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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE:
A STUDY OF ATHLETE AND DOPING CONTROL
OFFICER RELATIONS**

— SUMMARY REPORT —

Based on a Master's Thesis Project by:

Daniel George Thorpe

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Introduction

Since Canada's 'national embarrassment' in 1988 when Ben Johnson's Olympic Gold Medal in track and field was rescinded due to his disqualification following a positive drug test (Walker, 1988), Canada has been in the forefront of the anti-doping movement (Canadian Heritage, 2001; Dubin, 1990). To ensure that a similar scandal would never reoccur, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) developed stringent doping control rules. Canadian athletes competing at the international level, the vast majority of whom have no history of doping, are required to disclose their whereabouts to ensure that they can be located to provide urine or blood samples in full view of CCES doping control officers (DCOs), 365 days of the year, with no advance notice (CCES, 2011). As such, when athletes are notified for doping control, they are required to stop what they are doing, follow doping control officer's directives and expose their genitals. Failure to comply with these rules or a positive test result can destroy an athlete's career or cause a lengthy ban from competition (ASADA, 2010). As a result, athlete and DCO relations can be awkward and in some instances very adversarial, yet no research exists that specially addresses this topic.

The purpose of this research was to examine how athletes and DCOs understood doping control relations and which elements of the relations were most contentious.

The research was informed by Michel Foucault's understanding of power and his concepts of discipline, panopticism, and governmentality. The adaptation of these concepts elicited an enhanced understanding of athlete/doping control relations as Foucault's (1978) understanding of power enabled me to unpack the tactics (discipline and panopticism) utilized by DCOs to mobilize power over athletes. In addition, Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality, which he defined as the art of government, allowed me to examine how the CCES and the WADA use policy to direct both athletes and DCOs thereby shaping athlete and DCO relations.

Research Strategies

Ten interviews were conducted with athletes and 10 with DCOs between March and June 2013. The duration of each interview ranged from 28 minutes to 110 minutes. A list of open-ended questions that centred on predetermined topics was used to guide the conversations.

All athletes who participated in this study were current or former members of the Canadian Senior National Swim Team, had participated in at least one Olympic Games and had been members of the CCES Registered Testing Pool. In addition, 10 CCES certified DCOs also participated. An effort was made to include DCOs who had worked with swimmers, as sport-specific nuances in the doping control process may impact the DCOs' relations with athletes. In addition, equal numbers of male and female athletes were sampled because doping control is a gender-dichotomized practice whereby female athletes interact with female DCOs and male athletes interact with male DCOs.

Findings

In the following section, the key findings of the study are highlighted.

Athlete and DCO Understanding of Doping Control Relations

As a means to examine athlete/DCO understanding of doping control relations, the typical relationships, the pros and cons of doping control and athlete/DCO responsibilities during doping control were examined.

Typical Relationship

When asked to describe the typical athlete and DCO relationship, three themes emerged: the friendly professional, initial negative reaction and athlete/DCO familiarity.

The Friendly Professional

Two terms were frequently used to describe the athlete/DCO interaction: professional and friendly. Three of ten athletes and six of ten DCOs used the term professional to describe the relationship. Others alluded to such a relationship without using the terms explicably. In addition, six of ten athletes used the term friendly to describe the typical interaction. Similarly, six of ten DCOs also used the descriptor friendly or cordial.

Initial Negative Reaction

The second tendency was that athletes had a negative reaction when they first encountered DCOs. This theme emerged in several of my conversations with athletes (4 of 10) and DCOs (8 of 10). The negative reaction was the result of athletes' understanding that once they were selected for doping control by the DCO or chaperone they were required to comply with the process and forgo their previous plans or risk facing an anti-doping violation. During the process, however, the negative attitude of the athletes typically subsided.

Athlete/DCO Familiarity

Familiarity commonly exists in athlete/DCO relations. The majority of athletes (6 of 10) interviewed discussed how they recognized DCOs and even continued conversations initiated in the past. The DCOs (9 of 10) shared similar experiences. Interestingly, the familiarity was described as both beneficial and problematic; it may increase athlete comfort during doping control resulting in the athlete being able to provide a urine sample more quickly but it could also affect the integrity of the doping control process as a DCO may be more likely to succumb to the demand of an athlete and disregard doping control rules.

Quotation 1 and Quotation 2 highlight the key elements discussed above: the professional/friendly interaction, the initial negative reaction and the familiar relationship. Furthermore, they illustrate how athletes and DCOs have a similar understanding of the relationship.

Quotation 1 - Athlete

It is kind of just... so they show up and you ask who they are testing and you are like 'ohh damn it is me'. Then they just kind of laugh at it and then if you want some water they'll bring a bag and you have to grab it out yourself. They will just wait there and they will have a conversation with someone. They obviously have to make sure you're not... I think doing something weird with the water bottle or something like that. I am not sure what it is. They just have to make sure you're in the vicinity of their vision and then after that you go into the room and we kind of just chat a little bit. I remember talking to them about some TV show last time and we just talked about that again this time. While we were doing that we were just looking over the forms and just making sure all the numbers matched and all the information was correct. Then we went to the bathroom... it is not an awkward part but it is definitely the most awkward part of the process and then you just go back into the room and you do a little bit more paperwork and then after that they say just 'have a nice day, see you later possibly and no news is good news'. That is how it kind of goes.

Quotation 2 - DCO

I think that in the beginning it is... I mean it stays throughout the whole thing as a professional relationship... I don't think it is a negative relationship, I think that it is an amicable relationship. I think that the athlete although frustrated at the time respects the process and most of them are very pro testing because they want to make sure everyone else is playing fairly. I do think that when over time... because I've tested the same athletes over time... you do get to know the athlete to some extent. So you are more than just a stranger coming in ... obviously it is still professional but you do get to know certain details about the athlete's life and I think that as long as the professionalism maintained then I think that is OK.

Pros of Doping Control

When asked to describe the pros or positive aspects of doping control, both athletes and DCOs typically referred to an answer they had previously given during the interview, their description of the purpose of doping control. Participants' responses generally fell into two categories: doping control is beneficial because: i) it protects sport (8 of 10 athletes) or ii) it protects both the sport and athletes (7 of 10). Several (11 of 20) participants nearly quoted the purpose verbatim as outlined by WADA (2009) by using the phrase "level playing field".

Cons of Doping Control

Both athletes and DCOs highlighted several cons or drawbacks associated with doping control including: i) how it could hinder performance, ii) how it was ineffective, iii) how it violated athletes' personal integrity, iv) how it was inconvenient, and v) how it was an invasion of privacy.

Hindrance to performance

Although many of the athletes were unwilling to use doping control as an excuse for poor performances, several (4 of 10) of their comments suggested that doping control had hindered their athletic performances because they were required to complete doping control late into the night, and it decreased training time. Five of the DCOs were also cognizant of the implications of doping control on performance.

Ineffective testing procedures

The majority of athletes (9 of 10) and DCOs (8 of 10) felt that the current testing procedures were unable to detect sophisticated forms of doping. In addition, doping control was deemed to be ineffective because administrators utilized improper measures resulting in the conduct of insignificant tests. (See Quotation 3 as exemplar). This critique was reiterated in the interviews of three athletes.

Quotation 3 - DCO

I think that everybody wants numbers. I think that CCES has to report how many tests they've done and FINA has to report and Swimming Canada has to report how many tests they've done, so you are going to have to do tests that aren't meaningful. So you test athletes that really are not in a high risk category and I think that that is unfortunate. The media wants numbers, the IOC, WADA... everybody wants numbers but those same organizations say it is not about the numbers, it's really what you're doing and what you are testing for and who you are testing and why you're testing and even when you are testing.

Violation of personal integrity

The majority of participants (8 of 10 athletes, 7 of 10 DCOs) used the terms invasive, awkward or uncomfortable to depict how doping control could violate an athlete's personal integrity because it requires athletes to perform private bodily functions in full view of a DCO.

Inconvenience

The majority (6 of 10) of athletes and several (4 of 10) DCOs mentioned inconvenience as a con of doping control. Doping control was described as inconvenient because athletes must choose between cancelling their plans or risk being banned from their sport. Furthermore, (3 of 10) despite stressing improvements to the system, some athletes described the process of submitting whereabouts as too time consuming.

Invasion of privacy

A number of athletes (3 of 10) and DCOs (3 of 10) highlighted how the invasion of athletes' privacy was a negative consequence of current doping control procedures. Doping control was deemed an invasion of privacy as athletes were required to invite DCOs into their private residences and required to submit their daily overnight residence in addition to their location for a daily 60-minute time slot

Pros Outweigh Cons

However, despite the intrusive rules, the inconvenience, and the invasion of privacy, all 10 athletes and all 10 DCOs interviewed agreed that doping control was required to keep some athletes from having an unfair advantage. Athletes were willing to submit to DCOs enforcing the rules as doping control was seen as productive because it enabled them to participate in sport drug-free. It must also be noted that the athletes who had

been subject to doping control most frequently (100+ tests) expressed reservations even though they agreed that doping control was required (See quotation 4 and 5).

Quotation 4 - Experienced athlete (150 tests)

Like I think obviously the answer is yes [doping control is required] but within that I think a lot of the tests are [lagging] behind the drugs that are out there so it almost becomes... the ability of the tests are not up to the ability of the drugs and they might never be... it seems sometimes that it is a bit more of a pain for people that are clean than it would be for the few people that choose to dope.

Quotation 5 - Less experienced athlete (20 tests)

I just think it is important for fair sport. I think it is a good idea. I don't mind doing it because I never obviously have problems doing it. I just think it is something that needs to be done if they want to keep our sport clean.

Athlete Responsibilities

Study participants outlined a primary and a secondary responsibility of athletes during doping control.

Primary

Both athletes (8 of 10) and DCOs (7 of 10) identified that the primary responsibility of the athlete was to follow doping control rules and produce a sample.

Secondary

Four athletes stated that the secondary responsibility of athletes was to be respectful of DCOs. Several DCOs (6 of 10) stated that the secondary role of athletes was to be knowledgeable about the doping control process. Only one athlete stressed the importance of being knowledgeable about the process.

DCO Responsibilities

Study participants outlined primary and secondary responsibilities of DCOs during doping control.

Primary

Similar to athletes, the primary role of DCOs described was to follow anti-doping rules and collect a sample.

Secondary

DCO's were prescribed two secondary responsibilities: be empathic and efficient. Four athletes and four DCOs stressed that DCOs should be empathetic. The additional responsibility of DCOs highlighted was to minimize the amount of time athletes spent in doping control. The importance of an efficient doping control process was paramount. When describing their best experiences in doping control, eight of the ten athletes described the process being completed quickly (10-30 minutes).

Similar Understanding

Several similarities were apparent in how both groups understand doping control relations. After reviewing the descriptions of a typical relationship, the pros and cons of doping control, and the responsibilities of both athletes and DCOs, their understanding differed only slightly. DCOs emphasized that doping control was productive because it protected athletes in addition to sport and DCOs claimed that being knowledgeable of doping control was an athlete's responsibility. Similarities in athletes' and DCOs' understandings were attributed to Foucault's governmentality and the workings of disciplinary power as athletes and DCOs had internalized and normalized CCES's and WADA's guidelines.

Contentious Elements in Doping Control Relations

Athletes and DCOs generally had a similar understanding of doping control, and the typical athlete/DCO relationship was described as both professional and friendly. However, there were instances when it became problematic and even rare instances that escalated to verbal altercations. Six athletes and six DCOs reported that they have been angry or frustrated with an athlete/DCO. Furthermore, four athletes shared that conflict existed in athlete/DCO relations and nine DCOs confirmed that conflict existed. It should be noted that the verbal resistance moved beyond athlete and DCO interactions and involved members of the athlete's support team, specifically their coaches. Two specific catalysts of conflict in athlete/DCO relations were apparent: inefficient doping control and rule confusion.

Inefficient Doping Control

A short time in doping control was typically referred to as a best case scenario for athletes and also reduced the opportunity for problematic interactions. Throughout the interviews three general causes of inefficient doping control were alluded to: insufficient infrastructure, human impediment, and frequency of tests.

Insufficient infrastructure

Both athletes (4 of 10) and DCOs (5 of 10) recognized that insufficient infrastructure (e.g. too few toilets) could be problematic as it resulted in athlete frustration and physical discomfort. Insufficient infrastructure reflects poorly on the DCOs as athletes associate lengthy wait times with a lack of respect on the part of the DCO.

Human impediment

The notion of human impediment emerged in two capacities: strict application of anti-doping rules and game playing. Several athletes (6 of 10) described the process of being read their rights and responsibilities as awkward, frustrating, and a nuisance (See quotation 6 as exemplar). Despite the fact that DCOs/chaperones were following WADA's rules, the experienced athletes felt as though DCOs/chaperones were ignorant of their knowledge. The majority of DCOs also described the complications associated with reading athletes their rights and responsibilities (See quotation 7).

Quotation 6 - Athletes

It is a little bit awkward, like someone just following the rules exactly to the T... it is one of those things where it's like OK I get it, I've done this before.

Stop [reading], I know them, I've heard it a million times.

Quotation 7 – DCO

Yea it happens all the time [a negative reaction towards a DCO reading of athletes' rights and responsibilities]. The answer is always the same. 'Sorry I have to read it to you.' A lot of times they just look away and they walk away or whatever but I can understand that but they have to understand too that it has to be done.

DCOs also complained that athletes impeded the doping control process. Although unremarked upon by athletes in my study, seven of ten DCOs claimed that they had been frustrated by athletes who they felt had engaged in a form of game playing by intentionally increasing the duration of the doping control process.

Frequency of tests

Both athletes and DCOs related how athletes and their support personnel became frustrated when they felt that testing had been conducted too frequently and therefore inefficiently. Testing was deemed too frequent when tests were conducted multiple times a month.

Rule Confusion

Contention among athletes and DCOs was apparent in terms of rule confusion. During my analysis, disconnect emerged in two instances: the whereabouts window and requesting a delay.

Whereabouts window

All the athletes who participated in the study were required to submit a 60-minute time slot during which they would be available and accessible for testing at a specified location for each day. To comply, athletes would record their one hour window at a time when they knew where they were going to be; for many (8 of 10) athletes this was during swim practice. Athletes (7 of 10) chose this hour as they considered it to be the most convenient time for doping control. Interestingly, based on the rarity of tests, it appeared that the CCES purposely avoided testing in the one hour window because if a DCO could not locate an athlete during that time, the athlete received a missed test; three missed tests in an 18-month period could may result in an anti-doping rule violation (CCES, 2011h). Despite the CCES's intentions to spare athletes penalties, the majority of athletes (6 of 10) and one DCO, confirmed that avoiding the time slot frustrated athletes. See quotation 8 as an example of athlete frustration.

Quotation 8 - Athlete

We used to get so frustrated because they [DCOs] never showed up in the hour we gave them. We would always say 'why wouldn't you come in our hour and they are like that hour isn't supposed to be for your convenience. That is just a doping control rule.' I was like OK I understand it is supposed to be random but we choose the hour we choose because that is the best time for you to drug test us... when we 100% know where we are going to be, when we are not in the middle of dinner or the middle of doing something... it is a good time for you to come. I am not saying that they have to come every time in the hour but I was just so frustrated just making sure that I was where I was in my hour and then never getting tested in my hour. The hundred tests I did I never got tested in my hour, like what is that? All the worry I always had about it and then nothing.

Requesting a delay

The second area where athletes demonstrated confusion regarding anti-doping rules was related to requesting a delay in completing doping control. Contention occurred as a result of differences in what athletes/DCOs deemed reasonable and justifiable circumstances. Athletes believed that provisions should have been made to ensure training at different locations was not interrupted and university exams were not missed whereas the DCOs did not.

Recommendations

Several participants' recommendations to alleviate contention in athlete/DCO relations were uncovered in the research. The recommendations were related to the sharing of information and ensuring empathy in the relationship.

Sharing of information

The findings of this thesis reiterate the importance of shared knowledge to facilitate power relations and negate resistance. Both athletes and DCOs agreed that the sharing of such information could be improved in several areas. Athletes (3 of 10) alluded to improving the anti-doping education process. An athlete suggested that sport specific anti-doping rules could be beneficial. The need for improved athlete education can also be inferred by an athlete's description of the manner in which he completed the CCES athlete educational material: "I mean you just kind of put it on mute and wiz through it and then answer questions and just hope you get the right answers". A DCO also recommended improving the process of collecting athlete feedback. The DCO described how the comment form on the doping control form was ineffective as almost all stated "no comment". In addition an athlete and DCO emphasized the need for National Sports Federations [e.g. FINA], National Anti-Doping Organizations [e.g. CCES] and Major Games Organizers to better coordinate testing plans [which athletes are being tested and when] to ensure that testing is not conducted too frequently by chance.

Empathetic DCO

It is apparent that doping control can be construed as repressive as athletes are required to submit to the direction of DCOs. However, despite the imbalance of power in the social relation, athlete and DCO relations are typically described as professional and

friendly. This is likely the case because athletes see the benefit of doping control and also, DCOs are generally very cognizant of athletes' feelings. If DCOs were officious, the likelihood of conflict among athletes (and their support personnel) and DCOs would likely increase. All of the DCOs interviewed described to a greater or lesser degree that demonstrating empathy towards athletes improved the doping control process. The effectiveness of this strategy is demonstrated in Quotation 9.

Quotation 9 - Athlete

They [DCOs] knocked on the door and I was like so frazzled because I had to write a test that day and I was like this is just not cool this is my sleep in day, you woke me up early but they were the sweetest people, like I couldn't even get mad because they were so nice. They were like we didn't really want to do this either. Sorry that it is so early. They were very apologetic. Yea I just think having people who are friendly like that just makes the situation that much better. I mean it is their job and they are told what to do and they have to do it. You can't really get mad at them because they are doing what they have to do.

Conclusion

By engaging directly with 10 athletes and 10 doping control officers (DCOs), this study facilitated a detailed examination of participants' perspectives on doping control relations. The findings revealed that athlete and DCO understandings of doping control relations differed only slightly but contention arose when there were inefficiencies in the doping control process or rule confusion. Similarities in athletes' and DCOs' understandings were attributed to Foucault's governmentality and the workings of disciplinary power as athletes and DCOs had internalized and normalized CCES's and WADA's guidelines. It is my hope that this research can inform policy-makers and potentially improve doping control policy and in turn, enhance the process for both athletes and DCOs.

Please contact Daniel Thorpe at danielgthorpe@gmail.com if you would like additional information.

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