

CANNABIS USE IN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT: AN EXPLORATION

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Abstract

Cannabis use is undergoing a process of normalization, which is allowing for cannabis use to transition from a once deviant social behaviour to remerge as a common lifestyle choice (Duff et al., 2012). On October 17th, 2018, recreational use of cannabis was legalized in Canada. Since then, cannabis use has increased nationally (Statistics Canada, 2019); this is due to the measurable changes in the ways Canadians perceive and understand the risks associated with cannabis use. However, cannabis remains prohibited for varsity student-athletes in Canada. Consequently, varsity student-athletes who use cannabis maintain separate and competing identities as athletes and as cannabis users. Noting both the proliferation of cannabis use culture in Canada and the prohibition of cannabis use for varsity student-athletes, this study employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach to situate cannabis use within a sociocultural context and to explore cannabis use amongst men and women varsity student-athletes from the University of British Columbia. The purposes of this study were twofold. First, I wanted to challenge existing assumptions by uncovering the reasons why athletes use cannabis and how they use it. Second, I wanted to understand the role that cannabis has in shaping athletes' identities by exploring the experiences they have when they use cannabis. The findings revealed that cannabis use amongst varsity student-athletes is prevalent despite the current restrictions and that the participants motives and cannabis use behaviours for using cannabis were purposeful. This study also explored student-athletes lived experiences of using cannabis. The findings revealed that the participants used cannabis in ways, at times, and in contexts that allowed them to maintain their dual, competing identities. The findings also highlighted that cannabis use represented a discreditable behaviour, which resulted in feelings of shame, guilt, and regret.

Lay Summary

Varsity student-athletes from the University of British Columbia were interviewed to explore why and how they used cannabis. The findings revealed that a relatively large constituent of varsity student-athletes used cannabis. The participants motives and cannabis use behaviours were purposeful and supported their athletic and academic lifestyles. Moreover, the findings highlighted that the participants used cannabis in ways, times, and contexts which allowed them to maintain their identities as cannabis users and as athletes. In addition, this study set out to uncover student-athletes lived experiences of using cannabis. The participants did not believe that using cannabis was consistent with their athlete identity. As a result, the participants experienced guilt, shame, and regret.

Preface

This research was approved by the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board (H19-02582). This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Andrew Kanerva.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to challenging and putting into question the presumptions that we as a society have about cannabis and those who use it.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On October 17th, 2018, recreational use of cannabis was legalized in Canada. Cannabis use is undergoing a process of normalization, which has been defined by increased usage rates, prevalence, availability, and accommodating attitudes of non-using individuals (Duff et al., 2012; Hathaway, Comeau, & Erickson, 2011). Bottorff et al. (2013) explain that using cannabis has transitioned from a once underground activity to a common lifestyle choice for many Canadians. In 2019, over 5 million or 17% of Canadians aged 15 and older reported using cannabis (Statistics Canada, 2019) and nearly half of Canadians reported having used it at some time in their lives making it one of the most widely used substances in Canada (Rotermann, 2020). Despite the legislative and sociocultural changes, cannabis remains prohibited for student-athletes competing in varsity sport across. USports, the national governing body of university sport, is compliant with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and adopts its prohibited list, which posits that cannabis will remain prohibited in competition for varsity student-athletes in spite of any legislative changes made by the government (Pinkerton, 2018; World Anti-Doping Agency, 2019). As such, this thesis is premised on the fact that cannabis is legal in Canada and yet, varsity student-athletes in Canada are restricted from using it.

In an American study evaluating substance use among collegiate athletes from twenty-three sport disciplines, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2012) found that 22.6% of college athletes reported using cannabis in the previous year, making it the most commonly used substance by athletes other than alcohol. However, little is known about the reasons why athletes use cannabis and their experiences of using cannabis. Gillman, Hutchison, and Bryan (2015) explain that the extant literature on cannabis in sport has examined cannabis in terms of its impact on athletic performance and therefore, limited research has explored the prevalence of

cannabis use by athletes or the possible reasons why athletes might use cannabis. The extant literature also presents methodological limitations. Systematic reviews exist that do not reflect the current legislative landscape (Docter et al., 2020; Huestis, Mazzoni, & Rabin, 2011; Kennedy, 2017; Saugy et al., 2006; Ware, Jensen, Barrette, Vernec, & Derman, 2018) and others have been conducted using quantitative methods to understand the potential effects of cannabis use on exercise performance from an objective perspective (Avakian, Horvath, Michael, & Jacobs, 1979; Lisano et al., 2019; Lorente, Peretti-Watel, & Gretol, 2005; Renaud & Cormier, 1986; Steadward & Singh, 1975). This study attempts to depart from the methodological constraints of these studies by employing qualitative methods to gain insight into the lived and personal experiences of varsity student-athletes who use cannabis. This study not only hopes to fill methodological gaps within previous research, but also hopes to be a catalyst for more phenomenological-based inquiries of cannabis use in sport. Most importantly, this thesis represents one of few studies to explore cannabis use within a sports context and is positioned to be the first exploration of cannabis use in a multi-discipline, high-performance sport context through a sociocultural lens.

This thesis presents a fresh perspective and an exploratory investigation of cannabis use among varsity student-athletes. The purposes of this project is to challenge the existing assumptions about cannabis use amongst athletes and to explore the role that cannabis use has in shaping their identities as athletes and cannabis users. The research questions are:

1. Why do athletes use cannabis?;
2. What are athlete's cannabis use behaviours?;
3. What experiences do athletes have when they use cannabis?; and
4. What do athletes know about cannabis?

Symbolic interactionism (SI) is used as an overarching theoretical paradigm. SI addresses how meaning is created and preserved through repeated, meaningful, purposive, and creative social and symbolic interactions (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Moreover, a symbolic interactionist perspective attends to the process of interpretation from subjective standpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective. In summary, SI supports four tenets: individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them; interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects, as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings; meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society; and meanings are continuously created and recreated through processes of interpretation during interactions with others (Blumer, 1969). Therefore, SI allows me to address the research questions from a perspective that is attentive to the meaning that athletes ascribe to their cannabis use and their experiences of using cannabis as well as the role that their cannabis use has in shaping their identities.

Erving Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical theory is used as an operational theoretical framework. Dramaturgical theory suggests that an individual's identity is not stable but rather, continuously reconstructed as that individual interacts or 'performs' in front of different audiences. Dramaturgical theory considers life as a series of theatrical performances, in which individuals perform as actors on different stages. Goffman (1956) believed that regardless of the particular objective which an individual has in mind and the motive for that objective, that individual will express themselves and perform in such a way as to convey an particular impression to others, which is in their best interest. During a performance, the actor will rely on purposive and creative strategies to guide and control the impression they intend to make on others and to construct a viable presentation of themselves to accentuate certain matters and

conceal others. The premise of this study is that athletes perform or ‘act’ in ways to coordinate their use of cannabis with their athletic identity. For that reason, this qualitative, phenomenologically informed study attempts to situate cannabis use in a broader sociocultural context by providing a critical examination of how varsity student-athletes who use cannabis present themselves in everyday life.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature germane to the interests and topic of this study. First, I describe what cannabis is and identify some of its therapeutic uses. I also present a detailed explanation of why cannabis remains prohibited in sport. In particular, I outline the specific criteria that WADA uses to evaluate banned substances. Next, I provide a synopsis of the overarching theoretical paradigm and operational theoretical framework. Then, I describe the concept of identity. Most importantly, I identify the dissensus between athlete and cannabis user identities. Lastly, this chapter concludes with an outline as to how this study satisfies gaps in the extant literature.

2.1 Cannabis

Cannabis is an annual, dioecious, flowering herb that is commonly used for medicinal, therapeutic, and recreational purposes. It contains hundreds of chemical substances; most notably, cannabinoids. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD) are arguably the best-known cannabinoids to the general public. THC is the main psychoactive cannabinoid and is most responsible for the ‘high’ experienced with cannabis use. CBD has little to no psychoactive effects and is most responsible for the claimed ‘medicinal’ benefits of cannabis (Fletcher, 2019).

2.1.1 *Cannabis Use*

Cannabis is used for a variety of therapeutic and recreational purposes. Cannabis is speculated to have originated from central Asia (Booth & Bohlmann, 2019) and it has been used medicinally for several thousands of years (Pisanti & Bifulco, 2019). Evidence for medicinal cannabis use was documented in the Shen-nung Pen Ts’ao Ching, the earliest existing Chinese pharmacopeia (Hanus, 2009). Similarly, cannabis was also documented in the Ebers Papyrus, an ancient Egyptian medical text, which is one of oldest pharmaceutical texts known to exist

(Russo, 2007). Historically, cannabis has been used to treat multiple symptoms including but not limited to infection, gout, rheumatism, leprosy, and, most commonly, sleep (Aldrich, 1997). More recently, cannabis has been used for therapeutic purposes for treating multiple symptoms with sleep, stress, depression, pain, and anxiety (Bonn-Miller, Boden, Bucossi, & Babson, 2014; Corroon, Mischley, & Sexton, 2017; Walsh et al., 2018).

Medicinal, therapeutic, and recreational cannabis use have been common terms to define cannabis use for different reasons across different contexts and legislative environments. For example, prior to October 17th, 2018, qualified Canadian citizens were legally permitted and prescribed to use cannabis for medical purposes including nausea and vomiting from chemotherapy, low appetite and weight loss from AIDS, muscle soreness and stiffness from multiple sclerosis and spinal cord patients, and chronic neuropathic pain at the end of life (HealthLinkBC, 2018). Differently, therapeutic cannabis use has been a widespread term to describe using cannabis purposefully for acute or chronic pathophysiological conditions that may not necessarily qualify for medicinal cannabis use or may not typically be treated with cannabis. For instance, the most common therapeutic uses of cannabis are to treat symptoms with sleep, pain, anxiety, and depression (Corroon, Mischley, and Sexton, 2017; Sexton, Cuttler, Finnell, & Mischley, 2016; Walsh et al., 2013). Lastly, recreational cannabis use has been used to refer to cannabis use, typically illegal, without medical justification.

Since October 17th, 2018, recreational use of cannabis has been legalized in Canada, which means that Canadians can use cannabis legally without justification. The term ‘recreational’ now serves an encompassing term that includes individuals who would have otherwise used cannabis for medicinal or therapeutic purposes. Though the widespread use of cannabis nationally has been termed ‘recreational’, many cannabis users continue to use for

therapeutic purposes. For example, according to Smith et al. (2019), 52% of Canadian university students use cannabis and of those students, approximately 11% use cannabis for therapeutic purposes. Further, 38% of those students opt to replace traditional prescription medication with cannabis. Echoing Smith et al. (2019), Corroon, Mischley, and Sexton (2017) also found that individuals substitute cannabis for prescription drugs. The most common cases of substitution are for narcotics or opioids, anxiolytics or benzodiazepines, and antidepressants.

2.1.2 *Cannabis in Sport*

Cannabis has been reported as both beneficial and detrimental to sports performance (Gillman, Hutchison, and Bryan, 2015). Despite evidence that cannabis may acutely impair psychomotor skills and cognitive function, there is a perception amongst athletes that cannabis may have beneficial effects (Ware, Jensen, Barrette, Verneec, & Derman, 2018). That being said, cannabis remains prohibited in competition. WADA considers three criteria when determining whether or not to prohibit a substance, of which two must be satisfied (Huestis, Mazzoni, & Rabin, 2011). These criteria include: 1) potential health risk; 2) potential to enhance performance; and 3) spirit of sport. There is limited, yet growing research that has explored these criteria. First, potential health risk is concerned with the impact of doping on athlete's health. Huestis, Mazzoni, and Rabin (2011) argue that cannabis poses many threats to an athlete's health including an altered perception of risk, decreased coordination, and decreased cognitive performance. Second, potential to enhance performance is concerned with a substance, alone or in combination with other substances or methods, having a performance enhancing effect. Huestis, Mazzoni, and Rabin (2011) argue that cannabis poses the potential to enhance performance through a reduction of anxiety and enhanced concentration. The last and most elusive criterion, spirit of sport, relies on ethical and societal considerations that encompass a

wider view of sport beyond the physical achievements and health of an athlete. Huestis, Mazzoni, and Rabin (2011) suggest that cannabis infringes on the spirit of sport, as it remains illegal in many parts of the world.

2.2 Theoretical Approach

This project uses a working theoretical partnership of SI and Dramaturgical theory. In particular, this project is guided by SI and its conceptions of identity (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1956), which emphasizes that identity is actively developed and negotiated through a process of interactional work between the social actor and others in a dynamic and ongoing social process (Mead, 1934). There have been plenty of studies conducted in various sports contexts that have adopted a symbolic interactionist approach to understand identity management among athletes (Collinson & Hockey, 2007; Hickey & Roderick, 2017; Snyder, 1985). Likewise, a number of symbolic interactionist analyses have explored cannabis use and the changing of meaning and context over time (Bell, Pavis, Cunningham-Burley, Amos, 1998; Dahl, 2017; Klein, Frank, Nielson, Christensen, Dahl, 2013). Guided by these studies, this project expands on the extant body of symbolic interactionist literature and contributes an exploration of cannabis use within a novel context.

2.2.1 *Symbolic Interactionism*

SI is a sociological theoretical perspective that emphasizes the ways in which societies are created and maintained through repeated, meaningful social interactions among individuals (Carter & Fuller, 2015). The development of SI by Herbert Blumer (1969) has proven seminal for understanding social reality and the construction of identity. A symbolic interactionist approach focuses on processes actors use to constantly create and recreate experiences from one interaction to the next (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Moreover, SI attends to the process of

interpretation from subjective standpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective. From this perspective, meanings are intersubjective, perceived, and constantly reinterpreted and thus, behaviour is changing and unique to each and every social encounter. Methodologically, SI emphasizes intimate understanding of an actor's experience and is conducted by immersing oneself in the position of the actor to capture the meanings for that individual during a specific social interaction. From a symbolic interactionist approach, this project focuses on the intentional, processual, interactional processes that athletes use to interpret situations and experiences and construct their actions in changing social environments.

2.2.2 Dramaturgical Theory

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) As You Like it Act II Scene VII lines 139-42

Arguably one of the most pivotal symbolic interactionist sociologists (Carter & Fuller, 2015), Erving Goffman is regarded for his dramaturgical account of human interaction. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1956) presented Dramaturgical analysis as a symbolic interactionist theory using a metaphor of a theatrical performance as a framework to describe how actors present themselves to others, and how they attempt to control the impressions that they impose onto others.

In dramaturgical sociology, human interactions are dependent on context and audience. The concept of self is a sense of who one is as a dramatic effect from a performance. Life, in the dramaturgical model, is a series of performances. In Goffman's (1956) terms, a 'performance' may be defined as "all the activity of a given individual on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (p. 13). The objective of these presentations of self is acceptance from the audience that the actor is who they present themselves to be.

Actors behave differently in front of different people. In the dramaturgical model, actors put on different masks and perform different 'parts' in front of different audiences. A 'part' may be defined as a pattern of action which unfolds during a performance. Goffman (1956) argued that, individuals perform a variety of dynamic 'parts', which are context-, content-, and audience-specific; controlling and staging the impressions they impart onto the audience. In addition, taking a particular performer and their performance as a point of reference, those individuals who contribute the other performances are referred to as the audience, observers, or co-participants. Those who are not present and are neither participating nor observing are referred to as outsiders. Additionally, in general, a group of individuals who co-operate in staging a performance may be referred to as a team.

A performance serves to represent or express the characteristics of the mask that is being worn by the actor rather than the characteristics of the performer. Similarly, people in everyday life manage and rely on 'fronts' or masks to control the manner in which the audience perceives them. Goffman (1956) refers to 'fronts' and masks interchangeably. A 'front' refers to the expressive equipment used by the actor intentionally or not to define the performance for the audience and contains multiple components. First, the 'setting' refers to all matters of the context in which a performance occurs; the scenic parts of expressive equipment which supply the

scenery and stage props for the performance. Second, a 'personal front' refers to the other items of expressive equipment inherent to or that identify the actor, which may include sex, race, age, height, weight, appearance, et cetera. Similarly, 'sign vehicles' refer to the use of language and body language during a performance. In combination, an actor will use their expressions to foster an impression; one that is intended to be accepted implicitly by the audience. As such, the audience is asked to "believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes they appear to possess, that the task they perform will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be" (Goffman, 1956, p. 10). According to Goffman (1956), actors perform on the basis of their interpretation of the situation and may exert control by influencing the definition of the situation which the audience comes to formulate. In this way, performing and exercising control over the performances and the impressions that are fostered is referred to as self-presentation.

The foundation of self-presentation is impression management, which refers to the changes in performances in an effort to create specific impressions in the minds of others. Performances are moulded and modified to adhere or fit into the social norms of the audience. The main idea is that individuals display different kinds of behaviour depending on where they are and who they are with. Based on their interpretation of the situation, an actor will present a front- or back-stage self. Goffman (1956) makes a clear and important distinction between front- and back-stage behaviour. A frontstage may be defined as a place where a performance is given and conversely, a backstage may be defined as a "place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted" (Goffman, 1956, p. 69). Frontstage behaviour are actions that are readily visible to the audience and are part of the performance. Whereas backstage behaviour are actions taken when there is no audience, and the

actor is not required to perform. In situations where the actor does not know the audience, observers, or co-participants on an intimate or familiar level, that actor will tend to present their front stage self and engage in front stage behaviour. This front stage self represents versions of the actor whom the actor believes embodies certain status- or group-specific standards and will be favourable in their interactions with others. The front stage self is context-, content-, and audience-specific; changing to satisfy the desired impression the actor intends to impart. Accordingly, front stage behaviour is indisputably coerced by norms within a given social context, the values of those individuals whose perceptions are of concern, and cultural practices. In contrast, in situations where the actor is alone or with individuals who share an intimate or familiar relationship, that actor will tend to present their backstage self and engage in backstage behaviour. This backstage self represents raw versions of the actor that are unbound of the expectations and norms that dictate their front stage behaviour. Provided this, individuals are often relaxed and comfortable in the backstage. Backstage behaviour mirrors the ways actors behave in the back of a theatre when they are no longer acting or similarly, the ways employees behave in staff areas when they no longer have to interact with customers. There is also an off-stage area. Off-stage is a place where the actor is not involved in a performance and where actors meet audience members independently. Unique and nuanced performances that might offer the audience member privileged information occur in the off-stage area.

I have distinguished three distinct roles: the actor, audience, and outsiders. There is one more role that is of importance: confidants. Confidants are individuals who the actor confides special and/or secretive information to. The actors are the most knowledgeable. Audiences only know what the actors have disclosed and exposed. Outsiders know very little or nothing at all. Actors perform either on the front or backstage regions. Confidants might know slightly more

than the audience if the actor has revealed that information to them. The audience only appears in the front region except for those who have been granted special access to the back region by the actor. Outsiders are excluded from both regions. Confidants might transition back and forth from the front-stage area to the back-stage area. As audiences change, so does the performance. However, in certain circumstances, an outsider(s) enters either the front or back regions and is exposed to a performance that was not meant for them. In these cases, difficult problems in impression management arise. Discrepant performances represent a lack of expressive coherence, jeopardize the credibility of the actor, and may lead to a disruption of that performance. Moreover, discrepant performances typically present destructive information of which the performer does not intend for the outsider(s) to gain access to. In this case, destructive information refers to secrets that the performer only shares with certain audiences. 'Dark secrets' are facts that the performer attempts to conceal, and which are incompatible with the impression that the performer is attempting to foster. 'Strategic secrets' are strategies or actions taken by the performer to conceal conflicting behaviour(s). 'Inside secrets' identify individuals as being part of an incompatible group of the impression being fostered or sharing certain characteristics of an undesirable group (Paige, 2015). Lastly, 'entrusted secrets' represents information that is shared within a team or components of a team that need to be kept in order to maintain team integrity.

Impression management refers to intentional work on maintaining the desired impression. Techniques and strategies of impression management may need to be employed in order to successfully stage a performance and foster an intended impression. One such strategy is 'dramaturgical loyalty', which refers to sustaining a performance and avoiding voluntarily exposing destructive information. Dramaturgical loyalty becomes particularly important when a team of performers know secrets of one another that could be discrediting or incongruous with

the role of one or more of the team members. A basic technique to obtain loyalty is to establish a high degree of team cohesiveness. Another strategy, 'dramaturgical discipline' refers to a commitment to a performance; maintaining that the performer is able to immerse themselves in the performance and at the same time, be cognizant of dramaturgical contingencies and affectively dissociated from the performance in order to deal with those contingencies. An actor who is disciplined displays discretion and demonstrates an ability to clean up a performance inconspicuously if a disruption is to occur, all while maintaining the impression that they are merely playing their part. 'Dramaturgical circumspection' refers to a quality of acting with prudence. When there is limited risk of being seen or being scrutinized for certain behaviour, opportunities for relaxation can be taken and performances can be indulged in. However, actors and teams are required to exercise circumspection, preparing for likely dramaturgical contingencies in advance. As such, a team may choose members who are loyal and disciplined, or a team may clearly identify the extent of loyalty and discipline it can expect from its members. In both cases, dramaturgical circumspection attempts to ensure the safety of the performance and of the team. These protective strategies mean conducting oneself with tact, behaving with a certain sensitivity towards others, difficult situations, and destructive information.

Performances change and are contingent on the audience as well as the context of the performance. The special interest of my project is the study of impression management. My project is concerned with the dramaturgical problems that varsity student-athletes encounter when presenting themselves and their cannabis use before others. I consider the ways in which varsity student-athletes who use cannabis present themselves and their cannabis use to others, the contingencies that arise in fostering an impression that meets the values and norms of the audience, the techniques which varsity student-athletes use to guide and control the impression

others form of them, and the kinds of things varsity student-athletes may or may not do while sustaining their performance before others.

2.3 Identity

Dramaturgical theory suggests that identities are not fixed. Rather, identities are multiple and in a constant process of being reworked and renegotiated (Jenkins, 2014). Lawler (2008) argues that identity itself is a social and collective process rather than it being something that is located within the person. For the purposes of this project, I have adopted Erving Goffman's (1963) definition of social identity, which refers to self-categories which define an individual in terms of their shared similarities with members of certain social categories (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, McGarty, 1992). For Goffman (1956; 1963), there is no true self, no authentic identity, and no identifiable performer. Rather, identity is a situated construct and identities are continuously changing and adapting to the interpretation of the situation. The concept of identity work highlights the process of changing identities and has been described by Snow & Anderson (1995, p. 241) as:

...the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept. So defined, identity work may involve a number of complementary activities: a) arrangement of physical settings or props; b) cosmetic face-work or the arrangement of personal appearance; c) selective association with other individuals and groups; d) verbal constructions and assertion of personal identities.

Since this project examines impression management, this project also explores the role of identity work in sustaining continuity of identities for athletes who use cannabis, which

inherently present challenges to and behaviour that is incongruent with the stereotypes and characteristics of their athletic identities.

2.3.1 *Athlete Identity*

Athlete identity refers to the extent to which an individual identifies with the athlete role and the extent to which they seek recognition of an athletic role from others (Burns, Jasinski, Dunn, & Fletcher, 2012; Sparkes, 1998). Similar to Goffman's (1963) social identity, role identity is defined as an individual's sense of self in fulfilling and satisfying the inherent characteristics and behaviour of a particular role (McCall & Simmons, 1966). Role identities provide meaning to behaviour and the interpretation of contexts and events (Snyder, 1985). Consequently, role identities supply criteria for selecting behaviour that will satisfy the stereotypes of what an individual should be and how an individual should act in a particular role. By participating in sport, athletes declare their social identity, who they are and how they want others to think of them. Individuals who identify with an athlete identity are often characterized by a high degree of personal sacrifice and commitment to personal and collective performance (Carless & Douglas, 2013). Accordingly, a performance narrative permeates high-performance sport cultures and is defined as a "single-minded dedication to sport performance to the exclusion of other areas of life and self" (Douglas & Carless, 2009, p. 215). Hence, optimal athletic achievement is considered to be the sole life focus of high-performance athletes and according to Douglas and Carless (2009), it is expected that these athletes must have such a narrow focus on achieving optimal performance that it is impossible for them to be anything else. However, the concept of athlete identity is relative. Hickey and Roderick (2017) argue that athletes are not theoretically reducible to a solitary athletic identity. As such, it is conceivable that even high-performance athletes may be able to sustain multiple social identities. Yet,

Warriner and Lavallee (2008) suggest that the degree of sacrifice and commitment often prevents high-performance athletes from engaging in exploration of different roles and behaviours.

2.3.2 Cannabis User Identity

Cannabis users have been stereotyped as ‘potheads’, ‘stoners’, ‘lazy’, and ‘unmotivated’, to name a few (Lawson, 2019). Once prevalent only in deviant social groups and deemed a behaviour belonging to addictive and delinquent individuals, using cannabis is transitioning to an activity more socially accepted and established across different contexts (Bottorff, Bissell, Balneaves, Oliffe, Capler, Buxton, 2013; Hathaway, 2004; Hathaway, Comeau, Erickson, 2011). Hammersly, Jenkins, & Reid (2001) suggest that the notion of describing cannabis users as belonging to deviant social groups has disappeared to a certain degree. Therefore, as the prevalence of cannabis use continues to increase and the normalization of cannabis use across different social groups prevails, the defining characteristics of someone who uses cannabis is also changing (Duff et al., 2012). In more detail, Duff et al. (2012) suggest that the process of de-stigmatization is, in large, due to the measurable changes in the ways Canadians perceive and understand the risks associated with cannabis use. However, for varsity student-athletes, this does not hold true. Varsity student-athletes continue to be subjugated to regulations that prohibit the use of cannabis. Consequently, varsity student-athletes’ cannabis use contributes to devalued identities as they are contradicting the implicit requirements of belonging to their athlete identity and thus, may still be judged to be ‘deviant’ by others or as ‘potheads’, ‘stoners’, ‘lazy’, and ‘unmotivated’.

Identity is a complex product of the social groups that one belongs to or identifies with. Therefore, a fundamental purpose of belonging to a group is to adopt a social identity. Hammersly, Jenkins, & Reid (2001) suggest that either cannabis use is a method to indicate

‘cannabis user’ group membership or that cannabis use does not signify group membership and is not part of an individual's social identity. For example, individuals may take their cannabis use very seriously and outwardly identify as cannabis users. By contrast, others may consider their cannabis use as inconsequential to their social identity and rather, more representative of a particular context or social circumstance. Similarly, Mostaghim & Hathaway (2013) suggested that the process of cannabis normalization has been facilitated by a transient view of self whereby the identity of user and non-user is not fixed, but rather more contingent on the situated context or social circumstances of use. To that end, Hathaway (2004) argued that the context of cannabis use is more important than the traits of those individuals who use it. This suggestion has important implications for the varsity student-athletes who used cannabis as it may signify that the stigmatization of their cannabis use was a product of the broader athletic context rather than their social identities.

2.3.3 *Stigma and Spoiled Identity*

Erving Goffman (1963) defined stigma as an “attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3). A discreditable attribute could be readily noticeable, like an individual's appearance, or could be concealed but nonetheless discreditable if revealed, like that of an individual's backstage behaviour. Goffman (1963) argued that most if not all people, at some point, experience being stigmatized. Stigma is not an absolute concept. Rather, for Goffman, stigma is relational and context dependent. An attribute may be stigmatizing in one context or to one audience and may not be stigmatizing in another context or in front of others. Therefore, it is not an attribute that is stigmatizing per se but rather, the result of an attribute being perceived or interpreted as unvalued. Goffman’s (1963) early elaboration of stigma included many discredited attributes, including what he defined as ‘tribal stigmas’, ‘physical deformities’, and ‘blemishes of

character'. All of these are context dependent; what was once a discredited attribute may not be today or may not have been in a different context. Of those, for the purposes of this project the interest will be of 'blemishes of character' and how the use of cannabis represents a discredited attribute of varsity student-athletes. So, in this case, cannabis use is a discreditable attribute that reflects a blemish of character, which is specific to the context of Canadian varsity athletics.

Page (2015) elaborates on Goffman's description of stigma and adds that stigma also refers to any attribute that is incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be. Page (2015) explains that stigma acquires its meaning through the emotion it generates within the person bearing it and the feelings as well as the behaviours toward the person of those affirming it. Therefore, deviation from our socially constructed stereotype of a particular role will be accompanied by stigma experienced and related to that deviation.

Deviance is defined as behaviour that violates expectations, which are shared and recognized as legitimate within a group (Dentler & Erikson, 1959). Page (2015) distinguishes deviance as being either societal or situational. The former is considered absolute and reflects behaviour in the public that does not align with systemic values. The latter is considered relative and reflects behaviour that emerges as deviant in interpersonal situations. As a consequence, athletes may experience stigma associated with cannabis use in situations where meaning is created through societal beliefs and values and from situations where meaning is created through social interactions.

Goffman (1963) suggested that the experience of stigma differs and is dependent on the concealability of the stigmatized attribute (Chaudoir, Earnshaw, & Andel, 2013). The discredited are individuals whose stigmatized attribute is readily visible such as sex or race. The discreditable are individuals whose stigmatized attribute is concealable such as sexual orientation

or mental illness. Botorff et al. (2013) describe a slightly different dichotomy. Enacted stigma refers to others' judgement that an attribute is undesirable or unvalued, which manifests as rejection, distancing, and other discriminatory practices. Perceived stigma refers to assumptions or fear of discrimination made by the stigmatized individual, which result in perceptions of shame and guilt.

Goffman (1963) argued that stigma is an interactional process that spoils identity. A 'spoiled identity' is used to refer to an identity or component of an identity that causes an individual to experience stigma. Although individuals do not inherently have spoiled or unspoiled identities just as individuals do not inherently have normal or abnormal identities. Instead, aspects of an individual's social identity, components of the multiplicity of selves that performers present to the world, can be damaged or discredited at particular moments in particular places (Neale, Nettleton, Pickering, 2011).

2.3.4 *Stigma of Cannabis Use*

Cannabis use is becoming normalized across various contexts and within different social groups (Duff et al., 2012; Hathaway, Comeau, & Erickson, 2011; Hathaway, Mostaghim, Erickson, Kolar, & Osborne, 2018; Hammersly, Jenkins, & Reid, 2001). Duff et al. (2012) elaborate that the emergence of more permissive attitudes towards the use of cannabis have allowed for the previously deviant social behaviour to reincarnate as a lifestyle choice for many Canadians. Factors of normalization include prevalence, availability, and accommodating attitudes of non-using individuals. In more detail, Duff et al. (2012) suggest that the process of de-stigmatization is primarily due to the measurable changes in the ways Canadians perceive and understand the risks associated with cannabis use. This has particular importance for athletes who use cannabis, and for this study. It suggests that perhaps if there was more awareness of

athletes who use cannabis and understanding of their motives, that those athletes may be able to experience an increase in accommodation and may not have to alter their performances when they use cannabis. That being said, Hathaway (2004) argued that cannabis use continues to be morally divisive and that stigma associated to cannabis use persists. Besides being labelled a ‘drug-user’, unfortunately, cannabis users are frequently associated with criminal, delinquent, and deviant behaviour (Bottorff et al., 2013). Bottorff et al. (2013) confirm that “little is known about how the stigmatization of cannabis influences users’ patterns of use and their personal lives, and in-depth explorations of the strategies they employ to manage these experiences are limited” (p. 2). The stigma associated with cannabis use is increasingly connected to the context of consumption rather than the stigma being a reflection of an attribute of the personal identity (Mostaghim & Hathaway, 2013). Mostaghim and Hathaway (2013) suggest that the management of the persisting stigma attached to cannabis use requires users to observe boundaries and exercise tact in choosing a context to use cannabis.

2.4 Gaps in the Existing Literature

Based on the literature that has been presented in this review, I will identify the gaps in the literature that this research intends to fill. First, Gillman, Hutchison, and Bryan (2015) explain that limited research has explored the prevalence of cannabis use by athletes or the possible reasons why athletes might use cannabis. Further, no research has examined the use of cannabis amongst athletes by examining their behaviours, perceptions, and experiences of using cannabis. Sznitman and Zolotov’s (2015) called for the use of sociocultural analysis to reach an understanding of the ways cannabis is used by different populations. Noting that, this project adopts a qualitative approach to identify why varsity student-athletes use cannabis and their cannabis use behaviours.

Second, there have been no investigations of cannabis use within a multi-discipline varsity sport context amongst men and women student-athletes. The limited existing literature on athletic cannabis use is exclusive to one sport and either men or women athletes. Noting that, this project explores cannabis use across a variety of sport disciplines and includes men and women athletes in a varsity sports context.

Lastly, this project is the first to present a dramaturgical analysis of cannabis use within a sports context. As highlighted above, the varsity student-athletes maintain dual, competing identities, which presents unique challenges. For that reason, this research is concerned with the dramaturgical problems that varsity student-athletes encounter when presenting themselves and their cannabis use before others. I consider the ways in which varsity student-athletes who use cannabis present themselves and their cannabis use to others, the contingencies that arise in fostering an impression that meets the values and norms of the audience, the techniques which varsity student-athletes use to guide and control the impression others form of them, and the kinds of things varsity student-athletes may or may not do while sustaining their performance before others.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the methodology that shaped the research process. First, I discuss the paradigmatic stance that was adopted, including the ontological and epistemological perspectives that were exercised. Second, I review the methods of recruitment and outline the specific criteria that were used to recruit participants. Third, I present demographic details about the sample. Fourth, I specify the methods and strategies used for data collection and analysis. In particular, I present a detailed description of the online survey and the semi-structured interviews. Fifth, I address the ethical considerations and decisions that were made throughout the research process. And lastly, I provide insight into my role as the researcher, elaborate on my insider status, and discuss my reflective practice.

3.2 Paradigmatic Stance

Drawing practices and traditions from phenomenology, the study was conducted using an online survey and semi-structured interviews. Allen-Collinson (2017) notes that phenomenological inquiry requires “a deep, fundamental challenge of the taken-for-granted, a willingness to identify, question and bracket existing assumptions and presuppositions regarding a phenomenon, in order to approach it ‘fresh’, and to identify its essential characteristics” (p. 15). Continuing, phenomenology as a method is not concerned with recounting the immediate, subjective experiences of a particular person as lived in everyday life, but rather about fundamentally putting into question “the everyday flow of subjective experiences and taken-for-granted ways of thinking and being” (Allen-Collinson, 2017, p. 14). As such, this research project set out to challenge the existing assumptions about cannabis use amongst varsity student-athletes and to identify student-athletes’ motives for and experiences of using cannabis.

It is important that I, as the researcher, delineate how I understand the human experience and how that understanding informed the intentions of this research project and the research process. An interpretivist constructivist paradigm informed this exploration of cannabis use amongst varsity student-athletes. First, an interpretivist approach accepts multiple meanings and focuses on “recognizing and narrating the meaning of human experiences and actions” (Levers, 2013, p. 3). Second, a constructivist approach holds that “meaning is created through an interaction of the interpreter and the interpreted” (Levers, 2013, p. 4). Further, an interpretivist constructivist approach attempts to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people give to them (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). According to Giddens (1987) an interpretivist constructivist approach is characterized by interpretations where participant meaning-making becomes data for the researcher who proceeds in further meaning-making. To that end, I understand too that the process of interviewing was itself a co-construction of meaning between the participant and myself in a unique social and cultural context (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). Accordingly, operating with a relativist ontology, I am aware that reality is subjective, constructed, multiple, and ever-changing (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). Incorporating subjectivist and constructivist epistemologies, I am attentive to the subjectivity and social construction of shaping lived experiences and realities (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). I recognize that I am not seeking a singular truth but rather, I am interested in exploring the multiple truths, and multiple ways that athletes experience cannabis use. Therefore, this project considers cannabis amongst varsity student-athletes as multi-faceted and -purposed, where athletes use cannabis differently, for different reasons, have different experiences and, most importantly, understand and make sense of their experiences differently.

3.3 Recruitment

This study employed purposive, criterion sampling. The sampling was purposive because I specifically recruited for diversity across a range of key characteristics that could be understood to mediate the participants experience of cannabis use. Purposive sampling is a “non-probability form of sampling” and strategically recruits participants who are “relevant to the research questions” (Bryman, 2015, p. 408). Bryman (2015) explains that often the researcher will seek to sample to ensure that there is adequate variety within the resultant sample “so that sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the research question” (p. 408). For this study, an effort was made to recruit a sample that represented a diversity of sport disciplines and academic ages as well as a mixture of men and women athletes.

As Bryman (2015) notes, with criterion sampling, participants are sampled that meet particular criteria. In this case, the sample population was composed of varsity student-athletes from the University of British Columbia (UBC) and for the intentions of this study, age, cannabis use, and varsity status were used as three distinct criteria in the sampling process.

First, only athletes who, at the time of the interview, were nineteen years of age or older were recruited. Age was a criterion for two reasons. First, the legal purchasing age of cannabis in Canada is nineteen. Second, in 2018, individuals of fifteen to twenty-four years of age reported the highest rate of cannabis usage in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018). The age range of individuals with the highest rate of reported use was conveniently inclusive of the average age of university students in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). That being said, students who were twenty-four years and older were not excluded.

Second, only athletes who had used cannabis in the past twelve months were recruited. The rationale behind this decision assumed that these athletes are more likely to have more

clarity and in-depth knowledge of their cannabis use and their experiences of using cannabis. Equally, seeking out athletes who had used cannabis within the past twelve months meant that those athletes may use cannabis more frequently and for reasons different than for irregular social occasions.

Third, only athletes who were of eligible varsity status were recruited. Redshirt athletes, those whose participation was delayed or suspended to lengthen their period of eligibility, were excluded. Athletes who were considered as Redshirted may not present the same degree of team involvement as current varsity student-athletes and therefore may not represent the sample population to the same extent. Moreover, Redshirted athletes are not subjected to anti-doping testing, which may have influenced their responses to the interview questions.

The requirements to participate in the study were outlined in an invitation to participate (see Appendix A). The invitation to participate was distributed electronically to all potential varsity student-athletes and provided information of the study and what participation would involve. First, this study was pitched to the Thunderbird Athletic Council (TAC), which is responsible for working closely with the Department of Athletics and Recreation, representing the interests of the student-athlete body, and is composed of student-athlete representatives from each team. Then, the student-athlete representatives distributed the invitation to participate to their teams respectively. I chose to pitch the study to TAC and have the student-athlete representatives distribute the invitation to participate because it provided those representatives an opportunity to recognize that I was, in fact, the researcher conducting the interviews. This way, the student-athlete representatives could acknowledge that a UBC varsity alumni was conducting the study. Having the invitation to participate distributed by the student-athlete representatives

also circumvented the chance of the Department of Athletics and Recreation not supporting the study.

A link to an online survey (see Appendix B) was included in the invitation to participate. The online survey was designed on and administered through Qualtrics, an online survey platform, for three purposes: to recruit participants, to inform interviews, and to obtain demographic information. The online survey was made available to all varsity student-athletes, cannabis users and non-users. The online survey included sixteen questions. Four questions posed forced responses and the remaining questions were optional. None of the questions requested information such as name, sex, or sport discipline that could potentially disclose the respondent's identity. The survey included six questions regarding age, enrolment status, and varsity status eligibility; nine questions regarding the student-athlete's motives for using cannabis, cannabis use behaviours, and whether or not the athletes believed that cannabis should be permitted in sport; and one question that asked the respondents if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. In the case that a respondent wanted to participate in an interview, they were requested to provide their first name and email address. Therefore, the online survey maintained the student-athletes confidentiality. As a result, participating in the survey did not pose a risk that a student-athlete could be identified as a cannabis user.

All of the interview participants were recruited with the online survey. Responses to the online survey were received throughout the research process and so, the participants were not recruited all at once.

There was a lack of survey responses from certain sport disciplines, likely due, in part, to previous convictions from drug testing. Comparably, even though precautionary measures were

made, there may have also been a fear among the student-athlete population that participation in this study could lead to them being identified as cannabis users or could result in consequential social or athletic outcomes. For example, many varsity athletic teams uphold codes of conduct, often constructed by the athletes themselves. Some of these codes of conduct specify that players will not use cannabis. Therefore, if an athlete were to have broken that code of conduct by actively admitting to using cannabis, that athlete could have experienced consequences such as being reported to the coach or being excluded from social groups within that team. This was particularly interesting because codes of conduct are only binding so long as the athletes who create them maintain and agree to them. What this means is that the oppression of cannabis use was facilitated by the consent of the oppressed, the student-athletes. Moreover, the consent of the student-athletes to subdue their use of cannabis demonstrates the taboo nature of cannabis because student-athletes who use cannabis are willing to subject themselves to a binding agreement.

In addition to the previously described recruitment strategies, following an interview, I would ask the participant if they knew or were aware of teammates or student-athlete peers who satisfied the inclusion criteria and who might be interested in completing the survey. Many of the participants agreed to reach out to their teammates and student-athlete peers. This strategy proved to be successful. Some interviewees stated that the interview process, the interview questions, and the measures of confidentiality had imparted a sense of trust and therefore, those participants felt comfortable advocating for this study.

Once a student-athlete agreed to an interview, we negotiated via email to find a suitable space - a classroom, a meeting room, or a learning space on campus. Prior to the interview, the

participants were provided a consent form (see Appendix C), which outlined the participants rights and consent. All of the participants consented and were interviewed in-person.

3.4 Sample

Seventy-seven student-athletes responded to the survey. See Table 1. for demographic information about the population. Those responses were filtered out to those athletes who were nineteen years of age or older, indicated on the survey that they were interested in participating in an interview, and used cannabis. In total, fourteen student-athletes were recruited for interviews - eight men and six women. The purpose for the sample was to be small and specific enough to manage the material and yet, large and diverse enough to provide a new and textured understanding of experience (Sandelowski, 1995). The interviewees satisfied the inclusion criteria. Notably, a majority of the interviewees (n=8) had been using cannabis regularly for at least the duration of their varsity sporting careers. This was important as these student-athletes were able to narrate rich, insightful anecdotes and identify with the interview questions. See Table 2. for detailed demographic information about the sample.

Table 1.*Population Demographic Information*

<u>Demographic Categories</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Age	
≥ 19	57
≤ 19	18
Degree *	
Undergraduate	52
Graduate	1
Academic Year *	
First Year	3
Second Year	12
Third Year	13
Fourth Year	21
Varsity Eligibility *	
First Year	12
Second Year	10
Third Year	14
Fourth Year	13
Fifth Year	1

Note. * indicates questions on the online survey which did not force a response.

Table 2.

Sample Demographic Information

Participant	Gender **	Age *	Academic Year *
1	W	21	Fourth
2	M	22	Fourth
3	M	19	Second
4	W	21	Third
5	W	21	Fourth
6	M	21	Fourth
7	W	20	Fourth
8	M	25	-
9	M	24	Fourth
10	W	19	Second
11	M	22	Second
12	M	23	Third
13	W	22	Fourth
14	M	20	Second
n=14	8 M 6 W	Avg = 21	

Note. * indicates questions on the online survey which did not force a response. ** indicates data that was collected during the interviews.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

3.5.1 Online survey

The online survey (see Appendix B.) was used to garner data to inform the interviews and to construct a description of cannabis use amongst the broader varsity student-athlete population. The responses to the survey were anonymous, unless the athlete elected to submit their first name and email address for an interview. The online survey included questions with text, multiple choice, and select all responses. Four questions posed mandatory, forced responses. The forced response questions were used to eliminate participants that did not meet specific criteria. For instance, after requesting consent, the first question asked if the respondent was of nineteen years of age or older. If not, the respondent was prompted to the end of the survey. Similarly, the third

question asked if the respondent was a ‘UBC varsity athlete that will be involved in the 2019-20 season’. If not, the respondent was also prompted to the end of the survey. Another forced response question asked if the respondent had used cannabis within the previous twelve months. Compared to the other forced response questions, this response did not permit the respondent to the next question or prompt them to the end of the survey. Instead, the responses to this question were crucial in selecting interview participants. As previously mentioned, I selected interview participants that had used cannabis within the previous twelve months because those student-athletes were able to narrate rich, insightful anecdotes and identify with the interview questions. I opted to leave the remaining responses as optional because the information from those responses can easily be gathered during an interview. I also reflected on my experiences as a varsity student-athlete and recognized that responding to surveys was not a priority. So, I designed the online survey to be as accessible, straightforward, and user-friendly as possible.

The questions in the survey were informed by existing literature on cannabis use questionnaires (Lee, Neighbors, Hendershot, & Grossbard, 2009). The survey data informed the interviews and guided interview questions. For example, the survey data constructed a general understanding of why, how, how often, and how much the interview participants used cannabis. With this information, the interviews proceeded almost immediately into deeper layers of inquiry and these seemingly superficial topics did not take away from valuable interview time.

3.5.2 Interviews

In total, fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted in-person and were audio-recorded. I began interviewing in November of 2019 and I finished interviewing in February of 2020. Interviews are occasions for conversation that invite “the participant(s) to tell stories, accounts, reports and/or descriptions about their perspectives, insights, experiences, feelings,

emotions and/or behaviours in relation to the interview question(s)” (Smith & Sparkes, 2016, p. 103). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to gather meaningful and purposeful data while ensuring that the conversation remains organic. To the same effect, semi-structured interviews provide researchers with an opportunity to ask unplanned questions, generating novel or additional insights (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). In this case, semi-structured interviews provided space for the athletes to navigate the conversation, illuminate their experiences, and describe the meanings constructed and associated to those experiences.

Aligning with the research questions, a semi-structured interview guide was developed to elicit rich data corresponding to the research questions (see Appendix D). The interviews were designed to last no longer than ninety minutes. See Table 3. for a summary of the interview durations. Broad topic areas remained consistent across the interviews. However, questions were modified and informed by the individual responses to the online survey. The interview guide provoked discussions about the participants’ motives for using cannabis; use behaviour characteristics such as how, when, where, how much, how often, and what type of cannabis they would use; experiences of using cannabis; knowledge and understanding of cannabis; and belief(s) surrounding whether or not athletes should be permitted to use cannabis. The interview guide was intentionally designed to be informal and flexible. The interviews provided space for the interviewee to navigate the conversation and outfitted the interviewer with the ability to deliver unplanned questions that were tailored to the conversation and the information that the participant was willing to share.

Table 3.

Interview Duration

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1	55:40
2	49:09
3	54:13
4	50:29
5	42:15
6	67:22
7	46:50
8	55:12
9	47:51
10	48:01
11	42:12
12	47:50
13	51:37
14	48:21
Average	50:30

3.5.3 Data analysis

Interview audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Following the transcription of the interview data, a thematic analysis of the data set was performed using NVivo software.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning – themes – within and across qualitative data in relationship to participants’ lived experience, views and perspectives, and behaviour and practices (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) note that the process of thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition and involves immersing oneself in the data in a search for themes to provide novel insight, providing the categories for analysis. Clarke and Braun (2017) remark that a hallmark characteristic of thematic analysis is its flexibility; it is “unbounded by theoretical commitments” (p. 297) and boasts flexibility in terms of research questions, sample size, data collection method, and approaches to generating meaning (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016).

Thematic analysis involves a recursive, reflexive process through data familiarization, coding, theme development, revision, naming, and writing up (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). As such, Braun, Clarke, & Weate's (2016) six-phase model for thematic analysis was adopted to inform the analysis process. This model required an iterative sway, back and forth movement throughout the data and throughout research process components; as Sandelowski (1995) notes, qualitative research is an iterative operation in which researchers are actively sampling, collecting data, and analyzing data concurrently. The first phase asks the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data through transcription, reading, and note taking. The second phase has the researcher generate initial, preliminary codes. For the intentions of this study, a hybrid method of thematic analysis was adopted, which included data-driven inductive and literature-inspired deductive approaches to code creation. Codes are the smallest unit of data analysis and capture features of text – at a semantic or latent level - potentially relevant to the research questions (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016). Together, codes “underpinned by a central organizing concept” form and create themes (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p. 297). The third phase requires that the researcher sort through the codes for themes. Themes are overarching, recurrent patterns of meaning that transcend the data and help to make sense of the story it tells the reader. The fourth phase gets the researcher to review the codes, looking for inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and alternative explanations. The fifth phase calls for the emergent themes to be named and defined. Also, subthemes may become apparent. The sixth and final stage requires the researcher to produce a report through an eloquent illustration of the story being told through the data.

In total, the transcriptions were reviewed and coded twice. The first round of coding involved categorizing units of text broadly into four initial, latent codes: motives, use behaviour,

understanding, and experiences. The second round of coding involved deconstructing the initial codes into separate components. For example, use behaviours were deconstructed into when, where, how, how much, frequency, type. Then, the compartmentalized codes were organized into overarching themes. These themes were reviewed for accuracy and their relation to the research questions. Throughout the findings and discussion chapter, participants are referred to as P1, P2, P3, et cetera rather than their first or last name in order to maintain participant confidentiality.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study received ethics approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board on October 15, 2019 (see Appendix E). This study posed limited ethical concern and minimal potential risk to the participants. Bryman, Teevan, and Bell (2016) outline three core principles for the conduct of research on humans: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice. First, respect for persons maintains that human participants should not be treated as objects. Central to this concept is consent. Consent was obtained through the completion of the consent form prior to the interview. The consent form notified the participant of the research objectives, the methods employed, how their data would be used, and the potential risks and benefits of the study. In addition, the participants' rights were reviewed prior to the interview. The participants were also reminded that, at any time, they could opt to terminate the interview. Second, concern for welfare encompasses the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and economic well-being of research participants. Central to this concept is privacy and confidentiality. Ensuring that participant confidentiality was respected, and that personal information was kept strictly private was essential throughout the research process. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, findings have been summarized anonymously and pseudonyms were used to protect the participant's identity after the interview and during the analysis and reporting processes.

Responses to the online survey, electronic copies of the written notes from the interviews, and audio recordings of the interviews were stored on a password-protected, encrypted external hard drive. Throughout the research process, I continued to be heavily involved with varsity athletics. In this respect, it was vitally important that I not inadvertently identify a research participant in a social context, especially with other varsity student-athletes, coaches, or managers around. Access to the data was restricted to the student researcher, Andrew Kanerva, and supervisor, Dr. Andrea Bundon. Last, justice refers to the idea that the burdens and benefits of research should be dispersed equally. Central to this concept is participation and minimizing harm to participants. Participation did not present an issue because this research lacks an immediate life-and-death consequence (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2016). Similarly, this study did not require an intervention and does not ask participants to take part in illegal behaviour or misconduct.

Continuing, there were other ethical considerations that did not directly fit into descriptions of the three core principles outlined by Bryman, Teevan, and Bell (2016) but were, however, equally or even in some cases more overt or consequential. First, I knew that the athletes were putting themselves and their team(s) in a vulnerable position. I was being given information about athletes using a prohibited substance. There are significant consequences for athletes that are found to be in violation of doping policy such as competitive suspensions or medals and trophies being pulled from that athlete or their team(s). Similarly, there was a possibility that athletes may become stigmatized for their participation in this study. As such, it was possible that athletes could experience stigma where meaning is created through societal beliefs and values and because of their participation in this study being incongruous with a stereotype of what an athlete should be and do. For both cases, I was careful not to identify athletes for their participation in the study.

Second, I chose to recruit via TAC rather than the Department of Athletics and Recreation. I felt as though the interests of the department may have been different to those of the study. The notion of athletes using cannabis could jeopardize the legitimacy, credibility, and success of the department and varsity athletic community. Therefore, it was assumed the Department of Athletics and Recreation may not have advocated and approved of the study at all or to the same extent as did TAC.

Last, despite receiving approval for limited ethical concern and minimal potential risk to the participants, the essence of the study and the vulnerable position of the participants did pose personal, societal, cultural, and competitive consequences. All considering, I argued that the potential benefits of providing insight into a behaviour that is otherwise considered taboo in an athletic context outweighed the potential risks. By challenging the underlying assumptions about cannabis use amongst varsity student-athletes, I hope that this study is one of many that questions the existing policies and regulations for banned substances and begins to illuminate that athletes use cannabis differently, for different reasons, have different experiences and, most importantly, understand and make sense of their experiences differently.

3.7 Reflexivity

Throughout my undergraduate degree at UBC, I competed as a varsity and Canadian national athlete. Throughout my graduate degree, I was a strength and conditioning coach for the varsity program at UBC and I was a teaching assistant for multiple undergraduate courses offered in the School of Kinesiology. Over the course of my undergraduate and graduate degrees, I had access to the varsity student-athlete population and gained valuable insight into the practices and values of this group. At the time of this study, I was a known figure in the varsity athletics community. Many of the athletes either knew me as a coach, prior teammate or prior

athlete peer, or they were aware of my involvement in the School of Kinesiology. Thus, my identity and positionality provided unique visibility within the varsity community and, in many ways, meant that there was a mutual understanding that I was similar to and shared similar experiences with the athletes due to my background and involvement. To the same end, drawing from my experiences as an athlete and my experiences working closely with athletes as a strength and conditioning coach, I was better able to establish rapport and empathize with the participants during the interview process and during the analysis process with the resultant data. My mixed identity as a researcher, strength and conditioning coach, and former athlete was paramount in conducting this research and epitomized the importance to be an athlete and to know what it meant to be an athlete in conducting research in a sports context.

Aside from the fact that my mixed identities enabled me to build relationships and foster rapport with participants and other athletes both in and outside of the research context, I was able to use my identities to propel my study and recruit participants. For example, once the interview participants recognized that I was the researcher, many of them told me that, as a result, they would promote the study to their teammates and other athlete peers because they felt a sense of security knowing that I, as a former athlete, had their best interests in mind and that I would not divulge any confidential or potentially harmful personal information. This was also particularly important for the interviews themselves. Throughout the interview process, it became evident that the participants had different experiences and exhibited different levels of comfort. Some athletes were outspoken and were comfortable speaking to their cannabis use. Others were more reserved and did not readily disclose information about their cannabis use. I used those opportunities when participants did not feel at ease to put myself in a vulnerable position and explain how I, as an athlete, used cannabis. I did not exclusively use this strategy with

participants who were reserved. Rather, I used this strategy as a way of connecting with participants who were outspoken and reserved in a hope that they would see parts of themselves in me.

My experiences as an athlete and a cannabis user presented a bias. I am an advocate. I strongly believe that athletes should be permitted to use cannabis, whatever the reason. That was a significant motive for conducting this study in the first place. However, I recognized that my experiences also narrowed my focus and greatly influenced how I interpreted and presented the data. I had to remind myself throughout the research process that my stance on the topic was my own and that others would have different opinions. Further, I had to make a commitment to myself and the research not to project my bias onto others and that my bias not be reflected in the interpretation and presentation of the data. Instead, I emphasized the individual experience of each interview participant and made a concerted effort to maintain the subjectivity of their data.

I found it challenging when I interviewed athletes from the same sport discipline or from the same team. Part of the challenge was concealing insider knowledge that I would not have possessed, had I not interviewed another athlete from the same team. Consequently, I had to be prudent about my language and what information I divulged. In one case, I interviewed two athletes from the same team, of which the athletes developed and maintained a code of conduct that prohibited the use of cannabis. Neither athlete was aware that the other used cannabis. Not only that, both athletes believed that they would be ridiculed by their teammates if their teammates were to find out that they used cannabis. So, in this case and others alike, I was aware of the information that I possessed, of my position as the researcher, and as someone who knew the athletes outside of the research context. Prudence was essential to make sure that I did not disclose information that would expose or put any of the participants in a vulnerable position.

Being an insider presented many benefits in terms of developing relation, rapport, trust, and understanding with the interview participants. That being said, my insider status created biases and posed potential negative consequences. Most obviously, my opinion of or stance on the topic informed almost every aspect of this project. It is, to a certain extent, the main reason I wanted to do this research. Although cannabis has gone through a process of normalization and legalization, it continues to be approached by research as something that is taboo. Literature continues to be inconclusive about the effects of cannabis in general, due to its complexity and relatively recent inception into contemporary research. Noting this, I approached this project with biases that athletes can use cannabis safely and effectively, and can have positive experiences when they use cannabis, regardless of the social context. Most importantly, I believed, and continue to believe, that athletes should be able to use cannabis without reason and without consequence. With this project, I attempted to highlight the experiences that athletes have when they use cannabis and draw attention to the fact that athletes are required to conceal or mask their cannabis use due to the meanings and understandings that society has constructed of cannabis use.

In light of the advantages of my insider status, it also posed potential negative consequences to the research process. First, it was challenging to navigate my blurred identities. For example, I would interview an athlete and then, sometimes within days, I would interact with that same athlete as a strength and conditioning coach. My roles as a researcher and strength and conditioning coach require different conduct in social interactions. As a researcher, privacy and confidentiality was of central importance but as a strength and conditioning coach, athletes would approach me to chat informally about cannabis. In these situations, I would not deny or reject the conversations because I wanted to maintain healthy social relationships with the

athletes in the gym space. So, as a result, those conversations that I would have with interview participants did cross over from role to role, or from identity to identity. Second, some interview participants may have left out information, of which they may have revealed with a different researcher. Despite my insider status instilling a sense of trust and confidence in the interview participants, those participants may have restricted particularly personal information because of their relation to me outside of the research context. Lastly, my insider status may have resulted in the interviews being too informal and therefore, hindered the ability for the interviews to elicit vivid and detailed accounts of athletes' experiences of using cannabis.

Regular debriefs with my graduate supervisor, Dr. Andrea Bundon, were used to mitigate the potential consequences and to improve the research process. After the interviews, I would reflect on what went well and did not; the nature of the questions I asked and how I asked them; my nonverbal communication with the interview participants and how my gesture, posture, facial expressions, and body language influenced the interview; and my use of language. More specifically, in terms of my use of language, I was cautious not to guide or lead participants towards a particular response. Nevertheless, I understand that the process of interviewing was itself a co-construction of meaning between the participant and myself in a unique social and cultural context and that I would inevitably have an impact on interview participants' responses. In conjunction to my processes of reflection, I would regularly meet with my graduate supervisor formally or informally throughout the research process to discuss pertinent matters. These meetings were especially constructive as Dr. Bundon made an effort to facilitate my learning through the research process rather than telling me what to do explicitly. A key part of this facilitation of learning was done by getting me to question, reflect upon, and articulate my bias in a meaningful way.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Overview

In the following chapter I respond to the research questions and present the themes that were developed throughout the data analysis process. The findings are organized into four separate sections; the first two sections are descriptive and the subsequent two sections are analytical. First, I contextualize the University of British Columbia. Second, I provide a synopsis of the participants motives and cannabis use behaviours in response to the research questions: *Why do athletes use cannabis?* and *How do athletes use cannabis?* Third, I illuminate the participant's lived experiences of using cannabis in response to the research question: *What experiences do athletes have when they use cannabis?* And lastly, I annotate the participant's knowledge of cannabis in response to the research question: *What do athletes know about cannabis?*

4.2 Context of Cannabis Use by Student-Athletes at the University of British Columbia

UBC is located on the traditional, ancestral, unceded territory of the Musqueam people in Vancouver, British Columbia. British Columbia has been recognized as an epicenter for cannabis. Notably, 'BC Bud' has been a widespread term synonymous with world-class, high quality cannabis (Lang, 2018). British Columbia's worldwide status as a cannabis mecca stems from a mixture of unique history, distinctive culture, and optimal environmental characteristics (Bettridge, 2018). 'BC Bud' was originally trademarked and sold in the 1930's as a lager beer, which was smuggled south of the US-Canada border to supply thirsty Americans with alcohol during the era of prohibition. As a result, the term 'BC Bud' became a popular, well-known term across North America. Shortly thereafter, 'draft dodgers', in the thousands, flocked to British Columbia, disobeying United States federal law, in search of reprieve. Upon arrival, this

counterculture, instigated by an opposition to the Vietnam war, found tolerant and likeminded communities, and relaxed law enforcement towards cannabis all across the province despite the fact that cannabis had been criminalized in Canada since 1923. The ‘draft dodgers’ dispersed across the province and coalesced into the existing ‘hippie’ culture. Offering supreme landscapes and optimal seasonal growing conditions, British Columbia’s cannabis culture flourished, and ‘BC Bud’ was reincarnated. The previous illicit associations of the term ‘BC Bud’ perhaps explain why it was adopted by the cannabis community, which propelled British Columbia’s cannabis to proliferate as some of the best in the world. The context of cannabis in British Columbia permeated the premise of this study and offered a unique cultural context, unlike any other, to research cannabis use.

The other context that informed this study was UBC itself and the nature of the varsity program. In the 2019 World University Rankings, UBC was ranked 37th, making it one of the most prestigious universities in the world (Cowan, 2018). Strong academics is a defining feature of the university and particularly, of the varsity athletic program. While a small number of scholarships are provided to recruit athletes, student-athletes are not exempt from the competitive academic standards. Rather, student-athletes are accepted into UBC for their outstanding academic achievement *and* for their athletic characteristics. This was important because it meant that the student-athletes who responded to the online survey and who participated in an interview were representative of exceptional academics.

There is a strong history of student-athletes performing well both academically and athletically. For example, 139 student-athletes or approximately one quarter of the student-athlete population were named Academic All-Canadian’s during the 2019-20 academic year. This is an award given to student-athletes at Canadian Universities who achieve an academic

standing of 80 percent or better while competing for a varsity athletic team. The high rate of academic achievement is a distinguishing attribute of the varsity program at UBC. This meant that the student-athlete participants studied and competed within a unique context that presented high academic and athletic expectations. Moreover, it also meant that the student-athletes were obligated to manage extraordinary workloads and the stresses that accompany their dual roles.

UBC has the most successful varsity program in Canada. The university provides competitive sports opportunities for men and women athletes in seven sport disciplines respectively, which include baseball, basketball, cross country, field hockey, football, golf, hockey, rowing, rugby, soccer, softball, swimming, track and field, and volleyball. It supports an elite sporting culture, which posits high levels of competitive expectation. Notably, as of 2013, UBC is the leader among Canadian universities with the most national championship titles. As of 2020, teams at UBC have won 115 national championships. During the 2019-20 season, varsity athletic teams won 10 national championship titles and 8 UBC athletes were named USports Athlete of the Year in their respective sport disciplines. In addition, a number of UBC athletes and alumni have competed for Canadian national teams and 224 have competed at the Olympics, collectively winning 58 Olympic medals including 18 gold medals. The remarkable extent of athletic achievement and presence of national athletes highlights the demand and level to which student-athletes are expected to perform athletically. Together, the expectation of the student-athletes to perform exceptionally well academically and athletically meant that they had to endure extraordinary workloads, manage schedules, and govern the stresses from their dual roles. The uniqueness of this population meant that they might use cannabis for different reasons and have different experiences than other students and athletes.

The rules around cannabis use also set the student-athletes apart from their peers. Namely, student-athletes at UBC and across Canada are required to complete and adhere to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) drug education program in order to be able to train and compete as varsity student-athletes. USports also enforces the World-Anti Doping Agency's (WADA) list of prohibited and banned substances. This means that student-athletes in sports sanctioned by USports are subject to drug testing and, as outlined earlier in this document, cannabis is on the prohibited list of substances. A positive test or failure to comply with testing can have immediate consequences including being banned from competition. Furthermore, it is not only the athletes who commit to upholding the values of the CCES and maintaining a drug-free sport program. Others, including coaches, are responsible for upholding the code and commit to not endorsing any practices that contravene the drug-free sport code and reporting athletes that offend. For example, an athlete could be suspended from training, competition, or both if a coach were to find out that athlete used cannabis. Even if the coach did not take the drastic measures of reporting that athlete, they could also engage in more subtle practices such as selecting and promoting athlete whom they know to be drug free. In this sense, student-athletes have a vested interest in concealing their cannabis use because exposure could result in bans from training and competition.

In addition to the more official and universal codes of conduct enforced in the athletics program, many teams choose to develop and enforce codes of conduct written by the student-athletes themselves. These codes reflect the agreed upon values of the team and behaviours that are restricted as well as the consequences to athletes found to be in violation to the code. In this case, for example, teammates could report a teammate who uses cannabis to the coach. Alternatively, teammates could also employ more permissive consequences by excluding a

teammate socially, athletically, or both. In this sense, student-athletes have a vested interest in concealing their cannabis use because exposure could tarnish their relationships with teammates.

The codes, both the formal anti-doping codes and the less formal codes adopted by each team, also contribute to reinforcing the notion that cannabis use – and discussions of cannabis use – are taboo. Because cannabis use remains prohibited for student-athletes, cannabis is a ‘discreditable’ activity. In this sense, a taboo around discussing cannabis use has developed. The prohibition of cannabis prevents student-athletes from openly identifying as cannabis users and sharing their experiences. Moreover, the taboo inhibits student-athletes who use cannabis from feeling supported and denies USports or the Department of Athletics and Recreation the opportunity to formally educate and guide the student-athletes on how they can effectively incorporate cannabis use into their academic and athletic lifestyles.

Using cannabis is both legal and increasingly accepted. Ordinary students can use cannabis, but student-athletes cannot. It’s for this reasons that student-athletes operate within a bind. Their status’ as varsity student-athletes restricts an activity that is more generally tolerated and celebrated by their non-athlete peers. Moreover, their status as varsity student-athletes generates a taboo aura surrounding cannabis that denies the athletes the opportunity to be transparent and use cannabis in the same ways that others do. This is why athletes must perform separate roles as athletes and cannabis users.

Next, I describe the student-athletes and I provide an overview of their cannabis use behaviours. In doing so, I construct a profile of why, how, when, and where the student-athlete population and interview participants used cannabis.

4.3 Cannabis Use by Student-Athletes at the University of British Columbia

During the 2019-20 academic year, 629 varsity student-athletes competed for UBC. Of these, 77 student-athletes completed the online survey and 14 were interviewed (n=8M & 4F). Data was gathered from the 77 responses to the online survey. For those athletes that opted not to provide their contact information for an interview, their data provided valuable insight into how cannabis was used amongst the broader varsity student-athlete population and this was useful in suggesting questions to ask during the interviews. Further, the survey data compiled a general, yet detailed, understanding of the reasons why many varsity student-athletes use cannabis and their use behaviours. See Table 4 for the population's cannabis use behaviours.

One of the questions on the online survey asked if the respondents had used cannabis within the past twelve months. This question did not force a response. 50 student-athletes responded to the question and a majority (n=36) had used cannabis recently (within the past twelve months). This finding is significant as it suggests that cannabis use by varsity student-athletes is prevalent despite the current restrictions. Of course, there are challenges in extrapolating from the survey data. However, if the survey respondents are in any way representative of the entire student-athlete population, then, this would suggest that at least a substantial number of student-athletes use cannabis.

A majority of student-athletes (n=30) disagreed with cannabis remaining on the prohibited list and either strongly agreed (n=13), agreed (n=17), or were neutral (n=12) that cannabis should be permitted in sport. In comparison, only a few student-athletes (n=8) disagreed that cannabis should be permitted, and no student-athletes (n=0) strongly disagreed. This divergent opinion represents a stark divide between the attitude of the athletes and the restrictions enforced upon them.

According to the online survey, student-athletes leading motives for using cannabis were celebration (n=18), enjoyment (n=27), low risk (n=15), and sleep (n=20). This finding illustrates that the reasons *why* student-athletes used cannabis were different than those associated with the stigmatized identity of cannabis users, which includes using cannabis to cope ‘because [they] want to forget’ (n=3); and being unproductive, using cannabis out of boredom ‘because [they] have nothing better to do’ (n=4). This finding also highlights that student-athlete’s motives for cannabis use were different than those associated with illicit drug use problems such as substance use, dependence, and harmful activity. Instead, the respondents used cannabis purposefully, for recreational and therapeutic purposes.

When the student-athletes used cannabis strongly supports that they used cannabis purposefully. For example, a majority of the respondents (n=31) indicated that they used cannabis in the evenings. This is compared to only a few respondents (n=7) who used cannabis in the afternoons. Comparably, none of the respondents (n=0) indicated that they used cannabis in the mornings. The large number of respondents who used cannabis for sleep and in the evenings suggests that the student-athletes used cannabis primarily as a sleep aid and to relax at the end of the day. The overwhelming number of student-athletes who responded that they used cannabis in the evenings suggests that the student-athletes were strategic about when they used cannabis and that they prioritized their athletic and academic responsibilities.

The student-athletes also specified *how* they used cannabis and what type of cannabis they used. Smoking (n=23) was the leading method of *how* cannabis was used. A comparable number of athletes consumed edibles (n=17) and vaporized cannabis (n=14). A limited number of athletes indicated that they used extracts (n=6) such as oils and tinctures. The student-athletes varied in terms of how frequently they used cannabis. However, the bulk of the respondents

specified that they used cannabis multiple times per week. Corresponding with *how* the athletes used cannabis, using bud (n=30) or cannabis in its dried flower state was the leading type of cannabis that was used. Smoking and using bud are synonymous. The second most common type of cannabis used was in an oil (n=18). A limited number of respondents (n=2) indicated that they used concentrates such as hash.

The online survey data provided valuable insight into why, how, and when the student-athlete population used cannabis. This insight informed the development of the interview questions and particularly, what facets of cannabis use to focus on. For instance, a focal point of the interviews was exploring *how* and *why* athletes used cannabis purposefully due to the fact that so many athletes indicated that they used cannabis in the evenings and for sleep. Conversely, for example, I elected not to probe whether or not social conformity was a contributing factor for the participants cannabis use because, so few respondents (n=1) indicated that ‘they did not want to be the only one not doing it’. In total, 14 interviews were conducted. The interview participants ranged from 19 to 25 years of age and represented a diversity of sport disciplines, including individual (n=3) and team sport disciplines (n=11). In four cases, athletes from the same team were interviewed and in three cases, men and women from the same sport discipline were interviewed. All of the participants were enrolled in an undergraduate program and a majority were studying in their third or fourth academic year (n=9). All of the participants were eligible varsity student-athletes.

Table 4.*Population Cannabis Use Behaviours*

Data Categories	Frequency
Recent Use (<12 months)	
Yes	34
No	16
Cannabis should be permitted*	
Strongly Agree	13
Agree	17
Neutral	12
Disagree	8
Strongly Disagree	0
Motives*	
Alcohol	8
Availability	6
Boredom	4
Celebration	18
Conformity	1
Coping	3
Enjoyment	27
Experimentation	4
Low Risk	15
Other	9
Social Anxiety	3
Sleep	20
How*	
Smoking (ex. joint, pipe, etc.)	23
Extracts (ex. oil, tinctures, etc.)	6
Edibles (ex. brownies, cookies, etc.)	17
Vaporizing (ex. vape pen, handheld vaporizers, etc.)	14
When*	
Morning	0
Day	7
Evening	31
Frequency*	
0-3x / week	9
3-5x / week	5
5-7x / week	5

Note. * indicates questions on the online survey which did not force a response.

4.3.1 Why do Athletes use Cannabis?

In order to answer the overarching research question: *Why do athletes use cannabis?*; five key motives were identified. These motives were identified as follows: 1) Enjoyment; 2) Coping; 3) Sleep; 4) Pain and Soreness; and 5) Alternative Medicine. The interview participants used cannabis for recreational and therapeutic purposes. In this sense, ‘recreational’ refers to instances in which the participants were motivated to use cannabis for leisure. For example, participants used cannabis recreationally to celebrate academic and athletic achievements. Conversely, ‘therapeutic’ refers to instances in which the participants were motivated to use cannabis purposefully for relief. For example, participants used cannabis therapeutically to cope with stress, as a sleep aid, and to manage pain and soreness.

The key motives are symbolic of the meaning that cannabis had for the participants. By outlining these key motives, I highlight the meaning of cannabis for the participants. Meanings were created through processes of interpretation during interactions with cannabis and the participants reasons for using cannabis represented those meanings.

4.3.1.1 Enjoyment.

Enjoyment was the participants foremost motive for using cannabis and was both a recreational and therapeutic motive. *Enjoyment* was unique because participants who used cannabis for recreational and therapeutic purposes both expressed that *enjoyment* was a dominant motive. Out of the sample, a majority of the participants (n=12) indicated on the online survey that *enjoyment* was a motive for their cannabis use. Through the interview and analysis process, it became apparent that the main reason why so many of the participants used cannabis for *enjoyment* was because of its wide-reaching affects; cannabis enhanced and enabled the

participants to take pleasure in a great many aspects of everyday life. Highlighting that enjoyment was their chief motive, P14 explained:

P14: The biggest [motive] is enjoyment. I find a pleasant sensation. I find that most things are a little more fun. So, if it's something that I know I'm going to be doing anyways and I know I can enjoy it more when I'm high, I don't see any benefit to not being high for that... Overall, I would say that it's a pleasant sensation. That's part of the reason why I use cannabis.

Others felt similarly that if they were going to be doing something that it would be more enjoyable with cannabis. For example, one participant said that they would use cannabis before cleaning their apartment and argued that cannabis transformed the monotonous chore of cleaning into an enjoyable activity. Comparably, another participant said that they would use cannabis before cooking dinner because they would enjoy the otherwise tedious task of preparing dinner.

'Pleasant sensations' exemplified *enjoyment* as a motive. The most prominent 'pleasant sensation' was introspection, the participants acknowledging and examining their own thoughts. All of the participants (n=14) expressed that introspection was the most important 'pleasant sensation'. For example, one participant said that cannabis allowed them to be 'weird' and explore 'mental rabbit holes'. Similarly, P14 said:

P14: Generally, I feel like mushed out. You want to lay down... I notice that your thoughts seem a lot more interesting. You're a lot more content just to think about things and to sit with whatever comes to your consciousness and ponder over that.

Using cannabis also generated 'pleasant sensations' in social contexts. All of the participants (n=14) stated that cannabis made social interactions more enjoyable and enabled the participants to take pleasure in company. For example, P7 and P12 remarked:

P7: I would much rather smoke and hang out and laugh about stuff and talk... I guess it's just kind of like if you're bored and you just like don't really have a lot to do or maybe don't have important things to do and you're just like 'oh, let's just hangout and smoke'.

P12: I think everything is funnier. You have no worry in the world and you just enjoy everyone's company a little more. What they say is funny, even if it's not. It's thought

provoking too. You think of stuff that you wouldn't think of sober. It's kind of fun.

Additionally, using cannabis also elicited 'pleasant sensations' when the participants consumed media. In many cases (n=8), the participants took pleasure in listening to music and watching movies while or after using cannabis. For instance, P3 noted:

P3: For me, I'm relaxed. Like I can just sit there and enjoy my music. I find that's one of the biggest things like if I'm smoking a joint, I have a playlist that I made because certain songs sound better than others when you're high. It would be like when I'm good, I'm relaxed and it's like the feeling of almost like I'm floating. If I'm lying in my bed, all of a sudden, it feels like I'm lying on air. That's what it feels like... I'm just very relaxed when I'm high, having a good time, smiling and listening to my music.

These passages elucidate why *enjoyment* was the dominant motive for recreational cannabis use.

Enjoyment was also an important motive for therapeutic cannabis use. Many participants (n=5) used cannabis primarily for therapeutic purposes. Although cannabis use for therapeutic purposes stipulates that cannabis is used only for remedial outcomes, the participants who claimed to use cannabis for therapeutic purposes insisted that *enjoyment* was a key motive. For example, P3 and P11 expressed that *enjoyment* was as a leading motive despite the fact that they used cannabis for therapeutic purposes:

P3: It's still fun obviously, otherwise I wouldn't do it.

P11: Well, I enjoy it. I mean, I do use it for [medicinal] purposes, for my injuries, but I do enjoy the feeling...It feels good. It's kind of fun.

These responses demonstrate that *enjoyment* was a leading motive regardless of the participants underlying impetus for using cannabis, whether it was recreational or therapeutic. Evidently, *enjoyment* transcends the divide between recreational and therapeutic cannabis use. This is significant because it signifies that recreational and therapeutic users share similar experiences, which may lend itself to a unified understanding of why student-athletes use cannabis. This is also how cannabis' meaning was created. Using cannabis meant that the participants were able to

enjoy everyday life and this meaning was created and recreated through a wide variety of repeated interactions with cannabis.

4.3.1.2 Coping.

Only a few respondents (n=3) indicated that ‘coping’ was a motive on the online survey. The example of ‘coping’ that was provided on the online survey was ‘because you want to forget’. This example was drawn from Lee, Neighbors, Hendershot, and Grossbard (2009) and evidently, did not resonate with the survey respondents. However, despite few respondents selecting this as a motive in the survey, coping was a frequent topic of conversation in the interviews.

Coping was a leading therapeutic motive in two separate, yet interrelated ways: 1) the participants used cannabis to cope with stress; and 2) the participants used cannabis to cope with anxiety. Out of the interviewees, all of the participants (n=14) used cannabis to cope with stress and multiple (n=7) participants used cannabis to cope with anxiety. Although stress and anxiety are seemingly related, I distinguish between them because some participants specifically referred to stress while others referred to anxiety. There was a slight nuance between stress and anxiety whereby athletes referred to stress as being more generalizable and something that they encountered on a daily basis whereas athletes referred to anxiety as being more situational and something that they encountered on occasion and in particular circumstances. First, highlighting that *coping* with stress was a motive, P5 stated:

P5: [Using cannabis is] a chance to recollect yourself. Just forget about responsibilities because life is crazy and it’s easy to get caught up in it. So, when I smoke, I’m disconnected for like whatever for the few hours that I am.

‘Disconnection’ epitomized *coping*. The participants were motivated to use cannabis because it enabled ‘disconnection’ from the stressful events of the past and obligations of the future. The

concept of ‘disconnection’ or ‘disconnecting’ is consistent with the example of ‘coping’ that was provided on the survey; by ‘disconnecting’, the participants were able to ‘forget’. For example,

P3 and P10 explained that disconnection was a distinguishing facet of *coping*:

P3: I find that weed at least, it takes away your thoughts of trying to worry about what happens next or what’s happened before. It just really focuses you on what’s going on right now. Like if I’m lying in bed, I’m not thinking about what I have to do tomorrow or what I did earlier in the day, I’m just thinking about what I want to do right now and I find that’s a great way of being in the present and not being anxious or worrying about what has happened or what will happen. I think that’s the biggest reason why I use it, to be honest.

P10: Just like the stress, relaxation part... It just makes you mellowed out, I guess. You can’t think about all of the stressful stuff coming up or all of the stressful things that just passed.

Second, using cannabis to manage anxiety was an equally important aspect of *coping*. In the same way that cannabis facilitated disconnection, it also enabled the participants to relieve themselves from anxiety. Highlighting that *coping* with anxiety was a motive, P5 and P7 said:

P5: [Cannabis] really helps me get out of my own head. So, like I’m a very like type A person. I’m very in my head a lot; just always overthinking and just being really uptight. So, it really helps me just forget about everything that’s going on and just letting me let loose, which is nice for me. And I think it also breaks down some like, if I feel like anxious about something or socially anxious, it really helps me relax and be myself... It helps me overcome anxieties and overthinking and stress and all of that stuff, which has been pretty big in my life. So, it also helps me deal with that stuff... It’s a nice way to disconnect from those emotions and feelings and just kind of get to a place where I’m like more relaxed.

P7: I guess it just takes my mind off of it, if anything. It takes my mind of it and makes me feel relaxed. I would say that those are the two things. It directs my attention away from my anxiety. I’ve never experienced anxiety while smoking cannabis.

Coping was a leading therapeutic motive because of cannabis’ ability to relieve stress and anxiety. Key contributing factors to the participants stress and anxiety were the extraordinary workloads and schedules that they had to manage and sustain. Through a process of ‘disconnection’, cannabis offered the participants a viable tool to momentarily absolve

themselves from the responsibilities of those workloads and schedules. This is significant because it identifies cannabis as an effective therapeutic tool. P3 explained how they used cannabis to cope with the extraordinary workloads and schedules sustained by student-athletes:

P3: As a student-athlete, you're doing a lot more than the regular student. You got to go to class, you got to go practice, you got to go to the gym, you're doing stuff outside the gym and outside the school to maintain your body. Like you're rolling out, you're stretching, you're doing your physio. And there is just always something to do to make sure that you're ready for the next day, the next week, the next competition. Or whatever it may be. So, I feel like [cannabis] benefits me positively by almost resetting me. That relaxation is just like I have nothing to worry about, this is the time to be calm and have nothing to have to do because there is always something, like finish an assignment, go to the gym, go to the gym and now I've got to go to class, go to class and now I've got to go to practice or something like that and then, I have to go study afterwards.

These responses demonstrate that *coping* was a significant therapeutic motive. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, meaning was created through repeated experiences using cannabis to cope with stress and anxiety. Using cannabis purposefully meant that the participants were able to effectively manage and subdue their stress and anxiety.

4.3.1.3 Sleep.

Sleep was a leading therapeutic motive. A majority of the participants (n=12) indicated that *sleep* was a motive on the online survey. This is consistent with the online survey where *sleep* was the second most prominent motive (n=20), after *enjoyment*. Cannabis helped the participants get to *sleep* and stay asleep. For instance, P2 and P11 stated:

P2: After hard workouts and stuff like that, you know I would smoke a little bit just to help take that edge off or again, help me sleep because I have trouble getting asleep or even staying asleep and then, that was just one way to help me with that. So, mostly if I do smoke now, it will usually be because I know that I need to get to sleep.

P11: [Cannabis] helps me fall asleep... [Cannabis] helps me stay asleep. I won't wake up in the night. Maybe for other reasons but it helps me stay asleep and get a good 8 hours, 6-8 hours usually.

As a sleep aid, cannabis was especially important for dealing with pain and soreness and managing training schedules. The participants used cannabis as a sleep aid strategically on specific nights. In particular, the participants used cannabis after difficult training sessions to manage pain and soreness, and before early morning training sessions to ensure sufficient amounts of rest. For example, P1, P3, and P14 provided examples of why they used cannabis for *sleep*:

P1: It's pretty much Tuesday's night because we have a big lift and we throw, which hurts my knee and then we have a big lift, which hurts everything and then, I get massages some Tuesdays and the guy that does it just fucking goes at it. Like I'm bruised. Like it feels good in a day or two but I'm just like absolutely in pain when I move and [cannabis] kind of lets me sleep off that... So, [cannabis] just works out for me to have a good sleep after that.

P3: It would be on a Monday night or Wednesday night because I have to be up at 7:00 AM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, that would require me having to go to sleep a lot earlier than I usually would. Sometimes I'm just kind of alert at those times and [cannabis] would really help me calm down and actually go to sleep.

P14: I have quite a lot of trouble sleeping, especially because I have to go to bed really early. You know, to wake up for 4:30 practices and stuff, 5:30 practices. Smoking cannabis gives an extra two hours of sleep per night. It's actually a pretty big deal.

Part of the reason why cannabis was an effective sleep aid was because it helped the participants to unwind and relax at the end of the day. As such, using cannabis at night, for *sleep* often overlapped with using cannabis for *coping* with stress and anxiety. For example, P9 highlighted this interrelatedness:

P9: I think that's one of the reasons that I love to smoke weed at night is because, with my anxious mind, my head gets into this place of, everyone has experienced anxiety, where your mind is working at a hundred miles per hour and I feel like my head is always in this headspace and it won't shut off. Smoking weed allows me to remove myself and chill.

Sleep was a prominent therapeutic motive. Using cannabis meant that the participants could manage their workloads and schedules. This is significant because it represents a purposeful

approach to cannabis use that prioritizes wellbeing. It also exemplifies the multiplicity of positive outcomes that can be attributed to cannabis use.

4.3.1.4 Pain and soreness.

Pain and soreness were significant therapeutic motives and were related to other therapeutic motives like *sleep* and *coping*. In this case, *pain and soreness* were isolated from these other therapeutic motives because of the uniqueness of this population. Student-athletes frequently deal with and manage *pain and soreness* as part of their role as athletes and due to the inherent physiological stresses that they are required to sustain. Supporting this, the participants commonly referred to managing the *pain and soreness* from their sports participation as major motives for their cannabis use.

Although they were not offered as response options on the online survey, using cannabis for *pain and soreness* are consistent with existing literature (Hatchett, Armstrong, Hughes, & Parr, 2019; Kosiba, Maisto, & Ditre, 2019) and widely accepted as common reasons why cannabis is used for therapeutic purposes. In this case, the participants used cannabis to manage the *pain and soreness* from injuries, surgeries, and training.

First, a few participants (n=4) used cannabis to manage the pain from injuries. For example, P9 explained that they used cannabis to curb the pain from a back injury. P9 also described the overlap between *pain and soreness* and *sleep*:

P9: I had back pain from my herniated disc in my back. I would just get more high to alleviate the pain. For example, this year, when I first started to have back pain from my herniated disc, there was one night where I literally could not move. I was lying in bed and I couldn't walk, and I couldn't stand up. My back pain was so bad. I smoked and I was trying to put myself to sleep because I didn't want to be awake for that pain. It's time like that where I would smoke to get extremely high.

Alternatively, a couple of the participants (n=2) used cannabis to suppress the pain from surgeries. For example, P13 explained that they used cannabis to manage the pain from a knee surgery. In

the following excerpt, P13 also illustrated the overlap between *pain and soreness* and *coping*. By doing so, P13 distinguished the relief that they experienced by consuming CBD brownies compared to smoking joints. CBD brownies were effective for managing their *pain and soreness* throughout the day while joints proved to be crucial for *coping* with the emotional stress of taking time away from their sport:

P13: As soon as I had surgery, two days later, I started having brownies with CBD oil in them... I wasn't training obviously. It was the first time in my life where I didn't play [sport discipline]. So, I started smoking weed... I was always in pain with my knee, whether I was using CBD oil or smoking a joint. I think mentally, [cannabis] gave me relief... I think when you smoke a joint, you're a bit more spacey, you start to find things are funny, you're heightened, and you're happy. That's how I get. At that point in my life, I was really depressed. I wasn't playing [sport discipline]. I was in so much pain. I hated school. I hated being here because I wasn't playing [sport discipline]. So, it was just a really negative mind space. CBD brownies didn't take that away. It just made me feel less pain. Whereas joints did. It made me happier, just like felt better... [Joints provided effective relief] mentally yes, for sure, more than the CBD brownies. They didn't help with feeling depressed but [joints] did. It made me much happier and I would kind of forget about my situation a bit further than the brownies would.

Lastly, many of the participants (n=7) used cannabis to alleviate soreness. Almost all of the participants who used cannabis to manage *pain and soreness* used CBD products. This way, the participants could use cannabis as much as they wanted to, at any point in the day because the CBD products would not have elicited psychoactive effects. For example, P3 and P8 noted:

P3: I would use CBD for more after practice or after a competition where I don't have to compete... After the workout, it would have been a couple of hours afterwards. I had some achiness and growing pain in knees almost and my ankle and I applied [CBD cream] to that area and within ten minutes, because I wanted to see what it felt like before I seshed because I didn't want to be high and then, put it on and be like maybe it just me being high and I don't feel it. So, I put it on first and honestly, within ten minutes, all of my achiness and soreness was gone. Maybe it was a placebo, I don't know, but after ten minutes, my legs felt amazing. Like pain, soreness, achiness gone and then, I went to go smoke and I came back and I was just purely relaxed like could not move.

P8: I have a CBD balm... It calms you down on the adrenaline level and anti-inflammatory level... I only use the balm if I feel like a knot in my knee or I've taken a Charlie horse or tightness in my muscles. So, it's kind of like any bumps and bruises.

The participants described profound sensations of relief and the extent of which suggests that cannabis was effective. These responses suggest that cannabis has strong therapeutic applications within athletic contexts. This is significant because it means that the participants used cannabis to support their performance. In this case, meaning was created through the interactions between the participants, their pain and soreness, as well as cannabis as a therapeutic tool.

4.3.1.5 Alternative medicine.

Using cannabis as an *alternative medicine* was a significant therapeutic motive. The participants frequently made comparisons between the effectiveness of cannabis and pharmacological medications. *Alternative medicine* was a therapeutic motive because the participants chose to substitute cannabis for prescription and non-prescription pharmacological medications, which varied from Melatonin to Oxycodone. This was due to the participants believing that cannabis was an effective treatment and perceiving that cannabis presented fewer adverse effects. For example, a few participants (n=3) contested that cannabis was more effective and reliable than Melatonin as a sleep aid. P3 described how cannabis was an alternative to Melatonin:

P3: I was using melatonin sometimes, but it doesn't always work. So, I would use [weed] instead and it would make a big difference compared to melatonin, to be honest.

Alternatively, many participants (n=7) argued that cannabis was more effective than over-the-counter analgesics like Advil and Tylenol. For example, P3 and P11 said that they would rather use cannabis instead of Advil and Tylenol:

P3: If we have a hard practice, going out and doing some maximal speed endurance, it takes a shot at your energy systems sometimes and for the rest of the day, I feel groggy or tired or whatever. So, I want to make sure that I can wake up the next day and give the same effort I gave earlier in the day and not feel like I'm lacking in being able to give energy. So, I want to make sure that I'm fully recovered and doing the most that I can do to be ready to go the next day. So those are things that help me get to that point. I prefer to do that than take Advil or Tylenol.

P11: I experienced some injuries and I don't know, I dealt with the pain with rehab and, I don't know, Tylenol... I didn't sleep as much so I started using [cannabis] for sleep and it helped a lot. So, whenever my injuries were hurting, I would have a little edible. I didn't smoke. I've been pretty good to stay away from smoking. So, just have an edible or a [tincture], a little bit of both to help my body calm down and it kind of relieves the pain. I don't get aches and pains at night.

Similarly, a few participants (n=3) preferred to use cannabis rather than prescription pain medications to manage the pain from injuries or surgeries. For instance, P8 elected to substitute cannabis because they understood the harmful side effects of opiates:

P8: I was suffering from numerous injuries, the aches and pain... I don't feel the need to be popping heavy dosage pain killers for my broken toe or my shoulder injury or anything like that... I think that [cannabis] provides an alternative to opiates, which I think is an epidemic in our society and something is very dangerous, especially for high-level athletes. I know people that can speak to that. First and foremost, this could be an alternative to something that I think has huge negative downsides... I just think that opiates are a band aide solution. You slap that on, and the pain goes away for like eight hours. You feel like shit in the morning and the pain is still there. You need to take another one. That's the reason why people build a tolerance and become dependent because you keep needing it like that. Obviously, they go down a dark path towards street drugs or they could overdose on those prescription drugs themselves. Marijuana or CBD, it's like a whole different philosophy. There is a whole different approach to pain management once you start taking CBD. You recognize that's not the sole thing that going to stop me from hurting. It's like a tool in the toolkit. It helps ease the pain but there are other things that you need to be doing as well. When I talk to people about opiates, that's the super pill. It's going to take everything away and you'll be ready to go in the morning. Whereas people that I talk to about taking marijuana and CBD don't see it in the same light. It's part of a whole different philosophy towards pain management. Its more holistic. I don't want to sound hippie, grab my granola, and go down the whole health path. But I think that the people that I've talked about their marijuana usage, its more holistic. It's not a band aide that you can chuck on an injury for a couple of hours.

Likewise, P9 and P13 elected to substitute cannabis for their pain killers because cannabis created pleasant sensations of relief and their prescription medications caused undesirable side effects:

P9: Yea, so I've had three shoulder surgeries. First two, I got Oxycodone and the third one, I got Percocet. Those were my drugs that I used for my pain during those times. [I: Did you use weed in conjunction with those prescription drugs or did you just use the prescription drugs?] Just use the prescription drugs during those times. That was before I

started smoking weed. Being A-wall to realize that weed could help me in the same ways without the, during those times I was at home and my mom was like we need to cut you off of the narcotics. Towards the end of the recovery, she was worried that I would get addicted to them and I felt like they were really addicting. I was popping them just to go to sleep or to get away from the pain, but I would feel like shit. There were weeks that I don't even remember because I so heavily drugged. Whereas I feel like now, what I've realized with my back pain and weed is that I can still be cognitively there but alleviating that pain and still feeling alright the next day. And not the feeling of addiction, not saying that I was addicted to those drugs, but I don't really crave weed. It's more like I just want to smoke now. It's not like I'm addicted to it.

P13: I injured my knee last year. I had surgery. My pain killers were Oxy... I don't remember a lot of the days following surgery. Even conversations. My ex-boyfriend, his mom came to visit me, and she was having a full conversation with me and not a week later, goes and talks to me about it, and I have no recollection of the conversation whatsoever. I was just totally numb and very out of it. I hated it. I absolutely hated it. I felt like I had no concept of time and I just lied on the couch... I remember stopping the Oxy and being in pain. Obviously, I was in so much pain but the weed brownies, the CBD brownies were much different pain killer. I was still very lucid. I knew what was going on. I didn't feel like I was high at all. It wasn't like I was spacy. I knew what was going on. My body would feel tingly, soft, and warm. So, it took away my pain but mentally I was still there and I was still laying on the couch because I was in a lot of pain but I was able to communicate with people and remember everything that would happen when I started using them. It did make me feel nauseous, which is kind of funny but I still continued with them because I hated how I felt when I was using the Oxy. I felt like I was numb and didn't know what was going on.

These responses suggest that cannabis offered an effective and preferred substitute for a variety of pharmacological medications. Using cannabis meant that the participants would experience a pleasant sensation of relief and would not have to endure the harmful side effects of the other medications.

4.3.1.6 Summary.

The participants often used cannabis for more than one reason and their motives were interrelated and overlapped. For example, part of the reason why the participants used cannabis as a sleep aid was also because it functioned as a coping mechanism and allowed the participants to relax at the end of the day. Comparably, part of the reason why the participants used cannabis as an alternative medicine was also because it was enjoyable. The leading motives that have been

presented and their interconnectedness present a novel discovery of why cannabis is used by student-athletes. In all of the excerpts, participants expressed positive, meaningful reasons for using cannabis. This sentiment of positive, purposeful cannabis use represents a departure from the misconstrued stereotypes of cannabis users as ‘stoners’ and ‘potheads’ and points out that cannabis use amongst athletic populations is a purposeful, pleasurable, and effective recreational or therapeutic activity. Furthermore, this sentiment also challenges one of WADA’s three criteria prohibiting cannabis in competition, potential health risk, which is concerned with the impact of doping on athlete’s health. Contrary to this criterion, these leading motives suggest that cannabis, in fact, supports athlete’s well-being.

4.3.2 What are Athlete’s Cannabis use Behaviours?

In order to answer the overarching research question: *What are athlete’s cannabis use behaviours?*; three key sections were identified. These sections were identified as follows: 1) How do Athletes use Cannabis?; 2) When do Athletes use Cannabis?; and 3) Where do Athletes use Cannabis? The participants’ cannabis use behaviours were context-dependant and reflective of their dual roles as students and athletes. They had to ensure that the ways in which they used cannabis would not threaten their identities as athletes and would not interfere with their academic and athletic responsibilities. At the same time, the participants also had to ensure that they satisfied their motives for using cannabis. Correspondingly, the participants used cannabis in ways, at times, and in locations that made it possible to satisfy their motives while limiting the risk of spoiling their student-athlete identity and compromising their responsibilities.

4.3.2.1 How do Athletes use Cannabis?

Three distinct components of how the athletes used cannabis were identified: 1) Methods, which explains how the participants used cannabis; 2) Frequency, which explains how often the

participants used cannabis; and 3) Quantity, which explains how much cannabis the participants used. Some participants smoked cannabis whereas others vaporized cannabis, some participants used cannabis occasionally whereas others used cannabis frequently or on a daily basis, and some participants used more cannabis than others. First, I will discuss the methods that the participants used. Second, I will discuss how often the participants used cannabis. Lastly, I will discuss the amount of cannabis that the participants used.

First, the participants employed an array of methods to use cannabis. These included smoking cannabis in the form of a joint, using a pipe, and using a bong; vaporizing cannabis using handheld vaporizing devices; consuming cannabis oil orally as a droplet tincture; and eating edibles. The participants motives dictated which method they used. For example, participants who used cannabis for therapeutic purposes typically used vaporizers, cannabis oil, or edibles and by contrast, participants who used cannabis for recreational purposes usually smoked cannabis. All of the participants (n=14) had tried different ways of using cannabis. However, most of the participants (n=13) regularly used one or two methods.

Most of the participants smoked cannabis (n=12). Smoking cannabis in the form of a joint was the most common method. A joint is a rolled cannabis cigarette. However, unlike commercial tobacco cigarettes, joints are often hand-rolled with rolling papers. Smoking cannabis as a joint is convenient and offers users the ability to smoke quickly and discard the remains easily.

Many participants (n=7) vaporized cannabis. Vaporizing is the process of heating dried cannabis or cannabis oil to a temperature just below its combustion point. The concept of vaporizing cannabis is that by heating cannabis to specific, sub-combustion temperatures, the resultant vapor will contain the desirable cannabinoids while circumventing the production of

smoke and burnt materials. As a result, the health concerns associated with inhaling potentially harmful smoke such as carcinogens can be avoided by vaporizing.

Some vaporizers use dried cannabis whereas others use cannabis oil, and some vaporizers can use both. Cannabis users who use vaporizers often will have a preference. For example, P14 stated:

P14: I tend to use either a dry herb vaporizer, opposed to one that's an oil one because I used to use one of the oil ones but I saw a couple of the studies that came out about all kinds of contaminants that, I'm sure you've heard of it, so I use one that just heats up the bud but I also make cookies. I perceive those being better for my lungs and not impacting my respiratory system as much as just smoking it.

Alternatively, a few (n=3) participants consumed cannabis oil orally as a tincture; administered sublingually, or under the tongue. Cannabis oil offers a method that doesn't require combustion, heating, nor inhalation. Further, cannabis oil provides a means of precisely controlling the amount of cannabidiols that are consumed. For instance, cannabis oils are commercially available as only containing CBD, only containing THC, and in a variety of combinations of CBD and THC. CBD oil is commonly used by individuals seeking the medicinal benefits of cannabis. Using CBD oil was an effective means of reducing the pain and soreness from training and competition and was preferred by a couple of the participants (n=2).

Lastly, many participants (n=7) ate edibles. Edibles are food items that contain cannabinoids suspended in a lipid or sugar solution. Like cannabis oil, the benefit of consuming edibles is that users are not required to inhaled smoke or vapor and can still enjoy the physiological and psychological effects of cannabis. One participant (n=1) used commercial edibles. Commercial edibles are typically sold as gummies or as other varieties of candy. Conversely, the other participants (n=6) created their own edibles by simmering cannabis in a lipid, often butter, to extract the desirable cannabinoids and then, using that lipid in a baking or

cooking process. Individuals who created their own edibles typically made baked goods like brownies or cookies.

The participants would often use edibles as a means to cope with pain because they were easy to use and were otherwise inconspicuous. For example, P11 and P13 described eating edibles to cope with pain:

P11: It really helped again for sleep. After I talked to my trainer and I told him that I was going to use cannabis to help me fall asleep, not get headaches and it helps so much. It was insane. And then, for my knee, I have trouble walking up stairs. It's pretty bad. When I sleep at night, I always sleep on my right side and my meniscus is torn on the right side so when I lay down, it hurts and I can't fall asleep and I toss and turn all night and then, I take an edible and lights out, it's great. Helps me out a lot.

P13: From the time that I found out that I needed to surgery to getting surgery was only about two weeks. It was right away. And then, as soon as I had surgery, two days later started having brownies with CBD oil in them.

Second, the participants used cannabis either consistently or inconsistently. The participants who used cannabis every day and on a regular basis were consistent; their cannabis use was habitual and occurred every day or on particular days, for particular reasons. Conversely, the participants who used cannabis infrequently were less consistent; their cannabis use was sporadic and opportunistic. For example, the participants who used cannabis infrequently often used cannabis socially, when it was available.

A few participants (n=4) used cannabis every day. Some participants (n=5) used cannabis on a regular and/or frequent basis. Conversely, other participants (n=5) used cannabis infrequently. The important point is that the differences in cannabis use frequency were related to the motive of use and also the balancing of academic as well as athletic priorities. The participants who used cannabis every day and on a regular basis used it purposefully, for therapeutic purposes. The participants who used cannabis infrequently generally used it for recreational purposes.

All of the participants (n=14) used cannabis throughout the academic year. A few noted changes in how often they would use cannabis during school. For example, P1 and P9 highlighted shifts in their cannabis use during the academic year compared to the summer:

P1: Now that we're in school, I'll do it zero to three times per week probably depending on what my week looks like. It works out I pretty much smoke every Tuesday night and once or twice over the weekend.

P9: During the school year, probably an average of three to four times a week. During the summer, maybe more like five. Depends on how the week is going or what I was doing.

Similarly, some participants also suggested that their cannabis use frequency changed during their competitive seasons. For example, P10 said:

P10: It definitely decreases in season and then, it mostly depends on school. Like I said, going into the stressful parts of it or coming out of the stressful parts and then, probably in the summer, it would go up. School season and varsity season and even club, I use it less.

Likewise, many participants (n=7) noted slight increases in how often they used cannabis as a result of new injuries and/or increases in pain and soreness. For instance, P11 stated:

P11: I've kind of progressed in the last year and a half probably after injuries have set in. It's gone from once every two or once a month to three or four times a week sometimes... I got injured three times this season already and its progressed to seven to help me fall asleep. It's gone up a lot.

Evidently, there were clear differences in how often the participants used cannabis that were representative of the reasons why the participants used cannabis. Notably, in all cases, the participants prioritized their academic and athletic agendas by reducing their cannabis use frequency during their competitive season and the academic year. In the next section, I will discuss how this was also related to the quantity of cannabis used.

Third, generally speaking, the participants did not use excessive amounts of cannabis. Moreover, none of the participants indicated that they used cannabis with the intention of getting exorbitantly high. Instead, all of the participants stated that they used cannabis with a purposeful

intention, whether that be to enjoy a social experience, celebrate an academic achievement, or cope with stress, et cetera. As such, the amount of cannabis that the participants used reflected their motives for using cannabis.

A couple participants (n=2) were precisely aware of how much cannabis they used. For example, P11 described the oil that they used and the quantity of THC and CBD in milligrams that it contained:

P11: 25 milligrams of THC and then 25 milligrams of CBD.

Cannabis oil offered a means of precisely controlling the amount of cannabidiols that were consumed. This was more challenging with smoking or vaporizing. That being said, some participants (n=5) were roughly aware of how much cannabis they used. For example, P14 stated:

P14: Generally, the amount of cannabis that I use in a session is pretty small. Under a half of a gram, maybe a third of a gram... If it's kind of a social activity, I'll often have quite a bit more.

Differently, many participants (n=8) demonstrated that they were completely unaware of how much cannabis they used. To these participants, the amount of cannabis that they used did not matter so much as long as it elicited a desirable sensation or pleasant experience.

Even some of the participants who were precisely and roughly aware of how much cannabis they used noted slight fluctuations in that amount depending on how the cannabis made them feel. Highlighting this, P11 and P14 said:

P11: If it hurts a lot one day, I'll bump up my dose up to 100.

P14: Most of the time, I don't measure. I'll do it by how I feel.

4.3.2.2 When do Athletes use Cannabis?

Four distinct temporal components were identified: 1) Time of day, which delineates if the participants used cannabis in the morning, day, or evening; 2) Specific days, which specifies if the participants used cannabis on certain days versus others; 3) Academic year, which clarifies if the participants used cannabis during the academic year; and 4) Competitive season, which clarifies if the participants used cannabis during their sports season.

First, all of the participants (n=14) used cannabis in the evenings, some (n=4) used cannabis during the day, and none (n=0) used cannabis in the mornings. The participants used cannabis overwhelmingly in the evenings and particularly once everything that needed to be done had been completed. Highlighting this, P8 described why they used cannabis solely in the evenings:

P8: You do it in the evening once you've punched the clock. I've finished practice, or class, or doing any homework that I needed to do, and I don't have any obligations to be switched on.

Additionally, participants popularly used cannabis in the evenings to unwind after days packed with attending classes, studying, and training. For instance, P2 and P8 described why they used cannabis in the evenings:

P2: Predominantly at night. Or at least in the second half of the day because that's usually when I'm getting home from practice, class, or whatever.

P8: It's a pretty good way to unwind. Teammates, it could be any friend, I suppose. But that is my friend group, my teammates are in a similar space as me in terms of doing it in the evening and winding down after a long day of school, studying, work, practice, working out.

Second, there was a tendency to use cannabis strategically on specific days. For instance, cannabis was used to optimize rest prior to training and/or competition. This is consistent with and supports that *sleep* was a leading therapeutic motive.

Alternatively, the participants used cannabis on particular days to ease the physiological effects from hard training sessions. This is consistent with and supports that *pain and soreness* were significant therapeutic motives. For example, P1 and P2 used cannabis regularly after hard training sessions.

P1: I pretty much smoke every Tuesday night... Because we throw that day, and we have a heavy lift. Then, Wednesday we don't have practice at all. So, it just works out for me to have a good sleep after that and then like I don't really care about Wednesday because we don't practice.

P2: After a really hard work out because we do especially in off-season anyways, it's like fairly high volume and fairly high intensity. You know, you go home, and you feel like you got the shit kicked out of you. I think we're on, it's like five by eight box squat, five by eight snatches, and like a bunch of med ball stuff so it's like it's not really an easy workout. But stuff like that. So, it'll be more so to the edge off.

Third, all of the participants (n=14) used cannabis during the academic year. Yet, none of the participants used cannabis before going to class. Instead, they prioritized their academic schedules and refrained from using cannabis until their academic work was complete. For example, P4 and P6 stated:

P4: It's always at night. Like after the day is over. I've finished all of my work and that's it.

P6: It started off and remains an end-of-the-day all-of-the-work-is-done before-bed kind of thing.

Fourth, many participants (n=9) used cannabis during their competitive seasons, many of which used cannabis with their teammates. This way, there was a collective understanding between the participants and their teammates that they were all violating the anti-doping rules and using a prohibited substance. As a result, there was a certain level of comfort because the participants and their teammates were using cannabis together. For example, P8 and P14 stated:

P8: Something that we did post-practice with a couple of teammates.

P14: I'll even head that conversation with teammates. We both knew we had to get up early in the morning and we both smoked weed and hung out for a little bit before going to bed because we knew that we would both sleep better.

Conversely, other participants (n=5) did not use cannabis during their competitive season and did not feel comfortable because they feared the repercussions that could be inflicted on their team.

For example, P1 and P2 stated

P1: I didn't want to be the walk on in my first year of [sport discipline] ever that gets caught. You know how your whole team can be suspended. I didn't want to be the one that suspends the entire [sport discipline] team when I'm not actually the good to begin with. I'm not like a high performer, right. So, I wasn't going to be the to screw up the team.

P2: As soon as February rolls around I'm not smoking weed any ways so that when our competition starts at like the middle of March, I won't run the risk of having it in my system. I have no problem going the four months without smoking weed.

Additionally, in a few cases (n=2), participants opted to abstain from using cannabis even during their preseason training.

The participants were wary that their cannabis use would interfere with their academic or athletic performance. They always prioritized their athletic schedules and responsibilities. Even the participants who used cannabis during their competitive seasons refrained from using cannabis immediately before training, competition, and other team related events. For example, P3, P7 and P11 firmly stated:

P3: I have never gone to practice high and I would never think about going to practice high.

P7: on a Thursday or Friday, I would be like no I don't want to because I was just a little bit timid around games.

P11: Never in competition, never in practice, never in working out, never.

All of the participants shared this sentiment. It was apparent that the participants were acutely aware of how cannabis affected them and how it would influence their academic and athletic

performance. It was crucial to them that their cannabis use did not compromise their academic or athletic performance.

4.3.2.3 Where do Athletes use Cannabis?

Three key contextual characteristics were identified: 1) Security and Comfort, which describes the contexts where the participants used cannabis; 2) Alone, which explains that many of the participants opted to use cannabis on their own; and 3) Privately, which explains that many of the participants opted to use cannabis in private social contexts.

First, the participants used cannabis in specific contexts, which provided security and comfort. These contexts protected the participants' athlete identities and limited the chances of being found out. For instance, P3 described where they used cannabis:

P3: I'm by myself, most of the time, I'll do it on my way home or at home but not in the home. So that would be I would go out my front door and out a couple steps around the corner, to be honest. Like I'm here in my house and it kind of curves around the street so I would just go to the corner and take a seat. Because usually when I go, it's like 10 or 11 in the night. My neighborhood is really quiet, no one is walking around. So, I can just sit on the curb and if I smoke, it will be fine.

Second, many participants (n=7) used cannabis alone, due in large part to the fact that they felt as though they had to conceal their cannabis use. For instance, P13 said:

P13: I would take my little crutches and crutch outside. I live in a basement suite and there is this little nook corner, and I would smoke a joint alone with no one else.

Third, many participants (n=7) used cannabis privately with specific social groups. This way, the participants could ensure who would be present as it was vitally important to be able to control who knew that they used cannabis. Moreover, these private social groups also meant that strangers and uninvited guests would not join. A notable feature of these private social groups was that everyone used cannabis. The other individuals, often their teammates, used cannabis,

which provided comfort and reassurance. Highlighting the preference towards and importance of using cannabis alone or in private social groups, P12 stated:

P12: I typically try to keep close friends with me when I'm doing it. I've, maybe a handful of times, done it with people that I'm not typically close with. I do prefer probably people that I'm closer with. Not that I would be that much different without other people but maybe a little more relaxed before taking it so that I'm more relaxed while I'm taking it.

A prominent private social context that the participants used cannabis in was at home, with teammates. These contexts evoked a certain level of cohesion and togetherness. Consequently, the participants felt comfortable. For example, P9 described moving in with a few of their teammates and how that changed how they used cannabis:

P9: Last year I moved into the Fairview residence with a bunch of teammates. And so, it was more of the social aspect of it. Whereas before, I was living by myself. So, it was less amplified. So, I would have to think oh, do I want to smoke weed right now but if I go downstairs now and they're smoking weed, then I would just join in. when you have six guys living in a house, the odds of one out of six people smoking weed that night is pretty high. I think that when it started to amplify. In a social setting, after dinner, we would all sit down and smoke.

Another prominent private social context that the participants used cannabis in was house parties. Similarly, in this case, the participants felt a reasonable amount of certainty about who would be present, and how those partygoers would perceive and react to their cannabis use. For example, P5 explained that house parties with familiar friends offered comfortable contexts to use cannabis in:

P5: More times than not, I'm at a party with my friends, it's at someone's house, it's not at like a club or bar. So, it's more of a comfortable environment.

Conversely, on a few rare occasions (n=3), participants used cannabis in social contexts that did not provide the security of knowing who would be present. The participants noted that these occasions were atypical. These situations presented uncertainty and discomfort because the participants were unable to predict how the other people would perceive and react to their

cannabis use. For example, P7 described a situation when they used cannabis in a social context where they did not know everyone present nor was everyone else using cannabis:

P7: I was trying to play it cool because I didn't know some of the people around me and some of them weren't smoking and oh, there is a situation ok. There was a situation where people weren't smoking, and it did make me feel bad because I didn't know if they were ok with it or not. And then, I really disliked it and I was like ugh, I wish I wasn't high right now and I didn't want to be there anymore.

The other participants had more pleasant experiences in these uncertain social contexts. For example, P11 described hosting a party with their roommates, which presented challenges because they could not predict who was going to be there nor could they predict who was going to use cannabis and if there was going to be anyone that disagreed with cannabis use. Despite these challenges, the uncertainty was eased because all of guests were indifferent to cannabis:

P11: It was fine. It was just social. I wasn't drinking and I just walked outside and a bunch of the guys on my team were passing around a joint. Well, I brought out the joint and we all passed it around. It was just social, and we probably stayed outside for an hour and a half. People would come and go. There was probably fifteen or twenty of us out there... We were outside and some people weren't smoking, and we were just passing around and we would ask if they wanted some and they would say yes or no and just pass it to the next person. No one was like why are you guys smoking. Even the older people that were at the party didn't really care at all. They were doing it. They would come out and smoke with us. It wasn't a big deal.

4.3.2.4 Summary.

The participants used cannabis in ways, at times, and in locations that made it possible to satisfy their motives while limiting the risk of spoiling their student-athlete identity. Also, the participants cannabis use behaviours prioritized their academic and athletic responsibilities. Despite using cannabis purposefully and often to support their well-being, the participants faced challenges when it came to how, when, and where they used cannabis.

Using cannabis occurred within particular social and cultural contexts. Therefore, the meanings of cannabis were continually created and recreated through interactions with cannabis

and with others. How cannabis was used meant that the participants selected methods that accommodated and supported their dual role as student-athletes. When cannabis was used meant that the participants were strategic and used cannabis to complement their academic and athletic responsibilities. Where cannabis was used meant that the participants had to be secretive and avoid being found out. Nonetheless, whenever they used cannabis, the participants violated the anti-doping rules and used a prohibited substance.

4.4 Athletes Experiences of Using Cannabis

In order to answer the overarching research question: *What experiences do athletes have when they use cannabis?*; two key sections were identified, each of which have their own set of themes. These sections were identified as follows: 1) Impression Management, which includes two themes (Hiding in the Back Stage and Restricting the Audience); and 2) Narratives of Stigma, which also includes two themes (Discreditable Behaviour and Fear of Fitting into the Stereotype). It was also critical to develop an understanding about how the participants dual, competing identities conflicted. I describe the participants competing identities first to elucidate the conflict that existed between their identities and to better situate the research question and the succeeding questions.

4.4.1 Competing Identities

The participants maintained dual, competing social identities as student-athletes and cannabis users. Consequently, as a result, the participants experienced difficulties that required them to exercise purposeful strategies to manage the conflict between their identities.

Highlighting the dissensus between athlete and cannabis user identities, P7 said:

P7: In the moment, I think that when I'm smoking, I don't feel like an athlete.

On a personal level, many participants described incongruence between their identities as athletes and cannabis users. This feeling of incongruence stemmed from their perception of what it meant to be an athlete and cannabis user. For example, P13 described their perception of that incongruence and how that perception influenced how they used cannabis:

P13: Shameful. I think it was supposed to be this secret that I had to do this to ease my pain or because I was depressed but definitely isolating and shameful. It was like ‘let me do this quick and get back to my life’. It’s not something I imagine athletes doing. It’s not something that I associate with being an athlete. So, I think it was very much a different part of my identity that I had to do this because I wanted to become an athlete again. It was still something that I couldn’t speak about because it was not athletic of me to be doing it.

What this signified was that, like many others, P13 felt as though they had to conceal their cannabis use in order to maintain and protect their identity as an athlete. Although they continued to use cannabis, many of the participants believed that using cannabis contradicted their identity and role of being an athlete. Like P13 said, “it’s not something that I associate with being an athlete”. In the case of P13, shame was the product. The other participants expressed guilt and regret as a result of their cannabis use as well. Shame, guilt, and regret suggests that being an athlete and a cannabis user could not coexist.

Conversely, a few of the participants noted that they did not perceive their identities as athletes and cannabis users as conflicting but rather as two separate, independent entities of their identity. For example, P14 distinguished their cannabis user and athlete identities as two separate, yet coexisting entities:

P14: I use cannabis and I perform.

Continuing, as if a performer on a stage, P14 suggested that their identity changed depending on who their audience was. P14 along with many other participants were selective about who they would reveal their cannabis use to. Yet, P14 highlighted that people were still surprised when

they disclosed that they used cannabis. So, although P14 perceived their identities as athletes and cannabis users as two separate, independent entities, their audiences or those individuals who they disclosed their cannabis use to perceived them as conflicting. For instance, P14 stated:

P14: I think some people are surprised, especially with [sport discipline] is a cardio intensive sport that I would be a cannabis user... I think some people are surprised. You can name a bunch of athletes who are big marijuana advocates. I think it's a lot more common than a lot of people realize.

Alternatively, there were also instances when the conflict between these competing identities presented social challenges for the participants and their teammates. Being a student-athlete meant that the participants were to uphold standards of behaviour and conduct to ensure the welfare of their teams. For if any member of the team was to be convicted of using a prohibited substance, then that would have consequences for the entire team. This was reflected in the codes of conduct that were created and enforced by the members of the teams, which manifested dilemmas for those athletes who used cannabis. For example, P13 described tension and conflict between their role on their team and their cannabis use. They wrote the code of conduct for their team, which restricts athletes from using cannabis. Yet, paradoxically, they themselves used cannabis and they were aware of other teammates who used cannabis. P13 stated:

P13: I wrote the code of conduct and it says don't do drugs. That being said, I think that a lot of the girls on my team I'm really good friends with and I know that they smoke weed here and there. My roommate is on the team too and when I was using weed after my surgery around December, she was out of season. So then, she would have brownies with me and even though she knows that we're not supposed to be doing it but also, it's kind of like 'oh, you're out of season' so its ok. You make rules that benefit you to allow you to do weed. I know girls do it, of course I do. I think they're not open about it. Also, because my coach is really, really, really strongly against weed.

P13 continued to describe how they experienced the conflict between their identities and how the code of conduct was symbolic of their own hypocrisy. P13 referenced their responsibility to uphold the code of conduct in order to maintain a certain level of integrity amongst their team:

P13: I wrote this code of conduct and if I show that I don't support it, then I'm hypocritical. So, for me, I wasn't going to get made, I wasn't going to go tell [coach] that they were smoking weed, but I couldn't be seen accepting it almost. Yea, it's a hard bind because those are also your friends, your teammates but you've also created these rules that are supported by your coach. So, it's this weird bind. For me, it was easier to be like 'go and do it elsewhere' where I'm not seen seeing it and I'm not upholding this code of conduct that has other rules on it too, that I've created.

Lastly, there were instances when the conflict between these competing identities presented broader, cultural challenges. For example, P12 described their responsibility to abstain from cannabis use during the season in order to represent the university and their team well:

P12: [Cannabis is] prohibited right and to be caught with something like that, you're representing yourself but you're representing the school and your family as well. I think being an athlete, that representation is heightened and you're on a pedestal. You don't think that you're on a pedestal, but you are as far as how people view you. They want to target you. So that's what constrains me the most. You don't want to put out a bad name for your school and you don't want to represent your team in a bad way, where you're in the press for taking a positive test.

Evidently, the participants experienced conflict between their competing identities and encountered personal, social, and cultural challenges. This conflict and these challenges framed the types of experiences that the participants had when they used cannabis and also, how they had to orchestrate their performances of using cannabis to manage the impressions that they made in the minds of others.

4.4.2 *Impression Management*

Goffman described performances as presentations of self. According to Goffman (1956), the foundation of self-presentation is impression management, which refers to changes in performances in an effort to manage the impressions created. So, in order to create desired impressions of self in the minds of others, performers must manage the ways they present themselves. In the case of this thesis, I was particularly interested in the ways the participants managed their cannabis use in order to protect their identities as athletes due to the fact that it

remains prohibited. As such, the special interest of my project is concerned with the dramaturgical problems that varsity student-athletes encountered when presenting themselves and their cannabis use before others. Moreover, it considers the ways in which varsity student-athletes presented themselves and their cannabis use to others, the contingencies that arose in fostering an impression that meets the values and norms of the audience, the techniques which varsity student-athletes used to guide and control the impression others formed of them, and the kinds of things varsity student-athletes may or may not have done while sustaining their performance before others.

The main idea is that the participants displayed different kinds of behaviour depending on where they were and who they were with. Based on their interpretation of the situation, the participants presented a front- or back-stage self and conducted themselves with front- or back-stage behaviour. Since the context of cannabis use was more important than the personal attributes of those who used it, dramaturgically, the participants had to utilize their stages strategically when they used cannabis to establish a sense of coherence in the management of their identities. In total, two themes were identified when exploring how the participants managed their impressions in the minds of others. These included the participants managing their impressions by 1) Hiding in the Back Stage; and 2) Restricting the Audience.

4.4.2.1 Hiding in the Backstage.

A backstage may be defined as a setting in which there is no audience, and the performer is not required to perform. There, Goffman (1956) said that performers can relax, drop their front, forgo using their script, and leave the character that they were attempting to play. In the backstage, the performer is not acting to please anyone nor will their actions be condemned for not meeting social expectations and norms. Actions of and facts about the performer that are

typically suppressed in front stage settings may appear in the backstage. This is known as a backstage self. This backstage self represents raw versions of the performer that are unbound of the expectations and norms that dictate their front stage behaviour. All of the participants used cannabis in the backstage because the participants could drop their guard and feel comfortable performing their cannabis user identities. Although, this does not mean that the participants cannabis user identities were truer or more authentic than their athletic identities or vice versa. In this case, the backstage settings allowed the participants to embrace their cannabis user identity without worry of being criticized or discriminated against. For example, P1 explained how using cannabis in a backstage setting enabled them to act in ways that were unbound of the expectations and norms that dictated their front stage behaviour:

P1: I would rather just like be weird for a couple hours before bed than like try to have to be normal... I get weird when I'm high like I think about things [laughter] and I think that's part of getting high.

Using cannabis in the backstage was an opportunity for the participants to be alone and ensure that no one would find out that they used cannabis. Highlighting this, P13 described the advantages of using cannabis in the backstage:

P13: I think because people don't see you. Like I would never be seen... It wasn't something that I spoke about. It was just something that I kept to myself.

In many of the cases, the participants cannabis use was concealed, private, and often solitary. However, in special circumstances and with special company, performers invite close acquaintances into their backstage settings. This way, only the performer and those individuals would be exposed to the facts that were divulged and activities that occurred. This was a popular option for all of the participants. In these cases, the participants invited individuals who shared close and familiar relationships with them. For some of the participants, this meant that they used cannabis with their partners. For others, this meant that they used cannabis with close friends.

Even in some cases, this meant that they used cannabis with select teammates. First, highlighting using cannabis with their partner, P6 said:

P6: I would usually always share it with my girlfriend... You just want to veg out, enjoy yourself, you know, cuddle up to your girlfriend on the couch and watch TV and then, go to bed.

Second, highlighting using cannabis with close friends, P10 stated:

P10: I don't tell anyone on the [sport discipline] team when I'm smoking or if I smoke, other than one or two close friends. So, if you're in my friend group outside of the [sport discipline] team, never anything negative. But I would feel like my team would probably judge me if they knew I was smoking [I: Why do you think that?] Well first of all, it's illegal in sport. So maybe that. Also, they don't, from what I know, most of them or all of them. Like they're very serious.

These findings support the claims made by Hathaway (2004) and Mostaghim & Hathaway (2013) that the context of cannabis use is more important than the traits of the individuals who use it. Using cannabis in backstage contexts alone or with close acquaintances was unmistakably important and meant that the participants could relax and feel comfortable not having to perform in front of others. As such, backstage performances were far more prevalent than front stage performances.

These backstage settings were characterized by both isolation and intimacy. The settings were characterized by isolation because some of the participants preferred to be alone and alternatively, the settings were intimate because some of the participants would invite familiar individuals. Further, these settings were unique because the participants were not required to perform and did not have to concern themselves with managing a performance. That being said, these backstage settings did share a miniscule similarity with impression management; the participants were selective of the individuals that they invited into their backstage.

4.4.2.2 Restricting the Audience.

Performances are moulded and modified to adhere to the social norms and expectations of the audience. Likewise, during a performance, performers attempt to perform in ways that conform to the conventions and norms of their audience. In situations where the performer does not know the audience on an intimate or familiar level, that actor will tend to present their front stage self and engage in front stage behaviour. A front stage self represents versions of the actor whom the actor believes embodies certain status- or group-specific standards and will be favourable in their interactions with their audience. Accordingly, front stage behaviour is indisputably coerced by norms within a given social context, the values of those individuals whose perceptions are of concern, and cultural practices.

The front stage performances were coerced by social norms that embody athletic standards (Douglas & Carless, 2009). Namely, this meant that the participants had to impart impressions of being devout to optimal athletic performance to the exclusion of other areas of life and self, such as using cannabis. As a result, the participants made use of techniques within their front stage performances that allowed them to do so.

The key defining feature of the participants front stage performances that will be discussed was that the participants restricted the audiences to their performances. This was the dominant technique used by the participants to guide and control how they presented themselves when they used cannabis. Moreover, this technique of restricting the audience meant that the likelihood of contingencies arising during a performance was drastically reduced compared to front stage performances where the audience was comprised of unknown individuals. Similarly, the participants would only use cannabis in 'settings' where they were sure that the audience members would not judge or reprimand their cannabis use. This was the kind of thing that the

participants did in order to sustain a performance. For some, this meant avoiding settings in which they knew of members who would be disapproving. For others, this meant inviting audience members that would be accepting of their cannabis use. For instance, P7 and P14 explained:

P7: I honestly think that I actively avoid being in any situation that would cause me to feel uncomfortable for smoking weed because I don't even want to put myself in that situation. So, I know there are [athletes] on my team who are against it. So, if we're all at the same house party, I wouldn't smoke unless I'm just going to stay in a room upstairs and never come back down, which has happened. But if I'm planning on conversing with people who I know are a little bit more on the fence, then I'm not even going to do it. I don't want to be around people, I don't know, that would make me feel uncomfortable for it. Yea, so I just actively avoid those situations because I know how I would feel, and I would definitely feel guilty and I would definitely feel embarrassed. It would make me feel uncomfortable and then, I think I would kind of actively dismiss that and that would be fine. It's just something that I don't want to feel when I'm smoking because you know, that's not why you smoke. I don't want to get the bad vibes.

P14: People that judge me for using cannabis, I don't hang around those people or care for what they think. If you're going to think 'oh, you use cannabis'. Ok, I'm not going to hang out with you. It seems like a weird attitude, especially for someone my age to have. I've definitely experienced judgement.

As described by P7 and P14, the participants avoided front stage settings in which the audience members would judge or be impeded by their cannabis use. The participants also described being scrutinous about when, where, and around who they used cannabis to ensure that the audience members, observers, and by-standers would not be impeded by them using cannabis. For example, P9 and P10 explained:

P9: I try to smoke weed in situations where I won't be impeding on anyone else's experience. I also know that, from my own experiences, I don't want other people to impede on my experience with their use of alcohol or how drunk they're getting. When I'm walking outside on a nice day and someone is smoking a cigarette, it's like I don't really want to smell your cigarette smoke right now. So that applies to a weed situation where people may not want to smell my marijuana right now. So everywhere that I smoke is somewhere that I know that other people will be comfortable with it as well.

P10: I've actually been good with making sure that I don't put myself in those positions. So, like if I knew that my teammates were going to be around or if I was going to see

them later that day or evening, I wouldn't smoke so I wouldn't feel regretful and I wouldn't be scared of them finding out.

The front stage settings that the participants chose to use cannabis in were characterized by exclusivity. These settings were exclusive to audience members that would willingly accept the performance. The extent to which impression management influenced the front stage performances was minimal. Instead, the front stage performances were more so influenced by the audiences. As such, I would like to adopt the general framework of impression management and suggest a new term be used to describe how the participants managed the impression that they fostered: 'audience management'. The participants exercised 'audience management' as a means to control the who they would have to impress. This technique increased the likelihood that they would be able create impressions that embodied athletic standards and signified a devotion to athletic performance. However, had the participants used cannabis in more permissive settings, in which the audiences were unknown, then, perhaps, the participants would have had to employ techniques such as dramaturgical loyalty and discipline to commit and sustain the performance. Additionally, 'audience management' ensured that the performances would not become discrepant, which could have represented a lack of expressive coherence, jeopardized the credibility of the participants, or divulged destructive information about the participants

4.4.3 *Narratives of Stigma*

Goffman (1963) defined stigma as an "attribute that is deeply discrediting" (p. 3). An interest of this project was of 'blemishes of character' and how the use of cannabis represents a discredited attribute of varsity student-athletes. Additionally, stigma also refers to any attribute that is incongruous with a stereotype of what a given type of individual should be (Page, 2015). If an attribute is incongruous with a stereotype of what a given type of individual should be, then that individual's identity is spoiled. A 'spoiled identity' is the term used to refer to an identity or

component of an identity that causes an individual to experience stigma. So, another interest of this project was of ‘spoiled identity’ and if and how the use of cannabis spoiled the participants athlete identity. In total, two interrelated themes were identified when exploring how the participants were stigmatized and how they experienced stigma. These included the participants cannabis use as a 1) Discreditable Behaviour; and leading to 2) Fear of Fitting into the Stereotype.

4.4.3.1 Discreditable Behaviour.

A prominent theme was that the participants experienced perceived stigma due to fear of being socially discreditable. Cannabis use represented a discreditable attribute for varsity student-athletes. Consequently, the participants experienced perceived stigma because they feared being perceived negatively in social contexts. Perceived stigma refers to perceptions of being stigmatized or fear of discrimination, which results in shame and guilt. The perceived stigma that the participants experienced was situated in their fear that teammates, coaches, bystanders, and even family members would discredit their cannabis use. For example, P1, P7 and P10 described perceived stigma from their teammates:

P1: I brought a J. So, I went to go smoke it and [teammate] was just like she was standing near me, but she was like very her energy was like disapproving... I think that she has the knowledge and the assumption that like a lot of people smoke and like it's not, I think her disapproval comes from herself, it wasn't projected onto me necessarily, it's just like on the act of doing it.

P7: Yea, definitively and I think that comes from how it was talked about with athletes who don't use it, like who don't use it in season. Then, it will kind of make me feel like I shouldn't be doing this, just because of the stigma around it, I guess. Just judging from my personal experiences, there are girls who are very against it and then, I was always, I would go to practice and I don't want to talk about it, or I would never smoke around them, going out. So, when I would smoke, if I were to think about being an athlete, it would make me feel less of a true high-performance athlete because I'm doing this.

P10: Honestly, I don't get the best grades. So, I'm pretty sure they would probably relate it to my grades... So, they would maybe bring those together like 'I smoke weed so that's

why my grades are bad' or I'm also not like a star player. So, maybe they would be like 'you could be a star player if you didn't smoke weed', even though I don't smoke weed that often... The same goes for the coach and anyone involved with team.

Similarly, the participants feared discrimination from their coach. This was best exemplified by

P13:

P13: A lot of people smoke between the [sport facility] and our changeroom in that path, that road there and [coach] walks in and is like 'who the fuck is smoking weed in the changeroom?'. Air wafts in and it stinks in the changeroom. [Coach] loses it. I'm like '[coach], people smoke right outside the door. It's not us. We're at training. We're not going to be high coming to play [sport discipline]. It's not going to go well'. He is blatant that it's not accepted.

Alternatively, the participants experienced perceived stigma in public contexts. For example, P4 and P7 described the perceived stigma that they encountered just from ordinary public circumstances:

P4: I'm not sure. Maybe like the stigma when I'm in the daytime... I can think for the daytime is the stigma about what people think about me... The stigma of many homeless people uses drugs. So, if you use drugs, you're going to become homeless. I don't know. Those kinds of ideas have been spat at me.

P7: When I'm in public, I feel regret, embarrassment, that kind of stuff.

The participants also experienced perceived stigma from family members. This was the result of the participants being uncertain about what their family members thought about cannabis use but nonetheless had a negative impact on how the participants perceived their cannabis use. For instance, P1 and P7 described the perceived stigma from family members:

P1: I come from a pretty conservative family. We like don't talk about much in like the bad category like things you shouldn't be doing... I think [mom] equates like a weed high to like meth high like she equates the two she doesn't understand it, I think.

P7: I was with my boyfriend's dad and we were out at their place in Fernie and that was my last vivid experience. I remember feeling uncertain because I was like not sure if he was like about that and this was the first time and I was kind of like is he smoking with us, ok ill smoke too. Then, my boyfriend left, and I was nervous, you know, I was kind of like oh I don't know but I just remember we just laughed at something for ten minutes. That was the last time when I was pretty high [I: that's a really unique experience] Yea, it

was weird. Once I realized that he was okay with it and wasn't judging me. Then I was like oh, this is fun. Then, we were laughing for a really long time about something stupid. I can't remember what it was.

An attribute may be discreditable in one context and may not be stigmatizing in another context.

Therefore, it is not an attribute that is stigmatizing per se but rather, the result of an attribute being perceived or interpreted as unvalued. It was not cannabis use that is stigmatizing but rather, the result of cannabis use being perceived as unvalued in certain social contexts and from specific individuals.

4.4.3.2 Fear of Fitting into the Stereotype.

Another prominent theme was that the participants feared their cannabis use would spoil their athlete identity and would ultimately lead to them being identified as cannabis users. Stigma acquires its meaning through the emotion it generates within the person bearing it and the feelings as well as the behaviours toward the person of those affirming it. The participants felt guilty and shameful when they used cannabis because using cannabis was incongruous with the stereotypes of what an athlete should be and how an athlete should behave. According to Carless and Douglas (2013), athletes are often characterized by a high degree of personal sacrifice and commitment to personal and collective performance. Therefore, varsity student-athletes should abstain from using cannabis to symbolize personal sacrifice and as a commitment to their own and their team's collective wellbeing because it is prohibited. To that end, using cannabis is assumed to contradict how an athlete should behave. So, for many participants, using cannabis represented a spoiled athlete identity. Furthermore, the participants expressed fear that by using cannabis that it would lead to them being identified as cannabis users and thus, being characterized by the stereotypes of a cannabis user. These negative stereotypes include that individuals who use cannabis are lazy, unmotivated, and just want to get high. Besides being

labelled a ‘drug-user’, unfortunately, cannabis users are frequently associated with criminal, delinquent, and deviant behaviour (Bottorff et al., 2013). For example, P7 and P12 explained how they perceived a spoiled athlete identity and described their fears of fitting into the cannabis user stereotype:

P7: It would make me feel like that stereotype that I had in my head before I smoked weed in the first place. And it makes me feel a little bit like you’re the stereotypical pot smokers and just makes me feel like I’m a loser, you know... I would say that the negative emotion is a place of feeling like a deadbeat, I don’t know.

P12: I do still feel guilty when I use it... I think that its coming from the years of it being such a no-no and being frowned upon in the sporting community. That compiled in the back of my brain is what’s holding me back the most and giving me worry.

The participants were aware of the kinds of cannabis user stereotypes that exist. They were also aware of how those stereotypes spoiled their athletic identity. This spoiling of athletic identity manifested as fear of fitting into the cannabis user stereotypes and fear that they may be perceived as not prioritizing their athletic roles.

4.4.4 Summary

Cannabis is prohibited, which resulted in the participants having unique experiences when they used cannabis. Notably, this meant that they had to use cannabis alone or in private, in exclusive contexts, and that they felt guilty and shameful about using cannabis. First, the participants used cannabis by themselves and sometimes, they invited familiar acquaintances into the backstage settings. Second, the participants restricted and regulated who they would use cannabis with and around when they were not otherwise able to do so by themselves or with close friends or teammates. Lastly, the participants experienced stigma, which manifested as feelings of guilt and shame. This was in large part due to the fact that cannabis is prohibited and represented a discreditable attribute. It was also due to the fact that using cannabis is not congruent with the kinds of behaviour that is expected of athletes.

Although they had purposeful motives, the participants were stigmatized, nonetheless. This is a distinction that the participants did not perceive others to make and sometimes, that they did not make themselves. It was as if there was and only could be one type of cannabis user. It appeared as though a cannabis user would be stigmatized regardless of their motive for using cannabis. In this case, it did not seem to matter that the participants used cannabis for reasons that supported their personal well-being and athletic performance. They perceived their audience not to distinguish their cannabis use from stereotyped cannabis use and in some cases, the participants themselves did not distinguish their cannabis use. This was evident because of their feelings of guilt, shame, and the fact that none of the participants mentioned differing perspectives or stereotypes about cannabis use motives.

4.5 What do Athletes Know about Cannabis?

In order to answer the overarching research question: *What do athletes know about cannabis?*; three key sections were established, each of which has their own distinctive themes. These sections are consistent with WADA's criteria framework and were established as follows: 1) Potential Health Risk, which includes three themes; 2) Potential to Enhance Performance, which includes two themes; and 3) Spirit of Sport, which includes one theme. Together, these criteria are used to determine whether or not a substance should be prohibited. I used WADA's criteria framework to structure this section to elucidate the participants' knowledge of cannabis and why it is prohibited. By doing so, I also highlight the participants contrasting beliefs about and opinions of cannabis as a prohibited substance. These contrasting beliefs and opinions demonstrate the dissensus between the perceptions of cannabis from the perspectives of WADA, USports, and existing literature and the perspectives of the athletes who use it. On one end, WADA, USports, and existing literature supports that cannabis remains harmful and dangerous

for athletes. While, on the other end, athletes strongly suggest that cannabis is in fact safe, beneficial, and supports their well-being.

4.5.1 *Potential Health Risk*

This section highlights what the participants knew about cannabis' impact on their health. *Potential Health Risk* is concerned with the impact of substances on athlete's health. WADA evaluates if a substance poses threats to athlete's health to partially determine if a substance should be prohibited or not. It's argued that cannabis poses many threats to an athlete's health including an altered perception of risk, decreased coordination, and decreased cognitive performance (Huestis, Mazzoni, and Rabin, 2011). As discussed earlier, the participants agreed with these claims to a certain extent. This is precisely why the participants did not use cannabis before or during training or competition because they believed that the psychoactive effects of THC would hinder their sports performance via factors such as decreased coordination and decreased cognitive performance. However, the abovementioned threats to athlete's health are related specifically to instances when they are participating in sport. Conversely, all of the participants suggested that cannabis does not present health risk outside out of sports contexts. More specifically, they argued that cannabis was harmless and that it supports their well-being. Additionally, the interviewees expressed frustration that alcohol and other drugs are permitted in sport and yet, cannabis is not. They argued that alcohol and other drugs present more potential health risks than cannabis. As such, three themes were identified when exploring the participants perceptions of cannabis as presenting potential health risks. These included the participants perceiving cannabis to be 1) Harmless; 2) Beneficial; and 3) Healthier than Alcohol and Other Drugs.

4.5.1.1 Harmless.

The participants perceived cannabis to present low risk and suggested that cannabis was otherwise harmless. Simply put, P8 and P12 said:

P8: There are plenty of things that are legal that are worse, in my opinion.

P12: When I think of marijuana, I think it's a harmless drug.

One of the suggested negative health risks of cannabis is that users suffer decreases in cognitive performance. Some of the participants disagreed with that claim. For instance, P3 stated:

P3: I don't think it actually has an impact on my cognitive performance... I don't feel like I've dropped in function. I don't think that I've impacted it for the long-term.

One of the key undertones in the existing literature is that cannabis is harmful because the nature of using cannabis presents addictive characteristics and/or that using cannabis can lead to addictive illicit substance use (Hall & Degenhardt, 2009; Volkow, Baler, Compton, & Weiss, 2014; Zehra et al., 2018). Many participants added that they did not believe cannabis was addicting but rather, a habitual activity that they enjoyed doing. As such, the participants argued that they did not *need* to use cannabis. For example, P1 mentioned:

P1: I knew that like weed is a much more habitual thing than an addicting thing and like I don't like it so much that it's become a habit.

There was also a common perception of harmlessness due to the growing prevalence of cannabis use, especially within athlete populations. As a result, a perception of harmlessness permeated the varsity student-athlete community because more and more athlete peers and teammates were using it. For example, P6 and P11 argued that cannabis was harmless on the basis that they knew or were at least aware of quite a few other athletes using cannabis:

P6: I think a part of me says that 'oh because so many people use it, then, obviously it can't be that bad', you know.

P11: I just think it shouldn't really be something tested for. It doesn't like it's not life

threatening. To my knowledge, no one has ever died from getting baked. It's safe in my eyes. I've known multiple athletes that do it and like it's not even for improving in sport, its more for improving your life, I guess. Like making you happy, whatever you need it for, I guess because it helps with so many different things for people.

Evidently, the participants felt strongly that cannabis presents relatively low-risk and is otherwise harmless. Notably, the participants believed cannabis not to be addicting or addictive and perceived cannabis to be safe due to their awareness other individuals using it.

4.5.1.2 Beneficial.

All of the participants perceived cannabis to be beneficial in the sense that it positively impacted their personal well-being and athletic performance. This perception is reflected in the participants motives for using cannabis. The participants used cannabis to support their personal well-being by coping with stress and anxiety and they used cannabis to support their athletic performance by assisting with sleep, pain, and soreness. The therapeutic effectiveness and the extent to which cannabis was used for therapeutic purposes were the primary constituents in this perception of cannabis being beneficial. For example, P4 highlighted:

P4: [Cannabis] helps with aspects of certain people's lives, whether that be stress, sleep, or getting away from the craziness of life.

Continuing, some of the participants insisted that cannabis was beneficial regardless of whether it was being used for therapeutic purposes or not, so long that it was being used purposefully. For some of the participants, this meant that the benefit of using cannabis manifested different positive outcomes. For instance, P6 stated:

P6: I can say that slight increases in my cannabis use, frequency of cannabis use, regularity of cannabis use, has happened and coincided with me improving my mental health, improving my study schedule, and improving my grades.

4.5.1.3 Healthier than Other Drugs and Alcohol.

According to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports (2019), athletes are permitted to

compete with alcohol and a wide array of pharmacological medications in their system. All of the participants expressed discontent that they could have those substances present in their bodies when they compete but not cannabis. This sentiment was amplified by the fact that cannabis is no longer an illegal substance and that alcohol, pharmacological medications, and cannabis are all legal. For instance, P2, P5, and P11 expressed their frustration that having alcohol in their bodies is permissible but having cannabis is not:

P2: I just think that as a whole I think that it should be legal at this point. That's what my feelings were about it being illegal anyways. If you can have alcohol legal and present in your system while you compete, there is no reason that weed shouldn't be allowed as well... I would love to see it be legalized for Canadian sport.

P5: It's almost as common as alcohol, I'd say, at least in my experiences and I don't see why it can be legalized and be pretty much as commonly used as alcohol and have proven health benefits and still be banned in sport.

P11: I think that it should be available for everyone in sport... I can still drink alcohol and have that in my system if I get drug tested but why can't I have cannabis, it's a legal drug. It just makes no sense.

Obviously, the participants were frustrated with these regulatory standards. Further, P3 and P9 compared the relative impacts of alcohol and cannabis on their health and how those impacts would influence their athletic performance:

P3: Compared to liquor, like if I was going out drinking for the night, I'm waking the next morning hungover, which will last a couple of hours or even the whole day and that will take away from me being able to give one hundred percent effort in whatever I had to do the next day, whether it be my sport or going to study or whatever. I feel, in that sense, that weed is much more low risk. I'm not waking up with a hangover, I'm not waking up feeling like crap. I wake up feeling happy or just in a normal state. I'm not impacted by anything that I did the other day.

P9: I don't understand how alcohol can be legal in sport. I mean, I know a lot of people who drink insane amounts and it highly effects them, far more than if they were to smoke the same amount as they were to drink. I truly believe that the benefits of weed far outweigh the negatives of alcohol. So, I don't understand how having it as a legal drug for all of Canada, how you can't you it in sport. Or if I were to smoke weed last night and then, play in a game today how that would ever affect my performance, other than maybe alleviating the pain I had yesterday or allowing me to get a better sleep. To me, there is no logical

reason, like I understand why you might not want people smoking weed during the game, but I feel like if you're a smart enough athlete that you're probably not going to smoke weed during the game. That's where my mind lays on it.

Likewise, some participants expressed displeasure that certain pharmacological medications are permitted in sport and that these medications could potentially pose more harm than cannabis. For example, P6 and P8 stated:

P6: So why should cannabis, which has very little effect on your long-term health and very little effect on your short-term health, why should that be banned from sport when other drugs are you know, they're bad.

P8: There are plenty of things that are legal that are worse, in my opinion... I think that it provides an alternative to opiates, which is something that I think is an epidemic in our society and something is very dangerous, especially for high-level athletes. I know people that can speak to that. [inaudible] that first and foremost, this could be an alternative to something that I think has huge negative downsides. I don't think that its harmful. I think there is a lot more harm in getting blackout drunk and boozing than going home and smoking a joint after a game. I mean you're less of a detriment to society but also feel better in the morning. There are plenty of things that are legal that are worse, in my opinion.

The participants expressed contempt towards cannabis remaining a prohibited substance, especially since other substances, which they suggested pose more harm than cannabis, are permitted. Thus, the participants felt as though they were being restricted from using a substance that provides therapeutic relief and benefit.

4.5.2 *Potential to Enhance Performance*

This section highlights what the participants knew about cannabis' potential to enhance their performance. *Potential to Enhance Performance* is concerned with a substance, alone or in combination with other substances or methods, having a performance enhancing effect. Cannabis remains prohibited because WADA holds that cannabis poses the potential to enhance performance through a reduction of anxiety and enhanced concentration (Huestis, Mazzoni, and Rabin, 2011). All of the interviewees disagreed with these claims and expressed two contradictory beliefs. They argued that cannabis in fact undermines performance and they

contested that cannabis does not directly enhance performance but instead, has an indirect effect on their performance by supporting recovery and coping. As such, two themes were identified when exploring the participants beliefs about cannabis' potential to enhance performance. These included the participants believing that cannabis 1) Does Not Enhance Performance; and 2) Supports Recovery and Coping.

4.5.2.1 Does Not Enhance Performance.

Interestingly, the arguments have been made that cannabis has the potential to enhance performance by reducing anxiety and improving concentration but, at the same time, presents threats to athlete's health by decreasing coordination, and decreasing cognitive performance are contradictory. Contrary to the notion that cannabis has the potential to enhance performance, the participants argued that cannabis would compromise their performance. This was a fundamental reason why the participants abstained from using cannabis before and during training and competition. The participants noted that cannabis would make them sluggish, uncoordinated, and unmotivated. P1 and P11 explained how they believed cannabis would impact their performance:

P1: Getting high and doing sport, I don't see that as an advantage to you. I see that as being an advantage to the other team... I only see it from an athletic point of view, I see it as recovery. I don't see it as an enhancement.

P11: I don't believe it actually improves your performance in a game in any way. Like if I got ripped before a game, I wouldn't play better. I would probably play worse. It's not like performance enhancing. If I took steroids all summer, I would be a super athlete but if I got baked all summer, I'll be the same guy. I won't be any stronger or faster or be able to think better.

P1 and P11 mentioned that using cannabis would actually provide an advantage to the competition. More specifically, P10 suggested that cannabis would cause them to feel lethargic and further explained how cannabis would impact their performance:

P10: I don't think it improves performance... I just don't think that it would help me for the upcoming game. Like it might be bad for my performance... [I: Why do you think

that it wouldn't have an effect or possibly would have a negative effect on your performance?] Probably like lethargy. Like that lame feeling. When you wake up, you're not always like 'oh, let's go'. You kind of like still mellow. After a really deep sleep, you know. You're kind of groggy. That's kind of like the feeling that I would get. So that's why I wouldn't do it super close to a competition.

Evidently, the participants believed that cannabis would have a hindering effect on their athletic performance. This sentiment was shared by all of the participants as none of the participants used cannabis immediately before or in conjunction with training or competition. The participants obviously understood how cannabis would impact their performance. Provided that, this theme exemplifies that cannabis use within athletic populations can be a safe and permissible behaviour.

4.5.2.2 Supports Recovery and Coping.

As previously discussed, participants used cannabis to aid with recovery and assist in coping with stress, anxiety, pain and soreness. The participants insisted that their intention of using cannabis was never to attain a performance enhancing effect nor did they believe that cannabis could manifest a performance enhancing effect. Instead, a theme within the interview data was identified that the participants used cannabis for recovery and coping. Thus, the participants used cannabis to support their performance rather directly enhancing it. For instance, P12 said:

P12: I don't think its performance enhancing... I think it's a huge stress reliever. It's also a pain reliever as well. I think that are the two main things that it can help with for athletes.

All of the participants who used cannabis for therapeutic purposes agreed that cannabis does not enhance performance but instead, has profound abilities to help in dealing with stress, pain, and soreness. P5 stated:

P5: I haven't seen any research showing that it can improve some ones like physical abilities, except for like obviously pain, helping with pain, and anxiety, and stress. But I

feel like if you're using it for anxiety and performance-related stress, that shouldn't be something that's performance enhancing any more than getting a therapist. You know. Yea, that's kind of hard to word out. I don't see how it really overly affects performance benefits from a physical standpoint and if from a mental standpoint, I don't think it's enough or different enough from other methods so much so that it shouldn't be allowed.

Continuing, P11 and P14 described broader, more holistic understanding of how cannabis supported their performance. In doing so, they argued that cannabis' therapeutic effects should not be considered as performance enhancing. P11 and P14 also shed light on the injustice of restricting cannabis use since it has been legalized and especially when it supports athlete's well-being:

P11: It's not even for improving in sport, it's more for improving your life, I guess. Like making you happy, whatever you need it for. I guess because it helps with so many different things for people... It's more of a life enhancer than it's enhancing you in your sport. I think it affects everyone differently like I'm not saying that one person should be able to have it and someone else shouldn't. I just don't believe that it's going to help you be better than the next person. If I smoke and if someone else doesn't, it's not going to help me be better than them. It's just going to help my way of life and then competition, it's not going to help you anymore. Maybe you got a couple more hour's rest but that's about it. What's wrong with getting a couple hours of rest. It's not like a can bench fifty pounds more or something.

P14: I think that it's kind of a ridiculous thing to tell people that they can't do it. You're not gaining a real competitive edge in their performance while they're on it. It's kind of funny what we determine gives someone an edge and what doesn't. Like creatine gives people an edge. But you're allowed to use that. We say that's fine. Anabolic steroids you can't do. It also gives you an edge but that's not fine. For me, I guess cannabis gives me an edge because it allows me to sleep more and that gives you an edge in sport. I don't think that it should be counted as an unfair advantage. It seems like something everyone has equal access to basically. It just seems ridiculous to penalize someone for making that choice. It's a personal choice.

4.5.3 *Spirit of Sport*

This section highlights what the participants knew about cannabis as infringing on the *Spirit of Sport*. *Spirit of Sport* relies on ethical and societal considerations that encompass a wider view of sport beyond the physical achievements and health of an athlete. As such, cannabis infringes on the *Spirit of Sport*, as it remains illegal in many parts of the world (Huestis,

Mazzoni, and Rabin, 2011). None of the participants were aware that *Spirit of Sport* is a criterion used by WADA to identify whether or not a substance should be prohibited. However, all of the participants questioned why cannabis remains prohibited for Canadian varsity student-athletes when international legislation does not concern their sports participation. They also questioned why USports upholds WADA's prohibited list when there are legislative differences between the legality of cannabis internationally compared to Canada. As such, only one theme emerged with relation to athletes understanding of why cannabis is prohibited and how it infringes on the *Spirit of Sport*. This theme was identified as 1) Misunderstanding Why Cannabis is Prohibited. This section highlights the general lack of knowledge that the participants possessed about why cannabis is prohibited in the first place.

4.5.3.1 Misunderstanding Why Cannabis is Prohibited.

Despite the prevalence of cannabis use among the student athlete population and the consequential severity of using a prohibited substance, many participants misunderstood or did not know why cannabis is prohibited. For example, P11 and P12 expressed their misunderstandings:

P11: I should know this. [I: It's not a trick question] No, I know. But no, I don't know. I really don't. I think it's because the country had it as illegal first and that's why it was prohibited.

P12: I don't know much about it to be honest... Just the fact that it's prohibited and that's so heavy on our minds because of what we go through with our CCES protocol, knowing what's on the prohibited and knowing that you can't do it for these reasons.

Similarly, many participants misunderstood when cannabis is prohibited and when they could use cannabis with reasonable certainty that they would not test positive for cannabis during competition since cannabis is prohibited in competition. 'Competition' is a period of time defined by each sport discipline. Typically, 'competition' signifies a range of time within twenty-four hours of competition. Further, traces of cannabis are usually detectable in bodily fluids for

relatively long periods of time, between one and thirty days, in comparison to other prohibited substances (Hadland & Levy, 2016). A number of participants misunderstood when cannabis is prohibited and were unaware of how long traces of cannabis remained in your body. For example, P10 explained:

P10: It's like game day, right. So, I think that if you're tested on game day, then they'll test for that as well... So, I mean, like right now, if people use it regularly for sleep and anxiety and things like that, then they can use it like the week going up to a game and it would be fine for them. So that's why I don't think it really matters if it's illegal or not. Because they still have the choice.

4.5.4 Summary

Cannabis use is becoming increasingly normalized and more prevalent. So, many of the participants raised concerns over the ethics of prohibiting a substance that is otherwise legal. The participants expressed varying extents of knowledge and understanding of cannabis and why it is prohibited according to WADA's criteria framework. Perhaps simply acknowledging that cannabis is prohibited may have been a satisfactory level of knowledge for many of the participants. It appeared as though the participants perceived using cannabis as inconsequential and therefore, understanding why and when cannabis is prohibited was not important. Interestingly, however, a number of participants argued that cannabis should be permitted, which postulated that athletes knew why cannabis was prohibited and disagreed. In review, the participants were unaware of the reasons why cannabis was prohibited. Coupled with that, the participants also contested that cannabis should be permitted. This was paradoxical because the participants engaged in an argument in which they exhibited lacking knowledge. What this signified was that the participants argued that cannabis should be permitted based on anecdotal evidence of its benefits. Additionally, the participants believed that there were double standards at play since they were technically permitted to compete with alcohol and other drugs in their system.

It was made clear that athletes were displeased that they were restricted from using a substance that otherwise helps them in multiple ways. Together, this section evidenced that there is a need for more education of cannabis and why it is prohibited, especially since there is a high rate of use among the student-athlete population. This is why it was fundamentally important to gain an understanding of the knowledge that the athlete participants have of cannabis. If there are changes to be made to how cannabis is regulated in varsity sport, it is with this type of understanding that sport governing bodies and athletic departments can develop education programs about cannabis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

In this chapter, I give a summary and discuss the significance of the research findings. I also direct attention to some of the limitations of this research project and illuminate directions for future research.

This thesis was premised on the fact that cannabis is legal in Canada and yet, athletes who compete in varsity athletics across Canada are restricted from using cannabis. While others (Gillman, Hutchison, and Bryan, 2015; Lisano et al., 2019; Ware, Jensen, Barrette, Vernec, & Derman, 2018) have explored cannabis use in sport through other means, this thesis will represent one of few studies to explore cannabis use within a high-performance sports context and is positioned to be the first exploration of cannabis use amongst men and women athletes in a multi-discipline, high-performance sport context through a sociocultural lens. The purpose of this project was to challenge the existing assumptions about cannabis use amongst athletes and to explore how cannabis use influences the dissensus between the athlete and cannabis user identities.

In review, the athletes presented five key motives for using cannabis, specific cannabis use behaviours, experiences of using cannabis that were characterized by isolation and secrecy, and lacking knowledge of cannabis and why it remains prohibited. First, with respect to the reasons why athletes used cannabis, enjoyment, coping, sleep, pain and soreness, and alternative medicine were identified as five key motives for using cannabis. Notably, these motives revealed that athletes used cannabis purposefully; they used cannabis to enjoy the moment, to cope with their academic and athletic loads, as a sleep aid, to manage pain and soreness, and as an alternative for alcohol and other medications. This was significant because it contradicts the

assumptions of why individuals use cannabis. Moreover, these findings present an alternative understanding of what it means to be a cannabis user, which does not conform to the stereotypes of belonging to deviant and delinquent subcultures.

Second, the findings revealed that the athletes varied greatly in the ways in which they used cannabis. For example, there were differences in how, how much, how frequently, and what types of cannabis that the participants used. This was significant because it meant that cannabis use, at least within an athletic context, cannot be reduced to a particular set of behaviours, which could lead to consequential assumptions about the individuals who use cannabis. Additionally, however, there were similarities in the contexts that the athletes chose to use cannabis in and that they all prioritized their academic and athletic agendas and responsibilities. So, the findings also imply that the athletes were responsible and chose not to jeopardize their academic nor their athletic performance.

Third, with respect to athletes' experiences of using cannabis, the participants personified dual, competing identities as cannabis users and as athletes. Consequently, the participants were required to present themselves and their cannabis use using purposeful strategies and techniques to manage the impressions that they imparted onto others. This project focused on the intentional, processual, interactional processes that athletes use to interpret situations and experiences and construct their actions in changing social environments. As such, the participants often concealed their cannabis use in the backstage or performed in front of exclusive audiences on the front stage. The athletes were selective about their audiences and the locations in which they would use cannabis because they did not feel comfortable using cannabis in the public. The findings also suggested that using cannabis was a discreditable behaviour and the participants experienced perceived stigma accordingly. This was significant because it

contravenes the continuing process of cannabis normalization and demonstrated that the athletes were stigmatized for an activity that is legal and otherwise beneficial to them.

Fourth, with respect to athlete's knowledge of cannabis, it was evident that the participants were opinionated about the fact that cannabis remains prohibited. The participants contested that cannabis supported their performance by providing effective relief from pain and soreness and by assisting with sleep. They also argued that cannabis does not enhance performance but instead jeopardizes their performance. The participants did not believe that it is fair that recreational use of cannabis can be legalized but yet, can be prohibited by their national sports governing body, primarily because it is illegal in other countries. Their discontent about cannabis remaining prohibited reflects the frustrating nature of the double standard that exists within the regulations of varsity sport in Canada. If the regulations around cannabis are to change, more education is needed from athletic departments and governing bodies to ensure that the student-athletes are fully aware of what cannabis is, what it does, how it does what it does, and why it is prohibited. This is important because athletes will be able to make informed decisions about cannabis use, why they might use it, and how they might use it.

The findings were presented in such a way as to illustrate that varsity student-athletes use cannabis purposefully and experience challenges as a result of cannabis continuing to be prohibited. In doing that, this thesis was fourfold in that it 1) explored the reasons why athletes used cannabis 2) identified athletes cannabis use behaviours, 3) investigated athletes experiences of using cannabis, and 4) questioned athletes' knowledge of cannabis. The incentive for addressing these particular areas of inquiry was fueled largely by the fact that we, as a society, greatly misunderstand cannabis and the individuals who use it. Moreover, this study was inspired to provide an opportunity and space for athletes who use cannabis to explain why they choose to

use cannabis and how cannabis supports their athletic performance. This study is positioned to be the first of its kind and satisfied a significant gap in the extant literature (Docter et al., 2020; Gillman, Hutchison, and Bryan, 2015; Kennedy, 2017; Lorente, Peretti-Watel, & Gretol, 2005; Saugy et al., 2006; Sznitman and Zolotov's 2015). In addition, no research, to my knowledge, has employed qualitative, phenomenological methods to investigate cannabis use in a sports context. This study not only hoped to fill methodological and theoretical gaps within previous research, but also hopes to be a catalyst for more phenomenological-based inquiries of cannabis use in sport. Due to the lack of research of cannabis use amongst athlete populations, there was very little to build upon. So, in this case, this study and its findings offer part of the foundation for further investigations. That being said, the findings contradict much of the dated literature that does exist (Avakian, Horvath, Michael, & Jacobs, 1979; Renaud & Cormier, 1986; Steadward & Singh, 1975). The findings also contradict some of the more recent research, which seems to have an overt intention of incorporating cannabis use with other delinquent or illicit behaviour (Huestis, Mazzoni, & Rabin, 2011; National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2012). This is in large part due to the changes that have been made to the legislative landscapes around recreational cannabis use. When cannabis was illegal, researchers were, of course, incentivized to discover and rediscover the negative and potentially harmful characteristics of cannabis and cannabis use. Now, since it has been legalized, cannabis research is due to change and the positive attributes of cannabis use and those who use it will likely come to the forefront of cannabis research.

Finally, this thesis is presented in such a way to vie for cannabis to become permitted. Since this thesis advocates for cannabis use, it was crucial to offer understandings of why and how athletes use cannabis, what types of experiences they have when they use cannabis, and

what they know about cannabis. This way, the findings from this paper provide information that may guide future changes to how cannabis is regulated in varsity sport across Canada.

5.2 Project Limitations

My insider status as a varsity alumni, coach, and fellow student presented many benefits in terms of developing relation, rapport, trust, and understanding with the interview participants. Although my insider status helped to facilitate and expedite the research process, it also became a point of limitation. For example, the similarities shared between my stance on the topic of cannabis use in sport and those of the participants made it difficult sometimes to dissociate my opinion from theirs and to critically analyze what they said. To that same point, my close relation with the participants and the similarities between our opinions posed challenges to the integrity and subjectivity of the interviews. For example, depending on my relationship with the participant, the conversation would sometimes sway back and forth from formal to informal. This would happen in a way such that the discourse would sometimes transition from a dialogue in which I was the researcher, and they were the interviewee and then, transcend into a chat in which I was an acquaintance, and they were a familiar. Additionally, I discovered particularly through the transcription process that there were questions that I would have liked to have included in the interviews. It was only during the transcription process and being reflective that I identified these questions, the responses to which would have incited valuable dialogue. For example, I would have liked to have asked the following questions: do you identify as an athlete? do you identify as a cannabis user? when you are using cannabis, do you feel like an athlete. There were also instances when I felt as though the extent to which I interrogated the participants responses was lacking. For example, I was reluctant to question further when maybe I should have inquired more. This was especially true when the participants narrated specific experiences of using cannabis. Despite these

challenges, I remained aware of and committed to my position as a researcher through the data analysis and reporting processes.

5.3 Future Research Considerations

There are a number of gaps in research knowledge that would benefit from further research. First, especially as cannabis continues to go through a process of normalization, I advocate that more research be done on cannabis use in general. Little is known about cannabis use due to the fact that it has been illegal for so many years. Only now, since its legalization, have the positive attributes of cannabis become of interest. Namely, I would advocate that further cannabis research depart from inquiry situated within illicit drug use and the characteristic of those who use illicit drugs. Instead, I recommend that further cannabis research turn to the ways that cannabis is used positively.

Second, I encourage that more research be done with interpretive, phenomenological methods when studying cannabis use, particularly with an interest in the experiences that cannabis users have. The body of qualitative, interpretive research on cannabis use is relatively small and limited in comparison to the body of quantitative, clinical and epidemiological research on cannabis. So, as it did for varsity student-athletes who participated in this study, an interpretive, phenomenological approach provides a unique and novel opportunity for research participants to narrate their nuanced experiences of using cannabis. In combination with that, research knowledge on the use of cannabis amongst athletic populations pales in comparison to the bodies of research on the use of other substances in sport. Future studies grounded in qualitative methodologies, epistemologies, and theoretical lenses are required to better understand why athletes use cannabis. Moreover, future studies are required to better understand the interconnectedness between the reasons why athletes use cannabis and the benefits that they experience.

Third, I encourage that future research investigates the impact of racialization on cannabis users and the experiences that cannabis users have. The criminalization of cannabis is historically rooted in political processes of racialization. Exploring the experiences that cannabis users from a perspective that attends to the process of racialization would provide a unique opportunity to further appreciate the contingencies and challenges that cannabis users continue to experience.

Fourth, I encourage that future research investigates the impact of gender on the experiences that athlete cannabis users have. Primarily, I encourage future research to explore how gender and gender stereotypes might shape the experiences of using cannabis that women athletes have compared to men athletes.

Lastly, I encourage all future research of cannabis use in sport to employ an open-minded approach to understand how an otherwise stigmatized substance can provide effective benefit rather than presuming that cannabis is a negative influence in all aspects of it.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Invitation to Participate

Invitation to participate

Cannabis Use in High Performance Sport: An Exploration



Why?

Research like this has not been done before! We are inviting people like you to learn more about varsity athletes who use cannabis, how they use cannabis, and their experiences of using cannabis

How?

Eligibility for the research project will be determined from with a demographic questionnaire. Participant candidates will be contacted individually. Athletes will be asked to participate in one individual interview that will last no longer than 90 minutes

Who?

Varsity athletes at the University of British Columbia

Interested?

If you would like to take part, please follow the link and complete the demographic questionnaire. It should take no longer than 10 minutes. [Demographic Questionnaire](#)

Have questions?

Contact Andrew at andrew.kanerva@ubc.ca

Cannabis Use in High Performance Sport: An Exploration - Demographic Questionnaire

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Information Sheet for Demographic Questionnaire



UBC School of Kinesiology

Study Title: Cannabis Use in High Performance Sport: An Exploration

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrea Bundon, PhD, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, andrea.bundon@ubc.ca

Student Researcher: Andrew Kanerva, MA, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, andrew.kanerva@ubc.ca

Why you should participate in this questionnaire?

You are being invited to take part in this questionnaire because we want to learn more about high performance athletes who use cannabis. This questionnaire will help us learn more about cannabis use amongst high performance athletes because little research has focused on the use of cannabis by athletes.

What will happen in this questionnaire?

If you decide to take part in this questionnaire, you will be asked basic personal questions, if you use cannabis or not, about why you use cannabis, and about your experiences of using cannabis. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Before the questionnaire, you must consent to participate. During the questionnaire, you may choose to discontinue at any point, and you may choose to not respond to any of the questions. During the questionnaire, you may be asked to provide contact information. The demographic questionnaire will be used for recruitment purposes for interviews.

How will your identity be protected? How will your privacy be maintained?

Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your personal information will not be released without your consent. Data from the questionnaire will not be used for secondary purposes. Responses to the questionnaire will remain strictly anonymous.

Who can you contact if you have any questions about the study?

Please contact Andrew at andrew.kanerva@ubc.ca with any questions directly related to the study.

Who can you contact if you have any complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in the study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598

- I agree to the terms listed above and wish to continue with the survey (1)

Skip To: End of Survey If Information Sheet for Demographic Questionnaire Study Title: Cannabis Use in High Performance Spor... != I agree to the terms listed above and wish to continue with the survey

Q2 Are you 19+ years of age?

- Yes (1)

- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you 19+ years of age? = No

Display This Question:

If Are you 19+ years of age? = Yes

Q3 How old are you?

Q4 Are you a UBC varsity athlete that will be involved in the 2019-20 season?

- Yes (1)

- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you a UBC varsity athlete that will be involved in the 2019-20 season? = No

Q5 Are you a undergraduate or graduate student?

- Undergraduate (1)

- Graduate (2)

Display This Question:

If Are you a undergraduate or graduate student? = Undergraduate

Q6 What academic year will you be in during the 2019-20 school year?

- First (1)
 - Second (2)
 - Third (3)
 - Fourth (4)
-

Q7 How many years of eligibility have you used? If there are no eligibility restrictions for your sport, please write 'other'

Q8 Have you used cannabis within the past twelve months ?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
-

Q9 Please respond to the following statement:
I believe cannabis should be allowed in sport

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neutral (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly Disagree (5)

Display This Question:

If Have you used cannabis within the past twelve months ? = Yes

Q10 Would you be willing to participate in an individual interview? If yes, please provide your first name and email address so that you may be able to be contacted.

First name (1) _____

Email address (2) _____

Display This Question:

If Have you used cannabis within the past twelve months ? = Yes

Q11 Please identify the reasons for why you use cannabis? Select all that apply

- Enjoyment (ex. to feel good) (1)
- Conformity (ex. because you don't want to be the only one not doing it) (14)
- Coping (ex. because you want to forget) (13)
- Experimentation (ex. to see what it feels like) (16)
- Boredom (ex. because you had nothing better to do) (2)
- Celebration (ex. special occasion) (11)
- Social Anxiety (ex. because it makes you feel comfortable) (3)
- Sleep (ex. to help you sleep) (4)
- Availability (ex. because it is readily available) (15)
- Alcohol (ex. because you were drunk) (5)
- Low Risk (ex. because it is not dangerous) (6)
- Other (9)

Display This Question:

If Please identify the reasons for why you use cannabis? Select all that apply = Low Risk (ex. because it is not dangerous)

Q12 If you selected 'other', please outline your reason(s)

Display This Question:

If Have you used cannabis within the past twelve months ? = Yes

Q13 When do you use cannabis? Please select all that apply

Morning (1)

Day (2)

Evening (3)

Display This Question:

If Have you used cannabis within the past twelve months ? = Yes

Q14 Please describe how often you use cannabis (Ex. 3x per week, 1x per month)

Q15 What type of cannabis do you use? Please select all that apply

- Bud (1)
- Concentrates (Ex. Hash Oil, Wax, Shatter, Etc.) (2)
- Oil - CBD Only (3)
- Oil - THC Only (4)
- Oil - CBD + THC (5)
- Other (6)

Display This Question:

If What type of cannabis do you use? Please select all that apply = Other

Q16 If you selected 'other', please describe the type of cannabis you use

Display This Question:

If Have you used cannabis within the past twelve months ? = Yes

Q17 How do you use cannabis? Please select all that apply

- Smoking (ex. Joint, Pipe, Bong, Etc.) (1)
- Vaporizing (ex. Vape Pen, Conduction Vaporizers, Convection Vaporizers, Liquid Vaporizers, Etc.) (2)
- Extracts (ex. Oil, Tinctures, Etc.) (3)
- Edibles (ex. Cookies, Brownies, Etc.) (4)
- Other (5)

Display This Question:

If How do you use cannabis? Please select all that apply = Smoking (ex. Joint, Pipe, Bong, Etc.)

Q18 If you selected 'smoking', please describe the method(s) or device(s) you use

Display This Question:

If How do you use cannabis? Please select all that apply = Vaporizing (ex. Vape Pen, Conduction Vaporizers, Convection Vaporizers, Liquid Vaporizers, Etc.)

Q19 If you selected 'vaporizing', please describe the method(s) or device(s) you use

Display This Question:

If How do you use cannabis? Please select all that apply = Extracts (ex. Oil, Tinctures, Etc.)

Q20 If you selected 'oil', please describe the oil(s) you use

Display This Question:

If How do you use cannabis? Please select all that apply = Other

Q21 If you selected 'other', please describe the method(s) or device(s) you use

End of Block: Default Question Block

Appendix C. Consent Form

Content Form Cannabis Use in High Performance Sport: An Exploration

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrea Bundon, PhD, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, andrea.bundon@ubc.ca

Student Researcher: Andrew Kanerva, MA, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of British Columbia, andrew.kanerva@ubc.ca

Why should you take part in this study?

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you completed the demographic questionnaire and meet the criteria for interview participation. We want to learn more about high performance athletes who use cannabis. This study will help us learn more about cannabis use in high performance athletics because little research has focused on the use of cannabis by athletes and no research to date has been performed using interviews. We are inviting people like you to provide personal anecdotes and insights into the reasons why you use cannabis, what you think about cannabis, and your experiences of using cannabis.

What will happen in the study?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in one individual interview. Interviews will last no longer than ninety minutes and will be conducted in a location on UBC Vancouver campus decided on by the student researcher and the participant. Interviews will be audio recorded. Before the interview, participants will be contacted to arrange a time and place for the interview. During the interview, the participant and the researcher will engage in a semi-structured dialogue. The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in journal articles and books.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for you?

We do not think that there is anything in this study that could harm you or be bad for you. Some of the questions we ask might be sensitive. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

We do not think that participating in this study will help you. However, in the future, others may benefit from what we learn in this study.

How will your identity be protected? How will your privacy be maintained?

Your confidentiality will be respected. Information that discloses your identity will not be released without your consent. Data from the interviews will not be used for any secondary purposes, will be stored on an encrypted external hard drive, and will be stored for five years following the completion of the study. Then, the electronic copies of the notes and the audio recordings will be destroyed. All data will be identified only by code number and be kept in a secure storing area. Only the principal investigator and the student researcher will have access to the interview recordings. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?

If you have any questions about what we are asking of you, please contact Andrew Kanerva. His contact information is listed at the top of this form.

Who can you contact if you have complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in the study, contact the research participant complaint line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance email RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

Participant Consent and Signature

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your academic or athletic status.

I, _____, have read the explanation about this study. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Appendix D. Interview Guide

Introduction

You are not bound to this interview. At any time, without explanation, you may terminate the interview. Similarly, you are not obligated to answer any of the questions. What you say will remain anonymous and the interview data will be stored on an encrypted external hard drive.

The interview data will be used in a graduate thesis and is not intended for secondary purposes.

Are you comfortable if I audio record this interview?

Before we start, do you have any questions?

Ice Breaker

Tell me about your athletic career...

You mentioned that you're studying ' '. Tell me more about that...

Tell me about what inspired you to participate in this study...

When did you start using cannabis?

Topic 1. Cannabis Use Behaviours

Why

Why do you use cannabis?

- Tell me about a time...
- Tell me more about...
- Why is that important to you...
- Why is that a challenge for you...
- Some others have mentioned...

When

When do you use cannabis?

- Tell me about that....
- Tell me more about...
- What happens when...
- Why is that important to you...

How much

How much cannabis do you use?

- Tell me more about that....
- Tell me more about...
- How does that make you feel...
- Has this changed over time...
- Why do you think that is...

What Type

What type of cannabis do you use?

- In the questionnaire you mentioned...
- Tell me more about...
- Tell me more about that....
- What do you know about...

Methods

How do you use cannabis?

- What would that look like...
- How do you do that...
- Some others have mentioned...
- Tell me more about...

Frequency

How often do you use cannabis?

- In the past year...
- In the past month...
- In the past week...
- In the questionnaire you mentioned...
- Some others have mentioned...

Topic 2. Experiences

- Can you describe your experiences of using cannabis...
- Can you give me an example...
- Tell me more about...
- Some others have mentioned...

Stigma

Have you experienced stigma when using cannabis?

- Can you give me an example...
- What was the situation...
- How did that make you feel...
- What was the situation when...
- What did everyone else do...
- What were other people doing then...
- Can you think of another example...
- How do you manage..
- What did you do...

Topic 3. Beliefs

Beliefs

Do you believe the use of cannabis should be permitted in sport?

- What do you believe about cannabis...
- What leads you to believe....
- Why is that important to you...
- Why does that matter...

- How do you feel about...
- I'd like to hear more about...
- Is this typical of you...
- What might make you think differently...
- Has your mindset changed over time...

End of Interview

Is there anything else that you think is important that we haven't covered yet?

Is there anything else that you would like to say?

I will summarize what we have talked about today, and if I've missed anything or got anything wrong, please let me know