Project Summary

My project involves an in-depth case study of the medical cannabis program in Minnesota, and seeks to understand how governance operates through medicalized drug reform policies. To understand how governance operates, I draw connections from the historical emergence of the Drug War and the development of evidence-based medicine, the context from which the legislation emerged, the array of institutions created to implement and regulate the program, and the experience of patients participating in the program – thereby drawing connections from the structural, legislative, institutional, and embodied levels of the program. Specifically, my project involves (1) a discourse analysis of the legislative debate and professional position statements by medical professionals and law enforcement groups in Minnesota; (2) an institutional analysis of the various organizations involved in making and regulating medical cannabis; (3) a survey of healthcare professionals’ attitudes about and participation in the medical cannabis program; (4) a questionnaire of the Medical Cannabis Citizen Review Panel members attitudes about and experiences serving on the Panel; analysis of two years of state-collected program data; and (6) in-depth interviews with 27 patients participating in the program. I draw on new materialist theories to frame my analysis, and through these analyses, I propose a model for governance operates through the “symbiotic convergence” of medicine and law enforcement with the medicalization of drugs.

Results

- Publications
  - I have submitted a revised version of my first dissertation chapter to the peer-reviewed journal Sociology of Health & Illness, which is currently under review.
  - I plan to submit at least four additional articles derived from my second and third dissertation chapters in 2021.
- Presentations (planned or completed)
  - I presented a paper from this research at the Law & Society Association’s 2020 Annual Conference.
  - Another paper was also accepted to be presented at the 2020 International Conference on Sociology & Anthroposophy and at the 2020 Pacific Sociological Association conference. Both conferences were cancelled due to COVID19 pandemic.
  - I plan to submit another paper from this research to the 2022 American Sociological Association’s annual conference.
• Grant proposals (planned or submitted)
  o I received a CLA CARES Summer Dissertation grant in 2021.
  o I also applied for the Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy research grant, which is currently under review.

• For curriculum development, course description and schedule
  o I am currently teaching a course that has been informed and inspired by this research in my current Visiting Lecturer position in the University of Richmond's Department of Sociology & Anthropology, titled “On Drugs: Pleasure, Panic, and Punishment” (SOC 379). The course seeks to understand how drugs have been used throughout human society, why people use and experience them, and how authoritative institutions have been created to govern drug use.

Future Project Plans
• This project is for my doctoral dissertation, which I plan to submit and defend in spring 2022.
• From this research, I plan to write additional journal articles from my data that will not be able to fit into my dissertation (at least two additional articles). One of which will focus on physicians’ attitudes about chronic pain patients and their conflation with “drug seekers,” and therefore how medicine functions as a drugs policing agent. The other will focus on a theoretical and analytical framework for embodied drug use experiences and how institutional analysis can be derived from focusing on embodiment.
• As previously stated, in addition to the article I’ve already submitted for peer review from my dissertation, I imagine submitting at least four more journal articles from my dissertation alone.