

***Cannabis* consumption rituals by users on the border between Brazil and Uruguay**

Rituais de consumo de *cannabis* por usuários na fronteira entre o Brasil e o Uruguai

Rituales de consumo de *cannabis* por usuarios en la frontera entre Brasil y Uruguay

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Abstract: Aim: To understand the rituals of consumption of Cannabis Sativa by users in a Brazilian city bordering Uruguay. **Method:** A qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study. Data was collected with 11 users of Cannabis Sativa through a semi-structured interview in October 2016, and submitted to Content Analysis. **Results:** Consumption rituals are influenced by sociocultural, economic and political elements, strengthened by the divergent policies regarding cannabis consumption in these countries. These rituals cross the acquisition, frequency, quantity, methods, places, socialization and sensations experienced by the users. **Conclusion:** The rituals are linked to the characteristics of the user, social groups and territory. The conflicting influences of the public policies existing between the two countries marked by the regulation of Cannabis in Uruguay are highlighted, which fosters changes that are continually happening in the rituals of consumption. Hence, it is necessary to accompany the social transformations in this space.

Keywords: Cannabis; Border areas; Ritual behavior; Illicit drugs

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Resumo: Objetivo: conhecer os rituais de consumo de Cannabis Sativa por usuários em uma cidade brasileira que faz fronteira com o Uruguai. **Método:** estudo qualitativo, exploratório e descritivo. Os dados foram coletados com 11 usuários de Cannabis Sativa por meio de entrevista semiestruturada, em outubro de 2016 e submetidos a Análise de Conteúdo. **Resultados:** os rituais de consumo revelam-se influenciados por elementos socioculturais, econômicos e políticos, potencializados pelas políticas divergentes referentes ao consumo de Cannabis desses países. Estes rituais perpassam a aquisição, periodicidade, quantidade, métodos, locais, socialização e sensações experienciadas pelos usuários. **Conclusão:** os rituais estão atrelados às características do usuário, grupos sociais e do território. Destaca-se as influências conflitantes das políticas públicas existentes entre os dois países, marcadas pela regulamentação da Cannabis no Uruguai, o que fomenta mudanças que estão, continuamente, acontecendo nos rituais de consumo, sendo necessário acompanhar as transformações sociais neste espaço.

Descritores: Cannabis; Áreas de fronteira; Comportamento ritualístico; Drogas ilícitas

Resumen: Objetivo: conocer los rituales del consumo de Cannabis Sativa de los usuarios en una ciudad brasileña que limita con Uruguay. **Método:** estudio cualitativo, exploratorio y descriptivo. Los datos se recolectaron con 11 usuarios de Cannabis Sativa por medio de una entrevista semiestructurada en octubre de 2016, y se los sometió a Análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** los rituales se ven influenciados por elementos socioculturales, económicos y políticos, potenciados por las políticas divergentes referentes al consumo de Cannabis de esos países. Esos rituales están relacionados con la adquisición, periodicidad, cantidad, métodos, locales, socialización y sensaciones experimentadas por los usuarios. **Conclusión:** los rituales están vinculados a las características del usuario, de los grupos sociales y del territorio. Se destacan las influencias conflictivas de las políticas públicas existentes entre los dos países señaladas por la reglamentación del Cannabis en Uruguay, lo que alienta cambios que suceden de manera continua en los rituales, siendo necesario acompañar las transformaciones sociales en este espacio.

Descriptor: Cannabis; Áreas de frontera; Comportamiento ritual; Drogas ilícitas

Introduction

The use of psychoactive substances (PAS), popularly referred to as “drugs”, alcohol and tobacco considered as licit and *Cannabis Sativa* as illicit, has been widely discussed nowadays, due to the increasing problematic use and the low efficiency of the drugs prohibitionist policies. In countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, the United States and Uruguay, innovative public policies regulating the use of some PASs have already been adopted.¹

In Uruguay, a country bordering Brazil, *Cannabis Sativa*, known as marijuana and considered one of the most consumed drugs in the world, is a PAS that is no longer in the illegality list. In this country, the entire process of planting, possession and trade of the substance was regulated by Law 19,172, sanctioned in December 2013.²

This conjecture brings new characteristics to consumption in Uruguay: from illegality to legality and from the user’s social exclusion to social inclusion. However, the setting where

there is intersection of divergent policies on the subject, as in the case of the border between Brazil and Uruguay, has particularities arising from territorial, political and paradigmatic boundaries. In addition to the interactions mentioned, this territory is the space in which people from both countries interact in everyday life, whether in commerce or in cultural affairs, obtaining an identity of border people.³

In this setting of political contrasts, *Cannabis* use occurs in a unique way, materializing a ritual of consumption with unique characteristics and dynamics. The rituals are understood as social events of a group that are influenced by different contexts, including cultural and political ones, which become mutable according to the interaction of the subjects involved and these contextual elements.⁴

Considering that the frontier is influenced by the two-way antagonistic policies, it becomes an unexplored scenario of possibilities regarding the consumption rituals of *Cannabis Sativa*. Therefore, the research question is the following: how do the rituals of *Cannabis Sativa* consumption by users in the border region between Brazil and Uruguay occur? Consumption is understood as the set of sociocultural processes carried out with a view to the appropriation and use of a given product and that this action has symbolic value and determines the roles played by consumers and the social groups to which they belong.⁵ And, the research aim is to know the rituals of consumption of *Cannabis Sativa* by users in a Brazilian city bordering Uruguay.

Method

This article derives from a research entitled “ Monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the new Uruguayan *Cannabis* market regulatory policy on public health and drug use practices in the border area between Brazil and Uruguay”,⁶ carried out in the six municipalities bordering these countries.

The article presents the qualitative results obtained in a Brazilian municipality that has a dry border with Uruguay. The study has a descriptive exploratory nature,⁷ in order to answer the proposed objective. Eleven *Cannabis* users participated in the research, two female and nine male, single, aged between 26 and 60 years old, with a predominance of people in their thirties. Eight people had not completed elementary school, two had completed elementary school, and one was in college. The study included Brazilian users of *Cannabis*, aged 18 or older.

Data collection was performed through semi-structured interviews containing the characterization of the participants and open guiding questions, addressing the use of *Cannabis* and the contexts that permeate this action, the dynamics of the rituals and the aspects that influence them. To access the participants and data collection, performed in October 2016, the non-probabilistic method called Snowball was used.⁸ The first participant (key informant) was referred by the Health Service responsible for taking care of people who make a problematic use of a PAS in the city where the study was developed. After participating, he indicated other users, and they indicated other participants, thus effecting the proposed method. The interviews were conducted at the mental health service, the basic health unit, in public spaces such as squares, and in the participants' houses.

To ensure the reliability of the speeches, the interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and the signing of the Free Informed Consent Form. Soon after, they were transcribed, immediately starting the process of Content Analysis,⁹ which consists of three stages: pre-analysis; material exploration; and treatment of the results and interpretation. As criterion for closing the research, the appearance of homogeneous data repetitively was used, that is, when there was data saturation. After the beginning of data saturation, the participation of another three users was sought to confirm the findings and to validate the saturation.¹⁰

The macro-research was funded by the National Secretariat of Drugs of the Ministry of Justice (*Secretaria Nacional sobre Drogas do Ministério da Justiça*, SENAD/MJ) and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Applied Research (*Instituto de Pesquisa*

Aplicada, IPEA) under Protocol No. 13/2015 and the Ethics and Research Committee of the Nursing School (*Faculdade de Enfermagem*, UFPel) under Protocol 1,757,94/2016, in compliance with Resolution¹¹ 466/2012 of the National Health Council of the Ministry of Health, which deals with the guidelines and standards for research studies involving human beings. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, they were identified by the letter “U”, referring to “user”, followed by the order of the interviews, for example, U1.

Results

From the different interrelated and interposed elements the construct of rituals of *Cannabis* use in the border region emerged, with particularities influenced by socio-cultural, economic and political aspects, presented in five categories:

Border region and its influences on drug acquisition

The acquisition of *Cannabis* in Brazil and Uruguay takes place in a particular way, influenced by the dissonance of the laws governing the trade of this substance in both countries. The participants reveal that the acquisition of *Cannabis* is carried out on the Brazilian side of the border. Such action is related to the formation of a network of relations among users and dealers in order to have access to the illicit PAS. They also reveal that the acquisition may be through third parties, or through direct contact with the dealers:

it's easy to get it, you only need to be invited by someone who smokes. (U2)
I used to go straight to the drug den [point of sale for drug users] to buy it from a drug dealer. (U4)

it's hard to get weed in this area, you have to know someone. nobody says a thing because nobody knows, only the friend of the drug dealer, then this person shows you where it is. Then you get to know, and you can show it to another friend of yours. Only those who use it know. (U11)

Reports expressed that, on the Brazilian side, the means to get the substance are easier, although trade is illegal. In order to buy this substance in Brazil, users need to go to unfamiliar places or spaces of social vulnerability, usually “drug” trafficking zones, which is processed

differently in Uruguay, since users can plant it at home and there are specific points for this market with no other psychoactive substances available:

it's simple to get it, you ask in the city center and you get it anywhere. Here [in Brazil] you feel bad because you are going to enter into a village, but in Uruguay everything is easier. There's a place only to buy weed, unlike here with the rest of the drugs, which I think makes it easier to use other things. Because you want to buy one thing and there is another one. It is similar to going to the supermarket to buy something and look at the poster of another product and end up taking it [...]. (U3)

after legalization in Uruguay, trafficking has stopped. Now people plant it, they don't buy with dealers anymore. There is no place for us [Brazilians] to buy in Uruguay. (U8)

Socialization and consumption settings

The way and place of use differ among the participants, the consumption ritual is expressed in two ways: in group and alone. Despite mentioning that the effect of the substance may be the same as when using it alone, other users report greater satisfaction when using it accompanied. From the mentioned places of use, public spaces such as squares and streets and private spaces in order to feel safer were mentioned:

I used drugs with the 'partners', at home, but I don't feel like using them anymore. I sometimes feel like using cannabis, but I try not to. I do not smoke alone. I only smoke if I have someone with me. [...] [...] I have a friend who smokes with me. (U1)

when I smoke, it's always with 'partners'. We used to smoke on the streets, when someone passed by, we would hide. At home, alone, never. My family doesn't allow it. (U2)

usually alone, it's rare in group. In the Uruguay square, sometimes you get there and the guys come to smoke. Not here, the thing 'gets difficult' [police issues] a little bit. Smoking alone is one thing, another is when you give weed to someone. Our law is very bad. [...]. (U3)

[...] both ways. The difference is that in group it gives more joy. One tells a joke, the other tells another. Then each one gets a girl and goes to the

party. And alone the person gets too high and stays still, sleeping, and will only wake up after the effect has passed. I prefer to smoke in group. (U5)

Consumption practices

To perform the consumption ritual, the reports demonstrate unanimity referring to how to use *Cannabis* and the necessary material. The preferred substance, in terms of quality, is related to the scope of the desired effect with its use, especially pressed *Cannabis* (largest offer in the illegal Brazilian trade), which is prepared in the form of cigarettes, with silky paper. For the preparation of the cigarette with pressed *Cannabis* it needs to be "grinded", that is loose, since its presentation is solid with unknown attributes, so that it is easier to place it in the paper in order to wrap the substance.

Typically, handmade *Cannabis* cigarettes are made from one or more silky papers. *Cannabis* is used according to its intended effect, emphasizing the importance of swallowing the smoke and taking a long breathing pause to reach the psychoactive effect faster and more intensely, the so-called "pressing" the smoke:

I smoke with silky paper, wrap it and smoke. I put two silky papers, I divide the weed because it is too much, you can make three cigarettes with the amount of a purchase. The best weeds are the strongest, the most rubbery ones [pressed] that you have to crumble. (U1)

I would close it as a normal cigarette, grind it [crumble], remove the little seed from the middle, throw it away, leaving only the leaf and the sprig. Grind it very well, inside the paper itself, it had to be silky paper, not the tobacco paper. Then we pull, swallow the smoke, hold the breath, and the smoke 'rises to the head'. (U5)

Quantity and frequency of consumption

The statements express that there are variations in the amount of *Cannabis* consumed and that it depends on the availability of the psychoactive substance. It has been observed that the same *Cannabis* cigarette may be used in several stages, for example, smoking one part, putting it out and later smoking the remainder:

I smoke a couple of 'cigarettes' a day, in several times. Daily, seven times a day, a cigarette in seven times, sometimes two. You do it twice [smoke inhalation] and it puts out. About four times a day, in the morning, before lunch, after lunch, before bed. After lunch because it is digestive and relaxing. I use about two grams a day, it depends: two grams of 'pressed' is a 'little', two grams of 'florão' [Cannabis without mix] is another. (U3)

it depends on the amount you have. If I have enough, I smoke a lot. If not, I do not smoke. (U6)

The reports show that the participants can stay for long periods without using *Cannabis*, ranging from months to years. It was also identified that the user of this substance does not develop cravings for Cannabis:

I was 28 when I stopped using frequently. The maximum I have ever been was four years without using. If I don't want anymore, I don't smoke. (U1)

I spent 2 years straight without smoking weed. I haven't used it in a month. (U10)

Sensations

Multiple sensations and effects are assigned to *Cannabis* use by the participants, varying from person to person. Effects such as anxiolytics, antidepressants, relaxation and calming sensations were expressed in the reports. In addition to these, increased appetite as well as changes in libido have been reported. The negative aspect mentioned was mental confusion:

[...] I start to 'lose it' [get confused]. (U1)

[...] there is no medicine that makes you calmer than cannabis, it makes you calm. I feel everything, the weed totally changes, sex is super attractive, you get more potency, it causes more sexual potency. I end up having more desire in sex and it gets much better. I get happier, there is no drug that gives as much joy as weed. (U6)

I think I get more [...] I get happier too. (U7)

it helps me very much to sleep and eat. (U9)

Discussion

The border socio-cultural context and the use of *Cannabis* are predictive of the ritualistic experience for *Cannabis* users. As the literature shows,¹² the consumption ritual pervades

behavior patterns established by users, encompassing the methods of drug acquisition, selection of the physical and social setting where the use occurs, the ways and frequency of use, the amount consumed, the sensations and activities undertaken under its effect, the association between substances and the ways to avoid harmful consequences.

The heterogeneity with regard to access to the substance appears to be influenced by aspects of illegality and criminalization of sale and consumption. This fact demonstrates that access is facilitated by the informal social networks existing among users. By belonging to a network, the user has free access to illegal marketing settings. However, when not part of a network, the user ends up having difficulty in accessing the points of illegal trade of psychoactive substances.

A study conducted in São Paulo and Salvador¹³ reveals the importance of the social network formed by the users, covering their first contact with *Cannabis*, which takes place through friends and/or family and, subsequently, in the realization and maintenance of the consumption. This network is considered effective due to the dependence the user develops on it regarding the acquisition and use of *Cannabis*. The network interferes in the control of use, being a way of reducing damage,¹⁴ considering that the elements that are part of this network are not always available for the person to be able to consume, which may impair the use when not in their company.

Even facing the severe laws prohibiting the commercialization and consumption of *Cannabis* in Brazil, it is easier to acquire the substance on the Brazilian side of the border. This aspect reveals the inefficiency of the public security services in guaranteeing the maintenance of the prohibitionist policies and in avoiding *Cannabis* trade in Brazil. This points to the rupture of *Cannabis* trafficking in Uruguay after the regulation of trade and consumption, since Uruguayan laws make legalized trade unfeasible for Brazilians and they no longer find this substance in the illegal market.

The ritual of acquisition of *Cannabis* by the Brazilian user includes going to the trafficking points, where other illegal psychoactive substances are sold, exposing the user to the possibility of diversified experimentation, when the effects are already known. This fact contrasts with the Uruguayan reality where there is no exposure to other substances, as the user has the possibility to grow the plant, participate in planting clubs or buy a volume of 40g per month in pharmacies in the country, as a result of the regulation of trade and consumption of *Cannabis* in Uruguay.²

The *Cannabis* acquisition ritual on the Brazilian side of the border includes going to trafficking points, leading to the insertion of the user into socially vulnerable settings, spaces where there is a possibility of exposure to urban violence or confrontation among police and drug dealers, among others. The acquisition of the substance in Uruguay, on the other hand, seems to be safer, as it avoids the presence of users in spaces of violence. The Regulatory Law allows the production of *Cannabis* for own use,² offering a greater certainty as to the origin and quality of the product, excluding the possibility of assigning other unknown substances to the supplies used.¹⁵

The ritual of *Cannabis* use on the border between Brazil and Uruguay is a social event for some users, while for others it takes place in a particular way. This divergence seems to be related to the acceptance of this practice by the social groups in which the user is inserted, as well as to the attempt to prevent unpleasant situations that may arise. It is inferred that the use in group brings greater pleasure to consumption, and this factor is conditioned to the sociability of the elements of the group.

The literature reveals that when users are starting to use *Cannabis*, they need to learn how to use it and feel protected from its possible effects, thus being essential to perform the ritual collectively.¹⁶ The need to perform rituals of use in group influences their periodicity, which can be understood as a preventive factor for problematic use.¹³ The context of collective use permeates the development of rules and social controls that are established by the group.

However, when learning how to use and make the most of the effects of the substance, many users choose to use it alone.¹⁶ It is inferred that the reasons given for this choice would be to avoid getting involved with people who use other psychoactive substances with which the user does not want to have contact or to be encouraged to use, or to stay in abstinence from other “drugs” taken by other members of the group, such as Crack. This is in line with the literature,¹⁷ which disregards the ability of the *Cannabis* user to avoid contact with another substance. The ritual of collective use may be avoided in order not to draw the attention of the police when it takes place in public settings.

Regarding the place where the ritual of *Cannabis* use is performed, it seems to be linked to aspects related to user safety, as with other psychoactive substances. Performing in closed settings, such as the house where there is no exposure to society, proves to be a protective factor, which keeps the user confidential and prevents the recrimination of this practice.¹⁷

However, in the impossibility of doing so in a private place, the use in public settings on the Brazilian side of the border happens with precaution and with the need to hide the act. In this sense, ecological aspects become paramount to ensure secrecy and security, such as less exposed places of squares and parks, perpetuating the relatively reserved rituals. Also permeating ideals of discretion, respect and parsimony, which aim not to disturb or scandalize society.¹⁸

The literature shows that even when the ritual happens in a more hidden place, there is some degree of exposure of this practice due to the aroma exhaled by the combustion of *Cannabis*.¹⁸ Thus, when performed in a private place, such as the user's house, there is the possibility of neighbors noticing the practice and calling the public security services. However, in outdoor settings the practice is even more exposed, and may draw the attention of passers-by or the police. In general, by trying to keep the practice secret, the user may expose it in another way.¹⁹ In order to avoid such a situation, performing the ritual on the Uruguayan side of the

border proves to be an alternative to Brazilian users who seek security and acceptance in this setting, even if forbidden.

This condition reveals the lack of a public debate in Brazil and the repetition of false, authoritarian and prejudiced ideas that disqualify, marginalize and demonize the user, who needs to remain hidden, and is considered a risk to society. This reductionist way of stereotyping the user ensures the concealment of structural problems in society, as it emphasizes the importance of this imaginary enemy and is necessary for the *status quo*.¹²

The use that embodies part of the ritual of consumption in the border region happens specifically for *Cannabis*. The physical characteristics and mode of presentation of the substance seems to lead the user to adopt uniform rituals, with emphasis on the consumption of the substance presented in the pressed mode, which needs to be “grinded” (crumbled), thus facilitating its accommodation so that the cigarette is rolled.

This practice was also reported in a previous study,¹³ which describes that the act of “grinding” makes the herb thinner, facilitating the removal of the unwanted parts, considering that there is no preference for seeds and stems of the herb. After the pressed form, the substance becomes less dense, more expandable and malleable, facilitating the rationalization of the amount of use, distributing it in a possible or desired number of cigarettes.

It is inferred that the preparation of the cigarette with silky paper relates to its low combustibility characteristics, slowing the burning of the cigarette; to the low taste interference due to the reduced addition of dyes and other chemicals to the base material (cellulose, flax, corn fiber, rice straw, among others); and to the paper strength, which ensures the handling of the cigarette without breaking it. In addition, the commercial presentation of silky paper for cigarettes seems to facilitate its packaging and transportation in a discrete way and without damage to the product.

Choosing to use silky paper and not using specific pipes may be linked to the user's fear of discrimination and coercive police action. If questioned by these professionals, users may

attribute the possession of the silky paper to tobacco use, which is a lawful psychoactive substance, reducing the likelihood of having criminal sanctions or other problems with the security agency.

The way *Cannabis* is consumed with cigarettes made from silky paper is safer for the user compared to other illegal substances such as Crack, which has the can or improvised metal pipes as main containers for use.²⁰ Repeated contact with heated aluminum may damage the skin tissue and oral mucosa, causing blisters and sores to appear on the tongue, lips, face and fingers. By sharing this instrument, there may be contact with other users' continuity solutions, such as blood from burn injuries, which may increase the risk of transmission of infectious diseases.¹⁷

The manner in which the ritual of *Cannabis* use takes place is directly related to the desired effect. These aspects consider the pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics of the substance, and are revealed in the act of swallowing and holding the smoke at the pulmonary level, in order to allow absorption and transport into the bloodstream and then to reach the central nervous system level and obtain the desired effect.

The frequency of *Cannabis* consumption and the quantity consumed are linked to its availability and form of presentation and not to the continuous desire to obtain the sensation provided by the use. It is inferred that this aspect reveals the absence of the cravings, described as the anxiety that the individual acquires due to the absence of psychoactive substance in the organism.²¹

This characteristic of the psychoactive substance points to the possibility of establishing a certain control in relation to the frequency and necessity of use. It can also allow the user to plan and choose the best time for being exposed to social vulnerability settings for substance acquisition, avoiding moments of political or social tension among drug dealers and public security agents.

Didactically, the ways in which the control over substance use happens encompasses three aspects: self-control, social controls and heterocontrols. Self-controls correspond to the varying degrees of control that users are able to exercise over their consumption, frequency, amount used, way of use and socialization of the involved. These emerge from the user's autonomy to develop practices meeting their needs. However, sometimes self-controls end up being internalizations of social and heterocontrols.²²

Social controls are the informal pressures of the groups to which the user belongs,²² and influence the way the user relates with the substance and establishes the consumption rituals. Through these controls, also understood as social sanctions, the acceptable use is defined, as well as the behavior patterns, the safe social means, the precautions to be taken before use, among others, condemning the elements and actions that are beyond this standard.²³ These include the rules established for the effective use regarding the choice of place of consumption, so as to preserve this action from exposure that directly or indirectly harms the consumption and safety of other users.¹⁸

On the other hand, heterocontrols are the policies, laws or public actions aimed at curbing, controlling or facing the use of psychoactive substances. This kind of control seeks to impose over other ways of control; however, although legitimate, they are not able to solve the problems that involve the theme even tangentially.²²

The hetero and social controls that influence the rituals of *Cannabis* use on the Brazilian side of the border are based on conceptions that present the use as a criminal practice with social stigmas, leading to a self-control that pervades the secrecy of the ritual and the distance of services that may proclaim criminalization speeches and actions. In contrast, the hetero and social controls established on the Uruguayan side of the border permeate the possibility of non-exclusion of *Cannabis* users and the establishment of self-controls that include the participation of health professionals, among other agents. From this perspective, the possibility of effective therapeutic actions aimed at collective health emerges, such as the use of the Harm Reduction

strategy, aiming at the replacement of heavy psychoactive substances with mild ones, such as *Cannabis*.

The sensations provided by the *Cannabis* consumption ritual proved to be heterogeneous, an aspect found in the literature,¹⁶ and these sensations suffer interference from each person's singular and concrete experiences.¹³ The different sensations were also described in another study,¹³ pointing out that there is a variety of these and that they may be positive and pleasant, or negative, indifferent, disappointing and unpleasant.

The current literature seeks to consolidate knowledge regarding the sensations provided by the use of *Cannabis* through its therapeutic effects, demonstrating that it is capable of providing anxiolytic effects, stimulating appetite, as well as antiemetic, relaxing and analgesic effects for chronic and acute pain. Given this range of beneficial effects, the possibility emerges of using *Cannabis* in treatments for conditions such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus, depression, cancer, and epilepsy, among others.²⁴

The reported divergences regarding the sensations may be attributed to two aspects: user characteristics and *Cannabis* characteristics. Regarding users, the elements related to the emotional needs, socialization and affection as well as personality and psychosocial characteristics stand out.

Related to the characteristics of *Cannabis* that interfere in its effects, the different forms of presentation, species and parts of the plant, and the varied physicochemical characteristics stand out, with different concentrations of THC (active ingredient of *Cannabis*) which may interfere in the sensations. It is worth noting that, due to the illegality of production, trade and consumption in Brazil, other substances unknown and undesirable by consumers may be added to *Cannabis*.

The addition of other substrates to *Cannabis* may occur with the intention of increasing the yield of the plant compared to its pure form, aiming to provide greater profitability to illegal

trade. Such practice may lead users to consume other substances that are potentially harmful to health and do not provide the desired sensations.

It is noteworthy that the theme discussed in this article cannot be dissociated from the social context. Nevertheless, as the literature reveals, the aspects regarding drug availability, market considerations, trends, social rules and standards, values, life structure of users, among others, remain unclear, aspects which also influence the consumption of any psychoactive substance.

Final considerations

Through this study it was possible to know the aspects that permeate the ritual use of *Cannabis* by users on the border between Brazil and Uruguay, such as the border's influence on *Cannabis* use, socialization among Brazilian and Uruguayan users, favorable settings for consumption and specific aspects of the border that influence the practice of use.

Thus, the ritual is linked to the personal characteristics of the user, the social groups and the territory in which the action is performed, highlighting the conflicting influences of public policies existing between the two countries. The confluence of the drug laws of the two countries in question may interfere in the ways of acquiring the substance, in the socialization, effective use, choice of locations, frequency of use and feelings experienced by users.

As a limitation of the study, we observed the sample uniformity of the participants reached by the snowball method, which may reduce the contrast of perspectives of these individuals in relation to the rituals of *Cannabis* use on the border between Brazil and Uruguay. However, the data collection method is justified due to the difficulty of access and approach to *Cannabis* users.

Considering the Brazil-Uruguay interface existing in this border space and the regulation of the latter in relation to the *Cannabis* production chain, it is considered that changes in the rituals of consumption are continuously occurring, the accompaniment of social

transformations in this ambivalent space being necessary. Given the above, further research is suggested in order to unveil the social and political nuances involved, aiming at a continuous and broad debate on the subject.

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