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Who do you think you are? constructing self/identity in women's rugby through aggression, control and unacceptable behavior

Shannon M. Baird
University of Iowa

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
CONSTRUCTING SELF/IDENTITY IN WOMEN'S RUGBY THROUGH
AGGRESSION, CONTROL AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

by

Shannon M. Baird

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Health and Sport Studies
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2010

Thesis Supervisor: Assistant Professor Kerry R. McGannon

ABSTRACT

Some behaviors in sport may be labeled: bad, unnecessary and distasteful. Sport psychologists have used concepts of aggression to understand and lessen these behaviors. To date, most research has conceptualized aggression as a product of individual cognition. Specifically, aggression is defined in the sport psychology literature as any behavior motivated by the intent to harm one's opponent (Baron, 1977; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000). Consequently, sport psychology analyses of aggression tend to reproduce take-for-granted conceptions of aggression as male, physical and other-directed. To better understand sport aggression, it has been argued that symbolic interactionism has much to offer (Baird & McGannon, 2009). By utilizing symbolic interactionism we can reconceptualize aggression as a social construct given meaning in and through interaction with self and others. From this perspective, self notions and interactions with others are important "locations" of meaning making and are significant in the study of behavior.

The present study used symbolic interactionism to explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they interpret, define and structure experiences relative to self development. In conjunction with participant-observation, 12 semi-structured interviews with female rugby players ages 18-45 were conducted to explore: (1) how do women define themselves as ruggers/how do they (re)produce these identities in and out of rugby, (2) how do women define and experience aggression, and (3) how are these accounts used in the construction of self/identity?

Data emerging from interviews and observations suggested that athletes defined and experienced behavior in ways challenging contemporary sport psychology

conceptualizations of aggression. The participants often used the word aggression to describe forceful and physical play. In sport psychology literature, this is typically referred to as assertive behavior (Husman & Silva, 1984; Tenenbaum, Saks, Miller, Golden, & Doolin, 2000) and aggressive behavior is a label reserved for unacceptable behavior motivated by the intent to harm (Tenenbaum et al., 2000). According to the women in this study, unacceptable behavior was not defined by intent; rather, unacceptable behavior was a negotiated space that was constructed through notions of lack of control. That is, if a player was constructed as out of control, that player was seen as engaging in unacceptable behavior.

In terms of self/identity construction, pain, contact and aggression emerged as important in the (re)production of self-related experiences within and outside of rugby. Within rugby these characteristics indicated a player's *rugbyness*. Outside of rugby these characteristics were often exhibited by non-rugby players as proof that rugby was a male sport. These participants both resisted and reinforced that notion. Rather than (re)define rugby by other *female* characteristics, these athletes used their rugby selves to say that pain, contact and aggression are not male *only* behaviors. The women used the bruises on their bodies to claim their rugby selves and prove, "I'm more than you think I am."

This research offers a unique glimpse of female collision athletes' experiences of aggression and contributes a new conceptualization of "unacceptable" behavior to the existent sport psychology literature.

Abstract Approved: _____

                                        Thesis Supervisor

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                                          Date

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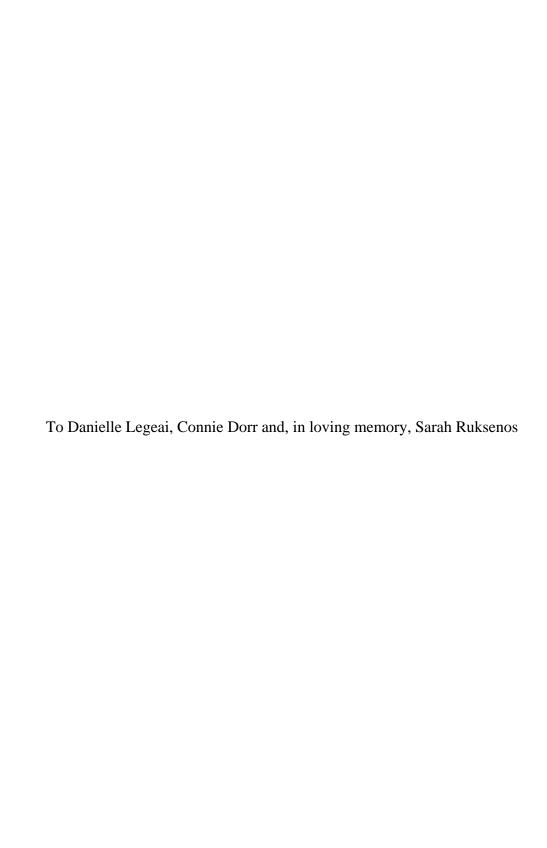The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph. D. thesis of

Shannon M. Baird

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement
for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Health and Sport Studies at the
May 2010 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
                     Kerry R. McGannon, Thesis Supervisor

                     _____
                     Susan Birrell

                     _____
                     Catriona Parrat

                     _____
                     Jennifer Metz

                     _____
                     Stephen Wieting

To Danielle Legeai, Connie Dorr and, in loving memory, Sarah Ruksenos

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Becky, I don't know how, but you held me up when you didn't have to. Your unwavering faith in my intelligence is unsettling but motivating. I am not sure why you believe in me, but that faith has made me smile when, let's face it, tears were easier. You have assured me, on many occasions, that I have helped you; consequently, without knowing it, you reminded me of what this was all for. Thank you. You've been Sunkist!

ABSTRACT

Some behaviors in sport may be labeled: bad, unnecessary and distasteful. Sport psychologists have used concepts of aggression to understand and lessen these behaviors. To date, most research has conceptualized aggression as a product of individual cognition. Specifically, aggression is defined in the sport psychology literature as any behavior motivated by the intent to harm one's opponent (Baron, 1977; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000). Consequently, sport psychology analyses of aggression tend to reproduce take-for-granted conceptions of aggression as male, physical and other-directed. To better understand sport aggression, it has been argued that symbolic interactionism has much to offer (Baird & McGannon, 2009). By utilizing symbolic interactionism we can reconceptualize aggression as a social construct given meaning in and through interaction with self and others. From this perspective, self notions and interactions with others are important "locations" of meaning making and are significant in the study of behavior.

The present study used symbolic interactionism to explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they interpret, define and structure experiences relative to self development. In conjunction with participant-observation, 12 semi-structured interviews with female rugby players ages 18-45 were conducted to explore: (1) how do women define themselves as ruggers/how do they (re)produce these identities in and out of rugby, (2) how do women define and experience aggression, and (3) how are these accounts used in the construction of self/identity?

Data emerging from interviews and observations suggested that athletes defined and experienced behavior in ways challenging contemporary sport psychology

conceptualizations of aggression. The participants often used the word aggression to describe forceful and physical play. In sport psychology literature, this is typically referred to as assertive behavior (Husman & Silva, 1984; Tenenbaum, Saks, Miller, Golden, & Doolin, 2000) and aggressive behavior is a label reserved for unacceptable behavior motivated by the intent to harm (Tenenbaum et al., 2000). According to the women in this study, unacceptable behavior was not defined by intent; rather, unacceptable behavior was a negotiated space that was constructed through notions of lack of control. That is, if a player was constructed as out of control, that player was seen as engaging in unacceptable behavior.

In terms of self/identity construction, pain, contact and aggression emerged as important in the (re)production of self-related experiences within and outside of rugby. Within rugby these characteristics indicated a player's *rugbyness*. Outside of rugby these characteristics were often exhibited by non-rugby players as proof that rugby was a male sport. These participants both resisted and reinforced that notion. Rather than (re)define rugby by other *female* characteristics, these athletes used their rugby selves to say that pain, contact and aggression are not male *only* behaviors. The women used the bruises on their bodies to claim their rugby selves and prove, "I'm more than you think I am."

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CHAPTER I
SEND OFF

I take pen to paper and begin this voyage. Then again, as Charon (2004) suggests, this act, writing, is not an isolated action, it is a part of a larger "stream of action." In that regard, this is not a true "beginning," it is a decision based on past decisions that will shift the direction of my stream of action. In that case, let me begin again. As I drag my pen across open white space, riding a current of my own making, I pause and ask my self, "How will you do this? How can you do this?" I laugh, half out loud, at the image I have of my self. I see me sitting upon a rickety raft of my own construction. The raft, my education, whines and creeks beneath the weight of the task set before me. There I am, cross-legged and rocking with the ebb and flow of my stream, stuck between Scylla and Charybdis. High upon the ledge and deep within the rock wall to my right Scylla lurks. She is my doubt, my insecurity and fear. Scylla, once a beautiful nymph, was turned into a six-headed dodeca-ped by the very waters within which she bathed. She bellows from three mouths and brandishes her three rows of formidable teeth. A daunting foe created within my own heart, curiosity and creativity perverted by the specter of Truth and some notion of "doing it right." To my left, only a raft-width away, Charybdis yawns, swallowing in the sea. She is the whirlpool of post-positive science and sport psychology orthodox. I kick furiously to escape, for somewhere in this voyage I have lost my oars. I look upon Thetis and take heart in her advice. "Just write," she says. So, I write. Here goes, everything…

(Baird, personal journal, 2007)

Who am I? Am I the sum of my biological parts? Is there something inside of me, some kernel of being from which comes all motive for behavior? Am I propelled through life by internal psychological elements? Is my behavior an indicator of a core psychological self that "is" regardless of interaction and can be revealed through rigorous inquiry? Do I simply respond to stimuli or am I more? Am I, as Blumer (1969) suggests, an actor (not an actor in the dramaturgical Goffman (1959) sense, but an actor as opposed to a reactor)? Do I choose my behaviors based on meaning, meanings constructed

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The expulsion of a player from the game due to flagrant or malicious fouls is called being sent off

through social interaction? Do I give meaning to situations, others, myself and objects?

Do I, once defined, choose behaviors that are similarly defined through social interaction?

My answers to these questions point to my beliefs about the nature of self,

identity and behavior. According to the symbolic interactionist perspective (Mead, 1934),

the self is not an innate structure that produces behavior, the self is a process of ongoing

interaction and meaning development (Blumer, 1969). The self is how we define

ourselves as objects in the world to ourselves and others (Blumer, 1966, 1969). Identity is,

more specifically, a name I give my "self", to self and others, in particular contexts

(Charon, 2004). In this way, when I evoke a specific identity I am still talking about the

self. In efforts to problematize the notion that the self is a hierarchical structure made up

of distinct identities I use the term self/identity.

In more specific terms, my rugby self/identity does not emerge from some

internal mechanism impelling me to aggress. My rugby self/identity is a creation of my

own interpretations of experience that I try to share with others through self stories. From

this perspective, aggression may be picked up and used as a means to express to others

and myself who I think I am as a rugby player. Thus I define that self/identity and my self

as aggressive.

Understanding how individuals give meaning to the self/identity is important

because self/identity forms and guides behavior (Blumer, 1969). However, the

importance of self/identity has been relatively unexplored in sport psychology research

concerning athletes' aggression. This dissertation expands current sport psychology

research while contributing a new paradigm through which to consider aggression in sport.

In this chapter I present an overview of sport psychology literature concerning aggression in sport to highlight important research findings. I also introduce sport sociology literature indicating the importance of understanding aggression as a multidimensional symbolic behavior. I do this to offer a critique of sport psychology research concerning aggression, highlight gaps in the literature and indicate a need for new ways of considering sport aggression. Finally, I propose a symbolic interactionist perspective as a means of reconceptualizing how aggression is considered in sport psychology. Thus, in this research, I extend our current understanding and fill some of those afore mentioned gaps in the sport psychology literature.

Defining aggression

From a psychological perspective, aggression has been defined according to Baron's (1977) conceptualization of aggression as any physical, mental or verbal behavior driven by the intent to harm someone who is motivated to avoid such treatment. According to this definition, aggression is deliberate behavior chosen to harm someone. The critical element of this definition is intent; events that inadvertently cause pain are not considered aggressive actions. In order to be labeled as aggression, an act must be intended to do harm. The act does not necessarily have to cause harm, but the *motive* for the action must be harm. This definition is problematic for a number of reasons. One of those reasons is related to the last line of the Baron's definition that suggests aggression is directed toward someone who is motivated to avoid harm. In sport, most participants

are aware of some harm that may be inflicted upon them as a result of their sport and are willing to endure that harm (Kerr, 1999, 2002, 2006). For example, I know that it hurts when someone tackles me in rugby; however, this type of intentional harm is not included within the traditional definition of aggression. In the sport psychology literature, this type of enthusiastic play is considered assertion (Husman & Silva, 1984; Tenenbaum, Sacks, Miller, Golden & Doolin, 2000). Aggression is something different from assertive behavior. From a sport psychology perspective, aggression is the intent to harm another beyond the point of harm perceived as implicit in certain sports. Additionally, aggression can include more than the intent to physically harm; it can also be the intent to harm verbally, nonverbally, emotionally, or psychologically (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Kirker, Tenenbaum, & Mattson, 2000).

Further, sport psychology literature divides the intent to harm into hostile and instrumental aggression. These forms of aggression are differentiated by motive. On one hand, hostile aggression is the intent to harm for the sole purpose of inflicting pain; it is an end in and of itself (Husman & Silva, 1984; Rascle, Coulomb, Pfister, 1998). Hostile aggression is commonly tied to retaliation, anger, and frustration (Kirker et al., 2000; Mintah, Huddleston, Doody, 1999). Physical hostile aggression is often labeled violence (Tenenbaum Stewart, Signer, & Duda, 1997).

On the other hand, instrumental aggression is the intent to harm for the sake of gaining an advantage or a reward (Husman & Silva, 1984; Rascle et al., 1998). In this case, the aggressive act is a means to an end. Ultimately, the distinction between the two comes from understanding the desired result of the action. An athlete using hostile

aggression wants to witness the pain and/or suffering of another human being, whereas an athlete using instrumental aggression is attempting to give one's team an advantage.

Specifically, aggression, whether hostile or instrumental, is defined as unacceptable behavior contradicting the nature of sport (Tenenbaum, et al., 2000). Ultimately, what is being considered in this definition is the distinction between acceptable (i.e., assertion) and unacceptable (i.e., aggression) behavior. This definition assumes that unacceptable behavior is defined the same across all sports, contexts and individuals and can be located by identifying one's intent to harm.

In this research I deconstruct the term "aggression" and demonstrate the usefulness of looking at athlete's definitions/experiences of unacceptable behavior as a way to move away from assumptions about the importance of harm and intentionality in athletes' understandings of what is acceptable or not. I will, at time, use the term aggression/unacceptable behavior to talk about how sport psychology literature defines unacceptable behavior through the term aggression. I will use this term when it is important to distinguish between the sport psychology construct referencing "intent to harm" and the athletes' use of the term aggression. In no way is this research advocating nor celebrating the use of maladaptive behaviors in sport. It is the point of this research to simply understand more about what is considered and experienced as unacceptable behavior in sport. This research works to problematize/challenge the word aggression and address unacceptable behavior as a negotiated space.

Theoretical Perspectives in Sport Psychology Aggression Research

Sport psychology literature concerning aggression relies primarily on social learning theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1973, 1978) and moral reasoning theory (MRT) (Haan, 1978; Kohlberg, 1969). As a result, the sport psychology discourse on aggression maintains aggression as a *product* of internal psychological structures. These internal psychological structures, such as moral reasoning or the complex cognitive structures of learning, can be *accessed* by investigating aggression and eventually can be used to predict an athlete's likelihood to aggress.

SLT suggests that sport aggression is a learned behavior (Coakley, 1981; Husman & Silva, 1984; Mugno & Feltz, 1985; Russell, 1981; Silva, 1983; Smith, 1974, 1978, 1979, 1988) and MRT identifies aggression as the outcome of one's level of moral reasoning (Bredemeier 1985; Bredemeier & Shields, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c; Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields, & Cooper, 1987). Despite studying different cognitive structures, both approaches investigate aggression as a product of innate structures affected by various situational factors. This reliance on SLT and MRT in sport psychology has led to a limited conception of aggression in sport.

Consequently, operating within these perceptions, sport psychology research has focused on attempting to isolate determinants of aggression. This approach has also resulted in a somewhat limited understanding of aggression. The research done using both perspectives tend to focus on physical acts. This is problematic as it omits other forms of aggression, forms which research has indicated females prefer over more overt violence (Gladue, 1991; Lenzi, Bianco, Milazzo, & Placidi, 1997; Storch, Werner &

Storch, 2003). Additionally, both perspectives address "context" as a predictor of aggression. Though this does give us insight into the constructs related to aggression, the underlying epistemology suggests that there is an identifiable, singular, cause of aggression that one can discover. Ultimately, though "context" is considered it is reduced to an arbitrary classification of a sport based upon the level of contact present in the game or an isolated "contextual variable" (e.g., gender, winning, losing, or one's opponent). Although literature from both SLT and MRT indicate the importance of context, little research has been done looking at aggression as behaviors given meaning in and through interaction situated in a specific context. Also, sport psychology aggression literature has yet to focus on women's unique experiences of aggression in collision sports despite research indicating that females approach, define, and use aggression differently than males (Coulomb-Cabagno, Rascle & Souchon, 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Keeler, 2007; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Moreover, the sociological literature indicates the importance of self/identity development in understanding aggression (Messner, 1992, 2002; Theberge, 1998; 2000); however, no research in sport psychology has attempted to look at the connection between self/identity and aggression in athletes.

<div align="center">Aggression as a Symbol</div>

Aggression has also been studied from a sociological perspective. Yet, in the sociological realm, aggression has not been circumscribed by intent. This research addresses the symbolic nature of aggression. Aggression can be understood as a symbol of superior play and athletic prowess while simultaneously a symbol of masculinity (Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner, 2003; Schacht, 1996). Violence and aggression in sport

are expected, naturalized, legitimated and lionized (Burgess et al., 2003; Howe, 2001; Messner, 1990). In this way, aggression and violence can be used by athletes to convey their identity, to self and others, as legitimate athletes (Bryson, 1994; Messner, 1992; Scranton, Fasting, Pfister & Bunuel, 1999; Theberge 1998, 2000; Young & White, 1995). Moreover, these very characteristics are viewed as innately male characteristics (Bryson, 1987; Hargreaves, 1986; Schacht, 1996; Theberge, 1981) thereby linking the sport context to the development and maintenance of masculine identity (Messner, 1988, 1992). This is important when we consider female athletes due to the relational definition of masculinity and femininity; that is, masculinity is positioned against femininity as its opposite (Schacht, 1996). This places aggression and violence within the domain of masculinity and, consequently, outside of femininity. The combination of aggression as a symbol of masculinity and simultaneously a symbol of authentic athleticism establishes an interesting conundrum for females trying to define themselves as legitimate athletes. Add to that conundrum a female athlete's desire to participate in a sport defined in and through its perceived connection to the male body (e.g., collision sports such as football, hockey, and rugby) and we move into a vexing intersection of social standards and sport expectations (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006). Yet, sport psychology literature has not explored how female collision (e.g., football, hockey and rugby) athletes define, structure and use aggression.

Most of what we know from a sport psychological perspective and are continuing to learn about aggression in sport comes from all male samples (e.g., Chantal, Robin, Vernat, & Bernache-Assollant, 2005; Gee & Leith, 2007; Gee & Sullivan, 2006;

Loughead & Leith, 2001; Visek & Watson, 2005). Only recently has aggression research concerning collision sports been extended to include female athletes. Recent sport psychology research has included female collision athletes' use of aggression but most have investigated female athletes in comparison to male athletes (Keeler, 2007; Tucker & Parks, 2001). This research indicates that males and females aggression levels are not as different as previously believed (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Nonetheless, this does not mean that findings from the aggression literature can be blindly applied to female athletes. One should not suggest that the findings for male athletes can be generalized to female athletes because males and females have different cultural norms for behavior and therefore may approach, define and use aggression differently (Coulomb-Cabagno, Rascle, & Souchon, 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1986).

Unfortunately, despite sport psychologists' tremendous interest in aggression, little attention has been given to the cultural or contextual meanings attached to aggression or the possible link between aggression and self/identity. Specifically, no research has considered the unique context of women's collision sports or how women participating in collision sports define or experience aggression. Experience is important because, according to Denzin (1989), experience is the key to understanding a phenomenon. He suggests that if researchers want to understand a phenomenon we must understand other's experiences of that phenomenon. Without considering experience, we can know very little about how individuals interpret, understand and give meaning to aggression. This oversight makes the current research concerning females, collision sports and aggression limited. This dissertation expands the current sport psychology

literature in this realm by introducing symbolic interactionism as a way to investigate the link between identity and aggression in women's rugby.

<div align="center">Identity-Aggression Link</div>

From the sociological literature, we can conceptualize aggression as an expressive behavior that may be used in an athlete's construction of self and identity. However, sport psychology literature tends not to address the possible importance of aggression in the development of an athletic identity or gender identity. Instead, sport psychology perspectives focus on aggression as a *product* of an underlying coherent cognitive structure. With such a narrow focus the importance of self as a process is obscured. In order to better understand human behavior Blumer (1966, 1969) suggests looking at how behaviors are formed and given meaning(s) in and through interaction with self and others.

According to symbolic interactionism, we are interacting together (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Through such interactions, we are all actively negotiating meaning; how and what we take up as meaningful depends on how we define our self in a particular situation (Blumer, 1966, 1969). Therefore, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, I am interested in how aggression is picked up and used in order to convey meanings of self to others. The symbolic interactionist perspective coupled with the sociological literature concerning aggression indicate that understanding athletes' experiences of aggression and how they structure, define and reproduce those experiences relative to self/identity development, may contribute to our understanding of aggression in sport.

By incorporating self/identity into the investigation of aggression in sport we can challenge orthodox notions that human behavior is a predictable outcome of intrinsic factors. Using symbolic interactionism allowed me to understand humans as active and unpredictable actors within the sport context who continually interact and give meaning(s) to one another, themselves and their actions.

Putting it Together

Considering the forgoing research, this dissertation used ethnographic methods to investigate aggression and self/identity in women's rugby. Specifically this research addressed the link between aggression and self/identity to gain insight into women's experience within rugby. I chose rugby for three reasons. First, the experiences of female collision athletes are missing from sport psychology research concerning aggression. Second, aggression is a meaningful behavior within rugby culture that can signify one's legitimacy as a rugby player; however, aggression is also a meaningful behavior in that it symbolizes masculinity. Rugby has been defined as "everything masculine" (Schacht, 1996) and everything a woman should not be (Howe, 2003). Yet, despite its link to aggression and masculinity it remains one of the few collision sports open to female athletes (without rule modifications). Third, my own experiences in the sport of rugby made me curious about aggression, self/identity and unacceptable behavior in sports. As I read aggression literature and reflected upon my own involvement in rugby, I wondered how my experience of aggression in rugby could be produced, I wondered if my moral reasoning structure really was flawed or if there was another way to consider aggression. The more research I read, the more I felt alienated and othered. After a time, I realized it

was not the findings within the research that troubled me; it was the underlying

epistemology of that research. I realized that the research relied on a post-positivist

epistemology. Which is one way of looking at aggression in sport. All of these thoughts

combined and I was left wondering how women *experience* aggression in a context

where contradictory meanings *collide*.

In order to understand aggression as a lived experience, I conducted 12 semi-

structured interviews with female rugby players. The interviewees were selected from a

Midwestern collegiate-club rugby team called the Raptors and also represented 10

additional ruby teams. The designation "collegiate-club" indicated that the participants

were from both the university student population and local residents unaffiliated with the

university. The team was classified as a Division II (DII) rugby team. This classification

represented competitive teams that did not have the experience or organization to

compete at the very highest level which was Division I (DI).

In addition to interviews I also collected observations to aid in the contextualizing

of my interview data. In this regard, I did participant-observation. I played and continued

to play rugby with the Raptors throughout the course of this research. As Denzin (1989)

suggests, my own experiences helped me interpret and understand the experiences of the

women around me. The skill level, years of experience (0-14), age (18-45) and reasons

for participating (e.g., social or skill improvement) varied amongst team members and

interviewees. This team was also in a time of transition and often combined with another

local women's rugby team called the Poppers. To ensure a wide range of perspectives, I

recruited interview participants from both teams and conducted interviews throughout the

fall season (August-October). I chose to research the Raptors due to its proximity and my affiliation with the team as a long time participant.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand and explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they understand, define and structure those experiences relative to self/identity development in sport.

Research Questions

My research questions were as follows: (1) how do women define themselves as ruggers/how do they (re)produce these identities in and out of rugby, (2) how do women define and experience aggression, and (3) how are these accounts used in the construction of self/identity?

Lineout[1]: The Trajectory of this Project

This research is laid out more completely in the chapters that follow. In chapter two, I review the psychological and sociological approaches to aggression. I focus on the sport psychology aggression literature while utilizing developments in the sociological literature to critique the psychological perspective concerning sport aggression. Through this critique I highlight some limitations in the psychological literature thereby demonstrating how this project extends our understanding of aggression in sport. In chapter three, I propose symbolic interactionism as a new way of conceptualizing aggression and carrying out research in the realm of sport psychology. In this chapter I

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[1] The method of putting the ball back into play after it has gone out of bounds.

also explain how symbolic interactionism fits with and expands the sport psychology understanding of aggression in sport. Chapters two and three set the theoretical stage for my research which I introduce in chapter four. In this chapter I address ethnographic methodology and methods. In chapter four, I discuss the epistemological and methodological assumptions underlying ethnography and finish the chapter by detailing my research methods. In chapter five I report and discuss my results relative to the themes of pain, contact, aggression and gender. Lastly, in chapter six, I conclude the dissertation. In this chapter I summarize my findings, remark on major contributions made by this dissertation and provide future directions for this type of aggression research.

CHAPTER II
THE SIN BIN: SPORT AND AGGRESSION

This chapter summarizes and links both the sociological and psychological literature on sport aggression. First, I focus on presenting social learning theory (SLT) and moral reasoning theory (MRT). After an in depth look at the theories, I provide a review of the major research findings resulting from each theory. Next, I introduce a more critical approach to understanding aggression through the sport sociology literature. This chapter sets the stage for critically analyzing the term aggression while demonstrating the usefulness and appropriateness of introducing a new theoretical perspective into the study of aggression/unacceptable behavior.

Psychological Approach to Sport and Aggression

In the field of sport psychology, SLT and MRT are the dominant theories employed to study aggression as the intent to harm. In the following section, I introduce each theory and then review significant empirical findings concerning sport aggression from each theoretical perspective. I then problematize both theoretical perspectives utilizing developments within sport sociology literature to demonstrate the potential for an alternative conception of aggression to expand the current understanding of sport aggression in sport psychology. What follows next is a review and critique of both theories and the resulting literature.

Bo-Bo[2] Made Me: Review of Social Learning Theory

According to Bandura (1978), the raison d'être for acts of aggression is much more complex than simply inflicting pain and suffering upon another being due to an instinct or innate drive. Bandura suggests that social learning theory (Bandura, 1973, 1978) is one theory that can address the complexity of aggression. The theory can be used to explain not only the development and provocation of aggressive actions but also how and why such actions are sustained. In as far as Bandura is concerned the particular origins, instigators and regulators of aggression are of great importance. More specifically, there are three origins of aggression: observational learning, reinforced performance, and structural determinants.

Observational learning, as proposed by Bandura, is a demonstration process containing the following four stages: observation, retention, motor reproduction and motivation. As a result of moving through the four stages, individuals appropriate various social behaviors. For example, if a child is to learn an aggressive behavior they must first see (i.e., observe) a model perform that aggressive act. Once the action is seen, the child must then remember (i.e., retain) the aggressive act as well as the multifaceted context within which the act took place. Before the child can attempt to match her/his own behavior to the action of the model, the child must have the physical ability and coordination (i.e., motor reproduction) to mimic said aggressive act. Depending on the context, environmental cues, incentives and/or punishments associated with the

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[2] Reference to Bandura and Huston's (1961) seminal work in social learning theory. The research looked at children modeling adult aggressive behavior directed toward a five-foot inflatable 'Bobo' doll.

aggressive behavior, the child may or may not be motivated to model the aggressive behavior.

Bandura (1973, 1978) suggests that individuals learn aggressive behaviors through direct experience or observation of others acts and consequences. He goes on to explain that through observation individuals acquire large amounts of information without prolonged personal experience. Through watching one can learn both the specific reactions and more wide-ranging patterns of behavior. For Bandura, observation allows individuals to cultivate specialized behavioral strategies to deal with particular instances. Individuals collect observed behaviors and synthesize different models to create whole new patterns of behaving based upon perceived punishments and rewards.

According to Bandura (1978), aggression is modeled and reinforced most prominently through familial relations, subcultures and mass media. Aggression is dispersed through salient exemplars and is spread rapidly through many channels. Despite the different types of models and the diverse medium of their distribution, aggressive models display a particular type of action that can then be retained or discarded depending on the perceived import and/or value of behavior. Bandura proposes that modeling and reinforcement operate concurrently. "Styles of aggression are largely learned through observation, and refined through reinforced practice" (Bandura, 1978, p.16). In other words, aggressive acts are learned through observing the world around us. If we perceive those actions to be of value we will continue to use those behaviors to achieve a desired end. The kind and context of the aggressive act is often changed from

the original modeled behavior. These new styles and tactics of aggression are then reiterated as profitable solutions to different problems.

For Bandura (1978), the instigators of aggression (i.e., the reasons why people choose to aggress) are dependent on an individual's interpretation of their emotional arousal, the responses modeled as coping strategies and their ability to deal with the situation. This response is a choice among numerous models of response to which the individual has been exposed and his/her perceptions concerning the effectiveness of that behavior. Once aggression is used, its potential for continued use is related to various regulators. External reinforcement is one regulator of aggression. External reinforcement occurs when an individual aggresses and that behavior is commended through tangible rewards (e.g., trophies), reduction of pain or humiliation, victory, praise or status. Similarly, punishment consequences can also be used to regulate aggression. Individuals who perceive aggression as carrying a penalty too severe will abandon the aggressive model of behavior. However, this regulation becomes complicated when aggressive acts are glorified and imbued with considerable positive meaning in society. Punishment consequences can also increase the likelihood of aggression. Through socialization, individuals learn thst disobedience is punished. As such, individuals perceived to have legitimized power hold sway over our perceptions of aggressive acts. For example, a coach may demand that a player hurt an opponent under threat of punishment if the player refuses to do as the coach instructs.

Despite the origins, instigators, and regulator of aggression, Bandura (1973, 1978) accentuates self-regulation as a vital part in the choice to reproduce certain behaviors.

This self-regulation is primarily in the form of perceived rewards and punishments. Individuals tend to choose aggressive behavior where the anticipated rewards outweigh the anticipated punishments. Through socialization, members of particular cultures learn to obey cultural norms to receive rewards or risk being punished for being disobedient. Therefore, where aggression is the norm, violence is perceived as legitimate, justified and necessary (Bandura, 1978). So powerful are social norms that even if a punishment does exist for an aggressive behavior (e.g., penalties in hockey for fighting), an actor may still increase their social status among their peers through the use of aggression. It is also important to remember that not all actions of models are acceptable for all observers (e.g., what a male hockey player might do during the course of a game might not be acceptable for a female hockey player to do during the course of her game). In other words, individuals are not just machines responding uniformly to every stimulus; rather, individuals respond differently based on expected rewards and/or punishments they have learned to associate with certain modeled behaviors (Bandura, 1973, 1978). Despite the consideration of the social "impact" on behavior, SLT is primarily concerned with aggression as a product, an outcome of a set psychological structure.

Everyone Else Is: Sport Aggression as Learned Behavior

> *The Twelve Plays of Rugby*
>
> *On the twelfth play of rugby,*
> *My top foe gave to me*
> *Twelve sin-bin minutes*
> *Eleven bloody gashes*
> *Ten cleats a-raking*
> *Nine elbows flying*
> *Eight teeth a-gnashing*
> *Seven head concussions*

Six noses broken
Five high tackles
Four crushed ribs
Three kicked shins
Two fallen scrums
And a black eye from a fair play.
　　　(Baird, personal journal, 2007)

SLT has been used extensively in sport psychology to explain and better understand aggression in sport. Past research has suggested that athletes learn to be aggressive and are reinforced for such behavior by fans, parents, coaches, other athletes, team tactics, sport rules, role models, victory/success and media (Husman & Silva, 1984; Mugno & Feltz, 1985; Silva, 1983; Smith, 1974, 1978, 1979). Through all of these interactions, athletes learn that aggression is valued and celebrated in sport.

> Outside of wartime, sport is perhaps the only setting in which acts of interpersonal aggression are not only tolerated but enthusiastically applauded by large segments of society. It is interesting to consider that if the mayhem of the ring or gridiron were to erupt in a shopping mall, criminal charges would inevitably follow. However, under the umbrella of "sport," social norms and the laws specifying what constitutes acceptable conduct in society are temporarily suspended....[The official rules of sport] dictate the forms of aggression that are illegal (e.g., a low blow) and the conditions under which aggression is unacceptable (e.g., the late hit) (Russell, 1993, p. 181).

According to his work with elite male hockey players (ages 12-21), Smith (1975) asserts that aggression is a learned, socially sanctioned behavior that is normalized by the very institution of sport. By suggesting that aggression is a learned behavior, Smith simultaneously dispels the myth that aggression is an innate drive within people that is released through the cathartic experience of sport and that violence is inherent in the very nature of sport. Specifically, Smith (1978, 1979) points to the social organization of

hockey, mass media consumption, and parental influence as the three major determinates of aggression within hockey.

According to Smith (1978, 1979), one major determinant of aggression in hockey is the arbitrary link between aggression and success that is purported and reinforced by the organization of hockey. Smith's research claims that hockey institutionally encourages the athletes participating in the sport to use aggressive tactics in order to be successful in the sport (Smith, 1975, 1978, 1979). For example, athletes who want to advance to junior professional or professional hockey are judged and given opportunities to advance in the sport based on their ability to both give and take violent acts (Smith, 1979). As such, aggression is a behavior that is rewarded by advancement to professional ranks in the sport of hockey.

Furthermore, Smith (1979) discusses how sport media influence athletes' tendency to aggress. He reports that media often convey fighting and violence as desirable and acceptable actions within hockey. This portrayal of fights and the celebration of certain violent athletes lionizes and condones violence in the sport of hockey. In a study of 12-21 year old hockey players and non-players, Smith (1978) investigated how much professional hockey was watched and/or read by hockey players and non-players. He found that 53 percent of players and 39 percent of non-players read about hockey in magazines, newspapers, or books at least once a week. Furthermore, 70 percent of players and 60 percent of non-players watched television coverage of hockey at least once a week. Interestingly, Smith (1978) also found that the athletes tended to use aggressive and illegal acts they learned by watching hockey game coverage at least once

or twice. In his study of 83 high school hockey players, Smith (1974) found that athletes who identified "rough and tough" players as their favorites committed more assaultive penalties throughout the season than did their peers who selected less violent players as their favorites. From the social learning perspective, these findings indicated that youth hockey players learn aggression and model their behavior after mediated sport images.

In a similar investigation, Mugno & Feltz (1985) supported Smith's claims concerning the impact of sport environments (as depicted in media) on athletes' willingness to aggress. In their study of youth football, Mugno and Feltz (1985) found that there was a positive correlation between the amount and type of aggressive and/or illegal acts learned from mediated coverage of football and the players' use of aggressive and/or illegal acts. It is also important to note that this correlation did not differ across high school and youth league age groups. According to their research, youth football players tended to consume more mediated football than non-playing peers. As such, the players learned more aggressive and/or illegal acts and also tended to justify those aggressive behaviors more than non-players (Mugno & Feltz, 1985). In short, from the social learning perspective, media portrayal of aggressive and violent behaviors reinforces those behaviors as legitimate behavioral responses within the context of sport. This portrayal allows aggressive behaviors to be learned and internalized for later use by the observer when faced with negotiating similar sporting situations.

In addition to the organization of hockey and media coverage, Smith (1979) identifies significant others as important determinants of aggression in sport (i.e., hockey). For Smith (1979), the coach, other players, and parents are the most influential

individuals as they help orient the athletes to their sport culture and guide them to action

by advocating particular behaviors, norms, and values. First, coaches can encourage

aggressive behavior by utilizing violence as a symbol of hard work, dedication, desire,

and character. Coaches also demonstrate their approval of aggressive behavior by

choosing more violent players over less violent players and also giving those players

status upon the team (e.g., "the enforcer," "the hit man"). Next, other players contribute

largely to the attitudes on the team. Smith (1979) emphasizes the role of aggression in

gaining and maintaining respect of other players (i.e., the players on the team know that

the other players look down on those individuals unwilling to stand up and fight for a

teammate). Lastly, Smith (1979) speaks to the role of parents. Parents are influential in

their reinforcement of aggressive behavior during the game and parents are also

incredibly significant in teaching athletes particular gender roles (long before they ever

set skate on the ice).

Throughout his research, Smith (1975, 1978, 1979) demonstrates the importance

of identifying the multiple social influences affecting aggression. However, SLT limits

how one can conceptualize those influences. Although SLT looks at social influences,

how those influences can be understood is limited by the theory's underlying post-

positivist epistemology. Within SLT there is little room to conceptualize aggression as

more than a product. Due to its principal assumptions, SLT cannot be used to consider

aggression as a process where meaning(s) have been (re)created and reiterated through

media coverage, coaches, and other players. In order to look at how dominant discourses

of aggression are negotiated and (re)produced in ways that naturalize male aggression

and therefore male superiority in any activity believed to be inherently aggressive, a more post-structuralist theory should be used. Ultimately, within SLT, social contexts are conceptualized as *factors* influencing individuals' cognitive processes. Despite addressing the context of sport, SLT does not look beyond the self regulatory processes within the individual that "produce" aggression. For example, though Smith (1975, 1978, 1979) talks about the institution of sport and the importance of others in understanding aggression, SLT does not allow him to look at *how* aggression is experienced, defined, negotiated or lived in and through interactions with others.

Despite its shortcomings, SLT has maintained popularity in sport psychology as a theory to investigate how aggressive behavior is produced and what stimuli provoke and sustain aggressive behavior (Bandura, 1978). As such, many researchers have tried to identify various factors that are related to aggression. Much of this research works to isolate variables as predictors of aggression. As a result, considerable amounts of sport psychology literature concerning aggression can be categorized based upon which factors are being studied. Therefore, as I review this literature I will rely on a categorical representation of this information; however, this categorization is capricious. Nonetheless, SLT has used these classifications to yield important results. This research has focused on success, experience, level of contact, and gender as the major determinants of aggression.

Success. Sport psychologists and sociologists both recognize that success in sport is often, albeit arbitrarily, linked to aggression. From the sociological perspective this "common sense" notion is examined as a discourse that reinforces the naturalness of male superiority in sport by linking success to characteristics ideologically bound to male

bodies (Burgess et al., 2003; Messner, 1992, 2002; Theberge, 2000). Conversely, sport psychology literature attempts to investigate the "validity" of the relationship between success and aggression.

In their study of 32 male professional hockey teams, Widmeyer and Birch (1984) were unable to confirm the notion that there is a positive relationship between aggression and success in sport. They actually were unable to report a positive or negative relationship between aggression and success. The researchers stated that their findings may have been ambiguous due, in part, to the possibility that two different relationships between success and aggression were canceling each other out. They found a positive relationship between aggression and success when aggression occurred early in a game or in the season; however, a negative relationship between aggression and success occurred when aggression occurred late in a game or in the season. The researchers speculated that high levels of aggression occurring early in the game/season were related to success because aggression was viewed, by the aggressors, as a means to attain success. The researchers went on to suggest that aggression was negatively related to success late in the game/season because athletes were using aggression as retaliation for losing or high point differential.

Related to the notion of aggression as a strategy for success, aggression has also been perceived to be a mediator in "home court advantage." In a study of the 1987-1988 NHL professional hockey season, McGuire, Courney, Widmeyer and Carron (1992), found that home teams aggressed (i.e., had more aggressive penalties called against them) more in games they won whereas visiting teams aggressed more in games they lost.

Despite the common perception that aggression is positively related to success the researchers were also unable to illustrate that correlation. However, in Sheldon and Aimar's (2001) investigation of successful and unsuccessful moments following or preceding aggressive acts in 11 National Hockey League games, it was found that there was a relationship between aggression and success. They used this finding to support social learning theory and proposed that successes following an aggressive act function as reinforcement for the aggressive act thus leading to more aggressive acts.

In a study looking at male baseball players and female softball players from both high school and community college, Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, and Bostrom (1995) found that being on a winning team was related to increased perceptions of teammates' and coaches' willingness to aggress. However, Kirker and colleagues (2000) suggest that playing on a losing team contributed to the elevated aggression levels they found among the hockey players they researched.

Regardless of the accuracy in the relationship between aggression and success, Smith (1978, 1979), points out that some sport institutions and teams position the most aggressive players as the most successful athletes. This reinforces the arbitrary link between success and aggression. Consequently, aggression can be viewed, by some, as a way to win. Sport psychology research suggests that teams which emphasize the importance of obtaining victory, whatever the cost (i.e., win-at-all-costs attitude), normalize aggression as a viable tool to achieve success (Duda, Olson, & Templin, 1991; Dunn & Dunn, 1999; Rascle & Coulomb, 2003; Shields et al., 1995).

Sport psychology investigations of the relationship between aggression and teams with a win-at-all-costs attitude have utilized goal orientation theory (Nicholls, 1984, 1989). Goal orientation is a motivational theory that identifies two goal orientations differentiated by definitions of success. On one hand, task orientation or being involved in a task oriented motivational climate means individuals perceive task mastery, learning or improvements as markers of success. On the other hand, ego orientation or being involved in an ego oriented motivational climate means that individuals perceive victory, dominating others, and winning as markers of success. A team with a win-at-all-costs attitude is typically described as an ego oriented motivational climate.

Dunn and Dunn (1999) investigated 143 elite Canadian male youth hockey players' perceptions of aggression, goal orientation, and sportspersonship. According to the researchers, ego environments tended to have increased endorsement of aggression. It was suggested that ego environments endorsed aggression because such environments emphasize winning or dominating one's opponent. Ego orientation was also tied to the use of injurious acts by Duda and colleagues (1991) in their investigation of goal orientation and the welfare of others. In their study of high school male and female basketball players they found that athletes with high ego and low task orientation were more likely to endorse aggressive conduct (Duda et al., 1991). Similarly, in their analysis of male rugby players, Todd and Hodge (2001) found that higher levels of ego orientation coupled with lower levels of task predisposed individuals to justify aggressive behaviors.

Shields and colleagues (1995) also used this notion of winning-at-all-costs as the explanation for why they found teams with high task cohesion (i.e., a group's tendency to

stick together and remain united around the task that defines the group) to have higher levels of aggression than teams with high social cohesion (i.e., a group's tendency to stick together and remain united as a social group). They suggest that task cohesion might be related to aggression because obtaining victory, rather than developing relationships and/or friendships, is seen as more important in a task cohesive group. Moreover, Rascle and Coulomb (2003), in an investigation of teenaged male handball players, found that team motivational climates have more influence over one's likelihood to aggress than one's own goal orientation. That is, participation on a team with a win-at-all-cost attitude is a powerful predictor of an individual's belief about the importance of winning.

According to SLT, this means that athletes learn and are rewarded for their aggressive acts from their own teammates and coaches. Furthermore, success is used as a reward that can, in some cases, encourage the use of aggression. Though these researchers are looking at the influences of team norms, the understanding of how these members interact is limited by SLT. From this perspective, teammates, coaches and group norms are stimuli that evoke similar aggressive responses from athletes in that situation. According to the sociological literature, this is a fairly limited understanding of the relationship between aggression and success.

According to sport sociology research, the association of aggression to success in sport, regardless of its *truth*, can be viewed as a powerful ideology that reinforces the naturalness of male superiority in sport. This association between aggression and success suggests that an individual must be aggressive in order to be perceived as a real, good or successful athlete (Bryson, 1994; Messner, 1992, 2002; Theberge, 2000). As such,

aggressive acts of dominating one's opponent become valued and revered athletic self

stories. Athletes may therefore use, interpret, understand and experience aggression as a

means of self/identity development. However, this view is not without gender

implications, as aggression is also linked specifically to males (Messner, 1992, 2002).

This linkage suggests that male aggression is a natural/normal occurrence and should be

dismissed as human nature (Messner, 1992, 2002). This naturalized ideological

connection between males, aggression and sport leads to the taken for granted notions

that male athletes are naturally superior to female athletes (Howe, 2001; Messner, 1992,

2002; Theberge, 2000; Wright & Clarke, 1999), that aggression is a natural part of sport

(Bryson, 1987; Burgess et al., 2003) and that the most aggressive sports are the most

legitimate sports (Messner, 2002).

These ideologies are problematic as they privilege aggression as an admirable and

necessary quality in sport and, in so doing, other female athletes. In other words, males

are portrayed as naturally superior athletes because they are naturally more aggressive

than females. Armed with the knowledge that aggression is valued in sport, female

athletes may use aggressive behaviors to move from that subordinate position and claim

legitimacy as athletes (Theberge, 2000; Young & White, 1995). These behaviors, though

they challenge hegemonic notions of what a female is able to do, further naturalize

aggression as necessary for athletic success.

From this we can see that aggression can be understood as a symbol of both

masculinity and athleticism. To this point, sport psychology has not yet considered the

importance of aggression as a symbol. What's more, sport psychology literature has not

considered *how* individuals experience, give meaning to or use aggression. This is problematic, especially when we consider the possible unique aggression experiences of female athletes. As a symbol of superior athletic ability and simultaneously, masculinity, aggression can be a potentially conflicting part of a female athlete's self story. Given that aggression is constructed as both a gender taboo and sport requisite, female athletes may structure, define and experience aggression in ways unexplored thus far in the literature. Therefore considering how female athletes experience, use, give meaning to and interpret the many seemingly contradictory meanings of aggression and incorporate them into their notion of self/identity can expand our understanding of aggression in sport psychology.

Age/experience. In addition to looking at the relationship between success and aggression, sport psychology uses SLT to understand the relationship between experience level and aggression. In general, the research in this realm indicates that the longer individuals are involved in a sport, the more likely they are to use aggression (Loughead & Leith, 2001; Mintah et al., 1999; Rascle, Coulomb, & Pfister, 1998; Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, & Bostrom, 1995; Visek & Watson, 2005)

In their study of high school and college aged baseball and softball players, Shields et al., (1995) considered the relationship between perceptions of unfair play and leadership, cohesion, and demographic information (i.e., age, experience, gender). They found that age, year in school and years of playing experience were all positively related to perceptions of team norms to aggress. The older the athlete and the more involved in their sport they became the more likely they were to perceive their teammates and coach as willing to aggress. Similarly, despite their primary interest in level of contact as a

determinant of aggression, Mintah and colleagues (1999) found aggression and justification for aggression was positively correlated with age.

More so than age, experience level has been shown to be related to an athlete's tendency to aggress. Loughead and Leith (2001) investigated youth male hockey players' (ages 10-15) experience levels and their relationship to perceptions of aggression and coaches aggression. The more advanced the players became; the more likely they were to agree with the use of hostile aggression. Visek and Watson (2005) also studied the relationship between different levels of male hockey participation (youth, high-school, college and professional) and the legitimacy of using aggressive behaviors. They anticipated that as level of participation increased there would be an increase in aggression. This was supported in the research. Additionally, they found that athletes participating at all levels felt that aggression was more acceptable at higher levels. Rascle, Coulomb, and Pfister (1998) found this to also be true for handball players. The researchers investigated the relationships among ego environment, level of sport participation and aggression. They considered level of participation as a way to consider how long someone has been involved in sport, how dedicated they were to sport, and how socialized they were into the sport sub-culture. According to their analysis of league (highly competitive) and physical education (PE)(non-competitive) handball players, PE participants tended to aggress less than league players on both hostile and instrumental aggression. These findings support SLT by suggesting that the longer athletes stay in sport, the more exposure they have to acts of aggression and the more likely they are to incorporate those actions into their own play.

Coulomb-Cabagno and Rascle (2006) also offer support to SLT in their study of male and female handball and soccer players. The researchers investigated the relationship between level of play, gender and aggression. They found, as did the previous studies, that as individuals increase level of play, they also increase their use of aggressive behavior. They also found males more likely to aggress than females. Furthermore, this study revealed an interesting interaction between gender and level of competition. As level of competition increased the differences in aggression between males and females became smaller. The researchers speculated that gender socialization might explain this interaction. They note that because aggression is considered a male behavior and is not socially acceptable for females, the costs for performing aggression are a little different for men and women. As such, the researchers suggested that as female athletes become more elite they are more willing to use aggression, regardless of social norms, in efforts to achieve success in their sport. Conversely, female athletes at a recreational level would be less likely to utilize aggression because the consequences for breaking social norms outweigh the potential benefit on their sport performance. Coulomb-Cabagno and Rascle (2006) suggest that in order to move the field forward, in terms of understanding aggression in sport, more work must be done to understand how female athletes might be experiencing aggression in ways which are different from male athletes. It is my hope that by (re)conceptualizing aggression from a post-structuralist perspective focused on understanding lived experience, I may extend this discussion of aggression in sport and contribute another way of understanding how female athletes define, experience, and structure aggression in sport.

Contrary to these findings that support SLT, Loughead and Leith (2001) found that the lowest experience level (in their study) was more willing to use instrumental aggression than the two higher levels. The researchers suggested that this might be due to the younger athletes trying to make up for lack of skill. Similarly, Shields and colleagues (1995) found that non-starters, more than starters, perceived their teammate's actions to be aggressive and therefore were more likely to aggress. To explain the higher levels of aggression found among nonstarters, the researchers proposed that the non-starters were overestimating the actions of the starters and thus perceived aggression as more important. These findings are unexpected from the social learning perspective. According to SLT, researchers should expect that individuals with more experience (e.g., starters or more advanced players) to have higher levels of perceived aggression.

According to Donnelly and Young (1988), these types of oversimplifications or "mistakes" concerning the perceived importance of behaviors are common in new group members attempting to construct themselves as group members. They suggest that new members to groups often attempt to deliberately use group characteristics they perceive as important in their own identity development. In this effort, however, many new members misunderstand group characteristics and end up evoking behaviors that further communicate their novice status. For example, in rugby culture, it is customary for an athlete to perform a "Zulu[3]" after scoring their first try in a league game. A Zulu is a rite

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[3] Rugby terminology such as Zulu, Haka, sir, eight-man, and whore indicate the larger socio-cultural and historical context surrounding the game of rugby. Understanding and using this language can position a participant as a "real" part of rugby culture but also acts to recall/evoke the larger socio-historical context of the game.

of passage where the try scoring player removes their clothes in a public venue while the rest of the team serenades the player with the "Zulu Warrior" song. This is typically done with a naked lap around the match field but can also occur at rugby houses or in a local pub. Donnelly and Young (1988) found that some rookie rugby players were aware of the Zulu ritual, misinterpreted the meaning of it and did unsolicited Zulus. In an effort to secure their rugby identity, these athletes further communicated their status as rookies to the veteran rugby players. These types of misunderstandings are, according to Donnelly and Young (1988) part of the ongoing negotiation of identity in a sport context. Given this information, we see the interrelationship between athletic identity and aggression. This connection can be used to explain some of the unexpected findings previously mentioned and indicates the potential usefulness of considering the relationship between aggression and identity.

Level of Contact & Gender. To date, the research in sport psychology indicates that level of contact influence one's tendency to aggress. According to Silva (1983) athletes involved in high contact/collision sports perceive aggression as legitimate more than athletes involved in lower contact sports (e.g., soccer, basketball, and baseball). Many researchers have taken up this line of inquiry to investigate a link between sport type and aggression.

Kirker and colleagues (2000) investigated factors related to aggression in an attempt to identify determinants of aggression across two different contact levels. The study was conducted to assess which factors increase the likelihood of aggression while interrogating instances of hostile and instrumental aggression. In an attempt to examine

sport specific findings, basketball and hockey were compared. It was assumed that the severity, frequency and type of aggression were different in basketball and hockey. Two male basketball and two male hockey games were filmed and later coded in terms of observable aggressive acts.

In discussing their findings, the researchers found that hockey had more instances of aggression than basketball and that those acts were more severe. The normalization of aggression in hockey was suggested as a possible explanation for why hockey had greater incidence and severity of aggression than in basketball. That is to say, hockey has more aggressive models positively reinforced for aggressive behaviors than basketball. The researchers concluded that collision sport athletes use aggression more than non-contact athletes. On a more specific note, concurrent with Smith's (1975, 1978, 1979) findings, the authors argue that hockey, more so than other sports, supports aggressive behavior.

In their study of 85 Division I AA male athletes, Mintah and colleagues (1999) also explored aggression differences between contact and semi-contact sports. Football and wrestling were categorized as contact sports while soccer and basketball were classified as semi-contact sports. Mintah et al. (1999) found that athletes in semi-contact sports (basketball and soccer) disagree more with the use of hostile aggression than athletes in contact and collision sports (football & wrestling). Despite the statistical non-significance of this finding, the researchers used it to explain the significant difference between semi-contact and contact sports in their agreement to use instrumental aggression. Semi-contact athletes agreed more with the use of instrumental aggression than contact athletes. This finding was not expected and was somewhat difficult to

explain from a social learning perspective. The authors speculated that the athletes involved in contact sports experience more forceful acts of aggression more often and therefore did not view instrumental aggression as sufficient or beneficial. In other words, the contact athletes gained more rewards using hostile aggression than instrumental aggression. Consequently, they viewed hostile aggression as more legitimate while the semi-contact athletes found instrumental aggression valuable. This explanation relies on a distinction between hostile and instrumental aggression based upon severity; however, the distinction made between hostile and instrumental aggression, according to sport psychology research, is in the desired result of the aggressive act. Hostile aggression is the intent to harm for the sake of hurting another player while instrumental aggression is the intent to harm to achieve another goal.

Mintah et al., (1999) consider differing experiences of aggression as revealing of contact athletes' differing views on instrumental aggression. They suggest that contact athletes might see intentionally harming another player to gain an advantage, score, or prevent their opponent from gaining an advantage as part of their sport which needs no justification. This assertion indicates that contact athletes might experience, define and use aggression in different ways than semi-contact athletes. However, sport psychology literature has not yet considered how individuals might experience aggression in different ways.

Furthermore, sport psychology research concerning aggression tends to classify sports based on commonalties perceive between sports. These types of classifications lead to generalizations suggesting that all athletes within that classification define or

experience aggression similarly. Tucker and Parks (2001) acknowledge that classifications such as contact and non-contact are capricious and problematic. Classifications of this sort arbitrarily group sports that may have vastly different discourses concerning aggression. This can then lead researchers to assume that each sport within that classification (and consequently each athlete within that sport) will experience, define, and use aggression in the same way.

This assumption obscures the importance of sport subcultures. Each sport has its own ethos regarding aggression which can affect how players of that sport understand, define and experience aggression (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b) and yet sport cultures are not examined. For example, the sociological literature suggests that in men's rugby aggression is used to maintain legitimate definitions of self as dedicated players and "real men" (Burgess et al., 2003; Schacht, 1996). That is to say, aggression is a valued characteristic in rugby. As such, Schacht (1996) found that male rugby players use aggression to secure their rugby identity and evaluate the worth of other rugby players. In some cases violent acts against others and against oneself, are lauded and recounted as exemplars of what it means to be a good rugby player (Schacht, 1996). This research suggests that the use of aggression may have more to do with the dominant discourse concerning aggression negotiated and (re)produced within that sport than the level of physical contact permitted by the rules of the game. The implications of this notion suggest that a sport such as rugby, where the meanings of the sport are told through aggressive stories, may permit for very unique experiences of aggression. What is more,

immersed in such a subculture, female ruggers may express themselves through aggression in ways unique to that subculture.

In addition to obnubilating the importance of distinct sport cultures, these classifications can also lead researchers to overlook important nuances in the study of aggression. For example, Kirker and colleagues (2000) did not include individual sports in their study because, according to the researchers, "aggression seems to have no place in certain individual sports" (p. 374). This statement is based on the notion that individual sports have less aggression than team sports because of limited body contact. The underlying assumption here is that physical aggression is the only type of aggression that occurs. The privileging of physical aggression in the literature is troubling as it may be one explanation for aggression differences between contact and non-contact sports. For example, US Olympic swimmer Van Dyken, is known for her pre-race antics. Van Dyken, a commanding six foot tall woman, will grunt, spit into the opponents' lane or stick her tongue out to distract and demoralize her competitors just seconds before the start of a race (Harris, S. May 28, 2000). However, this type of behavior is typically overlooked in the sport psychology aggression literature.

In focusing only on physical aggression, sport psychology literature privileges physical aggression as the most important form of aggression. In so doing, the sport psychology literature ignores multiple means of defining, experiencing, and using unacceptable behavior in sport. This omission may also contribute to some gender differences reported in the sport psychology literature. Researchers have suggested that females are more likely to use verbal, emotional, self or relational aggression than

physical aggression (Gladue, 1991; Keeler, 2007; Lenzi et al., 1997; Storch et al., 2003).

This suggests that gender differences in sport aggression may be more a product of form

than magnitude (Lenzi et al., 1997).

Moreover, according to Messner (2002) physical violence against another athlete

is only a small part of a vast array of violent actions that can be used to secure legitimacy

as an athlete. Messner (2002) focuses on different forms of male violence that contribute

to the ideological "center of sport." It is the center of sport that is privileged as the most

legitimate. According to Messner (2002), a "triad of male violence" works to secure an

individual's claim to legitimacy in sport while simultaneously sustaining dominant

ideologies about the nature of *real* sports and athletes. It is important to note that though

Messner (2002) highlights for us the importance of looking at different types of male

violence, we are still focusing on males. This is problematic as it positions male violence

as "violence" without considering what the female perspective might include (which

inadvertently maintains the center Messner is working to deconstruct). We do not know

how females do or experience violence outside of mimicking male violence.

In addition to the limits of SLT and problematic reliance on categorization of

sports, sport psychology research concerning the relationship between level of contact

and aggression has relied almost exclusively on male samples. More recently, however,

scholars have begun to consider gender differences related to level of contact and

aggression.

In general sport psychology literature from the social learning perspective has

investigated gender as a determinant of aggression. Bredemeier and colleagues (1986)

incorporate social learning theory, despite the researchers' moral reasoning perspective to explain differences in likelihood to aggress among boys and girls depending on sport type. This investigation utilized both boys and girls in its sample of 106 fourth, fifth, and sixth/seventh grade athletes. These athletes were studied as to how sport involvement and interest in high, medium, or low contact sports were related to moral reasoning maturity and tendency to aggress. Of primary interest here is that the researchers explored the gender, sport type and school level interaction as related to one's tendency to aggress.

First, the research indicated that boys participated in high contact sports more than girls but the researchers recognized that this finding reflects social norms surrounding gender roles. They suggested that social institutions make it difficult for girls to either access high contact sports or identify with role models in high contact sports. According to SLT, models who are more like the observer have more of an effect on the performance of said observer. Consequently, because high contact sport models tend to be male athletes, boys would be influenced more than girls by male role models. This was indicated in the finding that boys endorsed physical and non-physical aggression more than girls. This difference was discussed in terms of possible disparities between girls and boys concerning the meaning of aggression. The researchers suggested that because boys participated in sports with higher levels of contact, their threshold for aggressive actions might be higher than the girls who had less exposure to "aggressive" actions.

Shields et al. (1995) suggest that, due to exposure to this higher level of contact and legitimation of aggression, male coaches may influence their female athletes to be

more aggressive. They found that female athletes with male coaches were more likely to perceive their teammates and coaches as willing to aggress than female athletes with female coaches. Socialization was used to explain this finding. Specifically, the researchers claim that the male coaches come from sport experience dominated by the male model of sport, a model that condones cheating and aggression. Through their own experiences and socialization into sport these coaches learned the important sport norms and values (concerning aggressing) and passed them on to their players. On the other hand, female athletes might not be exposed at that same level to the male model of sport and thereby not be apt to teach their athletes that aggression/cheating is important.

Sport psychology research suggests that the relationship between gender and aggression is important, yet we know little more than that males tended to be more likely to aggress than females (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Shields et al., 1995). In an effort to look more specifically at the relationship between gender, sport type and aggression, Tucker and Parks (2001) studied 162 division I male and female college athletes across sport types. While controlling for gender, the researchers found that collision athletes condone aggression more than contact or non-contact athletes. When gender differences were considered across sport type, the biggest differences emerged in non-contact sports. According to the authors, males generally tended to aggress more than females; however, that difference was highest in magnitude when they looked at non-contact sports. Males and females competing in collision/contact sports were more similar than males and females competing in a non-contact sport. These findings suggest that there are not only gender differences, but there are also differences within genders when sport form is

considered. Tucker and Parks (2001) explain that these differences between and within genders might be due to the number of social influences to which female athletes are exposed. Females competing in collision sports might be more influenced by team/sport norms while non-contact female athletes are more influenced by social norms.

Moreover, Coulomb-Cabagno and Rascle (2006) found that gender and experience level also interacted with level of contact around aggressive behavior. Their findings also suggest that gender difference in aggression changes depending on sport form. Because of this, Coulomb-Cabagno and Rascle (2006) propose a double conflict for female athletes competing in traditionally male dominated sports at an elite level. They suggests that these athletes are caught between gender stereotypes and sport norms

More recently, Keeler (2007) compared male and female aggression scores in the same sports and contact levels. This investigation compared aggression scores for male and female rugby (collision), soccer (contact) and volleyball (non-contact) participants. Contrary to past research which investigated differences between males and females in terms of levels of aggression, this research found that males and females did not differ across sport type. In other words, as females engage in the same level of contact and have similar sport experience to males, their levels of aggression become more similar to men's levels of aggression. However, this study cautions researchers not to think that males and females approach collision sports and aggression the same way. Toward that end, they found that females aggress differently than males; females tend to use more indirect hostility than males. Keeler (2007) thus expresses the importance of trying to

understand the different ways in which males and females approach, use and give meaning to aggression/unacceptable behavior.

These findings are compelling, but remain, for the most part, unexplored in the sport psychology literature. However, the sociological perspective indicates that these findings regarding sport type and gender may be related to self/identity development. According to Young and White (1995) and Theberge (2000), females competing in traditionally male dominated sports, such as those sports typically classified as contact or collision, can utilize aggression to claim authenticity in a social sphere that privileges male bodies. Some female athletes go so far as to distance themselves from their female identity because they feel that being perceived as a woman in sport detracts from their athletic identity (Scranton et al., 1999). This research indicates that aggression may play a role in the development and negotiation of particular sport identities and should therefore be explored in order to gain further knowledge about how aggression is experienced.

Summary of Social Learning Sport Aggression Literature

In summary, the research concerning aggression from a social learning perspective suggests that there is a relationship between age, experience level, gender, level of contact and aggression. Older and more experienced athletes are believed to demonstrate higher levels of aggression due to the length of time they have been exposed to sport cultures that positively reinforce aggression (Shields et al., 1995). Higher levels of contact tend to be related to higher levels of aggression than lower levels of contact because aggression is normalized in high contact sports (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Kirker, et al., 2000; Mintah et al., 1999). Also, male athletes are believed to have higher levels of

aggression because they have more aggressive role models and masculine gender norms do not proscribe the use of aggression (Bredemeier, 1994; Bredemeier et al., 1986; Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006; Shields et al., 1995; Tucker & Parks, 2001). We also know that the relationship between gender and aggression is not a simple relationship. Research indicates that gender differences are affected by sport type (Keeler, 2007; Tucker & Parks, 2001) and level of participation (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006).

Though all of the above notions are supported by research, the previously reviewed literature, when considered with sport sociology research, also indicates that the sport psychology literature may benefit from looking at aggression as a behavior that can be used in one's athletic and gender identity development.

This is, however, only one piece of the aggression puzzle. In sport psychology research, the other major theory used to understand aggression in sport is MRT. SLT suggests that aggression is a learned behavior. Theorists using MRT also agree that aggression is a learned behavior, but only to a point. Researchers using a moral reasoning perspective suggest that atmospheres that teach aggression as legitimate, prized behavior are environments that encourage lower levels of moral reasoning. Aggression thus becomes a behavioral outcome of a lower level of moral reasoning. This perspective assumes that aggression has a universal moral meaning for all individuals. Therefore the choice to engage in aggressive behavior is a moral choice and is therefore illustrative of one's level of moral reasoning. Let us now look at MRT, the other major theory used in sport psychology research to investigate aggression.

Heinz[4] and Hypothetical Harm: Overview of MRT

Moral reasoning research in sport psychology focuses primarily on individuals'

interpretive responses to environmental circumstances. This structural developmental

model proposes that the structure of an individual's reasoning, rather than its content, can

give the researcher insight into individual psychological development (Kohlberg, 1969).

In other words, researchers in this area are primarily concerned with "how" people think

about moral issues rather than what they think. Though there are many theories that

investigate moral reasoning, Kohlberg's and Haan's perspectives of moral reasoning are

the most widely used perspective in sport aggression research. Kohlberg (1969, 1981)

and Haan (1978) both suggest that morals are inherent cognitive structures that are more

fully developed over time. In this way, structural development is singular, stable,

hierarchical, and *universal*. The assumption is that there is *a* moral way of thinking, that

it is developed in the same way in every person, and that moral thinking *matures* toward

an "ideal" way of thinking.

From Whence the Research Came

Kohlberg (1969) suggests that moral reasoning is innate and utilized in moral

situations when moral issues are being addressed. Kohlberg (1969) is careful in

distinguishing between moral issues and other "non-moral" issues. He defines moral

issues as a situation where one's universal rights impinge on another's claim to those

same rights. Non-moral issues, on the other hand, are behaviors and/or actions that do not

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[4] Heinz is one of the protagonists in the hypothetical moral dilemmas developed by Kohlberg to test moral reasoning

impinge on another's human rights. Social regulations are arbitrary when considering morality. Kohlberg (1969) also suggested that morally mature individuals are able to pick out, from relatively ambiguous environmental information, the "correct" way to behave. In this way, it can be seen that Kohlberg (1969) is assuming a singular "true" moral way of being and/or thinking.

According to Kohlberg (1969), the four orientations used to handle moral conflict are normative order, consequence, justice, and ideal-self. For Kohlberg, justice is the best and only orientation that will lead us to *the* moral principles of liberty, equality, reciprocity and impartiality. Justice orientation holds "universal" human rights as the logic of moral reasoning. Kohlberg provides a three level, six stag, model for moral development which he proposed as *the* path of all humans to achieve justice principled behavior. According to the theory, individuals progress one stage at a time, in order, from a lower level of moral reasoning to a higher level of moral reasoning.

The six stages are divided into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. The pre-conventional level of moral development is primarily egocentric and made up of two stages. Stage one is heteronomous orientation; avoiding punishment is the primary concern for reasoning about moral behavior at this stage. Stage two is individualism; reasoning at this stage is an attempt to meet one's own needs first. The conventional level of moral development is characterized by living up to social expectations and is made up of stages three and four. Stage three is the interpersonal concordance orientation and resolution of moral conflict is based on fulfilling expectations. Stage four is social system orientation. At this stage the individual works to

maintain social order or they fulfill a duty. The post-conventional level is typified by behaviors that are chosen for the greater good. In this level, Kohlberg believes that individuals are coming to realize justice as the "one" moral guidepost. Stage five and six are in the Post-conventional level. Stage five, social contract, includes reasoning that is mindful of relative points of view and that upholds values even if they run contrary to the majority. Stage six, universal ethical principle orientation, is governed by abstract and/or ethical notions of what is good.

According to Kohlberg (1969) these stages are in a universal, invariant and progressive sequence. Kohlberg (1969) felt that these stages were context-independent as the moral of justice did not change depending on context. He acknowledged that experience and teaching can speed up or slow down movement through but cannot change the order of the developmental stages. Eventually, movement through these levels will lead one to discover the universal moral principle of justice (Kavathatzopoulous, 1991; Kohlberg, 1969).

In addition to the stages of development, Kohlberg explains that moral development, moral judgment, and moral conduct are all related, but discrete constructs. Moral development is how we develop through the aforementioned stages. Moral conduct is the form of action arising from moral judgment. However, there is not a direct link between moral reasoning and moral action. Deonitic and responsibility reasoning are mediating judgments in the thought-action relationship. Deonitic judgment is doing what is right based on duty or law. Responsibility judgment is a situational decision where one

considers what is expected. In this way one's moral actions do not necessarily indicate a level of moral reasoning.

According to Higgins, Power, and Kohlberg (1984) every institution, group and structure profoundly influences individual moral judgments by creating a particular moral atmosphere. At times the moral atmosphere can become more important than individual levels of moral reasoning (Higgins et al,1984).

To measure moral reasoning, Kohlberg uses hypothetical moral dilemmas. In response to the many shortcomings surrounding hypothetical scenarios, Haan theorized that morality was achieved through dialogue and therefore could not be measured through hypothetical scenarios. Haan (1978) proposed that because moral dilemmas arise in and about interpersonal relationships, that moral maturity is building fair moral solutions through moral dialogue. In this respect, she suggests that context is very important in considering moral reasoning. To Haan, moral reasoning is negotiating moral actions through moral dialogue. In Haan's theory of moral reasoning, moral action is defined as any action that threatens one's welfare as a human-being. Moral balance is the mutual agreement about the rights and obligations of self and others. Moral balance can be upset when disagreements arise concerning the negotiation of one's own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of another. Moral dialogue is the resolution of that conflict.

Any human interaction, direct or indirect, that negotiates a moral balance between two or more individuals is considered a moral dialogue (Haan, 1978). Individuals use moral dialogue to countervail conflict. Despite the connotation of the name, not all moral

dialogue is verbal. Moral dialogue is any "legitimate" means through which one can come to understand another person's thoughts, needs, and/or wants. Legitimate moral dialogue meets certain criteria. In moral dialogue, individuals seek consensus without the use of coercive power. Further, all individuals involved must have equal access to all information. Additionally, all of the individuals must be allowed to contribute equally to the conversation. Lastly, the engaged individuals have to be considerate of a possible future together beyond the present situation/dilemma.

Though morals are still espoused as an innate cognitive structure in Haan's theory, "moral dialogue" is not innate. It is a skill that is learned and improved. According to Haan (1978) by studying moral dialogues researchers can make inferences about an individual's level of moral development. Moral development is made up of five stages categorized by three levels. The three levels are assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium. Level one, assimilation, is made up of the power stage (i.e., stage one) and egocentric stage (i.e., stage two). In the power stage moral balance is about resolving one's own wants except where one is forced to comply with the wants and needs of others. During the egocentric stage, individuals can differentiate one's own needs from others yet they tend to assume that everyone is out to serve their own best interests.

Stages three and four comprise the second level, the accommodation phase (Haan, 1978). Level two, accommodation phase, is made up of harmony stage (stage three) and common interest balancing (stages four). In stage three, individuals differentiate themselves from others and focus on the needs of others as more important. People in the fourth stage still differentiate between one's own wants and needs and the wants and

needs of others; however, they are able to consider all individual interests with group interests.

The final level, equilibrium, has only one stage (stage five) referred to as mutual interest balancing. At this stage, individuals coordinate the interests of self, other, and group. People at this stage are able to see the strengths, weakness, values, and desires of all individuals (Haan, 1978). In the final stage, moral balance is situationally specific because the individual is motivated to optimize the interests of all people through whatever means possible.

Like Kohlberg, Haan acknowledges that mediating processes influence the relationship between moral thought and moral behavior. In other words, level of moral development alone does not determine moral behavior; rather, the thought-action relationship is differentiated by interacting psychological structures *and* ego process. Unlike Kohlberg, Haan (1978) suggests that moral reasoning is an embodied negotiation of situation and cognitive structure; it is more fluid and flexible than Kohlberg's abstract notion of justice. As such, communication and naturalistic interactions are at the heart of Haan's theory. Research is therefore based within actual settings as opposed to hypothetical scenarios. Furthermore, Haan moves away from Kohlberg's stages and conceptualizes moral development as a continuum consisting of numerous ways in which one can act morally. For Haan, moral balance is not absolute; the "moral" thing to do is always open to negotiation. In this way, Haan links theory to method by considering the naturalistic setting (rather than hypothetical scenarios) to investigate moral dialogue and

moral development. Yet, she still remains consistent with post-positivist epistemology in

her reliance on existent cognitive structures.

To Aggress or Not to Aggress in Sport? A Moral Conundrum

> *To aggress or not to aggress, that is the question;*
> *Whether 'tis nobler in the sport to suffer*
> *The cleats and fists of an outraged competitor,*
> *Or to break arms and a sea of rules,*
> *And by retaliating teach them. To hack, to gouge*
> *no more; and by a cheap shot we end*
> *The cheaters advantage and by means natural*
> *to this game— 'tis a conundrum*
> *Sincerely to be considered, to hurt, to injure;*
> *to injure, perchance to win. Ay there's the rug.*
> *For in that harm what victories may come,*
> *When we have spilled blood on the pitch's soil,*
> *And earn us applause. There's the respect*
> *That makes merit of so long a game,*
> *For who would bear the opponents trips and swings,*
> *The referee's wrong, the drunk fan's taunt,*
> *The pangs of splintered bone, the games delay,*
> *The arrogance of foes, and the gashes*
> *That 22 stitches a closure makes,*
> *When we ourselves might the retaliation make*
> *With a bare boot? Who would with no pretense dare,*
> *To gouge and slap against the written law,*
> *But that the dread of who we are after defeat,*
> *The unsuccessful team from whose ranks*
> *No player acclaimed, scares us*
> *And makes us rather bear those teeth we have*
> *Than play by rules we know not of?*
> *Thus obscurity does make aggressors of us all,*
> *And the unsoiled hue of our uniform*
> *Is stained with the crimson of blood,*
> *And in the heat of the moment*
> *Our regard is turned away,*
> *And lost in the name of victory.*
>
> *(Baird, personal journal, 2007)*

Sport psychology research considering sport aggression as a moral issue is an

amalgamation of Kohlberg's and Haan's theories of moral development (with a certain

amount of weight put behind Kohlberg's theory). Bredemeier and Shields are the most

prolific researchers currently working in this area of aggression research. It is primarily

their work and the work of a few other researchers, utilizing similar perspectives, that

composes most of the knowledge concerning aggression in sport from this perspective. In

general, lower levels of moral reasoning have been correlated to higher levels of sport

aggression (Bredemeier, 1994; Bredemeier & Shields, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c). It has also

been shown that aggression in sport is context specific and dependant on perceptions of

moral atmosphere (Stephens, 2000; Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996).

Shields and Bredemeier (1995) use the notion of bracketed morality and "game

reasoning" (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b, p.20) to explain that sport is a morally

different domain unlike the moral domain of everyday life. Many athletes feel released

from the moral obligations of everyday life because sport is circumscribed spatially,

temporally, emotionally, and cognitively (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b). This then

allows for a particular "game morality" which makes it easier to justify the use of

aggression (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b). Consequently, game reasoning is defined as

the lower level of moral reasoning used by individuals within sport (Bredemeier &

Shields, 1986a, 1986b; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995). Game reasoning is attributed to the

"egocentric nature" of sport (i.e., one competitor is trying to win at the cost of others

losing). This notion of a circumscribed egocentric environment is then used to explain

why individuals in sport perceive aggression as more legitimate than non-sport

individuals. It is also used to explain why athletes and non-athletes alike have lower

levels of moral reasoning when judging the legitimacy of aggression in a sport context versus a "real life" context (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b).

Bredemeier and Shields (1986a) also suggest that the moral atmosphere of sport might affect an individuals game reasoning. In this way, Bredemeier and Shields (1986a) indicate that the ethos of a sport, team and game will affect individual behavior more than the rules of a game. According to MRT, moral atmosphere affects moral reasoning and one's tendency to aggress depends upon one's level of moral reasoning. Therefore, much of the research done in sport psychology, from this perspective, investigates sport as a moral domain separated from *real life*.

Investigating this notion of moral atmosphere and bracketed morality, Bredemeier and Shields (1986a) investigated 100 male and female college and high school basketball players and non-athletes. Specifically, the researchers looked at levels of sport participation and involvement in sport as related to levels of moral development. The researchers found that the athletes reasoned at a lower level than non-athletes. This finding reproduced earlier findings by Bredemeier (1985) in a similar study with a smaller sample. These two studies, according to the researchers, confirm that sport does foster game reasoning.

Additionally, Bredemeier and Shields (1986a) found that athletes tended to resolve sport dilemmas using lower levels of moral reasoning than non-sport dilemmas. The researchers suggested that both findings indicated sport as a unique moral sphere that fostered lower levels of moral reasoning. This was also illustrated by the notion that both males and females involved in sport longer (i.e., college versus high school athletes)

tended to have larger divergences between their moral reasoning in sport and their moral reasoning in "real life." Bredemeier and Shields (1986a) suggested that this was due to the athletes increased exposure to the depleted moral domain of sport. Furthermore, gender also changed the magnitude of the difference between sport and non-sport moral reasoning. Male athletes had more of a difference in moral reasoning between sport and non-sport dilemmas than female athletes. Bredemeier and Shields (1986a) explained this difference by suggesting that males, in American culture, have more experience with sport and therefore understand the moral obligations of that atmosphere better than females. These findings supported the notion that game reasoning is a form of bracketed morality. In other words, these researchers suggest that sport fosters a lower level of moral reasoning and the longer one is exposed to that moral atmosphere the more likely one is to aggress.

Looking less at the differences between sport and non-sport moral reasoning to focus on the relationship between moral reasoning and aggression, Bredemeier (1985) investigated forty male and female basketball players and non-athletes from both high school and college. The research indicated that moral reasoning was negatively related to aggression; the lower the moral reasoning level the more injurious act the individual was willing to endorse. Bredemeier (1985) also found that athletes, males, and college athletes were more likely to endorse injurious acts than non-athletes, females, and college athletes respectfully. She suggested that this was due to increased exposure to a moral atmosphere encouraging game reasoning.

Until this point, moral reasoning research suggested that moral reasoning fluctuated depending upon the moral atmosphere. However, Todd and Hodge (2001) found that moral reasoning level can fluctuate not only between contexts, but it can also shift from moment to moment within a context. In their study of Under-21 male New Zealand rugby union players, they interviewed rugby players with at least 10 years playing experience, who were playing rugby and perceived rugby as their most important sport. They found that moral reasoning fluctuated depending on context and situation. In other words, the same person in the same sport can use different levels of moral reasoning as the situation changes.

In addition to demonstrating that sport is often perceived and treated as a different moral sphere within which injurious acts are legitimate, research from the moral reasoning perspective has attempted to identify specific "variables" that are related to moral reasoning. In a study previously mentioned, Bredemeier and colleagues (1986) studied 106 fourth through seventh grade athletes in order to investigate how sport involvement and interest in high, medium, or low contact sports are related to moral reasoning maturity and tendency to aggress. They found that high levels of contact were related to lower levels of moral reasoning and an increased tendency to aggress in sport. Their interpretation of this finding contended that high contact levels may encourage more physical contact than low contact sports. Consequently, more actions can be perceived by others as aggressive. Interestingly enough, despite the fact that girls were not competing at the same level of contact as the boys, girls and boys both decreased in their moral reasoning as they competed in sports with more contact. Furthermore these

athletes also had a tendency endorse aggression inside and outside of sport more than athletes participating in sports with less contact. The researchers suggested that movement to a higher level of moral reasoning may be difficult to do if one is engaged in a high contact sport because the welfare of others and personal responsibility is easily discarded. Lastly, Bredemeier and colleagues (1986) concluded by saying that participation in sports with high levels of contact may impede moral growth and development in children.

Nonetheless, this barrier to moral growth does not mean that contact sports are hopeless. Moral growth can still occur through sport; however, conscious efforts must be made to create a moral atmosphere that encourages higher levels of moral reasoning. Bredemeier, Weiss, Shields and Shewchuk (1986) investigate the influence of a five week sport camp on the development of pro-social behavior in 5-13 year old sport camp participants. Both social learning and structural developmental interventions influenced moral development. This research indicates that an athlete's perception of the moral atmosphere is important and can be manipulated to influence moral reasoning level.

In order to investigate moral atmosphere as a predictor of an athlete's likelihood to aggress, Stephens and Bredemeier (1996) tested how influential collective norms (i.e., perceptions of coaches and teammates) were in influencing girls' likelihood to aggress in soccer. They distributed an aggression questionnaire to 212 female soccer players between the ages of 9 and 14. They found that the "likelihood to aggress was significantly predicted by players' perceptions of their coaches' ego orientation" (Stephens and Bredemeier, 1996, p. 169). Further, they found that the girls' self-reported

likelihood to aggress was best predicted by what they believed their teammates would do. Overall, this study showed that collective norms were significant predictors of athlete's likelihood to aggress. Stephens (2000) then replicated the study with 307 youth soccer players between the ages of 9 and 14. One-hundred and two of the athletes were girls and 205 of the athletes were boys. With a more diverse sample, Stephens (2000) found that for all groups studied the primary predictor of likelihood to aggress was moral atmosphere.

The research reviewed in this section suggests that aggression is a result of lower levels of moral reasoning evoked by the circumscribed egocentric moral atmosphere of sport. In summary, researchers using MRT are interested in understanding the unique aspects of competitive sport and how those aspects alter an individuals' level of moral reasoning. Ultimately, MRT is concerned with "discovering" the stimuli that affect an individual's moral reasoning level which, according to MRT, is a developmental structure within the mind of the individual. This perspective limits our understanding of what aggression can be and how it is experienced. According to the sociological perspective, aggression is more than an outcome or a product. It is a meaningful behavior constructed of multiple meanings and experienced differently. I will more fully address the limitations of MRT and SLT in the next section.

Summary of Sport Psychology Research on Aggression

Similar to sport psychologists using SLT, moral reasoning theorists attempt to isolate "contextual variables" that have the largest effect on an innate cognitive structure. The difference between SLT and MRT is that theorists using MRT assume that some

behaviors, such as aggression, manifest through a more specialized cognitive structure than observational learning. These aggressive behaviors are separated from other behaviors because such behaviors are believed to have "inherent" moral connotations. The structures believed to be responsible for producing aggressive behaviors in sport are different in SLT and MRT. However, the post-positivist structuralist assumption of an underlying innate psychological structure that causes behavior limits the type of understanding we can gain about aggression in sport. As such, neither theory can be used to look at aggression as behaviors with negotiated meanings that can be used in the development and (re)production of self and a sport identity.

More specifically, SLT is too removed from the individual. It does not allow for the deconstruction of particular behaviors as meaningful cultural symbols that might be used/manipulated to say something to self/others. The theory does not account for individual meaning development in and through interaction. SLT is also fairly deterministic suggesting that if an individual *perceives* aggression to be rewarded, they will more than likely reproduce that behavior.

While SLT does not allow for individual agency it does consider social forces and MRT omits social influences entirely. MRT, due to its underlying epistemology, ignores the impact of large scale social ideologies (i.e., gender, race, or class) and neglects the variability of context when claiming that there is one correct course of action and one universal morality that can be discovered through scientific inquiry. Furthermore, moral reasoning research tends to overemphasize the importance of morality and reduces aggression to a singularly resolved moral behavior (this is also to assume that all

individuals view aggression as a moral act). Lastly, from the moral reasoning perspective, sport is positioned as a social sphere that is less "real" than other social spheres within which we engage. This assumption limits our understanding of sport and aggression by suggesting that experiences within sport are removed from another, more legitimate/real, existence. Ultimately, positioning sport as outside real life reinforces the notion that aggression in sport is acceptable because it is not "*real life*."

Overall, the research done using both SLT and MRT tends to focus on physical aggression. This is problematic as it omits other forms of aggression, forms which have been associated with females. As such, a limited (male) view of aggression not only emerges but omits other (female) experiences and conceptualizations of aggression. Additionally, when considering "context" both perspectives rely on arbitrary classifications based on levels of contact or isolate single "contextual variables" (e.g., gender, level of contact, experience, age or perceptions of coach or teammates) in efforts to identify determinants to aggression. Although literature from both SLT and MRT indicate the importance of context, to date, no research has been done looking at aggression as a behavior given meaning in and through interaction situated in a specific context. Also, the sport psychology aggression literature has yet to focus on women's experiences of aggression in collision sports. Typical research looks to compare male and female athletes on levels of physical aggression despite research indicating that females use different forms of aggression. What's more, studies considering gender differences in aggression have yet to critically analyze or problematize gender as related to aggression.

The sociological literature on aggression provides a more critical understanding of aggression and as a result has indicated a gap in the psychological investigation of aggression in sport. Therefore, in this next section I explore the sociological perspective on aggression. I will use the following section to highlight how aggression has been addressed in sport sociology research to problematize the term aggression and indicate the need for new perspectives in the psychological investigation of aggression/unacceptable behavior.

<div align="center">Sociological Approaches to Sport and Aggression</div>

From a sociological perspective, aggression is not circumscribed by intent. Aggression, within the sociological realm, is a meaningful symbol that gets taken up and used by athletes to communicate something to self and others. Primarily, aggression is a symbol of athleticism and, by virtue of a naturalized association, masculinity. This makes for an interesting symbolic space for female athletes in terms of self and identity development. Furthermore, because of its link to masculinity, understanding aggression also necessitates the importance of exploring a "gendered identity" (however that might be defined). In order to understand this symbolic space I first define gender from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. I then address how aggression is considered from a sociological perspective. Finally, I indicate the important developments and contributions of this research to illustrate the potential for a perspective that considers how aggression is linked to self and identity development to expand the current sport psychology understanding of aggression.

Though this section is focused on a discussion of aggression in sport, gender is bound up in that discussion because of the meaning(s) given to aggression in Western culture. Culture is a process of meaning production through our social actions. It is reciprocal, we make meaning of actions through culture and actions (re)produce cultural meanings. Furthermore, social relationships and actions are bound to the social system within which we live. Various cultural practices then tend to construct, constitute and reinforce dominant social relationships within that social system. Cultural practices, such as sport in US culture, tend to replicate dominant forms of masculinity (Dworkin & Messner, 1999; Hargreaves, 1990, 1994; Messner, 1992, 2002; Schacht, 1996).

In a patriarchy, gender is a mechanism that perpetuates the myth of male superiority. More specifically, gender is a social construct. It is a set of expectations placed on an individual based on sex. Gender is a false binary anchored to an erroneous presumption of two biological sexes (Butler, 1990). Gender represents an ever changing and evolving set of characteristics ideologically bound to men (e.g., aggressive) and women (e.g., passive) as mutually exclusive. These gender characteristics are tied to their respective bodies and naturalized as biological differences between the sexes. Gender ideologies are reinforced through cultural practices like sport (Dworkin & Messner, 1999; Hargreaves, 1990, 1994; Lorber, 1994).

Not all gender performances are equally valued. In sport, for example, males who exude aggression, power, force, and strength are celebrated for their athletic prowess, while other males, displaying grace, style or flexibility are primarily emasculated (Coakley, 1994). In this way, not only are males expected to be masculine but they are

expected to act in accordance with characteristics of *hegemonic* masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is an idealized and privileged form of masculinity that is continually worked on and accomplished (Connell, 1990; Trujillo, 2000). Hegemonic masculinity prescribes appropriate behaviors, values, beliefs, and appearance while proscribing anything perceived as feminine. In this way we can see that masculinity exists in relation to femininity and the two are "relationally constructed" (Schacht, 1996, p.551). That is to say, by defining what constitutes masculinity, femininity is simultaneously defined as what is not masculinity. However, what is valued most is not static. Hegemonic gender notions are ever shifting and changing to encompass new gender forms while still excluding/devaluing other forms. For example, at one time muscles were excluded from appropriate feminine gender performances, however with ever growing numbers of women becoming physically active, hegemonic femininity shifted to include a toned but not too muscular fit female body (Duncan 1994; Krane et al., 2004; Markula, 1995).

While males are expected to conform to hegemonic masculinity, women are expected to conform to "hegemonic femininity" (Lenskyj, 1994). Hegemonic femininity is an unattainable standard to which most women are compared. It is an ever shifting set of "appropriate" characteristics that are acceptable and attractive in Western society. "Appropriate" feminine characteristics include being compliant, weak, passive, dependent, thin and not muscular (Bordo, 1993; Duncan, 1994; Greendorfer, 1998; Krane, 2001; Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004; Mutrie & Choi, 2000). Just as masculinity is defined in relation to all that is not feminine, so too is femininity defined as all things not masculine.

Characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, characteristics coalesced with men, are perceived as necessary and superior attributes for success in life and in sport. For example, strength is a valued quality in western culture (Schacht, 1996). In general, male bodies are believed more capable of generating strength than female bodies. Consequently, males are perceived as biologically superior to females. Various social technologies and institutions, such as sport, that emphasize such differences between male and female bodies, naturalize male superiority and female subordination.

Sport is one such social institution where this gender order is reproduced (Messner, 1992). Sport is portrayed as a context where naturally occurring human characteristics can be displayed (Burgess et al., 2003). This portrayal obscures sport as a constructed site ordered around the male body and "masculine" characteristics (Messner, 1992). Specifically, characteristics such as strength, aggression, power, dominance, endurance of pain and injury, and winning are valued in sport (Bryson, 1994; Dunning, 1994; Messner, 1992; Young & White, 1995). According to Messner (1992) sport is an institution that privileges these socially constructed masculine characteristics as features of superior athletic performance. In other words, sport is constructed in such a way that the valued characteristics of an athlete are actively and continually linked to masculinity, establishing male superiority and marking female athletes as inferior intruders into the male domain of sport.

Characteristics of strength, aggression, and power are seen as legitimate or necessary for sport success; sports and sport performances devoid of these characteristics are often devalued and marginalized in Western culture (Bryson, 1994; Coakley, 1994;

Messner, 1992). In this way, aggression can be understood as an organizing principle of sport that defines superior performance (Bryson, 1994; Messner, 1992). Consequently, aggression becomes more than an outcome of an underlying innate psychological structure. Aggression is simultaneously a symbol of superior athleticism and masculinity. It is given meaning in and through interaction and can convey to self and others the meanings we give ourselves in a sport context.

In part, the use of aggression as an indicator for high-quality performance stems from the socio-historic development of particular sports as training grounds for manhood (e.g., soccer, rugby, ice hockey, football) (Dunning, 1994; Schacht, 1996). According to Dunning (1994) most contemporary versions of combative sports emerged from ancient games. These early forms of sport were appropriated, codified and "developed" as a means to "teach" masculinity primarily through violence (Connell, 1990; Messner, 1992; Schacht, 1996). This use of sport for masculine edification through exposure to brute force and violence (Dunning & Sheard, 1979) eventually led to taken-for-granted-notions concerning the "nature of sport". As a result, the constructedness of sport is erased and aggression is lauded as a natural part of sport (Bryson, 1987; Burgess et al., 2003; Schacht, 1996; Theberge, 1981), a vital part of the scaffolding upon which contemporary sport was built.

Specifically, aggression and violence are part of what Messner (2002) has referred to as the metaphoric "center of sport". It is this center that is privileged as legitimate sport. The center of sport is a space for dominance, aggression, hostility and power. It is a space for hegemonic masculinity, a space for "real sport" and "real men" (Messner, 2002).

Though particular sports can be located within the center of sport, the center is more about the ideologies reproduced by participants within those sports. Messner (2002) explains that the center is produced through the everyday exchanges of boys and men. "They construct this center through what political scientist Michael Kaufman calls a "triad of men's violence," which consists of men's violence against women, against other men, and against themselves (Messner, 2002, p.30).

In this respect, aggression is a multifaceted bid for legitimacy or as Messner (2002) suggests, aggression can be used to secure one's position at the center of sport. As previously mentioned these aggressive actions are multiple and incorporate many behaviors beyond physical harm (contrary to the current focus of sport psychology literature) of another living being. Let me now explore the triad of violence that secures one's place at the center of sport and simultaneously naturalizes those behaviors as the center of sport. First, violence against women can be used as a means to exalt one's self as superior and prove one's manhood. This is accomplished either with physical or verbal assaults directed at women. Furthermore, one's superiority can be reinforced through misogynistic or sex talk. Misogynistic talk includes denigration of characteristics associated with femininity (e.g., emotion) or anything that represents a woman (e.g., calling someone a "pussy"). Sex talk objectifies women and refers to women as conquests reinforcing the masculinity of the speaker. This type of denigration strengthens gender hierarchies and the superiority of masculine characteristics.

Schacht (1996), in his observation of two male rugby teams, found that the male rugby players used violence against women to position women as "less" and distance

themselves from femininity. Furthermore, the older, more experienced players on the teams often denigrated the rookies by calling them "pussies", "bitches" or "girls." This type of aggression toward women worked to claim their rugby identity and separate the male (and implicitly more masculine) rugby players from femininity.

According to Scranton and colleagues (1999) men are not the only athletes who distance themselves from femininity. In their study of elite level female soccer players, some athletes distanced themselves from their female identity because they felt that being a female diminished their athletic identity. The women in their study felt that being female on the soccer field was counterproductive to their desire to be perceived as elite athletes and as a result they tended to label themselves as "like boys" (Scranton et al., 1999). Labeling themselves as tomboys suggests willingness "to reproduce the dominant masculine values that have become central to the game [soccer]" (Scranton et al., 1999, p. 107). Though this is not a violent taunt meant to denigrate someone, this research shows that female athletes may also be working to distance themselves from their own female identities. However, more recent research suggests that female athletes are working to (re)construct femininity to include their athletic identities (Baird, 2001; Broad, 2001; Chase, 2006; Chu, Leberman, Howe, & Bachor, 2003).

In addition to violence directed at women, Messner (2002) explains that violence between men can also be used to "access" or retain the center of sport. Violence against one another is the second form of violence used to access the center of sport. Violence against one another is achieved on the playing field and through interpersonal or team relationships. Normalization of violence on the playing field, using one's body as a

weapon, or enacting hostile measures to endanger one's opponent are exemplars of what Messner (2002) means by violence against one another.

According to Schacht (1996), physically aggressing against another player can secure a rugby player's position within rugby and move him up in the rugby hierarchy. In particular, he found that the players most willing to hurt others were the most well respected members of the team. Similarly, Light and Kirk (2000), in their study of high school boys rugby, found that the most violent players were often the most lionized players and that their stories were often mythologized as exemplars of a true rugby player. Violence was also used against teammates to teach rooky players the meaning of rugby (Schacht, 1996). Schacht (1996) and Light and Kirk (2000) suggested that aggression against others was a way to simultaneously claim rugby status and appropriate masculinity. According to Burgess and colleagues (2003) in their study of Australian school boys, aggression against others was a symbol of both being a good rugby player and being a "real man."

As previously discussed, physical aggression has been included in the realm of psychological consideration of aggression. However, Messner (2002) goes on to indicate that violence against others also includes excessive drinking, initiations, taunting or other acts of cruelty carried out within social networks. Schacht (1996) illustrated the rugby social as a place where excessive drinking is perceived to be a part of one's commitment to rugby. Donnelly and Young (1988) actually suggest that some members, in an attempt to fit in as rugby players, drink and party so as to avoid being viewed as outsiders. Though physical aggression against other participants is considered primary in the sport

psychology literature, we can see here, that there are other types of aggression that are not only important in maintaining an authentic sport identity, but seem integral to developing and hence understanding a rugby identity.

The final component of the triad of men's violence is violence against one's self. This violence is directed at one's own body and entails the disregard of one's own pain to continue to play the game. Performing in sport while injured is expected and praised; it is a way to gain respect in sport and a way to perform hegemonic masculinity (Messner, 2002).

According to Howe (2001) and Schacht (1996), experiencing pain and playing through the pain are essential to developing respect within rugby culture. Schacht (1996) suggests that rugby athletes can demonstrate their rugby identities by sustaining and enduring pain. In some extreme cases he witnessed some men refuse to wear a protective cup or mouth-guard as a testament to their commitment to the sport. Light and Kirk (2000) reported that this type of self-sacrifice is perceived as an important characteristic of a "real" rugby player. This notion of playing through pain is also perceived by female rugby players as an important part of their identity construction as rugby players (Broad, 2001; Chase, 2006). Showing of one's bruises becomes a way for ruggers, male or female, to demonstrate that they are "real" ruggers (Broad, 2001; Burgess et al., 2003; Chase, 2006; Schacht, 1996).

With all of this said, aggression can be understood as a symbol of both legitimate athletic performance and masculinity. As such, aggression can convey to self and others the meanings we give to ourselves. According to the materials just presented, aggression,

in many forms, can be used as a means to construct one's rugby identity. Due to the ideological link between aggression and masculinity, aggression seemingly becomes a contradictory symbol negotiated by female rugby players

Female athletes, like male athletes, are aware of what constitutes the center of sport, they are likely to know the role of aggression in sport. However, they are also aware of the social implications of performing behaviors perceived as masculine. Consequently, if a female athlete takes up a contact sport she is often labeled as inferior to her male counterparts because she lacks the same intensity, violence, aggression or brute force (Howe, 2001; Theberge, 2000; Wright & Clarke, 1999). In the same breath, if a female athlete embraces the characteristics demanded of athletes in the center of sport, she is labeled as, masculine, like a man or a lesbian (Scranton et al., 1999; Wright & Clarke, 1999). Because aggression symbolizes both masculinity and superior athleticism, female athletes are often relegated to a subordinate position because they are not as aggressive as their male counterparts.

Due, in part, to this subjugation, some female athletes use aggression in order to be taken more seriously. Young and White (1995) found that elite level female athletes participating in rugby, basketball, downhill skiing, bodybuilding, and football embrace many of the same values as their male counterparts. They found that the elite women in their study endorsed the use of aggression, were willing to subject their bodies to risk, and felt that it was important to play through their injuries. The researchers suggested that these athletes adopted a masculinist model of sport privileging pain and danger as means to be recognized as "real" athletes. By accepting characteristics of the male model of

sport, the athletes make a claim to legitimacy and reinforce particular gender relations in sport.

Likewise, in her ethnographic study of an elite female ice hockey team (i.e., the Blades), Theberge (2000) explains that violence and physical contact are used as markers of legitimacy in hockey. For the most part, men's and women's hockey are governed by the same rules with one major exception: body checking is prohibited in women's hockey. While women's hockey prohibits checking, this action is a defining characteristic of men's ice hockey. This is problematic because "real" hockey is seen as the aggressive NHL version of hockey where body checking is rampant. Versions devoid of body checking are seen as lesser version of the "real" game of hockey. This reinforces gender relations in sport and positions women as inferior athletes. Despite the rules prohibiting body checking, the females in the study tended to use intentional body checking to gain an advantage on the ice. The female ice hockey players Theberge interviewed and observed endorsed the use of body checking to fight for social acceptance and legitimacy as "real" hockey players playing a valid game of hockey.

The work of both Theberge (2000) and Young and White (1995) illustrate the importance of aggression and violence to female athletes fighting to be seen as legitimate athletes. For the female athlete aggression can come to represent an athletic identity, or even symbol of equality. The athletes fought to be seen as legitimate, equal, real, not other while simultaneously reinforcing that the male standard of athletic prowess.

What does all this mean in terms of aggression and sport? This means that there is more to aggression than a moral choice or a learned response. This means that aggression

is a powerful symbol that can be used by athletes to develop an athlete identity. "Real" sport, the center of sport, is often defined as the most aggressive form of a sport and "real" athletes, at the center of sport, are the most aggressive players. Consequently, aggression can be used to claim authenticity and move toward the center of sport. However, aggression is also a symbol of masculinity and female athletes are aware that females should not exude characteristics of masculinity if they want to be perceived as "real women." Given these meanings, will a female collision athlete aggress to be seen as legitimate in sport but risk being labeled man-ish? Will she not aggress, maintain one's status as a real woman but sacrifice one's athletic identity? Or is something else going on? These are the types of questions I hope to answer in this project by considering aggression as a symbolic behavior that may play a role in a female athlete's development of self and identity.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

From a sport psychology perspective, researchers rely on both MRT and SLT. The resulting research, though meaningful and important does leave some gaps that become more apparent when the sport psychology literature is considered with the sport sociology literature. Specifically, more research is needed that critically considers context, addresses the lived experiences of female collision athletes and explores the potential link between aggression and self/identity development and maintenance. As a result, I use a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand and explore female rugby players experiences of aggression and how they understand, define, and structure those

experiences relative to self/identity development in sport. In the following chapter, I

explore symbolic interactionism and its contribution in this endeavor.

CHAPTER III
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

For the most part, sport psychology has tended to consider aggression as a behavioral manifestation of underlying innate psychological structures. To be sure, this has been extremely beneficial because we have learned a great deal about aggression in sport and its relationships to various constructs such as: environmental factors, gender, sport type, level of competition and age. In light of the sociological perspective already outlined, sport psychology could broaden its understanding of aggression by considering aggression from a poststructuralist paradigm.

Therefore, I propose symbolic interactionism as a new way of conceptualizing aggression in sport psychology. My specific purpose is to use a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand and explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they understand, define, and structure those experiences relative to self and identity development in sport.

What is symbolic interactionism?

Symbolic interactionism has its roots in pragmatic philosophy. The theory, so named by Blumer in 1937, flows from the works of Cooley, Dewey, James and Mead (Denzin, 1992). Though influenced by Cooley, Dewey, and James it is Mead's ideas that are formed by Blumer (1969) into what Denzin (1992) refers to as the "canonical form" of symbolic interactionism.

Mead (1934) was attempting to understand his environment by developing a perspective that theorized the self as tied to one's social units. Traditionally, as outlined earlier when discussing sport psychology aggression research, the self had been

considered a psychological structure, innate and productive. Mead attempted to move away from this and consider the self as a social experience (Mead, 1934). He believed that communication was the key component in the development of self. In the crux of his theory, Mead (1934) described language as a collective agreement of a whole society about the meaning(s) of certain gestures, symbols, or behaviors. Mead suggested that the self is developed through the internalization of language. With language as the center for self development, the self can be understood as more than consciousness. The self is, therefore, a process that is *accomplished in and through interaction*, as opposed to an innate and separate structure residing solely within the mind (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934).

These thoughts were further developed by Blumer (1969) into a more formal perspective which he called symbolic interactionism. Despite its advancement, symbolic interactionism remained haunted by the pragmatic tradition and "scientific" orthodoxy of its inception (Denzin, 1992). However, Denzin (1989, 1992) has addressed the pragmatic roots of symbolic interactionism and has moved toward a more critical poststructuralist perspective that he calls interpretive interactionism. Interpretive interactionism "attempts to make the world of lived experiences directly accessible to the reader. It endeavors to capture the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied" (Denzin, 1989, p.10).

My understanding of symbolic interactionism incorporates the canonical writings of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) as well as the perspective's more recent gyrations. Through symbolic interactionism I assume that reality is a social construct made up of social objects that are given meaning in and through interaction (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1974, 1992; Mead, 1934). Furthermore, I understand humans as active agents who direct

their own behaviors; behavior does not get released from a preexisting psychological structure nor is behavior a pure response to an innately meaningful stimulus (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1974; Mead, 1934).

Social Objects

To understand identity is to also understand the self. From a symbolic interactionist perspective "the basic object for all interaction is the self" (Denzin, 1969, p.923). From this statement Denzin is informing us that the self is an object. Therefore, in order to understand how symbolic interactionism defines self I need to first define "object."

A social object is any entity (physical, social, abstract, or imaginary) that we can recognize as a unit and refer to (Blumer,1966, 1969; Denzin, 1969). Social objects are given meaning in and through behavior directed toward that object (Blumer, 1969). This means that objects do not have innate meaning, the meaning comes from the individual referring to the object (Blumer, 1969). Consequently, these meanings affect how we see objects and how we choose to act toward objects (Blumer, 1969).

For example, the utterance "chair" represents a particular kind of object. I can recognize a chair as an object and I also understand that I should behave toward that object by sitting on it. However, the object, the chair, does not have an innate "chair-ness" that qualifies its existence as a chair. If the chair does not have a chair-ness how do we know that the object is to be sat upon? We lean from the our extant cultures agreed upon meanings (i.e., uses) for the physical entity we refer to as a chair.

In much the same way that a chair is a social object, so too are self, identity and aggression. In this way one's "athletic identity" is a way that we can refer to our self, as an object, in a sport setting. According to symbolic interactionism the behaviors we use toward the social object of our self depends upon the meaning(s) we have for that identity. However, this meaning is not stable nor is it innate (in the individual or the identity).

Meaning arises out of interactions with social objects. Social objects are more than just the physical "things" around us. Social objects are anything to which we can refer. For example, wizards, dreams, hurricanes, silver, sport teams, aggression, identities, etcetera are all social objects. Social objects range from the most definite to the utterly vague (Blumer, 1966). One type of social object with which we interact and negotiate meaning is other humans. By interacting with others we can see how they regard social objects and learn to appropriately direct our behavior toward that same social object even if that object is us (Blumer, 1969). We know to sit upon a chair because we, as conscious agents within a particular culture, agree upon the meaning of that object.

My adventure to Nicaragua comes to mind as an example of the constructedness of social objects. Consider again objects we might recognize and move to sit upon. During my travels in Nicaragua my notion of "chair" underwent a major overhaul. As I visited many local families in the small community where I stayed, I was welcomed into Nicaraguan homes and usually offered a "chair" to relax upon. This "chair" often ended up being a bail of hay, a discarded toilet or a car engine covered with a sheet. In

Nicaragua I was able to understand a tubeless television as a "chair" not because of the innate quality of the object, but for the meanings we, actors in that environment, negotiated. It is, therefore, not the object itself that makes the unit a chair, it is our mutual recognition and action toward that object that makes it a chair. In this way, it is not "aggression" or a "rugby identity" that hold meaning, but peoples' experiences of aggression and self/identity that are made meaningful.

We manipulate social objects, interact and come to some sort of agreement about what an object is and how we should act toward it (Denzin, 1969, 1974). Similarly, self/identity is negotiated terrain. For example, athletes learn that aggression is a desired characteristic in sport (Bryson, 1994; Burgess et al., 2003; Coakley, 1994; Messner, 1992, 2002; Schacht, 1996; Theberge, 2000; Young & White, 1995). Furthermore, aggression in rugby is lionized as a characteristic of superior athleticism (Burgess et al., 2003; Schacht, 1996). In this regard aggression in rugby may be used to convey something positive about one's identity as a rugby player. However, not all individuals may define aggression in the same way and therefore may view that behavior as indicative of a different quality (e.g., bully). For example, consider the following story from my own experiences as a rugby player.

The "sir" just warned, "last play, last play." Only seconds now remain until the end of the game. We are playing our in-state rivals and are being demolished. It isn't until later that I think about the fact that they compete at a division above us, are more organized and have a sideline of players to fill in for injuries. At the time, I'm not thinking about the fact that we are playing with a rag-tag team partially composed of

spectators, all I am thinking about is leaving every ounce of me on the playing field. We are 5 meters from our try line and they win a crucial scrum. I am able to free myself from the tight knot of women bound on to me and begin filling in on defense. The ball carrier is advancing up the field. I make a choice to chase her down. With all my speed, I throw myself into a tackle. Mid-tackle she passes the ball, but I cannot stop my body's motion. I complete the tackle and take my opponent hard into the uneven dirt and dying grass. As I push off the ground to get up, my attention turns to my next move, and I think, "where should I go? Where will I be of most use?" Then her fist makes contact with my nose. The next few moments are a vivid blur of thoughts and actions. I'm furious for being punched. "How dare you?" rings inside my own mind as I grab her retracting fist, pull her to me and growl, "really?" She struggles against me and I let go. She balls up her fist to hit me again and, in an instant I have her in a headlock. Her team tries in vain to pull me off of her. I'm being dragged by my right leg and I'm taking her with me. Inevitably, I release her, our two teams disengage and the game is over.

In this situation, the meaning of fighting, or what sport psychologists label aggression, did not speak to one construction of who I was or who my opponent was. In the example, I interpreted the act of my opponent as a symbol of her misunderstanding of rugby and her inability to "take" a legal "hit." My retaliation was intended to symbolize my position as a legitimate rugby player. In this one moment aggression was a symbol of two different types of identity. Additionally, many of my teammates confirmed my rugby identity by praising my actions. During the rugby social after the game, some of the

players from the other team validated my behavior by suggesting that, "she just doesn't get rugby." Still others read my actions as being "scary" or "frightening."

In this way, we can see that interaction is a defining process through which we come to understand our social realities (Blumer, 1966, 1969). In other words, meanings are not applied to social objects, they are negotiated. This reveals that meanings are not fixed; they are sustained, created, transformed and cast asunder in and through interaction (Blumer, 1969). Considering aggression and self/identity both as social objects carries sport psychology research in a more multidimensional dynamic direction and expands our understanding of aggression as a socially constructed and contextually negotiated behavior.

Social Interaction

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, aggression does not come from an innate structure; it is a behavior that is chosen as a means of giving meaning to a particular social object, which might include a player's rugby self/identity. Moreover, with each action I use in my definition of self, the meaning of me changes. This means that my rugby self/identity is constantly changing and evolving. My self/identity as a rugby player will not always mean the same thing. For example, if I wanted to tell you a story of who I am as a rugby player, I might share the story above. I might share a story of making the Midwest select team, a story of triumph, a story of sportpersonship, loss, pain, or injury. All these self stories describe how I see myself as a social object, as a rugby player, and with each permutation of my story the meaning of me, as a rugger, changes.

The infinite number of meanings represented by a social object (e.g., self/identity) are further complicated when we consider that I am not the only person in the world. Just as I have innumerable meanings I might give to a social object so too does the person next to me. Just because I use aggression in my definition of myself as a dedicated rugby player does not mean that the person next to me will perceive those actions to mean the same thing. That is to say that we all have our own lines of action toward the social objects of our realities. It is this negotiation of our different lines of action that symbolic interactionism refers to as social interaction (Blumer, 1969, 1966). Symbolic interaction occurs when we try to understand the meaning of one another's behavior (Blumer, 1966, 1969).

I give meaning to the social objects of my reality and guide my behavior toward those objects relative to their meaning, but I also transmit that meaning to others through my behavior (Blumer, 1969). That is to say, by fighting on the rugby field I may indicate to other ruggers how I define myself as a rugby player. In this way, behavior is a transmitter of meaning; behavior is symbolic (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2004; Goffman, 1956, 1978).

A symbol is a type of social object that represents a meaning, it stands in the place of that meaning (Charon, 2004). Actions, utterances, language, gestures and pictures can all be used to convey/ communicate meaning (Charon, 2004). From a symbolic interactionist perspective it is assumed that much of human action is a way of communicating with self and others (Blumer, 1966; Charon, 2004). This means that I transmit meaning through my actions and I also interpret the actions of others.

Consequently, we are simultaneously transmitting and interpreting meaning (Blumer, 1966; Goffman, 1956, 1978; Charon, 2004). Aggression is a social object that symbolizes both masculinity and sport performance (Messner, 1992, 2002; Bryson, 1994; Dunning, 1994). As such, athletes may use aggression to communicate to self and others how they define themselves as ruggers.

If I am the actor it is easy for me to recognize my action as symbolic; however, it is much more difficult for the observer (Charon, 2004). We have a tendency to attribute meaning to behaviors even if the behavior was not intended to be symbolic. For example, if an opponent kicks me in the face during a rugby match, I tend to perceive that action as an indication of that player's disregard for me as a rugby player. Regardless of my opponent's intent, I still make meaning of that action. Given that actions have meanings for the actor and the individual interpreting the act (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2004) effective communication depends upon the actions holding similar meanings. Miscommunication can occur where the actor and interpreter do not have the same definition of a particular action.

As observers we tend to focus on one segment on an individual's line of action, isolate it and attempt to capture the meaning of a single act (Charon, 2004). Consequently, the possibility for miscommunication is enormous as the meaning of a single act cannot be completely understood in isolation (Blumer, 1966; Charon, 2004). Blumer (1966) explains that we each develop our own lines of action made up of innumerable and indivisible acts. We construct these lines by coping with our own realities. Assessing the meaning of a single act without regard to the line within which it

was developed leads to inaccurate perceptions regarding the meaning of that act (Blumer, 1966; Charon, 2004).

Charon (2004) uses the metaphor of a stream to explain an individual's line of action (i.e., a stream that we are simultaneously within and controlling). He explains that a single act does not occur in seclusion, it is a part of one's continuous stream of action. We each have our own streams of action developed through different lived experiences which means our realities and actions can have vastly different meanings. Capturing a single act without contextualizing that act is like trying to capture and carry the water of a stream with one's bare hands. Consequently, in order to attempt to understand a single act we must consider the stream of action within which the act resides.

Any one act at any one point along our stream is caused by a decision to act according to our definition of the present situation. The choices we make and the resultant actions are not unrelated to past experiences or future possibilities (Charon, 2004). Our past, though it influences our decisions, does not cause action. As we experience the world, we make decisions concerning action based upon the meanings we give the world around us, therefore our decisions, not social objects, lead to action (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Charon, 2004).

However, not all of our actions are a matter of careful deliberation (Charon, 2004). We are not perfect at constructing our own actions (Blumer, 1966). We do not see every important piece of information in every environment, we misunderstand the actions of others, we use poor judgment, and we struggle to put ourselves in someone else's shoes (Blumer, 1966). In short, we are fallible. Therefore, at times we misrepresent our

definitions, meanings or selves through our own actions (Goffman, 1956). This makes human behavior very unpredictable (Denzin, 1969, 1974).

Added to the multiplicity of meaning and human fallibility, human agency makes behavior even more difficult to predict (Blumer, 1966). For example, imagine, if you will, a mother walking on a tour of a German castle with her 15 year old daughter. The mother and daughter stop at a display to take in the grandeur of a particularly ornate throne. There is a sign swaying from the red velvet ropes insuring the safety of the relic. The sign reads "Kine Blitz fotografieren." As the tour-guide rounds the corner out of sight, the mother places her 110 camera, flash whining, in the daughters' hand, vaults the velvet ropes and whispers a throaty, "hurry," as she takes her place upon the throne. Even though we may think we know how someone is defining themselves (e.g., mother) and we think we can "predict" how they will act, they can still surprise us. The wonderful thing about being human is that we have the ability to alter our actions and direct our own behavior (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2004). The symbolic interactionist perspective takes account of this agency and positions humans as agents and not cultural dupes (Denzin, 1974). We are active entities negotiating meaning through interaction.

When discussing symbolic interaction it is important to note that it is an ongoing, dual process (Blumer, 1966). It is a defining process through the continual interpretation of one another's actions (Blumer, 1966). It is also simultaneously a reiterative and transformative process (Blumer, 1966). Interaction is not the combination of two lines of action into one. Interaction has an emergent quality. A new line of action emerges from the combining of the two which creates something new that did not exist before (Denzin,

1969). Streams of actions interact to create wholly new streams like the combination of hydrogen chloride and ammonia vapors to create a cloud of ammonium chloride. Joint action is dynamic (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1969). Through this continuous process of give and take (Charon, 2004) we negotiate new objects, new definitions and open up the possibilities for future change (Denzin, 1969).

In summary, we live in a world of objects and our actions are formed around those objects based upon the meaning those objects hold for us (Blumer, 1966). Our meanings of those social objects are shared through action. My behaviors transmit meaning to others and so too do the acts of others mean something to me. Therefore we are all simultaneously transmitting and interpreting meaning via behavior. As a social object, aggression can be thought of as transmitting meaning to self and others about an athletic identity. The use of symbolic interactionism to understand aggression allows us to look at aggression more critically and as a socially situated, multidimensional, social object that can only be partially understood through the investigation of "predictors" of aggression. The notion of self and identity are important to the investigation of aggression because, according to Mead (1934) the self plays a primary role in our ability to interact symbolically.

Self and Identity

The self is my understanding of me as a social object (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Denzin, 1974; Mead, 1934). The self is a social object constructed and given meaning in relation to others (Blumer, 1966). Identity is one way in which we can refer to the self in a specific situation. In this regard, self and identity are not innate, they are not the captain

at the helm of our bodies and they do not determine our behavior (Blumer, 1966, 1969).

Self/identity[5] is a continually evaluated multitude of social objects with multiple

meanings that we arrange in accordance with others (Blumer, 1966, Denzin, 1969, 1992;

Mead, 1934). This means that my rugby identity is not existent, until I define it.

Like all social objects, the self/identity is grounded in interaction (Blumer, 1969;

Charon, 2004; Denzin, 1969). I come to understand my self/identity through others'

definitions of me (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2004). Others perceive me in an environment

and report back to me through behavior, gesture, language or non-acknowledgement the

meaning of me as a social object (Charon, 2004). For example, a few years ago, while

competing at a rugby tournament, my team was selected to play against a local high

school girl's team. During the course of the game I was knocked out and my nose was

broken. When I regained consciousness, I placed cotton in my nose to stop the bleeding

and continued playing. At the end of the match, a small group of the girls from the high

school team approached my team mates and me. They then started to praise me as an

inspiration because I continued to play after being knocked out and breaking my nose.

One of the girls remarked that she would not have been "brave" enough to do it. Her

friend turned and said, half to me and half to her, "That's what makes her a real rugby

player." In this situation, others indicated to me the meaning of me as a social object at a

rugby tournament. I was able to understand myself as an object through the

actions/communication of others (Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934).

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[5] Recall that I use self/identity as a means of communicating that self and identity are simultaneous.

To become an object to myself, I must be able to take on that view; I have to see and act toward me from an outside perspective (Blumer, 1969). This involves imagining how someone else perceives a situation and how they perceive me, as an object, in that situation (Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934). Therefore, self/identity is not a structure it is a reflexive process accomplished by taking the role of the other (Blumer, 1966; Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934). Taking the role of the other is a process of looking at ourselves as others might perceive us (Blumer, 1966). This other can be a single individual, a finite group (e.g., a team), or an abstract community (e.g., rugby community) which Mead (1934) refers to as the generalized other. Though taking the role of the other is necessary for the development of self, consciousness and symbolic interaction, it is hardly an "accurate" exercise because we can never truly abandon our own perspectives (Charon, 2004).

Because we can understand ourselves as social objects, self/identity is also an object of the actor's own behavior (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934). We act toward the self according to how we have come to define the self (Blumer, 1966, 1969). Self communication is one way in which we act toward our self as a social object. Self communication is thinking (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2004). Through indicating something to ourselves we extract that thing and affix a meaning to it thus making it a social object (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Our behaviors are subsequently constructed based upon the meanings we attach to that which we indicated to ourselves (Blumer, 1969). This self communication is implied in symbolic interactionism as we are sharing social objects. In order to communicate symbolically I must simultaneously signify

something to self and others (Charon, 2004). For example, in order to communicate to you the meaning of my rugby identity it has to have meaning to me.

According to Blumer (1969) behavior arises from the interpretation(s) made through the processes of self indication. This notion of self interaction allows us, as humans, to be aware of a thing (i.e., perceive it), indicate that thing to the self (i.e., give it meaning) and decide to act toward that object. In this sense, the self forms and guides behavior (Blumer, 1966). That is not to say, however, that self/identity propels action (Charon, 2004). Instead, from a symbolic interactionist view, the actor acts based upon meaning and built in response to the social world (Blumer, 1966).

Summary of Symbolic Interactionism

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, reality is a social construct made up of social objects that are given meaning in and through interaction (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1969, 1974; 1992; Mead, 1934). Humans are active agents who direct their own behaviors. A social object does not produce action (Blumer, 1966). Action is not released from a preexisting psychological structure (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Charon, 2004) nor is it the outcome of a predetermined plan of action (Blumer, 1969). Rather, we interpret social objects, give meaning to them and act accordingly (Blumer, 1966; Denzin, 1992). Our meanings of those social objects are shared through action which makes behavior symbolic. My behaviors transmit meaning to others and so too do the acts of others mean something to me. Therefore we are all simultaneously transmitting and interpreting meaning via behavior.

Self/identity is a social object (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Denzin, 1974; Mead, 1934). It is given meaning in and through interaction (Blumer, 1966; Denzin, 1969, 1992; Mead, 1934). How I understand myself as an object affects how I choose to act toward that object (Blumer, 1966, 1969). Interaction is the vehicle of self/identity, it is how we come to know how others view us as social objects, how we learn how to define our self/identity, and how we communicate self/identity to others (Denzin, 1992; Goffman, 1983; Mead, 1934).

Understanding aggression from a symbolic interactionist perspective means that I am looking through the lens of these assumptions. Thus, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, aggression, sport and self/identity are social constructs that are given meaning. Also, aggression, as a symbol of both masculinity and athleticism might be used as a means of indicating something about one's athletic or gender self/identities. I am using symbolic interactionism to expand the current sport psychology perspectives of aggression by looking at aggression as a multidimensional and negotiated behavior with meaning(s) that are accomplished in and through interaction.

CHAPTER IV
WHERE DO I PUT MY PENCIL?
ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY & METHOD

The purpose of this study was to use a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand and explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they understand, define, and structure those experiences relative to self and identity development in sport. In relation to this purpose the following research questions were of interest: (1) how do women define themselves as ruggers/how do they (re)produce these identities in and out of rugby, (2) how do women define and experience aggression, and (3) how are these accounts used in the construction of self/identity? To accomplish this purpose and address these research questions, I employed ethnographic methods to understand and explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they understand those experiences.

Methodology

Ethnography has a long tradition as a method and theory within anthropology and sociology that has extended into cultural studies, women's studies, social psychology, counseling, and a number of other fields (Tedlock, 2000; VanMaanen, 1988). Recently, researchers have employed ethnography in sport sociology (Silk, 2005) and sport psychology (Krane & Baird, 2005). The purpose of this study was to utilize ethnographic methods to investigate how experiences of aggression were structured, defined and lived (Denzin, 1992). In so doing, I created a text giving voice to previously silenced female rugby players on the topic of aggression (Silk, 2005). As a researcher investigating meaning, I was interested in how members of rugby culture gave meaning to their own

behaviors and the culture around them, how they gave meaning to the behaviors of others, and my interpretations of their experiences/interactions through a symbolic interactionist lens.

Theoretical and Methodological Synergism

Ethnography incorporates a wide range of interpretive methods including interviews, personal experiences, observation, analysis of artifacts, documents, and cultural records and also collecting visual and multimedia materials. Ethnography is a methodology based on certain epistemological and ontological assumptions (Crotty, 1998). Methodology is an explanation of how one is going to attain knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). How one attains knowledge depends upon their epistemological and ontological stances (Crotty, 1998). Ontology is the understanding of the nature of things and epistemology is the beliefs concerning the location of meaning.

Epistemological and Ontological Consistency

According to Crotty (1998), a theoretical perspective is a philosophical stance that provides context for one's methodology. Further, this theoretical perspective has certain embedded epistemological and ontological assumptions. Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934) is the theoretical perspective through which I understand the world around me. The tenets of symbolic interactionism suggest that all of "reality" is constructed and given meaning in and through interactions with others and self. Specifically, symbolic interactionism addresses the construction of self through language and interaction (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Therefore, as a researcher from within this theory there are limited methodological approaches to which I can subscribe and remain

in line with the underlying assumptions of the theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998). Ethnography is one such methodology with similar embedded epistemological assumptions (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionism is the epistemological stance that connects my theoretical perspective and my methodology. Constructionism assumes all meanings are constructed through social interactions (Gergen, 1994). The focus of constructionism is upon relationships and the meaning making process of cultural beings in dialogue with one another. Constructionism does not suggest that there is an inner existence that interprets the world "out there." Everything, even the self, is constructed. Constructivists, on the other hand, look at the construction of meaning while privileging an existent inner structure (Gergen, 1994; Rosenau, 1992). Constructivists say that identity and self are innate structures shared by all people. This structure is organized and given meaning through engagement in society yet, it is still existent, discoverable, and meaningful as an influential structure organizing human behavior (Crotty, 1998). Both perspectives address meaning as constructed, however, constructivist epistemology emphasizes the existence of underlying governing structures that, if isolated, can make predictions about behavior. Constructionists argue that even these "structures" are discursive. Constructionists support that things exist but even as I make that utterance, I enter into the discursive construction of that thing as meaningful (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1994).

According to Crotty (1998) though these epistemological and ontological stances typically do not initiate investigations, they do operate covertly through our decisions. How we define/understand knowledge can influence how we perceive situations, read

theory, or pose questions. For example, I did not start my current research interest by saying, I am a constructionist therefore I will study aggression in rugby. It began much more subtly, slowly and painfully.

It was not a theory that spurred my questions, it was my experiences, curiosities and beliefs about the nature of "things" that led me to wonder about the meaning of aggression in women's rugby. From these experiences I pondered aggression as a behavior with meanings not addressed by sport psychologists. Maybe aggression is a behavior imbued with meaning(s) specific to one's activity within a given context. Aggression might even be a behavior athletes can use to give meaning to themselves as rugby players. But as I read through the literature in sport psychology concerning aggression, I found only a hole where meaning should have been. I found myself searching the literature for the meanings of aggression to female rugby athletes and discovered nothing. To answer this question I needed to access socially accomplished meanings developed in and through rugby interactions. These beliefs and questions about meaning, truth, and knowledge ally with constructionist epistemology and indicated ethnographic methodology.

Ethnographic Methodology

As a methodology, ethnography involves the use of data emerging from in-depth observation, immersion, and exploration of meanings individuals give cultural phenomena in the context of the phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Ethnography can be used to achieve a number of ends. It can be used to construct critical, formal, literary, dialogic, realist, confessional, or impressionist tales (VanMaanen, 1988). Ethnography

can also be postmodern, interpretive, biographical, memoir, or narrative (Denzin, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Tedlock, 2000). For the purposes of this research I utilized ethnographic methods while adhering to the assumptions of interpretive ethnography (Denzin, 1989).

From this perspective, ethnography is a combination of interpretive methods, ethnographic theory and cultural descriptions used in a naturalistic setting to, as best as possible; understand how the participants in that setting make meaning of their reality (Denzin, 1969; 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Spradley, 1979). Therefore, I utilized ethnographic methods to enter into a dialogue with female rugby participants to better understand how they develop their own accounts of their own actions (Denzin, 1992).

In applying ethnographic methods in this fashion, I focused on the meanings female rugby players make for their own actions. I used interviews to investigate how experiences of aggression were structured, defined and lived (Denzin, 1992). I also used my involvement and observations to help make sense of their experiences. In so doing, I created a text and space that gave voice to female rugby players in sport psychology aggression research (Silk, 2005). This research not only gives voice to female athletes engaged in a collision sport but also challenges the taken-for-granted notions reiterated and maintained as truth in the sport psychology aggression literature.

This is important because, even as researchers, our meanings and choices of action toward particular social objects construct relationships among the objects described. This simultaneously creates a reality/truth concerning the observed relationship and also eliminates other possible explanations (Gergen, 1994). The more

these choices are picked up and used to describe said relationship, the stronger "truth" becomes and the more difficult to accept alternative explanations.

"Truth" is a coercive chimera given authenticity through orthodoxy. While looking to give voice to previously ignored female ruggers, redefine aggression and expand our understanding of aggression in sport, I am also aware that I am not outside of the duplicitous relationship among language, truth, knowledge, and meaning. As I write, I am constructing meaning, adhering to a particular orthodoxy, and elucidating partial truths. While I recognize this complex position, I am also acknowledging truth as culturally and historically contingent. In other words, knowing one understanding of aggression in sport, we are privy to only a portion of the meaningfulness of aggression in sport. In accepting only a fraction of the story as "the truth" we are wondering explorers lost in an infinite forest of meanings obscured by darkness with only the light of our laser pointer to light the way. However, if we listen to that voice as one of many possible lived experiences, one laser pointer becomes multiple and illuminates the infinitude of meaning. In this research, I add another voice, experience, perspective, position, and dimension to our current understanding of aggression in sport.

In summary, epistemology is embedded in one's theoretical perspective and one's methodology (Crotty, 1998). It is therefore important that these activities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) remain linked (Crotty, 1998). In this way, my theoretical perspective, symbolic interactionism, informs my previously outlined methodology. Based upon these assumptions I utilized the following ethnographic methods to investigate the female rugby players' experiences of aggression.

Method

In this section I discuss my research methods in detail. First, I discuss my use of semi-structured interviews. I then address the importance of participant-observation as a way to contextualize my interviews.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Consistent with Spradley (1979), as I reentered rugby culture with the additional role as researcher, I set aside the assumption that all people assign meaning to behaviors and situations in basically the same way. Therefore, I assumed that different rugby players may experience, define or structure aggression differently or those experiences and definitions may shift across contexts and time. This research was not about imposing my meanings, ideas, experiences or values on another actor. This research was about developing an understanding of how individuals within rugby culture ascribe meaning to certain actions; it was about leaning all that I can from the people involved in rugby (Spradley, 1979). Spradley (1979) calls this process of meaning seeking, "discovery." Through discovery, I asked the participants what they see and how they ascribe meaning to certain occurrences, social occasions, interactions, environments, and traditions (Berg, 2001). In this regard, semi-structured interviews helped me access meaning.

Semi-structured interviews are based on a predetermined interview schedule (Schensul et al. 1999). This interview schedule is typically based on themes emerging from observations (Kvale, 1996; Spradley, 1979). Because of my past experience as a rugby player and based on previous research findings relating to aggression and identity, a tentative draft of my interview guide was made before entering the field. This guide

changed very little as a result of my emersion in the field. The guide did evolve in each

interview depending on the experiences of the interviewee. The flexibility of semi-

structured interviews was one of the reasons why I chose it for this research. In a semi-

structured interview, the guide is just a tentative strategy; it is not meant to determine the

flow of the interview (Schensul et al., 1999). This was beneficial because the guide

provided me with an outline of subject matter for discussion but also allowed me the

freedom to explore unanticipated topics brought to light by the participant (Berg, 2001;

Schensul et al., 1999).

The interview guide, which is included in appendix A for reference purposes, was

a useful tool, providing a framework of open-ended questions and probes, which helped

me remember important topic throughout the course of multiple interviews (Schensul et

al., 1999). Furthermore, the structure of the interview guide (i.e., the order of the

questions) can contribute to rapport with and comfort of the interviewee (Berg, 2001).

For example, by placing demographic (e.g., how long have you played rugby?) and

potentially easy, non-intrusive questions (e.g., how did you choose rugby?) at the

beginning of the interview, I was able to put the interviewee at ease and allow her to

speak more freely throughout the interview session. This strategy allowed the athletes to

feel at ease to explore their feelings and thoughts concerning more complicated questions

(e.g., what does it mean to you to be a female rugby player?).

Beyond the organization of the interview schedule I also followed a few of Berg's

(2001) guidelines for creating a conducive interview environment. First, whenever

possible I asked the interviewee to choose a comfortable and convenient meeting place to

conduct the interview. At the start of each interview I began the audio-tape and engaged the interviewee in a "chat" to set the interviewee at ease. Once the interview was underway, I worked to keep the interview on track and used smooth transitions and probes rather than harsh interruptions to redirect deviations from the interview topic. Throughout the interview I conveyed my enthusiasm and interest through my non-verbal and verbal responses. At the conclusion of every interview I thanked the participant and asked the interviewee if she had anything to add that was not previously address during the interview.

Observation

To aid in my analysis of my interview data I also did participant-observation. The first step in conducting observations is to become a part of the team, group, culture or setting (Berg, 2001). *Gatekeepers* are the individuals who have the power to allow or prohibit a researcher's participation in the group (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). It is important for the researcher to build rapport, trust, and interest among gatekeepers in order to obtain entrée into a group (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In some situations, gaining entry to a culture that piques a researcher's interest may be quite easy due to their status as a member of the group they are interested in studying. Such was the case in this study.

As a participant-observer, the researcher becomes a part of the group and shares and creates experiences from within that culture (Taylor & Bogdan, 1988). During this research, I played rugby and interacted in rugby culture as a player. This role allowed me to observe behavior and situations that helped in my understanding of rugby and enriched

my interviews. Participant-observation was also useful as it helped me gain insight into the functioning of the rugby social group.

Observation is not only about entering an environment, becoming a fixture, watching, feeling, listening and interacting, it is also about getting used to the setting. Observation is about developing relationships and coming to understand the contextual experience of the participant (Denzin, 1997). Situations, behaviors, conversations, and traditions are not singular, stagnant or reflected in words. They are multiple and the meaning of the moment is not mirrored in descriptions but produced in shared dialogues, spoken or un-spoken. My representation of what I observed was only a part of the context within which meaning was produced. In this way, I did not use my observations as capturing experience; my observations simply helped me better understand the shared experiences and the taken-for-granted notions of rugby.

Field Notes

I did observations at one rugby tournament, three individual rugby matches (before, during, after, and while traveling to and from) and 14 practices. My field notes contained descriptive notes about what I observed. These field notes helped me understand rugby culture. According to Spradley (1979) there are two types of field notes: condensed and expanded. In the condensed account I jotted brief notes, phrases, descriptions, and key words in to a small notebook while I was in the field. I then elaborated on these condensed accounts in my expanded field notes which were typed once I exited the field.

My expanded field notes included date, time, and place of observation. Furthermore, I added details to the jotted condensed account made during my field observation. In my expanded field notes I recorded physical descriptions, details of occurrences, sensory impressions (e.g., sights, sounds, textures, smells and tastes), specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations and language used.

Also, consistent with Spradley (1979) who emphasizes the importance of identifying who is speaking, I noted who was speaking and, as often as possible, recorded verbatim conversations. This was important as the actual words rugby players use are keys to their experiences (Spradley, 1979).

My expanded field notes have page and line numbers which helped organize my observations. Further, to help with organization, I split the typed page into two columns (divided by a line down the center of the page). My expanded field notes appeared only in the left-hand column of the page. This organization allowed me to make analytic notes next to my field notes while simultaneously keeping my interpretations separate from my observations.

Analytic Notes

Analytic notes are separate interpretations of field notes. Analytic notes are preliminary notes taken during early scrutiny of the field notes (Ely, 1991; Spradley, 1979). My analytic notes were hand-written on the right hand column of my research log. In this space I recorded my questions about people or behaviors at the site and used that information for future interview investigation. I also used that space to analyze meaning,

brainstorm about culture and keep track of my continual interpretations and insights regarding my observations.

Personal Experience: The Reflexive Journal

Consistent with Denzin (1989) my own personal experiences with this team helped me interpret and comprehend the meanings of aggression felt, extended and expressed by the women I interviewed. To record my experiences, I kept a reflexive journal. The reflexive journal was my journal about my experiences with this team as a player and a researcher. In the reflexive fieldwork journal explored my fears, ideas, epiphanies, problems and possible solutions. This journal was an introspective place for me to articulate my feelings and influences while also recording my personal responses to the research process (Spradley, 1979; Berg, 2001). These reflexive notes, though not analyzed, helped me in my analysis of my interviews.

The reflexive journal also helped me position myself within the social environment and acknowledge my interactions and experiences. In being reflective, I simultaneously introduce myself to the reader, position myself in the context, and acknowledge how my "being" shapes how I see. Reflexivity is a process that must be ongoing. It is a process that must be undertaken with fervent persistence. Not only is it important for me to disclose, up front, my theoretical perspectives, personal descriptions, and relationship to the culture, I must also speak to my ongoing influence throughout this research (e.g., through the reflexive log). I will therefore make sure that I am not erasing my own voice from this text. I have already worked on writing myself into these first few chapters, however, that is not enough. I must continue writing throughout the whole

ethnographic process. The reflexive journal is part reminder to write and part long term

memory. The ideas, experiences, emotions, fears, and accomplishments expressed in my

reflexive journal have been used to help me analyze my interview data.

Reflexivity is valuable in reminding the reader and the researcher that there is no

singular truth to be told, truth is multiple and relative (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000;

Berg, 2001; Schensul et al., 1999). Everyone views the perceptual world differently,

through different lenses. The reflexive process allowed me to recognize the lenses

through which I perceive the world. My interpretations were but one of many possibilities

for knowledge. To attempt to be objectively removed from this research would mean

concealing my influence and privilege my truth (or way of seeing) as *the truth*.

When I speak, be it in dialogue with a participant, during an interview or through

the lines of this text, I speak from the culture within which I am situated. Therefore it was

important for me to reflect critically and consciously on own multiple self/identity. Every

phase of this research worked through my biography as a socially, politically, personally

and historically situated individual. I must admit my own authority, acknowledge myself,

and take responsibility for my impact on the situation and the participants.

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

I played rugby for the Raptors and collected field notes and interview data during

the fall 2008 season (August-October). During that time, I attend the three hour practice

session twice a week and play in the six weekend rugby matches. The Raptors were a

college-club rugby team with which I played for eight years. As both a university and city

affiliated sport club we were an official university sanctioned club team but were not

restricted by membership limits typically placed on university teams. Specifically, team

members did not have to be students to play on the team. As such, the Raptors had a wide

age range (18-45 years old) and diverse team membership. Due to my status as a rugby

player of 11 years with select-side experience, I had a certain amount of status and

respect on the team. Therefore, I had an open easy rapport already established with the

women on the team and the volunteer coach, Libby. This eased recruitment of interview

participants. I met with the team prior to the first day of practice and informed them of

my intention. I then asked for volunteers. Additionally, at rugby tournaments, I

approached other teams, provided them with an overview of my research and got contact

information for willing participants. Due to scheduling conflict and geographic location

only four of the volunteers were able to be interviewed.

During the course of this research the Raptors were in a rebuilding stage and were

struggling to get new recruits to join the team. Due to the limited numbers, the Raptors

played matches with another women's rugby club affiliated with a different university

one hour from the Raptors. The two teams held their own practices but would enter rugby

tournaments and matches as a single team. During a typical Raptor practice, held twice a

week, about 10 individuals attended. Consequently, I aimed to recruit at least 10

participants from the Raptors. Fourteen of my teammates volunteered.

The Raptors were classified as a division II team. This meant that the Raptors

were not a highly competitive team though many of the team members had played with

highly competitive teams in the past. Despite struggling for players, the fall 2008 season

was played without forfeit due to insufficient players on the field. The Raptors always had at least 15 players present at every match.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

I conducted and transcribed 18 semi-structured interviews throughout the fall rugby season. I recruited interview participants after most women's rugby teams had competed in at least one game of the fall season. Though the participants were recruited early, due to the busy schedules of most of the participants, I conducted the bulk of interviews after the last games of the season. This insured that everyone I interviewed had at least one season of rugby experience. I recruited 18 female rugby players to participate in semi-structured interviews. The number of interviewees (i.e., 18) was based on my desire to get a diverse sample of participants and the overwhelming interest of players to participate in the interview process.

Despite conducting and transcribing 18 interviews, this study focused on 12 participants. After immersion in the field and in the data I found that these 12 participants provided rich and detailed information that was not substantially different from the remaining six participants. The participants in these interviews ranged in age from 18 to 45 years of age. They also represented a wide range of talents and years of rugby experience. I was careful to choose ruggers who had played with or identified strongly with other rugby teams. More specifically, the women I interviewed represented not only the Raptor club but also eight additional clubs. One individual competed at the national level and vied for a spot on the US national team. The experience level of these women ranged from first semester rookies to 14 years experience.

These 12 interviews represented a variety of experiences. In terms of experiences with other teams, Jane, Erica, Suzie, and Sandy all brought with them strong experiences from other teams. Cali played for the Poppers and only engaged with the Raptors when our teams played together at tournaments. In addition to playing with the Raptors, Libby had the unique experience of playing at the most elite and well respected level of women's rugby in the US. As such, she brought with her experiences from both a regional select-side team and experiences competing at a national team selection camp. The remaining six participants, Rae, Nina, Sabrina, Wendy, Sheri, and Laura had only ever played for the Raptors. In addition to team identification, every one of these 12 participants had experience playing at least one match with another team as a "whore[6]."

My experiences in rugby, at the club level, have taught me that team boundaries are not as rigid as they are at higher, more competitive, levels nor are team boundaries as riged in rugby as they are in other sports. Furthermore, a whole component of rugby culture, the rugby "whore," is contingent upon an individuals' willingness to "fill in" on teams without enough players. In this regard, my participants rarely pulled from a single team experience to construct themselves as rugby players. Ultimately, these 12 individuals represented a diverse cross section of the rugby community and of the Raptors rugby club. I have compiled their information for reference in appendix D table D1. Also, in appendix E I have provided more details on each participant in the

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[6] In rugby a whore is someone who is willing to play with other teams perhaps even against one's own team

interviewee character sketches. Each semi-structured interview was audio-recorded on mini-cassettes which allowed for verbatim transcription of the interviews. The interview transcripts were then analyzed.

Data analysis

The analysis of my ethnographic record was a long process of reading, re-reading, and reading in order to "reduce" my heap of data into a hierarchical coding structure (ranging from specific to general) based on Charmaz's (2000) adaptation of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss' (1987) grounded theory paradigm for coding. Interpretation of the data collected into meaningful codes is the basis of ethnographic data analysis (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Codes were constructs that I identified to represent themes within my data during and after my data collection (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). My analysis in this research was focused on my interviews and informed by my observations and personal experience.

My process of data analysis was continual. The continual quality of this process facilitated my data familiarity, insight and understanding of rugby culture (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991;LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). My analysis began as soon as I transcribed my first interview. With each completed interview I began transcriptions. During these transcriptions I kept notes in my reflexive journal about themes, interesting stories and common language. Once all 12 interviews were finished and I completed transcribing the interviews, I dove into each interview focusing primarily of my analysis. I began this process with a comprehensive "reading" of my data. While I read, I noted my ideas,

reflections, or theoretical insights about the text (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991) in my reflexive journal.

Once I read the data, I then read it looking for significant events, meaningful interactions, assumptions, contradictions, repetition, conflict, metaphors, and any data seemingly relevant to my research questions (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991; Charmaz, 2000). I then "chunked" these phenomena into meaningful sections (Ely, 1991). This process was as precise as possible and allowed me to generate as many codes as I could (Berg, 2001). Once noted, the meaningful chunks of data were labeled with brief descriptors (Ely, 1991). These descriptors became my open codes (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Open codes were tags that indicate meaningful phrases, words, paragraphs, and/or pages which, sometimes, overlapped (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Strauss, 1987).

With most of the texts read and tagged I listed all of my codes (Ely, 1991; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). That list was compiled in an excel document into what Ryan and Bernard (2000) call a "codebook." The codebook included descriptions and examples from the transcripts of each of the codes. The codes in the codebook were then compared and contrasted so that I could identify and eliminate codes that are redundant. Furthermore, this examination of my codebook allowed me to perceive independence, similarities and relationships among my open codes (Ely, 1991) which facilitated coding the codes (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Coding of open codes is called axial coding (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Axial codes are larger themes encompassing the meaning of the

smaller codes (Charmaz, 2000; Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991; Glaser & Strauss, 1967;

LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Strauss, 1987). For example, *I'm not girly, I love to hit*

people, they told me I couldn't, and *empowerment* were open codes that were compiled in

the axial code *be who I've always been.* After I generated axial codes, I returned to my

transcripts and determined if my codes represented the text (Ely, 1991). Once I was

sufficiently satisfied that my axial codes were viable, I coded my axial codes in an effort

to generate a limited number of focused codes (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967;

Strauss, 1987). For example, the axial codes *be who I've always been* and *rugby*

symbolizes made up the focused code *I am rugby.* My focused codes were general enough

to capture the "gist" of my data (Berg, 2001; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). These codes

were then placed into categories (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987)

which I called layers. For example, *I am rugby* is one of four focused codes in the layer

Rug(me). I organized all the data into three layers which represented overarching themes

arising from the data (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). In

appendix F I have compiled, in three tables (F1-F3), my layers, focused codes, and axial

codes. Additionally, I presented examples of some of my open codes and raw data to help

demonstrate my analysis process.

<center>Representing the Voice of the Participant</center>

Do to my immersion in the field, I must be cautious in my representations of those

who I research. In this research I tried to balance the safety of my participants with what

Denzin (2000) refers to as the right to know. He suggests that this right to know must be

balanced with "nonmaleficence" (Denzin, 2000, p.902) but should not be done at the

expense of their voice. I was willing to portray the contradiction of human experience even if it did not elucidate my assumptions. This research was a process of discovery of my responsibilities to those individuals I am claiming to represent. As such, I attempted to portray those individuals in a way that allowed me to be ethical to the community while also being loyal to my research agenda.

As a member of the group, enmeshed in rugby culture, I formed meaningful relationships with the other rugby players, coaches, referees, etc. Those relationships, though meaningful also allowed me access to personal information that had no bearing on my research. In order to reduce threats to participants' privacy, I weighed the costs and benefits associated with reporting potentially private data. Consistent with Angrosino & Mays de Perez (2000) when the information in question was of greater risk than benefit, I omitted the information. A more challenging scenario occurred when the information in question was of relevance to self/identity development in rugby yet presented a significant risk to a participant's privacy. In these situations, I remembered my responsibility to the individuals involved in rugby culture while also acknowledging my position of power and avoided reporting potentially harmful information. Further, by maintaining the confidentiality of the participants I was able to traverse the consequences associated with learning too much (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Berg, 2001; Christians, 2000; Ely, 1991; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In order to maintain confidentiality, I converted the names of the individuals in this study to pseudonyms and also concealed identifiable locations, descriptions, and/or characteristics that may inadvertently divulged a participant's identity (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991; LeCompte &

Schensul, 1999). As a guard against unwanted access to my raw data, I secured these materials in my home office in a locked fire proof box (Berg, 2001; Ely, 1991; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

As a result of these methods, I compiled rich and contextualized interview data that allowed me to explore my research questions in depth. This data also shed new light on aggression as a sport psychology concept while indicating the viability of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective to understand and explore unacceptable behavior in sport. In the following chapter I discuss my results.

CHAPTER V
RESULTS/DISCUSSION: RUG(BE)(YOU)(ME)

The purpose of this research was to use a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand and explore female rugby players' experiences of aggression and how they understand, define, and structure those experiences relative to self/identity development in sport. Moreover, this research explored a new way of conceptualizing and studying aggression as a way to extend sport psychology's understanding of what is experienced as "bad behavior." My research questions were, (1) how do women define themselves as ruggers/how do they (re)produce these identities in and out of rugby, (2) how do women define and experience aggression, and (3) how are these accounts used in the construction of identity?

Symbolic interactionism assumes that self/identity are social objects that are given meaning in and through interaction (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1974, 1992; Mead, 1934). As such, I am looking at how female athletes construct not only their rugby self/identity but also construct their experiences in rugby. Furthermore I am looking at how these athletes give meaning to themselves as they negotiate and (re)produce a self/identity that is multiple and changing.

In order to accomplish the above, I will present the following data in a way that speaks to the reflexive process of self/identity accomplishment (Blumer, 1966; Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934) and specifically illustrates the unique experiences of female rugby players as they negotiate meanings of self/identity, rugby, gender and aggression. Though my results are presented in a way that is distinct, the simultaneous construction, (re)presentation, negotiation, and experience of identity is much more fluid and complex

than this coding scheme would suggest. Therefore, in an effort to better illustrate the complexity of identity, I have decided to represent the data as layers to emphasize the relatedness of the data in the construction, maintenance and experience of rugby self/identities. I have arranged the data into three higher order catagories which I refer to as layers. These layers are: rug(be), rug(you) and rug(me). These layers are organized in this way to illustrate self/identity development, maintenance and (re)creation through symbolic interactionism. Through the use of layers I am representing the data as intertwined. These layers are like transparencies. We can talk about each layer individually but a glimpse of self/identity development looks more like transparencies laid upon one another, messy and indistinguishable. This means that when an experience is told, all of these layers occur simultaneously. Though I am still applying boundaries and categorization in this representation, I want to also emphasize that these moments and experiences are overlapping and occurring simultaneously, they are layered upon one another.

By utilizing layers I am attempting to understand how rugby self/identities are constructed from a symbolic interactionist perspective. Self/identities are one's understanding of oneself as a social object (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Denzin, 1974; Mead, 1934). To accomplish this, one must experiences one's self as an other (Blumer, 1969). This involves imagining how someone else may experience "me" within a given situation (Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934). This other can be a single individual, a finite group (e.g., a team), or an abstract community (e.g., rugby community) which Mead (1934) refers to as the generalized other. The layers rug(be) and rug(you) were created in accordance with

this portion of self/identity accomplishment. Rug(me) represents the reiterative tendency of self/identity development and maintenance. Because we can understand ourselves as social objects, self/identities are also an object of the actor's own behavior (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Charon, 2004; Mead, 1934). Which means one will tend to highlight experiences and behaviors that reiterate to oneself and others one's understanding of that self/identity (Blumer, 1966, 1969).

More specifically, Rug(be) represents a layer of how the participants experience the generalized other. This layer is split into two categories: (1) what "they" say, and (2) the game. The category, "what they say" explores rugby players' stories concerning interaction(s) with non-rugby players. "The game" category references these rugby players' construction of the physical game they play. In other words, this category explores how these ruggers define the situation of rugby.

Rug(you) addresses how the participants take up and use "what they say" and "the game" as a means of defining themselves as rugby players without referring to themselves specifically. In other words, this layer represents their experiences of self/identity as a social object. This layer is made up of four categories: (1) fearless, (2) aggressive, (3) red badge of fearlessness/aggression and (4) it takes all kinds. Taken together these categories illustrate how these athletes constructed a rugby identity as something other; not me, "you."

The layer Rug(me) speaks to the incorporation of previous layers rug(be) and rug(you) into the participants' self/identity stories. This layer is also made up of four

categories which are as follows: (1) I am fearless of pain and contact, (2) I am aggressive but under control, (3) bragging bruises and (4) I am rugby.

These layers, rug(be), rug(you) and rug(me), are important to acknowledge as they represent important pieces of symbolic interactionism. What's more, setting up these layers allows me to talk about how (1) fearlessness, (2) aggression and (3) gender are intertwined across all three layers. Setting up my data in this way allows me to talk about specific important experiences in these athletes' construction of self/identity relative to symbolic interactionism.

What makes this organization of data unique is my attempt to represent the data as layered, intertwined, complex and messy while still imposing a level of organization. I am choosing to begin by discussing the layer relating to how the rugby players experience other people's reactions to their participation in rugby. This is an arbitrary choice and is not meant to indicate an origin of meaning.

Additionally, I have decided to include the results and the discussion sections together. As Denzin (1993) has suggested, qualitative analysis is not simply coding the data. Part of the analysis is making sense of the data as connected to the situation, actions and events while simultaneously interpreting that information. This interpretation or decoding is done by the researcher as she/he reads the data through the interpretive lens of theory and past research (Denzin, 1993). As such, the choice to include results and discussion together was a conscious choice because they are occurring simultaneously. Presenting the codes simultaneously with my interpretation allows me to reveal taken-

for-granted notions, alternate readings and multiple meanings layered within the symbols of cultural exchange (Denzin, 1993).

<p align="center">Rug(be): Outsiders Think and the Sport Demands</p>

In the layer rug(be), I am highlighting these women's construction of a generalized other. In this layer I focus on two aspects of this constructed other. First in the category "they say," I look at the imagined standpoint of non-ruggers. Second in the category, "the game" I look specifically at how these athletes define the sport of rugby. Both the imagined view of the non-rugger and the definition of the sport of rugby help these athletes comprehend the "rules" of the situation that make self accomplishment possible. This together with their ability to understand and enact these "rules" was what Mead (1934) referred to, in his game metaphor, as the generalized other. Within each category I will discuss the themes of pain, contact, aggression and gender.

<p align="center">*They Say*</p>

Rugby, as a sport and self/identity, was a social object which held specific meanings constructed through communication between rugby players and non-rugby players. In this arena, rugby as a sport was linked to pain, excessive contact and males. Specifically, most participants in this study explained that much of the negative response they experienced from others was linked to the idea that rugby players desire to hurt others or be hurt. These responses work to attach meaning to rugby as inescapably painful. Through continued repetition of this link between pain, hurt, and rugby, pain and hurt become solidified as truths about rugby. With these meanings assigned to rugby, rugby participants are defined in this arena as "possessing" these same qualities.

Therefore, because rugby was constructed as a setting synonymous with pain the women

participating in rugby were defined as seeking pain. Wendy explained: "People think that

you're looking to hurt someone else. Or, get hurt." Similarly, Laura said, "people think

rugby players are like, kind of some of those X-games people, you know, where you do

the really, dangerous stunts, you could get really hurt." Furthermore, Suzie said, "they

think I'm crazy that I'm like, I think they think it's like masochism -- they think that I

want to be hurt."

   The link between pain and rugby was also expressed through many of the

athletes' experiences with "concerned" parents. For example:

> My mother and father both concerned that I'm going to get hurt and that's
> their main concern. My mom's like, "I'm going to have to be like paying
> your bills and doing, you know, you're not going to--" She thinks I'm
> going to get some major concussion or something and be out and not be
> able to do anything, won't be able to feed myself (Rae).

> My parents're very supportive of me, they're not supportive of the concept
> of rugby. Every time I talk to my mom about rugby, "why are you doing
> this? Just go play some other sport. There's so many other sports where
> you don't have to go get an MRI for" (Suzie).

   In these quotes, the women suggest that their parents do not like rugby because

they see rugby as dangerous. If we consider the interpretive/interactive process of

meaning making and the context of these statements, we can see more than a link

between danger and rugby. In the arena created through interaction between a rugger and

a non-rugby player, meanings about rugby and these ruggers, as social objects, were

communicated and negotiated. As social objects, these individuals were interpreted by

the individual engaged in conversation with them. In accordance with Goffman (1959)

and Gergen (1991), these women were more than just rugby players, they also

held/conveyed meanings to others as mothers, daughters, sisters, students, etc.

Interactions such as these spoke to the multiple ways in which others interpret them as a

social object. Specifically, gender and rugby were woven together through a discourse of

concern. For example, take the experiences of Cali when discussing her family:

> My own parents don't understand why I would "put myself through this?"
> They're, "why would you want to do that to yourself? Aren't you happy
> with just--" Pretty much just playing the role of the mom and the caretaker
> and what not. And it's just like, no! This is, this is great, this is a whole
> nother side that we can be. That you can do physical things. Of course my
> parents are always, "there are so much more safer sports for you to be
> playing."

Just beneath the discourse of concern, one can read gender norms. For Cali, rugby was

associated with pain; however, seeking pain, or playing rugby, was constructed as

conflicting with her more "feminine" roles of mother/caretaker. In this way, pain held

gendered meanings. Messner (2002) and others suggest that pain is associated with the

accomplishment of masculinity. Interactions between ruggers and non-ruggers reiterated

this notion. These interactions serve to, as Blumer (1966) suggest, solidify the connection

between pain and rugby and work to position pain as an incontrovertible "truth" about

rugby and as such work to link rugby to notions of masculinity.

With such a reliance on pain as a defining aspect of rugby, players were often

positioned as abnormal, crazy or stupid. Rae explained:

> There was that butt-load of people that was like, "you're nuts! This is
> crazy that you would consider doing this." I think it's a lot of the older
> people that I tell that think that it's crazy because they just think that I'm
> going to get hurt, and they don't want to see us get hurt.

Interactions such as this served to define rugby as painful and those involved were

constructed as seeking pain. The idea that ruggers were crazy was related to pain. Pain

was constructed as something that normal, sane people avoid. Again, in Rae's quote, the discourse of concern veils a gendered notion about the perceived frailty of females. Therefore, seeking pain not only goes against what was expected of a female, but also goes against one's sanity. These quotes illustrate the taken-for-granted notion that female bodies are naturally frail (Griffin,1998; Hargraves, 1994) and demonstrates how male superiority in contact sports is naturalized (Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). What's more, as evidenced in previous quotes, rugby was crafted as a location to inflict pain. As such, rugby participants were constructed as desiring to hurt others.

Many of the participants also linked pain and aggression. Sandy explained that others experienced rugby players as, "just really rough, mean people who want to hurt each other, or like maybe really aggressive people." In this quote, Sandy shared an interaction that illuminated the connection between aggression, pain, and rugby. What's more, by evoking the phrase, "mean people" as linked to "aggressive people" a negative connotation was placed on both aggression and playing rugby.

Throughout recounted interactions between ruggers and non-ruggers, a portion of rugby was defined as connected to pain (i.e., the inevitability of pain and seeking pain). Rugby players were then constructed, in these interactions, as carriers of these meanings. Therefore, ruggers were constructed as seekers of pain—inflicted on one's self or others—and, as a result, were positioned as crazy, aggressive or sitting in opposition to female gender norms (Theberge, 2000). Through the continued emphasis placed on pain and injury the link between rugby and pain became more solidified and pain was easier to

consider as a "fact" of rugby. The primacy of pain, aggression, insanity and gender are

also present in my discussion of contact.

Remaining in the arena of interaction between ruggers and non-ruggers, rugby is

also defined as a sport with excessive amounts of contact. For example, many athletes

felt as though others defined rugby as unruly and lawless.

> I think that people think it's more of a you just go out and tackle and there's no rules, because, like professional rugby, it's not televised, so they hear about injuries from rugby, or it's a chaotic sport, there are no rules and so people can do whatever they want (Libby).

> I don't think most people understand how much thinking goes into the game, it's not just this mindless oh throw the ball around, you're just hitting each other (Cali).

> Oh they can do anything in rugby, it's not even a sport, cuz it's just a free for all (Laura).

Through interactions with non-ruggers, rugby was defined as a set of specific behaviors.

These behaviors, such as full body contact, were then given meaning through continued

interaction between rugger and non-rugger. In this case, excessive contact indicated that

rugby was a violent or aggressive sport. Wendy explained, "A lot of people would say

it's violent." Furthermore, some of the ruggers felt that their participation in a "rough"

sport was negatively evaluated. Sheri explained, "Outside people, oh, a lot of outside

people, usually when I tell them I play rugby, their response is, 'isn't that rough?!'" Not

only were the words of Sheri's quote interesting, but the tone in which she used to deliver

the question, "isn't that rough?" was also interesting. In her delivery of this question, she

indicated to me through tone of voice, that the comment was less of a question and more

of an accusation of misbehavior. As a social object, Sheri was interpreted and acted

toward in a way that indicated to her that she was doing something wrong in being involved in a sport defined as rough. One possibility for this resided in the link made between excessive contact/violence and gender. Jane reported that when she claimed her rugby participation non-ruggers tended to ask, "oh that's pretty violent isn't that? Don't men play that?" Like Sheri, Jane indicated that non-ruggers tended to respond to her participation with distaste.

In Jane's quote we can start to see the communication of a link between gender and notions of contact/violence. Past research has suggested that contact, pain and aggression are characteristics aligned with masculinity (Bryson, 1994; Dunning, 1994; Messner, 1992, 2002; Young & White, 1995). Because of the relational definition of gender (Schact, 1996) these characteristics are constructed as opposite to femininity and sports that are given these meanings are constructed as men's sports (Messner, 2002). Because of the definition(s) constructed around the sport of rugby, is positioned as a male sport and is used to reproduce certain types of masculinities (Burgess et al., 2003). This was consistent with what these women experienced as non-ruggers response to them as female rugby players. Nina put it bluntly when she said that many non-rugger's defined rugby in this way, "they think, rugby, it's for men – only." Nina was not alone. Many of the athletes were aware that others defined the sport of rugby as a man's sport. For example some athletes said, "It's I guess rugby would be stereotypically men" (Sandy). "They think it's a men's sport" (Jane). "Even though we play, it's still seen, like, a man's sport" (Laura).

Furthermore, the women in this study imagined that the response of shock and disbelief to their rugby participation was because these shocked and disbelieving individuals defined rugby as a man's sport. "I think people are surprised that women do full contact" (Jane). Other athletes went on to explain:

> Whoa, that's crazy, that's intense, you're a girl?! ... People are just shocked. Oh that's something that girls shouldn't do because we're supposed to be all preppy and girly … I mean it's aggressive, a boy should be playing this sport according to society's point of view (Wendy).

> I think just the fact that you have a group of girls that are out there tackling each other without pads; most people think that's crazy because, "girls aren't supposed to be doing it" (Rae).

Research also suggests that when female athletes do enter sports typically defined as male/masculine they are often labeled as lesbians or deviant in some way (Scranton et al., 1999; Theberge, 2000; Wright & Clark, 1999). Consistent with past research, the women in this study suggested that many non-rugby players define female rugby players as man-ish or "beasty." For example, Erica explained that female rugby players are imagined to be, "Ugly. I guess. Right because pretty girls don't want to mess up their face or get dirty." Other athletes suggested that female ruggers are assumed to be "crazy, uhm, manly (Laura), "big girl, strong girl, looks like a man" (Suzie), "really beasty" (Wendy) or "I would say big, burly, mean, rough, ya know a beast" (Sandy). Similarly, these ruggers identified that non-rugby players also think of female rugby players as lesbians. For example Erica said, with no hesitation, "I think they think lesbian, only lesbians play rugby." Sheri echoed this when she said, "everyone thinks I'm a lesbian." Similarly, Cali explained,

> They stop and they're like, "are you a lesbian?"Are you serious? Really? You were in my wedding! This is not the kind of generalization that I would expect. I was like, "no, I'm good. What in the world are you talking about?" They were like, "ho well, we just figured, you know rugby."

The women in this study explained that non-ruggers may think that all female rugby players are lesbians because the sport is typically defined based on boy/guy behavior (e.g., intensity, toughness, strength, contact, aggression).

> "Oh are you a lesbian?" Kind of thing. "Well, no, no I'm not." And they're like, "oh isn't that what it's supposed to be like." I'm like, "no, it's just kind of an intense sport that you can play, anyone can play it, it's just you gotta be tough… I think it's just a stereotype in rugby, they're like, "oh, if you're going to play a boyish sport and be really intense, then, you have to be gay or something, weird" (Wendy).

> I think stereotypical female sports player with aggression they think, "oh she must be a lesbian." You know, because heaven forbid you be straight and aggressive. There's no way that's a combination (Erica).

For these women, the sport of rugby was defined as intense, tough, painful, contact focused and aggressive and because of those definitions rugby was labeled a man's sport. It was these definitions that the rugby players sighted as the reason why many non-rugby players assumed they were lesbian.

These women also imagined that non-ruggers saw ruggers as mean, brutes bent on hurting others. Therefore, when the non-rugby player defined the rugby player before them as caring, nurturing, nice or small they tended to respond to that rugger with disbelief or confusion.

> When I was at the doctor I told him, "oh I dislocated my elbow" and he said, "hmmm, wrestlers and rugby players are the two top sports where you see that. I don't think you're a wrestler, plus it's not the season…are you a rugby player?" he's like, "you don't play rugby!?" and I say, "yeah actually I do" (Laura).

> I went to the MRI and everything and then when I came out, we're getting my stuff together and they're like, "so uhm, we read your chart, and aren't you a little small to be a rugby player?" (Laughing) and uhm, well first off I was like, "yeah apparently." Yeah, so people are surprised (Suzie).

> Definitely a lot of people go, "wow, really? You don't look like a rugby player." Or some people… "I don't believe you; I don't think you really play rugby" (Sandy).

This confusion or, as was the case with Sandy, disbelief conveyed meaning to the ruggers about their rugby selves. This confusion/disbelief also communicated meaning(s) about rugby and rugby players as they are defined by non-ruggers. Specifically, confusion/disbelief indicated to these ruggers that their rugby self was flawed either in terms of size or appearance. In some cases, the women were pressed to "prove" themselves as ruggers. For example Wendy said about non-ruggers, "They don't believe me, they're like, 'let me see your bruises'"

Though no one indicated a response directly questioning their ability to play based on gender, gender can be read as part of the meaning of these interactions. Ultimately, the confusion/disbelief these athletes experienced as a response to their participation reinforced the dominant definitions of ruggers as big, mean, and male. However, as Charon (2004) suggests, our interactions with others are not one sided, we are continually negotiating meanings. In this way, many of the women that experienced disbelief engaged in what Goffman (1959) calls defensive practices. Through these defensive practices individuals protected their definitions of themselves from conflicting interactions with others. In this case, the ruggers protected their definitions of themselves as rugby players by emphasizing that they are not too "nice" or "small" to play the game of rugby.

> Depending on the situation, how long I've known them; it depends, because sometimes it'll be like, "you're so nice though, really? You're so calm." And I'm like, "yeah, I'm…not on the field" (Erica).

> You have to be really tough to play it. They think you have to be this beast to play this sport, so their kind of in awe. When they find out that you play it, especially when they see me and I'm 5 foot 3, and they're like, "hmmmm." One guy told me I was too small to play rugby. I was like, "that's not true. That's not true at all" (Sheri).

In this category, these women were able to understand themselves as social object by imagining the perspectives of non-rugby players. In this arena, when these women say "I play rugby," they acknowledge that according to their interactions with non-ruggers they are defined as aggressive, violent, mean, willing to get hurt and hurt others. Furthermore, in the arena constructed through the interaction between rugger and non-rugger, their rugby self definition was set in conflict with their definition of themselves as women. As such they were labeled as outsiders (e.g., crazy, man-ish, lesbian). However, the generalized other is not singular and is not constructed from one person or place (Coles, 2008; Mead, 1934). Part of the generalized other is our understanding of our current situation. Specifically, each set of "rules" constructed and comprehended for self accomplishment is situated (Denzin, 2001). As such I want to now turn and consider the situation within which the individual was defining herself must also be considered.

The Game

In this category, I focus on how the participants talked specifically about the physical sport of rugby as a painful and dangerous sport: a sport that demands fearlessness, respect, and a willingness to get hurt. I also address how these women define aggression and unacceptable behavior. According to Denzin (1989, 2001) it is

important for me to understand how they define the situation of rugby in order to understand how they give meanings to behaviors and interactions within that space. Therefore in this category I explore how rugby players incorporate, ignore, or modify some of the definitions of rugby constructed through interactions with non-rugby players into their experiences and definitions of the sport of rugby. Specifically, I talk about how the athletes defined rugby as a space for pain, contact, and aggression.

One of the main ways in which these athletes defined the sport of rugby was through endurance of pain. Specifically, they suggested that the point of rugby was endurance and infliction of pain.

> One of the points of the game is to bruise somebody else and to not be the one who gets bruised. You'd like to think that you're giving just as many as you're getting, if not more (Rae).

> Rugby is to put yourself in a position to get hurt, because that's an awesome adrenaline rush (Suzie).

> Part of the territory, to come home with something, to be walking funny, to kerplop onto the toilet because you can't squat down that far (Cali).

For these athletes, signing up to play rugby was about signing up to get hurt. As Cali suggested in her previous quote, pain was linked to the level of contact allowed in the sport. Contact was related to the importance of pain as a defining characteristic of the sport of rugby. Specifically, Nina said, "The physical nature of rugby, in general, defines it." Jane added, "it seems like physical contact is everything." Repeatedly these women made it clear that one very important defining component of the sport of rugby was contact. According to symbolic interactionists like Denzin (2001), with continued reiteration, contact was imbued with meaning and then that meaning, the bedrock of rugby, was made "real" through further experiences. The "reality" of rugby as contact

was so well solidified that, according to these ruggers, without contact, rugby was no

longer rugby. For example, Suzie explained, "Rugby wouldn't be rugby without

contact...and I probably wouldn't play that game."

In addition to pain and contact, these athletes also used aggression as a way to

define rugby. For example, Sandy said, "rugby is an aggressive sport." Libby echoed this

statement with a little more emphasis when she said, "rugby is a huge aggressive sport."

They also used aggression as a means of differentiating the sport of rugby from other

sports as was evident in Sam's words, "I think you are allowed to be more aggressive in

rugby than other sports." For these women, rugby was defined by aggression; however,

these ruggers were very specific as to the meaning of aggression. For these athletes,

aggression was linked to contact and effort

> I think aggression is when you do something full force. In the physical
> sport context, it's when you go your full extent, and you're giving it 100%
> and you're going full out. Tackling is aggression. So you're going at them,
> you're taking them down, but it's not any kind of vicious intent (Sheri)

There were levels to this definition of aggression that can be deconstructed. First,

aggression was linked to contact. Second, aggression was linked to giving maximal

effort. Also, aggression was articulated as not malice. Lastly, Sheri suggested that

aggression was demonstrated through physical performances such as tackling. Similarly,

other athletes note that aggression can be communicated through other behaviors such as

sprinting or advancing first.

> Advancing first. Not giving someone the chance to-- just all up in
> somebody's face is really aggressive (Laura).

> Sprinting as fast as you can, or running as hard as you can towards that
> person to try and win over the ball. Whether that means they're going to

pass it and you're going to have to start darting the other way, or that means you're going to tackle your still being aggressive in that you're pursuing the goal what you want to do with like, all your force, your mental energy and physical energy (Sammy).

In addition to demonstrating effort, aggression can be thought of as forceful. According to Denzin (1989) we can also interpret how these women understood aggression by looking at their word choices. Phrases and words such as: "all up in somebody's face," "fighting" and "force" suggested that there is a fragment of domination through forceful action tied to the word aggression. However, there was a point at which that forceful effort can go too far. That "limit" was sometimes articulated through the legality of an act. Erica explained:

> You know just like, fighting for everything, legally, legally fighting for everything every inch every, every possession. Just like, this is mine, I want it, I'm going to have it. That to me is rugby aggression. On the field never giving in, never giving up.

Not only was aggression experienced as behaviors falling within the legal parameters of the game, aggression was also considered good as long as it was not directed to hurt anyone. Suzie explained:

> If it's within legal bounds of propelling you forward and for a good cause for your team without hurting anyone else--well of course you're going to hurt other people--but without *honestly* hurting someone else, then, I think aggression's good.

For the most part, aggression was defined by these women as "going 100%." Within the context of rugby the term aggression was ascribed a certain positive value so long as the behavior was experienced as genial or legal. The athletes noted that there were differing levels of aggression, levels that would venture into "bad behavior." Laura explained, "I

think there's different degrees of being aggressive, good and bad and then there's violence, which isn't rugby – ever."

Aggression was a key term used to define rugby and rugby players throughout my discussions with these athletes, therefore it is vital to understand how these athletes defined aggression. For the most part, aggression was used to talk about desirable characteristics. Some of what they discussed could be classified as "assertive behavior" as defined in the sport psychology literature as forceful play within the legal bounds of the game (Husman & Silva, 1984, Tenenbaum et al., 2000). It is important to remember that the sport psychology literature defines assertive behavior as acceptable within sport and aggressive behavior (i.e., behavior intended to harm an opponent) is seen as unacceptable (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000; Husman & Silva, 1984; Rascle, Coulomb, & Pfister, 1998; Tenenbaum et al., 2000). Though some of what these athletes said could fall into this dichotomy, most of their understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable within rugby was much more dynamic and complex than this dichotomy allows.

In order to understand how these athletes defined aggression and how they understand acceptable and unacceptable behavior in rugby, it is important to remember that when considering meaning the situation matters (Denzin, 1969). Rugby, as a situation, is a complicated interwoven web of symbols. To better understand how these symbols worked together in these athletes' definitions of rugby it was helpful to think of how one might define the dimensions of a rugby field (i.e., the pitch).

The exact specifications for a rugby pitch are not fixed. The primary recommendations for a pitch simply suggest that the pitch should not exceed 144 meters long (including both tryzones) or 70 meters wide. On a rugby field the out of bounds lines are called touchlines. If a ball goes out of bounds, it is said to be "in touch."

The area of the pitch is not always the same; it changes each time the field is constructed. Similarly, as the women described rugby, they defined acceptable behaviors that occurred within the game. These can be thought of as "in bounds" behaviors. They also talked about behaviors that were "in touch" or unacceptable. The interesting thing here, like the physical dimensions of the pitch, was that what was considered in bounds and in touch changed; that is the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors were negotiated. In this way what was experienced as acceptable and unacceptable heavier was always changing which was different from the sport psychology conception of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Sport psychology literature considers behaviors undertaken with intent to harm as bad behaviors that fall outside of most sports (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000; Husman & Silva, 1984; Rascle, Coulomb, & Pfister, 1998; Tenenbaum et al., 2000). Using the analogy of the rugby pitch can help us understand how these athletes go about constructing what is rugby (i.e., what behaviors and meanings fall within their definition of the sport).

According to Coles (2008) we can know a social object, like rugby, through contrast. If one thinks of the limits of a playing field as defining the space where rugby takes place and the area around the field as defining that which is "not rugby," then one can see that the area identified as "not rugby" can help in understanding what is rugby. In

this same way, by listening to what these ruggers said rugby was and what they said

rugby was not we can understand how they defined their sport.

These women defined rugby as painful, contact focused and aggressive. They

have defined aggression as all out effort without malicious intent. Despite defining rugby

as painful, contact focused and aggressive, there was a limit to what was deemed

acceptable. Specifically, violence was defined as decidedly, not rugby.

> I don't really see rugby as a violent sport...violence has a negative connotation and that's why I don't like to connect it to rugby...violence's something you do to someone you don't like, that you want to do damage (Jane).

> I don't I don't think rugby should be about violence, I think rugby is tough I think rugby is people sign up for aggression to propel them forward. I don't think that we actually want violence on our field because violence is more than just the tackles and things like that. Tackles are different than an actual violent incident (Suzie).

> The game is supposed to be rough, but it's supposed to be somewhat civilized. It's supposed to be one of those things where both teams have this mutual understanding that you're going to play hard and you're going to do the best you can, because the match means nothing otherwise. But, that's it. It's nothing personal. You go out, you play as a team, you do your best, and that's how it is. I don't think that it should be where you start taking things personally, or you start planning malicious thing (Sheri).

For these women rugby was associated with pain, contact and aggression. These

concepts were contained within the area of acceptability: they were inbounds behaviors.

Despite non-ruggers' definitions of rugby as a space where "anything goes," these

athletes were careful to say that there were behaviors that could be called bad or "in

touch". Pain, contact and aggression were identified as benign. However, these athletes

suggested that rugby was defined as not violent. Considering the analogy of the rugby

field and its dimensions; pain, contact and aggression were the field of rugby and

violence represented what was "in touch." Nina eloquently articulated the negotiated

"touch line" between "in touch" and "in bounds" behaviors in the following quote:

> there's a difference between physical aggression and violence and then -- the even more benign level of contact -- cus it seems a little bit like a scale to me…Contact is fairly benign when you talk about it on those terms, which, in rugby, most of the time is what we do. There is a certain amount of passion behind it which brings it more to the aggression level, the level, of, "I'm going to take my body to stop your body. Because that's what, how I'm going to win this. My team and I are going to plow over you." In that way, that's aggression because there is a passion, there is an emotion, there's something behind that. It-is not just literal physical contact. We could bump into each other, that's not aggression, that's contact. During rugby we bump into each other all the time, that's not what that is. Then violence, in my world, takes malice. There's a want to do harm in a way that is not *socially* ok. The rules are a little different on a rugby field, it's not socially ok in the normal world to like tackle someone … but we have an understanding. Rugby is--we do have a amount of contact we expect, we want it to happen, we know it's going to happen, it's ok to get tackled. It's ok to be raked in a ruck, in a way that's not extremely hurtful. It's ok. You know you're gunna get hurt just in normal play, there will be bruises, it's ok. But then when somebody goes above and beyond that, and it generally requires a certain amount of malice to go above and beyond that, that's violence, that's why cleating is *violence* where as raking is aggression. Raking is purely, "I want to get the ball." Cleating is, "I want to hurt this person so we can get the ball."

In this quote Nina used the metaphor of a scale to talk about acceptable and unacceptable

behaviors. Nina's years of choral participation allowed her to think of behavior and the

escalating meaning of that rugby behavior in terms of a musical scale. She connected

aggression and contact. She also suggested that pain and contact with passion (i.e.,

aggression) were the game of rugby. Furthermore, she articulated that some contact

behaviors can be experienced as malicious and those behaviors were beyond the game of

rugby. In this example then, there were a few notes, (e.g., pain, contact and aggression)

that were the notes that make up the song of rugby. But as one hits notes of violence,

malice and "too much" hurt one was no longer singing the song of rugby. These notes were in conflict with the harmony of the game.

Rae also addressed the notion of escalating behaviors and talked about the behaviors in terms of good and bad aggression.

> I think that if you're going at it to hurt somebody, then that's bad aggression. If you're going at it to hit as hard as you can hit, that's good aggression. If it just so happens that you hit harder than next person and they get hurt, that's part of the game. I think it kinda has to do with what your mentality is going in.

Like Rae, many of the athletes defined "in touch" behavior through the interpreted presence of a desire to hurt. However, Rae made it clear that there was, within rugby, a certain level of hurt and pain that one must accept to play the game. Libby suggested that, "there's not a lot that's really completely unacceptable in rugby." Similarly, Rae went on to explain:

> Anything goes as long as you're on the field. I feel like, you put your mouth guard in, you put on your scrum cap, you walk on the field, then you should be ready for whatever comes your way. Whether that's someone who's playing under the rules or not, it's all part of the sport.

What is interesting was the contradiction expressed when discussing the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. According to Glassner (1990) these contradictions can help us understand what constitutes the line between behaviors deemed a part of rugby and behaviors deemed "in touch." For Rae and a number of other athletes the infliction of pain was not the courier of meaning. The meaning of a behavior as "in touch" was negotiated and depended on the interpretation of that behavior. When the behavior was "not even about rugby anymore" (Suzie) the behavior was deemed

unacceptable. Specifically, behaviors that were experienced as out of control were considered to be "in touch."

> I think it depends on the kind of want-to-hurt-your-opponent. If you say your gunna kill them, that's ok, you can say, "let's go out there and kill them." But if you honestly are going to play dirty, then that's not ok. Cuz you could hurt someone. Like the point of rugby is to put yourself in the position where you can get hurt and hurt other people, but do it cleanly. Don't go in there and rake other people, don't do high tackles, things like that. Don't do anything that's blatantly dangerous and unnecessary because, rugby's amazing, it's an awesome sport but it's not worth, paralyzing someone over (Suzie).

In this quote, Suzie exemplified the contradictions built into the athletes' description of "in touch" behaviors. In touch behaviors included behaviors that were considered "dirty." For these women, "dirty" actions went against what the sport was and how it was defined. These types of behaviors symbolized ruggers who were out of control. Additionally, behavior that was experienced as out of control was in touch behavior.

> When I think of aggression, I think of, -- a situation where it's controlled and there's a consensual understanding that this is what's going to happen. Yes, you may get hurt, but we both know that this can happen and we're both allowing ourselves to do this. When I think of violence I think of it usually being a one sided thing -- definitely not consensual in the sense that one person is being hurt, or being injured (Rae).

> Out of control behavior, that's just not even about the game anymore. They're not even thinking about the game, they're just so angry. I think a good way to explain it would be whether or not it's about the game. If you're in rugby state still and you're thinking about the game and your aggression is pushing you forwards--that's ok. Once it becomes not about the game, once it becomes about your own personal emotion and you've have lost sight of everything and it doesn't even matter if you're on a rugby field (Suzie).

Ultimately, the distinction between what was described as part of rugby and what lay out of bounds was a confusing subject for most of the women in this study. Though

they clearly identified the existence of a "line" over which behavior was labeled

unacceptable and "not rugby", the location, size, shape and resolution of this line varied

from person to person and situation to situation. They all agreed however, that there is a

point at which behavior goes from "in bounds" to "in touch."

> There's a line, and I don't always know where it is. And there are definitely gray areas. And like, do I venture into that? Probably. And will I again, in the heat of the moment, is it possible that something will happen? Yep. But…do I try to not let it happen? Yes … I feel like my understanding of the line can be, is sometimes very different of other rugby players (Nina).

> In Italy there's nothing wrong with you taking your cleat and going down and scraping and just being like, "Oops, I was just stepping forward." Is that necessary? No, but, does it play into what the sport is about? Well, fuzzy gray line. That's where the differentiation is between aggression and the violence. You can be aggressive and attack and play the sport in a manner that says, "Hey, I'm a presence to be reckoned with because I can play this game well." Then there's cross the line and just being blatantly stupidly violent, where it's just like, well now we're hurting people. Now we're shattering tibias, now we're causing direct impact that just wasn't warranted. Again, it's such a fuzzy (Cali).

In both of these quotes the athletes are talking about a line demarcating unacceptability.

However, the unique nature of the line is in its continual fluctuation. These quotes also

suggest that, because of the flexibility and negotiated nature of the line, sometimes they

did cross the "touch line."

Though the line was hard to specify for most of these women, they believed that

they could tell when a behavior had crossed in to touch.

> Everybody brings their personalities to the field...the speed of some of the hits that were being delivered, you could almost see the difference between, "I'm out to get you," as opposed to, "this is me playing my role in the game" (Cali).

> I think, you can definitely tell. The time when our player put her arm back and hit [the opponent] in the face, I don't think she was intentionally

> trying to do it because she wasn't like, "oh there's a girl there, ok, I'm going to hit her." It was like she was in a very intense situation, and the opponent was going to grab her or something and she threw her arm back and hit her in the face. I think that is not intentional. If you're running back to your side and play has stopped and someone's punching you, that's not needed, that's just being violent. I think it's something you see on the field which you can't really say, "oh that's aggressive" or "that's violence" unless you're seeing it (Wendy).

In both of these quotes the athletes described their ability to observe when a behavior had crossed the line into touch. It was important that in touch behavior was described as malicious, intentionally hurtful, out of control or "cheap" behavior. In this regard, the athletes suggested that they could read the thoughts of another through their actions. This means that certain behaviors had meaning(s) to these athletes that could be interpreted in different ways depending on the situation.

Thus far in this category (i.e., the game) the women defined what rugby was by identifying both what was and was not rugby. For these athletes, rugby was painful, aggressive and contact focused, however rugby was not violence. Ultimately through repetition, the definition of rugby as aggressive, painful, and contact focused becomes taken-for-granted and is expressed as the nature of the sport. All other potential definitions of the sport are glanced over for this more widely accepted definition of the sport.

According to Messner (2000) the sports that are the most aggressive, have the most contact, and allow for pain and injury are the sports that maintain centrality in America. This then allows us to add another layer of understanding to how these athletes define their sport. It would make sense to define one's sport according to those

characteristics most valued in sport discourse. Some of the athlete's in this study defined

rugby as superior to other "more popular" sports, such as American football for example:

> It's not like, you know football is very, "we're running this play," and sometimes they will change it, but not very, often. And they get lots of breaks. Even Tom will say, football is kind of for winnies, because, they get time outs, and they get--every down they get a little break where they get a breather and they have pads (Libby).

However, while having more pain, contact and aggression than other sports may position

rugby as more valued this definition also has very gendered meanings. Messner (2002)

talks about the salience of aggression, pain and contact as routine or taken-for-granted

notions in *men's* sport and he also suggests that these behaviors are part of the

accomplishment of hegemonic masculinity through sport participation.

Consistent with Messner (2002) these ruggers, despite their own participation in

rugby, defined rugby as "kind of like a boyish sport" (Wendy). Most of the athletes

suggested that "physical contact makes rugby a sport for men" (Laura). For example,

> It's a guy sport because it's full of guy behaviors…guy behaviors? (sigh) as defined by--me! More physical. I don't think that, especially the tackling aspect, is associated with a common, or even an acceptable, by society, form of girlish behavior or what's deemed girlish behavior (Sam)

In this quote, Sam clearly stated that tackling was unacceptable for women and that

unacceptability makes rugby a man's sport. This quote does much to illustrate how these

athletes (re)produced the centrality of contact in the definition of rugby, linked contact to

males and normalized male superiority in rugby. Despite some congruence concerning

notions of gender between the definition of rugby imagined to be in the minds of non-

ruggers and how these women defined their sport, there was some disagreement. For

example, non-rugby players were imagined to define female rugby players as lesbian,

brute, big and man-ish. These definitions served to exclude the varied female body from

rugby participation that was experienced by these participants. Faced with this type of

contradictory information, Goffman (1956) would suggest that these athletes would

engage in "defensive practices" to protect their definition of self. In this regard, many of

the women focused on the necessity of everybody in the sport of rugby. For example:

> You need every body type out there on the field to make the team strong
> (Jane).

> How many sports do you see that allow for body individuality, that's
> needed to make the team really progress? That makes it this really equal
> opportunity game that allows a more huge cross section of people to be
> experienced. Rugby really is a collective of humans that are coming
> together for the one purpose of getting that try (Cali).

The female athletes in this study defined rugby as a sport that was aggression, contact,

pain and a man's game. But rugby was also defined as a place of body diversity that

required different body types.

Summary

Both categories, "they say" and "the game," work to establish what Mead (1934)

identified as the generalized other. Specifically both categories inform the ruggers

comprehension of the "rules" of the situation, which, according to Mead (1934) make self

accomplishment possible. The ruggers in this research understood non-ruggers to define

rugby through pain, contact and gender. Similarly, through their definitions of rugby as

based on notions of pain, contact, aggression and gender we can see how these women

(re)produced their experiences of rugby consistent with the views of others. In addition to

recreating the importance of pain, contact, aggression and gender, the ruggers'

experiences of rugby also challenged the limits of these tropes. For example, in "they

say" rugby was defined as a sport where "anything goes." In "the game" category, the ruggers very specifically addressed "the line" between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in rugby and this suggested that not *everything* goes in rugby. Also, in the "they say" category, rugby was defined as a man's game and only "beastly," non-feminine, lesbian women would play rugby. Though the ruggers also defined rugby as a man's game, they also described rugby as a sport that requires all kinds of female bodies.

Despite subtle differences in expressing pain, contact, aggression and gender, the continued presences of pain, contact, aggression, and gender in the different constructions of rugby reiterates their importance. Blumer (1969) suggests that this congruence is evidence of the social construction of meaning, that a part of how an individual defines a thing is a negotiation. In this case, how rugby is defined is a negotiated space that is constructed through interactions with non-rugby players, other players, and the environment. Furthermore, if ruggers are imagined to be perceived along the lines of pain, contact and gender and the sport is defined along those same lines then, according to symbolic interactionism, these tropes will remain important in the construction of self as other within the context of rugby.

Rug(you): As a Rugger I Think Rugby Players Are

In this layer I discuss how female rugby players took up and used the responses, the imagined perceptions of others and their descriptions of the game of rugby to construct what it means to be a rugby player as defined as something other than themselves. More specifically, this layer serves to illustrate the athletes' ability to see themselves as other as a social object (Blumer, 1966; 1969; Denzin, 1974; Mead, 1934).

In their discussion of what a rugby player was and how a rugger should behave, they were describing themselves without reference to "I am." In this way, a part of the self was accomplished as they took on the imagined view of another to understand themselves as social objects (Blumer, 1969; Coles, 2008; Mead, 1934).

When talking about rugby players, four categories emerged. These four categories were *fearless*, *aggressive*, *red badge of fearlessness/aggression* and *it takes all kinds*. In the fearless category athletes suggested that rugby players should be fearless of both making contact and experiencing pain. This notion of fearlessness overlaps with the defining tropes of pain and contact presented in the previous layer, rug(be). According to my participants, ruggers should also be aggressive; however, this aggressiveness came with a limit that was expressed through control. Also, rugby players can prove their ability to be fearless and aggressive by wearing their bruises as red badges of courage. Finally, contrary to notions that all female ruggers are lesbian brutes, these athletes suggested that female rugby players represented all kinds of people/bodies in the category it takes all kinds.

Fearless

According to the women in this study, rugby players were supposed to be fearless. For example Sandy said, "I think rugby players really need to be just strong, tough and fearless." For these athletes, this fearlessness was related to both contact and pain. In terms of contact, fearlessness meant that ruggers were not afraid to take a hit or deliver a hit.

> Someone who's not afraid to get hit. Who's not afraid to hit somebody makes a good rugger (Rae).

> In rugby, it's like, just going your hardest and not being afraid to tackle anyone that has the ball and just not scared. Going 100 percent. You have to tackle, so if you're scared to tackle, it's hard to play rugby (Libby).

In this case, fearlessness was linked to tackling. As was demonstrated in the previous layer, rug(be), tackling and contact took a central role in the definition of rugby. Tackling and contact also took a central role in defining a rugby player. Not only was it important, as a rugby player, not to be afraid to make contact but also one's capability to hit hard was used as an expression of one's rugby ability. This is consistent with past research about rugby players. Schact (1996) and Light and Kirk (2000) found that rugby players use hard hits to garner respect. In that way hard hits are symbols of value in rugby. Similarly, the women in this study felt that delivery of "hard hits" was an indication of a rugby player's value. For example Sandy and Nina both explained that hard hits were "impressive." Sandy said, "I guess, you know the big plays; the big tackles impress me." Nina agreed, "I really respect people who make big aggressive tackles, who play with that much passion." Ultimately, many of the athletes valued big hits. More specifically, as was illustrated by Nina's quote, big hits were a way to "read" someone's passion for rugby. What's more these athletes expected rugby players to deliver big hits. In the following quote, Sheri explained that hard hits were what rugby players should do:

> People who tackle really hard, it's just what they do. Like, Suzie got hit really hard. And she got a rib popped out, but the girl didn't do anything wrong. Maybe it was a little over the top aggression, considering Suzie weighs like 20 pounds. But, she didn't do anything wrong. She hit her hard, and that's what she was supposed to do, you know, and that's perfectly fine. So if you're trying to tackle and you hit hard, whatever, if you're running and you can't stop and you run into somebody, whatever. It's not playing dirty. That's doing what you're supposed to do (Sheri).

For these women, making contact and tackling, even if it inflicted pain, was what rugby players were supposed to do. In this quote, there was also a link being made here between contact and aggression. The connection between contact and aggression reinforced the notion that aggression was a physical behavior that could be interpreted. Sheri also alluded to an appropriate level of aggression that a rugby player must utilize: a level of aggression that was measured considering one's opponent. Tempering one's aggression with consideration of others is a point I will make more clearly as I discuss the importance of aggression in defining a rugby player in the subsequent category. Important for the current discussion was Sheri's indication that hard hits were a part of rugby. She also indicated that because hard hits were the game of rugby, there was nothing wrong with hitting hard even if people were likely to get hurt. The evocation of pain and injury in this previous quote was not without meaning. The previous quote linked contact and pain suggesting that pain, like contact, was a part of rugby.

When discussing fearlessness as an important characteristic of rugby players, bravery in the face of body contact and potential injury were closely related. Laura explained, "You could get really hurt, most of the time you don't, but you still have enough guts to do it." In her quote, Laura suggested that a rugby player accepts the likelihood of pain and continues to play the sport despite the possibility of injury. Additionally, these athletes suggested that even when injured a rugger should continue to play. In this way fearlessness was communicated by playing the game despite the knowledge that one could get hurt and continuing to play even if hurt. The notion that

rugby players "keep going" was reiterated through their descriptions of important

qualities to have if one wants to play rugby.

> When you're on a rugby field you have that mindset, you have to be like, "ok, I'm going to get hurt here and I'm going to get back up" (Suzie).

> It's true that a lot of rugby players, if you get hit, if you break your nose or something happens you get up and you keep going (Sheri).

These participants suggested that rugby players have a nonchalant regard for pain.

Furthermore, the athletes suggested that rugby players are willing to accept and endure

pain. These findings are consistent with past research on rugby which has suggested that

playing through pain is an important behavior used to establish respect (Broad, 2001;

Chase, 2006; Howe, 2001; Schact, 1996). Specifically, in an investigation of a men's

professional rugby club, Howe (2001) found that playing through pain was used as a way

to communicate being a good athlete.

According to Blumer (1969), this meaning of a rugby player as someone who is

willing to play through pain was, in part, accomplished through interactions with other

rugby players. That is, by watching other individuals who are defined as rugby players,

one can begin to define a rugby player by those observed actions. Denzin (1974) refers to

these encounters as encounters of significance. For example:

> I've seen a lot of injuries and I've only been playing for a year and a half. Laura and her neck and …I actually watched one of guys get a compound fracture in his arm in one of the tournaments and … it was pretty nasty. Bone sticking out of his skin. I've never seen anything -- never seen it before. And I'm sure that he would have taped it up in order to play if he could. That's the kind of mentality that I think rugby players have (Rae).

> I've seen people knocked out for a few minutes, the knee issue, ankles, separated ribs and people generally just play through it. You get knocked out, you wake up and get back out there (Laura).

> Rebecca had a broken leg one time, and actually our coach wouldn't take her out of the game.He didn't realize it was broken and neither did she. That was pretty impressive that she stayed in. She said it hurt a lot. I said, "Yeah, but you didn't show it." That was pretty cool (Jane).

In this way, a part of how they defined a rugby player was based on their experiences with other rugby players. Moreover, when rugby players "keep going" that behavior held meaning. As such, it is a symbol that indicates meaning to self and others. It is a symbol that carries multiple meanings. For example, these athletes felt that playing through injury was an impressive action. Wendy explained, "It is awesome, just because you give it your all and even if you're hurt, you're still going at it." Erica, explained why playing through pain was impressive:

> You know, like you get hit you get back up, you keep going. I think that people are really impressed with that. That you have that sort of strength in you.

In this quote, Erica established that playing through pain was a symbol of one's strength on the rugby field. This connection between pain and strength was reiterated throughout the interviews.

> When you keep playing, it's physical toughness. An ability to withstand something that other people don't really have to stand in their everyday life. Ok yes, you put yourself in the situation to have to withstand that, but, you still did it (Sammy).

> It shows, not just a physical toughness but a mental toughness too (Jane).

For these women, playing through injury indicated both physical and mental toughness. Furthermore, as Sam later suggested playing through pain/injury was a "sign of toughness, you know, willing to help out the team." Therefore, playing through pain not

only signified strength but also indicated to others dedication to one's team and the sport

of rugby.

> I think giving your all even when you're injured means a lot to the team. It shows your dedication to them and maybe not the smartest thing to do but if it's what your heart's telling you to do, then you should do it (Rae).

> You keep goin' because you love it. You love it, you have heart for it. Don't want to let your team down, lots of different things, but I think it comes down to, how you feel about the game, the game we play (Libby).

In this way, acting in disregard of personal health indicated to others that rugby and one's

teammates were more important than one's physical wellbeing. Playing through pain

conveyed meaning relative to how one defined one's team and how one defined oneself.

This action simultaneously communicated that the team/sport were worth enduring pain

and indicated to others that this individual defined herself as a rugger. This was

consistent with Theberge's (2000) ethnography of the Blades, a women's ice hockey

team. She found that playing through extreme pain and injury was a statement of

commitment to both the team and the sport.

If one was not willing to continue to play through injury that too carried meaning,

but meanings which were contradictory to a rugby self/identity.

> I also feel like something inside like, if you don't go out there, you didn't do your best, you're like, I can't even really word it, "you suck" you know. You're not a good rugby player if you don't go out there and finish and give it your all, even your body (Laura).

> If you're not bleeding, or broken, then you're not trying, then you are giving up. It's like, you're soft, you're giving up (Erica).

> I think it depends on how extensive the injury is. I mean if you like, break your pinky finger and then sit out for a couple matches, people will probably be like, "come on--get over it" (Sheri).

Not playing through injuries meant that the individual was quitting, that she was not good

at the sport or that she was weak. All of which were contradictory to characteristics

identified as important in a rugby player. Also, these women said that not playing can

mean that a player was letting the team down.

> "Hey you ok? Let's get up, let's walk it off, see if it's ok." If it's not, I wouldn't push them to play. But at the same time, I'm relying on them. So if it's something minor, it's like, well suck it up and let's go. I think it depends on the person. As you get to know people more, there were girls on my team that I just knew were mentally tough and because of that, if something happened they wouldn't go off, but if something happened and they had to go off, I knew it was something for real. I would never push someone, but I would definitely question their motives (Sandy).

In this quote Sandy made it clear that in rugby teammates depend on one another to keep

playing and if an individual did not continue to play then she was letting her team down.

Laura echoed this in her quote:

> If you're in there and you can't be subbed for, you can't go out. That's just what it is to me. And so if you choose to go out, then you're just being weak, selfish (Laura).

Despite primarily negative meanings associated with not playing through pain, Sandy,

like many of the women in this study, indicated that the meaning of not playing through

injury was negotiated. Ultimately, the meanings ascribed to leaving a rugby match due to

injury depend on who the rugger was that was leaving the field.

> It just depends on who the person is coming off. Like if you (i.e., Shannon) were to come out of a game, something is really wrong. That's what I would think. Not to name names, but if Elle came out of a game, I'd be like, "fuckin' Elle." So it depends on the player playing the game. Whether or not I'd be like, "you're faking," well, not faking. I don't think I'd ever say to someone, "you're faking it." Especially after what happened to my friend, I would never say something like that. I'd be like, whatever, it can't be that bad. Which sucks because sometimes it is. You have in your head, "I'm still out here and I'm exhausted" you know. But I

> think that with certain players there is a negative connotation to coming out of a game early (Erica).

> It would probably depend on how long they've been there. If you got hit hard, and you walked out, I'd be like, "what the fuck's wrong with Shannon?" I mean that's just not you. If someone who's relatively new comes and gets hit really hard, I would be like, ok, they got rocked. They need a moment to compose themselves, and whatever. I'd probably be like, if it wasn't someone really new, I'd probably be like, "that's kind of weird, because you should be used to getting hit at this point," but, it's not like I would judge them for it (Sheri).

> If you (i.e., Shannon) leave the field, I am saying, "she is hurt, bad," but there are some other people on our team, I would be like, "pussy" (Laura).

These women suggested that the meanings associated with coming off the pitch depend on what Blumer (1966) refers to as an individual's line of action. Some individuals who have previously demonstrated their willingness to play through plain are not judged as harshly as others. It is worth mentioning that Laura's harsh criticism of someone who comes off the rugby field is to call that person a "pussy." According to Messner (2002) this would qualify as misogynistic talk and falls under the umbrella of violence toward women. Messner suggests that this is just one of three components in the triad of men's violence that earmark those sports that are the most valued in American culture. In this description of the center of sport, Messner discusses how male athletes reproduce and maintain dominance through violent behaviors and suggests that misogynistic talk works to distance male athletes from femininity. More specifically, Schacht (1996) discussed how male rugby players use name calling such as "pussy" to distance themselves from femininity and thus reifying themselves as masculine. Laura was also distancing herself from notions of female frailty and moving herself closer to the metaphoric center of sport; however, she simultaneously othered her own corporeality and reinforced a

particular masculinity, as accomplished through the triad of violence. Calling someone a pussy was not just an act of denying their rugby status it also linked females with weakness and an inability to play rugby, which ultimately reinforced the dominant masculine definition of the sport. Scranton and colleagues (1999) found similar actions among elite female soccer players who distanced themselves from a female identity because it contradicted their definition of an elite athlete.

Thus far we can see that pain and contact and gender are wrapped up together in this layer. However, rug(you) and rug(be) are layers that overlap along the notion of pain and contact. In this layer, rug(you), the ruggers explained that a rugby player must be fearless of contact and pain. These layers function not in isolation but in conjunction to reiterate and reinforce dominant definitions of rugby. For example, the following quotes illustrate how pain is used to simultaneously define the sport of rugby and define "appropriate" behaviors for a rugger:

> If you can tape it up, you can play. That sort of idea, that's basically what rugby is (Erica).

> Shirts that say, "donate blood, play rugby" that's what it's about, cuz everyone's getting hurt, but everyone keeps coming out. It's just, addicting (Wendy).

> It is a physical game and I think people almost expect injuries, maybe, so it's like, when they happen, they're just like, "ok, let's get you better." I don't know maybe it's the mentality of the rugby players too (Sandy).

Aggressive

In the previous category I explained that these women defined rugby players as fearless of both pain and contact. In this category I explore the characteristics of aggression, a characteristic that was identified as important in describing a rugby player.

It is important to recall that in the previous layer aggression was defined as giving

maximal effort without crossing the "touch line." This notion of acceptable force was

reiterated in the ruggers descriptions of a rugby player through the concept of control.

Specifically, respect was identified as a key way to demonstrate control as a rugby player.

Aggression was identified as a quality necessary for survival in rugby. Wendy

said, "I think it's part, like you have to be kind of aggressive to survive the game in the

first place." In the following quote Libby recounted an experience with a player from

another team who agreed to play with the Raptors. In rugby, players who are willing to

play with other teams are called "whores." In this story, Libby explained that the absence

of aggression was a sign that someone should not play rugby.

> We had some people leave so we didn't have quite enough and so they
> gave us two players and we would have been much better if we had just 13
> on 15. Because the one girl was like the worst rugby player ever in the
> history of the universe. Well first off she's a skinny little thing and second
> of all, she was terrified. Like, you threw the ball, if she caught it, and if
> her team was running at her, she ran the other way, backwards, she ran
> away. And that's like, "oh my god." So and I'm not lying, she did do that.
> And if they had the ball, she would move out of the way if they were
> running at her, and I was like, "ok, you're pissing me off. Maybe you
> should just not play." So then I pretty much told everyone else that was in
> the back line, because she was playing wing, "pretend she's not there.
> Pretend like you're covering and we don't have anyone there." And we
> did better then, but we lost because they had scored several times on her.
> They knew to run to her, because they gave her to us as their whore, which
> I'm like, "oh my god." She was the worst whore we've ever ever ever had.
> She is seriously like the, if you ever talk to our old coach, ask, "who's the
> worst rugby player that you have ever met?" And that is her. So, that is the
> opposite of aggressive (Libby).

By outlining the worst rugger of all time and linking that to a lack of aggression, Libby

clearly identified the role of aggression in defining a good rugby player. In this quote

Libby articulated that a rugby player cannot be fearful. She also, by linking fearfulness to

a lack of aggression, suggested that fear and aggression are related. Ultimately, by defining the worst rugger through lack, Libby defined the best rugger as *having* and in this case, *having* referred to aggression. However, though many ruggers described aggression as important, they also suggested that the good rugger maintained the delicate balance between being aggressive and taking that aggression too far. The following explored the notion that the balance between good aggression and bad aggression was tempered by control.

Control

As indicated in the rug(be) layer, the game of rugby was defined as aggressive but with limits. In this layer the women identified that it was important for a rugby player to know these limits. One way that the athletes talked about the limits of rugby behavior was through the notion of control. For example:

> Ruggers need aggression, they're just aggressive. Being in control and taking a stand versus, being aggressive maliciously (Sandy).

> Emotions and things like that get so high because you're fighting out there. I think you need to a least try and control yourself … I think that it's good that aggression can propel you forward but there is a line where it becomes not about the sport anymore, about your own personal problems and I think you need to be able to control yourself in some way (Suzie).

In these quotes, the ruggers emphasized that the game was a physical challenge and because of that, rugby players had to be willing to buffer their actions with control. Some of the ruggers talk about this moment of control as having tact. For example, Laura explained,

> A good rugger would have like tact, too "like oh man, that person's ears hanging off, I'm not going to tackle you, I'm going to stop right now even though you're running that way." Like, kind of like tact.

In this quote Laura evoked the term "tact" to address control by suggesting that a good rugby player will be able to think about the welfare of her opponent even in the heat of action. The choice of the word "tact" is interesting in this context as it evokes notions of communication, delicacy, and diplomacy but does so in terms of physicality. Regardless of terminology, these women defined a rugger as aggressive but under control.

For these athletes loss of control moved an athlete into touch and was experienced as "un-rugby-like" behavior. Behaviors that indicated an athlete was out of control were behaviors the athletes called "cheap" or were behaviors that indicated an athlete was "taking things personal." For many of the women, cheap behaviors should not be used on the rugby field because those behaviors symbolized a loss of personal control. These behaviors included high tackles and biting which were illegal in rugby but also included legal behaviors that were deemed unnecessary. In the following quote, Sandy suggested that both illegal and unfair behaviors were unacceptable because they go against the point of the game of rugby (i.e., those behaviors were in touch).

> Like high tackles, clothes-lining people, stuff that, I mean, the point of playing is to have fun. I think when people take it any other way, then it's that kind of stuff that's not ok like stepping on people, unnecessary tackling, and stuff that can endanger the player (Sandy).

These quotes represented the limits of what the women defined as a good aggressive rugby player. Simply, they suggested that good rugby players are supposed to be aggressive but to a limit. According to Libby, "a good rugby player is not going to try and cheat, you know and try to take swings at somebody unless that they do it first to them." In this quote, Libby indicated that good rugby players do not cheat. She also indicated that punching was not an acceptable behavior for a rugby player, unless that

rugby player had been provoked. For many of the participants, punching or fighting was specifically identified as an unacceptable behavior for a rugby player, unless there was a good reason for that behavior. For example,

> If there's no danger to your physical self, I don't see any reason for you to go up and just haul off and punch someone or to target them (Sheri).

The participants in this study used aggression as a way of talking about a number of different behaviors necessary to be considered a good rugby player. They also cautioned that a rugger must be in control. To maintain "control" ruggers should avoid cheating or cheap behaviors such as biting and unprovoked fighting. In addition to being aggressive with control, ruggers were also defined by their ability to "take it." For example, Nina said, "To be a good rugger you have to be willing to take that aggression." Sam also indicated the importance of being able to "take it."

> Rub some dirt on it. You're not only expected to be more aggressive but you're also expected to be able to handle the fact that because of this added aggression there's going to be more injury and you're going to need to deal with that. It's in the rules, when you go down, it's part of the game.

In this quote Sam indicated that injury and aggression are related. Many of the athletes suggested that pain and injury might result from added aggression. Furthermore, these athletes expressed that complaining about that added level of aggression, indicative of a game of rugby, was a marker of not being able to "take it." For example, Nina explained, "let's play the friken game and shut up. You know. Like, we want to do this. Uhm, we don't need to complain." Complaining about what was defined as rugby was met with fierce resistance by these women. They often ranked their dislike for complaining with their dislike for unprovoked fighting. Erica said, "Fighting is absolutely not ok and just

like like complaining about things that are legal in rugby. Completely not ok." In addition

to and related to complaining, taking the actions of the game (e.g., hard hits) as personal

attacks were thought to be indicative of out of control behavior. In other words, rugby

players should not take aggression personally.

> If you're just being an asshole, then it's over the line, cuz even though rugby may seem rough, it may seem crazy, everybody that I've met thus far is very civil about it. You go out, you play hard and it's what you're supposed to do. So if you get hit hard, the person that hit you did their job it wasn't anything personal. When you take it personally and take it out on someone else that's not ok. That's just outta control and not rugby (Sheri).

For these women aggression under control was an important characteristic necessary to

be considered a good rugby player.

Respectful. A quality that demonstrated one's control was respect. If an individual

respected the sport of rugby and its participants then she was likely to be in control of her

aggression (i.e., not playing cheap or taking things personally). For example, Nina

specified that the very best ruggers are good sports.

> Good sportsmanship. A willingness to keep pushing on, to push yourself and just generally very caring attitude…Put yourself out there, but the best rugby players I have ever seen are all very, very good sports. And if you can do that, you can probably be a great rugby player (Nina).

Like, Nina, Rae suggested that a good rugby player was a "brute, you know, like, the

brick shit house. You know like, uhm, aggressive but sweet." This quote demonstrates

the athletes' beliefs that forcefulness was an important quality in a rugger but that

forcefulness must be tempered by what Rae refers to as "sweetness." This "sweetness"

was characterized by a rugby player's ability to care for opponents on the field and their

ability to leave forceful interactions on the playing field. For example Erica explains:

> You know, you can tackle each other really hard and it's like, "great tackle!" Like in boxing, you don't get punched in the face and go, "oh hey that was a perfect punch, you're amazing." You know what I mean. People celebrate each other even when we're on opposite teams.

Erica suggested here that there was a level of respect and celebration that occurred between rugby players on the field that was a unique part of the sport and of the women who play the sport. Similarly, Nina explained a moment where she was engaged in an interaction that represented care or respect for the opponent while on the field, a moment that was echoed by many of the participants.

> The best part of the scrum is when you get out and everyone's helping each other up and making sure you didn't step on the hooker and making sure that every one's ok – oh now go after the ball. I always find that really interesting and wonderful because that happens not only between you and your team, but you and the other team. This happens in a scrum, it happens in the rucks sometimes. When you find yourself literally straddling someone on the field and you're like, "I can't get off you right now because there is somebody else on top of me." And you just have to tell them, "you're ok, you're ok, don't move. Let me move first." That form of communication is interesting. I didn't know that there was going to be so much communication even between the teams, that much respect for each other *while* on the field but there is and it's nice. Unless somebody's being an asshole and then you want to wallop 'em (Nina).

In this quote, Nina explained that rugby players were willing to go hard but there was also a level of care that occurred after the exertion. However, this care was not extended to those ruggers that were out of control (or being an asshole). Actually, Nina indicated here that sometimes out of control ruggers require a wallop to get them back under control. I will return to this idea subsequently. Nina went on to explain the necessity of respect as a way to communicate control and when that respect was absent it communicated snide, out of control behavior.

> There's a certain graciousness you should have, and it's not even like you need to say, "Oh I'm sorry I hit you." No. just, get off, walk away and be like, "There you go." Pat-pat, "Let's go." Without out it -- the pat-pat goes a long way or the "were out of it" or like "you can get up now." Just that communication which is part of why I love the sport so much. When that's absent, or when there's something cynical or snide –especially snide—in its place that gets a little out of control and a little wearing.

Nina exemplified these women's definitions of a rugger as under control. She also articulated that lack of control can be communicated through lack of respect. She alluded to the importance of regaining control of that situation. Quotes like this one from Nina indicate a hole in the sport psychology concept of aggression. Specifically, intent to harm an opponent is used to mark a behavior as unacceptable (Baron, 1977; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000; Tenenbaum et al., 2000). However, these women suggested that it was not the intent to harm that marked a behavior as unacceptable; instead, it was the moment after the behavior that was important. For these women, the moment following a behavior was important in constructing a behavior as acceptable. If control was communicated, the behavior was experienced as acceptable. This is not looked at in the sport psychology research.

In understanding rugby as a place of aggression, contact and pain, the women cited the need for rugby players to have these qualities but also to be respectful of the game and other rugby players. Suzie specifically linked sportsmanship to aggression in the following quote:

> Sportsmanship? They can definitely get into the game, have aggression and push themselves forward and can get angry in the game, that's fine, but don't make it so you start cheating, that's too much. Just have respect

> for the game, have respect for your fellow players, have respect for your opponents, have respect for your sir. That's sportsmanship.

Here Suzie articulated a connection between aggression and sportsmanship. In this quote she stressed the importance of being aggressive in rugby but under control and within the "legal bounds" of the game. Specifically, forceful behaviors that another player expected were defined as acceptable. Cheating or unexpected behaviors were defined as unacceptable. These behaviors were unacceptable and were interpreted as symbols of disrespect.

If someone disrespected the sport, these women indicated that the respectable rugger would defend rugby. Specifically, the participants suggested that when a rugby player behaved in an inappropriate way, those behaviors sullied and disrespected the sport.

> Rugby is already really physical and when people add in their shit it gives rugby a bad name (Laura).

> For girls, for people to be out there like punching each other unnecessarily and complaining about being tackled hard--this is what the game is--if you didn't want that, you shouldn't have signed up. You don't have to play. I think that's why it's such a big deal when people are like that. You're like, I have no respect for you, any more … no respect, what are you doing? You're defacing the game (Erica).

In her quote, Erica suggested that *unnecessary* fighting and complaining indicated to other ruggers that that person was out of control and was not worthy of respect. Erica went on to explain that when a rugby player lost control they disrespected the game and ruined the game for everyone else.

> I think when you decided, no matter what the rules are--that's when I think it turns into the punching and the little cheating that you do. That actually spoils the game for other people. Your teammates can't trust you to not get penalties and other people can't trust you to not attack them when they

> have the ball. It slows the game down, it ruins the game, it's not a
> competition anymore it turns into like trying to stay away from this one
> person because they're crazy. I think that's when it gets too bad.

Not only did the participants feel that these "in touch" behaviors detracted from the

nature of the game, they also felt that such "in touch" behaviors indicated loss of control.

Additionally, these behaviors were interpreted negatively by other ruggers as an attack on

a teammate or the sport. It was repeatedly mentioned that a respectable rugby player was

a defender against such attacks. The respectable rugger was a defender of the sport, of her

teammates and of herself. In this way, a rugby player was described as someone who

responds to "in touch" behaviors.

> I know it's not part of our sport but they need to follow the rules. If you
> lose your temper in any other sport, you're going to get punished, and
> just so happens, your opposing team might be the one to punish you
> (Laura).

> Sometimes you will physically try to go after someone if they're being an
> ass, if they're not playing by the rules well, go ahead and lay one into
> them. As long as you don't get caught…it's just that, what kind of
> boarder line unacceptable action can you take to make it so that all
> unacceptable action stops…so if they're doing things sloppy or just being
> kind of a jerk, hit them really hard the next time you tackle them and
> really really hurt, hit them hard. Like, don't hurt them, just make sure you
> take them down and sometimes the best thing to do is to like hold them
> down for a little bit just to be like, "you're not on a high horse. Like, get
> off it." You don't even have to say anything, but like that moment of
> defeat will sometimes really click people back in place (Nina).

These quotes indicated that a rugger should be willing to control out of control situations.

In this way, the ideal rugger was still under control, she was just controlling others. What

is interesting here is that a single behavior can hold multiple meanings. This is consistent

with symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1966), however, multiple meanings are not

considered in the sport psychology literature. For example many researchers utilize

observation as a tool to identify aggressive acts (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000; Loughead & Leith, 2001; Rascle & Coulomb, 2003; Rascle, Coulomb, & Pfister, 1998). These researchers typically classify rule violations and fighting as indicators of aggression. The athletes in this study contradicted simplistic classifications of unacceptable behaviors. They indicated that at times illegal behavior was unacceptable but they also indicated that illegal behaviors, such as fighting, could be used in an acceptable way. Specifically, these women indicated that the context of the moment was important in identifying the meaning of a behavior as out of control, and therefore, unacceptable.

To this point in the Rug(you) code, the participants in this study definedwhat it meant to be a rugby player. They suggested that a good rugby player was someone who was fearless of contact and pain and was willing to be aggressive. However, these women also identified a measure of control that was important in a rugby player. A good rugby player would not cheat or take things personally. Additionally, the good rugby player was willing to stand up against people who play the sport without the proper level of control. Rae exemplified this definition when she said:

> A great rugger? Someone who can be aggressive, for lack of a better term, on the field but laugh with them off the field when they have the social type thing or shake the hands afterward and really mean, "good game." Someone who isn't afraid to get hurt, someone who likes to be part of a team and can work well in a team, stands up for the game and is selfless. I think those would be great rugby characteristics.

In this category aggression is defined by these ruggers as requisite to participation in rugby. These findings have some resonance with sport psychology literature in aggression. In sport psychology, assertion is defined as forceful effort without intent to

harm that is considered part of a sport (Husman & Silva, 1984, Tenenbaum et al., 2000).

In this literature, assertion is juxtaposed with aggression. Aggression is defined as

behavior directed toward intentionally harming another player that is not within the

acceptable limits of sport (Tenenbaum et al., 2000). In this regard, sport psychology

literature positions intent to harm as the line between what is acceptable and unacceptable

in sport. Aggression was defined by these athletes, at first blanch, much like sport

psychology definitions of assertion. However, when looking more specifically at what

these athletes regard as in bounds behavior, acceptable behavior did include some

behaviors sport psychologist would argue fall into the category of aggressive or

unacceptable behavior. This means that intent to harm (i.e., the sport psychology

definition of aggression) was not how these women defined unacceptable behavior. These

athletes indicated that control, rather than intent to harm, was ultimately more important

in determining unacceptable behavior. For example, making snide or rude comments

after a tackle was an indication of out of control and unacceptable behavior whereas

"cleating" an opponent who is holding the ball was seen as acceptable behavior. For these

women, harm was part of their game, whereas, loss of control indicated what was *in*

touch.

Red Badge of Fearlessness/Aggression

Reiterating the importance of contact, pain and aggression was the continued

emphasis placed on bruises as symbols. Rugby players were described as being proud of

their bruise as ways to communicate their performance in the game, their fearlessness and

their aggression. Bruises were the embodiment of participation in a sport in which pain, injury, contact and aggression were considered inevitable.

For the participants in this study, bruises were indicators of what a rugby player did and markers of a rugby player's legitimacy in terms of being fearless and aggressive. Bruises were experienced as a way for rugby players to communicate their performance and their commitment in two ways. First, a bruise itself indicated to other rugby players how hard a person played and how tough she was during the game. Bruises also communicated rugby performance by presenting an opportunity to share with others how that particular bruise happened.

As a symbol, bruises communicated a rugby player's involvement in a rugby match.

> I think they are kind of like a symbol of pride. You know what I mean, how hard you played. You were in there (Erica).

> It all hurts but also really feels good...I guess that's what makes it badass is that you not only have the stories but like, bruises are great cuz you have this physical representation of what it is you did. (Nina).

> You've done your job. You've got your knocks in, someone else is wearing one of yours, it's a badge of honor almost, it's just you've been playing. If you've gotten away from a game and you've not got some mark, bruise, what have you, or your knees aren't torn up, if you're not carrying some of the dirt somewhere on your body home, so that you're in the shower, "oh yeah, that was a really good game," it's almost like you haven't played..."what were you doing in the game that you didn't carry something home with you?"… they are like a badge of honor kind of thing. but they are what they are. Crap happens, body parts fly, something's going to get hurt, some bruise is going to come up (Cali).

In this environment, bruises carry with them the story of their participation in a game of rugby. Also, bruises were an indicator of how tough someone was. For example:

> A big bruise, it kind of is a level or an indicator of how tough you were in that game, or how well you did (Sandy).

> You can take all the hits and have all the bruises, and survive it (Laura).

In rugby, the presence of bruises indicates a rugby player's toughness, her ability to take aggression and her wiliness to keep playing through pain. Just as bruises were an indication of a celebrated rugby performance, the lack of bruises/injuries was an indication of a flawed rugby performance. Erica explained, "Like I think if you come out clean, and not bruised it's like, you didn't play rugby."

In addition to holding meaning, rugby bruises also gave rugby players the opportunity to share stories that exemplified moments of fearlessness and aggression.

> Just to hear other people's rugby stories, "oh and I broke this and I broke that and I broke that and I'm still playing" (Erica).

> It's a battle wound. "Hey look at this"... "I got this from so-n-so blah-blah-blah." That will lead to a more fun conversation about, "oh yeah, I remember when this happened and I remember when that happened." And it can be more of a conversation starter (Sam).

Bruises were given meaning in and through interactions with self and rugby players. They were symbols of effort, strength, fearlessness and other valued rugby characteristics. If a rugby player wore a bruise she was indicating to others, "I have done what I needed to do and I am proud." Also, rugby bruises were centerpieces in many of the stories these women shared that focused on how well rugby players can endure pain and keep returning to the game despite the inevitability of pain. This is consistent with past research suggesting that bruises are a way that rugby players can demonstrate their authenticity as ruggers (Broad, 2001; Burgess et al., 2003; Chase, 2006; Schact, 1996). Chase (2006), in her research with female rugby players, found that bruises were

associated with certain levels of prestige and value as symbols of involvement and

contribution to the team. The ruggers in Chase's (2006) analysis suggested that their

bruises were symbols of their effort and endurance of physical abuse; and as such these

athletes took considerable care to show off their bruises.

Through the constructed importance of bruises we can see that the valued

behaviors of an ideal rugby player (e.g., fearlessness and aggression) were connected.

These behaviors were connected to one another, but they were also connected to how the

sport was defined (as demonstrated in the rug(be) layer). The valued behaviors of a

rugger and the definition(s) of rugby worked in concert to reiterate the importance of

pain, contact and aggression. What's more, as we saw early on, these same defining

characteristics held gendered meanings. Specifically, as many sport sociologists have

demonstrated, pain, contact and aggression (Messner, 2002; Howe, 2001; Theberge;

Wright & Clarke, 1999) are constructed as male characteristics. This was consistent with

the findings represented in rug(be) where the participants suggested that many non-

ruggers identified specific "manly" body or personality characteristics were required for

rugby participation. The ruggers in this research directly contradicted these assumptions

in their descriptions of the ideal rugger. Despite their continued emphasis on the

"masculine" characteristics of pain, contact and aggression when defining an ideal rugby

player, these athletes identified that there was no ideal body type or mindset for a rugby

player. Specifically they continually focused on the idea that rugby "takes all kinds."

It takes all kinds

Much of how these women defined a rugby player reiterated their experiences

with non-rugby players' definitions of rugby and their definitions of the sport of rugby.

However, they also constructed a definition of a rugby player that challenged dominant

gendered notions surrounding who can play the game of rugby. Specifically, their

definitions focused on the notion that there was not a singular body ideal. Also they

presented evidence to indicate how males were not "the ideal" because they did not

engage in sportsmanlike behavior or remain in control of their actions. In so doing, they

contradicted the notion that only men can play rugby.

When asked to describe the ideal rugger many of the women struggled because

they felt that there was not one ideal body that they could "nail down."

> I don't think there's a certain type because there's really a spot for
> everyone on the team (Rae).

> I don't think there's an ideal. I mean, it's what the individual really would
> like it to be (Cali).

> I don't think it even matters what size they are it's the fact that they, if
> they're tinier than me and they can make a tackle and they get out of that
> and run with the ball, you're an awesome rugby player (Suzie).

Furthermore, the athletes repeatedly positioned rugby as a sport for anybody. They

suggested that characteristics and outward appearance were not important. Erica

explained that an individual must only want to play rugby to be a rugby player:

> One of the things I think is great is that every kind of girl can play the
> sport. I think people don't think that. They think you have to be a certain
> type of person. I don't believe that to be true at all. There's a position for
> every single type of person on the field. You just have to want to play and
> that's all you need is--the *want* to play. Anybody can play it. Some people
> will be like, "Really? That girl's so prissy." I'm like, "No! you should see
> her, she gets on the field and she play's what she's supposed to play, she

does what she needs to do....it doesn't matter what you look like, it doesn't matter where you're from, it's doesn't matter what kind of things you like, you can play rugby. I think that's another great thing about this sport. It doesn't box people in. It doesn't say, "Oh, you have to be really big, you have to be really small, or you have to be really strong" you can be anything and just play. You just have to want to do it.

Further, these athletes used their definition of rugby as being related to the diversity of women's bodies present on the rugby pitch.

Rugby's perfect because this is actually a sport where there are places for every body type. It's not like a lot of other sports where all the positions basically do the same thing. Like your packies--it doesn't matter if they have weight on them--it's a place those girls to go because they're not going to be able to make the cross country team but there're going to make the rugby team because they can knock a bitch over (Suzie).

The nature of the game means there's a spot for almost anyone on that field. My girl friend, just saw me play rugby for the first time and she said to me, "I really understand what you mean by the fact that there's room for everyone on that field. You get to be 1 of 15 and there's a perfect spot for you there" (Nina).

Despite their continued acknowledgement that anyone can be a rugby player, they went on to condition that statement suggesting that anyone can play rugby as long as that individual was tough and fearless:

It's an intense sport that anyone can play, you just gotta be tough (Wendy).

I think that anyone can do it if they put themselves out there. You just have to try not to be scared (Suzie).

When I talk to people about rugby, I always make sure that I say that there's a spot for everyone, because it's totally the truth. Very different kinds of women come together to play this sport, different body shapes, different mentalities, just different characters. So, I don't think that I could probably nail down--this is what I think of when I think of a rugby player--because my experience with them has been much different. I think in that same breath, I would say that you have to be in that line of sanity, realizing that you are putting your life in danger. There's a certain type of

> person that will make that choice but it's not really something you can pick off the street and say, "yeah that's a rugby player" (Rae).

Additionally, working against dominant notions linking male bodies to contact sports and superior performance in those sports (Howe, 2001; Theberge, 2000; Wright & Clarke, 1999) these rugby players referenced reasons why the men's version of rugby was flawed. These athletes tended to suggest that the male rugby players were out of control.

> I'd much rather be a female rugby player than a male rugby player...I feel like the men, more often, make it a personal game. They more often are very quick to violence versus aggression, at least from what I've seen. If they get hit they're like, "You shouldn't have done that. I'm going to make you wish you hadn't!" Whereas us it's like, "It's the game, it's part of the game, play the game, do your best." The men are more like, "I'm going to make you pay for that." That's not me. So I'm definitely very glad that I'm a female rugby player versus a male rugby player (Sheri).

In addition to positioning the males' game as "out of control" and their behavior as "in touch" these women suggested that male players, unlike female players, did not respect their opponents or the game enough to actively try and regain control of out of control behavior. Cali explained that men's behaviors are often over the line and they do nothing to police that behavior.

> Watching men and women play I perceive men's games as being tremendously more violent. You can hear the hits in the men's game. You see the full out aggression played out in men's faces and the way they're going at the plays and stuff and …in their body language. It's this, "I'm going to spring and attack you, I'm going to get you" very violent poses and stuff. At those points you lose the train of thought on how you're playing the game, it becomes singled out and now my mission is to hurt you rather than, "this is our end goal as a group." You're not running with the pack, suddenly you're in the individual hunt. That's played out so much more when I watched the guys play as opposed to watching the women play. Where you start out as a collective and then certain things happen and you break off. But then, for some reason, the women have checked those individuals and said, "Hello? I is *not* for team" and then the team comes back again. It's a crazy phenomenon. I don't know if it's that

–the whole village takes care of the baby—thing, something instinctual. You know, as women we've gotta take care of everyone. Probably not. But that's what we've been brought up to do. It's funny…it's just different animals. It almost hurts watching the guys play sometimes, because it's like, damn, that's gotta hurt, and then when they get up, it's like for a moment they don't even pay attention to their part of the team, just "arrrrr, ggrrrrr, gaaaaaa" they're in that animalistic mode, attack. It's been a real interesting animal, kind of watching the differentiation between the men's idea of violence and aggression playing out on the field as opposed to seeing women play.

In this way these athletes position female rugby players as in control of their aggression. On an individual level this emphasis positions the female experience as superior to the male experience. Males are positioned as emotional animals unable to control their behavior; a devalued experience traditionally reserved for the hysterical woman (Bordo, 1993). Considered in conjunction with the findings in category "they say" in the previous layer that suggested that women should not play rugby, this emphasis could be understood as a defensive practice (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman (1959), because these women identify themselves as rugby players and value that self/identity they protect their positive definition of self when confronted with contradictory information. These defensive practices illustrate the continual negotiation/interaction with others involved in the accomplishment of self/identity.

Despite their continued emphasis on pain, contact and aggression and reiteration of pain, contact and aggression as the only way to define rugby, they are working to separate the link between the male body and these "masculine" characteristics by suggesting that women do pain, contact and aggression better than men. While this may serve to destabilize the taken for granted notions concerning gender and contact sports at an individual level, at an ideological level, they reproduced dominant discourses and

gender relations by continuing to emphasize the importance of pain, contact and aggression as superior while devaluing emotion. This was similar to Theberge's (2000) hockey findings. In her analysis, Theberge (2000) indicated that the female hockey players, due to their presence in a traditionally male dominated sport, destabilize the gender binary; however, she also suggested that their continued judgment of their own performance along lines of strength, power and aggression ultimately reinforced male superiority. Consistent with Messner (1988), Theberge (2000) suggested that continued emphasis on strength, power and force as indications of superior performance privileged male physiology and mark female physiology as inferior thus reinforcing the gender order in sport.

<div align="center">*Summary*</div>

In this layer I explored how female ruggers accomplished a part of their rugby self by understanding themselves as social objects (Blumer, 1969; Coles, 2008; Mead, 1934). By referring to the ideal rugger these women were not explicitly referring to themselves but in effect they projected themselves onto their definitions of others. The "ideal rugger" was a way for these women to articulate how they defined themselves without saying "I am." Specifically, these women defined a rugger as fearless of pain, fearless of contact and aggressive. They also suggested that bruises could be used to express that fearless of pain, fearless of contact and aggressiveness. Lastly, the athletes in this study emphasized that there was no ideal rugger, in rugby all kinds of bodies were needed.

The categories explored in this layer worked in concert with the categories in the layer rug(be) to sustain the importance of pain, contact, aggression and gender in the

defining and understating of rugby. Consistent with symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1966; Denzin, 1969; 1992; Mead, 1934) this parallel works to solidify pain, contact, aggression and gender as the only meanings available to express valued rugby experiences or selves. Furthermore, given these constructed meanings and an individual's desire to see herself as a rugger it is not surprising that pain, contact, aggression and gender are reiterated in these athletes rugby self stories.

<div align="center">Rug(me): I am Rugby</div>

In this layer, I look at how these women constructed and used their rugby selves/identities. In the first two layers I discussed how these players define themselves as social objects. In this final layer, Rug(me), I look at how these definitions were incorporated into the construction of a rugby self/identity. As Blumer suggests (1966; 1969) individuals will act toward the self according to how they define the self. That means that individuals will tend to tell stories about themselves that ring true to their self definitions. In sport and exercise psychology Smith (2010) has advocated the study of self stories as a means to understand how people *know* themselves and others. Considered in conjunction with symbolic interactionism this means that the stories these women told me expressed how they defined themselves inside and outside of rugby. Consistent with the assumptions of symbolic interactionism, the definitions of rugby/ruggers were reiterated in these athletes' storied self descriptions.

Specifically, this layer is made up of four categories: *I am fearless of pain and contact*, *I am aggressive but under control*, *braggin' bruises* and *I am rugby*. In the category *I am fearless of pain and contact* the ruggers told stories that emphasized their

fearlessness of both making contact and enduring pain. The category *I am aggressive but under control* focuses on the ruggers self descriptions as aggressive. This category is divided into three codes which are as follows: *I am in control*, *I will control you* and *respect*. These codes were used to emphasize the important role of control in the women's self definitions as aggressive rugby players. Next, in the category *bragging bruises* I focus on the ruggers' use of bruises to communicate to self and others their fearlessness and aggressiveness. Lastly, the category *I am rugby* explores how these athletes negotiated two seemingly contradictory selves/identities. In this category I also look at how they used their rugby self/identity to communicate with others, inside and outside of rugby, a part of how they define themselves as women.

I Am Fearless of Contact and Pain

During the course of the interviews the participants stressed that they were not afraid of making contact with others. Sam exemplified that sentiment in her statement, "I can't say I've ever had that real fear of making physical contact with people." Many of the women expressed their fearlessness of contact through self stories. They constructed themselves, within rugby, by telling glory stories of accomplishment in rugby that highlighted their ability to tackle.

> National's game, we were kicking off, and we're playing this team, the good team, the best team there. And so, we're running, and my teammate and me were running and the girl just caught the ball and I was there, and just made an awesome tackle, which was awesome, and I remember that. That was really good, I was just like, "yes!" I love, love to make the good tackle. But she caught it and it was like as soon as she caught it she was on the ground, which was just awesome. Fun (Libby).

In this quote Libby spoke directly to a moment of triumph that was defined by making a

tackle. In telling this story she also reiterated tackling as an important way in which she

was defining herself within rugby. Similarly, Sheri talked about a personal triumph

centered around the act of tackling.

> A few plays later, I was on one side of the field and that girl was running
> down the other side and I don't know what happened but she broke
> through somebody and she's closing in on the tryzone and it's like, "I have
> to get there--FUCK!" I'm running across the field and I took her out and it
> was like, "Fuck yeah!"...I took her down and that was awesome. Not that
> it really made up for letting a try through before, but kind of.

In this quote, Sheri expressed her ability to "make up" for a previous error by hitting a

tackle. Her exuberance demonstrated that tackling and making tackles was important to

her. Even when athletes discussed themselves as not strong tacklers they found ways to

articulate the importance they place on tackling. Some athletes, like Jane in the following

quote, spoke in terms of making themselves better ruggers by improving their tackling.

> I want to go into my tackles harder, physically, getting lower, wrapping,
> holding on even if I feel--I tend to tackle more on my left side because I
> have the right shoulder injury from rugby and from the car accident--so
> even if I'm wrapping up and she's on my right side--just holding on tight
> and repeating that and not going, "well that was a tough tackle, I'm going
> easy the next time." Just, hitting them, being technically correct and not
> necessarily picking the people up and slamming them to the ground,
> because that's a little out of my range of talents--being safe. Doing it
> technically correct but not letting go. I've done that, I've let go in the past,
> going, "I'm just not into it." It looks bad and it makes me feel crappy.

Earlier in her interview Jane referred to her tackling as her weakest part of her game.

Despite her descriptions of previous failures as a tackler, Jane was able to illustrate that

tackling remained an important part of how she defined her rugby self. For example, she

focused on her desire to work on making her tackling better. However, regardless of her

ability to execute a good hit, she was still evoking tackling as important over other

possible aspects of the game of rugby (e.g., passing, knowing the game, endurance, etc.).

Through her focus on tackling, the behavior was (re)produced as important. Also, in

saying, "picking the people up and slamming them to the ground" was outside of her

talent, she linked hard hits with outstanding ability. This statement also implies that this

was an ability that she endeavored to possess. This quote worked to further solidify the

importance of tackling in defining rugby and rugby players while simultaneously

indicating her legitimacy. Jane was able to construct herself as a legitimate rugger despite

her inability to execute big hits by articulating her value of tackling and respect for others

who can make big hits.

In addition to fearlessness of making contact and making big tackles, the athletes

also identified themselves as able to take the big hits and keep playing.

> We were playing the Wolverines. They were ranked nationwide and Jo was on their team. She was inside-center so she was right across from me, scary. It was funny because when we walked one of us's like, "holly shit! Is that one of their girls? She looks like a guy." Then we find out that she was training for weight lifting for the Olympics. Lydia, our coach said, "Yep, that's Jo" and we're like, "Oh great." Then when I get on the field I'm like, "Oh shit she right across from me! That sucks." So, we're playing, we got the ball from the scrum, I was inside center, I got as pass from Vicky and Jo wrapped me and she seriously picked me up off the ground. I don't know even how it happened, but it must have looked really bad. She picked me up and put me flat back on the ground and I guess it looked bad, cuz then, it didn't hurt, but I got up and my coach was on the side and she's clapping and goes, "way to get up Libby, way to get up." And I go, "oh that must have looked really bad." Jo only scored one try and she's usually scored all of theirs she usually would score five or six trys a match. Lydia was like, "she was just pissed because you weren't letting her score, you did awesome, awesome defense." So that whole game was a memory that was good. That was just funny because Lydia was like, "way to get up, good job" and clapping. I'm like, "that must've looked really bad then obviously." So, that was pretty memorable (Libby).

In this quote Libby articulated the meaning of a muscled body, the importance of big hits and her ability to "take it" and keep playing. First, Libby reinforced gender norms by suggesting that the well muscled body of Jo made her look like a man. This story also confirmed Jo's rugby performance as positive, valued and authentic through the praise of Jo's ability to make hard hits. In this situation Jo's body was labeled as male due to her muscularity. This is consistent with past research that suggests that females with excessive muscularity are often labeled as man-ish (Howe, 2003; Krane et al., 2004). However, because of her man-ish muscled appearance she was awarded status within rugby. This moment reiterates a gendered link between authentic/valued rugby performance and contact which suggests that men are better ruggers because they are stronger and able to hit harder (Messner, 2002; Schacht, 1996). All of this established Jo as a rugger but also constructed Libby as a "good rugger." Furthermore, Libby was aware that Jo hit hard, but was still willing to play hard against her. This quote demonstrated the importance of tackling and playing on in the face of pain even if that pain was imagined. Even without suffering, Libby was praised for continuing to play on after the "hard hit" was interpreted as painful. In that way, this quote linked hard hits with pain by suggesting that hard hits imply pain.

Though level of contact and the ability to hit hard were used as ways to confirm their rugby selves, contact was also related to fearlessness of pain. Sam told a story of her first rugby match in which she was afraid of contact as it related to a fear of getting hurt.

> In the first game the tackling thing scared the hell out of me because you don't do that in any other sport. The idea of running up towards the person and then, all the sudden, you just try and wrap around their middle or their waist or legs even to take them down. You don't know how that's going to

feel when you are actually at full force and they're at full force. Is it going to hurt? Are you going to land the wrong way? Are you going to end up hurting them and then the sir's going to be really angry? It's just all these thoughts are running through your head about what could go wrong. The whole idea of tackling becomes, "maybe I should just let somebody else do that." Once it was like, "I have to tackle this person. If I let them pass it's pretty obvious to everyone that I was scared." When it's forced upon you then you're able to just do it. That had a lot less of the whole, "oh my god, oh my god, I have to tackle someone."...the fact that there was enough distance to have that whole anticipation of what it's going to be like to tackle them, that was scary. I don't think she went down right away. I'm pretty sure I was one of those, you hit them and it slows them down and makes them stand still but your still kinda hanging around their middle and trying to figure out how to contort your body so that they will fall before they can pass the ball off to someone else. So it didn't work so hot, but it wasn't nearly as humiliating as my head said it was going to be...it was definitely cool after the first one. I was like, "Yes!" I think then, the next tackle, it was a bigger girl--more of the grandeur, "yeah I tackled someone who outweighed me, yes." I actually got her to go down once I hit her, that was more satisfying because I wasn't just hanging there and she's pulling me along as she continues to advance down field.

In this quote Sam talked about being fearful of contact when she began playing rugby, however, this quote also spoke to her fearlessness of contact and pain. Sam's story was a story of triumph. In this story, Sam continued to play rugby despite her initial fears. In this quote Sam made the link between fear of tackling and the probability for injury. That she chose to tell this story indicates two things. This story worked to simultaneously position Sam as a rugger engaged in appropriate fearless behavior and to reiterate the importance of contact and pain in the definition of the sport of rugby.

Moreover, this story revealed the self as unstable (Dickens, 2008), mutable (Gergen, 1991) and inconsistent (Glassner, 1990) when considered with Sam's earlier statement that she had never been afraid of contact. Recall Sam had said, "I can't say I've ever had that real fear of making physical contact with people." According to Goffman

(1959) contradictions of this kind can reveal the contrived nature of reality. In other words, Sam's contradiction of herself revealed that she was actively creating and constructing a rugby self using the concept of fearlessness.

Many ruggers told tales like the previous story through which they indicated their awareness of the possibility of pain and their willingness to play in spite of that possibility. The choice to play or continue playing in the face of pain was used as a way to define themselves within rugby. These rugby players made comments about the likelihood of injury and pain in rugby, but the relevance of those comments was not in the recognition of pain/injury but in the nonchalant disregard of its inevitability.

> Trying my hardest is more important than being cautious in that sport (Wendy).

> My brain--thinking about fear of injury--doesn't really have much conversation. My heart's just, "we're not going to talk about it, we're just going to do it" (Rae).

While these athletes disregarded pain, other athletes actually worked to embrace pain. These ruggers explained that a rugby "hurt" was a hurt that they wanted and enjoyed. For example, when asked if she had anything left to add at the end of our interview, Rae said:

> Just that rugby really is about hurting so good. There's something about the amount of pain that I inflict on myself when I play that feel's good. You know. And. Yeah exactly, bring it on. I'm excited for the rest of the season and seasons to come, hopefully if I just don't get hurt -- Not badly hurt.

Rae explained the positive aspects of hurt and pain. Nina explored this idea further suggesting that she liked the hurt and that enjoying the hurt with other ruggers was the heart of rugby.

> The physical aspect of rugby I really do enjoy. It does feel good to be able to just hit someone, not in a--I want really hurt you, kill--way, but in a--I want to make contact. I'm not sure why that feels really great all the time. But just being able to say, "I'm going to take my body and stop your body in a way that neither one of us is going to get hurt." Actually, it seems like something you shouldn't be able to do, but-chu can…I don't mind the violence, the hitting each other because we're all adults and we can agree that we kinda like the way this feels, hate to tell you, but like, it actually feels good, somehow. We don't understand it (Nina).

In these quotes athletes acknowledged that pain happened in rugby but the experience of pain varied amongst participants. Despite differences in their experiences of pain, all of the athletes in this study shared stories that highlighted their ability to play through pain and continue on despite injury.

> I go to the first match and I get rocked! I don't know what happened. I got hit, my head hit the ground, and I got up dizzy. I wasn't use to it yet, so I got up and it took a minute to kind of get back in position and then I was fine, whatever, I played. Then, Erica, later was like, "ok, you might have a minor concussion." And I was like, "whatever" (Sheri).

> I got knocked out tackling, the ground was hard, somebody tackled me and my head just bounced off the ground … I did [continue to play]. But I mean, I had taken a minute. I can see, I'm not bloody, I'm alright (Libby).

> I messed up my rotator cuff really bad. I landed on the ball then someone landed on me…It took me a good six maybe eight months before I could really move my arm without pain…That shoulder injury was at the last tournament last year so it wasn't like I had to play on it for very long, I did play the last two games in the tournament, cuz the tournament wasn't over yet (Rae).

These quotes indicated the athletes' individual willingness to continue playing despite their injuries. Laura summed up this attitude toward playing through injury quite simply when she said "If I can move, I can play" (Laura, 704-705, 16). According to previous rugby research (Broad, 2001; Burgess et al., 2003; Chase, 2006; Howe, 2001; Schact, 1996) these pain-filled stories are used by ruggers to garner respect and legitimacy as

rugby players. Furthermore, Messner (1992; 2002) suggested that these stories worked to situate the women within a valued sport discourse.

This individual zeal to continue playing even after being knocked out worked to not only solidify their belonging in rugby but also worked to (re)construct pain and the willingness to play on in the face of pain as a symbol full of valued meanings within rugby culture. As Light and Kirk (2000) suggest, self-sacrifice becomes an important symbol of being a "real" rugby player. As a symbol, these participants explained that playing through injury held valued meaning(s) to themselves and to others. Specifically, these players identified that playing through injury was praised amongst teammates and indicated their strength to themselves. For example, Sheri explained:

> I'm not going to let this take me down, I'm better than this, this can't stop me and I would say the other half of it probably is, if I stop, no one's there for my team in the way that I need to be there. I can't let them down.

Like many athletes in this study, Sheri felt that playing through pain indicated that she was as tough as she believed herself to be. Moreover, these actions were not only used to confirm self beliefs, these actions were also used to communicate to others their willingness to sacrifice their bodies for the team. Sacrificing one's body for the good of the team is a quality valued in rugby (Ligh & Kirk, 2000) and in sport (Messner, 1992; 2002) and was a value the ruggers in my study embodied.

> Something about the combination of being a part of a team and giving it your all, giving it a 100 percent of what you have and it really wasn't a question of whether or not I was going to play (Rae).

> It is more important for me to be out there supporting my team than for me to worry about my injury (Nina).

Messner (2002) identified self-sacrificing of this sort as a part of the triad of violence that positions some sports at the valued center of sport but also positions these sports as masculine. More specifically, according to Schacht (1996), playing through pain/injury is a way to communicate legitimacy in rugby. In terms of self/identity construction, stories of playing with pain/injury reified self beliefs of what a rugger/athlete was, reinforced definitions of the sport of rugby as focused on pain/injury and effectively communicated to others a valued rugby performance. Ultimately, the importance of playing through pain in the construction and maintenance of a rugby self was exemplified by Laura in the following quote:

> This girl was running down the side and there's no way I could tackle her. So, I was jumping and I was going to push her out but at the last second, when she'd already crossed over the line, I pulled her back in and took her down, the air and she landed on my arm. The first thing was, I stopped her, now everybody can get back ... but my are was just hanging there when I got up. I was like, push myself up on it and I fell back down. I didn't really know what happened but Ellis came over and I was just having trouble getting up, and she was like, "oh, Laura, your arm," and then she said, "just let me take a look at it real quick." And she's just standing there looking at it then she just put it back in. I thought, "oh, ok, I can, I can get back out there." Libby was coaching and she wasn't like, "get over here now, you're not going back in."...and these guys lining the tryzone were watching us, and we had to take a minute and they were like, "oh man." I got back out there and I almost felt like I was strutting. I didn't back down, I came back out there and then I made a couple more tackles right by them. A few weeks later I found out that I'd torn some ligaments in my elbow and the doc said, "I have to advise you, as a doctor, not to play but I know how you rugby people are. And if you're going to play make sure you wear the brace." So I wore the brace and played and stuff. My my teammates are usually, they were all, like, "Wow, you really, you played through that? That's awesome."

In this quote Laura told a story about dislocating her elbow and tearing the ligaments of that joint. In this story she emphasized her willingness to continue playing in two ways.

First, she continued to play in the game during which she sustained the injury. Second, she continued on to play throughout the rest of the rugby season. In this way she was accomplishing a rugby self/identity. However, a portion of how one defines a social object, like the self, comes not only from our own engagement with that object (e.g., self interaction and behavior) but through interactions with others about that social object (Blumer, 1966, 1969; Denzin, 1969, 1992; Mead, 1934). Others can reflect back to us the appropriateness of our behaviors while defining ourselves according to a particular "role" (Goffman, 1959). In this story, Laura's rugby self was reflected back to her through the eyes of the male spectators and through the eyes of her teammates. Also, according to symbolic interactionism, a portion of how we know our selves as a social object is through others definitions of that self (Blumer, 1969). That means that we consider our interactions with others when we construct our self in a certain fashion (Charon, 2004). A rugby self was defined for Laura from the perspective of her coach and her doctor. Her coach did nothing on the day of her injury to communicate to her to come out of the game. Also, her doctor defined ruggers to her as people who play through injury. In this way a particular definition of a rugger, a person who keeps playing, was defined for Laura through what was said (by the doctor) and what was not said (by the coach). In addition to accomplishing a rugby self through a story about pain, Laura also accomplishes this through the simultaneous telling of a story about contact. Her detailed and enthusiastic description of her initial tackle, the response of the male spectators to the tackle and her focus on additional tackles made after the injury worked to construct her as

a legitimate rugger. This story also worked to reinforce the importance of contact in defining all things rugby.

Laura's quote exemplified this category in which we can see that these women positioned themselves as fearless of contact and pain by telling self stories emphasizing big hits and playing through pain. In this way they simultaneously achieved a valued rugby identity and reinforced definitions of the sport as painful and contact focused.

I Am Aggressive but Under Control

Like their definitions of the sport they play and like their descriptions of what a rugby player should be, these women defined themselves as being aggressive. In terms of aggression, they recognized that there was a point of acceptability beyond which they would not go. These women defined themselves according to that notion of control.

> Tackling allows me to fuck people up, which is fun too, in a gentle way (Rae).

> I'm badass, I'm tough, I'm a competitive person but I'm not competitive--no matter what (Nina).

In these quotes the athletes identified the limits of their efforts and enthusiasm. More specifically, these athletes told me stories about what they would and would not do. This reiterated the notion that there was a level of behavior that was acceptable and a level of behavior that was unacceptable in rugby.

For most of the participants, the 'line' between acceptable and unacceptable behavior was easy to name, but very hard to define or give examples. The line was thought of as the space between what these athletes said they did and the behaviors that

they said they would never do. Furthermore, this "line" may be thought of as a dialectic space made up of contradiction and comparison.

In this category I explore how these athletes used aggression to accomplish a rugby self/identity. Specifically I will discuss the importance of control as a vital part of the women's self definitions as aggressive rugby players. Subsequently, the link between control and self/identity definitions helps illustrate the importance of control as it relates to aggression in rugby. This category is divided into three codes which are: *I am in control*, *I will control you* and *respect*. In the code, *I am in control*, these women articulated that they were willing to do what it took to advance their team. However they also infused control into these statements. Through various stories they articulated behaviors that they valued and articulated behaviors that they would never do because they were *under control ruggers*. In the code, *I will control you*, I look at the importance placed on gaining control of others that they read as out of control. Lastly, in the code, *respect*, I discuss how these athletes demonstrated respect as a way to communicate to others their control.

I am in control

Throughout the interviews the women discussed a number of ways that they interacted with teammates and opponents on the field. This communication included both verbal and non-verbal communication. Both types of communication were tempered by levels of control. For example these women felt that psyching out the opponent was ok but it was not ok to "talk shit" or complain. "Shit talking" and complaining were symbols

that a rugger was taking things personally and, as such, was out of control. First, I will

explore these athletes' willingness to do things to throw the other team off their game.

> Psyching out. So, I am famous for being the prop that screams in the scrum. It's literally, psychs people out! To just be screaming in this, a place where everyone else is just gritting their teeth and going. And personally it makes them laugh sometimes or like, "holly shit, this girl's capable of anything." Reality is, probably I am, but I'm just trying to push you over. Also, I will do that as a lock as well, one of my favorite jokes to play with the other prop, I don't know if you've been there when Ellis and I have done this, but one of us will be like, "Find her ticklish spot" because you're locked in with each other and even if you're not ticklish you start thinking, "oh my god, she's going to tickle me, what? NOOOOO!" (Nina).

> I think it's fun to, like glare at the other team, (Laughing) I don't know, I think that that is kind of, a fun thing to be able to do because without being verbal or physical, you can still mess with somebody's head just by a look that you are sending them (Sammy).

Though psychological and non-verbal intimidation was constructed as acceptable, taking

that to a place without tact or control was constructed as unacceptable. This "in touch"

verbal communication was labeled "shit talking."

> They were so, they just talk and they're all really mean out there and like talking shit to us, I get fired up for that (Laura).

> People talking shit really bothers me. Whether it's talking themselves up like, "I'm so good, I'm gunna kick your ass." That's just more of an annoyance but if they continuously do that it's starts building on top of that and eventually we get to the point where I either yell at 'em to shut up or get angry and maybe start targeting (Sam).

For many of the athletes "shit talking" was situated "in touch." Furthermore, both Laura

and Sam suggested that "in touch" behavior warranted some type of response (i.e.,

getting fired up, yelling or targeting). In the following quote, Cali told a story about a

rugby player who lost control, took her verbal communication too far and the collective response to that behavior:

> We were playing against a fairly young team they were in the scrum, they had a fairly new hooker and she didn't get her head positioned right and she got a really good solid whop to the head and she probably got a really decent mild concussion. She started hyper ventilating because she didn't expect it and it was a good blow to the neck and Ellis gave her the once over and said, "You really need to just have her relax, calm down, try to get herself back together," and one of her own teammates said, "Oh, just put a bag over her head and let her pass out, be done with it already." We were all just like, "Woah! Holly shit." Universally, across our line, we're like, "dude?? Are you kidding me? Just shut the hell up. I can't believe you just said that." And everybody just stopped. She shouldn't have done that, yeah we recognize what the rookie could have done better not to get into that position, but everybody as a whole was just like, "are you kidding?" That person stayed clam shut the rest of the time. She got put in her time out. That was it, nothing else came out of that person for the rest of the time, it was just really a wild thing to to be a part of.

In this quote Cali depicted herself as someone who would never "talk shit." Specifically, recalled a moment where she experienced "in touch" behavior. She told this story through her response to this behavior. In her construction of this memory she painted herself as a rugby player who does not accept that kind of behavior. What is more, she positioned herself with other ruggers on the field as responding to this behavior in a way that exerted control. That is, Cali was a part of the response that got this girl to stay "clam shut" the rest of the game.

In addition to "shit talking," it was deemed unacceptable to complain in rugby. The notion of not complaining was taken very seriously by these women. Constructing themselves as ruggers who did not complain was used as a way to state their superiority to other rugby players. For example, Nina explained here that she did not complain even in a situation where the opponents were cheating.

> When that other team was starting too close in the scrum, I didn't complain to the sir and yell. I didn't say, "oh my god why the hell are they doing this wrong." I didn't yell at them, I didn't yell at the sir, I talked to my captain.

In this quote, Nina was simultaneously expressing her control and her ability to take whatever was dished out. In this way, she located herself in the dominant rugby discourse accomplishing a valued rugby identity. Similarly in the following passage, Jane talked about not complaining about playing a specific position:

> Juliette and I were the two that were the strongest and tallest so we were the obvious choices. We didn't want to play Lock. I thought eight-man was pretty cool. I thought it was unique that they could control the ball, and they control part of the scrum, with the ball and the scrum half. I really didn't know what she did back there. I thought after I played this one position, I'd get to play anything else and I wanted to do something else but there was always someone playing 8 man. First there was Shrug, then it was some other gal, then it was a gal named Cloe and she would whine like a little kid when she would have play second row. You know there just weren't enough people, and I'm like, "well at least you get to play 8 man sometimes."

In this quote, by suggesting that she would not complain, Jane constructed herself as superior to Cloe because Cloe would "whine like a little kid."

Symbolic interactionism suggests that a part of how we know ourselves as social objects is through others responses to our behaviors while we are in a particular "role" (Goffman, 1959). Consistent with that notion, Rae explained how she learned never to complain again.

> When I was pinched I was trying to figure out which hand it was that was on my arm because we were in this big maul. We were all moving around with the ball and they were trying to grab the ball from me and a girl took the lower part of my bicep and pinched it as hard as she could. I was just screaming, "Stop fucking pinching me." Once I got out of the maul, one of my teammates brought me over and she's like, "Rae, they can do whatever they want to you in the maul. Pretty much anything goes, it's allowed as

> long as the ref doesn't see it, so, there's really no point in complaining about it or yelling about it." I was like, "OK, well I'll never be in a maul again." That's what one of my first thoughts was. I've been in mauls and shit still happens, I just don't bitch about it.

In this quote, Rae recalled a specific moment that illustrated her growth into a more acceptable rugby player. When faced with "in touch" behavior (i.e., pinching) Rae responded by complaining. This complaint was met with corrective behavior from a teammate. According to symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1966) this is a moment where a self/identity is being reflected back to Rae through the eyes of another, her teammate. From this quote, we can see that she crafted a story that illustrated her growth as a rugby player. She pointed at her inexperience as a rookie to explain her bad behavior but she also indicated that she learned from those mistakes. For Rae, with each mistake, the line of acceptability became more clearly defined. In her last sentence, Rae alluded to her ability to now control her responses.

In the following quote, Libby recounts for me an experience of unacceptable behavior

> Biting's inappropriate. It's still accepted, kinda, they do get punished but I've been bitten so it's not like it doesn't happen. When I got bit, the sir was the other team's coach and he saw my arm and he was just like, "Did someone on our team do that?" I was like, "yeah." It was bleeding, there was blood coming out and teeth marks. He's like, "that's unacceptable." So he found out who did it after the match because it was in a ruck and so I didn't know exactly who did it. He found out who did it and she was suspended from play. That team made it to the top collegiate finals so she missed out on that whole part of the season. I just don't understand why people, what would possess somebody to bite someone else.

Through this experience, Libby explained not only the events of that moment, but also the meaning(s) that she made for that moment. Libby reiterated that biting was "in touch"

and she also suggested that she would never bite anyone in rugby. This was a sentiment

shared by many of the women in this research. Though many of the athletes' had not

been bitten in a rugby match, many of them identified biting as one of the clearly

inappropriate behaviors in rugby. Nina explained, "I've seen it so it happens but I would

never bite someone, that's dirty, it's literally physically, like breaking, I try not to break

skin let's put it that way...Let's try not to break skin while playing rugby, is my kinda

theory." Interesting enough in her staunch disapproval of biting Nina claims its

unhygienic nature as a reason for her opposition rather than the harm it might inflict or

the illegality of the act. In the sport psychology literature, by defining

aggressive/unacceptable behavior as intentionally harmful behavior (Baron, 1977;

Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson,

2000), the assumption is that intent can describe all experiences of unacceptable

behavior. However, Nina indicated that harm is not the only gauge of unacceptable

behavior.

Returning, for a moment, to Libby's bite story, we can see that she defined biting

as "in touch" but that was not the only meaning conveyed in her story. Meaning was also

communicated through her description of how she handled herself in that situation.

Libby's story was not just a story about the meaning of biting, it was also a story about

Libby's willingness to "take it" without complaining. In her story, she did not draw

attention to herself. The only reason her opponent was punished was because the

sir/opponent's coach noticed her bleeding wound and sought to punish his player. This

story worked to solidify Libby's rugby self by simultaneously describing her position on

biting as "in touch" and demonstrated her willingness to play through pain and take it

without complaint.

In addition to constructing themselves as not losing control by "talking shit" or

"complaining" these ruggers also constructed themselves as not losing control physically.

Hitting someone really hard who was considered smaller than the player was determined

to be "in touch" because that behavior indicated that the player had lost control.

> I kind of feel like there could be an excess of aggression. I wouldn't hit someone nearly as hard who's smaller than me as I would someone who's bigger than me or my size. I do a self check of how much of a challenge to pose to someone based on, "obviously this person is a lot tinier than me," you can tell that just by the look of them, you may not be able to tell how much of that is muscle versus just scrawny-ness. I'd definitely say, like if I went to tackle Suzie, I'm not going to put all of my strength and effort into that, because she's a lot smaller than me but if it's Turk or Nina or someone who's my size or bigger or even just someone I see as being my size--because self perspective is always skewed in some fashion--then I'm going to put all of my effort into it. Because if you are like me then I know what I can handle and that's going to be all of my effort, and so I'm going to put that forward and expect you to be able to handle it too. For someone who's bigger than me, I've gotta put forth all my effort because their effort could be twice what mine is, it's going to be more difficult so…I'd say, trying to flatten someone who's way tinier than you is just not acceptable (Sam).

In this quote, Sam discussed the line of acceptability for her. This notion of checking how

hard one hit was consistent with the rug(you) code of control which suggested that the

rugby players should be in control of their behavior. However, though these ruggers

specified that hitting too hard may be considered unacceptable, these same women also

expressed that complaint about being hit hard was not acceptable. For example, Jane

revealed two incidences where complaints followed hard hits:

> I see people who are hotheads and people who don't know the rules. I have many stories of you tackling someone, even with the *ball* and their

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yelling, "get off me, get off me." Or you tackle them and they set the ball, or the ball is away, and they start swinging punches at you, because you tackled them hard. And they didn't expect it. I just run away kindof laughing because they're just kinda whimpy, I think. If it was more of a--if they didn't have the ball, they could have said, "look honey you tackled me without the ball" whatever, but no, it's their retaliating with fists. I don't like to see that. So when it's with you fighting, I just kind of run away chuckling. When it was with Rae, I tried to pull her off this girl. This happened in the last game that I played against the Tornados. Rae was tackling hard and they really didn't expect that and they didn't like it and they weren't use to it and they were starting to kinda get in her face and she was starting to get into an argument. I pulled her away and was like, "come on Rae, don't even worry about it." I had to do that at least twice. If I think it's a situation that might get out of hand, I like to step in and say, "hey that's not worth it."

Here Jane makes it clear that she believed that complaining about a hard hit was unacceptable. This serves a dual purpose. First, this statement reiterated that rugby players should not complain. This quote also helped Jane accomplish her rugby self through constructing herself as someone who had taken on this "requirement" and incorporated it into her beliefs. Second, this quote revealed meaning(s). Complaining meant that the complaining player was wimpy. Lastly, this quote also illustrated the importance of control but in a way that is different from my proceeding discussion. Through this story we can see that part of how Jane defined herself as a rugby player was to take control of an out of control situation. This was a common experience expressed by the ruggers in my study.

There's like point at which corrective behavior should be taken (Nina).

There's a certain line of behavior. Everything is fine and dandy until you cross that line then I'm going to need to change this, you need to get back on this side and until you do, I'm going to hurt you. I'm going to bring you around (Rae).

"I'm going to teach you a lesson." It's legal, it's going to stop the girl with the ball but it's more about teaching you a lesson. If this person is doing this, they need to, somehow, be stopped (Sheri).

Consistent with the notion of being aggressive but under control, these women also expressed that it was up to them to keep everyone else under control. What is implied, but not directly articulated, was the assumption of accurate communication. According to Blumer (1969) as interpreters of actions we tend to remove an individual from their line of action and attempt to interpret a single action. He suggests that this can lead to miscommunication. Furthermore, Blumer says that social objects have more than one meaning, and they can be interpreted in multiple ways. These things contribute to the potential for miscommunication. In terms of my rugby players, they assumed that they could accurately interpret control from the actions of an opponent. These actions were often isolated and removed from the opponents' line of action. Second, these athletes also assumed that the means of their response to an opponent's out of control behavior would be interpreted as a corrective response rather than an out of control behavior. The potential for miscommunication was substantially multiplied because of the negotiated meanings of behaviors. That is, no single behavior (with the exceptions of biting and complaining) was always marked as out of control or "in touch." What's more, these women endorsed the use of various tactics/behaviors to regain control of out of control situations. For example, Erica expressed the use of marking and psychological torment in the form of fear as effective ways to bridle out of control behavior.

We used to call numbers at my old school. If people complained or if people cheated, like punched when you're on the ground in rucks, you'd be like, "mark number 12." We'd all say it, we wouldn't do anything per se, but just like that fear that everyone now is watching for you (Erica).

Regaining control of an out of control situation by any means possible was used

repeatedly in the construction of self/identity within the context of rugby. Nowhere was

control used as much as it was used in the discussion of fighting.

I will control you: The meaning of fight

As previously discussed in the rug(you) layer, it was suggested that "real" rugby

players do not complain and they do not fight. For the most part, fighting was taken on as

something these women would never do. For example, Rae explained that fighting was

"in touch" and she explained that she would be the first to jump in and stop the fight:

> If a teammate started a fight I definitely try pull my player off the other
> player and apologize for her. That's probably what I would do. That would
> be hard to watch cuz you want to be able to give your team 100 percent of
> your support but I don't think I could support that.

This type of quotes worked to position these athletes as legitimate in their dislike of

fighting but there was also an element of control being articulated. Many athletes

constructed themselves as being the first to step in and break up a fight. This description

of themselves as stepping in suggested that they, the good rugger, were in control of

themselves and they were in control of others (who were imagined to be out of control).

Interestingly, many of the athletes felt that fighting was unacceptable and yet

these same ruggers later went on to explain situations during which they have advocated

fighting on the rugby field. Theberge (2000) found similar contradictions in her study of

female hockey players. Theberge's hockey players believed there was no place for

fighting in hockey, yet they accepted that, in some cases, fighting was necessary to

defend oneself or a teammate. This same contradiction occurred with the female ruggers

in this study and was made extremely clear in Nina's description of two separate events. I

have arbitrarily broken Nina's quote into two sections to facilitate interpretation. First I talk about Nina's (re)construction of a fight she witnessed and then I discuss Nina's own experience with throwing a punch.

> Cagney, who's a flanker and is a former Greco-Roman wrestler has some of these funny techniques that you use in wrestling. We were in a maul and Cagney has this huge squishy pink mouth guard so there's no way in hell she bit this girl. But the girl said she bit her because Cagney took her chin and she just put it in a spot on her shoulder and pushed down and dug, which I have now since used this technique a couple of time, it really works, it's actually quite nice, but, we're getting out of it, and mauls kinda dissolve a little bit. We finally realize that the, nothing's moving and the sirs calling it and all the sudden we see like Cagney go fwwaaa and she took an elbow to the girl and then she just starting swingin' and the other girl was like, "whhhaaaa, you fuckin' cunt!" like, wow. There was some pretty aggressive, there's some aggressive language going on. I cus on the field, I try not to at the other team, you know, they're not my concern and this is going on and I'd literally, *I* rather be standing in between them, cuz it wasn't appropriate. I grabbed Cagney around the throat, jus-kin-started pulling and somebody else got in between them. It was funny, cuz nobody on the other team pulled their girl off. And so, we were kinda like "what happened? Deal with your shit." But, that was definitely at that line. When I heard the rest of the story I was like, "yeah, I'm glad that you defended yourself verbally at least, but like starting a fight, not the best way to go." The other girl was like, "I can't believe you bit me, she fuckin' bit me." And I think she more started to just flail than anything else at anyone, but she was definitely directing a lot of it at Cagney and Cagney is not the type of person to back down in such a situation. When being personally attacked like that, it's just not in her personality to be able to do that…

In this portion of her quote, Nina told a story of herself as a controlled rugger. First, in her description of Cagney's encounter, Nina positioned herself as a woman willing to dig a chin into an opponent and cuss. However, she also articulated her level of control over her own actions (e.g., cussing) and thus positioned the other woman's actions (e.g., cursing) as excessive and inappropriate. Furthermore, Nina constructed herself in control of her teammate's actions. She was the one that broke up the fight. She went on to

position her team as the better team by suggesting that opponent was not willing to step up and "control their shit."

Cagney was defined as a rugger with valuable skills (e.g., chin dig). She was positioned as a person who stands up for herself and does not back down. Given this definition, her behaviors were constructed to fall within the parameters of acceptability. Cagney was fighting because she was defending herself from an opponent who was out of control as indicated by her cussing, her complaining and her fighting. In other words, despite throwing a punch, Cagney was not read as "in touch." What this version of the story conceals was the meanings communicated to the opponent who believed she had been bitten. This quote worked to construct Cagney, Nina and the opponent in a particular way. Giving voice to alternate ways of understanding that situation would not accomplish the same end. That end was the construction of Cagney and Nina as under control and the opponent as out of control. Nina then went on to describe her own perspective and experience with fighting:

> …I will fight verbally with anyone, but like, I come from, at one time, a physically abusive household and will ***not*** throw a punch at someone, just won't do it. In self defense? Sure. But, it's a rugby match, just, I don't, like physically punching someone like that, I would never-ever do. So like, throwing the one punch in that scrum, even that was hard for me. I was in a gray area for myself--I will be the first person to admit that to you--just because it was the only way I could get her to stop and like something needed to happen. I also knew she wasn't gunna actually get hurt and, interestingly enough, my gut instinct, at that time, told me, "She'll react appropriately." She was a snoty-snoty bitch but when somebody actually really faced up to her she was like "oooh, there is-there is a point." Did she complain about it later to her team? Yeah I didn't care.

In this final portion of the quote, Nina further positioned herself as in control by distancing herself from engaging in a fight. In describing herself as unwilling to fight, she

communicated her control. This control helped her construct a valued rugby self/identity. Also, her nonchalant endorsement of pain worked to accomplish a rugby self/identity. Furthermore, as Blumer (1969) suggested, contradiction elucidates the constructedness of self. As such, the constructed nature of Nina's rugby self/identity was revealed when, after saying she would never fight, she went on to talk about the one punch she did throw. Despite this contradiction, Nina remained a rugger under control. She was in control because she did not hit the other rugger hard enough to hurt her; she was in control because she was putting an end to the other ruggers out of control behavior; she was in control because she knew that the other rugger would respond appropriately. Therefore, the fact that Nina threw a punch was less revealing than the meanings she attached to that moment. For her, the punch was acceptable because it meant control. Again this meaning was contested in her final statement where she admits that the other rugger may have complained about the punch which would suggest that, like the story of Cagney, there was room for alternate meanings and experiences. Stories like this one revealed part of the process of self/identity development in rugby. Moreover, these contradictions, negotiations and constructions illustrated that the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in rugby cannot be easily defined.

In the sport psychology literature the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behavior is clearly defined. In this literature, aggression is defined as intent to harm (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000). The presence of intent to harm, whether instrumental (i.e., behavior directed for some other purpose) or hostile (i.e., behavior directed toward the suffering of another), is positioned

as unacceptable behavior. At times in my interviews, the women articulated that

intentionally harming someone was indeed, "in touch." However, when giving meaning

to their own behaviors and their teammates' behaviors, behaviors that are often

positioned in the sport psychology literature as innately harmful (i.e., fighting), were

constructed as accomplishing something other than harming the opponent. At one level, if

we consider this research within the current sport psychology language, the athletes in

this study suggested that intentionally harming someone was unacceptable. However,

when describing their own actions, actions that can be perceived as harmful (e.g.,

fighting), they did not experience *themselves* as unacceptable. For example, many of the

ruggers in this study articulated a dislike for fighting, however, at times they advocated

fighting as necessary in order to control out of control behavior on the rugby pitch.

> I still won't forget your fight. …I saw somebody sticking up for us, because from where I was on the field, there was just, like, the dirty play, and it's, I know you're going to have it in sports and stuff, but always, you need to stick up for yourself, especially in rugby to stop the crap. In Basketball a referee can stop it but the sirs aren't into that type of stuff, they don't stop that kind of stuff. I saw you sticking up for us. Not just, her because she did that, but they were all just pissing everybody off, and I saw that. That's what I saw…there you are, you're fighting her and I was, I just remember thinking, "Shannon will take care of it for us"… I think a lot of people were accusing you of starting it because how it ended with you on her neck, but that's all that everyone saw. …I like when you're in. I told myself at the beginning of this season, "If something bad should get, if you get hit in the face on purpose, they're doing shit, you have to stick up for yourself or else….it's not going to get taken care of and they will just keep doing it. I think you were sticking up for us, for rugby and I think that's ok (Laura).

In this quote Laura recounted her experience with me during a fight. She constructed me

as a defender of the team and of rugby. In so doing she emphasized the importance for a

rugger to maintain control of the game. Sheri remembered a similar experience in another match.

> It was hilarious though; that one match that Brooke hauled off and punched that girl. I don't remember what it was, but it was, it was a rough match. Whatever it was, the girls were kind of playing dirty, that might have been the match they got pulled back into a ruck by my foot…it had been a pretty rough match and the other scrumhalf was being a jackass. I don't know what she was doing, they were around the scrum, and Brooke would like try to get her hand in and get it out, or whatever, and I guess the girl was just being an asshole, like shoving her and hittin her and like, doing a whole bunch of stuff …she went and like tackled Brooke or something, something completely ridiculous, and Brooke just got up and punched her. I was like, "oh god, fist fight." Like, this is crazy. That was a pretty funny one. …in general I wouldn't say that you should just go and punch people, but that girl deserved it. There are some times that I think you need to put somebody in their place and this girl was completely over the line. I don't even know what all she was doing to Brooke, but she was just being a complete asshole to her so I don't fault her for it.

In this quote Sheri, like Laura, indicated that fighting was, at times, necessary to control out of control behavior. The contradiction and multiple meanings of single behaviors constructed by these women indicated the negotiated, contrived, ever shifting nature of the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; a distinction that sport psychology literature assumes is a clear, identifiable, stable and existent distinction that can be identified through intent to harm.

Fighting and throwing punches is constructed in the sport psychology literature as a behavior riddled with intent to harm and as such are behaviors marked as unacceptable in any sport (Tenenbaum et al., 2000). However, fighting and the line of unacceptability were constructed much differently by the participants in this research. The meanings constructed around fighting are important as they allow us to see the complicated negotiation of meaning surrounding the construction of the boundaries of acceptable and

unacceptable behavior in rugby. Specifically, the notion of "out of control" was used to construct the boundary between in touch and in bounds behavior. However, when (re)constructing their experiences, these athletes shaped themselves and their teammates as "under control." In other words, it was very infrequent that these women constructed themselves or their teammates as out of control, even when fighting. More often they tended to construct themselves and their teammates as in control and willing to take anything without complaint.

Some sport psychologists suggest that "athletes should never be compelled nor expected to proceed with the assumption that it is acceptable to intentionally harm another participant" (Tenenbaum et al., 2000, p.318). On one hand, most of the women in this study would agree with that statement and would suggest that they would never intentionally harm another rugger; they would say that even their attacks were measured and controlled communications. On the other hand, consistent with Messner (2002), harm was used as a way for these women to construct themselves as legitimate athletes. That is, a part of their self/identity accomplishment in rugby was linked to harm because the sport of rugby was defined as a space to hurt others and to be hurt. They constructed themselves as willing to accept that harm without complaint. This may then explain why, in some sport psychology research, there are inconsistent findings between perceptions of acceptability of intentionally harming someone and observed "harmful" acts (Loughead & Leith, 2001). This research indicated that how athletes construct self/identities is important to consider when investigating unacceptable behaviors. Moreover, control is an important concept to consider if one is to understand unacceptable behavior, however,

experiences of control and self/identity have gone unnoticed in the sport psychology

literature concerning aggression/unacceptable behavior. Unlike current sport psychology

definitions of aggression/unacceptable behavior, intent to harm was not the indicator of

unacceptability in this study, loss of control was. Ultimately, loss of control was

constructed as contradictory to a valued rugby self/identity. Therefore, these athletes

tended to (re)construct their rugby experiences through notions of controlling self and

others.

Respect

In addition to constructing themselves as ruggers "in control" through shared

stories highlighting control of their own and others' behaviors, they also constructed

themselves as controlled by sharing stories of respect. In this code I discuss how the

ruggers in this study took up and used "respect" as a means of constructing themselves in

rugby as controlled ruggers. For many of these women defining moments of their rugby

experiences came from the mutual respect they shared with other ruggers on the rugby

field.

> I got to try the whole prop thing across from one of the girls that's on the National 7's team and that was just sheer education to be at a collegiate level tournament, with everybody that's definitely a few rungs higher than us as far as experiences goes and what their talent set is, yet at the same time, I came in there, first time, not knowing and we'd stop for a moment and she's be like, "you know, listen" given me pointers and everything. And then went on to like, smear me and such and then she pulls me up and as she's running, she's telling me, "you should be trying, this and this and this." As the sir's going, "uhm hello?—excuse me." It was so cool to have that moment…almost a split second learning experience, and then going on to "we're going to smear you across the field." It's the wildest thing that you can experience and having that whole, "I'm going to tear you to shreds because, that's kinda what we're here to do, to have to fun, get it out, play this game," and then, having a learning experience in split

seconds. It was just wild, that was like the epitome. You drive for crazy hours to go play a game this violent game, and then you've got this opposing team who you are here to beat and play the game against and then, all the sudden, a little gears switch kicks in, "oh hey let's do this…oh sorry, was that my cleat?" and then go back. I think that is rugby. Watching the guys play rugby, I haven't seen any guys really go and stop and have a quick learning moment and then go back, to like, switch gears and play again. I've never see it before. I've told some of my other girlfriends and a couple other people who've played collegiate rugby before, they're like "yeah, this is the craziest phenomena on the planet." And then afterwards, you're having the social and drinking beer (Cali).

Cali recounted her interactions with an Eagle (i.e., a national team player), the very ideal rugger that most athletes compare themselves against. In this moment, Cali is the novice and she explained her edification at the hands of the superior player. Her experience in this moment reveals a part of how she defined rugby and the ideal rugger. Rugby was a place of intensity and respect. Further, the ideal rugger was a woman who was willing to respect even the most novice player by teaching her something about the game. This rugger would also be able to easily "switch" gears and go from teachable moment to "tear you to shreds." Ultimately, Cali positioned herself in this discourse as a respectful rugger. For Cali respect was used to claim control. In saying to an opponent, "great hit," after she was tackled, she communicated her value of hard hits but also communicated that she was not taking the hard hit personally. Nina shared a similar story of respect or, what she calls, graciousness:

It goes to that graciousness of, if I get tackled really hard. Here we go… just this last Saturday, I got tackled and it took me a little while to get up and I had just gotten pretty squished and my ribs were a little like, "ohhhh what happened?" But the girl who had tackled me, her name's Bean, she says to me as she's getting up, "I thought I'd try to take you down easy give you a good big hug" because like she was literally sitting there hugging me on the ground. It was just a big, "we're family, we love to play rugby this is what's happening." But if she'd been like, "Haha"--that

smirk is really the thing that gets me--and hadn't tried to help me up when I was obviously having a little bit of a hard time it might have been a different story, I might have lost a little respect for her…I really respect people who make good aggressive tackles. Who play with that much passion, but don't go so far as making it personal then it's about that one person HaHaHa. No, it's not and it's not necessarily, "I'm better than you," you can tackle me I can tackle you. Just because I got tackled doesn't mean I'm a lesser player than the person that tackled me. That's not how the game is played. I go into a tackle, knowing I'm getting tackled half the time--most of the time. As a forward--most of the time.

In this quote, Nina described respect as a way of representing one's control. She also

suggested that when that graciousness is missing, then that represents "in touch"

behaviors that can detract from one's rugby self/identity. Both Cali and Nina shared

stories of communication, respect and sportsmanlike conduct. By focusing on these

stories, they identified this level of respect as meaningful and important to them. This is

consistent with the two previous layers. Furthermore, many of the self stories that these

women chose to tell spoke of moments in which they would communicate appreciation to

an opponent or experienced a level of camaraderie on the rugby field with an opponent.

Rae specifically said:

After a clean hard hit I get up and say, "Good tackle."…Yeah it hurts but if it's clean, what better way to do it than till it hurts.

In this quote she is articulating not only her "respect" for her opponent but is also

demonstrating her ability to "take it" (i.e., take a hard hit). This idea of respect was very

important for many of these women. They felt that being able to take and deliver hard

hits was not enough. They felt that they had to be able to take it and give it, graciously,

unless their opponents indicated that they did not deserve respect.

I'm a pretty nice rugby player. After I tackle someone and I'm out of the action, I'll usually tap 'em, "you're ok." Or like slightly help em a little if

> I need to. And there's a couple, Brooke, on the Poppers, she saw me doing that once and she's like, "Why are you helping them up? And I'm like, "That's what I do." But when you're in the tackle and you're both getting up, if they've said something snotty or if you've seen 'em do something, or if, they're just, their team in general's lookin' like they're being dirty, then I just, whatever. Forget you. You're not appreciating it (Laura).

In this category I discussed aggression and how these athletes defined themselves as aggressive and how they tempered that definition with control. For these women aggression was valued, however, constructing themselves as ruggers "in control" was more important. In this way, they constructed themselves as ruggers who very rarely acted inappropriately. Furthermore, respect was used to communicate control and, as such, became a powerful indicator of inappropriate behavior. Simply put, these women defined acceptable behavior as aggressive but controlled and unacceptable behavior as aggression out of control.

The importance of control is a novel finding in sport psychology "aggression" research. As previously mentioned, sport psychology researchers differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behavior based on the presence or absence of intent to harm (Baron, 1977; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000). The participants in this study suggest that unacceptability was *not* located in a particular behavior and it was *not* always indicated by harm. For these women, control was much more important in locating the line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in rugby. However, control was not an internal existent mechanism; control was a constructed meaning that was communicated through situations, behaviors and individuals. Moreover, the complex webs of meanings

associated with fearlessness and aggression are not only transmitted through behavior,

but they are also written on and communicated through the bruised rugby body.

Braggin' Bruises

These athletes used bruises to communicate meaning to others in and out of

rugby. Bruises were a symbol of one's fearlessness of pain and contact. They also

symbolized one's ability to be aggressive and take aggression without complaint. In this

way, bruises were used to communicate effort to other ruggers and to themselves. Bruises

were also used as a way to communicate their rugby participation to non-rugby players.

The ruggers suggested that bruises were a way to prove to themselves that they had

worked hard on the field.

> Makes me feel like I actually did something. I played hard. I got battle wounds and scars to prove it…I'm like, "hell yeah, look here." Bruises show me I did something the day before. It shows me that I was being active. I think that bruises are a good thing. (Rae).
>
> I feel, the sorer I am, the harder that I played...if you're not very sore, it means you didn't work very hard (Jane).
>
> The huge bruise afterwards, I was like, "awwwww, that's awesome."It's just kind, it was just a reminder that I didn't go sit down because I was in a little bit of pain, I just kept going, I thought that was cool. (Wendy)

In addition to reminding themselves of all that they had done in the previous game, these

ruggers also felt that their bruises communicated their efforts to other rugby players.

Specifically, bruises were a way to brag about one's accomplishments on the rugby field.

> Bragging about bruises, like, "Holy shit, that's an awesome bruise" or "That's a huge bruise." It's a part of it and people really talk about them, they get talked about a lot. It's a normal thing that happens every week. It's funny because when I played last weekend, I bruised here and a bruise here, exactly the same spot, I was like, "I don't know what I did."I think that too, is just talking about, where did I get that bruise? I have no idea

how I got a bruise there. Because you will get bruises sometimes in like weird spots, and you're just like huh?…I think like colors, you know like swelling of bruises, or those always make people pay attention and talk about it…or black eyes are very big to talk about (Libby).

I would go home and be like, "aw, check out this." And we'd be showing each other where we'd find 'em, and it's like, oh, we all were doing it together, we were all trying really hard, and it goes with the teamwork, it's kind of like, we were all suffering together (Wendy).

Bruises are glory. Cuts and bruises are like, "ahhh, look what happened to me," and then you tell the story, "oh yeah, this girl stepped on me." "You kept playing?" "Yeah I kept playing." You know it's like this pride thing. so. Symbol of honor (Erica).

Chase (2006), Howe (2001) and Schact (1996) have suggested that both male and female ruggers show off their bruises to demonstrate their rugby self/identities. In Howe's (2001) study of male club rugby players, he found that players on the team would complain the most about injuries that athletes decided to continue playing with. He suggested that this served to elevate the status of the individual player due to his willingness to deal with pain. Schacht (1996) found that male rugby players used their bruises, scars and injuries as a means to claim both a rugby and masculine self/identity. Similarly, Chase (2006) found that female rugby players displayed their rugby bruises and injuries to construct themselves as authentic rugby players. The athletes in this study showed off their bruises because their bruises communicated fearlessness of pain, fearlessness of contact and aggression thus authenticating their rugby self/identity. Interestingly enough, these women also used their bruises as a way to give voice to their rugby selves outside the rugby arena.

People see that and they're like, "what'd you do?" It's, "ahhh, I was playing rugby" and they're like, "oh that's that's crazy," and then you can

tell them about it. You just kind of feel like, little bit proud of yourself, and stuff, that's why bruises are cool (Wendy).

In a group of people who don't play rugby, like when I went to work at the pre-school, I'd wear shorts, "oh my gosh, what'd you do, where'd you get all them bruises." "I played rugby." Yeah, I get tackled, stepped on, all that stuff, it's normal, and they just can't believe that somebody could handle that, or, get that and keep going back to it (Laura).

I think, which is really hard for me because I do not bruise, I would like to have a bruise. Me and my friend would always say, "ahhh I want to get a black eye this game, and that would be awesome if we came to school with a black eye," because then everyone asks you and then you're like, "ahhhh I play rugby." And then it's like, "oh you're so cool" (Erica).

These women used bruises to communicate to others and themselves their participation in and authenticity as rugby players. As a result of the meanings bruises held, bruises were often referred to as "badges of courage." For example Nina and Sheri referred to bruises as, "my red badge of courage" (Nina) and "war wounds" (Sheri). Cali concurred when she colorfully said, "bruises that seem to be the size of Cadillac, yet at the same time, it's just like, yep that's my battle wound." Through articulating bruises as badges of courage and battle wounds, these women suggest that bruises were a way to perform their fearlessness and willingness to take whatever rugby could dish out. Furthermore, wearing these bruises proudly outside of rugby brought attention to their rugby selves and claimed, "rugby is who I am." This is similar to Broad's (2001) analysis of female rugby players. She found that the women in her study, despite negative stereotypes, claimed a rugby identity through the collection and display of rugby paraphernalia. She suggested that this "in your face" display of a transgressive gender self/identity (female rugger) was an example of a gender unapologetic through which the women in her study aligned themselves with rugby to redefine themselves as women.

Chase (2006) also found that, like Broad (2001), the women in her study did not apologize for their rugby participation and wore their bruises to demonstrate to everyone their ability to play rugby and be women. In this regard, like the men of Schact's (1996) analysis, these women used their bruises, scars and injuries to claim a gendered identity that stood in opposition to dominant notions of femininity and was used in the service of constructing themselves as a different kind of woman.

I am rugby

These women constructed themselves as rugby players through stories of contact, pain and aggression. In addition to utilizing these stories to symbolize their authenticity as rugby players, they also used rugby as a way to claim those things for themselves as women. Consistent with Goffman (1959), these ruggers were never just rugby players. As such they used their rugby participation to communicate how they see themselves as women. They articulated that rugby was a way to prove that women are powerful. They also constructed rugby as a space that allowed them to be exactly who they have always been. These women identified themselves as rugby, which symbolized more than, "I play rugby."

> Rugby's just a source of strength. It's not just something I did, "I did that for a little while and I kinda gave it up, I moved on." Or whatever, it's just, is an integral part of my life (Jane).

Most of these women suggested that rugby was who they were; it was more than a game they played. Rugby was a safe place for them to be who they were without judgment and a way in which to symbolized their strength in a society that positions women as weak.

Gender was an important topic that emerged as these athletes communicated their own self/identities. Most of these women, they have been told what they cannot do. As a result they crafted rugby as the first place where there were no real constraints placed on them. They could act in any way, be dirty, loud, and big and not be judged negatively for it. For these women rugby was more than a sport they played. Rugby was a way in which they were allowed to be themselves in ways that society suggested that they could not be. For many of these athletes rugby was an opportunity to use their bodies in ways that others constructed as inappropriate for girls and women.

Be who I've always been

> On Facebook the first thing I write in like "about you" I'm like, "I'm not a girly girl type a person, I'm not after, I'm not all after boys like a lot of girls are. I just concentrate on school and doing things that I like, and I don't do a lot I don't like. A lot of people are really good at one thing, but I just like to do a lot of things that make me happy I guess, so, that's just how I am (Wendy).

> I don't think that I'm overly girly although I like shoes, I'm not going to lie (Sheri).

According to Scranton and colleagues (1999) female athletes will often distance themselves from notions of femininity in order to ally themselves more closely with the valued characteristics of strength, power, contact, aggression and pain. Consistent with Scranton and colleagues (1999), these women distanced themselves from hegemonic forms of femininity and constructed themselves as "not girly." This made it easier to claim valued masculine characteristics such as pain, contact and aggression as part of who they constructed themselves to be. In distancing themselves from "girly," these athletes positioned the female athletes more closely to the "center of sport" (Messner,

2002) but, in so doing, also reinforced dominant gender discourses reiterating that

masculinity and femininity are mutually exclusive categories (Schact, 1996).

Furthermore, masculine/male characteristics are synonymous with valued sporting selves

(Howe, 2001; Theberge, 2000; Wright & Clarke, 1999). This suggests that if a woman is

involved in a "masculine" sport, she cannot be feminine and be good at the sport.

However, by constructing themselves as "not girly" these female athletes challenged

gender ideologies that suggests that females should be a specific type of feminine

From these quotes we can see that these women identified themselves as not very

girly and thus distanced themselves from hegemonic femininity. In so doing many of

these women felt that they were taken more seriously in sports but were seen as outsiders

by others. Throughout many of their interviews these women struggled with wanting to

be less girly but were labeled as lesbian or deviant for these actions. They went on to

share that being less "girly" was who they were and who they have always been.

However, they also felt that they had never been given the opportunity to be who they

were. Specifically, these women told me of childhood stories of being a tomboy and

wanting to play contact sports.

> I'm very, very much of a tomboy. Mom and I were kinda fighting with each other growing about what I can and cannot do. I got grounded for having grass stains on my knees when I'd come home, it was ridiculous, just because I wasn't being ladylike (Rae).

> When I was little I lived in a neighborhood with a lot of boys and they wanted to play football and I always played with them, and I liked the whole stiff arming and running through 'em and hitting 'em I liked that too but I never had the opportunity to you know, girls don't play football (Laura).

> I've always just kind of envied football, playing, I always wished that I always wish I could play that kind of a sport that contact sport. So I mean, I played basketball but, you know, not the same, by far…and we never had soccer, so I never played that and so, I guess, I always kind of wanted something that I could play that was similar, that had the same kind of contact and just that was as aggressive or as strenuous as football (Libby).

In these quotes we can see that these women constructed themselves in a certain way but really had no way of talking about or expressing their definition of self. They relied on saying things like "tomboy" or "boy-ish" to describe their actions. In this regard, the women of this study relied on self descriptions such as "boy" because their language was limited by the social construction of gender as a binary (Butler, 1990). These women expressed that, for a long time, a part of who they were was not allowed to be because of their gender. Rae expressed this as she explored the connection between sport participation, aggression and the social construction of gender:

> It's really hard because I've been brought up with all these stereotypes about, "This is how a girl should act this is how a boy should act." All these stereotypes and stuff have really caused me to think about sports in those words, like boy-ish or girl-ish. I think being aggressive in a sport is being like a boy. At least that's what I was brought up to think. Being aggressive and being a woman just wasn't even an option. It didn't seem, to make sense to my parents. I think they felt somewhat threatened when I showed my male side of me. I think that everyone has that side of themselves whether they're allowed to show it or they want to show it. Some people's personalities just manifest one side of themselves but I defiantly am aggressive in the sense that I have very male characteristics that I think, now that I'm getting older and I'm out on my own, I've been able to express a lot better than when I was younger. I felt like I wasn't allowed to be who I was when I was younger because it wasn't who my parents wanted me to be, it wasn't very girl-ish. It wasn't very female oriented. So, boyish in sports? I just feel like when I'm out there I'm allowed to be a boy. … That's so weird that boy equals aggression and aggression equals athlete. It so weird because I've fought for so long to be able to be a girl and be good at sports.

In this quote, Rae speaks eloquently to many of the experiences of the other female rugby players in this story. They suggested that they have always been strong females but that strength has been seen as something bad. They have been forbidden to play the sports they love and taught that female and aggression/strength were not compatible concepts. They have been othered throughout their lives; however, rugby offered them a place to be accepted. This was similar to Chu and colleagues' (2003) findings. In that study the researchers found that women playing on the New Zealand national team enjoyed rugby because it offered them a place to finally use their bodies in ways they had been told was inappropriate for women.

For the women in this study, rugby then became an experience in sharing that othered status, it became a place where they could belong and be the women they have always been.

> It's a place where I can connect with other people who are like me. Some of my girls can be more on the girly side than I am but we're all out there, we all like that kind of sport, and that we're girls but we're going to play this anyway. I think it's just, it's good to be with people that I can connect with in that sense…because you get to meet more people like that. A lot of times, walking around, you kind of feel like, I don't look like a barbi, so I'm going against what society would say is normal for a girl, it's just kind of nice to be like, "Oh there's a ton of girls like that." Not like, "uhm, I'm one of very few." That means a lot (Wendy).

> Finally I found a niche in the world, it's awesome – it's who I am (Cali).

> I just felt like I'd finally come home (Jane).

> Meeting people of your kind (Laura).

For these women in this story, rugby was more than a sport, it was a place where they could express part of their self that they were told was unacceptable. In addition to

feeling like they had come home, these athletes talked about the experience of playing

rugby as a place where they could, for the first time, experience their bodies through

physical exertion.

> It's physical, I like physical, I like to push my body and my mind to the absolute limit and rugby can help me do that (Laura).

> It really has to do with the capacity to push your body to the limits; it's something that the sport is good for. It's an attribute of rugby, it's part of the mythology of rugby to push your body that hard (Nina).

They spoke of pushing their bodies as a way to communicate portions of who they were

as ruggers. Additionally, these women embodied their own definitions of rugby and

rugby players by experiences themselves through pain. This embodiment and use of pain

is a form of resistance to idealized forms of femininity that suggest the female body is

weak (Chase, 2006). Also the incorporation of pain and harm into self/identity definitions

problematize current sport psychology conceptions of the unacceptability of harm in

sport (Tenenbaum, Stewart, Singer, & Duda, 1997). These women also felt that rugby

was a space where they could be proud of their bodies, no matter what their size or shape.

> Being in the sport that would seemingly have the ideal of being this great all around athlete type people and then coming to the field and seeing that I'm not the only one swinging around an extra 100 pounds and playing the game and being affective to, some degree, and being valued for it. Which is crazy, because you don't get validated in society for being a full figured girl. And being useful is having a couple extra pounds on you and in rugby everyone is like, "yeah…oh my god, I'm not going to get run over." It was just incredible. Growing up it was, "You know you should be involved, get some dietary things going, you should stay away from the carbs, We'll pay for anything for you to lose some weight. You've got kids, what are you doing?" Then to come into rugby and have it be absolutely validating that you can eat your carbs and run down the field and call it good (Cali).

Like the athletes in Chase's (2006) rugby study, these ruggers constructed an empowered

rugby experience through rugby stories. In this category, I identified that rugby was one

of the few places where these ruggers felt like they could be who they were without

consequence. Furthermore, as Chase (2006) found, these women found that using their

bodies to achieve a goal allowed them to experience their bodies in ways they had not

been allowed to experience. For these women, rugby allowed them to construct an

embodied experience that was empowering.

> It makes me feel empowered, especially when it's something I've wanted
> to do for so many years and finally it was alright I'm going to do it (Rae).

> It's that whole almost hulk, moment where you just like, the only way you
> can describe it is just like where he's like, "whaaaaaaaaaaah" (Cali).

These findings are consistent with past research. Howe (2003) and Chase (2006)

suggested that rugby allowed women to construct their own embodied experience of

themselves as useful despite large scale social norms. Specifically, Chase (2006) found

that the ruggers in her analysis (re)constructed their bodies in ways that disrupted

femininity. She found that rugby allowed her athletes to (re)define their bodies through a

lens of functionality rather than conforming to hegemonic body expectations for females.

In this section the women embodied pain and harm and used those notions to

define themselves as rugby players and as women. This serves to destabilize sport

psychology's current definition of unacceptable behavior in sport and indicates the

importance of looking at self/identity development and maintenance when investigating

unacceptable behavior. Specifically, these findings indicate that looking at gender as a

categorical variable and describing differences in aggression/unacceptable behavior based

on gender role behavior (see Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006; Tucker & Parks, 2001)

is limited. As such Keeler (2007) has suggested that more in-depth investigation must be

done to understand gender differences in aggression/unacceptable behavior. Specifically,

this research indicated that in order to understand gender differences in unacceptable

behavior it is important to understand how individuals are constructing themselves within

that context relative to their sport and gender identity.

Rugby symbolizes

In addition to the embodied experience of rugby, playing rugby as a female also allowed

them to communicate their strength.

> Well I think that you're strong and that you work hard and have
> perseverance and I think that all plays out in rugby (Libby).

> I'm not afraid of pain. I'm aggressive. I'm a strong female. I'm telling
> people what things are important to me in my life (Rae).

These ruggers also felt that through playing rugby they communicated to the world that

women can be just as tough as men.

> I'm capable of doing something just as good as a man can do (Sam).

> It's something that people are like, girls shouldn't be doing that, so it's
> just kind of like, "well, I'm going to do it anyway, so" (give the bird to
> this imaginary non-believer) (Wendy).

> I think that there's a big stigma about females playing rugby that we have
> to be soft, well not soft--but not as hard as the men. I don't feel like that's
> fair. We're playing the same sport. Even though we carry babies in our
> bodies, right, they feel like we can't be as rough as them, or can't be as
> rough on each other and I was never coached that way. I was coached to
> be a rugby player, not a female rugby player, but a rugby player. I don't
> feel like there's anything wrong with being very aggressive and I feel like
> that's ok (Erica).

Related to this idea was how these women used rugby to talk about themselves as more

than a stereotype. Rugby became a way for these women to articulate their multiple

conflicting selves within new and different discourses.

> Rugby really showed my kids that you know, this is just something else
> that you can keep on doing as you get older, you don't have to just stop
> and then all the sudden you're mom…Mom's got other roles: what mom is
> besides mom? Go rugby (Cali).

> There's more to me than meets the eye. I'm not just the girl in the
> construction site, I also play rugby. You can respect me, I'm not just the
> girl from the office, I also play rugby, I have passions outside of this, I am
> the type of person, I both segment and do not segment my life a lot. Like,
> there are distinct sections of my life but I talk about the other sections
> within each of them. Like, so, yeah, my office worker friends are all great
> and wonderful, do they really mix too much with the rest of it? No. but do
> they know about my other passions in life? Yeah, they know about the girl
> friend, they know about my crazy family. Because I don't feel like I need
> to build a wall that says, I think you're going to judge me so I'm not going
> to tell you that I'm playing rugby. I'm the type of person who's just open
> about all of that…"I play rugby." I like to wear dresses and high heels and
> I play rugby. It's all the same thing, it's all good (Nina).

In this category, I illustrated how these ruggers constructed a gendered self in and

through rugby. This category also represents their embodied experiences of gender

through rugby and the construction of rugby as a space that held more meaning than the

rules of the game. Specifically, rugby was constructed as a safe place to be who they have

always been but have never been allowed to be. This was consistent with past research

conserving female rugby players. Chase (2006) and Howe (2003) have suggested that

female ruggers are aware that the sport of rugby is considered masculine that and by

playing it, they are resisting femininity. Furthermore, they have suggested that this

opportunity to resist femininity was articulated as one of the reason why the athletes in

these studies were drawn to rugby. For Howe (2003) this means that women's rugby is an

emancipatory space. Chase (2006) argues that women's rugby is simultaneously a space of resistance and constraint. The presence of both resistance and constraint were similarly articulated by the women in my research throughout this layer, rug(me). These women experienced and constructed self/identities as both reiterative and challenging of dominant rugby and gender discourses.

Summary

In this layer, I looked at how women constructed rugby self/identities using fearlessness and aggression. I also discussed the importance of embodying fearlessness and aggression in the form of bruises as a rugby player. Lastly, I explored the role of rugby in their construction of a gendered self/identity.

This research found specifically that unacceptable behavior was not defined only by intent to harm (Baron, 1977; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000) but was defined through the interpreted and constructed meanings of certain behaviors. This is somewhat consistent with past sport psychology research which suggests that females may use different forms of aggression than males (Gladue, 1991; Lenzi et al., 1997; Storch et al., 2003) and that they may experience and understand aggression differently than males (Coulomb-Cabagno et al., 2005; Keeler, 2007).The participants in this study defined unacceptable behavior as out of control behavior thus problematizing sport psychology aggression literature in two ways. First, control is introduced as a novel concept into the sport psychology literature. Unlike sport psychology literature that defines aggression (i.e., the intent to harm) as

unacceptable behavior, "in touch" behavior was defined by these athletes as behaviors

that are interpreted as out of control. Second, unacceptable behavior was used in the

construction of self and other consistent with symbolic interactionism. Specifically, the

contrived nature of "control" allowed for these athletes to manipulate control to construct

themselves as always in control. Very rarely did these women report themselves, or

teammates, whom they defined as "real ruggers," as being out of control. In this way, out

of control behavior was used to construct themselves as legitimate ruggers while moving

other, out of control ruggers, to the periphery. Furthermore, the women in this study did

not articulate themselves as intentionally harming opponents which may account for

some of the gender differences found in the aggression literature. However, the women in

this study embraced the notion of harm and pain as positive embodied experiences of self

as rugger and as woman. This directly contradicts some sport psychology literature which

assumes that females may endorse intent to harm less than men because of conflicting

social roles (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Some

researchers have found that due to the binary logic of gender and the gendering of sports,

females engaged in "male" sports are forced to negotiate social pressures to be viewed as

appropriate women (Griffin, 1998; Krane et al., 2004; Theberge, 2000).

     These women constructed themselves as ruggers by telling stories of their

fearlessness of pain and contact. Consistent with symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969),

by telling themselves through pain and contact these athletes reiterated the importance of

pain and contact in the definition of rugby and rugby players. What is more, they also

reinforced masculine standards of athletic prowess that then position the male sporting

body as naturally superior to the female sporting body (Hargreaves, 1990, 1994; Messner, 1992; Theberge, 2000). However, despite the reiterative quality of privileging pain and contact over other experiences that could be used to communicate a different rugby self, privileging these stories of pain and contact disrupted gender ideologies (Hargreaves, 1994). These self stories disrupted social norms of gender because the female athletes in this study defined themselves through characteristics typically reserved for males. Like both Chase (2006) and Broad (2001) the women in this study used the very same behaviors that are seen as contradicting hegemonic femininity (aggression, pain, strength and power) to (re)construct themselves as feminine.

Beyond the use of self stories that emphasized their willingness to endure pain, make contact and be aggressive, they also used their bruises to communicated those qualities to other ruggers and reinforce their self definitions as ruggers. Moreover, they used their bruises to communicate to non-ruggers their rugby self/identities. This is consistent with Chase's (2006) findings. She indicated that her athletes were aware of the social implications of a woman playing a contact sport, yet they proudly displayed their rugby bruises to claim their participation in a "man's" sport. For the athletes in my study, showing off their participation was important. For them, rugby represented all the things that they were told were off limits to them because they were women. In this way rugby was a way for these women to say, "I am more than you think I am."

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I summarize my results. I then address my research questions

related to my data and current sport psychology aggression literature. Next, I look at

contributions of the theoretical, methodological and applied contributions my research

makes to the current research sport psychology literature on aggression. Finally, I

propose future research directions based on my findings and the continued use of

symbolic interactionism in the study of aggression, unacceptable behavior and harm.

Rug(be)(you)(me)

While introducing symbolic interactionism as a novel approach to sport

psychology aggression literature, it was my intent to construct a representation of this

data that addressed my research questions, was coherent and also spoke to the complexity

of identity construction. The latter of these three goals was the most complicated. The

notion that we construct selves through continual interaction with self and others was not

a concept that was easy to represent. However, in an effort to meet all of my goals I

represented the data into three distinct layers. These layers were rug(be), rug(you) and

rug(me). In short these three layers represented three different layers of self/identity

construction. Rug(be) represented the imagined thoughts of non-ruggers and the athletes'

definitions of the sport of rugby. This code represented a generalized other. For Mead

(1934) the generalized other is one's ability to comprehend the "rules" of a situation that

make self accomplishment possible. In this way, non-rugby players and the participants'

definitions of the game of rugby communicated to these ruggers some of the "rules" that

would allow them to accomplish a rugby self/identity. Another portion of identity

development is the ability to take on the role of "the other" and see one's self from the

perspective of the other (Blumer, 1966; 1969; Denzin, 1974; Mead, 1934). Consistent

with this notion, I developed the layer rug(you) to discuss how these athletes talked about

themselves as social objects. In this layer I focused specifically on the behaviors and

attitudes these women used in describing rugby players. Then finally, in the rug(me)

layer, I focused more specifically on the stories these women told about themselves in

relation to rugby. Pain, contact, aggression and gender were used consistently across all

three layers as means of defining, understanding and shaping rugby experiences. With

this in mind, I will now address my results in terms of my research questions.

Rugger Self/Identity (Re)produced

The sport of rugby and rugby selves were defined through fearlessness of pain

and contact, being able to give and take aggression and notions of gender. Moreover,

these women accomplished a rugby self by privileging self stories that exemplified their

fearlessness of pain and contact and willingness to give and take aggression. Despite their

knowledge that contact, pain and aggression were defined as male/masculine

characteristics, they were happy to take on those characteristics in their self definitions.

They were willing and eager to be a part of a sport that disrupted gender norms for

women primarily because they defined themselves as residing outside of that traditional

definition of woman. While their participation in rugby may resist hegemonic notions of

gender, their evocation of pain, contact and aggression to construct themselves as rugby

players did not challenge the sport ideologies that position those "masculine"

characteristics as *the* defining characteristics of their sport. This then serves to reiterate

the notion that rugby is a man's sport. As such, these women were engaged

simultaneously in resisting and reinforcing gender norms.

Researchers have suggested that females who participate in contact sports resist

hegemonic social norms (Hargreaves, 1994). However, sometimes these same athletes

are labeled man-ish or lesbian due to their participation in a "masculine" sport (Scranton

et al., 1999; Wright & Clark, 1999). Therefore, participating in contact sports could be

seen as having the potential of being both socially emancipating and individually

constraining (Howe, 2001; Scranton et al., 1999; Theberge, 2000; Young and White,

1995). The women in my study were aware of both the resistance to gender norms

embodied in their performance as rugby players, and they were very aware of the

consequences of that resistance. In fact, they cited this resistance as one of the best things

that has happened in their life as a result of playing rugby. Most of the current research

on female rugby players has found that female rugby players are not only aware but

drawn to rugby because of its resistive quality (Chase, 2006; Chu, Leberman, Howe, &

Bachor, 2003; Howe, 2003). Like my athletes, these researchers found that the female

ruggers in their studies were aware that rugby was seen as masculine and was stereotyped

as everything a woman should not be. They also indicated that female ruggers were

drawn to the sport because of that label.

More specifically, during a two year ethnographic investigation of women's

rugby Broad (2001) found that female ruggers can and did use their rugby identities to

define themselves as confident and strong. In my research, these women used that label to

redefine how they were seen in other social situations. Specifically, they used their rugby

participation as a way to indicate to self and others their toughness, fortitude and commitment, qualities they had always valued but felt that they were never perceived in that light because of their gender. In this way, rugby was a way for them to redefine woman to encompass toughness, fortitude and commitment. Also, like Chase (2006) and Chu and colleagues (2003) the women in my study loved rugby because it afforded them the opportunity to use their bodies in ways that others had indicated were inappropriate for women. Consistent with past research on female rugby players (Baird, 2001; Broad, 2001; Chase, 2006; Chu et al., 2003), I found that the athletes in this study transgressed gender by playing a sport perceived as masculine and using that perception to challenge the limits of female capability. Consequently, they developed a new set of rules for defining themselves as women. In so doing, these athletes resisted what is considered natural for women.

Though, like the women in Chu, Leberman, Howe and Bachor's (2003) research about the New Zealand women's national rugby team, these athletes did not distance themselves from their identity as women they did distance themselves from hegemonic notions of femininity. Specifically, being a girly-girl was something of a derogatory term that they felt was limiting and indicative of weakness. Furthermore, on the rugby field, they tended to refer to themselves as being like a boy or engaged in boy-ish behaviors. Scranton and colleagues (1999) found that some female soccer players described themselves in very similar terms effectively distancing themselves from weakness and passivity by taking on and performing the male model of the sport. Similarly, Young & White (1995) described that this adoption of the male model of sport reinforces current

sport ideologies that privileges "male" characteristics as superior to "female" characteristic. However, for the women in this study, there was not a distancing from woman. They simply reverted to using terms like "boy" to describe their behaviors, not because they did not want to be seen as women but because they had no other language to describe themselves participating in certain behaviors. Consequently, these women, like the women in Chase's (2006) study, used their language and their rugby participation to redefine woman as inclusive of these "boy-ish" behaviors.

The ruggers in my research constructed themselves as fearless and aggressive. They accomplished this self definition by (re)constructing experiences in rugby that emphasized these qualities. However, their rugby self/identities were inextricably linked to their gender self/identities. Consequently, they used their rugby self/identities outside of rugby to (re)define themselves as women who are not weak but are capable of enduring pain, inflicting pain, tackling hard and playing hard. These women employed pain and harm to (re)create femininity. In this way they challenged dominant gender ideologies but, at the same time, reinforced the notion that these masculine characteristics are *the* way to define superiority in a contact sport like rugby.

Throughout the interviews gender emerged as important across all three layers. Though I represented them separately in this dissertation, all of the information in these three layers was used simultaneously to construct self/identities. In other words, the imagined response of others, the definition of the situation and defining oneself as other all affected how these women defined themselves. All three layers reiterated, created, contradicted and reinforced the importance of pain, contact, aggression-under-control and

gender in rugby. What's more, the meanings and experiences of pain, contact and

aggression-under-control were used to (re)construct a newly gendered self/identity.

Specifically, these women used those experiences to construct a female self/identity

outside of hegemonic binary notions of male versus female and (re)appropriated

traditionally masculine characteristics in the service of constructing a *female* rugby

self/identity. By looking back at the data along the line of gender, the interrelationships

among all three layers (rug(be), rug(you), rug(me)) and the tropes of pain, contact and

aggression can be seen. Let me provide the following example to illustrate the complexity

of self construction:

> They say that we're less effective because we're…you know. I've had several guys from the men's team come and say, "We can't practice with you because it just wouldn't be a work out for us." We are just kind of sub-par. We can play the game, but it's not the man's game. It's not the man's version of the game, which is rather irritating. I'm like, "really?!" We hurt people just as bad as the next person when we play the game. It really shouldn't matter if we got male genitalia swinging between our legs or all of our parts that can be wrapped up nicely. And it's just been frustrating and irritating and yet I totally realize well how closed minded some people can be to different things and the way people can play around the norms that have been set for 100's and 100's of years. I don't know if they think, "Aw, that's cute, they're playing rugby, oh, they're just playing around with the sport" If they felt some of the hits that that girl that plays on the national 7's team was delivering--really?! Not the same? My cartilage would beg to differ. There's some fantastic women athletes that are playing this sport like, "dude, pay homage, drop down" (Cali).

In this quote, we can see that Cali was simultaneously defining rugby, defining herself as

other and claiming her rugby identity. She was defining rugby through pain and contact,

defining the ideal rugger as able to inflict hard, painful hits and describing herself as able

to take that pain. What's more, pain and contact were used to construct and reconfigure

what *woman* is. Cali recounted that male rugby players devalued the game that women

played. For Cali, this interaction communicated that the women's game and female ruggers were positioned as inferior. She constructed a connection between devaluing female ruggers and women's assumed inability to deliver painful tackles. Cali then negotiated this contradictory meaning of herself reflected back to her by male rugby players by emphasizing the ability of female rugby players to hurt others. By drawing upon what is privileged in rugby discourse, Cali jockeys effectively to resist devaluation as a woman; however, in this way she reiterated the dominant discourse while simultaneously resisting it.

In this quote, we can see some of what Gergen (1991) intended when he suggested that we are not a unified singular "I." For Gergen, we have moved beyond a single structure that determines who we are in the world. We are now as multiple as the infinite identities with which we are inundated. As a social object, the self holds all of our meanings, all the ways in which we refer to ourselves, all the potential ways that we may someday refer to ourselves and all of our past self constructions (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2004). For these ruggers, they were never just a rugger. They were always all of their possible selves and their construction of self reflected that.

(Re)constructing Aggression Experiences

Symbolic interactionism allowed me to understand self as a social construct but it also allowed me to (re)interpret aggression as a social object. Symbolic interactionism permitted me to understand that the labels *acceptable* and *unacceptable* did not refer to existent singular behaviors, psychological structures or harm. Rather, the difference between acceptable and unacceptable was a negotiated space. This is in contrast to

existent perspectives in sport psychology literature. By relying on moral reasoning theory and social learning theory as the primary theoretical lenses for analyzing and understanding unacceptable behavior, the importance of individual experience and self/identity have been overlooked in the sport psychology literature. Theories such as MRT and SLT do not allow for a critical analysis of experience or behavior. From MRT and SLT behaviors are outcomes not negotiated symbols given meaning in and through interaction with self and others. Additionally, by utilizing "intent to harm" as the indicator of unacceptable behavior in sport, other experiences of unacceptable behavior have been overlooked.

These athletes defined aggression as doing whatever it took to propel one's team forward. However, they also defined aggression as acceptable to a point. That point/line was continually negotiated. In the sport psychology literature aggression is defined as any verbal, non-verbal, emotional, psychological or physical attack motivated by intent to harm one's opponent (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000). In the sport psychology literature, aggression, whether instrumental or hostile, is defined, as outside of the realm of sport (Tenenbaum et al., 2000); however, assertion is defined as the forceful effort necessary and expected within sport (Husman & Silva, 1984; Tenenbaum et al., 2000). For sport psychologists the line is quantifiable and measureable in terms of intent. If an athlete intends to harm her/his opponent, than she/he is using aggression and is outside of the boundaries of sport. I found that my participants, like sport psychologists, suggest there is a point beyond which behavior becomes unacceptable or outside of the definition of the sport of rugby. This line between

acceptable and unacceptable was not a line at all. The participants suggested that "control" was a defining characteristic of ruggers. Therefore, they very rarely articulated their behaviors or the behaviors of their teammates as out of control as this would contradict their efforts to construct a valued rugby identity. In this way stories of punching, fighting, kicking, hair pulling,tackling with "excessive" force and other experiences were used to (re)produce themselves as ruggers under control.

Because symbolic interactionism is based on the notion of social constructionism, I can understand more about how these ruggers constructed and experienced the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behavior than the sport psychology construct of aggression allows me to see (Baird & McGannon, 2009).

Understanding how these ruggers constructed and experienced the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in their sport illustrated the usefulness of symbolic interactionism in the study of aggression as suggested by Baird and McGannon (2009). Similarly, symbolic interactionism allowed me to better understand how these women constructed and experienced themselves relative to this notion. Which is in contrast to MRT and SLT which both suggest that behavior is an indication of an underlying existent psychological structure.

For the athletes in this study, aggression was defined and experienced as anything "under control." Aggression included any behaviors that the athletes could interpret as under control. Unacceptable behavior was defined as any physical, verbal or non-verbal actions experienced as outside the moment to moment negotiated meaning of rugby.

Consistent with symbolic interactionism and sport sociology research these women used aggression as a symbol of athletic prowess, authenticity in rugby and of resistance to gendered notions of ability.

Major Contributions

This research has three major contributions to the existing body of sport psychology aggression literature. First, this research is introducing a new theoretical and epistemological stance to the understanding of aggression/unacceptable behavior in the sport psychology literature. Second, this research contributes a new way of studying aggression/unacceptable behavior. Last, this research allows for a unique applied perspective to the reduction of potentially maladaptive behaviors in sport.

Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes a new way of conceptualizing aggression to the current body of aggression research in sport psychology. By introducing symbolic interactionism as a way of looking at aggression/unacceptable behavior in sport psychology, researchers can get away from the assumption that human behaviors are outcomes or indications of existent intrinsic structures. Furthermore, from this perspective, researchers can investigate the role of self/identity development and maintenance in relation to experiences of aggression/unacceptable behavior. Also, symbolic interactionism allows researchers to explore the possibility that "intent to harm" is not the only way to define unacceptable behavior. Last, by letting go of taken for granted notions about what aggression/unacceptable behavior is and what "causes" it, other experiences of aggression/unacceptable behavior can be explored.

Until this study, research in sport psychology concerning aggression has relied on SLT and MRT. SLT considers aggression to be a learned behavior (Husman & Silva, 1984; Mugno & Feltz, 1985; Silva, 1983; Smith, 1974, 1978, 1979) while MRT considers aggression to be a behavior laden with moral implications and therefore the outcome of an internal moral reasoning structure (Bredemeier, 1985; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986a, 1986b; Bredemeier et al., 1986; Stephens & Bredemeier, 1996).

MRT and the assumption that behavior directed from an "intent to harm" holds moral meaning leads some researchers to note the limitations of this theory. These moral reasoning theorists have indicated that not all athletes see "intent to harm" as a moral action (Bredemeier, 1985) and if "intent to harm" is viewed as legitimate, there is no moral conflict or need for moral reasoning (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b). In this regard, these same theorists acknowledge a need for additional perspectives to understand how athletes perceive/understand moral action and intent to harm. Utilizing symbolic interactionism allows researchers to explore meanings and experiences and therefore addresses this shortcoming directly. More specifically, even though I did not do it in this research, symbolic interactionism could be used to explore the meaning(s) and experiences of morality relative to sport performance and self/identity development and maintenance.

Though SLT does not make the same assumptions concerning the moral meaning of "intent to harm" it does assume that individuals learn the appropriateness of aggression (i.e., the intent to harm) from various social influences and reproduce those behaviors (Husman & Silva, 1984; Mugno & Feltz, 1985; Silva, 1983; Smith, 1974, 1978, 1979).

While SLT does allow a more sociological approach to understanding "intent to harm" it remains fairly limited due to its underlying epistemology. From SLT social influences are looked at as categorical variables that influence individuals' internal learning processes. Though SLT engages with the social context of sport, it does not look beyond the self regulatory processes within the individual that produce aggression.

From within SLT, Smith (1975, 1978, 1979) talks specifically about the importance of others in understanding aggression; however, SLT does not allow for exploration of how aggression is experienced, defined, negotiated or lived in and through interactions with these others. Symbolic interaction allows for such analyses and specifically addresses how meanings are negotiated with self, others, environment, context, situation and multiple other sources of meaning. It allows researchers to investigate the interrelationship and inseparability of self and society. This allows for multiple sport organizations, cultures and team contexts to be explored critically. Researchers can investigate in more detail how meanings are reproduced, negotiated and privileged in certain sport contexts relative to individual lived experiences.

Though both theories are considerably different in their approach to understanding the occurrences of unacceptable behavior in sport, their underlying epistemologies are the same. Due to sport psychology's commitment to two theories adhering to similar epistemologies, a number of holes have been created that symbolic interactionism addresses. Symbolic interactionism is based on social constructionist epistemology which allows researchers to step away from pre-conceived notions concerning the "nature" of things and the separation between mind and society. Non-

positivist epistemologies have been endorsed inside and outside of sport psychology because they challenge the notion of an objective reality that can be and is "measured" as distinct and separate from social context and lived experience (Baird & McGannon, 2009; Krane & Baird, 2005; McGannon & Johnson, 2009).

In addition to adding a different theory to the study of aggression and unacceptable behavior in sport, symbolic interactionism (re)introduces the importance of self/identity into this literature, but does so while simultaneously introducing a social constructionist epistemology. Sport psychologists have used identity in the investigation of aggression; however these analyses have focused primarily on fan aggression (Branscombe & Wann, 1992, 1994; Wann, 1997; Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999). Also, the theory used to look at the links between fan aggression and identity has the same underlying post-positivist epistemology as MRT and SLT. From this perspective, identity is assumed to be an existent structure within the individual that impels behavior. In this research, rather than a moral structure or learning process, identity is conceptualized as an innate cognitive structure. Utilizing symbolic interactionism allows researchers to look at the relationship between self/identity development and behavior from a social constructionist epistemology. From this epistemology, there is not separation between "inside" and "outside." Selves/identities, behaviors and experiences are social constructions that are given meanings in and through interaction; they are not receptacles that *hold* meaning.

From this paradigm, symbolic interactionism allows researchers to investigate self/identity as related to and inseparable from social experiences like sport. It allows

researchers to understand people as active constructors of meaning who interact and give meaning(s) to one another, self, behaviors and their social environment. In this way, self/identity is not an internal structure impelling behavior; like aggression and unacceptable behavior, it is a social object given meaning in and through interaction. This perspective also allows researchers to understand how these behaviors are given meaning and used in the development and maintenance of certain sporting and non-sporting selves.

Symbolic interactionism provides sport psychology aggression researchers with an additional perspective that endorses a different epistemological stance which can free sport psychology aggression literature from a somewhat myopic understanding of "intent to harm" and unacceptable behavior. Symbolic interactionism lets researchers redefine aggression/unacceptable behavior according to lived experience.

By introducing symbolic interactionism into the sport psychology literature on aggression, researchers have a new way of conceptualizing aggression which allows researchers to look at the taken for granted aspects of the concept of aggression and explore how athletes define and experience their own notions of bad behavior (Baird & McGannon, 1999). Sport psychology literature defines aggression as "intent to harm" (Baron, 1977; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986b; Husman & Silva, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000). Furthermore, sport psychology literature positions "intent to harm" as unacceptable behavior in sport (Tenenbaum et al., 2000). Yet, as indicated in this research, harm is not the only way to understand/construct unacceptable behavior in sport.

Symbolic interactionism allows researchers to consider more than harm as an indication of unacceptability in sport. By allowing researchers to investigate individual's experiences of unacceptable behavior, researchers are able to put aside taken for granted notions concerning the definition of unacceptable behavior. This research indicated that unacceptable behavior cannot be understood solely through the concept of "intent to harm." For the women in this study, control was a significant indication of unacceptability. The novel concept of control is a substantive contribution to the existant sport psychology literature on aggression/unacceptable behavior as it problematizes the current definition but also offers new insight into the negotiated space defined as "unacceptable."

However, this notion of control was a negotiated meaning unrelated to specific behaviors or psychological structures. That is to say that a single act, like fighting, was experienced as both acceptable and unacceptable depending on the meanings constructed around that behavior in a given moment. By allowing this level of analysis to occur, researchers can let go of assumptions about what aggression is and what *causes* it and begin to look at how unacceptable behavior(s) are defined and experienced at the individual level.

Adhering to specific notions of what unacceptable behavior is can contribute to ever growing gaps in our understanding of unacceptable behavior in sport. For example, some researchers, based on these taken-for-granted-notions have omitted individual sports from the analysis of unacceptable behavior (Kirker et al., 2000). These types of omissions perpetuate a certain limited definition of what aggression/unacceptable

behavior in sport is. Tucker and Parks (2001) suggests that researchers interested in aggression in sport need to get away from making assumptions about sport culture based on presence or absence of contact. Similarly, Bredemeire and Shields (1986b) have acknowledged the importance of considering sport and team cultures as they may influence or relate to endorsement of "intent to harm." Despite this acknowledgement, team and sport culture has only been investigated as variables. Symbolic interactionism allows for analysis of sport culture and acknowledges the importance of situational meanings. This allows researchers to investigate the meanings of behaviors and experiences within the sport/team context.

Moreover, sport psychology research, due to its focus on the study of contact/collision sports at the expense of other sports and the tendency of these researchers to rely on overt observable physical acts perceived as harmful omits other experiences of aggression/unacceptable behavior. This is why Mintah et al. (1999) have suggested the importance of understanding lived experience in understanding differing views of aggression.

More specifically, omissions of this kind may lead to gender differences in research (Blome, Waldron, & Mack, 2005; Storch, Werner, & Storch, 2003). Sport psychology research indicates that gender is important in the analysis of "intent to harm" however, little more is known about the relationship between gender and "intent to harm" than the finding that males are more likely to endorse "intent to harm" than females (Bredemeier et al., 1986; Shields et al., 1995). Researchers indicate that more is going on than current research is allowing sport psychologists to see (Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle,

2006; Keeler, 2007; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Females' experiences of aggression/inappropriate behavior remain, for the most part, unexplored in the sport psychology literature (Blome, Waldron, & Mack, 2005; Keeler, 2007; Souchon, Coulomb-Cabagno, Traclet, & Rascle, 2004; Tucker & Parks, 2001). Consequently the reasons for gender differences remain unclear (Keeler, 2007; Souchon et al., 2004). Lenzi and colleagues (1997) hypothesize that differences between males and females in terms of aggression may be more about kind than magnitude. As such they suggest that researchers consider more than physical aggression. In addition to looking at more diverse forms of aggression, Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle (2006) called for research focused on women's experiences of aggression.

This research provides not only a viable theoretical perspective to critically analyze and access gender experiences of aggression, unacceptable behavior and harm but also gives voice to women's experiences of aggression, unacceptable behavior and harm in a contact sport. This is the first time in the sport psychology literature that an in-depth analysis has been done with female contact sport athletes. This analysis adds their voice to the literature.

What I found was that these women did not define unacceptable behavior as "intent to harm." They defined unacceptable behavior as "out of control" behavior. The importance of communication on the field came through in a way unexplored in the current sport psychology research on aggression. These women identified that one way that they were able to understand if another player was "under control" was in their actions toward them after a moment of intense physical contact. They suggested that if

the other athlete was respectful of them as players, their action, regardless of intent to harm was deemed acceptable; however, if an opponent was disrespectful, that opponent was considered to be out of control and thus engaging in "unacceptable" behavior. In this way, this research has indicated that these women do experience aggression in ways that are not considered in the sport psychology literature and, more importantly, this research has allowed me to add, for the first time, women's experiences of aggression, unacceptable behavior and harm to the sport psychology aggression literature.

More specifically, by listening to the voices of female athletes who have chosen to participate in a full contact sport, I was able to hear that a very large part of their choice to play rugby was linked to exposing their body to pain and injury to prove that they could. In a world that censors their choices, rugby was a place for these women to prove to themselves and others that they were not frail, passive or weak. In this way, women's voices speak to a very different experience of aggressive and unacceptable behavior than the sport psychology literature would suggest. By hearing their experiences we expand our understanding of aggression and unacceptable behavior.

Furthermore, as the sociological research implies, gender as a social construction is important to investigate relative to studies of aggression/unacceptable behavior. Symbolic interactionism allows researchers to consider gender as more than a categorical variable. Specifically, as evidenced in this research, gender is a social construct that is always actively being negotiated and achieved. And this construction is being negotiated beyond traditional binary notions of masculinity and femininity as the women in this study demonstrated. Harm, aggression under control, pain were embodied and employed

in the service of constructing a new version of femininity. The subtleties and nuanced

gender experiences are lost in sport psychology literature when gender is used as a

determinant of aggression/unacceptable behavior.

Methodological Contributions

In addition to contributing a new theoretical perspective to the sport psychology

literature and giving voice to a relatively silenced group of individuals in the sport

psychology "aggression" literature, I am also introducing a new way of investigating

"unacceptable" behavior in sport psychology research. Until now, ethnography has not

been used to explore this topic in the sport psychology literature. Observational methods

(Coulomb-Cabagno & Rascle, 2006; Gee & Sullivan, 2006; Kirker, Tenenbaum &

Mattson, 2000; Loughead & Leith, 2001; Rascle & Coulomb, 2003; Rascle, Coulomb, &

Pfister, 1998) and interviews (Tod & Hodge, 2001) have been conducted; however, these

methods are used in the service of more traditional non-critical theories. This analysis

was the first of its kind in the sport psychology aggression literature and demonstrated the

usefulness of research methodologies that accommodate individual lived experiences.

Ethnographic methodologies allowed for the exploration of embodiment of self/identity

and the use of harm, pain, aggression, control and sport performance to construct

self/identity. This research opens the door for other less common qualitative research

methodologies in the study of "unacceptable" behavior. Research such as narrative

inquiry (see Smith & Sparkes, 2008, 2005), ethnography (see Krane & Baird, 2005),

reflexive feminist ethnography (see Bolin & Granskog, 2003) and discourse analysis (see

McGannon & Mauws, 2000; Smith & Sparkes, 2005) can all be used to generate a new understanding of unacceptable behavior.

This methodology also allowed me to understand individual experiences of unacceptable behavior. As was previously mentioned, observations and interviews can be done to investigate "intent to harm" and apply traditional theoretical perspectives like SLT and MRT. Specifically, through the interviews and observations conducted for this research, I found moments that would fit with traditional sport psychology definitions of aggression. For example, these women identified that intentionally harming another person, beyond the "normal" scope of the game, would be unacceptable to them. However, when describing themesleves or teammates in rugby, they never constructed themselves or teammates as intentionally harming another player. This, at a very traditional level would suggest that self reported measure of "intent to harm" may be flawed as these athletes rarely constructed themselves as engaged in unacceptable behavior. What's more, this was not the end of their discussion or use of harm.

Harm and pain was used as a means of defining the sport of rugby while simultaneously defining an authentic rugby self. Harm, though mentioned early on, was not as important in the defining of unacceptable behavior as notions of control. Ultimately, this methodology, not only aligned with the underlying epistemological assumptions of symbolic interactionism, but also allowed me to explore novel concepts in the study of unacceptable behavior. This will be a vital new way of exploring the ways in which individuals use aggression beyond hurting others or advancing one's team.

Applied Contributions

In addition to expanding our current body of knowledge in sport psychology, symbolic interaction also can inform powerful interventions in sport. A part of what vexes sport psychologists is coming up with ways in which to decrease unacceptable behavior in sport. Attempts have been made to use MRT and SLT to guide youth sport interventions in efforts to use sport as a place to increase moral reasoning and consequently decreases the likelihood of injurious acts (Bredemeir, Weiss, Shields & Shewchak, 1986). More recently, in their position statement on "aggression and violence in sport" Tenenbaum and colleagues (1997) made nine recommendations directed at sport managers, media, coaches and athletes. However, no recommendations are made to the sport psychologist. Symbolic interactionism has provided me with applied interventions directed at the sport psychology practitioner.

Specifically, in understanding how athletes give meanings to themselves we can better understand maladaptive behaviors that may negatively affect an athlete's wellbeing. For example, perhaps an athlete defines her/him self in terms of resistance to pain. If they define themselves in this way, they may then choose behaviors that would sacrifice their physical and mental health. As a consultant working with this athlete, I might then begin working on identifying other parts of how they define themselves and look for ways to increase the importance of that part of who they are.

Similarly, if I find myself working with an athlete who gets into fights during a game, I would want to look at how those fights might be related to his/her self/identity construction. If an athlete defines him/herself in terms of control and being the

competitor that keeps others in line, I might work with that athlete on the meaning of that identity, how he/she came to know others as "out of control" and how that athlete communicates "control." Based on those meanings and experiences, I could then begin to work with the athlete to help him/her understand meaning development and how, specifically, another's actions can be potentially misinterpreted to mean something not intended. Moreover, I can work with the athlete to brainstorm other means of communicating their control, rather than punching. The effectiveness of interventions based on symbolic interaction is just one vein of research I would like to explore in the future.

<div align="center">Future Research Directions</div>

Based on the findings in this research I would like to continue to explore the notion of control as it relates to acceptable and unacceptable behavior in sport. In terms of this investigation I would continue to investigate women's rugby and investigate more varied experiences of female rugby players. Specifically, I would like to continue to do interviews with female rugby players, but I would like to conduct these interviews at the national and international level. Also, I see a place in the literature for a more detailed exploration of the culture of rugby and how certain aspect of that culture/mythology (e.g., pain, injury, self harm and unacceptable behavior) are taken up and used in the construction of certain self/identities. For example, I would like to look at how rugby language is used to call up a larger socio-historical context and used in a formation of self/identity. Finally, I would like to interview high school rugby players in an effort to

better understand how teen-aged girls construct themselves as ruggers and as girls

relative to these notions of aggression and unacceptable behavior.

Additionally, I would like to look at male rugby players to understand how male

athletes construct and experience acceptable and unacceptable behavior relative to

self/identity development in rugby. Not only would this expand our understanding of the

experiences of aggression and unacceptable behavior, it would also provide the

opportunity to explore control across men's and women's rugby.

Furthermore, I would then like to investigate women's experiences of aggression,

control and unacceptable behavior in other collision and contact sports. Specifically, I

would like to understand more about how women in different contact sports construct and

understand unacceptable behavior, but also how their contact sport participation, notions

of harm and aggression play into their definitions of self and of woman. This research

will be important as it will continue to expand our understanding of unacceptable

behavior while also adding the voices of otherwise silences women.

In addition to continuing to explore notions of control and self/identity

development of males and females in contact sports, I would also like to look more

thoroughly at the use, experience and embodiment of pain and harm in the construction

of self. Due to the prevalence of self harm in this research, I think another vein of

contribution could be an in-depth symbolic interactions exploration of self harm and

embodied "pain" as a means of communicating and maintaining certain sport

self/identities. In this research pain surfaced as an important means of communicating

legitimacy in rugby but there was also a level of pride, empowerment and social cache indicated in the notion of playing through pain.

I would also like to investigate sports that do not get much attention in "aggression" research. For example, specifically I would investigate non-contact and individual sports in terms of aggression, control, unacceptable behavior and pain. These sports have been omitted from the sport psychology literature which perpetuates a particular notion of what unacceptable behavior is, to further disrupt that taken-for-granted-notion, I would like to add sports like gymnastics and distance running to the discourse concerning unacceptable behavior in sport psychology. I am also very interested in following up on the importance of "playing through pain" as a way to (re)produce certain self-identities in sports such as gymnastics and ultra/marathoning. This type of research applied to these populations can only increase our understanding of potentially maladaptive behaviors in sport as they related to self/identity development and maintenance across multiple contexts.

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background information
- How old are you?
- What year in school are you?
- Or what is your occupation?
- How long have you played rugby?
- What other teams have you played on?

Rugby Defined/Explained
- What other sports have you played?
- How did you choose rugby?
- How long have you played?
- What position do you play on the team?
  - Tell me a story that really captures your experiences in this position
  - What is the meaning of that position to you?
  - Do you like it/dislike it? Why?
  - Do you want to try another position? Why?
- What do you like about rugby?
  - Tell me one of your most memorable moments in rugby
  - Tell me more about that
- What does being a rugby player mean to you?
  - Can you tell me about that?
  - How does that make you feel?
  - Tell me a specific story about that?
- What does it mean to you to be a female rugby player?
  - Can you tell me about that?
  - How does that make you feel?
  - Tell me a specific story about that?
- Tell me what the term "rugby culture" means to you
  - Tell me more about that
  - Tell me a story about that
  - What are the most important characteristics?
- Describe yourself in relation to rugby culture (examples you just gave)
  - Can you tell me a specific story to illustrate that?
- Tell me a story about unacceptable behavior in rugby
  - How do you know when someone is behaving badly?
  - Tell me a story about that
- What does violence mean to you
  - Tell me a story about that in relation to yourself
  - Tell me a story about that in relation to others
- What does aggression mean to you
  - Tell me a story about that in relation to yourself
  - Tell me a story about that in relation to others

- Tell me about what you think the social perceptions of rugby players are
- Tell me about yourself in relation to those social perceptions
    - Tell me a specific story or stories
- Tell me about how you think important others in your life (e.g.,) view rugby
    - Tell me a specific story about that
- How do you think people view you as a rugby player
- Tell me about how you think your teammates view you
- How do you think your teammates view you outside of rugby
- How do you view yourself outside of rugby
- How do non-ruggers view you outside of rugby
    - How do you feel about that?

APPENDIX B. CONSENT INFORMATION-INTERVIEW

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IRB ID #: 200803760
APPROVAL DATE: 05/19/08
EXPIRATION DATE: 05/19/09
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CONSENT INFORMATION - Interview

Project Title: **Ruck You: A Symbolic Interaction Investigation of Aggression in Women's Rugby**

Research Team: **Shannon Baird, M.Ed.**

I invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to better understand women's experiences in rugby and how they use those experiences in their self and identity development.

We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you are a member of the Iowa Women's Rugby Football Club and/or are a female rugby player. Approximately 30 people will take part in this study conducted by investigators at the University of Iowa.

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last 1-2 hours for a single interview. I will ask you to meet at a mutually agreed upon location for an interview. In this interview I will ask you to talk to me about your experiences in rugby. The interviews will take place in a location of your choice at a time that is most convenient for you. I will ask you your age, your year in school, and your occupation. We will talk about your experiences playing rugby and being a female rugby player. I will make an audio recording of the interview. These interviews are designed to explore your experiences as a female rugby player but if, at any time, you can choose to skip a question or terminate the interview.

One aspect of this study involves making audio recordings of your interview with the researcher. The recording is made so that I will have an accurate record of your responses. The recording will be transcribed for the study. Only the research team members will have access to the recordings. These recordings will be destroyed within 2 years of completion of the study.

We will keep the information you provide confidential, however federal regulatory agencies and the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. To help protect your confidentiality, I will assign you a false name and conceal any identifiable locations, descriptions or characteristics in my research data. Only Dr. McGannon (my advisor) and I will have access to the original interview recordings and field notes. All original copies of information collected for the study and the list linking your assigned name and your real name will be kept secure in a locked office separate from the study data.. If I write a report or article about this study or share the study data set with others, I will do so in such a way that you cannot be directly identified.

You may be uncomfortable talking with the researcher about some of the topics. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer or end the interview at any time. You will not benefit personally from being in this study. However we hope that others may

benefit in the future from what we learn as a result of this study.

You will not have any costs for being in this research study. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to be in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify.

We encourage you to ask questions. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact: Shannon M. Baird at (319)621-7360. If you experience a research-related injury, please contact Dr. Kerry McGannon (dissertation advisor) at 319 335 8455

If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, please contact the Human Subjects Office, 300 College of Medicine Administration Building, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242, (319) 335-6564, or e-mail irb@uiowa.edu. To offer input about your experiences as a research subject or to speak to someone other than the research staff, call the Human Subjects Office at the number above.

If you agree to participate in the study, we can schedule a time and place for the interview now or you can let me know later when you wish to meet for the interview. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please let me know now. Thank you very much for your consideration.

APPENDIX C. CONSENT INFORMATION-OBSERVATION

CONSENT INFORMATION - Observation

Project Title: **Ruck You: A Symbolic Interaction Investigation of Aggression in Women's Rugby**
Research Team: **Shannon Baird, M.Ed.**

We are writing to invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research study is to better understand women's experiences in rugby and how they use those experiences in their self and identity development.

We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you are a member of the Iowa Women's Rugby Football Club and are a female rugby player. Approximately 30 people will take part in this study conducted by investigators at the University of Iowa.

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last the length of the spring rugby season (March-May). I will be doing observations of your rugby routines including practice sessions, weekend rugby matches, team meetings, and team social engagements to collect information about your activities, conversations, and interactions with others. You will not be asked engage in activities other than your normal everyday activities. I will simply observe your day-to-day behavior over the course of this 2008 Spring season (March-May).

We will keep the information you provide confidential, however federal regulatory agencies and the University of Iowa Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. To help protect your confidentiality, I will assign you a false name and conceal any identifiable locations, descriptions or characteristics in my research data. Only Dr. McGannon (my advisor) and I will have access to the original interview recordings and field notes. All original copies of information collected for the study and the list linking your assigned name and your real name will be kept secure in a locked office separate from the study data. If I write a report or article about this study or share the study data set with others, I will do so in such a way that you cannot be directly identified.

You may be uncomfortable having the researcher collect information about you during the observations. You may ask the researcher to stop collecting information, to remove information from the study data, or to end the observations at any time.

You will not benefit personally from being in this study. However we hope that others may benefit in the future from what we learn as a result of this study.

You will not have any costs for being in this research study. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to be in this

study, or if you stop participating at any time, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify.

We encourage you to ask questions. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact: Shannon M. Baird at (319)621-7360. If you experience a research-related injury, please contact Dr. Kerry McGannon (dissertation advisor) at 319 335 8455

If you have questions about the rights of research subjects, please contact the Human Subjects Office, 300 College of Medicine Administration Building, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242, (319) 335-6564, or e-mail irb@uiowa.edu. To offer input about your experiences as a research subject or to speak to someone other than the research staff, call the Human Subjects Office at the number above.
If you agree to participate in the study, I will start to collect information on May 1, 2008 and complete data collection at the end of the fall season November 1, 2008. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please let me know now. Thank you very much for your consideration.

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS

Table D1. Demographic information for the 12 semi-structured interviews that were analyzed

Name	Age	Race	Orientation/ Status	Occupation	Sports	Rugby Experience	Position(s)	Other Teams
Rae	27	White	Lesbian/ partnered	Nanny	Soccer, College Basketball, Softball, Volleyball, Golf, Frisbee Golf	1.5 years	Outside Center, Fly-Half, Flanker, Wing	--
Nina	26	White	Lesbian/ partnered	Student, Construction, Property Management	Softball, Basketball, Swimming, Soccer	2 years	Prop, Lock, Flanker	--
Suzie	19	White	Lesbian/ single	College Freshman	none	1 year	Wing, Inside/Outside Center, Fly-Half, Full-Back	High School
Jane	45	White	Lesbian/ single	Retail	Track, Basketball, Softball	14 years	Prop, Lock, Flanker, 8-Man, Fly-half, Scrum-half	3
Sam	19	White	Heterosexual/single	College Sophomore	Soccer, Softball, Basketball, Swimming, Volleyball, Cross Country, Boxing	1 season	Flanker, Prop, Lock	--
Cali	31	Mixed	Heterosexual/boyfriend	Enrolment Advisor	Power lifting, Badminton	2 years	Prop, Lock	Poppers
Erica	29	Black	Heterosexual/single	Math PhD Student	Swimming, Tee-Ball, Basketball	7 years	Prop, Flanker	2
Libby	33	White	Heterosexual/married	At Risk Counselor	Basketball	12 years	Every position	Regional & National
Wendy	18	Mixed	Heterosexual/boyfriend	College Freshman	Softball, Baseball, Basketball, Soccer, Hunting	1 season	Wing	--
Sheri	24	White	Heterosexual/single	Math PhD Student	Basketball, Volleyball, Softball	1.5 years	Wing, Outside Center	--
Sandy	20	White	Heterosexual/single	College Sophomore	Basketball, Volleyball	6 years	Fly-Half, Flanker	High School
Laura	25	White	Heterosexual	Unemployed School Teacher	TiQuan Do, Cross Country, Track, Basketball	4 years	Wing, Fullback	--

APPENDIX E. INTERVIEWEE CHARACTER SKETCHES

Rae

Rae was a 27 year old, white, lesbian who was working, full-time, as a nanny. Rae played competitive college basketball throughout her four years of college but also played soccer, softball and volleyball when she was younger. Rae was one of the athletes in my interviews who expressed interest in playing football. She talked about playing football with her brothers and the neighborhood boys when she was growing up, but she also told stories about getting in trouble for such exploits. Rae was very articulate about wanting to express her whole self, a self that she perceived as both masculine and feminine. She also suggested that all people have both sides to them, a masculine and a feminine side and most often women are not allowed to express their masculine side. For Rae, she felt that rugby was a place where she could be a boy, and be masculine. At the time of the interview, Rae was in her 3rd semester with the Raptors and had never played with another team. Despite only having 1.5 years experiences playing rugby, she was often marked as one of the elite players on the team. She played, primarily, in the back line though she had played a few games as a forward in the position of flanker. A flanker is one of the eight positions designated as a forward position. Rae was known for her "aggressive" style of play, however, she was also known for playing without regard for the rules of the game, a problem that she admitted was part of her inexperience in rugby.

Nina

Nina was a 26 year old lesbian in a committed relationship. Nina worked full time and was going to school. She worked in both construction and property management.

Nina was a self defined "bigger girl" who played a forward position for her two years of experience in rugby. Her entire career was played with the Raptors. Nina explained that she had played softball, basketball and soccer when she was younger, but she got most of her competitive experience as a club swimmer. Nina expressed herself through her participation in rugby, construction work, Tacoma driving and farm-girl heritage. She referred to these items as marking her as superior and strong, specifically these things were part of her "bad ass" card. Though she liked to be able to play what she referred to as the "bad ass" or "butch" card, she also expressed that she liked to wear skirts and high-heels. For the Raptors, Nina played a very large leadership role in organizing and scheduling the rugby matches. In this role she was responsible for developing the playing schedule by contacting other local rugby clubs, organizing travel dates and times and coordinating the team caravan.

<div align="center">Suzie</div>

Suzie was a 19 year old, white, lesbian freshman competing with the Raptors for the first time. Despite being in her introductory season with the Raptors, Suzie had played rugby for one year prior to joining the Raptors with her high school team while she was a senior. Suzie's experiences as a rugby player were her first experiences as an athlete. She had never played any sport before and chose rugby because she wanted to pick, in her eyes, the most challenging "bad ass" sport she could find. Despite her mother's continued insistence that she should play badminton, Suzie picked what she felt was a more challenging sport.

For the Raptors, Suzie played in the back line and was seen as one of the smaller women on the team, a fact that Suzie, herself, was well aware of. She mentioned often that people did not believe that she would be able to play rugby because she was small. She also explained that once she did make the high school team she was made fun of, by her high school teammates, for her small size. During the course of my research, Suzie sustained a shoulder dislocation during a match with the Tornados. She was tackled hard, legally, during the course of a 90 minute game. Suzie, despite pain and teammate encouragement to leave the field, remained on the field and played the entire game. This moment was remembered by many of her teammates and recalled as a point of reference for exceptional courage.

<div align="center">Jane</div>

Jane was a white, lesbian working in retail. She had experience playing basketball and softball. She identified herself as an active runner and biking enthusiast; however, rugby was her primary sport and first love. Of all the athletes on the Raptor's rugby team, Jane was the oldest and had the most years of experience. Jane was 45 and had accumulated 14 years of rugby experience. Jane played with three other club teams during her 14 years of playing. Despite her years of experience, Jane was not considered one of the elite members of the team. She was regarded as one of the more dedicated and responsible players on the team. Jane played primarily as a forward. In the pack, she

spent most of her years playing Lock but aspired to play eight-man[7]. During the season, two major incidents emerged with Jane as the protagonist. In one of the last games of our season, Jane went out of a match played against the Tornados with a broken nose. She left the match long enough to stop the bleeding and then returned to finish the game. Also, in an early season tournament, Jane was called for a penalty because she threw an opponent to the ground during a ruck. For her, this moment was embarrassing. Jane felt that she had lost control of herself in a way that she had never lost control before. Her teammates, though supportive, also constructed that moment as out of control. Interestingly enough, Jane went on to explain that the moment was brought on by a misunderstanding with her opponent and the cumulative effects of a "hard year" during which she has had to worry about possible re-location, selling her home, and negotiating a long distance relationship. Both of these moments were prominent in Jane's interview and were referenced by her teammates in their (re)constructions of the season.

<p style="text-align:center">Sam</p>

Sam was a 19 year old college sophomore. She was white, heterosexual and single. During the interview she was in her first semester of rugby participation. Her only experience playing rugby was with the Raptors. She played in a forward position during the semester and learned to play flanker[8], prop and lock. She indicated that she was quite active and had competed in soccer, softball, basketball, volleyball, cross country,

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[7] Eight-man and Lock are both rugby positions. Eight-man is a position in rugby that is part of the scrum but not part of the "tight five" and and a Lock is part of the "tight five" in the scrum. Locks are also referred to as "second row."

[8] A flanker is a rugby position in the scrum.

swimming and boxing prior to her rugby experience. However, she drew primarily on her pervious performances in soccer and boxing to make sense of her experiences in rugby.

For Sam, rugby was a sport that was available to her and allowed her to be "aggressive." Furthermore, rugby was a place for her to overcome some of her insecurities. Sam said that she really disliked being physically close to others. In rugby, she experienced a familiarity and closeness with others that did not make her feel uncomfortable. What is more, she also found that she was more comfortable with her physical body in rugby and was not self conscious in the context of rugby. She recalled that at one match she took off her jersey to give to another player and after the match her family was shocked that she had taken off her jersey and walked around in her sports bra. Sam recounted this moment for me as evidence of her increasing comfort with her own body and self.

<div align="center">Cali</div>

Cali was a 31 year old, heterosexual, divorcée with two children who self identified as "a mixed girl." She was working as an enrolment advisor for online education and had participated in rugby for two years. She played with the Poppers rugby club and only competed with the Raptors when teams combined on the weekends to play in rugby matches or tournaments. Cali had competed in high school in power lifting and badminton. She was a self proclaimed "big girl" and played in the pack as either a prop or a lock. For Cali, Rugby was a place to negotiate her multiple roles as mother, daughter, ex-wife, girl-friend, enrolment advisor, and rugger. Moreover, Cali used her rugby

participation to communicate to her daughter that, as a woman, you can be and do anything you want.

<center>Erica</center>

Erica was a 29 year old black woman who had played rugby for seven years. She was heterosexual, single and working toward her Doctorate in Math. Erica explained that she had played many sports before rugby but she was never very good at any of them. Specifically, she swam in high school and played basketball and t-ball when she was younger. For Erica, rugby was a sport that she felt she excelled. Prior to joining the Raptors, she played rugby for five years with an elite rugby team in California. Her California team experiences served as her reference for her definition of rugby and self definition as a rugby player. She explained that rugby "saved" her life. Rugby and her California teammates were there for her when she felt as if she were alone in the world. Before rugby she described herself as a woman that was withdrawn, isolated, insecure and on the verge of giving up on life. Once she committed to rugby, she felt that her team was there for her. She explained that these strangers were there and cared for her. For her, rugby represented that safeness and respect. On the Raptors, Erica was one of the most talented and experienced players. She played in the pack as either a prop or a flanker. For the Raptors, she played primarily, prop[9].

Furthermore, Erica did not drink alcohol. Upon exploring how she thought abstaining from alcohol consumption might position her as "outside" of rugby culture,

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[9] A prop is a position in rugby that is a part of the "tight five" in the scrum. Props are also a part of "the front row."

she explained that more people pointed out her race rather than the fact that she did not

drink. She experienced a number of incidents when people asked her, "is it weird that you

are the only black person at the party?" After such encounters she felt annoyed because

she was not prepared for that kind of "ignorance." She felt that rugby was a safe place for

her to be herself and to be asked such a pointed question in her "safe place" was

unnerving. As such she was never able to articulate exactly how she was feeling. She

often wanted to express that she, despite being aware of the color of her skin, did not

position herself in that way, she positioned herself as a rugger and a part of the diverse

rugby family.

<div align="center">Libby</div>

Libby was a 33 year old, white, heterosexual, married risk counselor at a local

elementary school. The only organized sport Libby played before rugby was basketball.

She explained that she had grown up playing football with her brother and was

disappointed that, at the time, girls were not allowed to play high school football. She had

always wanted to play football and envied her brother's experiences in a sport that

allowed for such high amounts of contact. What's more, when she was younger she felt

that her performance was often compared to her brother's performance. Therefore, when

she started playing rugby, she felt that she finally got to play a sport that was as intense as

(if not more than) football and rugby was all her own.

At the time of the interview, Libby had 12 years of rugby experience playing

primarily with the Raptors. However, Libby was selected and played on the regional

sevens team in a national competition and was selected to attended the Eagles

training/selection camp. In this regard, Libby was the most elite and talented rugby player on the Raptor team. She had played every position on the rugby field but identified herself as a Fly-half (i.e., a position in the back line). Though Libby recently retired from playing the sport of rugby, she was still involved with the team as coach and as a player when the Raptors did not have enough players. For Libby, it was difficult to "retire" from a sport that she had given so much of herself to; however, she felt that she needed to stop playing rugby while she still could move her body. She suffered a severe shoulder injury while playing rugby and was involved in a car accident which left her in considerable pain. Ultimately, she explained that the pain had worsened and her entire body was in pain. She then made the difficult decision to stop playing rugby. She also suggested that she wanted to have children "some day" and wanted to be able to pick them up and play with them. By the end of my emersion in the field Libby found out that she was pregnant.

<div align="center">Wendy</div>

Wendy was an 18 year old, heterosexual, coupled, college freshman who was, like Sam, in her first semester of rugby. Wendy self identified as "mixed" and "not girly." Wendy's past sport experience included softball, basketball, baseball, soccer and hunting. She had also played unorganized football with local boys when she was growing up and enjoyed the physical exertion and contact involved in football. She explained that her decision to play rugby was informed by the appeal of contact and exertion. When as a freshman she was asked to pick at least one club to get involved with, she picked rugby after watching an excerpt of a match on YouTube because she thought it looked tough. Wendy played as a back in the wing position.

Sheri

Sheri was a 24 year old, white, heterosexual, math doctoral student. She had been playing rugby for one and a half years. Her entire rugby experience was with the Raptors. Sheri had played volleyball, basketball and softball before playing rugby. Sheri had been a part of men's rugby culture for some time. She had followed a local men's club rugby team for many years and had watched their games and their parties. She started playing after Erica started encouraging her to come out for the team. After Erica dispelled some of Sheri's self doubts about her ability to be able to play rugby, Sheri came out to play. Sheri plays in the back line as either a wing or a center. Sheri explained that rugby was a place for her to be her "crazy" "eccentric" self. She described rugby as a place for her to let loose and not be as well behaved as she had to be in the rest of her life.

Sandy

Sandy was a 20 year old, white, heterosexual, college sophomore. She defines herself through her faith and commitment to being a doctor. Despite only being in her second year with the Raptors, Sandy was one of the more experienced players on the team with a total of six years experiences. Before competing with the Raptors, Sandy was on a high school rugby team for four years. This experience with a well established high school team allowed Sandy to have a unique perspective on her position on the Raptor team. She felt that she was in an awkward position because, on the raptor team, age and experience did not coincide. For example, Shae at 24 years old had less experience than Sandy at age 20. This, for Sandy, was difficult when she was trying to negotiate hierarchies and express herself as a knowledgeable rugby player. Furthermore, Sandy had

initially feared continuing on with her rugby experience in college because she thought that college rugby was centered on drinking. As a non-drinker, her fear resided in being judged for not drinking. After joining the Raptors, she realized that she was not forced to drink or negatively perceived for not drinking. At the time of the interview, Sandy had decided to take a more proactive role in team management and assume a leadership role.

<div align="center">Laura</div>

Laura was a 25 year old, white, heterosexual, married, unemployed school teacher. Her past sport participation included TiQuan Do, cross country, track, basketball and marathoning. In terms of rugby, Laura played with the Raptors for four years. Much of who Laura believes herself to be comes through in her description of her rugby experience. For Laura, rugby has been a hard battle. She started playing four years prior to the interview. During her second semester with the Raptors, she broke her neck during a match with the Tornados. This injury would take some time to heal and during that time Laura was not allowed to be physically active. She described this time in her life as the loneliest. She felt that she had lost all of how she defined herself. After time off, Laura came back and started playing rugby again. The story of her injury and comeback is part of the Raptor's collective memory. Her ability to play rugby again after breaking her neck is held up as an exemplar of the heart and courage it takes to play rugby.

In the season during which I did my observation, Laura was again severely injured in an early tournament. During that tournament her elbow was dislocated and the ligaments of the joint were torn. She went on to finish playing in that tournament. After

consulting a doctor and getting a brace she also went on to participate in all of the

remaining games in that season.

Despite the severe injuries plaguing Laura's career she is positioned as a talented

and knowledgeable part of the team. She plays in the position of fullback and is valued

by her teammates in that position as an athlete who is able to make quick decisions.

APPENDIX F. CODES AND EXAMPLES

Table F1. Rug(be) Layer

Layer	Focused	Axial	Open	Examples from transcripts
Rug(be)	They Say	Excessive contact	crazy game	I don't think most people understand how much thinking goes into the game, it's not just this mindless oh throw the ball around, your just hitting each other (sound effect) (Cali).
			no rules	
			violent	
			aggressive	
		Seeking pain	want to get hurt	They think I'm crazy that I 'm like, I think they think it's like masochism… They think that I want to be hurt (Suzie).
			going to get hurt	
			hurt others	
		Man's game	girls shouldn't play	People are just like, oh that's something that girls shouldn't do because we're supposed to be all preppy and girly (Wendy).
			you don't play!	
			You a lesbian?	
	The Game	Rugby is contact	contact defines	The physical nature of rugby in general defines it (Nina).
			no pads, full throttle	
		Rugby is pain	you signed up for it	People get hurt, yeah that's ok, yeah that's fine. You sighed up (Suzie).
			it's about getting hurt	
		Aggression in bounds	effort	Anything goes as long as you are on the field. I feel like you put your mouth guard in, you put on your scrum cap, you walk on the field, then you should be ready for whatever comes your way. Weather that someone's who playing under the rules or not. It's all part of the sport (Rae).
			in bounds	
			in touch	
		Gender	contact is boyish	How many sports do you see that allow for body individuality, that's needed to make the team really progress?? That makes it this really equal opportunity game that allows you know, like a more huge cross section of people to be experienced. Rugby really is a collective of humans that are coming together for the one purpose of getting that try (Cali).
			need for all bodies	

Table F2. Rug(you) Layer

Layer	Focused	Axial	Open	Examples from transcripts
Rug(you)	Fearlessness	Contact	give it	In rugby, it's like, just going you're hardest and not being afraid to tackle anyone that has the ball and just, just not scared, I guess, doing, going 100% like you have to tackle, so if you're scared to tackle, it's hard to play rugby, and uhm, if you're scared of tackling (Libby).
			take it	
		Pain	keep going	If you're not bleeding, or broken, then you're not trying, then you are giving up right. And I think that's what it is, it's like, you're soft, you're giving up (Erica).
			for the team	
	Aggression	Control	in bounds	When I think of aggression, I think of, a situation where it's controlled and there's a consensual understanding that this is what's going to happen. Yes you may get hurt, but we both know that this can happen and we're both allowing ourselves to do this. When I think of violence I think of it usually being a one sided thing -- definitely not consensual in the sense that one person is being hurt, or being injured (Rae)
			don't complain	
		Respect	opponent	
			sport	
	Red Badge of Fearlessness and Aggression	Pride	you show them off	You've done your job. You've got your knocks in, someone else is wearing one of yours, it's a badge of honor almost, but it's just like yeah, you've been playing. You know, if you've gotten away from a game and you don't, you're not like, got some one mark, bruise, what have you, or your knees aren't torn up, if your not carrying some of the dirt from where, in the body, home, so that your like, oh, in the shower, oh. Oh yeah, that was a really good game. You know, it's almost like you haven't played...what were you doing in the game that you didn't carry something home with you (Cali)
			compare size	
		Communicate	fearless	
			effort	
			identity	
	It Takes All Kinds	No Ideal	body	When I talk to people about rugby, I always make sure that I say that there is a spot for everyone. Because it's totally the truth. I mean, I have met, just in the short amount of time that I have been playing, very different kind of women come together to play this sport. And different body shapes, different mentalities, different, just different characters. So, I don't think that I could probably nail down, you know, this is what I think of when I think of a rugby player, because my experience with them has been much different. But I think in that same breath, I would say that you have to be in, you know, that line of sanity, and realizing that you are putting your life in danger. I mean, there's certain type of people that will make that choice and that can make that choice, but it's not really something you can pick off the street and say yeah that's a rugby player (Rae).
			mind	
		Compare to men	out of control	
			hit too hard	

Table F3. Rug(me) Layer

Layer	Focused	Axial	Open	Examples from transcripts
Rug(me)	I Am Fearless	Contact	I got hit hard	I got knocked out tackling, it was like a hard, the ground was hard, somebody tackled me and my head just bounced off the ground … I did continue to play. But I mean, I had taken a minute, and then, you know, I was able to like, I can see, I'm not bloody, I'm alright (Libby).
			I made a hard hit	
		Pain	I kept playing	
			I value their sacrifice	
	I Am Aggressive	I am in control	I don't talk shit	Tackling allows me to fuck people up. Which is fun too...In a gentle way (Rae).
			I don't complain	
		I will control you	you are out of line	
			I need to do something	
		Respect	camaraderie on field	
			camaraderie off field	
	Bragging Bruises	Communicate	I am fearless	I think, I think a huge thing, or we've made games out of it, kind of, and just compare or show off my bruise, wear shorts to school the next day, and walk around, "hey, check this out (Sandy).
			I can take it	
		Proof	I was in there	
			I made a contribution	
		I play rugby	scares non-ruggers	
			I get to say I play rugby	
	I Am Rugby	Be who I've always been	not girly	Age of 31, I can kick ass and take numbers and yet I can come home, and clean butts, and cook dinners and have my femme personality voice at work, and be like "hi, so you want to sign up and go to school and change your life today." So it's just, yeah, rugby has been an absolutely, good addition to my multiple personality problem. And that, complements all my other roles. It validates that uhm, yeah I'm a woman, I can be physical, but not in the physical sexual sense, but physical in the sense that my body can do these things, I can push though a bit further, and yes, I can spit, and swear more than I was before, but still be me, and still be woman, rar. (Cali)
			into contact	
			never allowed	
			empowered	
		Rugby symbolizes	more than you think I am	

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