identity is a complex issue, representing our understandings of how we feel we belong in the world. Identities are thus expressions of an individual's personal understanding of self

and the social groups to which they belong. This is further expounded on by Yates (2013, 32) when he posited that "[...] our understanding of the world is not only contingent upon our own beliefs, values and past experiences (our identities), but also upon the identities of those with whom we interact [...]." This further highlights the social constructionist view that identity is relational and contingent on our interactions with the social world (Jackson and Hogg, 2010).

Moving out of the paradox of identity and freedom requires understanding identities as effects of multiple contesting relations of power and relations of interdependence. Weir (2013) argues that our identities are best understood as our connections to each other, to ourselves, and to ideals. She further suggests that our freedom is found in these connections.

Sociological theories of "the self" attempt to explain how social processes such as socialization influence the development of "the self". Speaking on the concept of self-identity in relation to group identity, King (2007, 25) argues that "our perception of self is conditioned by the recognition of the other; a recognition predicated on reciprocal struggle." By this, King means that we are social beings whose self-perception is realized through the eyes of others as well as ourselves. In their article 'The dynamics of organizational identity', Hatch and Schultz (2000) take a closer look at the link between identity and self-image. What King (2007) suggests above contrasts with Hatch and Schultz (2000) who argue that identity can be an expression of true self that is authentic, coherent and deep, a core of one's personality. Contrary to what Schultz posited, Hall (1989, 6) argued that:

Identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. ... [Until recently, we have incorrectly thought that identity is] a kind of fixed point of thought and being, a ground of action ... the logic of something like a 'true self.' ... [But] Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself.

These two perceptions on identity suggest a binary opposition in how theorists understand the self. The one perspective views identity as fixed, stable and innate, while the other sees identity as fluid, dynamic and performative. Lawler (2008: 3) and Butler (1990: 55) highlight the latter understanding of identity by suggesting that identity is a performance, "not because it is false but because that is precisely how even truthful forms of identity get to be done." With this, Butler suggests that performativity is the repetition of physical actions over time, which in turn is reduced to an establishing of an identity. Identity is thus, for Butler, not a static reference point from which behaviour stems, but rather behaviour that establishes a sense of identity or "the self" (Butler, 1998). Writing about identity, Butler (1988: 520) writes that:

If gender is instituted through acts, which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.

Butler's (1988) idea on performative identity here agrees with Lawler's analysis in that identity is understood as established within performance as a "truth", as something that the individual, and the larger social group, believes is truthful.

This becomes established as learned, normative behaviour that may locate an individual within a specific identity or social grouping. An exemplification of this can be seen in children who are raised watching their parents adhering to strict gender-stereotyped roles. In general, these children are more likely to take on those roles themselves as adults, and to internalise them as natural and inevitable, than what their peers would be whose parents provided less stereotyped, more androgynous models for behaving. Lawler (2008) further claims that identity is performative and established only within this performance as a "truth". In this sense, the individual believes that their performed identity is who they are, and at the same time imagines this as innate or instinctual behaviour that establishes an individual within a specific identity.

Others, like developmental psychologist Erikson (1968), Cote & Levine (2002), Weinreich & Saunderson (2003) believe that our identities are inherent and fixed. We are defined by others who assign to us an identity. For example, my family, friends and strangers all read my performance as 'woman' and so my identity as a woman was not just assigned by myself, but also by others. This suggests that identity is not as simple as what the individual believes about him/herself. Thus, part of understanding our identity means understanding how we fit in (or do not) with other groups of people, for example socially. Some theorists like Mead (1956, 2017) suggest that "We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances". Social interactions, therefore, generate various social identities like gender, class, race, religion and sexuality that we project outward to others.

This section explored writing that views the concept of identity as socially constructed. The writings in this section also suggest that identity is shaped by social contexts and the world around us. Likewise, identity is fluid although some view it as fixed. The writings also suggest that identities are inscribed with meanings related to the social context within which they are formed. Comparatively, because identity is fluid, it can be argued that power relations are equally fluid.

## Writing on Social Identities

In the last section, I discussed the writing of key identity theorists. One of the important arguments was around identity as produced through interactions with others, that identities are relational. I develop the discussion of this in the next section to discuss writing on social identities.

Tajfel and Turner (1989) put forward the view that every individual has a perception of themselves, and that part of this self-perception is derived from the group that person belongs to. Tajfel and Turner refer to this as social identity theory. Thus, an individual not only has a personal selfhood, but the ability to have multiple selves and identities, based on the number of their affiliated groups.

Identity is certainly linked to individuality, and yet it cannot be completely detached from culture. Culture can be defined as the increasing deposit of knowledge, material objects, values, religion, notions of time, attitudes, hierarchies, concepts of the universe, spatial relations, roles, and beliefs and possessions gained by a group of people in the path of generations through individual and group striving (Poyatos, 2002). Culture is something that surrounds us all and continues to shape our lives every day. Thus, culture has a major role in shaping our identity. It could be said that our culture ‘speaks’ to us in a white, middle class, heterosexual ‘voice’ and anything outside of that is deemed as “otherness”. The “other” can be “trivialized, naturalized, domesticated” where difference is denied, or as a “pure object, a spectacle, a clown [...]” (Barthes 1972, in Hebdige D, 1979, in Gelder & Thornton, 1997). It can be argued then, that identities are multifaceted and consist of any number of sets of meanings, roles, and behaviours that circulate within contexts, which vary across time and space (Burke, 2004) as cited in (Sollar & Lee, 2010). Therefore, when looking at social groups and social identities, one must consider all these behaviours and the meanings ascribed to these behaviour contexts to understand how they might contribute to the formation of an identity.

Wendt (1994, 395) suggests that:

Social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object. ... [Social identities are] at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine ‘who I am/we are’ in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations”.

Each of us has a complex identity that is rooted in human differences such as gender, class, race, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality, age and ethnicity. Thus, the interaction between power and identity is nonlinear, because identity is constructed according to the interests of power. Identity can also be linked to structural inequality, and power in relation to the structure. For example, LGBTI people globally are marginalised in many ways. In contemporary South Africa the marginalisation of

Muslims, Jews and Hindus is structural and can be seen in how most public holidays are Christian holidays. The working week goes according to the Christian calendar and considers Sunday as the traditional Sabbath day, whereas someone that observes the Muslim or Jewish faith for example, must work during their Sabbath day. In addition, all identities overlap. A person is simultaneously raced, classed, gendered, sexualised, religious. I can simultaneously be viewed as a South African, coloured, working class, feminine, heterosexual female Christian.

Hogg and Abrams as cited in Burke and Stets, (2000: 225) argued that “social identity is a person’s knowledge that he/she belongs to a social group” such as an ethnic group, or sexualised group or gendered group. The people who constitute the group have common social identities, or view themselves as part of the same social group. These groups are established through social comparison and those who do not have commonalities are automatically the "other".

Tajfel as cited in McLeod (2008) proposed that “[...] the groups like for example, social class, ethnic group, family and so on which people belonged to be an important source of pride and self-esteem. In order to increase our self-image we heighten the status of the group that we belong. For example, Manchester United is the best football club in the world! Likewise we can boost our self-image by discriminating and holding prejudice views against the out group (the group we don’t belong to). For example, Liverpool F.C. supporters are a bunch of losers! Consequently, we divided the world into “them” and “us” based through a process of social categorization (For example, we put people into social groups). This is known as in-group (us) and out-group (them). Social identity theory states that the in-group will discriminate against the out-group to enhance their self-image”( McLeod, 2008).

Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. It also means being aware that some groups have more social, political and economic power than others. Socially constructed group identities like race, class, gender, are expressions and axes of social power. At the centre of identity is a power relationship (Butler 1990). Power shapes and mobilizes itself through notions of identity and is therefore, to an extent, defined by the adherence of a people’s collective identification. Simultaneously, identity is constructed according to the interests of power. Thus, the interaction between power and identity is nonlinear (Gara, 2012).

In this section, the key points I have made are that social identities are produced through our interactions with others. There is an overlap in our social identities because we are simultaneously raced, gendered, classed, ascribed religious and so on. Some of our social identities like sexuality, religion and race are expressions of systemic social inequalities, while other socially constructed identities like footballer, newsreader, sister, uncle and so on does not marginalize us. Some social groups may also have more economic, social and political power than others. I discuss in the next section where I use gender identity as an example of social identities.



## Gendered Identities

In the above section, I discussed that social identities are multifaceted expressions of power differentials. In this section, I go on to review literature on gender as a specific example of a socially constructed power differential. Koester (2015) writes that "Gender relations are power relations and that gender shapes power, from the 'private' relationships of the household to the highest levels of political decision-making." This suggests that gender relations are not just power relations among husband and wife, or father and son, but also that they are embedded within, and expressions of, social and political hierarchies in our society.

Gender identity is one's personal experience of one's own gender in relation to how others see us. Gender identity and gender roles are influenced by our upbringing and social environments. As children, we learn vicariously, in part through our observation and imitation of what we see from others. We then tend to imitate and internalise what we see and then repeat those patterns in our own lives as though they inherent to us. This implies that we learn gender behaviours through how others perform their gender roles. This would imply that you are a girl or woman in a particular context because of what you do. For example, wearing a pink dress; wearing lipstick and dating boys is 'performing' femininity in contemporary South Africa, signalling to others that I am a girl or, because I wear pants; a shirt and tie, drink pints of beer and assume that I will sit behind the steering wheel when taking a woman on a date, that I am doing masculinity and will be read as a 'man'. In other words, while sex as female or male is a biological fact referring to potential reproductive capacity that is the same in any human culture, what sex means in terms of gender can be totally different cross culturally and across time.

Eriksson (2016: 26) argues that gendered identity can thus firstly be understood through our experience of our own bodies; how society genders bodies as men, women, girls and boys, and how others interact with us based on our gendered bodies. Secondly, gender identity can be understood through how our deeply held, internal sense of self as feminine or masculine, or the blend of both, or neither operates Connell (1987, 1995). Last but not least, it can be understood as who we internally know ourselves to be through our gendered expressions and performances (Butler, 1998). This refers to how we present our gender in the world and how society, culture, community and family perceive, interact with, and tries to shape our gender. Modern day scholars like Leary, and Tagney (2012) Veenstra (2013), Parks et al. (2004) argue that gender expression is also related to gender scripts and how society uses those scripts to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms. In contrast, Butler (1998) disagrees with the notion of scripts and role playing when she talks about gender identity as performance rather than scripts or roles. Butler (1998, 25) further expounds on the idea by stating that "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being."

This reiterates that gender identity is a matter of performativity; something that we often perform unconsciously and which we do not have a completely free choice about. This means that we have to stop thinking of gender as a “natural” category. It can then be argued that gender identity is just as contingent, fluid, and socially constructed as other social identities, and thus I locate my study within the approach that views identity and social identities like gender, as a matter of performativity.

### **Intersecting identities**

Gender, as discussed above, is one form of multiple identities. How different identities intersect at different times, and thus co-construct each other, was first theorised by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when she coined the term ‘intersectionality’. Within intersectional frameworks, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other aspects of identity are considered mutually constitutive; that is, people experience these multiple aspects of identity simultaneously and the meanings of different aspects of identity are shaped by one another. An intersectional analysis of identity is distinct from single-determinant identity models and additive models of identity. A single determinant model of identity presumes that one aspect of identity, such as gender, dictates one’s access to or disenfranchisement from power. An example of this idea is the concept of “global sisterhood,” or the idea that all women across the globe share some basic common political interests, concerns, and needs (Morgan, 1996).

Intersectionality offers a theoretical perspective and paradigm in conjunction with a methodology to examine the nature and consequences of systems of social inequality (Murphy et al., 2009; Jani et al., 2011; Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1993; Weber, 2006; Hankivsky, 2011). Because it offers analytical tools to consider inequality, intersectionality offers opportunities to work towards positive social change. In addition, intersectionality insists that socially constructed categories of oppression and privilege interact on multiple levels (Collins, 1993; Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). Intersectionality is an attempt to explain how people are simultaneously advantaged and disadvantaged through multiple expressions of identity, through their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers. Rather than being created and conceptualized individually in terms of race or class or sexual orientation, identities are conceptualized and created by the interactivity and interrelationship between and among each other (Murphy, Hunt, Zajicek, Norris, & Hamilton, 2009). Intersectionality thus recognizes that identity markers like, for example, femininity and coloured do not exist independently of each other, and that the one informs the other respectively creating a complex confluence of oppression. Intersectionality views structural oppression at the level of the individual, the organization, and in the broader social systems reacting in complex and interdependent ways that systematically contribute to social inequality (Hankivsky, 2011).



Delgado (2011: 1264), however, notes that intersectionality can be taken to such extreme positions that the constant sub-division of experience (into more and more identity categories) can eventually shatter any sense of coherence. He highlights that:

[. . .] intersectionality can easily paralyze progressive work and thought because of the realization that whatever unit you choose to work with, someone may come along and point out that you forgot something.

Delgado also points out that identity categories are infinitely divisible, and so the uncritical use of intersectionality could lead to the paralysis of critical work amid a mosaic of never-ending difference. In contrast Gillborn (2015: 279) suggests:

[...] returning to a more critical understanding of intersectionality as a tool of critical race analysis and intervention. To understand how racism works, we need to appreciate how race intersects with other axes of oppression at different times and in different contexts, but we must try to find a balance between remaining sensitive to intersectional issues without being overwhelmed by them.”

While Gillborn's notion/idea/concept/hypothesis is specifically about how intersectionality is pivotal in understanding race analysis, it is also a critical insight into understanding how other identity categories like class and gender influence social inequalities. Strazny (2013: 369) suggests that “[i]f identity is further conceptualized as multiple, gender can be seen as one of several identities (e.g. masculine/feminine although an identity may be foregrounded at any given time.”

In this section, I have discussed the concept of intersectionality. This concept offers a theoretical tool to understand the complex ways in which identities structured around gender, race, class, religion, sexuality and so on, co-construct each other and how they intersect to position some groups at the centre and others in the margins in particular contexts. Intersectionality means that no one is just a gender or an ethnicity or (dis) ability or a sexual orientation or a social class or a religion. For example, gender is an expression of a power inequality between men and women. Race is an expression of a power inequality between black and white. Sexuality is an expression of a power inequality between straight and gay, and class is an expression of a power inequality between rich and poor, but none of these operate independently, they all intersect. Intersectionality thus becomes a facilitator for us to try and make sense of the complexity. For this reason, I have taken an intersectional approach in this study to navigate and help understand the complexity of multiple identities inhabited by my participants.

In the discussion above, I considered how intersectionality becomes a useful approach in understanding multiple identities like race, class, gender, sexuality, religion and so on. In the next section, I will be looking at literature that deals with marijuana. I have broken the literature into three bodies of work. The first body of work consists of writings on marijuana that pathologises the use of marijuana as harmful and helpful. I look at writing that shows that marijuana can be useful and used as an alternative to treat pain and various other symptoms of diseases. The second body of work is writing that reflects on marijuana as a social problem by it being criminal. Here I review writings that suggest that there is a correlation between smoking marijuana and crime, while the third body of work is writing that looks at smoking marijuana as a behaviour.

### **Writing on Marijuana as Harmful or Helpful**

According to Nutt, King, & Nichols (2013: 579) "cannabis has been used in medicine for over 3 000 years. However, despite this evidence the United Nations conventions categorises it as a schedule I drug because according to their results it has no current medicinal uses in Western medicine (United Nations, 1972). Moreover, the lack of any cumulative knowledge of cannabis-related health effects has led to more recent debates about what, if any, are the harms or benefits from its use. Some researchers have brought attention to the debate about medical cannabis legalization and suggest that discourses are typically informed by three beliefs: (1) cannabis has medical effects, (2) medical cannabis is addictive and (3) medical cannabis legalization leads to increased use of cannabis for recreational purposes (spillover effects). In substance abuse, spillover effects are believed to be events that occur as a direct result of using drugs. For example, if someone uses drugs, they are more likely to commit a crime. The Environmental Conservation Act, 1989 (Act No 73 of 1989), describes *Cannabis sativa* as a declared weed or invasive alien plant species. This Act is enforced by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism," (South Africa. Department of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries, 2012, p. 30).

Some writers have suggested that smoking marijuana may have long term effects. Fergusson, (2008: 103) argues that the regular use of marijuana during adolescence is of particular concern, since use by this age group is associated with an increased likelihood of deleterious consequences. Likewise, Lopez-Quintero et. al, (2011: 115) suggest that "Despite some contentious discussions regarding the addictiveness of marijuana, the evidence clearly indicates that long-term marijuana use can lead to addiction; approximately 9% of those who experiment with marijuana will become addicted". On writing about the long term effects of using marijuana, NIDA (2018) suggests that marijuana also

affects brain development. The report explains that "when people begin using marijuana as teenagers, the drug may impair thinking, memory, and learning functions and affect how the brain builds connections between the areas necessary for these functions".

According to the Central Drug Authority (2013:) "there is a need for an in-depth investigation of (1) the dynamics of cannabis use and related harm in South Africa, as well as (2) the relevance of current international/local policies regarding cannabis use, including measures such as legalisation and/or decriminalisation." Kevin Loria (2018) states that "...even though some medical benefits of smoking marijuana may be overstated by advocates of marijuana legalization, recent research has demonstrated that there are legitimate medical uses for marijuana and strong reasons to continue studying the drug's medicinal uses. One example of such a study found that "public support for medical cannabis legalization is likely to continue to grow" (Sznitman & Bretteville-Jensen, 2015). The study notes that public health, harm and crime (the spillover effects) have less bearing on public support for medical cannabis legalisation.

The writing above shows that there is a body of work that understands marijuana from a medical perspective and most of that writing treats using marijuana as a medical problem. While some of the writing suggests that using marijuana is medically harmful, there are signs of change. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for example, reported that "because the marijuana plant contains chemicals that may help treat a range of illnesses and symptoms, many people argue that it should be legal for medical purposes (NIDA, 2017)."

Similar to the NIDA there are other writings that assume marijuana is a medical issue that has positive effects on people who suffers from various illnesses. Kumar, Chambers and Pertwee (2001) evaluated multiple studies which proved cannabis to have medicinal and/or therapeutic value, particularly with regard to multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, chronic pain, nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy and other anti-cancer drugs, appetite stimulation (particularly with regard to AIDS-related illness or terminal cancer), epilepsy, glaucoma, bronchial asthma, and certain mood disorders and psychiatric conditions. This contrasts with the views held by the United Nations Drug Report that cannabis has no health benefits.

What must be noted is that, with all the efforts to criminalize marijuana, medical cannabis policies are currently undergoing rapid changes with increasingly more jurisdictions around the world legalizing medical cannabis for certain groups of patients (Sznitman and Bretteville-Jensen, 2015). These include countries such as the USA, Israel, Canada and more recently, South Africa. Some writers have also suggested that there is a need for further controlled studies, which historically have been lacking as a direct result of governments and international policy with respect to cannabis (Kumar et al., 2001; Nutt et al., 2013).

In this section, I discussed the medicinal value of marijuana, whilst problematising different views on its use and status. The literature revealed that writers are still in disagreement on whether or not using marijuana is harmful or helpful due to a lack of evidence to substantiate the former claims. However, some research suggests that there is good evidence to decriminalize the use of marijuana because of its health benefits. Writing discussed in this section also suggests that smoking marijuana has therapeutic value for treating diseases. The approaches used in the above research were mainly quantitative. The first body of work is aimed at contributing to a more nuanced approach to using marijuana as opposed to simply banning it and making it illegal. The medical approach to marijuana also tends to pathologise the use of marijuana. The literature further contributes to debates around making marijuana legal and accessible medically as an alternative to pharmaceutical drugs.

### **Marijuana as a social problem**

There is also a substantial body of writing that constructs marijuana as a dangerous social problem, writing that suggests that the use of marijuana can be the cause of accidents, addictions and a range of other social problems. It has been argued, for example, that marijuana is a significant “gateway drug” (Freshman, 2004; Strasburger, 2002). Most studies employing the gateway theory propose that users will start out using tobacco or marijuana but will ultimately progress to using stronger drugs like cocaine, heroin or tik “[...]also known as Crystal methamphetamine and speed [...]”. A good example of how this body of work constructs the use of marijuana as a dangerous social problem is found in an article in the South African Journal of Psychiatry where the authors Peltzer and Ramlagan (2007) posit that there is a correlation between high levels of cannabis use preceding an injury. One of the findings in this study highlighted that among 105 adult trauma patients in Johannesburg, 43.7% were positive for urinary cannabis; women were statistically significantly more likely to have taken cannabis than men (Peltzer and Ramlagan, 2007).

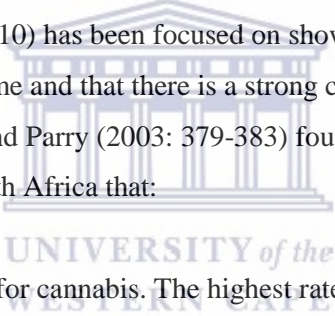
A more recent article by Van Niekerk, (2014: 387) in the South African Medical Journal suggested that the South African government needs to go beyond exploring legalisation of cannabis for medical purposes. He continued to argue that:

There is good evidence that decriminalisation of the use of drugs reduces the harms of drugs, reduces the power of the drug lords, and generates revenue for the government. Marijuana is much less harmful than the two legalised drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and has potential medical benefits. A good case can be made for its legalisation and regulation. This would also enable the longer and more complicated medical research to proceed legally, and for

those who use marijuana for medical or social purposes to do so of their own accord and without persecution. Bold leadership and action, rather than further revisions of the NDMP [National Drug Master Plan], are required.

Writing that presents marijuana consumption as a social problem is illustrated by Parry *et al.* as cited in Peltzer and Ramlagan (2007: 128). A study conducted in South Africa over a three-year period 1999 to 2001, found among 1 565 trauma patients in three major cities, that laboratory screening for cannabis showed that across various sites and over the three time periods, between 25% and 59% of patients tested positive for cannabis, and between 7.4% and 35% of patients tested positive for methaqualone and cannabis, the so-called 'white pipe' combination. While quantitative studies like these are quite fragmented and are not directly applicable to answering my research question, they contain key themes that need to be considered in this literature review.

Another social problem underpinned by smoking marijuana, according to some writers, is crime. The focus of research by researchers like Jessor and Jessor, (1977), Gottfredson and Hirschi, (1990), Hawkins et al., (1998) Fergusson et al., (2008), Hawkins et al., (1992), Plüddemann and Parry (2003), Bennett et al., (2008) Green et.al (2010) has been focused on showing that people who use cannabis are more likely to be involved in crime and that there is a strong correlation between the use of marijuana and crime. Plüddemann and Parry (2003: 379-383) found among a sample of 1 000 arrestees in three major cities in South Africa that:



39% tested positive for cannabis. The highest rates were in Cape Town (50.2%), followed by Durban (42.6%) and Johannesburg (24.2%). Among men the rate was 44.5% and women 16.3%; it was higher among younger age groups: 20 years and less 55.8% and 21 - 25 years 40.1%; and higher among coloureds (56.4%) and Indians or Asians (42%).

The argument that access to marijuana leads to increased crime rates and other social problems, as illustrated above, is used to justify understandings that smoking marijuana poses a considerable threat to public health and safety. It has also been used in discourses on public safety and criminology to justify the enforcement-led approach that many jurisdictions still adopt today (Joffe & Yancy, 2004; Quah et al., 2014). This implies that the discourse to criminalise marijuana to date is based on the idea that those who consume marijuana pose a safety risk and health risk to themselves and society.

The literature discussed above is structured around the assumption that most marijuana users will progress to using more serious drugs like meth, heroin or cocaine. An earlier series of studies among

adolescents showed the existence of a significant and a clearly defined sequence of drug use onset starting with marijuana and progressing to other drugs (cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin) through adulthood. (Kandel, 1975, Kandel and Faust, 1975, Kandel et al., 1992). Studies like these reinforce the idea that using marijuana is dangerous. Yet very little empirical evidence has been provided to support these claims. Scholars with opposing views on the correlation between marijuana and social problems suggest that there is insufficient evidence in current literature to support the notion that the use of marijuana poses a threat to public health and safety (Sznitman and Zolotov, 2015).

While there is an overwhelming amount of literature that reinforces the notion that marijuana is a gateway drug, research increasingly shows not only that the gateway theory is contentious, but that there is much debate needed on the subject. In the online publication *Newsweek*, Boeri (2018) writes that "[...] the gateway hypothesis doesn't make sense to those who use marijuana or have used in the past". Boeri's argument is based on quantitative research that shows that the vast majority of marijuana users in the United States and the Netherlands do not go on to use hard drugs. Most stop using after entering the adult social world of family and work. Other research suggests that marijuana can act as a kind of anti-gateway (Armentano, 2017). As this notion relates to the ever-increasing opioid epidemic in countries like the United States, several studies have found that medical marijuana legalization can actually reduce opioid deaths, perhaps because patients can use marijuana to treat their chronic pain without the risk of overdose and less of a risk to highly addictive and deadly opioids.

On the perimeter of the marijuana-as-gateway-drug debates are studies showing marijuana as beneficial for the treatment of opiate addicts, as discussed in the earlier section on literature taking a medical approach to marijuana. Two highly regarded organizations researching drug use, The Institute of Medicine and the Rand Corporation's Drug Policy Research Center conclude that "[M]arijuana has no causal influence over hard drug initiation." This suggests, for example, that someone could be smoking marijuana for several years, but they would not progress to other drugs. It is argued by Nkansah-Amankra and Manelli (2016: 1) that the progression to more serious drugs has more to do with the user's personality and social context than with marijuana being the initiator and gateway.

Research regarding marijuana as a gateway drug in a 2002 report by RAND's (Drug Policy Research Center) suggests that the same evidence supporting claims that marijuana is a gateway drug also supports an alternative explanation (Drug Policy Research Center, 2002). The report, in short, proposes "that it is not marijuana use but individuals' opportunities and unique propensities to use drugs that determine their risk of initiating hard drugs". These structural causes highlight the necessity



for using an intersectional approach in understanding a raced, classed, gendered and so on individual. While this research does not disprove the gateway theory, it does offer another plausible explanation for why some users of marijuana will go on to use more hardcore drugs and why so many do not.

In the above section, I considered writing on marijuana use as a social problem. Some of the literature in this section suggested that there is a link between marijuana use and crime; that marijuana use is a gateway to crime. Marijuana is also seen as a gateway drug that ultimately will see users go on to use stronger drugs like heroin and cocaine and so on. However, the research also revealed that marijuana can help in combating the ever increasing opioid pandemic.

### **Smoking marijuana as a behaviour**

A third body of work takes a more social constructionist approach to consider how the behaviour of smoking or using marijuana is linked to people's understanding of themselves and ways in which the use of marijuana can be an expression of one's identity. This work is underpinned by a conceptual approach that understands smoking marijuana as performative: as something that a person does in ways that are similar to the performativity of identities like gender, race, religion, sexuality and so on. According to this body of work smoking marijuana can be understood as a behaviour, and a component of the social construction of gendered (raced, classed, sexualised etc) identities. (Hammersley, Jenkins and Reid, 2001). A similar opinion, that there is a link between the use of marijuana and the construction of social identities, is held by (Haines-Saah et al., 2014). This link can be understood when looking at the relationship between consumption and identity formation. Duff (2003; 443) explains this link when he proposes that "through consumption young people not only shape their leisure time; they also shape formation of their own identity." This is an interesting idea for my own study. Fletcher et.al, (2009: 32) suggest that "with increasing numbers of "ordinary" young people growing up "drug wise" and accepting of controlled or "sensible" drug use the recreational use of marijuana has become part of their leisure repertoire, or just another aspect of the consumer lifestyle(Parker, 1998).

Researchers suggest that there is also an interrelationship between our context and the consumption of marijuana. Wilson, (2008: 30) brings to light the influence of context in relation to marijuana when she posits that:

"[...] differences between social groups also emerged in respect to the integration of cannabis use in participants' lives, this very much depending on the degree to which cannabis is integrated into participants' surrounding culture."

For example, in the South African context, growing up in Hanover Park as a coloured person means that a person is more likely to be found smoking marijuana on street corners and public spaces than a white person who grew up in Bishopscourt.

This points to the degree of how 'acceptable' marijuana consumption is, or is not, and how readily available marijuana is within the user's social context. For example, if a person who smokes marijuana grew up in a community where marijuana was smoked regularly and openly, their perception of marijuana will be different to someone who did not grow up exposed to marijuana. Marijuana use for some, however, appears to be facilitated by being better able to blend into the environment, while for others, it is more of an expression of being able to define themselves in ways they never thought they could before, for example, a form of rebellion (Mostaghim and Hathaway, 2013). This suggests that marijuana consumption is a way of fitting in with certain social groups; it is also a performance that challenges societal norms and social groups like parents, senior people, and religious groups and so on.

The idea that smoking marijuana can be a way of challenging existing social norms is expounded on by researchers like Warde (1994) who suggest that the transition from high school to university often means moving from a small town to a bigger place, and that this is often accompanied by behavioural changes. Mostaghim and Hathaway explain that participants in their study "said attending university afforded more opportunities and freedom for using marijuana whether they had used it or never tried before". The greater freedom they reported was commonly attributed to the anonymity afforded by the university environment and community (Mostaghim and Hathaway, 2013: 215). What this denotes is that universities provide young people with opportunities to experiment with things that might not have been so easily available or possible in the homes and communities in which they grew up.

Mostaghim and Hathaway (2013: 31) and others take a social constructionist approach to suggest that young people form and maintain an idea of the "self" that "expresses its integrity through parading its identity". Similarly, it is suggested that as the notion of "time out", or "chilling" becomes commoditized, the use of certain substances, much like fashion, is becoming just another form of "symbolic consumption" that conveys meanings about self, identity and status (Duff, 2003) and (Rhodes, et. al, 2003). This would suggest that the use of marijuana is a performative expression of self and identity. Wilson, (2008: 30) argues that "one's identity as a cannabis user can be seen as fluid, changing in response to the social context in which they find themselves." In the same light Bell, Pavis and Cunningham-Burley et.al, (1998) suggest that some young men's attachment to their cannabis use can be understood in the social context of their transitions to adulthood, and that



cannabis use helps form and sustain users' identities and friendship groups. Studies such as this offer interesting perspectives for this research.

In this section, I discussed the links between the social construction of identity and that marijuana use is an activity or behaviour that may contribute to the construction of particular identities. In addition, I also discussed literature that foregrounds the relationship between marijuana use and social identity. It suggests that marijuana use is an important aspect of many people's identities and that the reasons for, or meaning of, cannabis use changes and varies over time and by situation. The experience of using cannabis plays an integral role in the effect and regulation of one's identity. As a cannabis user, it can be seen as fluid in response to the social context in which the individual finds himself or herself. This behavioural approach exemplifies a social constructionist understanding of marijuana use.

The chapter began by discussing ideas about identity from different writers' perspectives and locating the study within a social constructionist framework which centres on the idea that we are and become through our social interactions with others. I discussed writing that considered how all identities are socially constructed and I used gender identity as a specific example of this. Additionally, I looked at writing on intersectionality as an approach used to understand the complexity of multiple identities built around race, class, gender and so on. The discussion then moved on to consider writing about the use of marijuana. There are three main bodies of work that I reviewed. The first body of work regards the use of marijuana from the perspectives of harmful or helpful. I reviewed writings on marijuana as dangerous and having no health benefit at all, while other writing gives evidence of the health benefits of using marijuana as an alternative to treating pain and other symptoms in different diseases. Another body of writing treats marijuana as the root of a wide range of social problems like crime and addiction. Finally, I discussed another body of work, writing that takes a social constructionist approach to understand smoking marijuana as behaviour, and it is within this last body of work that I locate my study. In the next chapter I discuss the design of the study.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

In this chapter, I outline the design and methodology of this study and explain the choices I made. I begin by explaining feminist research methodology, the research methods I applied and why I chose these methods for my study. I distinguish between two key research trajectories and explain why I believe a qualitative approach was the most suitable for this study. I then juxtapose the advantages and disadvantages of unstructured interviews with semi and structured interviews to justify my decision to use semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I then proceed to show why my study is feminist. I move on by outlining my method of sampling, selection of participants, data collection and I give an account of my own reflexivity during the process of this study. Finally, I discuss the ethical considerations considered during the conducting of the research and how I dealt with these considerations as they came up during the study.

#### **Research design and methodology**

In searching for a methodological framework in which to locate this study, I decided that a qualitative research methodology was most appropriate. Anderson (2006: 3) argues that

Qualitative Research is collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say, and quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things, qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things.

Bryman (2012: 35) defined quantitative research as “A research strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data...” It means quantitative research denotes amounting something. The reason why I did not think that a quantitative approach would be beneficial to my study was because I wanted the study to look at how participants produced and socially constructed knowledge through their own lived experience. Payne and Payne (2004: 180) stated that:

Quantitative methods (normally using deductive logic) seek regularities in human lives, by separating the social world into empirical components called variables which can be represented numerically as frequencies or rate, whose associations with each other can be explored by statistical techniques, and accessed through researcher-introduced stimuli and systematic measurement.

My interest was not centred on objectivity and measurability, which are defining features of a quantitative research methodology, but rather in subjectivity and interpretation, which qualitative research renders. As argued by Gadbois (1999: 5)

Qualitative research focuses on obtaining a truthful description of how a problem or situation is experienced by those who live it. It is also concerned with the involvement of participating persons and by privileging their experiences and striving to put researchers and those providing information and data on an equal plane.

I have, therefore, chosen a qualitative approach precisely because I was interested in how smoking weed shapes ‘stoner’ identity and how my participants make gendered meaning around the ‘stoner’ identity.

### **Feminist Research Methods**

Over the last few decades feminist methods of inquiry have gained momentum as feminist social researchers have endorsed the practice of what is known as ‘feminist research’ within qualitative methodologies.

Feminists, as argued by Hesse-Biber (2012: 4) “bob and weave their threads of understanding, listening to the experiences of “the other/s” as legitimate knowledge”. Feminist research offers critiques of the hierarchies of power and authority in the research process which underpin and reinforce divisions (see Smith ,J.A.) as cited in Hesse- Biber:2012). In her book, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Shulamit Reinharz (1992), provides a comprehensive overview of feminist principles. She identifies ten features that appear constantly in efforts by feminist scholars to differentiate how their research methods vary from traditional approaches. Reinharz posits that a key objective of feminist research is to further social change through challenging power inequalities, that it is diverse in its representation of humanity, and that it considers the building of specific relations between the researcher and the research participants (see Reinharz, 1992: 240). What makes my study a feminist research study are the kinds of questions, methodologies, knowledge, and purpose that is brought to the research process. The objectives of my study were to include both the construction of new knowledge and the production of social change by looking at how social constructs like race, gender, class and so on give meaning to ‘stoner’ identities.

Using a qualitative research design from a constructionist mindset rendered a greater emphasis on storytelling and the participant-researcher relationship in my research.

However, Naples as cited in Abrahams (2012) observes:

Reinharz does not attend to the theoretical underpinnings of the research methods she chronicles, nor does she distinguish between the epistemologies that are implicated in the specific methods. For example, what counts as desirable social change; how different feminist theoretical perspectives inform the application of different methods; how different perspectives influence the strategies considered effective for representing human diversity.

Considering the above urgings, one can note that one common strand cutting across feminist variations is the focus on addressing unequal power relations resulting from structural inequalities so as to reduce or contest these relations. I am drawn to the fact that feminist research disrupts traditional ways of knowing to create rich new meanings, a process that Trinh (1991) terms becoming “both/and”—insider and outsider—taking on a multitude of different standpoints and negotiating these identities simultaneously. My study fulfils these criteria in that it aims to highlight the diversity of ‘stoner’ groups and ‘stoner’ identities explained by participants who self-identified as ‘stoner’ by challenging the existing stereotypes that lead to othering of ‘stoners’. I hope to achieve this by using an intersectional approach and by looking at ‘stoner’ identity through multiple lenses of race, gender, class and so on. In this study, it was not just the gendered power dynamics between men and women that were examined, or the power inequalities relating to class, but also the power relations between myself as the researcher and the students participating in this study.

### **Social constructionism**

As discussed in Chapter 2, I employ a social constructionist perspective in this study. Social constructionism as an approach puts forward the view that all people, via interacting with each other, produce knowledge that there are no absolute truths, only socially produced truths about the world (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). Social constructionism therefore inherently accepts differences and conflicting beliefs, as what counts as truth and knowledge depends on which knowledge is being produced, when it is produced and by whom. Social constructionism is not one thing, theory or approach, but rather a “creative resource” that enables a new, expanded way of talking and thinking about concepts (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015).

It might be said that a constructionist view is one where all so-called “realities” are conceptual in

nature, a product of our own personal “baggage” (values) and the relationship we have with the object of our experience (e.g., a person, a product, an event). It is concerned with how knowledge is constructed and understood, who constructs it and under what conditions or circumstances. It has therefore an epistemological, not an ontological, perspective. Boghossian (1999: 1) posited that “[t]o say of something that it is socially constructed is to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves. It is to say; this thing could not have existed had we not built it; and we need not have built it at all, at least not in its present form”. By using a constructionist mindset, for instance, it might lead to new methods of inquiry, or perhaps a greater emphasis on storytelling and the relationship between myself as the researcher and the participants in this study.

In relation to ‘stoner’ identity, like all identities, one is not born with it; rather it is built through the behaviours, views, opinions and associations made by oneself and other social contexts. Social constructionist thinking understands the social worlds we inhabit to be products of human culture. It is people who develop meaning, who generate cultural rules for living, morals and norms (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). Social constructionism places great emphasis on everyday interactions between people and how the shared meanings ascribed to social practices work to construct shared ‘realities’. It is for this reason that I did not want to work with pre-conceptualised ideas of ‘stoner’ identities, but rather let it emerge during the research, and why it is crucial to locate my research participants in a geographic, raced, classed and gendered milieu. Because of employing a social constructionist approach to my study, the perceptions, attitudes, feelings and views of participants are thus contextualized in accordance with their social realities, which are constructed and exist because of living in a community. For example, a participant that lives in Mitchells Plain will have a very different reality from the participant that grew up in Old Belhar, or Rondebosch.

Tindall (1994: 157) suggests that completely valid research, as representative of an ‘ultimate truth’ is unmanageable when working within a feminist paradigm that postulates that all knowledge is socially constructed. He continues by saying that we must recognize that all research is constructed, that no knowledge is certain, whatever the claims, but is rather an understanding in process, and that different understandings, different ways of knowing exist (1994: 157). Given that I wanted to explore, in depth, how a small group of students who claimed the identity ‘stoner’ made sense of that identity, a social constructivist perspective appeared to be the most suitable as it will work best in understanding how participants make meaning of their reality and identity.

## Research Participants

The criteria for participants in this study were that they must be registered students at the University of the Western Cape, above the age of 18 and must also have self-identified as ‘stoners’ or marijuana users (smokers). As outlined above, my initial intention was to interview participants who self-identified as ‘stoners’. However, while collecting data I found that there were many perceptions and stereotypes about ‘stoners’ on campus, and I decided to include non-smoking students as participants in my study to gain greater insights into how and why those stereotypes exist. All my participants were, therefore, recruited on campus and through convenience sampling. Convenience sampling (sometimes known as grab or opportunity sampling) is argued by Cochran & William (1977: 286):

Convenience sampling [...] is a type of no probability sampling which involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population which is close to hand. That is, a sample population selected because it is readily available and convenient. It may be through meeting the person or including a person in the sample when one meets them or chosen by finding them through technological means such as the internet or through phone.

At the time of the study, I was a tutor in the Women and Gender Studies and Ethics Department at UWC. I recruited participants through talking to students in my tutorials, and through these conversations students would refer me to other students on campus. Most of the participants who participated in the one on one interviews were also part of the focus groups discussions. As this is a small scale qualitative study, I was not aiming to find a representative sample, although I ended up with participants who, as self-identified as ‘stoners’, came from different racial, class, gendered, geographical and academic backgrounds.

I had hoped to recruit equal numbers of male and female students, but it was easier to recruit male participants than it was to recruit female participants, at least at first. This was because male ‘stoner’ participants were more visible on campus than female participants and, as I discuss later in the data analysis, because smoking weed is considered more acceptable for male students. In the end, I recruited 19 students. Three were from the Science faculty, two from the Education faculty, three from Economic and Management Sciences faculty, three from the Law faculty, two from Community and Health Sciences and seven students from the Arts faculty. Of the 19 participants in this study, 13 were self-identified ‘stoners’, with seven males and five females, and eight were non-smoking ‘stoners’ with four males and four females, as shown below in table 2.

**Table 2.**

Students who self identify as 'stoners'				Students who do not self identify as 'stoners'			
All names have been changed				All names have been changed			
Participants	Sex	Race	Language	Participants	Sex	Race	Home Language
Mobi, PhD EMS	Male	Coloured	Afrikaans	Bob 2nd year Science	Male	Black	Sotho
John 3rd year Arts	Male	Coloured	Afrikaans	Eric 3rd Ems	Male	White	English
Peter 2nd year arts	Male	Black	Isixhosa	Toni 3rdyear Chs	Male	White	Afrikaans
James 2nd year Arts	Male	Coloured	English	Lee 2nd year Law	Male	Coloured	English
Jessie 3rd Ems	Male	White	English	Sandra MA Education	Female	Black	IsiXhosa
Ben Hon Arts	Male	Coloured	Afrikaans	Sara 3rd year Science	Female	Black	Zulu
Shaun 2nd year Law	Male	Coloured	Afrikaans	Jody 1st year Arts	Female	coloured	English
Beth Hon Arts	Female	Coloured	English	Thandi 3rd year Law	Female	Black	IsiXhosa
Nazley 1st year Science	Female	Coloured	English				
Anthea Hon CHS	Female	Coloured	English				
Jay 3rd year Education	Female	coloured	Afrikaans				
Kim 1st year Arts	Female	Coloured	English				



Looking back now at the start of this study, what caused me the most anxiety was finding participants for the study and successfully collecting the data. However, while I was reflecting on these anxieties using a convenience sampling method proved to be successful in finding participants for this study. Being a fellow student at this University was also beneficial to recruiting participants from different races, classes, localities, various faculties and levels of study.

### **Data collection**

Semi and unstructured interviews are methods widely used in qualitative feminist research as they “convey a deeper feeling for or more emotional closeness to the research participants (Jayaratne 1983: 145). Semi-structured interviews as argued by Longhursts (2003: 145) “unfold[s] in a conversational manner offering participants a chance to explore issues they feel are important”. For this study, I chose to employ focus group discussions complemented by semi-structured interviews to collect data as opposed to structured interviews. Gill et.al (2008) argues that “structured interviews are, essentially, verbally administered questionnaires, in which a list of predetermined questions are asked, with little or no variation and with no scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration”.

Greef (2002: 292) defines in depth qualitative interviews "as attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meanings of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations"; and because the study is located within a social constructionist framework in which meaning matters, it was important to have as few limitations as possible on the participants' responses. Furthermore, it is found that for more systematic forms of information collection, ninety percent of all social investigations use interviews in complex ways which quantitative research methods may not provide (Bannister et al., 1994). Kvale (1996: 133) contends that

[...] in-depth interviews involve not only asking questions, but the systematic recording and documenting of responses coupled with intense probing for deeper meaning and understanding of the responses. In-depth interviewing is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation.



This form of interview comprises of asking participants open-ended questions and probing wherever needed to attain data considered useful by the researcher. Thus, in-depth interviewing often requires repeated interview sessions with the participants. Unlike focus group interviews, in-depth interviews occur with one individual at a time, or sometimes pairs of respondents, to provide a more involving experience. In this study, I conducted six semi-structured one on one qualitative interviews.

I first made use of focus groups to develop insight into the questions I would later ask during the in depth interviews. A focus group is a group of people, normally between 6 and 12, who meet in an informal setting to talk about a specific topic that has been set by the researcher. Though I intended to ask specific questions, I was freer to probe answers and explore related additional questions as participants often made me aware of issues relating to the ‘stoner’ community that I was not previously aware of. Focus groups are used for generating information on collective views, and the meanings that lie behind those views (Morgan, 1998). I also used focus groups to gather data because it allowed participants to express their points of view in a group setting and provide me as the researcher with another platform to look for commonalities, differences and to promote self disclosure among participants in a group.

I proceeded with conducting semi-structured one on one interviews in addition to the focus groups because they are also beneficial in generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs. Wood & Kroger (2000) state that the semi-structured, one on one interview is flexible and open-ended in character and offers possibilities for qualitative depth. All of the one on one and focus group interviews took place on the University campus during the day. Each of the focus group interviews lasted an average of an hour, while the semi-structured interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. In each focus group I had six participants: 3 males and 3 females.

Another important part in the study was generating an interview schedule; so, for the purposes of this study, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed out of the issues raised in the focus group discussions, that I wanted to explore in more depth. In the interview schedule, I drew on the literature I had surveyed and carefully planned my interviews. I wrote down the topics and questions I wanted to ask and considered various ways of arranging them, while keeping in mind that a key aim of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions is to allow participants to shape the direction in which the conversation goes. With most of my participants, I began by providing an overview of my purpose and intended uses for the interview data, and the measures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity that I discuss in more detail in the section to follow on ethical considerations. As a “warm up” to the interview, I asked a few background and demographic questions first, such as the interviewee’s level of study, faculty etc. This allowed for the participants to relax. For the focus

groups and interviews was important to develop rapport and establish a relaxed, comfortable climate. I was aware of my own nonverbal communication: e.g., smiles, seating position, open/closed body posture, eye contact, as well as the non-verbal communication of participants.

One of the unexpected challenges I faced during one of the focus groups was when four of the invited participants showed up 30 minutes late and the venue was only available for 60 minutes on that day. This caused a stressful situation not just for myself, but also the other invited participants who were sitting in the room waiting with me. As a way of dealing with this, I offered the participants some refreshment and then we started with having a conversation about campus life and just their general thoughts on studying. Given the choice to cancel or continue with the focus group, I chose the latter, because I knew that I could also arrange a follow up session with those participants. My earlier anxieties were allayed by the participants' openness to share their experiences and their willingness to help me find participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is described as 'a range of techniques for sorting, organizing and indexing qualitative data' (Mason, 1996: 7). As a means of analysing the data in this study, I employed a qualitative thematic data analysis. I gathered my data for both the focus groups and semi-structured one on one interviews by using a digital recorder. Once the data was recorded, I listened back to the audio recording and transcribed it verbatim. While I found the process tedious, it was a proven advantage because it allowed me to do multiple readings of the raw data. Once the transcripts were completed, I re-read the transcripts of the focus groups and semi structured interviews beside my notes.

I went on to identified the following themes, which emerged out of the raw data. I went back to the transcripts numerous times to identify important themes. In chapter four I identified the themes: *'Stoners' and Identity*, *'Stoner' Identity as Behavior*, *'Stoner Identity: Collective Experiences*, *'Stoner' Identity and the Influence of Pop Culture and Media*, *Spaces that are associated with 'stoners' and how they are gendered* and last but not least *How is 'Stoner' Identity different to Rastafarianism*. In chapter five, I further identified themes such as, *Gender and Division in Stoner culture*, *Gender Stereotypes held by Non- Smoking Participants*, *'Stoner' Identity, Class and Expressions of Class identities Style as Expressions of 'Stoner' Class Identity*.

By using qualitative thematic analysis, the themes were organised in ways which allowed me to explore them by seeking the core connotations of the thoughts and behaviours described by the participants. According to Henning (2004:109), “Thematic analysis is the process of tracing the thinking pattern of interviewees, or the pattern of action depicted in the observation notes, or the pattern of the location of objects in the setting and the pattern of themes in documents”. Bannister et al (1994: 54) stresses the fact that the production of the interview transcript is part of the research process and they define qualitative thematic analysis as a coherent way of organising or reading the interview transcript in relation to specific research questions. It is also noteworthy that the technique of qualitative analysis is selective and subjective. Thus, two different researchers can identify contrasting themes and come up with different analysis of the same data, which is one of the reasons reflexivity is so essential (Bannister et al, 1994; Ulin, Robinson, Toley & McNeill, 2002).

These thematic analyses were conducted within an inductive approach. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 81) inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame. Whilst doing the interviews, I retained field notes in which I include important details such as body language and other non-verbal gestures and of the procedures and trends that will emerge from the interviews that can be used as possible themes. This has validated the identification of presiding themes. Mauthner & Doucet (2003: 414) suggest that “methods of data analysis are not simply neutral techniques because they carry the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions of the researchers who developed them (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000), and they are later infused with the, sometimes different, assumptions of the researchers who use them.

### **Reflexivity**

In this section, I discuss how my own history and social positioning helped shape this study. Watt (2007; 82) posited that "given the complex nature of qualitative inquiry, it is reasonable to expect new researchers to feel some trepidation at the onset of a first study". She goes on to say that while there may be guiding principles in the literature, each project is distinctive and ultimately it is up to the individual to decide what works best. Since the researcher is the principal “instrument” of data

collection and analysis, reflexivity is considered essential (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Russell & Kelly, 2002; Stake, 1995). With reflexivity, it is accepted that the researcher's own background and life experience influences the process of research and data gathering (Bannister et al, 1994). In this way, the researcher does not become 'detached' from the participant and related information but becomes part of the active meaning-making work. As a feminist researcher, I explored my personal and social investment in this study, which led me to face the reality of my own biases when it came to the subject of drug usage on campus.

When I started this process, I was 31 years old. I am now four years older and can locate myself in this study as an educated, coloured woman. As a teenager, I occasionally engaged in the smoking of marijuana, thus making my own experience very relevant to this study as there are certain things concerning marijuana smoking that I can relate to. As mentioned above, the fact that I do engage in smoking weed and that I do not form part of the 'stoner' community made me an outsider. I was also an outsider because of the class differences between participants and myself. At the point of data collection in this study, I was living in Hanover Park, which is an area on the Cape Flats with a high crime and unemployment rate. I lived in this area during my undergraduate and honours years, because during that time it was one of the few areas I could afford to live in as a student. In contrast, some of my participants came from middle to upper middle-class areas.

At the same time, I was also a student, just like my participants who often used the same public transport system, and this helped position me to gain access to them. In addition to being a student, I worked on the first year orientation programme where I encountered many of the first year students during their first few weeks of their university life. Bannister et al (1994) argue that reflexivity is used as a critique of objectivity, and that the conscious use of a critical subjectivity is considered a reflexive way of clarifying the conditions under which the research and knowledge was produced.

These similarities and differences have shaped this study in important ways, and these have been amplified by a focus on an activity that was illegal at the time. I had to gain participants' trust in that I had to convince them I would maintain their anonymity and right to confidentiality. For instance, had I been a 'stoner', it might have been easier to find participants as I would have been considered by participants as one of them, as an insider, and the likelihood that participants would have been more forthcoming in sharing their experiences would have been greater. Some theorists contend that, through reflection, researchers may become aware of what allows them to see, as well as what may inhibit their seeing (Russell & Kelly). For example, as the researcher through the process of being reflective, I could see that I held more power than my participants because I was the outsider seeking knowledge about their experiences.

Retrospectively, I realised that I was being affected by my participants' accounts and the research

findings that changed my perspective and understanding of marijuana users and identities. Retrospective reflexivity concerns itself with the effect of the research on the researcher (Fook, 2002., Finlay & Gough, 2003., Forbes, 2008., Berger., 2015, Finlay, 2015).

For me, being a reflective person is central to navigating a harmonious existence within racial, sexual, religious and class diversities. As a researcher and developing academic, it is imperative for accessing knowledge that reflects participants' experiences and remains as free as possible from my own cultural, religious, gender, class, biases. Reflexivity thus becomes a requirement and one of the key principles of feminism and qualitative feminist research because of my own experiences, emotions and thoughts attached to the study. It is about the understanding that no one else will be able to reproduce this research in quite the same way because, as the researcher, I am always implicated in the research. I am always questioning my own perceptions and assumptions of participants and their responses. Considering this, I kept a reflective journal which I could go back to at different stages of this study. In doing so, I could also see how my own thoughts as the researcher had changed. Tindell (1994: 151) proposes that over the course of the research, a reflexive journal be kept in which the researcher explores why she chose a topic, how she felt, and anything else that affected the processes of the research.

With the influence of my mother, aunts and my very religious Christian upbringing which taught me that "our bodies are temples", I started developing negative perceptions and assumptions about weed and people who smoked weed. Weed became more associated with gangsters and criminals. With young men who stood on the corners hustling people passing by for money. This image and discourse of course is very different to how I remember my own experience of smoking my first joint at the age of 16 with some of my school friends. We sat and laughed for hours after that, while eating every possible candy we could find. I would never smoke weed where people would see me, especially not people from my community, because I did not want to be labelled as a "bad girl", "gangster" or "low life". Somehow, amongst my friends, it became "ok" to smoke weed and cigarettes, "because we are teenagers and that's what teenagers do, they experiment". We were also expected to "outgrow" this, however, as we entered the workforce, universities or family life.

While I may have grown up in a very religious home based on Christian principles, over the years my views on Christianity, and my views on the use of weed and people who smoke weed, have changed. Bannister *et al* (1994) argue that part of being reflexive requires a conscious awareness of the unequal power relations inherent in the research process and that researchers should constantly be aware of the dynamics that are set up in their data gathering processes and attend to those in an effective manner. Over the years I have, through introspection and becoming reflective on the nature of my own reality and the reality of others, found a spirituality that is free from the binary of "all things are either good

or bad".

As a coloured woman who grew up in Bonteheuwel, Delft and Hanover Park on the Cape Flats and raised in a bilingual home where we spoke English and Afrikaans, being of a similar background in terms of race, language and location gave me considerably more access to gaining data than what I would have been able to had I been for example white, rich or an academic. Beoku-Betts (1994) states that an advantage of insider-status is that participants are more likely to trust me and share their experiences more openly.

Growing up in Bonteheuwel and Delft on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, I was always exposed to drugs. As a child growing up in the 80s, I thought that it was the norm for men to smoke marijuana and ironically even mandrax. Weed and mandrax were readily sold and available in our community. At family gatherings, my maternal uncles would gather separately from the women and smoked what we then referred to as "slow boats" (meaning a joint) while the children would run and play around them. Never in my child's mind did I ever assume that this was wrong because my uncles were respected in our community. They were men who worked hard to support their families and were always well dressed well. Reflecting on this now, it is strange that even as a child, I was never really exposed to women smoking weed. In fact, it was not until my teenage years and hanging around Rastafarians that I saw women smoking weed for the first time. And while my mother and aunts were never against my uncles and older male cousins smoking weed, they always disapproved of women smoking weed. Looking back now, I can see how my perception of marijuana has shifted over time and different stages of my life.

These insights and reflections have contributed to a more valuable study, but they have also made me aware of how my own personality can create limitations in the study. Throughout this on-going process of inquiry, the resonating question for me was my interest in how behaviours shape and produce identities. I held assumptions of why students use drugs. I was also very much aware of the fact that I could not/cannot stand the smell of marijuana or the sight of any other drugs. As I collected my data, I was confronted with my own stereotypes about who 'stoners' are. Bannister *et al* (1994) suggest that with reflexivity it is accepted that the researcher's own background and life experience influences the process of research and data gathering. This suggests that the reflexive nature of the researcher must be acknowledged as it gives meaning to the richness of the process and the product. Like many of the non- smoking participants, I too believed that those who smoke weed are lazy, tardy and that they will inevitably move on to more hard-core drugs.



What I have come to know through the process of data collection is that my prior assumptions about weed as being a “gateway” drug was far from the truth. Most ‘stoners’ in this study who have smoked weed for several years have never even smoked a cigarette, consumed alcohol or any other drugs like cocaine, ecstasy, crystal meth or mandrax. I no longer hold these stereotypes and while I was aware at the beginning of the study that marijuana was considered to be an illegal drug in South Africa, I am, however, less judgmental about people who choose to smoke weed.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Haworth (1996) ethical considerations encompass the essential principle that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all participants and any threat to participants’ psychological well-being should be eliminated. Before I even began gathering the data, I knew that I would be inquiring into illegal activities taking place on campus, which could have repercussions not just for the ‘stoner’ communities on campus, but also the University as an institute of learning. For example, doing this study could possibly create an awareness of drug use on campus which could directly lead to the persecution of students or contribute to the development of a negative reputation for the institution. Parents of students could hold the university responsible for creating an environment for drug consumption. Considering this, I tried to anticipate any ethical problems that might arise and prepared a letter of information and an informed consent form containing the key issues of concern due to the nature of the research topic. I obtained ethical clearance from the institution before I began gathering data

I read through the consent form and highlighted the vital issues to participants before they agreed to participate in the focus group discussions. I made it clear that, firstly, participation was voluntary; secondly, that they could withdraw at any point during the process; and thirdly that I would ensure anonymity and confidentiality by making sure that I would be the only one to look at the raw data generated by the focus group discussions. For the one-on-one semi-structured interviews, I drew up a similar consent form to which an additional aspect was added, dealing with anonymity.

Prior to starting the interviews, I would ensure that the participants were comfortable with the venue and I went through the consent form explaining that I would ensure anonymity by changing all the names of everyone participating in the interviews when writing up my research. Lastly, I explained to participants that they could, at any time, freely choose to withdraw from the study at no consequence to themselves. At the beginning of the focus group discussions and succeeding interviews, I asked permission to digitally record the process and to take notes, explaining that it was for the sole purpose of my analysis. After I explained the complete process to participants, I then gained their permission



and signature on the consent forms. All the participants' names were changed and given pseudonyms as a way of ensuring anonymity. Since then, one participant has changed his/her mind and asked that I not use his/her interviews in this study and I have not drawn on his/her material.

In this chapter, I discussed the design and methodology of this study and explained the choices I made. I showed that I chose a feminist research methodology because it offered the best opportunity to highlight the experiences of my participants. I explained that although my original plan was to conduct one on one semi-structured interviews, I decided instead to begin with two focus groups to explore the key issues before conducting semi-structured interviews as follow-up interviews to explore key issues in more depth. I discussed the criteria I used to recruit participants, the ethical challenges I faced in conducting the study, as well as outlining the ways in which my own positionality has shaped the design of the study. In the next chapter, I discuss the key themes emerging out of the conversations I had with my participants and attempt to show how I hope to answer/engage with them.



## Chapter 4: Data analysis

### **‘Stoners’ and Identity**

There are three groups of people who smoke weed: a) people who smoke weed recreationally and do not identify as ‘stoners’, b) Rastafarians that smoke weed for religious reasons and c) people who smoke weed habitually and call themselves ‘stoners’. The latter group, habitual smokers, are the subject matter of this thesis. While all these different groups of people can be found on this campus, this study will try to highlight differences between them and address the questions of how ‘stoner’ identity was performed on campus; what the key markers of ‘stoner’ identity are, and how is this ‘stoner’ identity gendered. In this chapter, I explore in more depth what my participants meant when they claimed a ‘stoner’ identity and how this helps to understand the various aspects of this claimed identity. I then explore how ‘stoner’ identity is different to Rastafarians. I then go on to discuss the ways in which certain spaces on campus have become associated with ‘stoner’ identity. Finally, I discuss ways in which these places are raced, classed and gendered.

### **‘Stoner’ Identity as Behaviour**

According to my participants, ‘stoner’ identity is based on particular behaviour, that of smoking marijuana, although, as suggested above, that is not a sufficient condition for claiming a ‘stoner’ identity. What follows next is an exploration of criteria used by students who self identified as ‘stoners’ (and those who did not) around what it meant to be a ‘stoner’. As noted in Chapter 3, twelve of my participants identified themselves as ‘stoners’ and all male and female participants claimed the identity ‘stoner’ in a very positive way. When asked about smoking marijuana and whether they identified as ‘stoners’, participants who smoked weed noted that: “I call myself a ‘stoner’”. “Yeah I’m a ‘stoner’”. “I’m a ‘stoner’.” “[...] been a ‘stoner’ since high school”.

What is interesting here is that ‘stoner’ is what these participants call themselves and not references made to what others call them. As noted in their interviews, the participants overtly pronounced: “I call myself, or I am a ‘stoner’”. This suggests the way participants see and identify themselves against a group of people they imagine as ‘non-stoners’ and speaks to a collective consciousness. The ‘stoner’ identity thus becomes a part of their self-image. This is as Wendt (1992: 397) suggested that “Identities are “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self”.

On what it means to be a ‘stoner’, both male and female participants in this study were in agreement as to the denotation of the word ‘stoner’. This is illustrated by John and Beth. John states that: “The word ‘stoner’ comes from being stoned [...] meaning you are high”. For John, ‘stoner’ identity is thus intrinsically linked to repetitive behaviour of consuming marijuana. While somewhat in agreement

with John, Beth explains that: “it’s one of the effects of smoking weed, you get stoned”. For Beth, however, the use of the words “[...] one of the effects [...]” indicates that the identity of “‘stoner’ is not solely dependent on the patterned behaviour of consuming marijuana alone. Thus, the concept of ‘stoner’ identity, for Beth at least, is more nuanced and complicated.

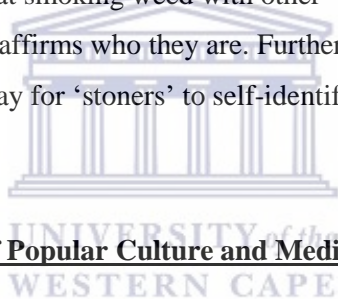
The consensus between the two participants is that the act of consuming “weed”, although not the only feature, is thus the hallmark by which the identity of ‘stoner’ is established. What is noteworthy is that the ‘stoners’ involved in this study insisted that claiming the identity of ‘stoner’ is different to just saying that you enjoy smoking weed. Being a ‘stoner’ by admission implies the regular smoking of marijuana takes place over time. As discussed in Chapter 2, identities are produced through repetitive behaviours. For the ‘stoners’, this is no different and it is the repetitive smoking of weed that is a central component of the identity. ‘Stoner’ participants unequivocally stated that one cannot claim the ‘stoner’ identity if you do not smoke weed. According to Harris (2014) “[...] many people use the term to refer to someone who habitually smokes weed, but some people who object to any drug use might refer to someone who smoked weed once as a stoner [...]”. This point is highlighted by other participants, Mobi, James, Anthea, Peter and Beth when they stated that “[...] you cannot be a ‘stoner’ if you don’t smoke weed, cause how are you going to [gesturing inverted commas with his fingers] get ‘stoned’?”. “[...] to be a ‘stoner’ means to “smoke” weed...to be high...to be stoned”. “[...] you must smoke weed to be a ‘stoner’...you can’t get stoned from drinking and being a ‘stoner’ is all about smoking weed”. “[...] in order to be a ‘stoner’ you have to smoke weed [...]”. ‘Stoner’ identity thus becomes a way that participants perceive and express themselves. In highlighting this, Butler (1988) suggests that performativity is reduced to the repetition of physical actions over time, which in turn establishes an identity. While, for people who do not smoke marijuana, the term ‘stoner’ might mean anyone that smokes weed. This was addressed by ‘stoners’ as not true. In this study, the term ‘stoner’ is applied to the former as indicated by participants’ interviews. While these behaviours centre on smoking weed, ‘stoners’ don’t just smoke weed alone. ‘Stoners’ also smoke and hangout with other ‘stoners’ as I discuss next.

### **‘Stoner’ Identity: Collective experience**

‘Stoner’ identity is not just performed through the experiences of smoking marijuana alone but also as smoking collectively with other self-identified ‘stoners’. Smoking weed with other ‘stoners’ also holds meanings as I discovered through the data. ‘Stoners’ participate collectively in the repeated behaviour of regularly smoking marijuana. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups (Tajfel and Turner’s, 1989).

Anthea, a woman 'stoner' and James and Peter, male participants, indicated that being a 'stoner' also involved "hanging out with other 'stoners', suggesting that being part of the group is also important to be a 'stoner'. Here, Anthea agrees with Beth (as discussed in the section on 'stoner' identity as behaviour) in the sense that being a 'stoner' is more nuanced than merely the consumption of marijuana. Participants Mobi, Nazley and Anthea all stated that "smoking with other 'stoners' is just different"...." it's better because you feel like you belong here, and you are not judged for smoking weed..." This suggests that it extends further than the culture of consuming weed to also include the active participation and communion within the group through social interaction and performance of their identity with other 'stoners'. Butler (1988) and Lawler (2008) theoretically explain the nuance of identity by arguing that identity can be understood as performance not because it is false but because that is precisely how even truthful forms of identity get to be done. In this sense, 'stoners' believe that their performed identity is who they are and that becomes equally as truthful as innate or instinctual behaviour that may establish them within this specific identity. In this instance, performativity is linked to regularly smoking weed but also to being part of a group.

In this section, the participants argued that another feature of 'stoner' identity is the experience of smoking weed as a collective and that smoking weed with other 'stoners' holds meaning to them. The shared experience of smoking weed affirms who they are. Furthermore, the collective experience of smoking weed together is another way for 'stoners' to self-identify.



### **'Stoner' Identity: The influence of Popular Culture and Media**

While, as discussed earlier, claims to 'stoner' identity revolve around the practice of smoking marijuana, participants' understanding of the term has been shaped by popular culture such as the media and film industry. Popular culture refers to those ideas, activities, trends, images, commercial products that are brought up or created to meet the preferences and tastes of the masses of people (Brumett, 2006).

The media and film industry create platforms that offer opportunities to represent 'stoner' identities. This space is a "perceived" space of performance, much like the internet and social media, where the 'stoner' identities can be portrayed in various ways that, in turn, work shape understandings of 'stoners' in the material world. Media and popular culture serve as primary channels through which we learn about groups that are different or similar to ourselves and contribute to the development of our understandings of who we are in relation to others (Malhotra, 2015). According to my participants, 'stoner' identities tend to receive negative attention from the media and this has impacted on understandings of the identity.

Ben, one of the older participants in the group, can trace the origins of the term's popularity in South Africa to as recent as five years, while the younger participants, who were all born in the 90s, credit the movie industry in the 90s and early 2000s for popularizing the term 'stoner'. James recollected that he "[...] first heard that word 'stoner' while watching a movie about high school kids that used to smoke weed and get high all the time [...]". This was also highlighted by Beth and Peter. Beth indicated that she "[...] actually first heard that word from my friend's brother [...] he was a 'stoner' and he used to religiously watch 'stoner' movies like *Pineapple Express*, *Jay and Silent Bob*, *Friday*, *Harold and Kumar* [...]" (laughs out loud) all of the classic 'stoner' movies". Peter explained, while laughing, that "[...] at first I didn't know what it ('stoner') meant, then one night watched this movie about 'stoners' [...]" (laughs out loud) was hilarious [...] think it was *Pineapple Express*". In this instance, the media's representations of smoking marijuana and the representations of popular culture have shaped how the participants understand themselves as 'stoners'. Rosenberg (2007: 1) argued that:

Beginning in the early twentieth century and continuing through today, American culture in general, and more specifically African-American culture and identity portrayed through the media, has played a significant role in the construction of identity and popular culture in southern Africa.

While the participants' accounts may suggest that the term 'stoner' has only become popular in recent years through the movie industry, what is notable is that the smoking of marijuana far predates the development of the concept/term/identity of 'stoner'. In highlighting this point, Ben stated that:

"Some of my uncles and their friends use to smoke when I was a laatie (child) in the 80s. It was something they would do in the shack in my grannies back yard at night, but we didn't call them (gesturing inverted commas with his fingers) 'stoners'.

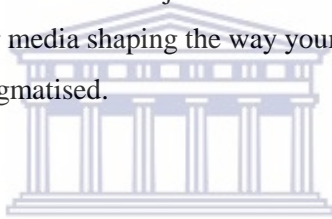
Sarah echoed Ben's point when she explained that:

"My older cousins used to smoke back in the day [...] probably in the late 80s I would say. They would smoke just to be naughty and for laughs, but they weren't called 'stoners' [...] most people that smoked "pot" as my dad use to call it, was called potheads or they were Rastas". They were just guys smoking ganja or marijuana. People smoking weed was also not something that was advertised on TV a lot when I was growing up".

Participants in focus group one, which included only self-identified ‘stoners’, described their experiences of when and where they first encountered the term ‘stoner’. Ben, a male ‘stoner’ participant described his experience:

“When I started smoking weed in the mid 90s, that word ‘stoner’ wasn’t around [...] people would call you a dagga kop, or pothead [or they] would consider you to be (using fingers to make inverted commas) a loser or gangster if you smoked weed....it’s only in the last 5...maybe 8 or so years that people have started using the word ‘stoner’ in South Africa.”

Here, Ben and Sarah expressed how they came to realise what being a ‘stoner’ is and means through their own experiencing juxtaposition with narratives created through the popular media. The older generations, in fact, might still refer to people smoking marijuana as dagga koppe or potheads. What they are also highlighting is how there has been a continuation of the behaviour, but shifts in how this is understood, perceived and labelled over the years. Fletcher et.al, (2009: 32) suggest that "with increasing numbers of “ordinary” young people growing up “drug wise” and accepting of controlled or “sensible” drug use, the recreational use of marijuana has become a relatively uncontested part of their leisure repertoire. With popular media shaping the way young people see smoking weed, it has become more acceptable and less stigmatised.



### **Spaces that are associated with ‘stoners’**

As a way of getting a clearer understanding of how campus is spatially divided, and to get a better understanding of where the spaces used by ‘stoners’ discussed in the thesis are located, I included a map of the University of the Western Cape, accessed on the UWC website. As seen below in the map, the University of the Western Cape campus is spatially divided into North, West, East, South, Central campus, West Park and East Park. Each building or site on campus can be identified by a number on the map of the University as seen below:





‘Stoner’ identities are performances, and performances must happen somewhere. The following spaces highlighted by participants are performative spaces for ‘stoners’. Smoking marijuana in these spaces sends a message that you are a ‘stoner’, while smoking marijuana somewhere else does not signal that identity.

Both ‘stoners’ and non-smoking participants in this study identified a range of spaces on campus as listed in the study that are frequented by ‘stoners’ and associated with ‘stoners’. An important one of these spaces is what is known by campus community as “the Perth”. The Perth is situated on the central part of campus behind the student centre, which is shown as number 9 on the map.





Figure 1A: The Perth



Figure 1B: The Perth

As Beth explained: “We [‘stoners’] hang out at the Perth”. As shown in figure A and B above, this is a space behind the cafeteria [student centre] which is surrounded by trees, grass and a few wooden benches. Sandra, a non-smoking student, said that “they [students] call it The Perth “...it’s like by the trees at the back of student centre ...everybody knows that that is where the ‘stoners’ hang out....and not many non-smoking ‘stoners’ hang there”. This suggests that ‘stoner’ identity is performed in certain spaces. As a student of this institution, I have passed this space many times over the years, but it was only when undertaking this study that I really started paying attention to spaces such as the Perth on campus and how it is occupied.

Another space that was identified by participants was the Herb Garden. The Herb Garden is in the central campus between lecture buildings and opposite the arts building, which is indicated as number 19 on the map. The Herb Garden, according to the participants’ description, is a very “zen-like” space for students and was given its name because of the various herbs that grow there. Thandi, a non-smoking female, stated that [...] everybody knows that [the Herb Garden] is where the ‘stoners’ hang

out [...] the space is very zen-like and not many non- smoking ‘stoners’ hang there”. While Anthea, a female ‘stoner’ commented that “We [‘stoners’] hang out there”. The participants’ description of the Herb Garden as being “zen-like” places emphasis on the atmosphere of the space; that it is a quiet and peaceful space for them.



Figure 2: The Herb Garden

In addition to the Perth and the Herb Garden situated in the Central campus, one more space that was identified by students was the cricket oval or, as it is used by the participants in the study, the Oval. The Oval, which is numbered as 32 on the map, is situated between the North and East campus. This is where cricket matches and training sessions take place. The Oval is a big open grass field that is surrounded by a few trees on its outskirts that provide shade. The shade that the trees provide on these outskirts attracts ‘stoners’ to ‘hang out’ at the oval. Peter, a male ‘stoner’ highlighted the oval when he stated that "we [stoners’] chill and light up on the oval...”. The Oval also runs parallel to ‘Condom Square’, another location on campus often associated with ‘stoners’ as described earlier.



Figure 3: The Oval





Figure 4A: Condom Square



Figure 4B: Condom square

All participants mentioned the area outside of the swimming pool as another space occupied by ‘stoners’. Condom Square and the swimming pools are located on Recreation Avenue and are numbered as 13 on the map. Condom Square, as seen above in Figure 4A, is one of the campus recreational areas that have braai facilities, benches and tables. It is also located opposite the university swimming pool and is a popular space during the summer and spring months of the academic year. Bob, a non-smoking student, explains that “they [‘stoners’] in summer chill at Condom Square”. However, as pointed out by Beth, a female ‘stoner’ participant, ‘stoners’ don’t just occupy the space in summer, but in winter ‘stoners’ will still occupy the space while “chilling in their cars”. This suggests that this space is commonly used by ‘stoners’ irrespective of weather conditions.

Non-smoking participants like Bob and Sandy identified the outside area of the university swimming pools parking area as one of the spaces where they ['stoners'] "hang out". John, a male 'stoner' participant, explains in his own words "...sometimes we ['stoners'] maybe just chill in a car outside the swimming pool". The swimming pool is located opposite Condom Square, next to the university pub [The Barn] and close to some of the student residences on campus. Correspondingly, Sandy, a non-smoking participant, describes the outside area in front of the swimming pool as another space that 'stoners' occupy when she states that "you see there in front by the swimming pool? Like that little parking area there? They ['stoners'] also hang out there".

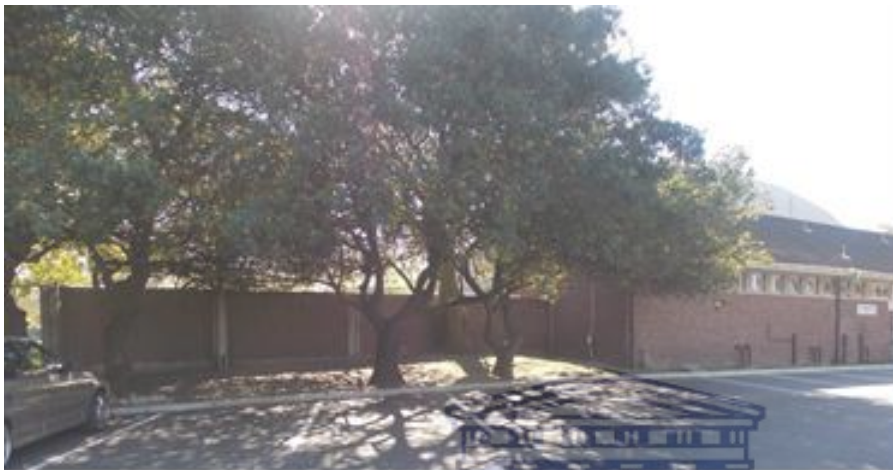


Figure 5

While 'stoners' and non-smoking participants agreed about spaces that are occupied by 'stoners', they were also in agreement that there are other spaces not occupied by groups of 'stoners' when they are smoking. James, a 'stoner' male participant, explained that "stoners won't hang out and smoke weed like in front of the library...the library has too much traffic (laughs out loud)". The library is listed as number 7 on the campus map provided above and is situated in the central campus. Bob, a non-smoking male, suggested that "they don't hang out in like common spaces like the library or in front of the admin buildings." The point that "'stoners' do not hang out in common campus spaces was further elaborated on by Sandra, a non-smoking female, who recalled that "I've never seen a group of 'stoners' hang out and smoke weed in front of the library, the caff, or the admin building". Similarly, Beth highlighted that "(starts giggling) the stadium I would say... I've never chilled there with my friends cause it's just too far to walk (laughs out loud)". On the other hand, male 'stoner' Peter noted that "we ['stoners'] don't hang out in lecture halls...we prefer to chill where we can light up (smoke weed)." This suggests that the spaces 'stoners' occupy must be conducive to the group's ability to smoke weed. These spaces must meet the following requirements. The spaces must be somewhat isolated and quiet. They are spaces that are not heavily frequented by the rest of campus community. It must be shaded as to provide some form of protection from the gaze and view of others

and because of this these spaces are not close to the main path ways trafficked by most of the campus population.

Through the participants' explanation and description of the spaces 'stoners' occupy, it becomes evident that 'stoners' tend to congregate in certain spaces. Spaces can easily become synonymous with groups and individuals based on how regularly they frequent and inhabit the space Hauge (2007). By using words like "we", "they" and "them" as inclusive terms, both 'stoner' and non-smoking participants gave the impression that the above-mentioned spaces are performative spaces: places where the identity 'stoner' can be performed by both male and female 'stoners'. We can see in the discussion above how particular spaces on campus are more (or less) likely to be used by students who identify as 'stoners'.

In this section, participants discussed the spaces associated with 'stoners' and how 'stoner' identity is performed in these different spaces. 'Non-stoner' participants were also in agreement that certain spaces on campus are synonymous with 'stoners'. They highlighted that these spaces include the Perth, the Herb Garden, the Oval, Condom Square and the parking area outside the swimming pool.

### Gendered Spaces

When asked about how 'stoners' occupy spaces on campus, male and female 'stoner' participants pointed out that the female 'stoners' are more cautious about where they smoke and that spaces associated with 'stoners' are less available to women. These performative spaces are also gendered as highlighted by Peter, a self-identified male 'stoner', who asserted that:

“[...]the girls are more nervous or scared to smoke randomly on campus...they don't easily smoke at the Perth because people can see and smell...they prefer to smoke and chill in the Herb Garden or the Oval that's more secluded... think guys are less cautious”.

In an equivalent way, John a male 'stoner' also pointed out that:

the girls always wanna [sic] go to a spot like the Herb Garden to go smoke, they won't just light up anywhere, like in front of the swimming pool on campus...unlike my guy friends”. While Kim, a female stoner, suggests that “I'm very cautious about where I smoke...I prefer the Herb Garden and the Oval, cause there people can't see you so much.



Further reinforcing work suggesting that women take fewer risks than men (Harris and Jenkins, 2006), and underlining how this is linked to particular places on this campus, participants reported that men students felt more comfortable “smoking anywhere”. As illustrated by Jessie and James, two male ‘stoners’, Jessie stated that: “I smoke in different spaces... at home, campus, the beach, malls, my granny’s house....lol ...while my girl ‘stoner’ friends only smoke in certain spaces (gestures inverted commas with his fingers) where they feel safe”. While James also explained that “I smoke everywhere...I don’t care... my house, on campus, on the way to the shop...I used to smoke at the library back in the day (laughs out loud)”. Women students, in contrast, were more cautious, reinforcing research that suggests that gendered vulnerabilities make it more important for women to minimize risk (Murphy & Arroyo, 2001). When I asked female participants to elaborate on why they were more cautious about where they smoked, Nazley firstly explained that “cops [Campus security] patrol on campus and sometimes they in civvies. [sic]” This anxiety was also expressed by Kim when she described that:

“I think for me and my girlfriends, it’s the fear of being caught, also people look more down on girls that they would on guys that smoke...so we only smoke with other ‘stoners’ in spaces where it’s safe for us to smoke”.

The fear of being caught and being taken advantage of because she is a girl was also echoed by Beth when she stated that: “I’m scared of getting caught that’s why I don’t just smoke anywhere, or even on my own on campus”. Beth’s position reinforces work by Gordon and Riger (as cited in Sur 2014; 213) in their “constriction of activities” hypothesis that demonstrated how fear of being caught in the act of crime “shrink the scope of women’s choices about their lives by restricting their movement through time and space”, and as it relates to the female ‘stoner’ participants in this study, it limits the areas and spaces in which they smoke weed.

Male students are also more likely to hang out at Condom Square which is situated opposite the pub. These spaces like Condom Square are public spaces that are comfortably being occupied by male ‘stoners’. Recreation Avenue at campus can be considered a public space because it is where many students socialise, park their cars and get on/get off some of the shuttle services provide for students by the university. Female students, on the other hand, on average would predominantly frequent spaces like the student cafeteria in the student centre which is at the Central campus. Likewise, female students are more likely to occupy spaces like the stairs and front entrance to the B-Block buildings located on the North side of campus. Just as they are classed and raced, many spaces at the UWC campus are also gendered. At the campus pub, The Barn, on an average day you will find the space is most frequented by male students. Women were also more cautious about where they smoked weed than ‘stoner’ men. For the girls, it mattered more where they smoked than what it

mattered to men because of fear of being caught in gendered stigmas about girls that smoke weed. This brings attention to how gendered 'stoner' identities are. While female "stoners" may be challenging the status quo, there are limits to challenges; these challenges which were articulated through anxieties about being caught and expressed through preferences for spaces where it feels "safer" to smoke; thus, reaffirming the notion that women take less risk than men and simultaneously reinforcing gender differences..

### **How 'stoner' identity is performed differently to Rastafarianism**

As I discuss earlier, one of the key defining features of 'stoner' identity is smoking marijuana. However, this is not exclusive to being a 'stoner'. People who smoke weed have been called Rastafarians, but it is important for this study to point out the distinctions between 'stoners' and Rastafarians. Rastafarianism as a religion comes with established behavioural patterns and religious "rights". Within the context of South Africa, Rastafarians form their own communities where likeminded individuals gather, live and practice "patterned behaviour" to maintain affiliation with the "space" in which the religion/culture is practised. One of those practices is the ritual smoking and medicinal use of marijuana.

Individuals or groups who identify as being 'stoners' are often confused with Rastafarianism because of their common affiliation with marijuana. However, what is noted by participants is that there is a difference between 'stoners' and Rastafarians. Mobi explained that "[...] sometimes when people see me walk with other 'stoners' and we may be wearing Rasta colours or the Rasta emblems, then they think we also Rasta." What made Mobi's point more noteworthy was that some non-smoking participants agreed with 'stoner' participants that while 'stoners' often get confused with or labelled as Rastafarians; they are not.

Participants were all clear about the fact that Rastafarianism is a religion and 'stoners' are not a religious group. However, stereotyping all 'stoners' as Rastafarian's is closely associated with both cultures smoking weed. This point was raised by both Peter and Beth. Peter explains that "people often get us confused with Rastafarians, but we not [...]". Likewise, Beth concurred with Peter when she stated that "[...] they assume we're Rastas." The fact that 'stoners' are not Rastafarians was further highlighted by James, who explained: "I don't believe in god...so I'm not a Rasta...I am an atheist". Even though 'stoners' and Rastafarians share commonalities associated with smoking weed, there are clear and notable differences between the two groups, giving further evidence that being a 'stoner' is more than just smoking weed. It also has to do with sharing common interest with other 'stoners'. Intersectionality comes into play with an observation on the nexus between gender, religion



and 'stoner' identities. Ingrid further elaborated on this by explaining that gender differences associated with Rastafarianism are not applicable to 'stoners':

“[...] 'stoners' are not Rastas. We are not a religion.' Stoner' girls don't have to cover their heads and wear long skirts. We also don't sit separate from men 'stoners' like the Rastas do. We wear pants. Our hair and heads are not covered, and we don't have our own church [laughs out loud] like the Rastas have.”

Participants highlighted that they are often confused with, and assumed to be, Rastafarian. They noted that women 'stoners' are especially different to women Rastafarians because of the mandatory dress code for Rasta women.

The discussion above suggests that there is a clear and defining central feature to 'stoner' identity and that this is moulded around the central action of smoking of marijuana and the side effects thereof in spaces on campus. At the same time, as I show above, smoking of weed is not a sufficient condition, as evidenced by the Rastafarian community. In addition, the identity 'stoner' is also mediated by gender, as I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I gave a brief overview on the defining features of 'stoner' identities and what it means to be a 'stoner' and changing understandings of 'stoner' identities. I also discussed the difference between 'stoners' and Rastafarians. In Rastafarianism, members smoke weed as part of the religious experience, whereas 'stoners' were all clear that being a 'stoner' and smoking weed have nothing to do with religious expressions for them. I further discussed how certain spaces have become associated with 'stoners'. 'Stoners' highlighted and brought attention to the spaces they occupy on campus such as the Perth, the Oval, the Herb Garden, Condom Square and the other spaces mentioned above and how those spaces are gendered with men occupying all these spaces and women having a preference to occupy only certain spaces like the Oval and the Herb Garden, because they are more shaded and isolated.

## Chapter 5:

### Gendered ‘Stoner’ Identities

Leading on from the previous section, this chapter focuses on gender and how it intersects with other identities structured around class. While the chapter does not focus on race specifically, it is briefly mentioned as a link to class identities in relation to the legacy of apartheid. I first explore the gendered division of labour among ‘stoners’ by looking at the buying and selling of weed amongst ‘stoners’. Next, I discuss the views that non-smoking participants hold of ‘stoners’. I then explore how class intersects with ‘stoner’ identities and consider the ways that the use of language and different terminologies are expressions of class ‘stoner’ identity. I then move on to discuss style as expressions of ‘stoner’ class identity.

#### Gender and Division in ‘Stoner’ culture: the case of buying and selling weed

Researchers have shown that selling of illegal drugs is predominantly men’s work (Carson and Anderson, 2015; Brown, 2011). In one of the few studies about female drug dealers, Denton and O’Malley (1999) argue that the world of drug dealing is mostly a male occupation. Gender divisions in buying and selling drugs “have described a highly sexist and segregated culture, where street-level drug markets often are characterized by well- structured distribution systems operated by men” (Rodriguez & Griffin (2005: 4) (see also Pini, 2001; Measham, 2002). This gender division of labour within the world of selling drugs is not outside of the general norm of men and women’s work within broader society. The way work is divided between men and women according to their gender roles is usually referred to as the ‘gender division of labour’ (Coltrane and Shih, 2009). This does not necessarily concern only paid employment, but more generally the work, tasks and responsibilities that are assigned to women and men in their daily lives and, which may in their turn, also determine certain patterns in the labour market. The reasons for this gender division of labour can be attributed to biological traits that are continually reinforced by societal norms (Almeida, D., Maggs, J., & Galambos, N., 1993; and Altschuler, J., 2004).

A similar gendered division of labour emerges out of the narratives of my participants. Beth highlights gender when she raises the issue of selling weed on campus by stating that “...it’s just guys that sell here on campus”. In similar fashion, male and other female ‘stoner’ participants also mentioned the fact that it is men who sell weed on campus. John and James conferred that “yar (yes) the few dealers on campus are male ...I don’t have issues dealing with them.” While James reiterates this point by stating that “[...] it’s just dudes on campus who deals...sometimes they can be dodge and yar (yes)” Likewise, both female ‘stoner’ participants Ingrid and Nazley stated that: “[...] the few dealers on campus are male” (Ingrid), and "I've only ever heard of male dealers on campus [...]"

(Nazley). The drug economy on campus, according to my participants, is male dominated. In the absence of special privileges, the key to gaining and holding a position as a dealer is to enact 'masculinity' (Dunlap et al., 1997: 42).

Male and female participants thus highlighted that the selling of weed on campus is gendered, in that males exclusively sell weed and not women students. Likewise, this division was also seen in who does the buying of weed among 'stoners'. Kim, a female 'stoner', describes that, in her experience, it is her boyfriend or male friends who buy weed, suggesting that there is a gendered division of labour amongst 'stoners':

"My boyfriend or my guy friends would be the one who would go and buy the weed for me or us girls... then we will drive to go get some, but he (boyfriend) will go in and go buy some while I stay in the car... "

Kim further goes on to say that "[...] when we are with the guys, they would go buy the weed".

In describing how men took on the buying, Beth said that men within their 'stoner' group would voluntarily take on the role of buying weed and that the female 'stoners' do not question this. Evidence of this can be found in her interview, where she states that "...guys mos like taking charge of things, lol (laughs out loud)... so we just let them do the buying". What Beth is referring to is a performance of masculinity by male 'stoners'.

Male participants Peter and James agreed with Beth, Nazley and Kim. James explains that "[...] my friends and I would buy from them, but not the girls that I know". While Peter states that "[...] yar the dudes would go buy the weed." This illuminates the fact that, on this campus, males are more likely than females to approach a person in public to obtain drugs like marijuana through cash transactions or non-cash transactions. This division of labour in terms of who sells and buys weed predominantly on campus not only highlights the different roles women and men 'stoners' play within their circle, but also, by default, means that women 'stoners' do not get in touch with sellers as often as their male counterparts. Thus, women are partly excluded from the illicit drug market as direct buyers and, to the extent that women are involved, women's access to marijuana depends on their relationship with male counterparts (See Dorn & South, 1990; Denton & O'Malley, 1999).

But if, as other researchers have found, buying and selling drugs was primarily men's business (see also Hutton 2005: 2006; Ludwick et al., 2015), there are moments when such divisions were challenged by the female participants. Beth and Kim pointed out that the gender division of labour is only evident when there are both males and females in the groups. Kim explains:

[...] but when it's just myself and other girls, we do everything ourselves [...] yes, we go buy the weed and prepare it ourselves.  
(Kim)

Beth agreed with Kim,

[...] when I'm with the girls we do our own thing [...] we have to get it ourselves, clean it and roll it ourselves. (Beth)

This confirms that when women 'stoners' are with other women 'stoners', they take on the role of buying and preparing the weed themselves, and that gendered division of labour is only displayed when the female 'stoners' are in the company of male 'stoners'.

The evidence from the interviews suggests that the buying and selling of weed is indeed gendered; that when 'stoner' men and women are together there is a division in labour. This division suggests that the men will assume the responsibility of buying the weed, while the women take responsibility for cleaning the weed. Although buying and selling weed is seen as male dominated by a previous researcher (Campbell, 2008), the 'stoner' women in this study were also able to buy weed, thus challenging these gender norms. The gender division was also made evident in who sells weed, especially on campus. Participants were all clear that selling of weed on campus was only done by males.

One of the reasons women were less likely to buy weed was fear for their own safety and the belief that women are more likely to be "ripped off" by the male dealers than the men. This was mentioned by Beth when she stated that "[...] guys who deal don't have any issue ripping girls off". This point was further illustrated by Nazley and James. Nazley stated that it is "[be]cause most of the places or people that sell are dodge man [...] like just imagine you go in their girl alone". Likewise, James commented that "[...] sometimes it's not safe for girls to buy weed from a dealer alone [...] some guys will take advantage of them by ripping them off". The fear of being ripped off because of being a woman, this gendered vulnerability, imposes another limitation to female 'stoners' challenging of the status quo. Because women and girls are repeatedly targets of violence because of their vulnerability, this vulnerability perpetuates their position in society. Violence, harassment and fear of both deters women from using public spaces on their own (Mahadevia et. al, 2016). In this instance female 'stoners' perceived fear is mostly accredited the behaviour of men dealers in campus spaces.

### Gender Stereotypes held by Non- Smoking Participants

There was also evidence of gender differences in views about ‘stoners’ held by non-smoking participants, further reinforcing evidence of a double standard existing between men and women who use illicit drugs. Warner et al. as cited in Sznitman (2007: 110), who have investigated the normative regulation of marijuana users, found that there are two separate normative systems: one for men and one for women. Also see (Ettorre, 2004; Eriksen, 1991; Erickson & Murray, 1989; O’Bryan, 1989; Järvinen, 1991). Whether or not perception is gendered, non- smoking participants gave considerably different answers when asked about perceptions of males and females who smoked marijuana or identified as ‘stoners’. As Eric, a non-smoking male participant, stated:

I think it’s still ok for guys to smoke, cause they guys (men) can be a ‘stoner’, smoke weed every day but as long as he has a job and make good grades who cares, but not so much for girls (women) cause women are just expected not to be bad man...and it’s not so bad when they drink, but weed is not ok for girls...I mean some of my aunts and uncles think that girls are ‘loose’ if the smoke weed.

Shaun, a non- smoking male, shared the sentiments of Eric that:

[...] girls shouldn’t smoke weed period. Like imagine what people will say and think of them walking around always baked (stoned)? and maybe everyone shouldn’t smoke weed, but it’s more acceptable for guys then what it is for girls.

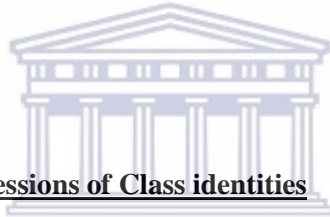
Similarly, according to Jody, a ‘stoner’ for all intents and purposes should be male "[...] and it's not so bad when they drink but weed is not okay for girls [...]" Jody goes on to explain that girls who smoke weed are considered to "be less virtuous." While Eric stated that perhaps everyone should not smoke. He did, however, point out that “[...] it’s more acceptable for guys then what it is for girls”. This points to the fact that students at campus deem certain behaviours more acceptable for men than for women; and among ‘stoner’ participants in this study, smoking weed is a gendered behaviour.

These views held by Eric and Jody illustrate that there exists a double standard in society held for male and female ‘stoners’ with moral boundaries created for women but not their male counterparts. These moral boundaries by non- smoking participants are divisions of gender imposing constraints on the female ‘stoner’s’ production of femininity (Holland et al., 1994). In this instance, it is the

perception that women should not smoke weed and if they do smoke then they are not virtuous enough.

In this instance, the narratives of all three participants suggest that ‘stoner’ identity is an acceptable expression of masculinity but not femininity and that ‘stoner’ identities are a performance of masculinity rather than normative femininities. The notion of a male ‘stoner’ is more accepted by non-smoking participants than female ‘stoners’, particularly in light of what makes for a suitable “girlfriend” to take home, thus reinforcing heteronormative ideas of relationships. This is also highlighted by Ettorre (1992) when he suggests that ‘drug use and addiction’ is not socially acceptable for women, especially when it interferes with women’s heteronormative social roles, such as housewife, worker, mother, daughter, or girlfriend.

For society, however, to impose these moral boundaries, they must be able to identify who ‘stoners’ are. These kinds of boundaries are not just imposed by society in general, but ‘stoner’ women students also place boundaries on where they can and cannot perform their ‘stoner’ identity by choosing less conspicuous places to smoke weed. This speaks to how ‘stoner’ women are aware of the existence of these unequal societal gender norms and take active measures to protect themselves through taking safety measures.



### **‘Stoner’ Identity, Class and Expressions of Class identities**

Class and level of access to financial resources can shape the ‘stoner’ experiences in various ways. These class differences are expressed through clothes, smoking equipment and quality of weed as well as terminology used by ‘stoners’ from various class positions.

Tabouret-Keller (1985) argues that when we use language, we do so as individuals with social histories; our histories are defined in part by our membership in a range of social groups that we belong to. Class distinctions become apparent in the language ‘stoners’ use when referring to smoking marijuana, as expressed through different words for the paraphernalia and practices associated with smoking weed. In the one-on-one interviews, ‘stoners’ and non-smoking participants were eager to share their knowledge about the different words or phrases they use among themselves.

For ‘stoners’, Peter, a male ‘stoner’, jokingly explains that”

“We call smoking ‘astro travel’ lol (laughs out loud)...I also call marijuana weed or grass. My friends and the people we hang out with smoke purple haze, hydroponic or northern lights. Some of the stuff we use are mostly grown chemically indoors we don’t smoke out of a bottle neck pipe. We

smoke out of bongs, or metal, or water pipes”.

Anthea, a female ‘stoner’ also expressed that:

“[...] I hate that word ‘dagga’ it’s so gham, and gangster [...] my friends and I call marijuana weed [...] when we smoke we call it blazing [...] or lighting up [...] (Laughs out loud) I smoke out of a small glass pipe that I bought at a specialized shop”.

Bob, a non-smoking male, noted that different [‘stoners’] use words depending on where they come from “like let’s get high or blown.” Bob explained that “‘stoners’ that come from more “boujee” (bourgeoisie) call marijuana weed, grass, or cheese. Likewise, Jay, Shaun and Ben male ‘stoners’ explained that:

“[...] a guy would like say to me let’s go get some milk, then the milk would like mean a joint. Or like cheese [...] here on campus, but off campus in the Plain (Mitchells Plain) they just call it smoking a boutjie or a joint”, (Jay)

“Where I live we call it a stop, a boutjie, a slow bout or a joint [...] on the flats [Cape Flats] we don’t speak about “blazing or cheese” when we go buy ganja or dagga”[...] for some people they smoke out of bottle neck pipe because they don’t have money to buy rizla (paper used to roll joints) and the pipe is kinda re-usable.” (Shaun)

In Mannenberg they don’t blaze cheese, or Mary Jane. It’s just plain dagga or ganja...here in Mannenberg we smoke Pondo and Tari which is the cheapest weed you can find [...] most guys that smoke here can’t afford the high-quality stuff like hydro, purple haze, or cheese. Here in Mannenberg you can still get some weed for R5, or R10. (Ben)

An example of the pipes that are referred to by Peter can be seen below in images 1, 2 and 3:





Image1: metal pipe

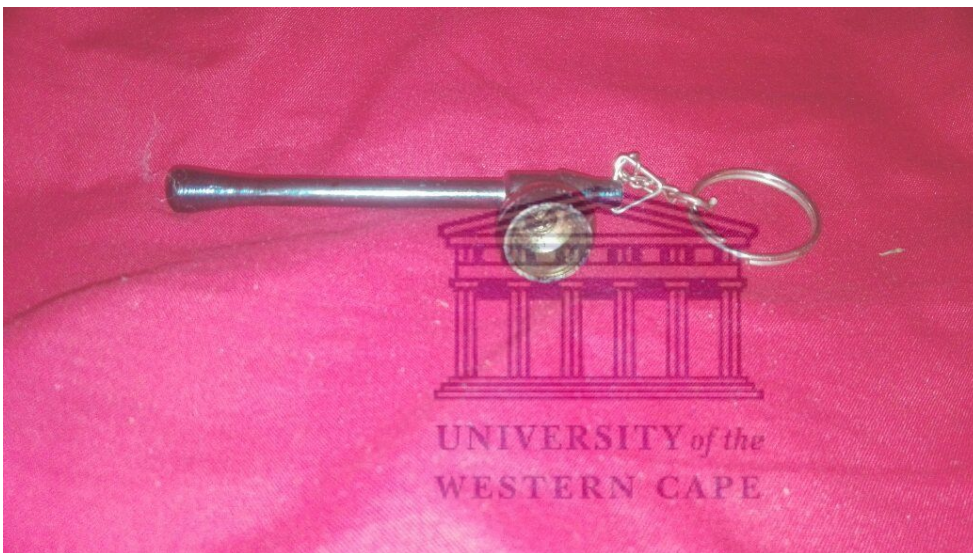


Image2: metal pipe



Image 3: water pipe

South Africa's history of racial and class divisions can be seen in contemporary legacies of geographical and residential disparities that further shape the kinds of terminology 'stoners' use. What is implied by Shaun and Ben is that in more marginalised areas, how to smoke weed will depend more on what is available rather than being able to choose. The use of terms or words for pipes or weed is an indicator of class differences. Ben brings attention to the fact that the kind of weed that is available will also be dependent on the locality. In lower income areas, you would not find expensive weed, because people cannot afford it. What is interesting here is how cheaper weed is made available at lower prices in these areas. In contrast to Jay and James' accounts, Peter, Mobi and Beth highlighted that they do not smoke weed out of a neck of a bottle and that these are related to class differences. What 'stoners' and non-smoking students called marijuana on campus was also different to what they called it in an area like Mitchells Plain.

This idea about different terminologies being appropriate in different contexts was also highlighted by participants. These differences are important in understanding the complexities around 'stoner' identities so that the members of the 'stoner' groups are not seen through a hegemonic lens, but rather viewed from an intersectional approach taking into consideration issues like class and race as well as gender.



Image4: bottle neck pipe

Class differences are expressed through the methods of smoking weed. In marked contrast to the costly metal or glass pipes illustrated earlier that middle and upper middle-class participants are able to buy, less well-resourced 'stoners' find or make pipes out of bottle necks. Better- resourced smokers also have a choice about whether to use a pipe or spend money on rizlas for rolling joints.

The discussion above indicates how class and race intersect to produce kinds of 'stoner' identity and how overlapping legacies of race and class shape different performances of 'stoner' identity. Those who come from better- resourced communities use terms for smoking weed like blazing and lighting up, and can buy more expensive weed called Mary Jane, cheese, hydro and purple haze. The equipment used to smoke weed is also different, with 'stoners' from better- resourced backgrounds choosing not to smoke out of a bottle neck pipe with pieces of newspaper.

### **Style as Expressions of 'Stoner' Class Identity**

As well as terminology, 'stoner' behaviours are also gendered and performed through styling and dress. Twigg (2009, 1) states that "Identity and dress are intimately linked. Clothes display, express and shape identity, imbuing it with a directly material reality". In focus group 2, non-smoking



students highlighted that there are kinds of clothes/style associated with ‘stoners’. Thandie, a non-smoking participant, stated that ‘stoners’ have their own unique style and dress that sets them apart from the rest of the dominant non-smoking campus community. She explains that:

[...] they are walking around in hoodies or beanies in the middle of summer  
[...] yes, it’s normal for guys to wear like baggy (oversized) hoodies and wear beanies, it’s weird for girls [...] make them look untidy.

In the above example, Thandie expresses how styling choices have come to signify ‘stoner’ identities. Bob, a male non-smoking participant, also brought attention to the fact that ‘stoners’, both men and women, wear kinds of clothing that are similar for men and women.

[...] you will see them on their skate boards on campus wearing hoodies and jeans. The guys’ jeans that hang around their bums [...] wearing the Rastafari colours or t-shirts and other stuff with that marijuana leaf on it [...] yeah guys...the girls also wear hoodies and stuff [...].

One participant indicated just how important clothes were in marking ‘stoner’ identities:

[...] yeah...say for instance they just had to like wear normal clothes [...] like jeans and plain t-shirt or something [...] if they didn’t hang out and smoke in the herb garden [...] you wouldn’t know that they were ‘stoners’.

Shaun reinforced Jessie’s point suggesting that

if a stoner chick (girl) was just wearing a normal dress, skirt, skinny jeans, or whatever I would not know that she was a ‘stoner’ , or accessories to make it obvious lol (laughs out load).

Kim, a female participant, suggested that signals like styling, dress and slang are important. She described this by stating that: “[i]t would be difficult to say that they (girls) are ‘stoners’ if they didn’t hang out with other ‘stoners’ and even wear like hoodies and stuff, cause you don’t expect girls to be ‘stoners’”. For ‘stoner’ men and women this seems to involve hoodies, beanies, Rastafarian logos, colours and symbols.

Underlining class differences, participants also alluded to the fact that certain brands are synonymous with ‘stoners’. This is further explained by Toni when talking about specific brands of expensive clothing that he wears. Toni explained that: “yeah like they wear Echo brand, Ed Hardy, vans and like stuff in the Rasta colours and the emblems like the lion or the leaf.” Participants agreed that ‘stoners’ also wear similar colours and emblems associated with Rastafarians. The latter could be an

explanation in earlier statements by ‘stoner’ participants when they stated that “[...] they often get confused with Rastafarians [...] but they are not”.

Significantly, participants were not in agreement on whether it was easy or not to identify ‘stoner’ women and men based on the clothes they wear. However, these clothes would include wearing hoodies, jeans (skinny, or baggy), beanies and t-shirts with specific logos and images on them. The clothes that ‘stoners’ wear are also tied to specific brands like Echo, Ed Hardy, Vans etc. ‘Stoner’ women are seen wearing the same brand of clothes as ‘stoner’ men. The way girls came to be seen as ‘stoners’ often means embracing ‘stoner’ culture’s masculine norms (Leblanc, 1999). It is also important to note that women ‘stoners’ wear these clothes differently to their male counterparts, as pointed by Thandi, suggesting that while an androgyny may exist in the designs of clothes, there is a gendered difference in how ‘stoners’ wear these clothes as an expression of style. For example, ‘stoner’ men can be seen wearing more baggie (oversized) jeans that hang far below their waist.

In this chapter, I explored the intersections between the overlapping categories of class and race and gender, by showing that there is a gendered division of labour in buying and selling marijuana for ‘stoners’. In addition, I also discussed the gender stereotypes associated with ‘stoners’ and smoking weed and showed that there is a socially accepted ‘stoner’ which is male. I found that smoking weed is more frowned upon for women ‘stoners’ than for male ‘stoners’. Further, I found that different terminologies were appropriate in different class contexts. The discussion then moved on to focus on how class and race intersect with ‘stoner’ identity and that overlapping legacies of race and class shape different performances of ‘stoner’ identity. Last, I explored the ways in which style is an expression of class for ‘stoners’ and these expressions are illustrated through the kinds of styling and brands that ‘stoners’ use to signal their identity.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the views and experiences of a group of university students in Cape Town who self-identify as 'stoner' and to contribute to debates about what it means to be a young, gendered person in contemporary Cape Town. Using an intersectional approach, the study aimed to show how 'stoner' identity is not only gendered, but also classed and raced in a context where class and race overlap with each other. 'Stoner' identity in this study has been established as a performative identity based on the repeated and habitual behaviour of smoking marijuana.

The research participants in this study consisted of both 'stoners' and 'non-stoners'. A number of them claimed the term 'stoner' and insisted that one cannot claim the 'stoner' identity if you do not smoke weed. Those who self identified as 'stoners' expressed positive views about this identity, saying that the identity is not only important but also empowering to them. Evidence of this was found in the language they used to express their views on 'stoner' identity. To them, saying that one is a 'stoner' is significantly different to saying that you enjoy smoking weed. To them, the latter is merely describing an activity that you do, whilst the former, 'I am', implies identity. Hence, 'stoners' claimed the identity 'stoner' as a consideration of who they are, suggesting that 'stoner' identity to them is a way of how they perceive and express themselves. They challenged stereotypes about smoking being linked to crime or as a gateway drug and pointed to the significance and the social importance of the collective smoking weed within a group with other 'stoners'. At the same time, they also revealed that "'stoner'" identity is much more than simply smoking weed: that gender and class impacted on what it meant to be a 'stoner'.

Gender was marked as significant in the construction of 'stoner' identities in a number of ways with participants both reinforcing and challenging normative expectations about gender. In highlighting that there is a division of labour among male and female 'stoners', in which men buy and sell and women prepare weed. Female 'stoners' drew on and reinforced gender normativity by pointing out that they allow this division to take place, because men "naturally like to take charge". This reinforces the notion of gender stereotypes and cannabis consumption within "stoner" groups. It was also highlighted multiple times by both male and female 'stoner' participants that women 'stoners' are more cautious than the males about where they smoke and who they buy weed from. Participants mentioned the fear of being caught and being "taken advantage of" because they were "girls" and that women customers are more likely to be "ripped off" by the male dealers than male customers were.

Non-smoking participants in this study also pointed to the intersection of gender when they were in agreement that masculine performances of 'stoner' identities are more socially acceptable than feminine performances. Reinforcing this, 'stoners' also revealed that women who smoke weed are perceived more negatively than their male counterparts, further suggesting that 'stoner' identities are



performances of normative masculinity rather than normative femininities. That these are also heteronormative performances is further reinforced by participants' agreement over what makes for a suitable "girlfriend" to take home. The double standards characterising contemporary South African society reveal themselves in the belief, as articulated by non-smoking participants, that while smoking weed is bad for everyone, "it's more acceptable for guys than what it is for girls".

On the one hand then, the gender division of labour is both reinforced and reproduced by 'stoners'. On the other hand, 'stoner' women are challenging stereotypical gender roles, but at the same time, while they may be challenging the status quo, there are limits to these challenges, as articulated through anxieties about being caught, and expressed through preferences for spaces where it feels "safer" to smoke, and through the gendered division of labour that sees selling weed as reserved for men.

Another important point of discussion highlighted by non-smoking participants was how class intersected with gender through access to resources, facilitating choices around clothes and possibilities for self styling. According to non smoking students, both male and female 'stoners' wear the same brands such as Ed Hardy and Vans which they suggested signalled 'stoner' identity. These brands, according to non-smoking participants, have become synonymous with 'stoners'. Yet these too are gendered, with similar clothes worn differently by men and women 'stoners'. Men are often found wearing jeans that hang below their hips and women tend to prefer more tightly fitting jeans that show their curves. However, while non-smoking participants highlighted that both men and women 'stoners' had a typical dress code associated with hoodies and jeans, they also agreed that the identity was very closely associated with smoking weed as well as doing so in particular locations around campus.

The study also indicated that overlapping legacies of race and class intersect with gender to shape different performances of 'stoner' identity. One aspect of this was how 'stoners' and non-smoking participants used different words or phrases which are expression of class and geospatial differences rooted in the legacies of Apartheid. The terminology that was used by a coloured participant who had grown up in working class area differed from the terminologies and words used by a black, Xhosa participant or an English, white participant. What they called marijuana at campus was also different to what they call it in a lower income area like Mitchells Plain. While terms such as "blazing...or lighting up" were used for smoking weed among middle and upper-class students, terms such as a "boutjie or a joint" were used in working to lower class areas. Furthermore, participants also highlighted that the method used to smoke weed differs among 'stoners' from different social classes. For some 'stoners', the kinds of weed they smoked and what they used to smoke weed out of depended on inexpensive homemade resources, while, for middle and upper income 'stoners', having

access to more financial resources allowed them more freedom of choice through preferences for more expensive smoking equipment and more expensive weed to smoke.

Perhaps now that the illegal status of smoking weed has changed in South Africa, some of the limitations surrounding research into this topic will be removed as well. In fact, research in this area is more crucial now to cover the gap caused by the lack of gender analysis in previous studies relating to the uses of marijuana. Because of the illegal status on the uses of marijuana at the time this study took place, I could not document students while smoking weed by taking photographs of them and their interactions. Likewise, due to the scope and size of the study, I was not able to give all facets of 'stoner' identity equal importance in the analysis. The use of marijuana has always been viewed in previous works from a discourse of criminality, which hindered my own ability to seek and find evidence in literature that coincided with my research findings.

Further study into "stoner" identities can provide insight as to how and why "stoners" use marijuana. Is it as an alternative to stress and anxiety medication or is it just another way of socialising? It can also provide insight into discovering why some students (if any) are negatively affected by the use of marijuana and others not. Perhaps by conducting further studies with graduates who smoked during their university years, we can also assess how many (if any) dropped out of university as a result of smoking weed. Further studies into "stoners" could possibly also uncover what the economics around selling weed on campuses are like. Who sells marijuana and why do they sell marijuana? What are their backgrounds (e.g. are they selling to put themselves through school, provide for their families, to earn extra money, or just because they are entrepreneurial). In addition, further study into stoner identities can also give insight into how our environment and religion can shape our understanding of marijuana. It can also shape our understanding into why the use of marijuana should not be illegal at campus and explore if there are any links to marijuana use and violent crimes at campus.

In summary, the study aimed to explore what it meant to inhabit a 'stoner' identity at this campus. I show that for the students who participated in this study and who self identify as 'stoners', their identity is shaped by gender as well as race and class. For these students at least, stereotypes of 'stoners' as failing students are inaccurate and their experiences of being 'stoner' cannot be viewed from a discourse of criminal or social deviance because their individual and collective experiences as 'stoners' hold positive meaning to them. This has transcended past observations about people who regularly smoke and use marijuana.

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**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**TITLE OF RESEARCH: An exploration of the gendered constructions of ‘stoner’ identity on a Western Cape campus.**

**Have you been informed of the purpose of the Study? Yes/No**

- Thesis in fulfilment of a Masters degree in Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape.
- Data Collected to be published in the form of a thesis
- Some data may be used for publication
- All raw data to be handled by Natasha Brown only.

**Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? Yes/No**

- At any time
- Without having to give a reason for withdrawing.

**Has there been any pressure exerted to participate in this study? Yes/No**

**Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? Yes/No**

**Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No**

**Have you received enough information about the study? Yes/No**

**Do you agree to take part in this study? Yes/No**

**Do you agree to the researcher using a tape recorder? Yes/No**

**I, the undersigned, consent to participation in the focus group facilitated by Natasha Carmen Brown. I have not been unduly pressured into participating and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any stage. I understand that the raw data will be handled by Natasha Carmen Brown only and that any names will be changed when the data is used in the thesis or any publications. The data will be published in a thesis as a requirement towards Ms Brown’s Masters Degree in Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape.**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print name in Block Letters) \_\_\_\_\_**

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**Do you agree to the researcher using a tape recorder? Yes/No**

**I, the undersigned, consent to being interviewed by Natasha Carmen Brown. I have not been unduly pressured into granting this interview and I understand that I am free to terminate the interview at any stage. I understand that any information will be treated with utmost confidentiality and that all names will be changed when the data is used in the thesis or any publications. The data will be published in a thesis as a requirement towards Ms Brown’s Masters Degree in Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape.**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print name in Block Letters) \_\_\_\_\_**



**SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS**

1. How is 'stoner' identity performed on campus?
2. What are the key markers of 'stoner' identity?
3. How is this 'stoner' identity gendered?
4. What are the places and spaces where 'stoners' meet on campus?
5. In which ways 'stoners' different to other groups that smoke marijuana?
6. How does the media shape perceptions of 'stoner' identity?

