Com 822-22

Persuasive Communication

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Professor

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Assignment

### *Developmental Readings*

Review Assignment #3, the course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and entries.

* Refer to the “[Student Guide to Developmental Readings](https://drive.google.com/file/d/161V_FaYR2BnNGCSFUlWPjUSIQzcH04Hq/view?usp=share_link)” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Alpandinar, E. (2021). The Effects of Police Officer Ideology on Opinions of Marijuana Legalization, Decriminalization, and Medical Marijuana**.**

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“Recreational marijuana legalization involves changing the law to allow people to legally access marijuana through policies that allow selling marijuana in the same way that alcohol is sold (regulated distribution)” (p.14).

**Essential Element:**

This quote includes the essential element Developing Persuasive Argument and the use of key words.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is variant. As the market for selling marijuana expands, it may appear less harmful to young people. In Europe, the rate of marijuana usage among adolescents aged 15 to 24 reported at 19% (Gabaglio et al., 2021). According to Zimlich (2019), there is an increasing trend of marijuana consumption among 8th and 10th graders in the United States. As cannabis products become increasingly commercialized, the THC levels increase. The concentration of THC in cannabis had a significant increase, rising from 3.4% in the 1990s to 20% in 2017. (Shi et al., 2019). THC is the psychoactive compound that recreational users desire in order to experience intoxication (Fischer et al., 2022). However, the excessive concentration of THC is harmful to one's health, as revealed in experiments conducted (Gabaglio et al., 20). The act of legalizing recreational marijuana correlated with a 13-15 percent rise in the usage of marijuana among individuals aged 12 to 17. (Hollingworth et al.,2020).

**Contextualization:**

Christian values advocate for the cultivation of a sober and rational mindset. I am skeptical that using another intoxicating substance would help us maintain a connection with God. We are instructed to embody the essence of the Holy Spirit by fully embracing his presence and maintaining a transformed state of consciousness, which will lead individuals to remain enlightened and free from sin. Currently, we are experiencing a loss of young individuals from the church. The distribution of regulations will further impact the young generation by providing them with convenient access to marijuana (MJ). Virginia classifies as a possession state - a person aged 21 or older can legally possess up to one ounce of marijuana, whether on them or in public. In addition, the Law allows them to grow up to four marijuana plants at home.(Blake et al., 2023)

 Canadian youth and young adults ages 15 to 24, exhibit the highest rates of cannabis consumption on a global scale. This trend sheds light on the prevalence of cannabis uses within this age group in Canada when compared to their counterparts worldwide ( Kourgiantakis et al, 2022).Since 2018, Canada legalized the sale and manufacturing of cannabis for adults. However, data is indicating a rise in the immediate negative effects of cannabis among both adults and children. Further, Canada lacks comprehensive and reliable survey data on cannabis usage and cannabis use disorders compared to the United States. (Hall et al, 2023)

I strongly endorse research that challenges the expansion of an unregulated market for marijuana sales, since it fosters (CUD), harms the cognitive growth of young individuals and their psychological wellbeing.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Though many states have contributed to marijuana reform through instituting policies of decriminalization, legalization, and expungement of low-level marijuana arrests, marijuana reform still warrants attention. (p.4).

**Essential Element:**

This quote involves the essential elements of Persuasive Writing Techniques and Key words.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive and variant. Alpandinar (2021) skillfully directs the reader's attention toward the advantages of legalization and decriminalization The author assures that marijuana reform does not adversely impact the cognitive and mental abilities of young individuals. The writer asserts that marijuana and laws reform are intrinsically linked, suggesting that the only obstacle preventing widespread usage of the substance is the need for legal changes. On the other hand, Kilmer and MacCoun (2017) highlighted two significant challenges that the medical marijuana sector currently faces:

1. Some in the recreational marijuana sector see medical dispensaries as rivals due to lighter regulations and taxes.
2. Government facilitating research access could question medical assertions without strong scientific support.

**Contextualization:**

In my quest to reach young people for Christ I believe I must educate them about CUD cannabis use disorder. According to a study by Willaims et al., (2024), the long-term effects of marijuana have been linked to similarities with attention-deficit-hyperactive disorder (ADHD). This connection raises concerns about the potential impact of prolonged marijuana use on cognitive functions and behavior associated with ADHD symptoms. Adolescents are significantly more prone to developing Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD) if they begin marijuana use at a young age, engage in frequent drug consumption, and are exposed to the high levels of THC found in vape or tobacco devices (Mennis et al., 2023). The legalization of marijuana contributes to the rising trend of young people using cannabis and developing an addiction to it.
I am currently writing a book that explores how the fruits of the spirit enable us to maintain a sense of calm and concentration amidst anxiety and depressive symptoms. In my opinion, rather than introducing young individuals to recreational substances as a means of addressing mental health issues, it would be more beneficial to educate them about alternative methods of coping that involve accessing the Holy Spirit and establishing a relationship with God.

**Source Two:** Husock, H. (2024). How should state and local Governments respond to illegal retail cannabis?

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Legal cannabis was meant to address both aspects of the situation—to recognize cannabis use as an individual choice for adults, similar to alcohol and tobacco use, and replace the illicit market with a legal and regulated one, sidelining criminal activity and ensuring the sale of unadulterated cannabis products (p.3).

**Essential Element:**

This quote utilizes the essential elements of Oral Defense of scholarly writing

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive and variant. Husock (2024) uses research to suggest that marijuana (MJ) bears a resemblance to tobacco and alcohol. However, Sabet (2021) argues that marijuana use increased among youth compared to the declining rates of tobacco and alcohol. The writer expresses the notion that individuals ought to possess the right to determine which substances are beneficial for their specific need. But Christianity places significant emphasis on the significance of humankind and the preservation of the rights of all individuals, which are derived from their true value in the eyes of God. (Kantola, 2024).

 Further the author emphasizes that introducing a legal and regulated market effectively suppress the illicit market. However, the ineffectiveness of taxes makes financially struggling individuals a target for illicit markets, pushing them back to the black market. (Choudhary, 2023).

 Further, the author fails to emphasize that MJ differs from tobacco and alcohol. Cort (2017) reported that 4.2 million individuals in the United States, aged 12 and above, fitted the criteria for cannabis use disorder.

In Colorado, where cannabis is legal and regulated, there is a concerning trend of young individuals experiencing fatalities and frequent hospitalizations due to cannabis consumption. Cannabis adversely affects the brain, leading to an increased risk of motor vehicles accident (Choudhary,2023). Adolescents are experiencing the emergence of psychotic symptoms, leading to hospitalization(Hall et al., 2023).While individuals are exposed to harmful substances in marijuana, this is primarily due to the high levels of THC present. The presence of THC in any form has been found to contribute to the development of mental illnesses like as depression and anxiety in individuals under the age of 25, whose brains are still in the process of development(Amen, 2015 ).

**Contextualization:**

(*Holy Bible English Standard Version*, 2001Proverbs 14:12 serves as a powerful reminder that individuals may believe they are on the right path, only to discover it leads to an undesirable outcome. Young people in society are especially deceived by the legislation around medicinal marijuana and recreational marijuana. According to Berenson (2019) the prevalence of mental disease has increased since the 1970s, when the level of THC was 5%. Even at that time, there were occurrences of psychosis. As mature individuals in our religious beliefs, it is obligatory for us to present the young generation with the unvarnished truth. According to the Bible, truth is discovered in Christ, and it is this truth that sets us free. (John 14: 6-10).

The Christian worldview enabled me to discern between the influence of society through its agenda and the freedom of human choice, as opposed to what is morally correct. My purpose is to safeguard our youth from the detrimental effects of an intoxicating substance that poses a threat to their mental well-being. Truth has an impact on everyone. Heddendorf and Vos (2009) aptly stated that there is something devilish in the way truth is misconstrued as evidenced in the Genisis narrative of Satan’s reversal of the truth.

**Source Three:** Keum, B. T., Cano, M. Á., Valdovinos, I. C., & Boland, D.-z. (2023). Impact of online and offline racism on cigarette smoking, marijuana use, and vaping via depressive/anxiety symptoms among racially minoritized emerging adults. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 93*(5), 450–459. [https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000691](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/ort0000691%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

 **Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“The present study sheds light on the coping-related smoking behaviors of racially minoritized emerging adults linked with both online and offline racism. Our findings suggest that these individuals may turn to tobacco and marijuana use to regulate their emotions and cope with the anxiety and depression resulting from racism” (p.9).

**Essential Element:**

This quote uses the essential elements of Key words- black male, stigma, men, mental illness

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive and variant. Dogan et al, (2021) literary review argues that African American men turn to cannabis to cope with racial discrimination. This pattern extends to detained individuals, with high cannabis use before and during incarceration.

Further, the path to substance abuse is often intertwined with public stigma and self-stigmatization. Ross et al (2019) found that various student and parent-held stigmas, along with mental health literacy, predict treatment stigma in college students. Student attitudes toward treatment were influenced by personal, perceived, and self-stigma. Parent-held personal stigma predicted student self-stigma. Education on psychological disorders reduced personal stigma but unexpectedly increased self-stigma levels.

This detrimental mindset can result in a sense of hopelessness and resignation, where individuals struggle to see their own value and potential. In the face of such challenges, some individuals turn to coping mechanisms like tobacco and marijuana use to alleviate the symptoms of conditions such as depression(Adzrago et al.,2022).

**Contextualization:**

Psychoeducation is essential for individuals belonging to minority communities to comprehend the stigma associated with mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, as well as their impact on mood. Each individual manifests the disease in a unique manner. Men, specifically, often struggle to acknowledge their need for treatment (McKenzie, et al., 2022).

Black masculinity and conventional black masculinity were linked to higher public stigma, resulting in increased self-stigma and less positive attitudes towards seeking psychological help. (Coleman-Kirumba et al., 2023).

I am eager to educate young African American minorities about depression. As an individual of color, I believe it is crucial for me to engage with others as an advocate for mental well-being. I feel compelled to inform them about the potential for violence and psychosis associated with the consumption of marijuana through vaping and ingestion.
They must also understand the concept of stigmatization and the importance of being able to openly discuss mental illness, which impacts everyone in society.

**Source Four :** Cort. B. (2017) *Weed Inc: The truth about THC, the pot lobby and the commercial marijuana industry*. Health Communication Inc.

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Cannabis contains at least sixty known chemicals called cannabinoid, which activate cannabinoid receptors in the body” (p.139)

**Essential Element:**

The quote utilizes the essential elements of Developing Persuasive Argument, Key words

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive. The active cannabinoid that impacts brain development is THC, known for its addictive properties due to its strong ability to bind to cannabinoid receptors in the brain and body. THC is absorbed through the liver, bloodstream, and blood-brain barrier (Amen, 2015).

Out of the 60 cannabinoids, only two - THC and CBD - are widely discussed for their significant impact on health. Hemp, a part of the marijuana plant, is utilized in creating soaps, herbal drinks, and fabric. It contains minimal levels of the psychoactive THC compound (Asare et al., 2024, Berenson, 2019, Cort, 2017).

Berenson, (2019) regard CB as an expensive pain reliever that works as a placebo. Mainly young people are unaware of the various cannabinoid found in marijuana plant the difference between THC and CBD or hemp. Statistic shows that 80% of adolescents and young adults do not perceive cannabis as a health risk (Sabet, 2021;Womack, 2016. Cort (2017) argues that THC is as detrimental consumer’s bodies if not more potent.

**Contextualization:**

During a conversation with a longtime friend at a funeral I attended last year, I was astonished to learn that her son spoke about her unintentionally taking his THC-infused candies. This middle-aged individual downplayed the matter, implying that it was merely cannabis-infused candy. I marveled how adults might interpret something that dangerous as mere jest. This explains the reason why young people tend to underestimate the seriousness of marijuana, particularly because the candy version industry makes significant efforts to target and promote their products to this demographic. According to studies, the candy industry has spent billions of dollars (Cort, 2017).

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“It’s pretty obvious why using pesticides in the production of weed- a plant being grown for people to eat, drink, and smoke-is a bad idea. Chemicals that are bad for our bodies to touch are even worse for our bodies to ingest or inhale”(p.115-116).

**Essential Element:**

This quote uses the essential elements of Keywords

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive. Plants treated with toxic pesticides pose health risks when consumed (Wildflower, 2020 ). For instance, marijuana laced with pesticides can harm the lungs, blood, and brain if smoked, or affect the stomach, organs, bloodstream, and brain. Legalizing marijuana can discourage illegal pesticide use, but the online black market remains appealing to youths due to affordability. Minors are particularly vulnerable to pesticide exposure through black market products. Mohr Avitia (2023) argues that California's Adult Use of Marijuana Act establishes strict environmental rules for efficient and legal cannabis cultivation. Piperonyl butoxide (PBO), a synthetic additive enhancing pesticide effectiveness, is allowed by Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) without tolerance in crop production. Nonetheless, PBO is linked to health concerns such as cancer and neurotoxicity. While natural pesticides are often preferable, those containing pyrethrins and metals may endanger workers and wildlife (Feldman, 2014).

**Contextualization:**

Studying naturopathy heightened my awareness of the presence of pesticides and chemicals in plants. This newfound knowledge has led me to make conscious decisions when selecting fruits and vegetables, ensuring they are free from harmful toxins that can impact our health.

Recent research studies have shed light on the presence of pesticide, a pesticide known to be linked to the development of liver cancer (Fieldman, 2014). This alarming discovery has further fueled my commitment to spreading awareness about the dangers of consuming MJ or vape products that may be tainted with harmful pesticides.

Moreover, it is concerning to note that many young individuals are unaware of the presence of these chemicals in MJ. Often, their main focus is on the recreational use of MJ or on using it to alleviate feelings of depression and anxiety. By educating the youth about the potential risks associated with pesticide exposure through MJ consumption, we can empower them to make informed choices regarding their health and well-being.

**Source Five:** Smith, C. Fred (2014). *Developing a biblical worldview: seeing things God’s way* . B&H Publishing Group.

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Even some seemingly positive influences, however, can have a false worldview underlying them, and we must learn to be careful and discerning (p.82).

**Essential Element:**

This quote uses the essential element of Developing Persuasive Argument

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

**This quote is additive.** The legislation on recreational marijuana allows adults to utilize cannabis for stress relief and social consumption, similar to alcohol and tobacco (Mennis et al., 2023). According to legalization advocates, MJ is equivalent to the consumption of alcohol and tobacco (Williams et al., 2024).

The proponents of the legalization measure believe that legalizing the drug will help avoid unnecessary imprisonment for individuals found in possession of small quantities of marijuana. (Mohr Avitia, 2023) Additional federal legalization would have a significant impact on black market sales, considering that the majority of states now permit the legal sale and purchase of marijuana. However, it is a well-established fact, supported by research, that the use of marijuana (MJ) can lead to cognitive decline and a decrease in IQ by approximately 30% (Sabet, 2021).

Despite this evidence, the marijuana industry and proponents for marijuana and recreational laws either neglect to educate the public about the potential risks of psychosis and violence to young adults and adolescents, or deliberately choose to ignore them. Studies indicate that young people can develop a cannabis use disorder, leading to addiction, as a result of early onset cannabis use (Mennis et al, 2023) Recent research suggests that young individuals with a familial history of mental illness, who consume high doses of THC and engage in substance use, are more vulnerable to developing serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia (Malabadi et al., 2023).

**Contextualization:**

An acquaintance of mine from Trinidad informed me a year ago that her brother acquired schizophrenia as a result of consuming marijuana. Prior to beginning this investigation, I maintained skepticism regarding her level of knowledge and the accuracy of her statements. I assumed she was misled because, like everyone else, I thought that marijuana was only equally harmful to the lungs as smoking tobacco. I was unaware of the THC content, as well as the reality that in the 1970s, THC levels were at 10% compared to the 80% in the 1990s and present day.

In a recent incident, a friend of mine from Trinidad, who resides in United States, requested me to offer prayers for her brother who was experiencing psychosis and living on the streets of Trinidad. During our conversation, I inquired about her drug usage and she responded that she was using marijuana. This time, I promptly informed her that I was researching precisely the topic I intended to discuss with him, and that I desired to pray and engage in conversation with him, if possible. This research has enlightened me about the apparent positive influence and normative opinion I held regarding marijuana, despite never having any inclination to use the drug. It demonstrates that obtaining comprehensive information about a controversial substance like marijuana enables us, as Christians, to discern what is morally correct and understand the potential consequences that could impact our youth. It is not beneficial to the lives of young people who are already struggling with their faith to hinder their mental powers by keeping them away from God.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

“He created us to be dependent on him and to be interdependent upon one another for fullness of life. These realities remain even though we are now fallen” (p.432).

**Essential Element:**

This quote utilizes the essential element of Developing Persuasive Argument and Key words

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive. God created humans to engage in a meaningful connection with both himself and other individuals. According to his teachings, it is stated that he created humanity before their awareness of him, starting the process of shaping his likeness from the very beginning of their existence in the womb. Therefore, humanity possesses a purpose that satisfies God's demands, which they are unaware of until they align themselves with God through his teachings. This relationship with God then develops into the kind of relationship that he intends for his people.

Despite the fall, which has damaged the kind of relationship God expects humanity to have with one another, the inherent resemblance to God's image creates a necessity for human beings to engage with others relationally. Through a filial love relationship, humanity can assume leadership roles, act as disciples, and exhibit love and support for one another. To comprehend the level of respect and devotion that exists between individuals, love must be fostered through an attachment to God and a personal relationship with Him.

**Contextualization:**

Through our connection with God, we are empowered to become stronger and more successful agents of change. Our primary aim is to alleviate the suffering and distress of people, not only by making a tangible impact in their life, but also by directing them towards the divine entity that designed them for a specific purpose.

Individuals suffering from mental illnesses such as depression may lose the ability to establish a personal connection with God, unless they are reminded by members of the church to maintain their spiritual connection. I am undergoing training as a mental health coach with the intention of utilizing this training to assist individuals suffering from depression.

 My approach involves incorporating scripture and facilitating connections between individuals and professionals to encourage them to get appropriate care. Oftentimes, we inadvertently overlook individuals suffering from mental illness, leading them to succumb to suicide when they completely lose hope in themselves.
While reading the book "By the Time You Read This" by Simpkins & Kryst, (2024), I came across the author's statement expressing her inability to endure the overwhelming sorrow any longer. These lines serve as a reminder of the extent to which we rely on each other to support and guide us through the challenges of life, particularly when it comes to mental illness. However, there is a subset of individuals who believe that substances such as marijuana might alleviate the feelings of emptiness and hopelessness associated with depression. However, I can't forget the words of Chelsea's suicide note to her mother: "So, I will leave and rejoin God in heaven and hope to find peace there. I don’t want to leave bit I genuinely feel like I have to if I want to escape my loneliness that feel like it has no end.” (p.208). I believe it would be incredibly rewarding to assist individuals who are unaware of or have lost faith in a God who never abandons us. As Christian world changers, it is required for us to ensure that the words of God deeply resonate into the hearts and minds of those who are suffering. I am determined to make this my mission, as I believe it is my true calling.

**Source Six:** Weiler, S. C., & Westbrook, P. (2020). Administering Medical Marijuana at School in Colorado: A Legal Analysis. *BYU Educ. & LJ*, 79.

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

 “There are students attending public schools in Colorado who rely on marijuana-based products for therapeutic uses and, after having met the legal requirements in the state, these students, along with their parents and physicians, are requesting permission to have these marijuana-based products administered at school.” (p.5)

**Essential Element:**

**Oral Defense of Scholarly Writing**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is variant. Given that teachers and parents cannot monitor who accesses marijuana in schools where it is not required for therapeutic purposes, research indicates that marijuana products are only beneficial for specific health conditions, particularly when using CBD, which has a minimal healing potential. There is a misconception in the public regarding the therapeutic effects of marijuana, aiming to promote its legalization and recreational use for industry profit. Furthermore, when asked about the effects of marijuana, most teenagers are unaware of its potential dangers to their psychological and mental well-being (Sabet,)

Studies reveal a high rate of accidents related to cannabis use in Colorado (Anderson & Rees, 2023). Hospitals have reported an increased incidence of young individuals being hospitalized for cannabis-related addiction, violence, and vaping-related illnesses due to the high THC content since the drug's legalization in the state. Colorado was among the first states to legalize cannabis (Cort, 2014).

**Contextualization:**

In the state of Virginia, the use of medical marijuana for therapeutic purposes is not readily permitted for students. I propose that high schools in Virginia should be provided with an educational session regarding the hazards of cannabis, in order to preempt the influence of parents and other marijuana proponents who may advocate for the drug as a therapeutic substitute. The high schools in Virginia have had instances of excessive marijuana use, leading parents to express concerns about their children falling into drug addiction due to marijuana and fentanyl. Studies have demonstrated that marijuana has a gateway effect, leading to the introduction of youngsters to fentanyl and other opioids. There is already an opioid epidemic. Research indicates that the majority of individuals initiate their recreational drug usage with marijuana or utilize it for therapeutic purposes before progressing to more potent substances such as fentanyl.

**Source Seven:** Schwabe, A. L., Hansen, C. J., Hyslop, R. M., & McGlaughlin, M. E. (2021). Comparative genetic structure of Cannabis sativa including federally produced, wild collected, and cultivated samples. *Frontiers in Plant Science*, *12*, 675770. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpls.2021.675770>

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

“Surgeon General Jerome Adams recently expressed concern that the current scheduling in the most restrictive category is inhibiting research on *Cannabis* as a potentially therapeutic plant.” (p.2)

**Essential Element:**

**Developing Persuasive Argument**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is variant. Classifying cannabis as a schedule 1 drug implies its potential for addiction and harm to users. Similar to tobacco and alcohol, drugs in this category have been reevaluated due to their intoxicating and addictive properties and associated health risks like lung cancer and liver cirrhosis. It is important to note that removing cannabis from schedule 1 does not eliminate the risks associated with THC. This oversight is concerning, especially for young individuals, as research shows that 59% of adolescents and young adults use cannabis. Studies indicate that this demographic uses cannabis to address psychiatric issues such as anxiety and depression, as well as for sleep and social concerns. They may also use it recreationally to relax and fit in with their peers.

**Contextualization:**

As a student of naturopathy, I possess a deep understanding of the therapeutic properties of plant medicine. Cannabis is not merely a botanical specimen, but rather a botanical specimen that possesses a psychoactive property due to the presence of THC. The process of chelation derives from CBD. The percentage of CBD found in cannabis is relatively low. Many people mistakenly confuse cannabis with CBD. The hemp plant is rich in CBD, which has proven to be beneficial for pain management and cerebral palsy disorders. THC is the primary psychoactive compound found in cannabis, which is used by individuals to induce a state of intoxication. According to Berenson (2019) some people believe that the plant has pain-relieving properties. However, Berenson argues that the pain-relieving effect of the plant is no different from using Bourbon to swiftly relieve pain, which only provides temporary relief for a short period of time.
I plan to do an independent study on the impact of CBD in my pursuit of natural medicine, with the aim of assisting young individuals in distinguishing between CBD oil and THC. One treatment option is for therapy, while the other poses a psychiatric danger.

**Source Eight:** Kilmer, B., & Pérez-Dávila, S. (2023). Nine insights from 10 years of legal cannabis for nonmedical purposes. *Clinical therapeutics*, *45*(6), 496-505.

**Comment 11:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Even in the United States, most states that have legalized it also allow adults to grow cannabis at home and gift it to others. (p.2)

**Essential Element:**

**Oral Defense of Scholarly Writing**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is variant. Legalization enables a home cultivation market that allows cannabis enthusiasts to give the substance as gifts, hence increasing the risk of exposing vulnerable individuals in society. This law allows others to discuss the negative consequences of the expanding cannabis industry. The research demonstrates that the expanding cannabis market, facilitated by grassroots lobbying, enables the product to be augmented with harmful substances, hence increasing its potential harm to young individuals. Adolescents who are vulnerable to mental illnesses like depression or schizophrenia might discreetly purchase these products online without their parents' knowledge. Adolescents who dedicate a significant amount of time to the internet and social media have convenient access to domestically cultivated THC cannabis, which may have high levels of potency or contamination, posing a potential health risk.

**Contextualization:**

I am disturbed by the fact that individuals have the ability to distribute a hazardous substance like cannabis to anyone, especially considering that it may be easily accessible to the youth who heavily engage with social media platforms. Adolescents possess a high level of proficiency in online activities and dedicate a significant portion of their time engaging with their peers via social media platforms.

As adults, we are aware of how peer pressure impacts young people and how their friends, who are adept at promoting cannabis, might influence them if they are not knowledgeable about the drug. Experts in the field refer to the endorsement of cannabis usage for young people as "dorm room law," or “street law” rather than supported scientific peer-reviewed research unsupportive of cannabis use among young individuals. Multiple studies have consistently demonstrated that the drug disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities. My objective is to inform people that purchasing cannabis online is even more unfavorable than buying from dispensaries, as they are unaware of the quality and nature of the product they will receive.

**Comment 12:**

**Quote/Paraphrase**

Whereas the flower being seized in the United States circa 2000 averaged ∼5% THC, the average potency of the flower being sold in retail markets is closer to 20% THC, and stores usually sell flower with THC levels >25%. (p.5)

**Essential Element:**

**Persuasive Writing Techniques**

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

This quote is additive and variant. The writer states that the level of THC has increased compared to the "Woodstock weed" era, during which THC content was 5% (Larkin). However, it is detrimental to individuals who consume marijuana with a THC content of 20% or more. Research indicates that a significant concentration of THC is associated with the occurrence of psychosis and other mental health issues, as well as impairments in brain development and decreased levels of intelligence quotient (IQ) (Kroon, et al, 2020). According to Berenson (2019), older Americans perceive marijuana as a very mild substance that is infrequently consumed in social settings and concerts.

**Contextualization:**

I firmly believe that THC, the compound responsible for the psychoactive effects of Cannabis, poses a significant health risk, particularly to young individuals. By focusing on the legalization and recreational rules, we overlook the impact of high doses of THC on the brains of young individuals. During the 1970s in Trinidad, I observed a significant number of young boys engaging in marijuana use, which ultimately led to their withdrawal from school. Studies have shown that the drug significantly reduces IQ levels and impairs focus and concentration. It is not surprising that I saw a higher prevalence of marijuana usage among boys from low-income backgrounds who faced challenges at home, and therefore turned to marijuana as a means of escaping their difficulties.
Upon my arrival in the United States, I was astonished to discover that it is considered virtually a rite of passage. For example, young individuals attending colleges who come from households in the upper-middle-class bracket often engage in the consumption of marijuana. I am grateful that I gained a deeper understanding at a young age regarding the consequences of marijuana, as I personally witnessed the gateway effect it had on the cocaine epidemic in the 1980s. I observed young men in my neighborhood who initially engaged in marijuana use, but eventually succumbed to addiction to cocaine.

**Truth**

The pursuit of truth is a divine gift, granting us the courage to seek honesty and challenge deceit. However, at times, we adopt worldviews that we believe to be true, yet diverge from God's ultimate truth. The scriptures reveal the truth bestowed upon us by God, as Christ declared himself the embodiment of truth (John 14: 6-10). It is imperative to enlighten young minds about the harsh reality of depression, a silent affliction that touches all of humanity. One important aspect of navigating information is the ability to distinguish between truths stemming from external sources - credible references or experts, and falsehoods that stem from internal biases or social influences. This discernment is key in critically evaluating information and making informed decisions (Heddendorf &Vos, 2009).

 Studies unveil a trend where men, in particular, mask their depression, unable to share their truth (McKenzie et al., 2022). Educating the youth on the detrimental effects of marijuana on the mind and body, including the risk of developing disorders like schizophrenia and cannabis use disorder, is vital.

The existence of absolute truth and personhood forms the cornerstone for moral conduct and human rights. Without a foundation based on these principles, the justification for historical atrocities remains unchecked (Smith, 2014). In questioning the validity of diverse worldviews, we venture into uncertain territory. Whether embracing Christianity, Islam, Secularism, Marxism, New Spirituality, or Postmodernism, we inherently label opposing views as distorted. Amidst this clash of ideologies, discerning the absolute truth remains a formidable challenge, as not all claims can coexist harmoniously, as articulated by (Noebel, 2006).

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