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An examination of unwritten rule development in men's ice hockey

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An examination of unwritten rule development in men's ice hockey

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Abstract

This research study sought to better understand at what point in the player development process did aspiring professional hockey players learn of, as well as consent to, ice hockey's unwritten rules. How this process occurred was also under examination. While some research had been conducted relative to the development of unwritten rules within sport, little research to date had focused on ice hockey's unwritten rules and none had focused on the factors associated with their development. Research in other sport areas has indicated that knowledge and consent of unwritten rules is expected in the development of a professional athlete. As a result, the unwritten rules of ice hockey were inductively analyzed to better determine when development occurred during the socialization of the athlete on a pre-professional participant track. In regards to ice hockey culture and this study, a social learning theory lens was used to provide insight into the player development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules. Qualitative participant interviews yielded the following 4 major themes: (a) Ice hockey's unwritten rule development initially occurs as a transition out of the youth hockey classification; (b) The unwritten rule development process is unique for each player; (c) Players consent to the unwritten rules to earn team respect, trust, and promote the well-being of the team; (d) The veteran players at each level should teach ice hockey's unwritten rules.

Keywords: ice hockey, social learning theory, unwritten rules.

An examination of unwritten rule development in men's ice hockey

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ice hockey is a game whose nature is based on achieving victory by physically dominating and intimidating the players on the opposing team (Baxter, 2005). It is because of its nature that the game of ice hockey is viewed by the general public as a violent game in counterpart to other aggressive sports such as rugby and American football (Glee, 2010). Much of this view lies in the fact that ice hockey is the only team sport where "fighting is part of the game" (Svoranos, 1997, p. 487). It is the inclusion of fighting within the sport of ice hockey that makes the unwritten rules and their development so unique. Not only is it possible that the participation in sport creates a unique and separate reality, but the context in which that reality is viewed changes with the evolution of each sport. In ice hockey, the standard of unwritten rules has matured along with the growth of the sport from the 1970's 20-on-20 team brawls in the days of the Broad Street Bullies to the 1-on-1 heavyweight bouts that occur on the ice in present day.

This research study sought to better understand at what point in the player development process did aspiring professional hockey players learn of, as well as consent to, ice hockey's unwritten rules. How this development process occurred was also under examination. While some research has been conducted relative to the development of unwritten rules within sport, little research to date has focused on ice hockey's unwritten rules and none has focused on the factors associated with their development. Research in other sport areas has indicated that knowledge and consent of unwritten rules was expected in the development of a professional athlete. As a result, the unwritten rules of

ice hockey were analyzed to determine when development occurs during the socialization of the athlete on a pre-professional participant track. In regards to ice hockey culture and this study, a social learning theory lens was used to provide insight into the player development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules.

The theoretical framework used to support this research was based on the concepts of social learning theory. Rich qualitative interview data from current or ex semi-professional hockey players provided support for this framework. Furthermore, the sociological perspective on the unique conditions and situations that arise in the sport of ice hockey, as explained by the participants, was examined to determine the underlying causes of unwritten rule development. By exploring these situations, this study offered an understanding for when unwritten rule knowledge develops in ice hockey players as well as when and why participants consented to the unwritten rules.

Unwritten Rules in the Courtroom

As the sport of ice hockey has grown and modernized in the 21st century, there are defining incidents that publically expose ice hockey's unwritten rules. There was one incident in particular that spoke to the importance of unwritten rule knowledge, not only for professional track hockey players, but also the culture of contact sports as a whole. That case was Moore v. Bertuzzi (2007). To describe what in hockey circles is termed as the "Moore-Bertuzzi Incident," the roots of the situation must be revealed. February 16, 2004 was the beginning of the Moore-Bertuzzi timeline in a game between Steve Moore's Colorado Avalanche and Todd Bertuzzi's Vancouver Canucks. It was here that Moore delivered an elbow to the head of Canuck's captain Markus Naslund resulting in a concussion and a forehead laceration. Naslund remained down on the ice for three

minutes before the medical staff could remove him to the hospital. The hit was a clear violation of the National Hockey League playing rules, which called for a five-minute major penalty for elbowing and game misconduct (NHL, 2009). The illegal play went unpenalized in the game and the NHL, along with its Commissioner Gary Bettman, gave no supplementary discipline for the hit.

Three weeks later on March 3, 2004 the teams met again among widespread speculation that there would be retaliation against Moore during the game (Vecsey, 2004, p. D1). This speculation of retaliation was legitimate within the unwritten rules of the game and was validated by the attendance of NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and NHL Executive Vice President and Director of Hockey Operations Colin Campbell at the game. Bettman and Campbell's attendance was a sign that retribution was expected to occur on the ice against Moore and perhaps the "league presence" allowed the game to be completed without any retaliation against Moore aside from trash talking throughout the game. When questioned about the situation in a post game interview, Bertuzzi stated that, "games will come, and situations will present itself" (Vecsey, 2004, p. D1). Bertuzzi in his own words posted a warning to Moore that the matter was still not settled and that retribution was still sought for his actions.

Just five days later on March 8, 2004, the two teams met for the final time of the regular season in Vancouver, British Columbia. In a game where the Avalanche would win by a final score of 9 – 2, the threat of retaliation against Moore still lingered. This threat of retaliation was also valid as the game progressed with Moore scoring to give the Avalanche a 5 – 0 lead. This threat was confirmed as game officials were contacted in the first intermission by the Director of Officiating for the NHL to warn of possible

retaliation against Moore (Thornton, 2009, p. 208). In the third period, with the game out of reach, Bertuzzi challenged Moore to fight during play. Moore declined and skated away. Bertuzzi would not take no for an answer and followed Moore up the whole length of the ice and half way back down constantly "jawing" at Moore and tugging his jersey in attempts to get him to engage in a fight. The situation turned ugly as Bertuzzi struck Moore from behind in the back of the head sending him face first into the ice.

As a result of the punch to the back of the head by Bertuzzi, Moore was rendered unconscious and laid motionless on the ice for sometime before he could be rushed to a nearby hospital. Moore sustained massive injuries from the incident including, "spinal fractions, spine ligament injuries, a closed head injury, facial lacerations and abrasions, loss of consciousness, and loss of memory" (Vancouver, 2004). As a result of his injuries, Steve Moore is no longer able to play in the National Hockey League. This punch delivered by Todd Bertuzzi from behind on Steve Moore is the definition of the "Moore-Bertuzzi Incident."

For the punch, the National Hockey League suspended Todd Bertuzzi for the remainder of the 2003-2004 season, rendering him ineligible for competition until opening day of the 2004-2005 season. The suspension cost Bertuzzi 13 regular season games and 7 playoff games resulting in an estimated $500,000 in surrendered salary and $350,000 in lost endorsements (Thornton, 2009, p. 209). Because of the NHL lockout for the 2004-2005 season the International Ice Hockey Federation, in compliance with the NHL's suspension, banned Bertuzzi from playing in Europe or any of its associated leagues during the NHL lockout.

Perhaps the most interesting variable with this altercation is the fine by the NHL associated with the Moore-Bertuzzi Incident in the amount of $250,000 to the Canucks organization. This fine serves as an official recognition by the league that the Vancouver Canucks are vicariously liable and hold a percentage of blame in the incident. In other words, the NHL felt that in some part Bertuzzi was performing his job under the direction of the Vancouver Canucks Hockey Club and the unwritten rules, which demand retribution for the earlier concussion to Markus Naslund delivered by Steve Moore's elbow. Because of the severity and consequences of this incident, the Moore v. Bertuzzi (2007) court case should define the acceptability of unwritten rules not only for the NHL and it's players, but ice hockey as a whole. All of the hockey world will continue to follow this case, which in 2011 is still proceeding through the discovery phase.

For reasons found in this case alone, the unwritten rules are a significant part of ice hockey and the code of conduct. Not only do the unwritten rules guide the standard of play in professional hockey, they also aim to keep a balance of respect and safety between the combatants. This research study recognized the significance of ice hockey's unwritten rules and their applications to professional ice hockey. As a result, the purpose of this study was to perform an initial examination into the development of these unwritten rules. It was the hopes of this study that a better understanding of ice hockey unwritten rule development would not hurt the integrity and tradition of the game but lead to a stronger and safer product on professional ice.

In this study, unwritten rule development was examined from current or ex semi-professional hockey players. Previous literature regarding unwritten rules in sport, ice hockey, masculinity, and the socialization of a professional athlete, was also examined

providing an in-depth view into the unwritten rule development process of a professional athlete. The significance of this study was to uncover any links that existed between ice hockey's unwritten rule development process and their application to professional ice hockey players. For this study, the following research questions were explored:

1. At what point in the player development process do aspiring professional hockey players learn of, as well as consent to, ice hockey's unwritten rules?
2. What is the development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules?

Chapter 2: Literature review

Fighting in Hockey

Pappas, McKenry, and Catlett, (2004) indicated, that fighting is frowned upon and viewed negatively by society. In society, a person who is frequently involved in altercations would be labeled a thug, bully, or a delinquent (Glee, & Potwarka, 2007). In reviewing the scholarly literature conducted on ice hockey and its players, hockey players were typically viewed the opposite. It is common to walk into a hockey rink during the summer months and see a professional hockey player volunteering their time with children at summer camps. Not all, but some of these same players who are seen as pillars of society in their respective community step on the ice in a professional hockey game and commit acts that, if committed in public, society would stamp them a criminal. This resulted in many ice hockey critics asking what it is in ice hockey that can allow some people who are model citizens in their communities to commit violent and aggressive acts on the ice?

This distinction could be made with the principle that participation in sport created a unique and separate reality. This shared "separate reality by the players, is quite distinct and apart from real life" (Svoranos, 1997, p. 487). The dichotomy of realities is what has enabled ice hockey organizations and participants to claim and justify that "although fighting is against the formal rules of the game, it is viewed as inherent part of it" (Timmer, 2002, p. 211). This rationalization of different realities has been the basis for the hockey world to be held to a different set of values and standards, and the unwritten rules have reflected this. Unwritten rules are not unique to sport however; in every walk of life there are unwritten rules whether it be in the home or work

place. Within the home without ever being told, a child might know not to change the channel when his parent was watching a certain show or sporting event. In the workplace, an unwritten rule has appeared in the boardroom when the seat at the head of the table is reserved for the CEO without discussion. For the most part, a majority of life's unwritten rules are dictated by their respective society and governed by social norms. What makes ice hockey's unwritten rules so unique is that it is the only major international team sport where fighting is a social norm. Vaz (1979) noted that from an early age, hockey players undergo a specialized socialization process in the production of a tough fighting unit where players are taught that competency is linked to aggressive play including penalties.

In a fast paced game where intentional player collisions are a part of the sport's fundamentals, fighting is an inescapable consequence. A fight is against the rules in all rulebooks from every professional ice hockey league. Svoranos (1997) noted, however, that fighting has been clearly established within the normal scope of the sport's unwritten rules as set forth by the players and coaches of the game. In fact, the unwritten rules of ice hockey require fighting in appropriate situations.

> Although aggression is also present in other sports, the nature of the game of hockey brings it within a unique context… Because of the intense physicality of the sport, unacceptable conduct by a player such as using a stick on another player is resolved at times by fighting (Svoranos, 1997, p. 487).

Within ice hockey norms, fistfights are not viewed to be violent, but rather a sometimes-necessary outcome of an aggressive contact sport. In contrast, stick assaults are considered violent and unacceptable under all circumstances (Colburn, 1985).

It was this context that made ice hockey a unique sport. A player could score a goal, get into a fight on the next shift, and would be hailed as a star role model because both acts are within the rules, unwritten rules, and fundamentals of the game. Both of these acts have been promoted as desirable qualities with ice hockey culture as a player is said to have recorded a "Gordie Howe Hat Trick" wherein a player scores a goal, records an assist, and gets in a fight all in one game. This trio of actions is named after one of ice hockey's greatest players of all time, Gordie Howe, who was well known for his skill at both scoring and fighting. As ice hockey has grown in the 21st century there are two prominent ways of earning respect as a hockey player, goals and points, or being a tough physical player and a good fighter. According to Svoranos (1997), "a fight is a legitimate response to a wrongful" act committed by a player (p. 490). A good example of this would be if a player from Team A was hit in the face by a stick of a player from Team B. As a result of this action, another Team A player would come to his teammates aid with the response of initiating a fight with the perpetrator from Team B. This response by the Team A player is considered more respectful than retaliating with the same unacceptable stick assault and would actually be an honorable response under the unwritten rules (Vaz, 1979).

The spectators

"Research regarding the National Hockey League has indicated that there are financial incentives for the league's teams to promote fighting" (Jacobson, 1993, p. 159). This promotion of fighting is an important connection to ice hockey's unwritten rules as in all sports, the culture and unwritten rules of each sport trickle down from the top professional league. In a 1995 poll conducted by The Hockey News, readers were asked

how they felt about various aspects of professional ice hockey. Sixty-seven percent responded to the survey by saying that the level of violence in hockey was acceptable and 62.5 percent responded by saying that fighting was acceptable and should not be banned (McKeever, 1995, p. C1). No matter how a spectator views the place of fighting in hockey, it is clear that fighting under the unwritten rules is expected during the course of any professional ice hockey game. With fighting being a known outcome of a National Hockey League game, Nielsen data has shown that the sport has seen continued growth in both attendance and television viewership during the 2000's (Street & Smith, 2009). The percent of National Hockey League games with a fight during the end of the 2010-2011 season was at an all century high of 43.16% compared to 38.13% in 2000 (McRitche, 2010). In the current study, I have not proposed that there is a direct correlation between NHL viewership increases and fighting. However, based on this data, it is fair to infer that fighting is not hurting professional ice hockey's popularity at the highest level.

The Reality within the Professional Sport of Ice Hockey

The preceding introduction and explanation of the culture of ice hockey established that participation in ice hockey creates a unique and separate reality. This understanding of the sport's culture was a pivotal piece of base knowledge that must be understood before a discussion on unwritten rules could take place within ice hockey culture. In a discussion of unwritten rules, it was necessary to understand that an action that is considered wrongful is an act that violates the guidelines of society. The society of an ice hockey team placed an extremely high regard on the well-being and safety of its members. Moving forward in this research study it is important to remember that a

sporting event such as an ice hockey game, is viewed as a separate entity, a world distinct from "real life" (Svoranos, 1997, p. 487). In other words, the unwritten rules and their development are not generalizeable to situations outside of sport.

The Importance of Ice Hockey's Unwritten Rules

With the context of professional ice hockey in the court room, Judge Bastin noted that, "hockey by its very nature involves violent contact and players' consent to blows and collisions incidental to the playing of the game," he also held that, "there are limits on a player's implied consent when another acts intentionally to cause injury to that player even if provocation exists" (Barnes, 1988, p. 258). In the Gauvin v. Clark (1989) case where the defendant Clark purposely struck Gauvin in the abdomen with the butt-end of his stick, the judge ruled in favor of the defendant stating that, "vigorous and active participation in sporting events should not be chilled by the threat of litigation" (Moore, 1996, p. 667). This position has been held for the most part in the context of ice hockey related claims by the courts in order to further the policy that sports are best to govern themselves.

As of May 2011, the current Moore v. Bertuzzi (2007) lawsuit was a cutting edge case for the sport of hockey and contact sports as a whole. The court had yet to decide if Bertuzzi's actions were outside of hockey's social norms and his employment by the Vancouver Canucks. "Steve Moore will likely argue he failed to engage Bertuzzi therefore there was no fight, only an assault by Bertuzzi which he did not consent to" (Thornton, 2009, p. 215). This opinion has substantial weight, and is backed by Canadian court system Judge Bastin, in response to the defense that this was a retaliatory act that occurred out of the self-governing unwritten rules of the game.

Even though the NHL has four on-ice officials for every game, hockey rules and norms at the highest level has always been enforced on-the ice by the self-governing fights that determine acceptable play and conduct (Colburn, 1985). While Bertuzzi is responsible for his own actions, this particular circumstance evolved out of his employment as professional hockey player. This is not to suggest however, that a hockey player under the games unwritten rules has "a license to kill" or dish out vigilante justice just because he is a professional athlete. It is a suggestion that the Bertuzzi action alone would be considered a break of the unwritten rulebook, but given the circumstances of the incident, Moore was aware of the impending attack. It was also possible that Moore was non-conforming to Vaz's (1979) "gentleman's agreement" in hockey's unwritten rulebook, which calls for holding yourself accountable for your own actions by fighting to repay the debt of your wrong doings. There is no question that Steve Moore committed a wrong during the February 16, 2004 game with his elbow to the head of Vancouver Canucks captain Markus Naslund. The question remains, did Steve Moore assume the risk of such an attack every time he stepped on the ice against the Canucks until the matter was settled according to the unwritten rulebook of the sport? It is examples such as these that make unwritten rule knowledge in ice hockey so unique and critical to player safety. Because player safety is the number one priority in every sport, it is important to understand where professional players learned of as well as consented to the unwritten rules of their respective sports. As a result it is also important to examine the possibility that players learned of unwritten rules through the actions of their peers and superiors.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (SLT) is based on the understanding that "people can learn by observing the behavior of others and the outcome of those behaviors" (Ormrod, 1999, p.1). Social learning theory focused specifically on learning that occurred within a social context. On the macro level, ice hockey was a large social culture and on the micro level, each team was a specific social context. As a result, social learning theory played a key role in the development of ice hockey's unwritten rules.

Bandura (1977), a pioneer in the development of social learning theory, proposed three primary concepts of the theory: observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Social learning theory since its induction has bridged the gap between behaviorist learning theories and cognitive learning theories (Ormrod, 1999). According to Bandura (1977), a primary component of SLT is observational learning where people learn through imitation of those in their environment and surroundings. Bandura goes on to explain that as humans, we are born with just elementary reflexes and that people are not naturally equipped with "inborn repertories of behavior" (Bandura, 1977, p.16). People must learn these behaviors. Either by a direct experience or by mere observation, people can acquire new behaviors or response patterns according to social learning theory. Using the observational learning component of social learning theory, an ice hockey player, as a child, does not know the unwritten rules of hockey when first participating in the sport. Once that player begins observing the sport and experiencing the normal interactions, that player will have undergone a social learning experience. What that player chooses to do with that information is personal and will ultimately shape a player's developmental path.

Further social learning theory development began with the formation of models with observational learning. Observational learning has also been referred to as vicarious learning in other fields. According to Bandura (1977), models are a main source of a person's ability to learn. Under Bandura's (1977) theory, a person without a role model relationship would lack the ability to make evaluations of their social environment. Since social learning theory relies heavily on the outcomes of others' actions, a role model is a key component to social learning growth. By observing a role model and their actions, Bandura (1977) claimed that a person can learn vicariously through the outcome of the role model's actions in a social setting and distinguish between the positive and negative in that environment. Role models in ice hockey usually consist of a team's most valuable player, captain, and/or coach. In this case, the player is likely to be reinforced of the social environment norms through the actions of these role models. For example, a player that changes his playing style to be more aggressive in order to fit in with a certain group of "tough" players has a strong likelihood of being socially accepted by those players and thus that group reinforces his behavior. Bandura (1977) stated that during a period of observational learning through models, the observer will draw the appropriate conclusion on how the newly observed actions exhibited by the model are carried out and accepted in that social environment. The player in this case, sees that a group of players are reaping social benefits from an aggressive style of play and that player makes adjustments to his playing style in effort to reap the same social rewards and fit in within the group. Under Bandura's (1977) observational learning model, this player would draw on past observations and their resulting consequences as behavior guide for present and future situations within that social context. It is after that player becomes socialized in

their respective ice hockey culture that observational learning truly begins to solidify as a result of the player's social environment.

Bandura's (1977) third main social learning theory component of imitation follows next. Under this SLT component, imitation by the observer can either be directly reinforced by the model or from a third party. While the reinforcement influence can be strongest with Bandura's (1977) role model influence, a third party influence of a coach or parent could also play a significant role in reinforcement. Staying with the same example of the player who desires to change to a more aggressive playing style, that player might be positively or negatively affected by a third party. A third party, such as a coach, might reward the player for changing his playing style, thus reinforcing the behavior under social learning theory. That same player's parent might disapprove of the new playing style thus creating negative reinforcement. Bandura (1977) explained that whatever influence proved strongest would result in imitation. What made the SLT imitation component so crucial to this research study was its application with identifying what group had the strongest influence on a player development. It was also crucial to understand the choices that this group had with their unwritten rule development.

As previously stated, in social learning theory the imitated behavior by the observer lead to reinforcing consequences. When the role model and the third party are in agreement, social learning peaks as the social influence is at its greatest (Bandura, 1977). Newman and Newman (2007), stated that observing actions not only informed the eyewitness, but could also serve as a tool for motivation. Another example of imitation with third party reinforcement is a player modeling the actions of his captain. The observer or player might make the decision to report to the arena a full hour before the

required time because that is when the captain reports. The coach notices this and compliments and praises the player for modeling such behavior. Thus a third party has reinforced the player's behavior. As previously discussed, imitation or acceptance of a behavior does not have to occur for application of social learning theory. However, Castine and Roberts (1974) point out that if imitation has taken place, social learning is known to have occurred.

Social learning theory and behavior choice

Akers (1973) focused a majority of his social learning theory research on its applications in deviance. The premise of Akers (1973) social learning approach was that the general behavioral learning process occurred the same way for both conforming and deviant behavior even though the substance and direction of such behavioral learning was different. Under this premises, Akers (1973) examined how and why some people came to develop actions or characteristics defined as deviant. With social learning theory defined as a "general processual approach," the theory is capable of accounting for the acquisition of both conforming and deviant behaviors (Akers, 1973, p.294). The connection between social learning and the social structure of any respective environment is the crux of SLT. The mechanisms of learning that shape a person's conduct are reinforced by the norms that govern the social society, and the reactions of others within that society attach either positive or negative reinforcing consequences. Akers (1973) made this connection when he claimed that, "social structure is an arrangement of sets and schedules of reinforcement contingencies" (p.291).

Akers (1973) also identified that self-efficacy played a large part in the observer's behavioral imitation under social learning theory. Ormrod (1999) noted, "people are

more likely to engage in certain behaviors when they believe they are capable of executing those behaviors successfully" (p.2). As applied to aggression in ice hockey, if a player observed a teammate being rewarded for fighting in a particular situation, he would only initiate a fight if he had a high self-efficacy about the outcome. In other words the player would only engage in fighting if he thought there was a strong probability that the outcome would be in his favor.

Self-regulation also played a strong role in the context of aggression in ice hockey. Ormrod (1999) noted that self-regulation is an important factor in SLT. Ormrod's (1999) self-regulation can be understood in that an individual will choose their desired action accordingly based on what they deem to be appropriate or inappropriate behavior. Self-regulation was a key component to the research questions of this study, as I sought to understand if unwritten rules and their development were the same for each player of if they take on different and personal variations for each player.

Social learning theory was integral to the current study because as hockey players progressed through the various professional track development stages, growth and identity could be influenced by others. Moving forward, it is important to define professional track players as those players who are within or will be in the normal professional playing development stages of elite prep school, junior, and/or collegiate hockey. The purpose of defining professional track players was to isolate the motivational factors and their influences from those who play ice hockey recreationally. Other influences on motivational factors such as players, coaches, parents, mass media, and officials also played a prominent role in the player development process. It was the opinion of this research study that the player development process for a professional track

player is in stark contrast to the development process of a recreational player whose sole motivation is fun and exercise.

Understanding how an athlete as an observer is socialized into the environment in which he participates was a necessary precursor discussion to the development of unwritten rule knowledge. According to Denzin (1970), rules of conduct "define the moral character of social selves and when employed establish their users as upholders of the social order" (p.63). Therefore, the lens that social learning theory provides on behavioral imitation through role models provided a credible perspective in evaluating the development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules. Per Akers (1973), social learning theory was also closely tied to aggression and deviant acts. Within the sport context, aggressive and deviant acts are often handled in part through each sports' unwritten rules. Some of ice hockey's unwritten rules specifically deal with the socially acceptable reactions to aggression and the deviant acts of physical violence. As a result of professional ice hockey being exclusively a male dominated sport, many of these unwritten rules carried masculine undertones. The purpose of this study was not to define the differences in the development process of males verse females. But since these masculine undertones existed within many of ice hockey's unwritten rules, a further examination of masculinity and aggression in sport was also warranted.

Masculinity can appear in the Form of Aggression and Violence

Masculinity was not a part of the theoretical framework of this research study. However, in the context of ice hockey, an understanding of the critical masculine theory lens must be understood for aggression and violence to be examined. Kimmel (1995) noted that gender is constructed from cultural and subjective meanings that will vary

depending on time and place. Gender is also constructed through societal stereotypes that dictate certain action to be typically either feminine or masculine. These stereotypes provide its society with collective and organized "meanings of gender and often become widely shared beliefs about who women and men innately are" (Courtenay, 2000). In conjunction with Akers (1973) social learning theory, Courtenay (2000) identified that it is only natural for people to conform and adapt to dominant stereotypic beliefs and behavioral norms of femininity and masculinity.

Courtenay (2000) noted that men and boys often experienced greater pressure to comply with societal gender expectations. Often these masculine expectations form around "health-related beliefs that men are independent, self-reliant, strong, robust, and tough" (Courtenay, 2000, p.3). Hargreaves (1986) stated that sports offered an ideal means for male athletes to develop and exhibit traditional masculine qualities including power, strength, and violence, while rejecting traditionally ascribed feminine values. Males often would use these stereotypic masculine ideals to demonstrate dominance and establish themselves as a hegemonic man. In order to be considered hegemonic under Connell (1995), a male must display stereotypic masculine tendencies of domination of other males and subordinate females. These male dominant stereotypes are the basis for the examination of critical masculine theory. Connell (1995) noted that hegemonic masculinity is an idealized form of masculinity at a given place and time. Critical masculine theory investigates the socially dominant male gender construction that has suppressed femininities. This branch of critical theory has gained significant traction with the arena of sport as female journalists and managers are finally seeing forms of equal treatment. Because of the beginning of this long overdue equality, the public has

seen the first glimpse of the masculine ideals that dominate professional sport organizations and shape athlete relationships. These masculine ideals have also shaped men's social relationships and interactions with women and other men in and out of the locker room. In essence, masculinity represents a struggle of power and authority in today's sporting society. In the context of masculinity with social relationships and authority, ice hockey's unwritten rules played an integral part in shaping the culture of a sport with masculine undertones such as ice hockey.

The complexities of athlete violence and aggression are socialized into sports by many contributing factors including, the structure of sport, governing rules, unwritten rules, sporting community attitudes, and society in general (Pappas, et al., 2004). Pappas, et al, (2004) stated, "hockey socialization and athletes' notions of masculinity combine to create a culture of aggression and violence" (p. 298). Essentially the physicality within the unique professional game of ice hockey created an environment where "manhood" must be proven and toughness displayed. This toughness is often displayed in professional ice hockey arenas through physical acts of aggression against an opposing team member.

According to Pappas et al. (2004), the physical contact afforded to participants in the game of ice hockey promotes a unique set of dynamics that is unlike most other contact sports, where by professional ice hockey players felt pressure from their coaches to perform aggressive and violent acts. This pressure from the coaching staff creates a top-down behavioral ladder that is easily imitated or learned by those on lower rungs. This created a unique sense of toughness amongst the participant players. These players were often then socialized to feel that their respective participation in aggressive ice

hockey behaviors separated them from all other sport experiences. According to the participants in the Pappas et al. (2004) study, this sense of toughness and aggressive participation promoted a unique set of dynamics that was unlike most other contact sports. `

Although social learning theory was not directly identified in the Pappas et al. (2004) article, SLT was described by participants in their study:

> Like even at universities or . . . back in the days of juniors . . . basically, if you go out in a fight and beat someone up . . . after the game . . . you'd get recognition for that—fans would come up to you and say, that's a great fight you were in, you really beat the crap out of that guy . . . and, basically, you're getting re- warded for . . . fighting with someone, and people remember that . . . if you're constantly getting rewarded for something you do . . . you're going to do that again and again. (p.302)

This professional player participant statement from the Pappas et al. (2004) study was congruent with social learning theory as hockey socialization and players' ideals of masculinity combined with Bandura (1977) and Akers (1973) to create a cultural picture surrounding masculinity in ice hockey culture.

Weisfield, Muczenski, Weisfeld, and Omark (1987) found that professional male athletes tend to share a set of ideological beliefs related to traditional forms of masculine expression. The Weisfield et al. (1987) claim is in line with Pappas et al. (2004), in that professional track ice hockey players have had a preoccupation with team and personal achievement, maintaining societal team status through fighting or off the ice risk taking, and acquiring an identity of toughness. This connection could be made as the strong

bonds that emerged among athletes, such as professional track ice hockey players, resulted in strong bonds of allegiance and loyalty but also reinforced aggressive behaviors. The Weisfield et al. (1987) discussion of masculine bonds created a unique mix with the Pappas et al. (2004) discussion on the unique violent culture of ice hockey. The resulting mix provided an explanation of how ice hockey players often felt that they are at the top of the masculine totem pole in comparison to the other major sports such as football, basketball, and baseball.

"Gender identity is never a completed project, but always a developmental process which unfolds within a social context" (Messner, 1990, p. 98). Messner's (1990) gender identity developmental process speculated that gender is a salient organizing theme in the construction of meanings around the development of sport violence, culture and ice hockey's unwritten rules. An understanding of this gender development process under critical masculine theory was crucial for a discussion of the social development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules. With an understanding of gender identity in place, the development process of unwritten rules could be viewed as a progressive system housed within the hockey culture context. This progressive system that is masculine, aggressive, and violent will remain steady according to Messner (1990) as long as the social environment of ice hockey culture remains constant.

The preceding literature provided in this chapter provided a necessary theoretical base in which to ground this research study. The literature outlined the importance of unwritten rules in ice hockey and set the stage for social leaning theory to be applied to the research questions with an awareness of critical masculine theory. This was the foundation from which this research study moved into the data collection phase.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Setting

The purpose of this research study was to determine at what point in the player development process did aspiring professional hockey players learn of, as well as consent to, ice hockey's unwritten rules. How this process occured was also under examination. While some research had been conducted relative to the development of unwritten rules within sport, little research to date had focused on ice hockey's unwritten rules and none had focused on the factors associated with their development. Research in other sport areas has indicated that knowledge and consent of unwritten rules was expected in the development of a professional athlete. For the purposes of this study qualitative participant interviews were conducted with male hockey players who have participated at either the NCAA intercollegiate ice hockey or the single-A professional level and/or above. These personal interviews of male ice hockey players provided the data for a more in-depth look at the unwritten rule development process within professional development track ice hockey players.

Method

For this research study I interviewed professional track male ice hockey players. The first four participants for this study were selected through the contacts of the student researcher and a "snowball" method was used to recruit the final 2 participants. No preference was given to age, playing position, development path, and/or leadership roles within current teams when selecting participants.

Procedure

All interviews for this research study were audio-taped in order for them to be transcribed with absolute accuracy. Each participant interview lasted between forty and fifty minutes and was conducted following the interview protocol (Appendix). A constant comparative inductive analysis was utilized to develop, organize, and refine the themes derived from the data. Trustworthiness and credibility of the data was established through individual member checks and the maintenance of a reflective journal. All participant interviews took place in locations chosen by the participants. If participants could not be interviewed in person, the interviews were conducted via Skype, iChat or telephone in the researcher's office.

All interviews were transcribed and all of the participants were then sent copies of the transcriptions with a draft of the initial results as a form of member checking. This process ensured that the transcriptions data used to developed themes and results were in the context the participant intended. Peer debriefers were used in the data coding process. Two graduate students, who completed a qualitative data analysis course, read initial study drafts and interview transcripts to help clarify and explore the themes that emerged from the data. Previous qualitative research has suggested that;

> Other people may be able to point out critical features you had not previously noticed, even though such features were 'right in front of you.' Other people may suggest metaphors, ironies, or comparisons that had not occurred to you (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.203).

Participants

This is a study of professional track male ice hockey players who have not yet reached the highest level, the National Hockey League. All the participants have either

played junior level hockey and/or NCAA collegiate level hockey. Junior hockey is a highly regarded path for aspiring professional hockey players under the age of twenty-one. As an amateur from junior hockey, a player may progress to many different paths. Some will progress to NCAA collegiate hockey and others will choose to play major junior hockey in Canada where a player is paid a small stipend, while a few will graduate directly to the minor league ranks of professional hockey. Only a selected few have moved directly from junior hockey to the National Hockey League. Many players have graduated NCAA Division I and made the jump directly to the National Hockey League. At the NCAA Division II/III level, many players have the opportunity to play professional hockey but many have to start at the single "A" level and work their way up the ladder.

Professional track players were chosen as participants at the collegiate or minor league level because, to have progressed to these levels, they are almost guaranteed to have experienced significant personal development of ice hockey's unwritten rules. Another reason study participants were chosen at this playing level is that for the most part these players are younger and closer to their development years than those at the highest level in the National Hockey League. The purpose of studying only male ice hockey players was to identify the similarities and differences within the unwritten rules from a player perspective, as they are the ones who ultimately produce the product that is the National Hockey League. This research study also only used male participants, as there are currently no options for female hockey players at the professional level in the United States.

Participant Biographies

Cam

At the time of the study Cam was a twenty five-year old retired professional hockey player. Cam had one year of single "A" professional playing experience as well as four years of NCAA Division II collegiate playing experience. At the NCAA level, Cam served as Captain during his forth and senior year. During his development years, Cam played both junior and prep school ice hockey en route to the NCAA DII level. Cam did not have any ice hockey history within his immediate family. At the time of the interview, Cam currently coached a youth level hockey team. Cam held only United States Citizenship at the time of the interview.

Shawn

At the time of this study Shawn was a twenty-four year old retired professional hockey player. Shawn had one year of single "A" professional playing experience as well as four years of NCAA Division II collegiate playing experience. At the NCAA level, Shawn served as Captain during his forth and senior year. During his development years, Shawn progressed through prep–school ice hockey enroute to the NCAA DII level. Shawn did not have any ice hockey history within his immediate family. Shawn held only United States Citizenship at the time of the interview.

Jeremy

At the time of this study Jeremy was a twenty-one year old NCAA Division I hockey player in his freshman year. During his development years, Jeremy progressed through the junior ranks ice hockey en route to the NCAA DI level. Jeremy's father played in the National Hockey League for eighteen years and at the time of the interview

currently held an assistant coach position with a National Hockey League club. Jeremy held both Canadian and United States Citizenship at the time of the interview.

Reggie

At the time of the study Reggie was a twenty six-year old retired collegiate hockey player. Reggie had four years of NCAA Division II collegiate playing experience. At the NCAA level, Reggie served as Captain during his forth and senior year. During his development years, Reggie played junior hockey en route to the NCAA DII level. Reggie did not have any ice hockey history within his immediate family. Reggie held only United States Citizenship at the time of the interview.

Zarly

At the time of this study Zarly was a twenty-four year old professional hockey player. Zarly had just completed his first professional season. Zarly had double "AA" professional playing experience as well as four years of NCAA Division III collegiate playing experience. At the NCAA level, Zarly served as Captain during his forth and senior year. During his development years, Zarly progressed through junior hockey enroute to the NCAA DIII level. Zarly did not have any ice hockey history within his immediate family. At the time of the interview he did have cousins who were involved within the sport at the youth level. Zarly held only United States Citizenship at the time of the interview.

Todd

At the time of this study Todd was a twenty-three year old NCAA Division I hockey player in his junior year. During his development years, Jeremy progressed from youth hockey to prep school ice hockey en route to the NCAA DI level. Todd's father

played high school hockey. Todd held both Canadian and United States Citizenship at the time of the interview.

Inductive Analysis

In qualitative research, researchers have many choices in which to view their data. In this research study I used inductive analyses to make sense of collected participant data in order to create a deeper understanding of each participant's experience with ice hockey's unwritten rules. Inductive analysis is used when a researcher approaches and analyzes qualitative data with an open mind as to allow the research findings to surface directly from the raw data in the form of concepts, categories, and theory (Paton, 2002). A qualitative researcher can contrastingly use deductive analysis when coding if his study calls for him to approach the data analysis with prior presumptions, theories, or hypotheses. I approached this analysis without any prior presumptions, theories, or hypothesis. However, for the fact that we are all human, it is impossible to approach any subject from a pure and open state of mind. As a result, inductive analysis calls for the researcher to let the data speak for itself (Grenier, 2011). In order for the data to create its own voice, a researcher must commit to "bracketing" their subjectivities and not carrying any prior theories into the data coding process (Merriam, 2009, p.93).

In this research study I carried prior professional hockey playing experience and had prior subjectivities in the form of presumptions in which to bracket. As a result, I have addressed these with a subjectivity statement in the next section following a further dissection of inductive analysis.

Grbich (2007) noted that in order for inductive analysis to be effective researchers must truly immerse themselves in the data. Proper steps must be followed when

analyzing the data to ensure the surfacing and recognition of discovered codes into themes (Grenier, 2011). The first of Grenier's (2011) steps is to reread the research question(s) and then compile and reread all of the data while making notes as you reread. A session of rereading in one or two sitting(s) will provide some emerging patterns to the researcher. The next step is to code the data into initial constructs or aggregates of data and compare these to each other to see if they are unique or can be condensed. Then begin separating and isolating potential data that is important or interesting as it relates to the research question(s). Finally, the researcher must build units of compiled data into themes that hold true and do not diminish the truth of the data (Grenier, 2011). Thomas (2006) noted that the analysis process had three analytical purposes, which further supported Grenier's (2011) analysis steps. According to Thomas (2006), one must first condense and summarize comprehensive and diverse data. Secondly, one must form transparent and defensible connections between the research question(s) and the data. This leads to the third step of indicating the findings, answering the research questions, and possibly developing a model that illuminates the structures or processes that are evident within the research data.

The inductive process credits some of its origin to the implementation of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory. Data immersion with an open mind is a key component to grounded theory and as a result so is the coding process. The initial process as defined by Charmaz (2006) is open coding. Open coding allows for the identification of the "smallest units of meaning" in a piece of data. There are many techniques, which can be adopted with open coding, but perhaps the most popular is *in vivo* codes. "*In vivo* codes help us to preserve participants meanings of their views and

actions in the coding itself. *Pay attention to language while you are coding. In vivo* codes serve as symbolic markers of participants' speech and meanings" (Charmaz, 2006, p.55). Charmaz goes on to identify the next step as "focused coding," where the initial open codes are analyzed in search of strong analytic connections. From here categories are formed from the data with "axial coding" using a constant comparative method.

Inductive analysis is primarily concerned with "the development of categories into a model or framework that summarizes the raw data and conveys key themes and processes" (Thomas, 2006, p. 240). Thomas (2006) noted that with inductive analysis, theory development is not essential, resulting in a separation here from both Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) grounded theory approaches. Even with the split, inductive analysis is still responsible for showing reliability, trustworthiness, and academic rigor. To ensure validity, Thomas (2006) suggested that independent parallel coding, category clarity checks, and stakeholder or member checks may be used. Thomas (2006) went on to suggest that stakeholder checks be conducted progressively throughout the research process both formally and informally to ensure validity.

"Through coding we make discoveries and gain a deeper understanding of the world" (Charmaz, 2006, p.70). Because of the unique nature of qualitative data, even after data saturation new codes may still emerge while others may disappear or need refocusing. Because of this fact, inductive analysis provides many benefits in comparison to deductive analysis, as the researcher is required to keep an open mind to any and all codes, categories, or themes that may emerge. This is perhaps the most important piece to remember when understanding inductive analysis as every qualitative method is under constant review to best represent its application in finding a deeper

understanding of the world. Inline with the inductive approach, I prepared a subjectivity statement in an attempt to bracket subjectivities for academic rigor and to keep an open mind for the data analysis.

Subjectivity Statement

My upbringing in a New England household created in me an awareness of the sport of ice hockey at a young age. I began playing organized hockey when I was seven and continued all the way up through the professional ranks. In considering research related to ice hockey's unwritten rules, there are several factors that need to be discussed. I have had both positive and negative experiences with hockey at all levels, both as a player and a referee. My negative encounters have made me hesitant to assume that all players know the unwritten rules. When it comes to my beliefs about hockey's unwritten rules, I fall within interpretive theory and critical theory. I am interested in how professional hockey players experience and interact within their social world and how the larger contextual factors of ice hockey culture affect the way these players construct reality. Throughout my own experiences as a player, I have witnessed a great deal of judgment and classification of different types of players based on their perceived skill level, past organizations, and development path.

In ice hockey there are four main types of players. These types are skill players, role players, grinders, and goalies. The skill players usually compose the top players on each team in terms of skating, puck handling skills, and shooting skills. These skill players do not usually play as much of a physical style as it is not essential to their individual and team identity. The role players usually comprise the third line of talent. A physical style of play is essential to their value, as they do not posses the same natural

talent as the skill players. These role players show their individual and team identity by playing an essential physical supporting cast style of hockey that creates more space on the ice for the skill players to operate. These role players will engage in fighting if dictated by the game. The grinders are the "fighters" of the team. These players usually do not get much playing time throughout the game but their responsibilities on the ice are physically more demanding. The grinders must have advanced fighting skills to prove their value to the team and maintain their individual and team identity. These grinders will engage in fighting on average of once a game. Last but not least are the goalies. Goaltenders are in a class all their own. Time has shown that goalies carry their own unique mindset to the sport. This is portrayed by the willingness to stop frozen pieces of rubber at speeds over one hundred mile per hour on a daily basis.

Personally, I have first hand experience as a role player throughout my hockey development from the mite level to professional. Most teams that I played for had a level of natural talent that was so high; I was required to become a role player. At 5'11" and 175 pounds, I was well suited to be a role player as I played hockey aggressively and posses a high threshold of pain. My development ladder also comes from organizations that support a physical style of play. Recognizing these player classifications has helped me be aware of the challenges faced when conducting research involving hockey's unwritten rules. I have confidence that my playing and referee experience have shown me multiple angles of the same unwritten rulebook. For the purposes of this research study I have also bracketed personal presumptions on the importance and impact of ice hockey's unwritten rulebook with different development paths.

Chapter 4: Results

Examining ice hockey's unwritten rule development process has been interesting, challenging, and rewarding. Even though all the players interviewed knew many of ice hockey's unwritten rules, many expressed that it was an understood code of conduct. In other words, a player would just learn and know the unwritten rules without much specific communication. With the idea that most players only learn through on-ice experience, the hockey player participants at this level feel that you can only truly understand the principles and significance of the unwritten rules in ice hockey by playing the game at a high level. One participant even stated that,

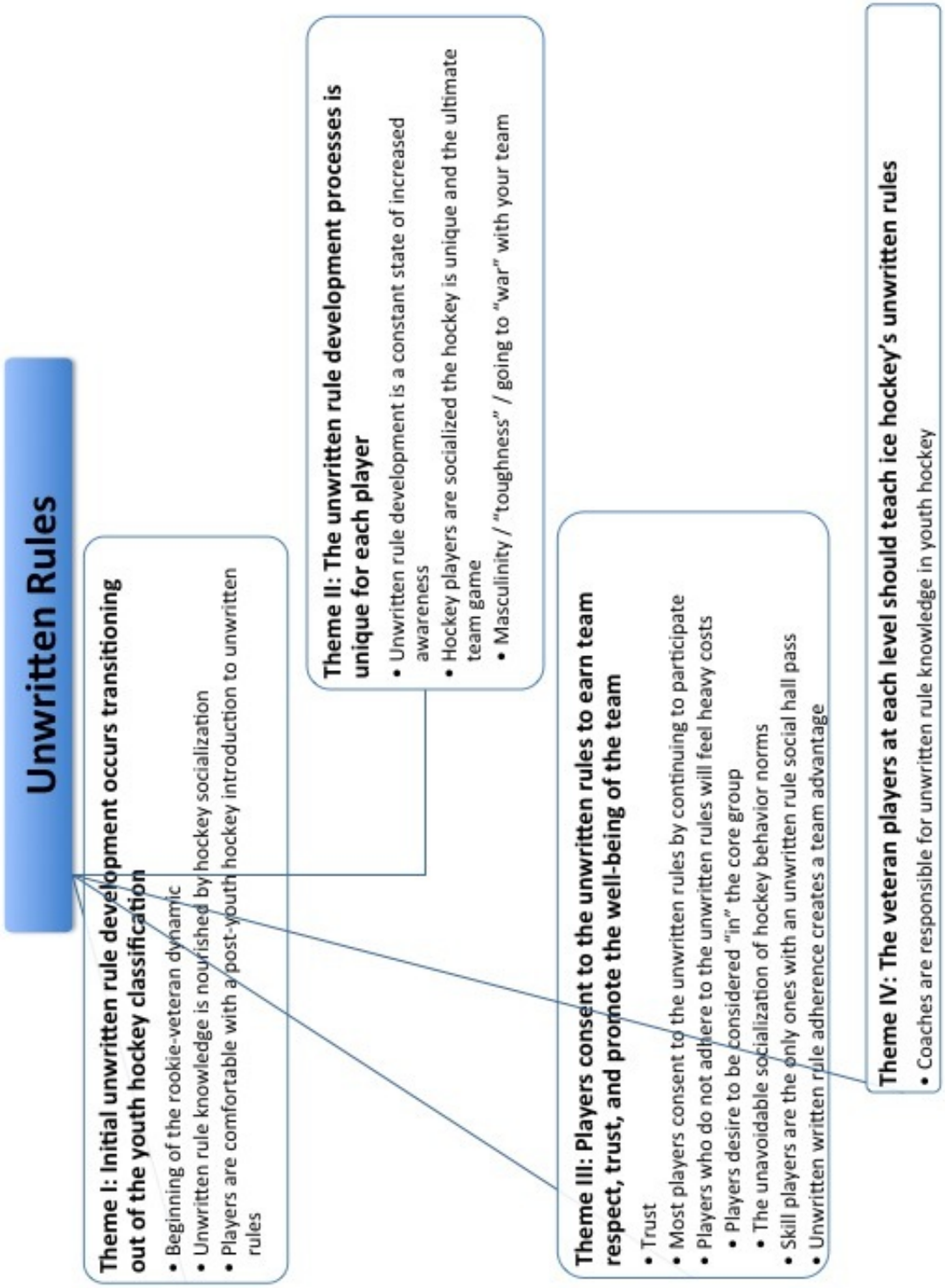
> I'm glad someone is examining this because it is very broad, yet it is hard to describe. You only understand that as a hockey player. Being on the ice, as soon as those doors close, it is a whole different dimension that if you do not play hockey, you will never understand. It makes the sport what it is" (Zarly).

Each interview participant was enthusiastic that I was studying ice hockey's unwritten rules and that it was long overdue. Participants indicated that a die-hard hockey fan as a non-player can have unwritten rule knowledge. But without playing the game at a high-level, they will not understand the origin behind each unwritten rule and why each one is indispensable.

Players expressed in interviews, their experiences and opinions on unwritten rules and how those apply within the confines of player development. Six participant interviews yielded the following 4 major themes that give insight into what it is like to develop unwritten rule knowledge as an aspiring professional hockey player: (a) Ice hockey's unwritten rule development initially occurs as a transition out of the youth

hockey classification; (b) The unwritten rule development process is unique for each player; (c) Players consent to the unwritten rules to earn team respect, trust, and promote the well-being of the team; (d) The veteran players at each level should teach ice hockey's unwritten rules. Each theme and its respective subthemes are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Unwritten Rule Development Themes



Theme I: Ice hockey's unwritten rule development initially occurs as a transition out of the youth hockey classification

During the participant interviews each player was asked when they first learned and experienced unwritten rules in ice hockey. All six participants indicated that they first experienced unwritten rule development when they progressed out of the youth hockey classification. For most it was the transition into high school hockey, but the transition from youth hockey to the junior hockey level was also evident.

> When you're in youth its not like there are rookies and guys that have been on the team for a while because everyone moves up kind of together. Whereas in junior and prep school, if there is a new guy on the team, if you're on the team for 4 years or if you play JV for a couple years and then you play varsity, there is always going to be rookies in a sense. But that doesn't really apply in youth (Todd).

These initial experiences were identified to occur at varying ages raging from 13 through 16. The variance in age can be accounted for by the fact that players graduate from youth hockey at different ages up until 18 years old. A player can leave youth hockey as a 13 year old freshman to play high school hockey or as old as 18 to play junior. The structure of USA Hockey, Inc. allows for players to choose their own path by giving them a place to play youth hockey in two-year age brackets commencing at age 18.

Beginning of the rookie-veteran dynamic

The participants in this research study all accounted for this unwritten rule origin at the same place in their development. This development period was the end of youth

hockey because of the socialization into a new culture and team dynamic. As Todd had previously mentioned, in youth hockey most players move up in the age brackets together with their youth teammates. This lack of teammate turnover creates a new rookie-veteran dynamic immediately proceeding youth hockey levels.

Participants indicated that as players get older, into the high school range, they really start to fully understand that there are unwritten rules because you experience certain things as a rookie on a team.

> At that point you're starting to play with older kids, you will have older kids on your team so you feed off them and learn a lot from them. But I think before that [in youth hockey], you're still just trying to have fun with the game. But when you're 13 and 14 that is when you really know you want to be a hockey player and you want to keep the career going [by moving on from youth hockey] (Reggie).

This study identified that as a player moving on from youth hockey, there is the creation of this veteran-rookie dynamic by joining a prior established team. This is the first time as an adolescent where a player will not have previously played with most of the team members and where for the first time, there is an age gap of up to four years with some teammates.

Because of this newfound teammate age gap, rookie players are often forced to adhere to standards previously set forth by the older, more veteran members. This was also represented in the participant data by the introduction of a team owned locker room. In youth hockey, most clubs do not have assigned locker rooms and the players bring their equipment with them to the rink each time. At the next level of high school and

junior, most clubs own or lease a locker room in their home rink or arena. This ownership of a locker room not only creates more time spent together as a team, but also creates a family dynamic as housekeeping duties and chores are completed by team members. Study participants identified their first locker room experiences as a key memory to their initiation to some unwritten rules and a link to other non-physical unwritten rules. Zarly recalled his experience: **"**Maybe just the established hierarchy within the locker room [create unwritten rules]. The veterans, the older guys are generally in control of the team. The new and younger guys have to pay their dues to gain the older guys respect." This element of respect for veteran teammates was presented by the participants not only in youth hockey, but also at all levels of the player development process. It was the transition out of youth hockey however that emerged as the key starting line to unwritten rule knowledge, experiences, and development within an aspiring professional player.

There are many first experiences as a player moving to a level of hockey beyond youth. The game was identified as faster at each level and the on-ice written rules varied based on age and skill level.

> [14 or 15] is when you started knowing new rules as you got older because you do not really fight in youth hockey. So the whole sticking up for your teammate and respect thing is not there as much. Obviously you would protect your friend, but it is different when the unwritten rule comes in and you knowingly have to stand up for a teammate or you have to perform rookie duties (Todd).

The players experienced many new unwritten rule experiences at each level they progressed to.

> It is a long process; you probably start to learn more and more [unwritten rules] through high school or junior. Older guys start teaching you some things and definitely by the time you're in college you have a pretty good idea [of the unwritten rules]. I'm sure if you play long enough and get to the pro level, there are other [unwritten rule] situations that do not arise at the high school or college level that you would learn about in the pro game (Shawn).

No matter the various experiences that each participant had, the first step out of youth hockey is where the player first faced any significant unwritten rule knowledge or experience.

As a rookie player stepping out of youth hockey, whether it is at the prep-school or junior level, the participants all indicated that the older players on the team socialized them into their respective new environment. Todd identified that graduating youth hockey,

> was obviously a transition, but the older guys, there are just rules that you are supposed to follow. You are supposed to pick up the pucks, your supposed to just do simple stuff like that [on and off the ice]. Make sure the locker room is clean and I didn't do that. So obviously I got a hard time for it. But then I would say, I started to follow the rules off the ice and it helped me because I started to fit in more. They started to give me more respect and now that I'm climbing up the ladder and getting older, I [now] see it from their point of view [back] then (Todd).

Participants like Todd all stated that when you're playing in youth hockey, there are no rookies or veterans because everyone moves up the age brackets together. Whereas in

junior and prep school, every year, there will be rookies on the team. Participants indicated that it is primarily the creation of the rookie position within a team dynamic that begins the unwritten rule development process for aspiring professional hockey players.

Unwritten rule knowledge is nourished by hockey socialization

The participants mentioned several times that you might have unwritten rule knowledge as a hardcore fan, but as a non-player there was no way to fully understand the purpose and importance of unwritten rules. The study participants claimed that only having played the game would allow a person to fully comprehend the meaning of the unwritten rules. Even though restrictions to comprehension were identified, it was apparent that unwritten rule knowledge could be gained by anyone who is socialized to the hockey culture. For example, socialization modeling as a result of being around the game of hockey was addressed by Cam. "You watch hockey as a kid and you see there's something there and you do not know what. Then you go to prep school or you go play juniors and it sort of comes together." Participants like Cam indicated that the development of these rules occurs by just being around the game. According to Shawn, the more someone is around hockey, the faster that person will learn the unwritten rules: "I think just from playing long enough, you kind of adapt to it, kind of understand what is going on and if your doing things right or your doing things wrong."

Playing is not the only method of hockey socialization, as watching the hockey was also credited as a key contributor. Zarly stated that he grew up watching hockey games in person and on TV. He credits some early youth unwritten rule knowledge to being socialized in hockey culture by just listening and watching. Reggie also turned to

television to be socialized into hockey. He stated, "watching hockey, you do not have to know the guys on the ice or TV to see what they do everyday." In today's society North American consumers can see the highlights of yesterday's games every morning and see how the players acted on the ice. This allows everyone who pays attention to gain unwritten rule knowledge and be socialized to what is right and what is wrong in ice hockey culture.

Players are comfortable with a post-youth hockey introduction to unwritten rules

The participants identified that the unwritten rule development process began in earnest after youth hockey. "[In] high school hockey, you're coming in as a freshmen and it's completely different to the game that you're used to playing in youth hockey. It's much faster, it's much more physical" (Zarly). After Theme IV surfaced which points to veteran players as teachers of the unwritten rules, the results yield the conclusion that the unwritten rule introduction process is adequate. All the participants were asked at what age they thought to be most appropriate for the development process of unwritten rules to begin? Every participant felt that the first step past youth hockey was the best time to begin the unwritten rule development process.

During an interview with Jeremy, it was identified that he felt the best ages to begin learning the unwritten rules was 14, 15, and 16 when moving on to play high school, junior, or prep school hockey. This was an exact match to when Jeremy actually began learning the unwritten rules himself. "You have to know 'em before you go to college or else you not going to get there" (Cam).

> I think you should probably start to have an idea [of unwritten rules in] middle teens, 15, 16, maybe a little bit earlier. It really becomes important as you get into higher levels of high school, prep school, junior, and college (Shawn).

Reggie and Todd both agreed as they said that it is the right time to learn when you're a freshman and sophomore in high school. Zarly stated that the best time to begin learning unwritten rules is whatever age a players steps out of youth hockey because that is when the player starts progressing into an adult. All of these participant statements agree that ice hockey's unwritten rule development should remain steady with its current post-youth hockey introduction.

Theme II: The unwritten rule development processes is unique for each player

The data collected from the participants for this research study showed that the unwritten rule development process for each player is unique. The unwritten rules were identified to remain steady and it was the player's skill development path that determined each player's interaction with ice hockey's unwritten rules. Cam identified the unwritten rule development process as baby steps. "It is a series of challenges that you pass both physically and mentally" (Cam). Every participant player noted that they learned the unwritten rules from continued growth as a hockey player.

> Through all levels you learn certain things and you know the same situation, it is not going to be the same situation every time, but you might see something playing in the NHL that you learned back in high school, different situation but the same kind of actions, and your going to know if that [response] was right or wrong (Shawn).

This continual learning was present throughout the transcripts and unwritten rule development was said to have occurred through a constant state of awareness in the development process.

Unwritten rule development is a constant state of increased awareness

Players declared that as they progressed with their development their views on the unwritten rules changed. It was this constant state of awareness that was linked to the players growing an affection and respect for the unwritten rules.

> I think as you get older and you experience more, you see how these [unwritten] rules apply more and more. When you're younger, you do not fully understand why those [unwritten] rules need to be there. You do not experience times when [unwritten] rules like that are needed, but as you continue to gain experience, play more games, see more situation, I think you begin to fully understand those different things (Shawn).

This increased awareness led to a further acceptance of the unwritten rules by most players. "Each year you move up in hockey is like another year in school and you're learning, learning, learning. Probably not until you get a few years into [each] program do you really know every rule and understand every rule" (Shawn). All participants in this study noted that the understanding of unwritten rules was linked to the number of years of playing experience. Increased awareness of unwritten rules was developed through increased experience as a player.

When the participants discussed a growing sense of awareness that matched their development process, a link developed back Theme I in that the socialization of the game created team norms. Players felt that on a learning basis, the development of these

unwritten rules occurred just by being around the game. Reggie noted that the more you're around the game of hockey and its social environment, the faster you would learn unwritten rules and the quicker you will take yourself and your team to the next level. This increased awareness occurred in all participants. Zarly and Todd both stated that as they got older, they analyzed the game more and became more aware of the unwritten rules.

> There is a set of unwritten rules depending where you are at. If you are in freshman year of high school or you are at the junior level or in college or if you're playing semi-professional or professional. It just varies and there are more unwritten rules as you progress in your career from level to level (Todd).

This increased awareness that was playing level dependent for the participants was present throughout that data as unwritten rule knowledge increased at each development step. Upon reflection, at each development step, each participant experienced an increased sense of awareness of the unwritten rulebook.

Hockey players are socialized that hockey is unique and the ultimate team game

The participants in this research study uniformly noted that hockey was a unique team game. Many examples were given as to why hockey was a unique sport. The study data showed that the participants felt that the sport of ice hockey created a unique atmosphere that allowed for a team bond to be created that was unmatched by other sports. These players claimed that they were socialized into hockey culture by the unwritten rules and that they still stand by them today in protection of that culture. This introduction of that special team bond was linked back by the participant data to the

emergence of Theme I and the creation of the first rookie-veteran team dynamic out of youth hockey. Examples of hazing and rookie activities unique to hockey were given to support this link, however every player participant supported the process as a necessary team-building tool. Each player interviewed provided data that portrayed hockey to be unique because of the level of physicality that was absent in all other team sports.

Other team sports such as baseball, basketball, football, etc. have elements of physicality, but nothing like ice hockey according to the participants.

> You're on the ice [in hockey] and its so fast paced and football, there are guys coming in and out, there is not the same line up. In hockey there are 4 lines and 20 guys. You have to be working as a team and use your systems to beat the other team. Hockey is the ultimate team game (Jeremy).

Reggie noted that if you were not part of the team, you were going to find it hard to make it to the next level because being a part of the team meant fully conforming to the unwritten rules. Teams at the next level are going to be hesitant to take you even as a skill player because they feel you might be a cancer in the locker room or you will cause more harm than good to the team.

The locker room was recognized as a being of the upmost importance with hockey players and a large element of uniqueness. The participants shared that there are a lot of unwritten rules specific to the locker room.

> As a younger guy on a team, whether it be a first year professional or a freshman in a college or high school team, you do not want to be the loudest one in the locker room. You want to keep it quiet and let the older guys do the talking. That

> is an unwritten rule that is nowhere in ink, but if you have been a part of a hockey team, you know it's true (Reggie).

The element of the locker room played into the previously identified hierarchy of the team and respect factors that are ever present in the data. "Hockey is unique just in general because everyone is just trying to have a good time. But there are certain rules that are in place just for respect reasons and to help the team" (Todd). The player's maintained that it was the creation of a specialized hockey team bond in and out of the locker room that made the unwritten rules and the sport of ice hockey unique. One such example that was often mentioned by participants was that it was expected that you have to socialize with the team outside of the arena:

> It is not that you will get punished [if you do not go out with the team], but you will get chirped. There are a lot of unwritten rules about being a part of the team and participating in team activities. If you do not do that, follow the rules and be a part of the team, then you will not be punished, but you will not be seen as one of the guys (Todd).

Todd went on to state that it was the level of aggression and violence that players on a team went through together that made the hockey bond unique. Creating that trust and respect amongst teammates by socializing outside of hockey was deemed necessary as a team needed to know that they are there to stick up for one another when the game got violent. This was perceived by the participants to not be a necessity in any other sport other than ice hockey.

Masculinity / "toughness" / going to "war" with your team

The participants in this research study laid a base as to why hockey was a unique team game. This base was comprised by the account that as hockey players, they had to go through trials and tribulations unlike any other sport. The participant data revealed a subtheme intertwined with masculinity. The element of male toughness and the relating of going to war with your team reappeared numerous times throughout the data set. Cam equated the uniqueness of hockey to the level of pain that one must endure and the lack of recognition someone got for enduring said pain. "[Pain is] a part of the game, whereas if some gets hit by a pitch, oh man that must hurt! Every shift people are getting checked, sticked, punched, teeth knocked out. That is part of the code" (Cam). Cam went on to share a personal story that related his enduring pain as a player to the sense of uniqueness to the sport. This story represented what the code of the unwritten rules meant to Cam as a player at the professional level.

> I got slashed in the hand and I got pretty cut up on my finger. I had to get one or two stitches. [The trainer takes me] into the home team locker room as the visitors and the doc was like you will take two or three [stitches]. I was like all right, stitch me up, its hockey, it is not a big deal. I'll play the third because that's what expected. [I told myself] your going to play, stitches are not a big deal. [Then the doc said,] you do not need any Novocain do you? I kind of hesitated and was thinking to my self, well I do need Novocain because you're going to put a fucking needle through my skin three times. But the assumption was that for five or less, you do not need any Novocain for stitches. So I let him stitch me up with no Novocain. Which in retrospect, I'm proud of. I lived the code. It made me feel like I'm part of the fraternity; I lived what I was taught (Cam).

This story and other examples within the data set showed how the unwritten rules and the code of conduct in ice hockey were rich with socialized masculine principles. Shawn also identified ice hockey to be more physical than other contact sports such as football. He made the masculine connection that since hockey is the only sport that allows fighting; players feel that they have to be tougher than everyone else.

The players also noted how the interactions with one another within the team dynamic were unique. They claimed that a portrayal of toughness was necessary for the well-being of the team.

> Hockey is unique because if you do not abide by these unwritten rules, the other team can actually do something about it. Fighting is allowed in hockey. So a team will not hesitate to let you know that you crossed the boundary. They will drop the gloves with you right then and there and you will have to stand up for yourself and what you did. If that ever gets taken away from the sport, that will hurt the game a lot and will change the game a lot (Reggie).

The participants identified fighting as the biggest uniqueness as it is not allowed in other sports.

> If I see a teammate gets hit. Then it is my responsibility to stick up for him and get in that guys face. It doesn't matter who is on the ice, you step in and get in that guy's face. You do not necessarily have to beat the guy's face in, but you stick up for your teammate. No other sport is played on ice. It is so fast. It is dangerously fast and if these rules aren't implied then it could just be absolute chaos (Zarly).

In this research study the element of team and masculinity were intertwined. The players outlined numerous reasons why unwritten rules were a necessity in the sport. In doing so these participant players also revealed that there was a socialized masculine tone to the unwritten rulebook. The participant data set unanimously accounted the uniqueness of hockey with fighting and the level of violence in the sport. Because of this uniqueness, it was necessary for the players to go to war with their team.

Theme III: Players consent to the unwritten rules to earn team respect, trust, and promote the well-being of the team

According to the participants, players consented to the unwritten rules in a post-youth hockey environment for the betterment of the whole. The participants stated that they consented to the unwritten rules in their development process to earn team respect, trust, and to promote the well-being of the team as a whole. Respect was the number one participant response when asked why players agreed to the unwritten rules. The participants also claimed that a player could earn respect amongst his own team by utilizing respect towards an unwritten rule situation with a member of the opposing team during a game.

It is expected that even in a fight situation, the opponent be given the respect to not take advantage of him when the fight becomes unfair, such as when, during a fight a player falls to the ice. The player's teammates and the opposing team will respect him for knowing when to stop. Shawn described it this way in his interview, "his guys will know it and you can gain respect throughout the league for things like that. You're going to be an enforcer and go out and fight people, but you're not going to be cheap and take advantage." Respect in hockey is hard to gain but easy to lose. Shawn continued, "I

think at every point someone breaks an unwritten rule, but there are different levels to it. Obviously I think everybody has probably given somebody a cheap shot at some point." It is up to the player to manage the level of respect that he has gained. If that player wants to be a respected member of his team's societal inner circle, he will have to conform to the unwritten rules a majority of the time.

Respect also played a key part in the participants' decision that all unwritten rules applied to all players. Shawn stated, "They apply to everybody. But whether or not every single guys going to listen and follow those rules, that is a different story." Moreover, if a player was non-conforming he was then labeled as an outsider who not a team player.

> I do not know if it's unwritten, but just being a good teammate and a good team player [is an unwritten rule]. Because guys aren't liked if they are selfish and stuff, you are brought up to be a good team player and think team first (Jeremy).

The participants explained that you could grow as a player with unwritten rule knowledge even if you do not abide by the unwritten rules. Reggie stated that,

> it does take one knowing the unwritten rules and the written rules for their game to go to the next step. Because if they know all the written rules and unwritten rules, they will get more respect from their teammates and from the opposing players as well (Reggie).

With the identification that all unwritten rules apply to all players, whether conforming or not, Reggie goes on to state that continued participation past youth hockey implies consent of the unwritten rules at each level. This feeling was uttered throughout the participants and it was noted that consent of the unwritten rules does equal compliance.

When speaking of the unwritten rules in ice hockey, players described a very high level of respect for one another even if they do not like each other. Reggie indicated in his interview that it is the level of respect that each player has for one another that makes hockey so special,

> The reason why the NHL is so different than any other sport is because if you do not follow these unwritten rules, other players will let you know. It is not like your breaking a [unwritten] rule and the league will kick you out, you just will not fit in. Hockey players definitely have a certain respect for each other and I think that is what makes it such a great game.

Even during a situation as simple as pre-game warm-ups, respect comes into play. The participant interviews revealed that there was always an unwritten rule between the opposing teams that you never cross the redline during the pre-game warm-up period. The unwritten rule was stated to be a sign of respect between both teams.

According to the participants, understanding the terms of respect as an aspiring professional hockey player is very beneficial in player development. Reggie acknowledged in his interview that ice hockey is a very physical game and that a lot of trash talk goes on during the games between the teams. Reggie accounted that:

> a big part of being a respected hockey player is leaving whatever happens on the ice. You have to leave it on the ice. You have to shake hands at the end of the game, everyone played hard, so that is a big respect factor.

Another instance of respect that emerged from the participants was the unwritten rule of vigilante justice or an eye for an eye on the ice. This unwritten rule stated that if you did something that was considered cheap or dirty on the ice, that it would result in

retaliation. Zarly stated that he believed this to be the originating reason for unwritten rules. It protected the well-being of the team and earned respect in the locker room. He stated that the unwritten rules were created,

> out of respect, for not only the game, but teammates. Everything is so tough. Hockey is a fast sport, people can get hurt and this allows players to police themselves. To control themselves and not let [the game] get out of control or crazy.

This concern for the well-being of the team was evident throughout the data and was utilized to represent the necessity of the unwritten rules and respect in ice hockey.

> You only understand that as a hockey player, being on the ice. As soon as those doors close, it is a whole different dimension that if you do not play hockey, you will never understand. It makes the sport what it is (Todd).

Todd's statement portrayed the participant sentiment that if someone has never played hockey, they do not know the importance of respect on the ice because they do not know what it feels like to hit somebody.

Trust

The element of respect also appeared from the participants several times in the form of trust within the team. This subtheme was not overarching amongst all participants but its reoccurrence in several interviews merits it's mention. Participants such as Cam acknowledged there are certain unwritten rules that a player must adhere to if he wanted to keep the trust of his teammates intact, "You always tell the truth. You do not swoop in on another player's girlfriend." Shawn explained another unwritten rule situation related to the creation of team trust,

> Before games, you do not hang around with the [opposing] teams. During games, even if your best friend is on the [opposing] team, they are still your enemy at the time. You're not going to be laughing and joking around with them [prior or during the game].

When the participants were asked why these trust elements were useful to them as a player, they responded that trust gave them a piece of mind. Zarly described it this way, "it is relieving. That guy got what was coming to him. I stuck up for my teammates. Again, it is all out of respect." Additionally Todd said, "regardless of the situation, I would follow the rules just because I know everyone would follow them for me." It was the comfort level that teammate trust provided, that the participants provided as another reason for conforming to the unwritten rules.

Most players consent to the unwritten rules by continuing to participate

It is the desire to be socially accepted within the hockey culture of the team that participants indicated to be a primary reason for consenting to the unwritten rules. The data also revealed that many players consented to ice hockey's unwritten rules, sometimes subconsciously, by continuing to participate at the respective playing level. This sub theme stated that there are different unwritten rule situations for each playing level and participants end up consenting to them by developing through those levels.

> By the time you're a senior in high school you should have a good understanding of things that are going to happen in high school. By the time you're a sophomore or junior in college you're going to have a real good understanding of what goes on there. When you start getting into professional, there is going to be more that you have to learn and understand (Shawn).

This understanding was also affirmed in Zarly's claim that continued participation in the player development process implies consent to an unwritten rule waiver, "when you step onto the ice, you're assuming that liability, that risk of being on the ice and trusting the unwritten rules." Participation implied consent not compliance because some players have consented to the unwritten rules but not adhered to them.

Players who do not adhere to the unwritten rules will feel heavy costs

In keeping with the overarching theme of respect, an action of disrespect can speak as loud if not louder than its counterpart. Several of the participants shared experiences where they were forced to make choices against their will or risk acting in disrespect against the team. The following is one story that was shared by Cam when he was asked if he adhered to the unwritten rules during his initial exposure.

> When I was being forced to. I'll elaborate. So in public high school hockey, our first freshman Friday practice… In the afternoon we go in and all the seniors come in and pick two people and make 'em fight, fight with helmets and gloves. Then [to] everyone else, they rip their boxers or hit 'em with shin pads on the ass and it is degrading. But for a senior to a freshman, [it is] funny and [it is] nothing that is going to kill you. They say that if you tell a coach or tell your mother, they will beat you up in school or something like that. Part of me [thought] because public school hockey is so bad in NY, part of me was like fuck these kids, I'm going to be out of here in a year, I might as well just spill the beans. But I didn't. In retrospect, I'm glad I didn't, because I think what I've learned from hockey is that [life] is not all unicorns and rainbows. There is tough stuff you have to deal with along the way. Not to say that is a good way to learn that lesson, but that I

> think if you learn that lesson, then a lot of the lessons that come down the road are a little bit easier to swallow (Cam).

Cam's statement illustrated that his hazing incident in high school not only modeled and reinforced the norm of fighting in hockey, but also represented the negative side of the team socialization process. Cam also indicated that you could continue to develop as a player if you did not comply with the unwritten rules, but people might not respect you, as they would have if you had followed the unwritten rules.

Players desire to be considered "in" the core group

When the participants were asked the probing question of why it was important to gain respect, each player indicated that they wanted to gain respect so that they would be considered an insider of the team core. The desire that was shown to be an insider was also matched within the data by an apprehension of not being ostracized by the same team core group. Cam portrayed in his interview that adherence to the unwritten rules or code of conduct is the initiation into to the core group of the family of the team as he put it. "Adherence to the code of conduct is entirely necessary if you want to be in the hockey family." The experiences of study participants showed that in order to be socialized into the core of the team, a player must have consented and abided to the unwritten rules for a duration that was deemed suitable to the veterans of the team.

The unavoidable socialization of hockey behavior norms

This pressure to conform was linked to the participants through the strong socialization of behaviors norms. The participants in this study portrayed the unwritten rules in ice hockey to be representative of behavior norms within the team.

> [During film sessions] they might show you as an example. We have to be more like him, see he didn't retaliate. I agree with most of them. I mean you come to accept [the unwritten rules] growing up with them (Jeremy).

If a player was not conforming, the participants identified that this non-conforming player was labeled as an outlier of the core group. Additionally Cam stated,

> Anyone who is not abiding by the rules is ostracized and made an example of. He will be on the fringe of society in terms of hockey. He will not be invited out with the guys to have a beer. His input will not be asked in certain situations, he will not be considered trustworthy, he will not have that [social] report with teammates that someone who does abide by the rules will.

Other data from this study was inline with this statement as the participants' claimed that ice hockey is a violent sport and that you need people in your corner to lookout for your backside. The players said that if you are in a tough situation on or off the ice, it is important to trust that someone is going to be there to take care of you. This was the primary reason stated as to why the participant players invested so much support into ice hockey's unwritten rules.

The participants linked the support of the unwritten rules to the acceptance of the socialization of team norms in an effort to be included in the pre-mentioned core of the team. Todd stated that there might be one or two guys that are not liked as much, but a majority of players want to fit in.

> Everyone wants to be liked by everyone. They would want to do the unwritten rules: Not be selfish and be a team player. There are guys who kind of rebel and are the ones who do not follow the unwritten rules. They have a target on them.

> They dig a hole for themselves and they are always the ones who get called out" (Jeremy).

The participants in this study showed that if a player does not conform to the socialized norms of the team and/or the unwritten rules, they suffer social consequences. "In general I would say everyone is held to the same standard as far as rookie duties and [unwritten rules]. But the whole fighting thing is kind of different and sticking up for a teammate" (Todd). Todd went on to say that,

> it would be obvious to players if Bertuzzi did something, and there is a kid whose is 5'2," and I think everyone kind of understands that he was not going to fight Bertuzzi. Maybe he will just say something instead of fighting (Todd).

Unanimously all participants claimed that a player can continue to develop in skill even without conforming to the unwritten rules, but that you would not want to as your life would be miserable. With this foundation in place, it was easy to see how the socialization of ice hockey norms outside of youth hockey created conscience and sub-conscience consent to ice hockey's unwritten rules.

Skill players are the only ones with an unwritten rule social hall pass

When the participants were asked if they thought that all unwritten rules applied to all players, a resounding yes was received. The players in this study claimed that "[the unwritten rules] apply to everybody. But whether or not every single guy is going to listen and follow those rules, that is a different story" (Shawn). This research study has identified the unpleasant costs associated with not conforming to the unwritten rules and socialized norms. However, there was one exception that constantly appeared through every participant interview, which indicated that a skill player was not held to the same

unwritten rule adherence standard. This preferred treatment was deemed necessary by the participants as they felt that the skill player's value to the team was higher above the standards that were set forth for the rest of the team.

> Unless your skills [on the ice] are so good that it is irrefutable. Highly skilled players will be made exceptions because of their skill. An average player to be on a team will have to accept [the unwritten rules], whereas an above average player, there might be exceptions made for them (Todd).

The participants indicated that the skill player on a team could be identified as frail emotionally. Since his value to the team's on ice success is so critical, unwritten rules are not always applied to that player because "we do not want to mess up his feng shui, let's leave him be" (Cam). The participants claim that if you are a skilled hockey player, sometimes you can get away with things regarding unwritten rules those other players are forced to adhere to. Shawn noted that no matter how skilled a player, at some point they are not going to get away with escaping unwritten rules adherence for an entire career. There will be a changing of the guard at some point in that skill player's career.

Top skilled players on the team were not only given a pass with unwritten rules from players, but the coaching staff as well.

> Skill players get a little more leniency with the coaches and the coaching staff than the fourth line guy who's not playing as much. If [that fourth line guy] goes out there and try's the same stuff and he turns [the puck] over, gets scored on, then [the coaches] will probably bench him [whereas they would] not [bench] the skilled player (Jeremy).

Zarly's claim matches this sentiment as he claimed that skill players do not play the same physical style of game so they are less likely to encounter in game situations that could get a player in trouble with the unwritten rules.

Unwritten written rule adherence creates a team advantage

Participants in this research study have already revealed numerous reasons that contributed to the role unwritten rules play within the game of ice hockey. In addition to the primary impacts of these rules such as player safety and respect, the unwritten rules were identified to have played a large role with which team won or lost a game.

> If you play within the unwritten rules, you kind of slide under the radar. But if you get caught hitting the other goalie and everyone attacks you, you are not flying under the surface now. You are in everyone's sight (Reggie).

Reggie's comments explained how drawing unnecessary attention to yourself and your team could create a disadvantage on the ice during the game. By not conforming to an unwritten rule such as hitting the goalie, an energy boost in the form of aggression could be given to the other team.

In keeping with one example of non-conformance to an unwritten rule, hitting, touching, or running the goalie was identified as one of the largest in game unwritten rules that commonly gets broken. This can result in anything from trash talk, a net front scrum, or a fight between the offending combatant and a member of the goalie's team who was on the ice at the time.

> There were times when people hit our goalie and I went right after them. I applied that to the younger guys saying that this is what we have to do. We have

> to protect our goalie, anytime anyone touches him, we half to stick up for him (Reggie).

This specific unwritten rule was found to be useful to players, especially defenseman. The defensemen were noted to be the first line of defense for the goalie. If a member of the opposing team slashes the goalie or hits him after the whistle, it is the unwritten duty of the defenseman to let that player know right away that his action was not acceptable.

Participants discussed that in this situation, a reactionary retaliatory response was appropriate here by the closest defenseman. By the defenseman sticking up for the goalie and giving a retaliatory shot back and maybe even taking take a penalty,

> they will think twice about crashing the net harder for the rest of the game. On the other side of that, if you let 'em hit your goalie without doing anything about it, they will continue to do it the rest of the game. That can change the whole intensity, the whole focus of the game just by not following one of those unwritten rules (Reggie).

Inline with this example, Todd declared that players need to be aware of what time in a game they choose fighting as the retaliatory response to a player touching the goalie. Fighting was evident in the data as a necessary reaction to many breaches of the unwritten rules but also as a chance to change the momentum of the game and slant the ice in the favor of the team that wins the fight. Defending the goalie and the net front by any means necessary,

> lets them know that, all right we are not going to just let 'em dig for the puck after the whistle and I would say that everyone [on the team] benefited because they might have not got a dirty goal digging at the puck (Todd).

This common example from the participants showed that by enforcing an unwritten rule, a situational in-game advantage can be gained for the benefit of the team as a whole. This on the ice advantage was also acknowledged by the participants to account for the slim margin of victory that is often present in one-goal hockey games.

Theme IV: The veteran players at each level should teach ice hockey's unwritten rules

The forth theme emerging from the participant data is that veteran players at each level are responsible for teaching the unwritten rules. The players in this study identified the older players on a team to be defined as veterans whom have played at that level for two or more years. Shawn described the role of veterans to teach younger players "guys playing have passed it down year after year that this might not be in the books, but this is the way things are done. This is how things should be done." The participants showed that teammates that have more experience, have played more games, and have seen more on and off the ice have the most experience with the unwritten rules and share those with younger teammates.

Each participant stated that every year the veteran players passed down the traditions and unwritten rule knowledge to the rookies. The collective reason given for the success of the knowledge hand off was linked back to the rookie-veteran dynamic and the respect amongst the team for the veterans. Shawn stated, "A coach can tell you anything and everything, but I think when it comes from a teammate, that it means just a little bit more." As players move up in their respective career stages, they hold more respect for their teammates' opinions than that of the staff. This resulted in another reason for why the veteran players should be responsible for teaching the unwritten rules.

Jeremy explained, "They definitely are role models because they have been through it all and they experienced the first year, second, and third year [of what you will experience]. They know what goes on." The juniors and seniors at the high school and prep level were said to communally pave the way for the rookies to grow. This included the transfer of unwritten rule knowledge as well.

It was the claim of each participant that the veteran players should be responsible for teaching ice hockey's unwritten rules. These veteran players are the ones that the younger players look up to every single day off the ice, in the locker room, and on the ice every single practice and game. This team teaching dynamic that has emerged from the participants' could provide value to all members of a hockey organization. The participants in this study declared the importance of veteran players being proper role models on and off the ice. It was stated that their effectiveness as roles models could not only influence the rookies, but also have an effect on overall team success.

> If you have a team full of juniors and seniors that are always stepping out of those [unwritten] lines, stepping out of those [unwritten] boundaries, you can pretty much guarantee that the freshman and sophomores on that team are going to follow suit and that will effect the rest of their careers pretty much (Reggie).

This statement showed that not only will non-compliance to unwritten rules affect a player's development, but it would also have a large effect on the success of the team during that player's tenure.

Compliance to the unwritten rules had been shown by the participants of this study to be crucial to individual and team success. Because of the importance of the unwritten rules, it is fortunate that all participant players in this study were in unison by

singling out the veteran players to teach them. When asked who should be responsible for maintaining ice hockey's unwritten rules, Shawn replied,

> I think it comes down to the players because they are the ones that are out there. The coaches can only have so much effect because they are stuck on the bench and they are not the ones going out on the ice (Shawn).

With the participants indentifying the players as the key group to maintain the unwritten rules, it was the charge of the players defined as veterans to lead the way in a post youth hockey team structure.

Coaches are responsible for unwritten rule knowledge in youth hockey

Although veteran players were identified as the keepers of the unwritten rules after youth hockey, participants identified the coaches as the key teacher to any unwritten rule knowledge that arises in youth hockey. As previously discussed, the unwritten rulebook does not carry many applications to youth hockey. However when citations arise with unwritten rules, the participants identified the coach as the sole figure responsible for that knowledge. The participants claimed that it was the responsibility of the coach to teach all of the youth players that unwritten rule and the proper way to address it at the youth level.

According to the participants, many youth players do not understand when unwritten rule situations arise and it is not the responsibility of the players at that level to even have knowledge of an unwritten rule unless expressly stated by the coach. The participants in this study indicated that the largest unwritten rule application in youth hockey was not running up the score on the opposing team. This unwritten rule at the

youth level surfaced numerous times. In context to the unwritten rule of running up the score Shawn stated,

> I'm sure there are a few players that are aware [of the unwritten rule], but as a whole it is up to the coach at [the youth level] to point it out and say, listen we are going to try and back off a little bit here.

Reggie identified in his interview that most coaches at the youth level, participate for the love of the game. As a result, they are the ones who need to teach the kids at the youth level how to become proper hockey citizens.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this research study, the participants provided rich and thick data to properly answer the research questions. Because of the participants' willingness to share their personal experiences, the results regarding ice hockey's unwritten rule development were both informative and intriguing. In these following sections, I discuss the results as they relate back to the literature and their relationship to the research questions. First, Research Question 1: At what point in the player development process do aspiring professional hockey players learn of, as well as consent to, ice hockey's unwritten rules?

Learning and consenting to ice hockey's unwritten rules

Ice hockey has been identified by the participants in this study as a game that is based on achieving victory by physically dominating and intimidating the players on the opposing team. It is because of this physical nature that the participant players believed that the game of ice hockey is viewed by the general public as a violent game in contrast to other aggressive contact sports such as rugby and American football. The participants each concluded that a major rationale for this viewpoint is because ice hockey is the only team sport where "fighting is part of the game" (Regina v. Gray, 1981). The players stated in their interviews that it was the inclusion of fighting within the sport of ice hockey that made the assumption of risk for a hockey player unique. This viewpoint was in accordance with Theme III that stated, players consent to the unwritten rules to earn team respect, trust, and promote the well-being of the team. This theme lead to the understanding that the development of ice hockey's unwritten rules as well as the fact that these unwritten rules were implicitly accepted by continued participation in hockey was important.

Coakley (2007) attempted to frame the development of unwritten rules within the culture of sport. However, neither Coakley nor other relevant researchers have attempted to address the uniqueness of ice hockey and its unwritten rules. This study did find ties however to the sociological and psychological theoretical framework of Akers (1977) social learning theory. The completion of this study's basic inductive data analysis determined that the culture of violent sports created expected consent of unwritten rules that lead to possible aggression and physical harm, which aligned with Cunningham & Singer's (2010) views on deviance and aggression. Under further analysis it was determined that these social factors were also intertwined with the initial development of a player's unwritten rule knowledge. The participant data, which created Theme I, stated that ice hockey's unwritten rule development initially occurs as a transition out of the youth hockey classification. The socialization of a player into a new team dynamic that houses a rookie-veteran status was identified as the initial encounter with unwritten rules. This matched Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. It is important to recognize that this initial encounter occurred at a certain skill development stage, not a specific age. With the participants of this research study having answered the when, the next step was to investigate the how in relation to if and how players consented to the unwritten rules.

Previous research in sport has revealed that unwritten rules are ritualistic in nature and are ingrained with the development of the athlete as a youth (Colburn, 1985). The data from the inductive analysis supported this statement. Coakley (2007) argued that the socialization of professional track athlete development leads to a subconscious acceptance of unwritten rules by continued participation. However, little attention has been given to the development process of what the participants believed to be America's

most violent major professional sport. The emergence of Theme III that identified why players consented to the unwritten rules supported this idea. The participants indicated that it was both a conscience and sub-conscience acceptance of the unwritten rules. The desire to be socially accepted within the hockey culture of the team was what each participant claimed as one of the primary reasons for consenting to the unwritten rules.

Identifying the development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules

The second research question in this study asked what was the development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules? This research question was represented within the participant data set by Theme IV, which stated that the unwritten rule development processes is unique for each player. Akers (1977) claimed that the development process is a direct result of the instrumental condition, which is the primary learning mechanism in social behavior. Therefore according to Akers, most players were developed under the social behaviors exhibited by their coaches, teams, and organizations. Under social learning theory, participants are motivated by the consequences of their behavior and the stimuli that follow. The participant data supported Akers in this case as the social behaviors within ice hockey team culture were noted to have direct ties to ice hockey player development. This finding was also congruent with Ormrod's (1999) general principals of social learning theory in which people could learn by observing the behavior of others and the outcomes of those behaviors. In regards to ice hockey culture and this study, a social learning theory lens provided an appropriate look into the development process of ice hockey's unwritten rules. As only professional track players were used as participants, their perspectives cannot be transferred to those who have not graduated out

of the youth hockey level. As a result, this study has only shown the experience of social learning for professional track players.

The findings in this study had ties to previous literature even though there has not been a similar study completed to date. For example, the finding that unwritten rule knowledge is nourished by hockey socialization matched that of Akers' (1977) social learning theory. Since no research had been conducted specifically focusing on ice hockey's unwritten rules and the factors that led to their development and acceptance to date, the connection of the data in this study to previous literature on sport culture was vital in establishing the credibility of the findings. The participant data set revealed several matches to previous literature in areas of social learning, aggression, and masculinity. With these connections to the literature in place, a better understanding of the factors that contributed to the participant's unwritten rule development in ice hockey could be gained.

One of the main factors that emerged from the participant data was that the unwritten rule development in ice hockey was defined as a constant state of increased awareness. The data collected from this research study showed that the unwritten rule development process for each ice hockey player was unique. The unwritten rules were identified to remain steady across all participants but it was each player's unique skill development path that determined their interaction with ice hockey's unwritten rules. Aggression and violence were identified in the participant data set as one key factor in a player's unwritten rule development process. With each player's development path being unique, one constant claim among the players was that on the ice unwritten rules knowledge was gained by a sense of awareness that increased with each skill level

advancement. As each participant progressed through their development ladder, they each accounted that a level of aggression and/or violence increased in their surroundings with each step.

All the participants in this research study identified a sense of aggression or violence that coincided with the beginning of their advancement out of youth hockey. "Because violent behaviors first emerge in high school and continue into college play, these would be useful arenas for generating a fuller understanding of the development of violent behaviors in this sport" (Pappas, et al, 2004, p.309). In his article, Pappas, et al, (2004) did not address the integral starting point of the development of violence and aggression, in ice hockey. The participants in this study however, showed that it is the first progression step out of the youth hockey classification in which violent behaviors began to manifest themselves into regularity.

In the development process of gaining unwritten rule knowledge through an increased sense of awareness, ice hockey players learned that adherence to unwritten rules could create respect, as sense of masculinity, and a team advantage.

> Although most athletes will stretch the rules as much as they can to gain an advantage over their opponents, most have a respect, even a reverence, for the importance of rules as a code of conduct that places safe boundaries around their aggression and their relationships with others (Messner, 1990, p.98).

Messner (1990) also noted that without unwritten rules, there would be physical and psychological chaos. He claimed that there would be an incredibly frightening need to constantly negotiate and renegotiate relationships. It was the formation of these relationships that Messner (1990) claimed to be dangerous to men and test their

masculinity. Messner's (1990) statements matched up with the data provided by Cam as the constant physical aggression that is part of striving to be a professional ice hockey player felt more than natural to him. Cam was clearly provided a comfortable context within which he developed a certain kind of relationship with other men. These relationships were evident throughout his interview data as it was these relationships that ended up socializing his behavioral patterns and norms.

Upon much review of the data, it was found that the learning process and consent to ice hockey's unwritten rules was the same for each participant across the board. However, not every participant chose to adhere to every unwritten rule situation. It was important to note that just because there was an instance of nonconformity from a participant player, that does not mean that learning and unwritten rule development process had not taken place. Ormrod (1999) pointed out that behaviorists claim learning has to be represented by permanent change in behavior. This behaviorist ideal is in contrast to the social learning theorists that claim people are capable of learning through observation alone. This meant that under social learning theory in ice hockey culture, what players learned might not necessarily have been represented or shown in their actions (Ormrod, 1999, p.1). In the context of ice hockey's unwritten rule development, a player developing and learning unwritten rule knowledge may or may not result in a behavioral change. The participants in this study portrayed through personal experiences that their learning and development of unwritten rules could create behavioral change by adhering to an unwritten rule. These participants also indicated that their behavior might not change. This was not from a lack of knowledge or development, but by the choice to not adhere to a certain unwritten rule or situation.

Under social learning theory a player could learn of the unwritten rules without consenting to them by changing their behavior. This was evident in the data provided by Zarly when he noted that he learned it was not appropriate to hit a defenseless player but proceeded to punch a player who was not looking as he skated by the bench. This example applied to social learning theory could bridge a cognitive theorists gap with the interpretive role Zarly played in human learning. Ormrod (1999) explained that over the last forty years, social learning theorists had become increasingly cognitive as they believed that the awareness and expectations of future reinforcements or punishments could have a major effect on the behaviors that people exhibited. This same awareness presented by Ormrod (1999) was evident in the participant players development processes. The participants each distinguished and defined compliance verse non-compliance of the unwritten rules through socialized reinforcements and punishments.

The socialized reinforcements and punishments that were shown by the participants in the data set were evident in both on and off the ice situations. These situations were again intertwined with awareness, aggression, violence, and masculinity. Pappas et al. (2004) put critical masculine theory on display when they claimed, "locker room talk [is] definitely machismo without doubt" (p. 306). Perspective must by applied with critical masculine theory as this research study found masculinity to play a large role in ice hockey culture, but not all of the ice hockey culture socialized norms identified in this study were gender defined and male specific. From the personal experience of the student researcher, "locker talk" is not defined by gender. In fact some female locker rooms have been know to contain harsher remarks and socialized conduct than their male counterparts.

Respect played a large role in the Pappas et al. (2004) discussion of masculinity in ice hockey. This theme of respect has been intertwined with masculine undertones throughout this study. It has overarched the participant data in this study stretching all of hockey culture from the locker room to the ice. Participants identified numerous examples related to the unwritten rules and respect throughout the data. Each player displayed masculine undertones in their discussions on respect, yet none expressed any realization that their examples were masculine in nature.

Each participant was found to have a unique unwritten rule development process in this study, yet all stressed the value of respect. Connell (1995) noted that masculinity is a form of respect to a certain set of ideals at a given place and time. Because the veteran players were said to have the strongest influence on the young rookie players, the veteran players must be responsible for their actions as the "carriers" of masculine ideals. The veterans in this study yielded an impressionable power over the rookies because the level of respect that they gave the veterans left them vulnerable. In conjunction with Connell (1995), it was important to recognize the presence of masculinity within ice hockey's unwritten rules because even if a player did not display any masculine undertones, he still was a "carrier" from his socialization into hockey culture.

Limitations and Future Research

This research study was not without limitations. First, in addition to their willingness to participate in this study, participants selected had to currently be playing or have played at the NCAA collegiate level or minor professional level. As a result, the anticipated age range for the participants was between the ages of 18 and 40. This assumed that the participants under eighteen years of age have not experienced the full-

unwritten rule development process. Therefore, finding participants that were closer to their development years and capable of articulating their experiences reduced the number of available participants. Developing a participant sample based on the established player criteria did not pose a significant challenge, however, locating participants meeting the specific criteria was difficult. In addition, participant recruitment may have been easier if interviews were not requested during an active playing season.

Second, of the six participants interviewed, all identified as White. Throughout the professional ranks of ice hockey a vast majority are players are White. In 2004, at the highest level of the National Hockey League only 17 of the 600+ athletes, less than 2%, where African American (Morrison, & Frantz, 2007). Thus, all of the data extracted in this study speaks only to the experiences of white male ice hockey players. It does not take into account the experience of ice hockey's unwritten rules for African American players or those of other racial/ethnic minority groups.

Third, the interviewed participants were all male. Consequently because of the absence of a professional women's ice hockey league and the aim of understanding the development process of aspiring professional hockey players, this research study did not take into account the female development experience of ice hockey's unwritten rules. Given that there are no female professional hockey leagues and that body checking and fighting are not allowed in any level of women's ice hockey, it is recommend that a similar project be undertook examining the unwritten rule development of female ice hockey players. While the unwritten rulebook will undoubtedly take a different shape, the development process can be examined as female ice hockey players also experience a similar transition out of the youth hockey classification into high school and collegiate

hockey. Also, an exploration into female specific unwritten rules might identify if masculinity influences unwritten rule development within the women's game.

This research study also encountered an additional limitation that should be noted. This study, along with other related studies, revealed that sport specific unwritten rules such as those in ice hockey are inherent to the culture, nature, and fundamentals of any sport. The question that went unanswered was, could the unwritten rule development process that was identified in this study be transferred to international ice hockey players as well? If time and resources allowed, further data would be acquired from players that transitioned out of youth hockey internationally, especially oversees.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

Date/Time: Participant:

Location:

I have two research questions that I am investigating for this study:

RQ #1: At what point in the player development process do aspiring professional hockey players learn of, as well as consent to, ice hockey's unwritten rules?

RQ #2: What is the development process of these unwritten rules? f

First, would you like to choose your own pseudonym name that will be used for the confidentiality of your data?

Second, I have a couple demographic questions:

A) Demographic Questions

- What is the history in ice hockey within your immediate family?
  - Mom/Dad?
  - Brother/Sister?
  - Grandparents?
  - Aunts/Uncles?
  - Cousins?
- What citizenships do you currently hold?
  - Where were you born?
- What state and town did you grow up in?
  - Duration?
- What state and town do you currently reside in?
  - Duration?

B) Background Questions:

- What is the highest level of ice hockey you have played?
- How long have you been involved within the sport of ice hockey?
- Have you held any other positions within ice hockey other than a player?
  - If so, what position(s) & how long?

- What were (have been) your reasons for (continuing) playing ice hockey at these levels?
  - Was (is) your playing experience within the sport of ice hockey's social norm of progression?
  - How long did (do) you plan on pursuing progression of your playing career?
    - What level of ice hockey did (do) you aspire to participate?
      - How long did (do) you think your progression to this level would (will) take?

C) Specific Questions on Ice Hockey's Unwritten Rules

I have a couple questions about your experiences with ice hockey's unwritten rules

- What do you think are some of ice hockey's unwritten rules?
- How do you know when you are in compliance or breaking these unwritten rules?
    - example? Can you give another example?
    - Have you ever been rewarded or punished in regards to an unwritten rule?
        - example(s)? Role player rewards?
- Where did you learn of these unwritten rules?
    - From whom?
    - At what age do you first recollect understanding that there are unwritten rules in hockey?
    - **How learned?** (examples)
    - **What other ways have you learned of unwritten rules**?
- Do you accept these unwritten rules?
    - Why?
    - Have you ever disagreed with any of ice hockey's unwritten rules?
- Do all unwritten rules apply to all players?
    - Can you continue to develop as a player if you do not consent or agree to the unwritten rules?
        - Does continued participation imply consent?
    - If not how do players distinguish? Playing style/ equipment appearance?
- How do you view the unwritten rules in hockey as different than other sports?
    - Can you give an example of why hockey is unique?
    - Do you think there is any connection between the unwritten rules and the change or status quo of ice hockey norms/culture?
        - In other words, what group do you think is responsible for maintaining the ice hockey's norms and culture?
            - Do you think it's the players with the adherence to the unwritten rulebook?
    - Do you think the unwritten rules have changed over time?

D) Application/Knowledge of Ice Hockey's Unwritten Rule's to a Player

Now I am going to ask you about the extent of your application of ice hockey's unwritten rules as they relate to your position as a player

- Are there any other unwritten rules you can think of?
    - Maybe off-ice unwritten rules?
- What unwritten rules have you applied to your position as a player?
    - (Specific examples of application needed)
    - When, Where, How?
- What about unwritten rule X was useful to you as a player?
    - What was the outcome of your unwritten rule application?
- What unwritten rules have you not applied to your position as a player?
    - (Specific examples of application needed)

- What about unwritten rule *X* was NOT useful to you as a player?
    - Why?

E) Research Application Questions

- How has your development as a player in ice hockey changed your views or made you more aware of hockey's unwritten rules?
    - Can you give any examples of how your viewpoints changed?
    - (Conversations you might have had? Coach, Teammate, Referee?)
        - Why?
        - If no change, why do you think you have remained steady in your views?

- Whom do you think is most responsible in the player development process for teaching ice hockey's unwritten rules
    - Coaches, Teammates, Officials, Parents, TV?
    - At what age?
- What age do you think is appropriate to begin player development of the unwritten rules?
- From your experiences, what do you think the unwritten rule development process is?
    - Stages, Age, Etc.?
    - Identifiable process or Random and continual based on playing path and coaches?

F) Closing Question

- The last question I have for you is: Is there anything I didn't ask about that you would like to share with me? Maybe something that you feel might be informative in the scope of the questioning?

Is there a difference between hockey's unwritten rule and the unwritten code of conduct?