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Unwritten Rules: An Examination of the “Code” or “Code of Conduct”

in the National Hockey League

by

John Buxcey

Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 1994

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. John Meldrum, School of Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education

Supervisor

Dr. Tim Hopper, School of Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education

Departmental Member

Abstract

Supervisory Committee

Dr. John Meldrum (School of Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education)

Supervisor

Dr. Tim Hopper (School of Exercise Science, Health and Physical Education)

Departmental Member

Professional Ice Hockey, as it is played in the National Hockey League (NHL), has rules of engagement termed the “code” or “code of conduct” that govern the conduct and interaction of players during games that is separate from the rules as written in the National Hockey League Official Rules 2012-2013 (© Copyright 2012 National Hockey League). The research examined and interpreted the “rules and meanings” implicit in the “code” by reviewing and identifying themes in the popular media, academic literature and in depth interviews with two former NHL players. At the core of the research is a focus on the idea or concept of interpretation. The results and ideas presented were interpreted through the lens of the primary researcher. It was interpreted inductively from the interviews, transcript text, audio recordings, life experience and self-reflection. The ideas and themes developed were co-constructed somewhere within the relationship between the researcher, the recorded data, society, and the participants. In the fourth chapter, the research was interpreted, written and presented in the form of a play or ethnodrama. It was the intention of the research to present and explore themes surrounding violence in a non-polarizing manner. As a play, ideas that are usually sensationalized by the media can be expressed and identified through the life experience of “real” characters. The play form allows for a window into the motivation behind sanctioned and unsanctioned violence in the NHL, sport, and aspects of daily lives that are governed by unwritten rules.

Key Words: sport, code, ice hockey, masculinity, identity, and violence.

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Dedication

To my daughters Dana and Samantha: They are a living reminder of the importance in finding and developing your own voice regardless of age or gender or any other type of culturally informed bias or stereotype. Thank you!

Unwritten Rules: An Examination of the “Code” or “Code of Conduct” in the National Hockey League

I am aware that through the process of this research and subsequent dissemination, I am telling a “kind of tale” and am involved in “the representational dilemmas inherent in the act of writing about other people and their lives from my own position as a situated author” (Sparkes, 2002, p. 1)

Chapter 1 Introduction

Canada’s national winter sport, ice hockey, has some defining characteristics. It is a fast paced physically demanding and, at times, an emotionally charged contact sport. The game is played with 6 players, a goaltender and five skaters. Professional ice hockey, in the National Hockey League (NHL), is a team game which has rules for fighting other than an automatic ejection and suspension. In the NHL, fights are governed by rule 46. “Rule 46 – Fighting – A fight shall be deemed to have occurred when at least one player punches or attempts to punch an opponent repeatedly or when two players wrestle in such a manner as to make it difficult for the linesmen to intervene and separate the combatants” (National Hockey League, 2013, p. 67). Players regularly commit contact beyond the behaviour that is permitted by the rules as they are written. NHL referees and “sport officials make decisions with the intent to maintain a fair and safe competitive environment in relation to the laws of the game” (Hancock & Ste-Marie, 2013, p. 66). In the NHL, the referee’s role is distinct from linesmen, only they have the authority to call on-ice penalties (Allen, 2002). In practice, the referees are provided very wide latitude in the penalties with which they may impose under the rules, as they are asked to subjectively observe degrees of player responsibility in violent situations.

Ice hockey is an exciting violent collision sport played at high speed with focus and intensity (Stubbs, 2006). It is a sport where players range from the highly skilled offensive role to those with a physical presence that view intimidation and protection as a necessary component of team chemistry (Blake, 2010). These players of diverse ability interact with each other on a number of levels that are unspoken and unwritten. Professional players negotiate the NHL's brand of ice hockey seeking to establish their place in that league. "The culture within contact sports, such as ice hockey, encourages aggression" (Cusimano et al., 2013, p. 1). Players regularly commit contact beyond that which is permitted by the written rules, and sometimes they do it intentionally (Rosenberg & Stevens, 2013; Class Action Complaint Plaintiffs vs. NHL, 2014). This study sought to better understand the manner in which players in the NHL develop an understanding and consent to this unwritten self-governed social system termed the "code."

Ice hockey is indeed an aggressive and physical game, but it is the inclusion of fighting that separates it from other team sports. Fighting in the majority of team sports will result in immediate ejection and the distinct possibility of suspension from future games, based on the perceived severity of the incident by a league discipline committee (Colburn, 1986). In ice hockey, increased levels of violence, especially fist-fights, more than playing or skating ability are seen to lead to a greater perception of competence by both teammates and coaches (Weinstein, Smith & Wiesenthal, 1995). The inclusion of fighting, in ice hockey, has fostered the development of an unwritten "code" of conduct that seeks to provide a type of moral or pseudo-moral framework, system within which altercations are then viewed as acceptable or become normalized within the context of the sport's culture. In fact, the fist-fight is viewed to be governed by the "code" "as an informal mode of social control among players that has a moderating effect upon the commission of more serious assaults between players" (Colburn,

1985, p. 153). This type of personalized physical violence has an expressive, symbolic, and traditional aspect that ties it to the cultural fabric of the NHL and societal myths around honour and respect.

The words “enforcer” or “goon” or “tough guy” do not appear anywhere in the NHL rulebook (Thornton, 2009). Nevertheless, NHL hockey teams have always employed players to protect their star players or create more room from which to deploy their offensive skills. In fact, rough play is commonplace in the NHL. Violence has always been part of professional hockey (Baxter, 2005; Jewell, Moti & Coates, 2012). In order to gain possession of the puck or slow down the progress of players, ice hockey players routinely make themselves known in a physical manner. They trip, slash, push, pull, impede and elbow the opposition to varying degrees throughout the contest. The physically directed or motivated players regularly involve themselves in actions that are technically outside the “written” rules of the sport. “Throughout the NHL’s history, iconic violence has thrived, exemplified by players like the “Broad Street Bullies,” and other notable “enforcers” and “goons” throughout the NHL’s many different eras” (Class Action Complaint Plaintiffs vs. NHL, 2014, p. 2). Baxter states that in addition to the official rules and penalties in the NHL official rules, there is “an unwritten code of conduct” agreed to by the players and referees as to the manner and scope of conduct they consent to experience and follow while playing the game (2005).

It is within this area of interaction, outside the rulebook, that the “code” exists. If a team perceives their opponents as being in a position to take liberties with their star players or the referees are not applying the rules properly, they are bound by the “code” to intervene or take action. It falls upon the physically skilled players to retaliate or to “enforce” a change in the opposition’s tactics that favour their own team. In this sense, it logically follows that fighting

and intimidation have become part of their “unwritten” job description. Is it possible that fighting could legally be considered part of an “enforcer’s” job by a judicial system outside the culture of a hockey arena? In fact, yes, the Court of Appeals of Virginia awarded a professional hockey player compensation for injuries sustained in a fight (Thornton, 2009).

The research of unwritten rules in sport and society in general has been done to varying degrees in academic studies. There has been little academic research into the unwritten rules in the NHL, termed the “code.” Specifically, there has been little research published based primarily on themes emerging from interviews with former NHL players. This research examined and interpreted the “rules and meanings” implicit in the unwritten “code” by interviewing and analyzing the life experiences of two former NHL ice hockey players. The semi-structured interviews revealed real life decisions, emotions, and assumptions made by these men as they reflected on their involvement and interactions in the game of professional ice hockey in the NHL.

Working Definitions: Code, Code of Conduct, Unwritten Rules, Enforcer, and Honour

The research was aware of the disparity and variation in the usage of certain words. “Inherent in this view is the social nature of knowledge, a view that assumes knowledge is not fixed” (Hirst, Henderson, Allan, Bode, & Kocatepe, 2004, p. 72). The use of working definitions, in this research, was employed as a way of presenting a functional approach to discourse. The information, provided in this manner, is intended to guide participants and readers into the subject matter and possibly provide enhanced coherence. It is used in English as a Second Language instruction in order to allow an opportunity for knowledge structure analysis, which focuses on meaning, form, and function simultaneously (Huang & Morgan, 2003). So, time has been taken to provide a brief discourse on working or operational definitions for

specific words and phrases, in order to facilitate better communication with participants and readers.

Code, code of conduct, and unwritten rules.

When the word “code” or the term “code of conduct” were used, within the context of discussing events in the NHL, they were used to attach a moral or social order to the “unwritten rules” that were seen to regulate acts of violence between players. Violence, unwaveringly, is an instrument used in human relations inside and outside the arena of sport. “Violence worries people for moral reasons, and yet it remains a ubiquitous all-pervading human force” (Nowak, 2012, p. 2). The research examined the levels of violence that occur inside and outside the written rules of the game, in an area of conflict where teams and players often feel the referees have failed to take care of their personal or team interest. The rules, and sometimes codes are violated and punishment is enacted. The written rules and unwritten rules combined with the nature and success of enforcement, then serve to shape the environment and tenor of the game. Unwritten rules provide a method of avoiding, circumventing, or manipulating enforcement to your advantage.

Enforcer

The role of “enforcer” or “tough guy” to describe players in elite level or professional sports is familiar to sport practitioners, researchers, and enthusiasts (Jones & Fleming, 2010). The study considered the “tough guy” or “enforcer,” on an ice hockey team in the NHL, to be an unofficial or informal role assumed by particular players. Their job was to respond to aggressive or violent play by the opposition or to initiate violence in order to affect a change in the balance of power in such a way that it benefits their team. “Players are also required to create trouble for opponents and to employ tactics that create anxiety in adversaries” (Weinstein, et al., 1995, p.

836). The benefit may be short-term or have some influence over interactions at a future date. “Different game situations also determine the types of players sent out on the ice for a particular shift” (Chan, Cho & Novati, 2012, p. 133). The violence of the interaction may even escalate to fighting. These fights “reflect an occupationally directed and controlled means of achieving occupationally approved ends (e.g., winning the game, career advancement)” (Colburn, 1985, p. 154). The study acknowledges that very highly skilled offensive players with a physical edge can and do perform the role, as well as less offensively skilled but physically able.

Honour

When referring to events in the NHL, the use of honour often applies or is used to describe the ritualistic manner in which interactions are orchestrated or how an individual responds to aggression during the context of an actual game. Weinstein et al.’s (1995) research suggests that “from the time they begin playing hockey and as they advance through the hockey system, players are expected to display such characteristics as toughness, courage, respect, and honour” (p. 844). It can be seen to be endemic with moral ambiguity as a player follows the violent path required by the spirit of the “code” in an honourable way. In the NHL, a player’s perceived honour is enhanced by his allegiance to the moral principles inherent in the “code.” It seems to have its foundation “based on the duty that players have of not letting down their teammates by failing to make sufficient effort to achieve victory” (Upton, 2014, p. 161). In this sense, the players are honour bound to conduct themselves in a particular way under the weight and influence of these “unwritten rules.” It is an agreed upon convention that orchestrates their behaviour, relieving them of individual responsibility.

Purpose

This study examined the “code” of conduct in ice hockey as it was viewed by professional athletes that played in the National Hockey League. Specifically, two former NHL players who were involved in the game in a manner which directed them to commit acts of violence as part of their responsibility to perceived team needs in specific situations. The research was guided predominantly by two research questions.

Research Questions

The following questions were used to guide the study:

R1 How do professional ice hockey players accept and experience the “code” within the lived experience of NHL culture?

Sub questions:

Can you explain how your knowledge of the “code” developed?

Is the “code” always followed?

R2 How do they judge and acknowledge their ice hockey roles as they move through their careers?

Sub questions:

How are acceptable levels of violence determined?

What process do you go through when deciding to retaliate or not?

Do you ever initiate aggressive behaviour and if so why?

Summary

This chapter began the examination of NHL professional ice hockey and its’ unwritten rules of engagement termed the “code.” Codes and specifically unwritten codes are present in

and inform society and sub-societies to varying degrees. The NHL and their players follow a sometimes violent code of conduct, a code socially constructed and self-enforced within their sport culture. These codes, both unofficial and unwritten, govern and to an extent pre-determine appropriate and inappropriate levels of violent behaviour. The particular focus of my research will be on deciphering the unwritten “codes” that governed and influenced the behaviour and emotions of two former NHL players as they pursued their ice hockey careers. The participants share their individual stories never shying away from problematic or perhaps uncomfortable experiences. The examination of the “code” in the NHL through semi-structured interviews may provide insight into the problems that present themselves in societal orientation and relationships that are governed by the norms and doctrine of unwritten rules.

Chapter 2: Literature review

For the development of this study, the literature review was divided into five sections. The first section provides an overview of the manner in which the ice hockey “code” has been discussed, published, and reflected upon. This foundational section provides context for the development and discussion of unwritten rules and the societal view of their application in the NHL. The next section reviews and introduces the construction of problematic masculinity and gendered stereotypes in the NHL. The third section focuses on the commoditization of violence and themes of violent consumption. The fourth section examines the concept of identity and identity construction as an aspect of an athlete’s life. The final section begins the exploration of the genre of ethnodrama

The “code”

There has been a limited amount of academic research published specifically focused on the ice hockey “code” of conduct. Early in the research process, an internet search with the University of Victoria’s search engine Summons using the key words “hockey’s code” returned 234 results. The breakdown was 228 newspaper articles and 6 journal articles. The *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (1990) and the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* (2012) were the only two academic journal entries that were returned. The academic article from 1990 did not involve hockey, but it did provide useful background information concerning the planned use of violence and intimidation in sport (Rail, 1990). The second, more recently published article, questions the morality of fighting in hockey (Lewinson & Palma, 2012). Their defining question was focused directly on the assumed moral or ethical behaviour defended by the proponents of the “code” as an ethical system of engagement, violent engagement.

The defence of “moral” violent behaviour follows a traditional pattern regardless of it being printed in a newspaper or in academic journals. The defenders are full of romantic nostalgia or self-delusion and see themselves as having some sort of insider, perhaps in-group consciousness. In this sense, “a hockey moral code as truth which guides hockey player conduct on and off the ice” (McGannon, Hoffman, Metz & Schinke, 2012, p. 29) emerges. They view people that are trying to change the game or at least question the “ethics” around violence as outsiders, as threatening. They, the proponents of leave the “code” as it stands, are numerous. NHL Hockey fundamentalists, such as Don Cherry, speak of tradition, service, responsibility, courage, honour, etc.

Allain (2012) writes, “Although the interviewed players attempted to downplay the significance of hockey critics such as Don Cherry, it is clear that the media works to generate a culture of appropriate Canadian hockey conduct, and that this conduct is premised on a rough-and-tough Canadian game. (p. 367)

It serves the construction of an archetypical Canadian hero.

A warrior born out of the frontier world where there was a need to bring order to and tame the wilderness. It is revealed as Popovic (2010) narrates her brother “I could envision him taking the puck up centre ice, end-to-end, with both the fluidity of a dancer and the strength of a warrior, competing with some of the best players of his time” (p. 236). This is her sense of the “warrior” in her brother, a person who competes at a high level. The NHL’s culture distorts this almost romantic image or sense and the warrior morphs into a violent skating weapon. The NHL hockey culture accepts a warrior, in times of crisis and conflict, who inflicts physical damage through violent means upon a player or players on the opposing team. The idea and necessity of a “warrior” identity is a constructed professional identity that has arisen in a situation where a

job or role has been introduced as a result of the perceived need to carry out obligations and provide deterrents or restraints in a social context, not commonly viewed as applicable to the culture at large.

The “code” and the media have an interesting relationship. In fact, the considerable size of the relationship between the newspaper medium is voluminous when you search the key words “hockey” and “violence.” The Summons search, July 08, 2014, returned 62,124 results of which 37,484 or 60.3 % were newspaper articles, 19,829 or 31.9% were books/ebooks, 3,030 or 4.9 % were journal articles, and magazine and trade publications made up the remainder. It follows that hockey and specifically hockey violence are viewed to be extremely news worthy and book worthy, especially in Canada.

The newspaper articles were predominantly directed at professional hockey and violence in particular, as the first 25 newspaper articles returned all centered on the topic of violence. “Media complicit in continuance of hockey violence,” reads a headline from *The Globe and Mail*, January 24, 2011 (Dowbiggan, 2011). It is as if the media is selling or capitalizing on propagating a form of moral panic. Wright describes this idea of moral panic as a condition, episode, person or group that emerges to become viewed as a threat to societal values and interest (2010). “‘Moral Panic’ is now a term regularly used by journalists to describe a process which politicians, commercial promoters and media habitually attempt to incite” (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995, p. 559). The secrecy and mystery of a “code” and the thuggery of the “enforcer” role become perfect partners in the media’s conceptualization and presentation of moral panic.

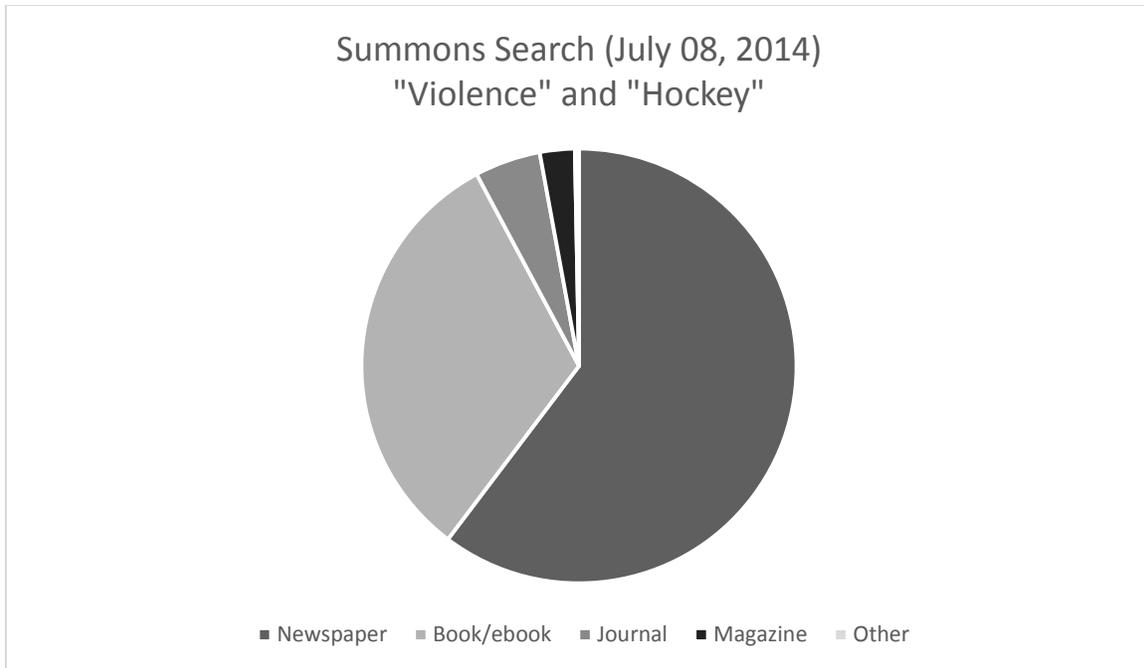


Figure 1. Search by publication type.

Individual identities are shaped and labelled within social positions and roles that convey meaning for behaviour and expectations. The sense of identity an athlete develops with a particular role can lead to more aggressive behaviour, especially if victory is on the line (Donahue, Rip & Vallerand, 2009). Roles are the pattern of behaviour expected of individuals in a given social situation (Cope et al., 2010). “Typically, the Canadian media construct hockey as being about physicality, body contact, and self-sacrificing masculinity” (Mason, Hill & MacLachy, 2010, p. 207). These particular roles can be re-cycled year after year and kept fresh with new players. In the media, it would seem, violence and conflict sell newspapers year after year.

Masculinity

The number one researched and documented form of masculinity is “hegemonic masculinity.” “Hegemonic masculinities are at the top of the gender hierarchy and exist in

relation to subordinated gender constructions” (Hinojosa, 2010, p. 179). One of the inherent problems with this generalized view is that hegemonic masculinity is then attacked or defended as something that is fixed in time and space. In this sense, it is viewed as something that just is and should be obvious to all people and all disciplines. Most of the research reviewed by this research centered around this stream of thought has been predominantly situated on the outside looking in.

The direction of the research, in this thesis, follows and echoes Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and wishes to challenge the “one-dimensional treatment of hierarchy and trait conceptions of gender” (p. 829). The external behaviour of the hegemonistic males, especially in the world of sport, is well documented and coded (McGannon et al., 2012; Messner, 1990). Weinstein et al.’s (1995) qualitative research “suggested that players endorsing traditional masculine behaviour were more likely to engage in violence than players who held weaker masculine beliefs” (p. 831). But, what is happening on the inside?

Researchers have raised concerns about the construction of dangerous and or problematic masculinities within sporting fraternities (Pringle & Hickey, 2010). In this sense, the “enforcer” or “tough guy” would have to be considered a constructed problematic masculinity or perhaps a form of the hyper-masculine. The “tough guy” or “enforcer” develops a working-class superhero or warrior mystique, an understated player often lacking in offensive prowess with an alter ego willing to do the sport’s most dangerous work and protect others. “These enforcers fight so other players do not have to do it” (Coates, Battre & Deutscher, 2011, p. 48). Their identities are paradoxical in nature as they are both robust and fragile at the same time.

They are only as good as their last fight and will always have to come out and prove themselves again tomorrow. From the moment an ice hockey player laces up skates and ventures

onto the ice to engage in the pursuit of an NHL career, questions are asked concerning their ability to handle themselves in difficult often violent situations. In the NHL literature, a particular type of hyper-masculinity seems to be emphasized centered around the concept of being physically able and willing to impose your will on another individual. In addition, “These players are to be polite, humble, gentlemen off the ice, and warriors who are willing to battle on the ice” (Allain, 2010, p. 4). As in other violent sports, the players that seem unable to act out this behaviour “are given labels denoting their inferior masculinity or femininity” (Fogel, 2011, p. 2). There is an inherent tension in any type of identity that has such a fragile or transient aspect.

There are numerous questions that are left unanswered by previous NHL research concerning masculinity. How do players live a masculinity that must be constructed and performed, basically on a game by game basis? What ideas and thoughts articulate through their minds? How do players shape and influence their personal narratives? Stopping to ask these questions paves the way for a more balanced representation of men, complexities, contradictions, contingencies, and all (Clayton, 2012). This research was designed to enter into this or see a glimpse of this paradoxical world as it is negotiated, from the inside.

Violence

Themes associated with violence in sport have produced a large amount of academic research and discussion. “Hockey has always been a violent sport” (Zimmerman, 2013, p. 49). The most relevant, with respect to the “code” and fighting in the NHL, are the themes of violent consumption (Westerman & Tamborini, 2010) and “whether the forms of violence can work as specific capital” (Guilbert, 2006, p. 239). The impact of sports on our society is pervasive (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993). It has come to the point where there is a general belief that

success in the sporting arena guarantees success away from it as well. Sport, sport events and sport persons have become commodities to be bought and sold to the highest bidder (Blackshaw, 2006).

Indeed, violence in sport occurs at all levels of competition, “from children’s leagues through high school and college and including amateur and professional adult leagues” (Fields, Collins & Comstock, 2007, p. 359). “Professional coaches appear to have much the same attitude about violence as their counterparts in highly competitive amateur leagues” (Smith, 1979, p. 117). Ice hockey, in many ways, does parallel the type of violent coercive behaviour that occurs outside the rules in other contact sports. There are cultural and monetary incentives “that drive the behaviour of athletes and teams within contests and the incentives that influence whether a league encourages, punishes, or outright bans aggressive and violent play” (Jewell, 2011, p. 3). The inclusion and acceptance of fighting, in ice hockey, as a part of the ethos of the game is a point of separation. Ironically, only box lacrosse, another Canadian sport, allows one-on-one fighting, a very direct form of interpersonal violence.

In fact, the ability to inflict or carry out “Increased levels of violence (especially fist fights), more than playing or skating skills were seen to lead to greater perception of competence by both teammates and coaches” (Weinstein et al., 1995, p. 831). Violence at a high level can have a profound affect psychologically and cause severe physical damage. “Violence worries people for moral reasons, and yet it remains a ubiquitous all-pervading human force” (Nowak, 2012, p. 2). The threat of violence and the very nature of abiding by a “code” involving violence have a deep and lasting affect on players in the NHL. Who can better reveal the true nature of violence in their roles? Guilbert (2006) states clearly that it is the players themselves as “they

have the genuine field experience and they can provide an accurate picture of the forms of violence they represent” (p. 232).

Identity Construction

There is a large amount of literature on the topic or concerned with identity and the manner in which it is shaped within cultures and sub-cultures. A search using Google Scholar with the key word “identity” revealed over three million results in just 0.05 seconds. Its popularity spans and includes most academic disciplines, different age groups, genders and sub categories of gender, and wide variety of ethnic cultures and sub-cultures. Identity and the process of identity construction are well documented in the world of sport as well. Bandura (1991) writes that people “become adept at reading social cues, remembering those that have predictive value and varying their self-presentation accordingly” (p. 253). The development of an appropriate identity and the extent to which an individual associates with it are important aspects of an elite athlete’s life (Brown & Potrac, 2009). “Identity is defined as a multidimensional view of oneself that is both enduring and dynamic” (Lally, 2007, p. 86). Athletes identify identification is such that it separates them from the population at large. “Research within the field of sport psychology has investigated the existence of an identity among student-athletes that separates them from the non-athlete student population (Sturm, Feltz & Gilson, 2008, p. 296).

In this research we look at the manner in which a professional athletes develop their identity in a physical, sometimes violent, high impact team sport. Not only do players need to develop an identity, they must also serve their team in various roles, roles that at times may be problematic or in opposition to their personal view. Kelly and Hickey (2009), when writing about their research regarding professional Australian Football Players, “argue that narratives of

identity necessarily involve a struggle for the body, mind and soul of these young men” (p. 27). Ice hockey and particularly the manner in which it is played in the NHL is no different.

The concept that different types of organizations share particular dominant versions of masculinity is not new. Organizational masculinities are both attacked and defended throughout society. “Having recognized the organizational production of masculinity, it is tempting to settle for a rather stereotyped picture of what is produced (Connell, 2008, p. 242). In a vast number of articles and academic papers, researchers are making assumptions, coding, and analyzing behaviour without speaking to players at a level intimate enough to reveal inner thoughts and emotions. This research attempts to look beyond the comfort and reliance of stereotypes and gain insight into the differences that may be exhibited by particular personal narratives. The research was directed into the internal discussion and emotions displayed when players negotiate within or reject the values of “code” and explore alternatives around hypermasculinity.

Ethnodramatic Representation

In this study ethnodrama is defined as a mode of “dissemination of data gathered and analyzed using traditional qualitative research tools such as action research, narrative, interviews, and field notes” (Prendergast & Belliveau, 2013, p. 197). It should be noted that this representation is not a polished work, but the beginning of a movement toward an ethnographic representation. Certainly field notes, nuances of recorded conversation, and the study of on line interviews of the participant interviewed by telephone exert an influence on the manner in which idiosyncrasies are depicted. But, the transcript of Identity Construction is based primarily on the participant’s interview. The characters are intended to be the research participants portrayed by actors (Saldaña, 2005). This study appreciates the complexities and difficulties when moving

script to the stage and would look to a collaborative approach with a theatre artist with the purpose of moving into the genre of ethnotheatre (Saldaña, 2008).

Research Gap

This research delved into this perceived gap in the academic literature. The semi-structured interviews will allow an opportunity to view and perhaps feel how former NHL players actually negotiated their roles in and out of the dominating presence of violence in their professional sport. The tone of the inquiry in this research is not unlike Allain's (2013) expression that "Analysing masculinities from this perspective allows us to see the ways that expressions of masculinity are disciplined, resisted, and regulated within certain cultural frameworks" (p. 206). The former players articulate their own personal experiences as they moved through their NHL careers.

Summary

Ice hockey is Canada's national sport, but little is written or known about how NHL hockey players negotiate their involvement in the game (Pringle et al., 2010). Codes and specifically unwritten codes are present in society in varying degrees (Fletcher, Bateman & Emery, 2011). The examination of the "code" in hockey's top professional league, the NHL, through semi-structured interviews provided insight into the inherent problems associated with relationships governed by unwritten rules.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Ice Hockey is Canada's national winter sport. "Hockey is an immensely popular team contact sport known for its aggressive violent character" (Rosenberg & Stevens, 2013, p. 283). It is played by professional ice hockey players in the NHL at high levels of skill and aggressive confrontation (Fleming, 2008). Primarily, the sport is conducted and refereed using formal written rules and regulations. However, it is also played within "unwritten rules" or a "code" of conduct that underlie and supplement the formal rules. The "code" has been viewed as having both positive and negative effects on the game of ice hockey, as it is played out in the NHL. There are unavoidable differences in the interpretation and application of a "code" of conduct that is shaped by tradition and cultural interaction rather than through a formal structure provided by the written word.

The research was focused on how professional hockey players, in the NHL who have voluntarily or involuntarily assumed the role of an "enforcer" or resorted to "physical play," experienced and interacted according to the "code" within the social world of their sport. How do professional hockey players accept and experience the "code" within their lived experience of NHL ice hockey culture? How do they judge, acknowledge, and negotiate their ice hockey roles as they move through their careers? Personal interviews with two former NHL players provided data for an in-depth examination of the unwritten rules, the "code," within the social milieu of the lived NHL. As Bowen (2008) stated, the methodology of using an in-depth interview process helped "to gain a fresh perspective on a familiar situation" (p. 138). The interviews allowed a glimpse of these player's personal perception of the potential for benefit or cost due to violence inside and outside the "code," as games unfolded during their careers.

Sample

Snowball sampling methodology was used to develop an initial study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess characteristics that are of research study's interest. Specifically, a former Major Junior A hockey player, who became an agent for professional ice hockey players in the NHL, was consulted to initiate the sampling methodology. A Snowball Sampling Interview Guide was used to record the possible participants (Appendix C). The participants were a purposely chosen sample with identifiable characteristics (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011).

The participants were both former NHL hockey players who had been identified as having played or asked, in some manner, to assume an enforcer role or play physically, at times during their ice hockey careers. The study actively sought out the people needed to elicit an insider's view of the subject matter. Both participants played ice hockey in a Major Junior A League and the NHL for more than ten years, were male and over the age of 18. The research only used male participants, as no female ice hockey players have fulfilled the role of the enforcer in the NHL. The participants were contacted and recruited by the principal researcher. They were recruited in person or by using a Telephone Contact Introduction and Participant Request Form, developed specifically for this study (Appendix D). No preference was given to playing position and or leadership roles within current NHL teams or organizations. Both participants were required to read and sign a Participant Consent Form before the interview was initiated (Appendix C).

Researcher's Background

The primary interviewer was, John Buxcey, a graduate student in the School of Exercise Science and Physical Health Education at the University of Victoria. As an interviewer he entered the process with a set of biases, perspectives and reasons for conducting this study. They should be considered and stated before the collection of data (Patton, 2002). He was influenced by his long engagement in various sports as an athlete, coach, administrator, referee, and spectator. His involvement in hockey, as a player, has been limited to the role of spectator following a brief involvement in minor hockey. His knowledge of the game and the nuances of the “code” of conduct, in Ice Hockey in general and the NHL in particular, are based mainly on perceptions derived from watching, reading, and listening to the Canadian media as well as listening to the stories of friends or acquaintances who were players or former players, as he grew up in Canada and the United States of America.

The movement toward the genre of ethnodramatic representation was tentative but was eased by a love for drama and theatre. As a youngster John wrote and performed plays for his family using his siblings and sometimes his parents as actors. He sang and acted in school plays up until the time sports demanded all of his spare time. In High School he studied Theatre Arts where he wrote and directed small plays and skits at school assemblies. As an undergraduate student he majored in English and Political Science. One of his favourite areas of study was Modern Drama. He appreciates a wide range of writers; two of his favourites are Sam Sheppard and Tom Stoppard. He also spent a year in the Writing Faculty where he was required to write a play.

The primary researcher may also bring biases developed through long term involvement in the sport of Rugby Union. As a rugby player, he has been involved in acts of violence that have escalated to rough play and fighting in order to protect himself and or others within a “code” of conduct that governed certain aspects of the game of rugby. As a rugby coach, he recognized the utility and importance of developing skilled players as well as ones that bring a physical presence or an edge to the game. As an administrator and referee, he realizes that changes to old or traditional unwritten “codes” require the courage and determination of the league administrators in the face of resistance from the people who view change as in some way undermining the integrity of their game.

Creswell & Miller’s (2000) study suggested the following validity procedure:

It is particularly important for researchers to acknowledge and describe their entering beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds.

(p. 127)

The researcher attempted not to actively carry prior personal theories and pre-determined thoughts into the initial research process allowing for ideas and themes to emerge on their own. The researcher was reliant on the player’s insider knowledge and ways of knowing in order to strengthen the methodology and diminish, to an extent, outsider biases. In this sense, the role of the researcher was to be as transparent as possible, allowing the player’s sense of their experiences to guide the interview process rather than through self-serving bias.

The researcher became aware that transparency was and is a problematic ideal when attempting to apply it to an interview process. The interviewer was fully engaged in the material

under investigation and had made himself knowledgeable about the careers, both in ice hockey and in business, of the participants. As a result, the researcher had a sense of comfort with both participants and “Where necessary, the interviewer departed from the guide to gain more in-depth descriptions of the participants’ attitudes and experience” (Grange & Kerr, 2010, p. 38). Also, “Elaboration probes included verbal and non-verbal cues in which the interviewer encouraged the interviewee to continue talking” (Cope, Eys, Schinke & Bosselut, 2010, pp. 426-27). It is an ideal born in the quantitative world of research and the attempt to follow a transparent path may not allow for the full richness of personal conversations to be realized.

Data Collection

The research data was collected using person-to-person interviews, approximately 60 – 65 minutes in length, with participants identified as players that have fulfilled the role of physical players, during portions of their careers in the NHL. Qualitative research like this, stresses purposive sampling in order to facilitate quality rather than quantity (Bowen, 2008). Prior to the interview participants were asked to complete a Participant Consent Form (Appendix C). The interview questions were semi-structured and conversational in tone, using the Interview Guide: Ice Hockey Code (Appendix F). The interviews questions were used to probe deeply and intensively in order to gain insight, collect good data, and understand the nuance of what is occurring (Thomas et al, 2011). The interviews were recorded using the computer audio editor Audacity® (audacity-win-unicode-2.0.2) and an iPhone 4S. The use of audio recordings allowed the interviews to be transcribed with accuracy. The data collected was based on the participants’ actual experience of the events, their events.

All interviews were transcribed and returned to the participants for approval for member checking, a common procedure to enhance the validity of qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The technique allowed the participants an opportunity to make additions or clarify text. The process ensured the transcript data was recorded in the language and context intended by the interviewee. The researcher maintained both a reflective journal and field notes that document the research process and support the audio recordings with back up notes of the interviews. The reflective journal enabled the researcher to make personal experiences and interpretations visible and an acknowledged part of the research design (Morrow, 2005; Ortlipp, 2008). The reflective journal provided another step in establishing the trustworthiness of the research.

Data Analysis

A number of approaches were taken to examine the data and develop findings. Inductive analyses served as the foundation for the understanding of the participant's experience. This type of analyses lends itself "to identifying patterns and discovering theoretical properties in the data" (Bowen, 2008, p. 144). Three specific approaches were purposefully used in this study to begin developing themes from the two recorded interviews. First, the researcher manually reading and re-reading the final transcripts in order to identify emergent themes and patterns of behaviour, then recording them using pencil and paper. The researcher approached the data without predetermined coding categories in order to allow findings to surface directly from the data collected (Paton, 2002). The researcher attempted not to drag prior theories and personal ideology into the data coding process. In the second approach, the study used the Qualitative Research Tool NVivo 10, an electronic method to code data, to help shape and make sense of the participant's accounts with a greater level of transparency (Johnston, 2006). The use of NVivo

10 reinforced and labelled particular words that helped to reaffirm the results of the pencil and paper exercise. Finally, the researcher listened to specific interview moments in the audio recording in order to better realize and understand the type and level of emotion contained in the participants' story. This concept of reflective listening enhanced the context-dependent quality of the recorded interviews (Taylor, 2001). It was a time consuming method of analysis, but a thorough audio examination allows the researcher to better understand expressive contextual elements, such as sighs, pauses, and laughter.

As a result, the researcher became immersed in the data on a number of levels. It was a difficult task as it was not fundamentally a mechanical or technical exercise. It was, however, a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorizing (Basit, 2003). The goal of the researcher was to become engaged in the study as an iterative exercise, drawing on the experience of gaining first-hand information from the lived experience of the participants. The researcher attempted to achieve a deeper understanding of possible coding categories, relationships, and assumptions by continually refining and examining personal interpretations. By identifying categories and patterns, the researcher was able to make more sense of the data and start to ask new questions (Johnston, 2006).

These processes enabled the researcher to generate a "codebook" with themes and patterns derived from the rich social commentary collected, listening to the emotion evident in the voice of the participants, and through the practice of personal reflection. "A codebook is a set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help analyze interview data" (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2010, p. 138). It is a tool that can be advantageous, at this stage of analysis, to ensure that the theoretical ideas which have emerged and documented in the first round of coding can be systematically evidenced in the data. "The process of building the

codebook is complex and dynamic” (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay & Milstein, 1996, p. 32). The sequencing and development of coding methods in this manner served to increase the validity of the research results and it may be "easier" to see if all data relevant to, for example, "identity" were congruent with each other. The researcher recognizes the value of both manual and electronic tools and will use of the advantage of each (Welsh, 2002).

Participant Biographies

Participant 1.

Participant one is a Canadian and former professional ice hockey player in the NHL. He was an undrafted free agent. His productive professional career spanned seventeen years. He played for five different NHL teams. He was forced into retirement, after the onset of post-concussion syndrome. During his developmental years, he played provincial Junior A and Major Junior A ice hockey over a three year period. He grew up in a hockey family. He has head coaching experience at the provincial Junior A and university level.

Participant 2.

Participant two is a Canadian and former professional ice hockey player in the NHL. He was drafted in the first round of the NHL entry draft. His professional career spanned nine years. He spent his entire professional career in one organization. During his developmental years, he played provincial Junior A and Major Junior A ice hockey over a three year period. He did not grow up in a hockey family. He currently runs a successful consulting business.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken that informed the proposed study. The pilot study entitled “Lacrosse Code” was conducted by Dr. John Meldrum and John Buxcey. Lacrosse is Canada’s national summer sport. Lacrosse and ice hockey share some defining characteristics. Both

games originated in Canada and are team sports that penalize fighting rather than respond with an immediate ejection or suspension. They also share unwritten rules of engagement termed the “code.” The pilot study examined and interpreted the “rules and meanings” implicit in the “code” by interviewing former Lacrosse enforcers. The pilot study’s stated objective was to better understand the role of the enforcer in elite Lacrosse.

The pilot study also served to provide a trial run for the study design planned for the full-scale study. It provided a training ground for researchers to practice using electronic equipment and interview techniques and skills. The pilot study determined whether instructions are adequate (Thomas et al, 2011). Pilot studies serve as a crucial element in good study design (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 1998). The pilot study was used to improve the study design and process of the full-scale study.

Four former Western Lacrosse Association (WLA) players were recruited for the study. They were all male, as there was no record of a female fulfilling the role of “enforcer,” retired from Lacrosse, and over the age of 40. The pilot study revealed a general reluctance on part of the participants to be referred to as an “enforcer.” They were quick to equate the word enforcer with the term “goon.” Two of the participants revealed they had participated in between 100 and 200 fights in their senior Lacrosse careers and had been the number one and two league leaders in penalty minutes in one particular year. They typified themselves as “good guys” just doing their job, answering the bell, and taking care of business. They also self-identified themselves as being skilled defensive players.

Their responses addressed the need for the study and future studies to develop an awareness of the social implications of the word “enforcer.” It may be necessary to describe or provide a definition of the role of the enforcer as it applies to the research question. Future

research will describe the role of enforcer in greater detail using quantified researchable data. For example, the number of penalty minutes, the number of fights and the type of penalties incurred during a season can be used to help define a particular player as an enforcer. In future studies, the term “enforcer” will be presented to describe a player, regardless of offensive or defensive skill level, whose unofficial team role is to deter or respond to perceived unacceptable behaviour by the opposition. The definition of informal roles, such as “enforcer,” will help the accuracy with which they are identified by athletes within sport teams (Cope et al., 2011). The research will bear in mind that the role is contextually framed and therefore can and will evolve and change over time.

Summary

The role of the “code” or “code of conduct” was recorded, examined, documented, and written, in the context of ice hockey as it is played in the NHL, through the lived experience of two former players through the method of qualitative in-depth interviews. Although this study was exploratory in nature, it may be useful to participants to see a summary of findings of others who have lived a similar role. By better understanding the role of players as they navigate their careers in sport we may be able to, over time, develop recommendations to organization involved in sport where aggression is a major component of the culture in which they are situated. Finally, the research’s findings and observations may add to society’s overall understanding of the impact of “codes” of conduct, unwritten and often unspoken rules, conflict, coercion, and violence in their lived worlds by viewing them in sport settings.

Chapter 4: Play (Ethnodrama)

Rationale

Academic writing is a style we have learned and practised as we progress and communicate throughout our studies and present our research. “Everyone doing research – from an undergraduate writing a research project to a seasoned professor who is going to submit work to a journal for publication – has to write” (Groom, Nelson, Potrac, & Smith, 2014, p. 86). An aspect of process of research that is often discussed as a shortcoming is the involvement and bias of the researchers. The manner in which I view qualitative and interpretive work has been influenced through my exposure to Andrew C. Sparkes. Sparkes speaks to the emergence of new forms of representation and the shifting landscape of qualitative research within the social sciences in much of his academic writing.

Sparkes (2002) writes: My hope is that in the coming years a variety of representational forms will come to be valued in their own right for the powerful ways in which they can enhance and extend our understanding of sport and physical activity [PA]. (p. 233-234)

In this research, I have chosen to use a written drama as the representational form. The play was crafted through the discipline of qualitative research and analysis of the players’ values, knowledge, and perceptions as they were revealed in their interviews.

The foundation for this play was co-constructed in the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and then written and re-written through the lens of the researcher and his advisory committee. The researcher also had the opportunity to view six extracts of the play as they were acted in Dr. Tim Hopper’s EPHE 585, Qualitative Research Genres Applied to Education, Health and Society, class at the University of Victoria. This allowed the researcher a different lens, the viewpoint as audience, in which to understand the level of authenticity and

trustworthiness (Appendix G). As the research was moved into this interpretive representational art form, the messages would become more fully appreciated (Sparkes). The observations and thoughtful comments elicited from the class confirmed and strengthened the researcher/writer's intention to connect the research with the audience in an accessible engaged manner.

The use of a written dramatic form of representation, or the genre "ethnodrama," allows the researcher and audience an opportunity to observe and explore the sociology and psychology of violent behaviour in the NHL. "A genre is understood as a style or form of representing research data" (Hopper et al., 2008, p. 216). It is a form that not only allows representation but the "idea of ethnodrama is to transform data from, for instance, interviews, participant observation, fiction, and/or autoethnographic accounts, into theatrical scripts and performance pieces" (Smith & Sparkes, 2009, p. 285). Ethnodramatic representation allows both the opportunity to listen, read and view ideas and behaviours distributed among characters and then acted out on a stage. It allows for the investigation, expression and explanation of events to unfold which shed light on the lived personal and often emotional world of NHL hockey players.

Identity Construction

by

John S. Buxcey

Act One

SCENE

The focal point is a comfortable booth in a roped off area at the back of an upscale restaurant. It could be anywhere in a major urban centre. It has richly appointed upholstery and its' walls are hung with works of popular local artists. There is a back bar to the right and a hallway to the kitchen on the left. There is a row of three booths facing the audience. There is an area behind the booths that can be used for a dance floor or a place to set up a buffet or flexible seating arrangements. The middle table is set for three.

Cast:

Brian: (Retired National Hockey League Player) *Mid 40s fit, 6' 4" 220 lbs., healthy male.*

Neatly attired: wearing a conservative dark blue suit, no tie and Timex Iron man watch. Owns a successful consulting business.

George: (Retired National Hockey League Player) *Early 50s fit, 6' 200 lbs., good looking healthy male. Carefully appointed: hair product, wearing a tailored suit, tie and diamond studded Rolex watch. Business entrepreneur.*

John: (Researcher) *Greying hair, mid 50s fit, 5' 6" 170 lbs., Casually attired: university logoed shirt, conservative glasses, Timex watch, Levi jeans, and new running shoes.*

Pierre: (Server) *Late 20s healthy good looking male.*

Ruta: (Server) *Difficult to distinguish age could be late 20s or early thirties self assured, good looking female.*

Scene 1

CURTAIN

As the curtain rises, John is escorted to a booth in an area of the restaurant that is usually not open at lunch.

JOHN: I hope this is not presenting a problem for you.

PIERRE: It is absolutely no problem. George set this up with the owner. He is a welcome regular and we often set him up back here for private meetings.

JOHN: Thanks, that is very reassuring.

PIERRE:

Pierre motions to sit down and places menus on the table as John sits.

Coffee?

JOHN: Yes ... please, and a glass of water as well please.

PIERRE: Cream? Sugar?

JOHN: Cream please.

Pierre exits as John begins to set up a lap top and microphone on table. Pierre returns with glass of water, cup filled with coffee, and creamer jug. Sets them on the table in a crisp professional manner.

PIERRE: Is there anything else I can bring you at the moment?

JOHN: No thanks.

PIERRE: I'll look in and check up on you from time to time.

JOHN: Thank you.

John finishes setting up the microphone and laptop and tests it and then he shuffles papers. He separates a consent form from the rest of the papers and sets it up with a pen. Pours cream into his coffee and takes a sip. Places cup back on table and turns his attention to the microphone on the table.

JOHN: Test.

Adjusts volume on computer.

Test. Prrrfect.

John rises out of booth and walks to front of stage with a spotlight following his movements. The rest of the stage darkens.

Soliloquy One – Introduction and Rationale

JOHN: Here it is ... my introduction and a rationale, I suppose, of the defining thoughts behind presenting my research in this manner. You won't find this drama heavy with debates regarding

it as a representational form with academic legitimacy. You won't find me using words such as ontological, epistemological, or etiological in the dialogue of the play. But you will discover a representation of the nature of a described reality, a relationship between the researcher and the researched, and an intention to reveal the underlying cultural myths that dominate a history and expectation of behaviour by athletes in the NHL, and physically violent sports. In the characters you will find a "truth," their truth. It may not inherently be yours. Yours may, in fact, be different ... be very different.

John pauses here turns and walks two steps to the right and slowly turns to address audience.

There is emotion and tension when we disagree whether we speak our truths or not. There is a type of power in speaking your truths, but it also raises or creates the possibility of conflict. We live in this disagreement at times throughout our lives. Our society is not exclusively peaceful; it is filled with violent moments. In Hockey and other physical contact sports, violence is often seen as an effective manner in which to maintain or assert power.

Pause.

Please sit back, watch, and listen to the characters as they share their stories and their relationship with violence during their NHL careers. Hopefully, the dialogue will evoke emotion in you, the audience. Remember these particular points and take time to reflect upon them later. Some questions you might ask: Is violence an intrinsic component of contemporary sport? Do you tolerate or champion sport violence that you would not tolerate in a non-sporting context? How about when your favourite team initiates or commits extreme levels of violence?

Lights slowly illuminate rest of the stage as the spotlight dims. John walks back to booth and sits as George is escorted in by Pierre sharing a laugh. Pierre motions George to sit down with a flourish. George sits opposite John.

Scene 2

PIERRE: Would you like anything to drink George?

GEORGE: Just the usual sparkling water ... thanks.

Pierre exits.

GEORGE: My apologies for being late. I was held up by a call.

JOHN: No problem George. I am really appreciative that you could take time from your busy schedule and meet with me.

GEORGE: No problem.

JOHN:

As he slides a document and a pen across the table to George.

There are a couple of housekeeping items I need to take care of before we get started.

GEORGE: Ethics? Where do I sign?

JOHN:

Pointing to form.

Yes. Sign here.

GEORGE: Anything else before we start?

JOHN: Yes, just a quick verbal explanation. George, thank you for agreeing to participate. You may exit the study at any time, if for some reason you do not want to continue. I do not have any predetermined answers as this is a qualitative study. This is really your story, your perspective, and ... we are now recording. I do have a written format, but the conversation may stray from the document from time to time. Think of it as providing structure and a guideline to refer to or from.

GEORGE: No bible? No swearing to tell the whole truth?

JOHN: No.

Chuckles, head slightly tilted to one side, smiles enough to crinkle skin around eyes.

There are certain aspects of the game that are governed in certain ways. Certain parts of the game that players take care of when the referees do not.

GEORGE:

Nodding in agreement.

Yes

JOHN: When you were a player coming up, whether it was in bantam, midget or junior, when did you become aware of a code or a code of conduct in hockey?

GEORGE:

Thoughtful pause.

I would say probably not until I was pro in Boston¹.

¹ Home of the NHL team the Boston Bruins.

JOHN:

Head snaps up with a look of surprise.

Wow! Really?

GEORGE: Yes, because I think that in junior hockey it's every man for himself and everybody's not wanting to be intimidated or back-down or ... you know they will basically sacrifice themselves in unfair situations. And then, when you turn pro, it changes to the enforcers enforce, the players play, and it's not often that there is an uneven matchup.

JOHN: So, as a pro, when you started being a pro, how did you learn about that? Is it just ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

Well I think that in Boston there was a code that if anybody hit Ray Bourque² or messed with Ray Bourque that they would pay and it would be ...

Pause. Gathering his thoughts.

Let's say that a ... let's say that I was 180 pounds. If it was a hundred and eighty pound guy, then I would know as a 180 pound guy that I would have to go after that guy. If it was a 210+ pound guy, which was usually the enforcers, a 210+ pound enforcer would go after him. But, that's where the respect really took place.

JOHN: Respect?

Leaning forward toward George.

² Ray Bourque was a record setting NHL defenceman who played the majority of his career with Boston.

What would happen if this procedure was not followed?

GEORGE:

Pause.

I will refer to the Naslund³ situation.

JOHN: OK. Could you just go through that with me?

GEORGE: So, when ... I'm sure when Moore⁴ knocked out Naslund ... after that game, you know it was an elbow, and after that game all the guys on his team would be high fiving each other in the shower laughing about the hit.

JOHN: Really?

GEORGE: Really! In my era early in the eighties, in Boston, if someone hit Ray Bourque like that, they would not have gotten off that ice alive or without a really good beating.

JOHN: On that day?

GEORGE:

With emphasis.

In that instant! The benches would have cleared.

JOHN:

Leans back into booth as he questions George.

³ Markus Naslund was an NHL player known for his offensive skills. He played the majority of his NHL career with the Vancouver Canucks.

⁴ Steven Moore played in the NHL for the Colorado Avalanche. He is best known for the career ending injury received during an incident with Todd Bertuzzi.

What's changed? Why would you think there would be a difference from when you played to an event in 2004?

GEORGE: Well I think that basically the rules have changed the game to the point where a guy risks fines, and suspensions. You know I think that the instigator penalty created a situation where if the game was close and somebody got hit hard like that, then guys were afraid to go deal with it because they might put their team at a disadvantage.

JOHN: So in your own playing career, how did the code and the way you perceived the code to work, how did that define you as a player on your team, and perhaps even in the league?

Pause for George to respond, but he does not.

I guess, in my sense of your situation, when you are looking at your own portfolio you would have an area that's a skill level, an ability not to be intimidated level, and then sometimes you would most likely have a role where you would be trying to change the way the game was going, if it wasn't going in your team's favour.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: So if you could reflect on how your career may have changed as your career played out?

GEORGE: So when I broke in, when I was twenty years old, I was basically a scrappy player trying to prove myself. So I would run around and hit and fight and do whatever I had to do, to try to give myself the opportunity to move up and compete every game. And ... then with, with time gradually, in Boston, I went from the fourth line to the third line to the first line.

JOHN: Right. George is it ... can we go back and look at your junior career?

GEORGE: Yeah. So, I think that, you know, I mean in junior I scored lots of points, but it wasn't until I played my last year that I played physical enough that I got NHL attention.

JOHN: Now can we expand on the idea of playing physical and getting NHL attention?

GEORGE: Sure.

JOHN: Because I was wondering about what was going on ... now did you get drafted?

GEORGE: No. Twice I went through undrafted.

JOHN:

Nods head in agreement.

Yeah! So, but when I look at your junior career. I've done the stats research on you.

GEORGE: Yeah. I had a hundred points.

JOHN: It's ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

I had a lot of points.

JOHN: Yeah. You had ... well you had ... your two last seasons were pretty good seasons and your last season was really good.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: How do you make sense of it?

GEORGE:

Flashing a big smile, almost bashful.

So I was a late bloomer. I was small. I was like six feet 160 when I was 19.

JOHN:

Smiling.

A little lean for contact.

GEORGE:

Nods in agreement.

And so I guess a lot of the NHL scouts thought that I was scared and I wouldn't play physical ... um because I twice went through the draft. Once in Major Junior A when I was 18 when we went to the Memorial Cup⁵, but I had played in Provincial Junior all year. So I played in the Provincial Junior League, then I got called up for the last 11 games of the season and then we went to the Memorial Cup and then the following year I played there and that was when I was 19 and I had a hundred points plus and then My last year ... well what happened after that year was a significant thing is that one of the scouts from LA⁶ came to town and wanted to meet me. And so I met him and he told me that I had the skill to play in the NHL but I had to put on 20 pounds and I had to play physical and compete because a lot of guys thought I was scared because I had like 6 penalty minutes or something that year. So I basically trained all summer at the Y⁷. I lifted weights, and I had a full time job, and then I took boxing from a local boxing legend.

⁵ Cup symbolic of Major Junior A ice hockey supremacy in North America.

⁶ Los Angeles (LA) is home of the Kings in the NHL.

⁷ Y symbolizes the YMCA-YWCA.

JOHN: So just ... so, so when he's saying physical. When that scout is saying physical, he means that you've got to get in scraps, in fights, prove yourself?

GEORGE: Yeah. Basically he told me all the scouts think you're a great player but they think you're scared. And so he says you know you've got to learn to defend yourself and when guys are abusing you, you have to, you know, you have to confront the situation. So, basically the first game we played exhibition the next year I fought a huge guy who used to abuse me all the time when we played against each other. He was about six foot four 220 or something and I remember the first ... in the first period he did something, slashed me, or something, then he and I fought and I beat him. And then he never came near me the rest of the year. But then I fought all the time because I played on the same line as one of our best players. He was our best player most nights and everybody knew he was only seventeen. So, everybody would go after him ... to intimidate him.

Lights dim as spotlight illuminates John. He rises out of the booth and walks to the front of the stage and begins to address the audience.

Soliloquy Two – George begins identity construction

JOHN: There it is. He isn't or doesn't appear to be quite what they want and so begins the process of identity construction and confirmation. It is a distinct point in his pursuit of a career in the NHL. It is this actual focused process that I draw your attention to, as George begins the process of socialization into the embodiment of a prospective professional NHL player. He has in effect decided to take on a new role, a new job, to become more violent, and this changes who he is and how he thinks of himself. Complementary to this is acceptance. Will the NHL confirm the new identity through an expression of interest? One cannot hope to fully participate unless both occur.

Pauses thoughtfully. Smiles.

Let's see what happens.

Walks back to booth. Lights return as spotlight fades. John returns focus to George.

Scene 3

JOHN: So, you, you protected him?

GEORGE: Somebody had to defend him. So it always, usually it was me. So I got ... and then by Christmas time I had twelve NHL contract offers.

John turns to the audience as the number of contract offers is expressed and winks.

So that was the difference between not getting drafted and being wanted was just basically competing. You know ... fighting.

JOHN: You consciously fleshed out that part of your portfolio.

GEORGE: Yeah. Yeah.

JOHN: Then they were attracted to you.

GEORGE: Yeah, I could have signed with anybody that year and I chose Boston because I thought I had the best chance to play there, but I probably ... I mean I spent a year in the minors ... I probably could have made a better choice.

JOHN: So can you tell me a little about that because you went there and I am not too sure whether I have this right? You went there and you played in the minors. Then you prepared again the next summer and went to camp again and from what I've been told, many people felt you had the best preseason of anybody, but, then you went back to the minors.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Is that right?

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Good, I've got that right. Can you explain your kind of ... mind set through that? What were you trying to accomplish in that camp that would have been different from the year before?

GEORGE: Well my first year I had a good camp too and I thought that, when I looked at all the teams, I thought, Boston basically had the weakest left side and that I would get a chance to play there right away. But what happened is they drafted a left winger in the first round and they drafted another kid in the second. I was a free agent ... and it's still the same. In hockey, if you're a free agent you have less of a chance of making the team than the first or second rounders. You have to work your way in. So my first year ... I played physical in camp. I can't remember how I did scoring wise, in camp, but I know in the second year I was one of the leaders in scoring but they sent me down ... again.

JOHN: Oh. Back to the minors?

GEORGE: Yeah. My first year I played in the minors but I hardly got any minutes because the coach down there played all the Washington guys.

JOHN: Washington?

GEORGE: We were affiliated Washington and Boston.

JOHN: So it was political?

GEORGE: It was politics all the way. I didn't play a lot. So I, I didn't want to go back there ... because that guy was coaching there again and it was just ... you know I wanted to play and I

didn't think I'd play again. So, that was when I basically told the Bruins that I wasn't going to go unless ... I said I'd go to any other team in the American League but that team. So then, I think it was about ten days later we came to an agreement with my agent that I would go there for a period of time and they would either bring me back or trade me. So, I went there back there and scored like sixteen points in eight games and they brought me back.

JOHN: That's pretty good.

GEORGE: Yeah. And so that was basically it. I was in the minors one more time after that, but just for a short period. I think that ... you know I had a good season my first season there playing on the third line. We were just checkers. And then the next year they had ... basically another first, one of their first rounders who was a left winger, who played ahead of me and then I went to Moncton for a couple of weeks and then they brought me back again and that was the last time that I was ever in the ... in the minors.

JOHN: Yeah. So that's ... for being undrafted pretty good. You spent one year and a couple of games.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: So now that you're ... you're you know you've got through that season and you're in your next season. How do you? How did you look at where you fit? What were you trying to do with let's say scoring and the other, the scrappy part of your portfolio?

GEORGE: Well that was probably the hardest part ... early on it is trying to find a niche to stay there.

JOHN: How did you fit in?

GEORGE:

Pauses. Rubbing his chin with right hand.

Well they didn't really need me in a scoring role and so they were trying to basically play me on the checking line but also trying to give me the opportunity to play. So, I didn't play power play my first few years, my first three years probably ... and so I checked. I played four on four.

And basically just tried to play ... physical really. Just hit and you know create chances and I was fast so I could check guys. I could get back and I could take chances up front. So, I learned a lot those years and worked hard.

JOHN: So what happened in your fourth year?

GEORGE: It was my last year in Boston I played on a really good line. Well actually no ... it was my third year when I started to score. We scored, we scored a lot.

JOHN: Did your role start to change?

GEORGE: Yeah, we scored a lot and that was when I started to play the power play and started to get a chance in offensive situations. Then my last year I played, I played on a great line with a future hall of famer.

JOHN: Yeah.

Showing obvious excitement.

So did your ... was there ... as your points went up did your penalty minutes go down or did they stay about the same? What was your perception of that?

GEORGE: In Boston ... probably always stayed the same because ... it was ... Boston was probably the most intense place I ever played.

JOHN: Oh really! Even more intense than ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts. Says with emphasis.

It was Boston Garden right!

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: It's the smallest rink in the league and it was like ...

JOHN: Smallest rink ... the surface?

GEORGE: Yeah, yeah and it was like intense. You had to be ... I mean if you weren't totally focused you could get your head ripped off because things happened quicker in that building than anywhere else. There and Chicago because they were small ... and it's fast and so I think that Boston was always a place we had huge rivalries with Montreal, Buffalo, Quebec. It was always ... it was always very physical!

JOHN: I guess you would have that being part of the original six. There are age old rivalries. You, you probably ... when you talk about it that way, which I hadn't really thought about, you would have more big games, more emotional games ...

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: ... in a season than a lot of teams.

GEORGE: Yeah. There's, there was ... it's interesting you know, a lot of Saturday afternoon games and there's more fights in the stands than there was on the ice. That's how intense that building was and how, how intense the atmosphere was.

JOHN:

Shaking head in disbelief.

Wow!

GEORGE: And, and you know ... I remember lots of times, lots of games where the games would stop because there were huge brawls in the stands. And that's just the way it was, it was just an intense place because people are running around trying to kill each other on the ice and then the fans are yelling and screaming at each other and ...

JOHN: Are these Boston Bruin fans fighting each other? Are these ...

GEORGE: Sometimes. You just, you know it was always ... different and people would come from out of, out of town, other cities and cheer for their team and then they were ... that was a problem. You know, too much alcohol consumption led to lots of brawls.

JOHN: Does that still go on ...

GEORGE:

Shakes head.

It's different. It is intense but not crazy like it, like it was.

JOHN: So, things, things changed a bit. Good to hear. Maybe we can move back to the game on the ice?

GEORGE: Sure.

JOHN: How is the "code" followed today compared to when you played?

GEORGE: Today it's just ... how I sort of explain it is that ... today it is a different game. It's faster. The equipment is different. It's basically the elbow pads the shoulder pads are like concrete. And these kids basically ... probably don't have the respect for each other that guys had when there were ... when there were consequences.

JOHN: So, can you just elaborate a little bit on that? You know for me looking in from the outside.

GEORGE: OK.

Pauses.

So, when I grew up. When I was younger. You know, we didn't wear masks in junior. And so ... now at a young age these kids all wear visors or masks, full masks in junior. So what happens is ... is uh ... the natural reaction when you are going to get hit is to defend yourself high and they come up to the NHL and they don't have the masks on but they still are defending themselves high. I mean it was, at the end of my career in two thousand, it was becoming a problem where you would go to hit a guy and he would ... his automatic defence was to come up. And you know I can remember in training camp a couple of time getting cross-checked right in the face because these kids were scared because you were coming in to hit them. And it's gotten worse, since then, to the point where guys now, in the old days, if a guy got hit cheap, and he was pissed off, he would just go fight the guy. Where now if a guy gets hit cheap, he's looking to hit the other guy cheap again at some point in the game. And now that the concussion situation has become more aware ... or visible. You're starting to see guys take guys out.

JOHN: So take guys out within the context of not fighting?

GEORGE: Right.

JOHN: So I'm looking to get you when you're not looking? That sort of thing?

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Looking to get you in the boards? So?

GEORGE: I'm ... OK I'll give you ... my career ended from a sucker punch. But, I always tell everybody: "I lived by the sword. So, I died by the sword." And that is I, I played in a lot of situations to win, at all costs. So, if I had to hit somebody. You know I hit the goalie, basically on purpose in a playoff series. We won the game because he was concussed, basically. You know I hit lots of guys dirty to try and take them out of the game or take them out of the series in different situations not always thinking I was going to take them out of the series but basically to try to gain an advantage.

JOHN: So in that sense the "code" like when you get in tight games you get in the playoffs, the "code," the "code of conduct" really doesn't govern how you play?

GEORGE: Playoffs. Playoffs the "code" changes because in the playoffs all guys play physical. But there's no room to play cheap because you can't afford to take penalties.

JOHN: Right.

GEORGE: So, I mean that's why LA, two years ago, cruised over everybody because they were big and strong and physical and teams ... couldn't ... they ... the other teams ... they couldn't control them and they couldn't stay with them because they'd wear them down in the first two games.

JOHN: So, now that we're talking about ... did you ... the season before when there was the final between Vancouver and Boston, did you think there was a conscious effort by the refereeing crews to referee differently in the final?

GEORGE: I think that ... So, the turn in that series was when that Aaron Rome⁸ knocked out Nathan Horton⁹ ...

Long pause.

JOHN:

Looking expectantly at George.

Yes.

GEORGE: ... with that hit ... the refereeing did change, they decided to let the players play, really play, and so did Boston's mentality.

JOHN: Go on.

GEORGE: They pissed off Boston and so Boston started going after them physically, really physically, and the Canuck's got scared. They backed off.

JOHN: They didn't, they didn't respond physically?

GEORGE: No ... they didn't respond and so Boston said: "Uh huh!" "This is how we beat these guys, we hit them and scare the shit out of them!"

JOHN: Really?

GEORGE: And it worked!

⁸ Vancouver Canuck defenceman at that time.

⁹ Boston Bruins winger at that time.

Slowly shaking his head as he speaks.

You saw it in game seven; Vancouver was ... nowhere.

JOHN: Now ... now Boston's decided to do that and for whatever reason Vancouver thinking the refs are going to take care of them? Do you think that played into it at all?

GEORGE:

Pauses.

Probably.

JOHN: Because I can remember ... I believe it was a quote from one of the Sedins¹⁰ that when they were talking to him about Boston's rough play he said: "Well you know we can get a penalty or they can get a penalty and we can score a goal." Boston was doing things that were certainly border-line, but weren't getting called for it in the context of ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

No. But I think in the playoffs a lot more is let go than regular season.

JOHN: Right.

GEORGE: So ... you know you don't see the injuries in the regular season that are in the playoffs because guys can ... take that extra step, they turn it up a notch.

¹⁰ Referring to the Sedin twins. Two highly skilled offensive players who play for the Vancouver Canucks.

JOHN: So ... OK. So when we are talking about regular season and playoffs. So what would you, what would you see as actions that might be perceived as unjustified? So where's the line? How does the line get crossed in the playoffs as compared to the regular season?

GEORGE: The line gets crossed in the playoffs when the game is out of hand, out of reach or the series is in jeopardy.

JOHN: Oh OK.

GEORGE: So let's say you're in a seven game series and you're down two games to one and in the fourth game the team that's down two to one is trying to tie the series at two games apiece and they're losing by three or four goals, that's when their guys start to try to hurt the other guys.

JOHN: And that's that part about sending a message for the next game.

GEORGE: Yeah, yeah.

With emphasis.

Sending a message for the rest of the series! Intimidation is a huge part of sports!

JOHN: It sure is.

GEORGE: Any sport, and I don't care what sport it is intimidation is in many ways: mental, physical. It's there all the time!

JOHN: Oh absolutely, there's academic papers on intimidation in international ping pong. There's intimidation in tennis. One of the first ones that I read that I found valuable to my research was one on the transition in the way women's basketball was played as it became much more physical and coaches coached intimidating tactics much more like the guy's game.

GEORGE: Yeah. The training for women athletes is different ... it's changed. You see it in women's hockey as well.

Pause.

JOHN: You know ... you spoke briefly, earlier in the interview, you spoke about the, the new rules.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: And if you could just go through ... the new rules ... these are all designed to make the game safer or make the game better, I believe that's why the NHL does things. But, how do they actually work? How do you perceive them working? And do they benefit hockey or do they just create another problem?

GEORGE: I think that ...

Long pause. Rubs chin thoughtfully and continues.

... It's very interesting that ... you know when I fought in the US, women would come up and ask me if the fighting was staged and I would laugh. And they would say why? And I would say no.

Pause ... thinking.

JOHN: Go on.

GEORGE: I said it is guys getting pissed off at each other because hitting is such a big part of the game and they would ... and it was interesting and they ... the women liked the fighting. Which was really, really weird, especially in the US. They thought it was ... I don't know whether they thought it was entertaining or what it was, but there's just sort of ... part of the

game that they, that they liked. But, I think what the rules have done ... is it's made guys scared to play physical at one-hundred percent in certain situations.

JOHN: So can you just tell me what that means? How does that ...?

GEORGE: Well ... when you ... it's hard to explain but when guys are afraid of getting suspended for ten to twenty games or ... there's a part of their game that ...

Thoughtful pause.

I'll use Cooke¹¹ for an example. You know this kid?

JOHN: Yes.

Smiles. Big smile.

He has a reputation.

GEORGE: He runs around. His game ... he's not the biggest guy but he's stocky. He runs around and hits guys and he hurts guys when he hits them and he's not always smart about when he hits guys and where, right. So now he's been suspended so many times that he's watched by the referees and the league. He is intimidated to play the game the way that he's most effective. So you can see him ... you know he's afraid to ... basically ... play full out ... to go for the big hit. He's just one example but there's a lot of those guys. They don't know what to do.

JOHN: So, you're talking about a particular type of player?

GEORGE: Yeah. Physical guys.

JOHN: So does that, does that provide more room and provide more ...

¹¹ He is a professional hockey player who has earned a reputation as a "pest."

Interrupted.

GEORGE: Yeah. It gives them more, more ...

JOHN: ... more ice to people that are skilled?

GEORGE: Yeah. Absolutely!

Smiling

But, only during regular season!

JOHN: Oh sure

Chuckling.

Oh yeah ... yeah.

GEORGE: Because you know there's a reason why some guys get eighty points a year and none in the playoffs or five in the playoffs ... and everyone wonders what's wrong with them.

JOHN: Right.

GEORGE: Because they don't ... they're not comfortable playing in the traffic and aggression that is there in the playoffs.

JOHN: Right. It's not that they don't want to, they can't lift their game because they are ...

Interrupted.

GEORGE: Which is why, another reason why LA won. I mean LA had four kids that played in the East Coast Hockey League the year before they won the Stanley Cup.

JOHN: Yeah that's a rough league.

GEORGE:

Speaks slowly emphasising his point.

That's a really rough league. So here's the thing ... all these rules and all these things in the game are changed for ... because the NHL is trying to get a TV contract. So, they're trying to change the game so it suits what the ...

John interrupts.

JOHN: So it's media driven in a way?

GEORGE: ... the TV bosses. Because they don't have a good TV contract. They don't have a football or baseball contract, and I don't think they ever will. Hockey is a lousy game to watch on TV and a great game to watch live.

JOHN: I agree it's great live ... I guess being Canadian I think it's both.

GEORGE: Yeah. If you understand the game but the Americans don't understand the game.

JOHN: Yeah.

Pauses, gathering his thoughts.

There was a moment there where you were ... these ladies were asking you whether fights were staged. They probably are now ... that's another thing that I think has changed in the game. I can't remember ... as a kid growing up I remember people fighting, but I can't remember per say that they were staged and I do believe with more media the goon did become a bigger more defined figure. The goon morphed from the original enforcer, a guy like John Ferguson¹², who

¹² Former NHL hockey player, he is best know as the enforcer that protected the Montreal Canadian stars.

could also do other things right. So the goon became a guy who was parked on the bench and only came to basically fight the other goon.

GEORGE: Pretty much.

JOHN: And those were staged fights. But that seems to be changing again?

GEORGE: So, let's take an example in the nineties where the guys who were the fighters, a lot of times, couldn't play in the playoffs.

JOHN:

Nods.

Right.

GEORGE: Because you couldn't afford to have them in the line-up because they couldn't play hockey.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: So they didn't play. Each team wouldn't dress their tough guy. So now the difference is, is that the tough guys now have to be able to skate and play the game so that they can play in the playoffs.

JOHN: Yeah. So a guy like Lucic¹³ is probably, today, one of the greatest tough guys because he really can skate ...

GEORGE: ... and score and play the penalty kill and he's just, he's just an intimidating guy.

¹³ Current Boston Bruin forward with a reputation as an uncompromising individual.

JOHN: Going back to when you were getting ready to get into the NHL ... of course there would be training camps and that kind of thing off season ... I know there is a lot more time and effort it seems put into training and off season training, and one of the other things that has developed are actual places where you can go, you can actually go to fight camp and learn how to fight better ... on skates. Were things like that available when you were?

GEORGE: No.

Shaking his head with a big smile breaking out.

I broke into the league in the early eighties. NHL teams didn't even have stationary bikes let alone weights.

JOHN: Wow!

GEORGE: So, we trained in the off season but during the season ... you just played.

JOHN:

Nods in agreement.

GEORGE: So there wasn't ... I mean we used to go to the gym once in a while and work out but, but hardly, hardly at all. Now, it's completely different. I mean now the focus is half on fitness and half on playing the game.

JOHN: And how has that changed the game?

GEORGE: Made it faster, much faster.

JOHN: How?

GEORGE: Yeah it's made it ... I think the speed of the game and the fitness level is definitely much higher than it was back then. It would be interesting to look at an NHL team's VO2 Max¹⁴ test in 1993 and compare it to now.

Phone rings.

I have to take the call. It's my son. He's playing in the minors.

JOHN: Really? OK.

GEORGE:

Shakes head and looks at phone.

Phone went dead. He's a good player.

JOHN: How old is he?

GEORGE: Twenty-three ... hello ... and he broke his nose in a fight and they're trying to make him have surgery tomorrow. Which is the dumbest thing I've ever heard. I broke my nose like twelve times and I never ever got it fixed until my career was over. So, I don't know what the latest is but I've been waiting for him to call me.

JOHN: So did he play Junior A Hockey?

GEORGE: He played provincial junior and then went to the NCAA.

JOHN: Oh.

GEORGE: And he did three years there and then he just left. I'm just trying to see what's going on here.

¹⁴ It is a test used to measure or predict an individual's aerobic capacity.

Phone rings again.

I'm sorry.

JOHN: Absolutely no problem.

As George is talking to his son, John moves from booth to front of stage, lights dim and spotlight follows her movements.

Soliloquy Three – John's self-reflection and challenges audience

JOHN:

Addresses audience.

Hello again. Well ... It's been a revealing interview for me, so far. This is why I love interviews. There are always twists and turns that are unplanned.

Chuckles.

I have to admit that, even though I mentioned to George that I didn't have any predetermined answers, as this is a qualitative study, I was surprised that he wasn't aware of the code until he was a pro in Boston. It was not the answer I was expecting. I had my head so far into my research theorizing about rules, agreements and theoretical outcomes that I hadn't even stopped to think about when I became aware of codes or unwritten rules in sport. As I grew up, I was certainly aware of violence and fighting in hockey but I really didn't give it much thought as having influence over outcomes when I was younger. I learned about them somewhere but they were never officially taught.

Pauses. Then proceeds to address a series of questions to the audience.

Maybe this is a convenient time for you to reflect on your experience? When did you become aware of codes or unwritten rules in sport? Was it from experience? Were you taught? Was it the media?

Pause, slowly turns and walks along front of stage, then stops and turns to the audience.

The phone call? What are we going to learn from the phone call?

John walks to booth and sits as spotlight fades and stage lights rise.

Scene 4

GEORGE: Ridiculous.

Shakes head from side to side. Looks at phone then places on the table top.

Ridiculous.

JOHN: It's a different world in lots of ways hey?

GEORGE:

Shakes head slowly.

It's the worker's compensation forms.

JOHN: Mm Hmm.

GEORGE: So they want him to get it fixed during the season. So that they don't have to pay for

...

JOHN: Oh. For the time that he's off?

GEORGE: ... after the season. They don't want him, they don't want to get charged for a worker's comp case when he says ...

Obviously agitated.

What happened right was this guy breaks his nose gets it fixed in the summer and then says he couldn't do anything all summer, he couldn't work.

JOHN: Hmm.

GEORGE: Because of his nose surgery. So he puts in a claim to get paid for the summer.

JOHN: Yes.

GEORGE: So that's fucked it up for everybody else. So now, the rule down there is they want him to have surgery now.

JOHN: Right, and it's more a legal issue, administration issue rather than a hockey player issue.

GEORGE: Right and he'll miss three games ... which is stupid. I said, you know I told him the other day if your nose isn't bothering you, why get it fixed?

JOHN: Right.

GEORGE: You're going to get punched again.

JOHN: Pretty likely right. OK. So if we go back to ... one of the things you mentioned was ... you called it living by the sword dying by the sword. You played a certain way and your career ended a certain way. When you were talking about doing particular things in games that were, I guess justified in the sense that you were doing things to intimidate or hurt other people in order

to win the contest that might be seen as just outside the law or just outside or outside the rules of the game.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: How, how do you ... when you're thinking about it in the game or in a particular point in the game. Is it before the game? Is it when the series starts? Is it in the third period? How did you, as a player go, about coming to the conclusion that you've got to run the goalie?

GEORGE: Uhh, that one was unique because you know the goalie played ... he, he came in we beat them the first two games and he came in and he stoned us in the third period. Then in the third game, he actually shut us out for two periods. So, we used to always have this thing you know ... I mean I played in some interesting places. So you know one of the big things ... lots of coaches who said: "Never ever let a goalie beat you." So there's ways to get a goalie off his game by ... you see guys bumping the goalies all the time in the playoffs. You know I look at the one ... OK I'll give you an example. I didn't hit anybody. We were in a really tight series and we had an all-star goalie. We had the better goalie.

JOHN: Right.

GEORGE: And one of their players jumped on our goalie and tore his ACL ... ON PURPOSE!

JOHN: And this is when you were playing in ...

GEORGE: In the playoffs and that took him out of the series. And then we lost in seven games.

JOHN: Right.

GEORGE: And if it hadn't happened, you know, it definitely would have been a different series.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: Because we didn't really have, we had a good back-up but he wasn't ...

JOHN: So that's a case where ...

GEORGE:

Shrugs shoulders.

That stuff happens.

JOHN:

Nods in agreement.

I understand. When it happens to you like that ... I guess your sense of it is a little bit different than when you actually are doing it to the other person?

GEORGE: Right.

JOHN: So can you just go through that scenario?

GEORGE: Yeah. I think ... you know when it happens to you it is pretty disheartening and ... it takes a lot of wind out of the team's sails. But when it happens for you and it works and you win the game at that moment, you're in the heat of the moment, the competition and you think it's great.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: But, then you don't feel great about it later on ... but at the moment and in that series you get so compelled to winning the series that you don't really feel, you don't really worry about anything else that's going on other than winning.

JOHN: Really?

GEORGE: And you know you have that attitude that you'll do whatever it takes to win.

JOHN: Right. So, in your career ending incident. When you got sucker punched, was it a younger guy?

GEORGE: No, it was a veteran.

JOHN: Oh? History?

GEORGE: So ...

Long pause.

I don't really know like whether he was pissed off at me or pissed off at someone else or if I did something before or whatever? I don't know.

JOHN: You didn't have a history?

GEORGE: Not really, no and I don't think that ... I, I kind of look at it like this is that probably that punch yeah it friggin knocked me out and, and gave me the symptoms the first time that ... basically didn't allow me to ever fully recover. But what it is with concussions is the more concussions you have the easier you have them and the more severe they get. And I think I'd had so many in my career that I was getting to the point where that ... there was going to be that one that put me over the edge ... and that was the one.

JOHN: Even though concussions are not the focus of the study, I am very interested in injury ... can you touch on how you, when did you become aware of it in your career? And I'm just going back to myself because I played a lot of sports. So, when I was younger and there wasn't a lot of information out about concussions. I can even remember being in a car accident in the eighties where I was briefly knocked out and I was released that night.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Which wouldn't happen today. How, how did you ... how were you thinking about that as a younger player ... because you probably think about it differently now?

GEORGE: Yeah. Well I mean my first really, really bad one happened playing in Washington. I had a lot of them before that too. But, my first bad one was in Washington, where I went to the hospital.

JOHN: OK.

GEORGE: And I got released that night and it was on a Saturday night in Washington.

JOHN: What point was that in your career?

GEORGE: That was six years into my pro career. So that was when I was having my best season and basically got taken off in an ambulance. I was sick in the ambulance all the way to the hospital. I was sick at the hospital. Got released early in the morning the next day and uh played two days later. If that happened today, you'd have been out for at least a month.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: So ...

JOHN: Was that from a body check?

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Whoa.

GEORGE: Yeah. I got hit in the middle of the ice to the chin ... it knocked me out and I flew through the air and landed on my head.

JOHN: So you hit the ice as well?

GEORGE: My head. Twice yeah.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: So ... then after that I had a few more but the ... when I really became aware that it was not good was, I think ... I got hit in the chest and it stunned me. I didn't even get hit in the head.

JOHN: It rattled you?

GEORGE: Yeah, and that was when I knew it was ... I was getting them easier.

JOHN:

Grimaces.

Geez.

GEORGE: Yeah. Concussions are dangerous.

JOHN: Yeah. With your son playing, do you talk about that with him?

GEORGE:

Pauses and then speaks slowly, carefully.

Yeah, because he's, trying to make it the way I made it ... he signed a minor league contract and he's trying to play his way into the NHL the way I did. And so he plays physical, he fights, he's, he's not a big scorer yet but he's still just trying to figure the game out and uh ... I mean my first year in I didn't score at all either. I just ran around and hit guys and pissed guys off and...

JOHN:

Nods.

Mm Hmm.

GEORGE: That's what he's doing but the problem is now like I told him as I said that minor league that you're playing in that's like you know guys don't give a shit down there. There's thirty-two year old guys who've been down there for twelve years and they'll ...

JOHN: They'll run you.

GEORGE: They'll basically fight you and they've been in a ton of fights and they're like, they know how to fight.

JOHN: Yes.

GEORGE: So ... I've basically been telling him that you've got, you've got to learn to play the game with respect, you've got to play physical ... play hard ... learn the game ... but learn also you have to be ready to defend yourself and there's ways to defend yourself against bigger guys.

JOHN: Without fighting?

GEORGE: No fighting but ...

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: You've got to learn how to hang on and not get ...

JOHN: Get in tight.

GEORGE: Yeah and not get, you know, get hit ... hard.

JOHN: Hmm.

GEORGE: Because that's where, that's where these guys really scare you.

JOHN: Yeah that's why I was wondering what happened with you and the sucker punch. In the course of my research I came across an interview with a player who, at the end of his career, ended up in a fight that he didn't really want to be in and he wasn't really concentrating on what he was doing and got hit, hard.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: So that's the story that he tells anyway. Because it was in an exhibition game, I think.

GEORGE: Yeah. Sometimes you can't control what happens.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: So, you know ... that's why I say: "I have no bitterness towards what happened to me because I friggin hit guys hard in a lot of situations that ... they were vulnerable too."

JOHN: Yeah. So when you ... you know there's always ... this ... the rules have changed so what has the adaptation been? Is there more stick work today? Or how do you in order not to get penalties, in order not to get suspended for hitting guys against the boards and that sort of stuff ... what has changed in the way that the game is played in order for you to intimidate and make sure that people know you're there?

GEORGE: You know that's the thing ... that's where probably the intimidation is ... is in the run of play for the players now. Like I said: "They're more conservative in their style of play as far as hitting and ... there's probably ... I don't think there is as much stick work, definitely not."

JOHN: No? How ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

The game's faster and more physical and guys get hurt more when they get hit by the equipment and the speed that guys are going at ... and it always seems that when guys get pissed off they go high which ... basically is hitting guys in the head. Which is the biggest thing they are trying to get out of the game which is what intimidates guys to ... they know now, if they hit a guy and they knock him out, they are going to get suspended.

JOHN: Yeah.

Pauses.

Except in a fight, right?

GEORGE: Right. So ...

JOHN: So, are more fights staged now? You know because ...

GEORGE: Um ... well there's for the tough guys ... for sure.

JOHN: What about ...

GEORGE: You see them come out to the face-offs and say OK ... you know.

JOHN: And you get, sometimes you get two or three guys dropping at the same time now. Why? Why is that?

GEORGE: I don't know what that is ... that's rivalry where there's something happened in the game prior ... or intimidation or whatever. I think those situations happen because ... maybe in the game past, one team played more physical against the other and intimidated them and won.

So the start of the next game the other team puts out all their tough guys to fight. That's why that situation would happen to try to basically regain the respect and ... confidence that teams need to win.

JOHN: I'd like to ask you about the Bertuzzi-Moore¹⁵ incident. The first thing that's talked about when this is discussed was the game you know the Naslund ... Moore's hit on Naslund. Do you think that if the NHL had stepped in and suspended Moore or provided some sort of punitive damage ... because when I look at that hit it's ... it seems pretty clear to me and I think it would be pretty clear to a ten year old that Moore went out of his way to hit Naslund.

GEORGE:

Nods in agreement.

In the head, yeah.

JOHN: Yeah and it's something that kind of gets dismissed in the event that, that happened but there's, there's was a ...

Pauses.

... I thought there was time for the league to actually do something. Do you think if he'd been suspended for five games or suspended for ten games that the later incident would never have happened?

¹⁵ Bertuzzi-Moore incident was a controversial event that occurred in Vancouver on March 8, 2004. Steve Moore's NHL career ended due to the injuries he suffered in the incident with Todd Bertuzzi. Legal action against Bertuzzi and the Vancouver Canucks was initiated and is yet to be resolved in court.

GEORGE: No, I think it would have happened at some point. It probably wouldn't have been as severe and also ... it should have happened, it should have been ... that night something should have happened then. But I think that ... that you know ... for whatever reason it didn't.

JOHN: Yeah. The other ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

And so players ... probably ... that boiled inside to where whoever was on the ice with him probably for a long time were like: "God I should have done something!"

JOHN: That would be Bertuzzi, right?

GEORGE: All of them! They should have got that kid back that night. And then it got blown up by the media so much that it was always on their minds and then, and then you know Colorado are blowing them out at home!

JOHN: Well yeah one of the things though ... I think it was Matt Cooke. He had a fight with him in the beginning that really turned into nothing more than a wrestling match.

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Nothing really happened and then actually in um ... I'm trying to remember his name, in the third period there was ... Sean Pronger¹⁶, a big guy, he tried to provoke him ... to get in a fight with him and he didn't. He skated away and then Bertuzzi happened.

GEORGE: Yeah, I was at the game. So I kind of remember the whole situation. I think it was ... yeah it was unfortunate.

¹⁶ NHL journeyman who played for Vancouver at the time of the Bertuzzi-Moore incident.

JOHN: Most unfortunate.

GEORGE: But you know it got blown up for a long time.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE:

Cringing.

And then that was nasty.

JOHN: Yeah. So you think the media definitely had a part to play in that?

GEORGE: Yeah they built it up, built it up, built it up.

JOHN: So do you think in the sense that you know I mean ... the NHL may have just you know this is good for hockey, it's going to be sold out; they're getting in the paper.

GEORGE:

Speaks abruptly and forcefully.

NO!

JOHN: No?

GEORGE: NO!

JOHN: You don't think they thought like that?

GEORGE: No, I think whenever something like that happens it's a ... a nightmare for them because they're really ... their goal is to get a good TV contract and then stuff like that happens.

JOHN: And it's not going to happen?

GEORGE: No!

JOHN: No? So you think in ... so, so you don't think if they, if they'd intervened that there would have been ... you think still there would have been retribution towards Moore?

GEORGE: Absolutely!

JOHN: One of the things that's overlooked in that too, I believe, is that Naslund never seemed to be the same player or regain the form that he had before that hit, actually. He ... I don't think he ever ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

Well, it's interesting because I've had a lot of those concussions and a lot of those hits and every single one of them can do damage and my biggest thing was losing my peripheral vision.

JOHN: Oh yeah?

GEORGE: So, I was always able to skate ... with the puck and feel it and not have to look at it all the time. I could kind of like see it, be aware of it without looking.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: And then when I, after I had my bad concussion, I always had to look down and see it and then when I looked down and looked up I'd, I'd always have the feeling that something, something wasn't right.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: And if guys went around me too, like in tight.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: I'd get dizzy.

JOHN: Wow.

GEORGE: I still have that ... when I coach little kids.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: If I stand in the circle and they go around me, after like a minute I feel like I'm going to fall over.

JOHN: Wow! Do you have any other symptoms?

GEORGE: Yeah, I get vertigo once in a while.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: And I, I don't feel ... I don't have tons of energy. I can work out. I can do everything normal. I can run.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: But I feel tired all the time and bright lights really bother me.

JOHN: Yeah. When you're tired it's a little more intense?

GEORGE: Yeah.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: I have a hard time sitting in offices because of the fluorescent lights.

JOHN: OK. So, when you're ... when you look at ... do you think your opinion and the way you look at the code and the way hockey works. Do you think you're ... that your individual idea about the way it works is pretty much how the people in the NHL also look at the game? Or do you have ...

GEORGE:

Interrupts.

I don't know. I'm ... I'm, I'm on the outside now looking in, now. So ... it's hard to say what they think. But I'm sure ... I'm sure that there's ... the playoffs is where you really see it.

JOHN: Right. Do you think the refereeing should be changed in the playoffs?

GEORGE: Uh, no ... I think the playoffs is probably the most exciting hockey of the season. I think that there's too many ... you know what's interesting is that the hooking and holding penalties now have changed the game and made it faster. It's opened it up so you get better chances to score.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: And ... so that's exciting to watch the power play and all that stuff. But in the playoffs it's ... I think it's pretty good.

JOHN: Yeah, is there anything moving forward that you'd like to see the NHL change?

GEORGE: Well I think the biggest change they could have made was making the rinks bigger but it's too late for that because there's too many rinks. But if they were a little bit bigger that would have definitely ... now with the speed and the size of these guys it would give them more room to play with finesse. I think the ... I think the overtime doesn't really work for me.

JOHN: And why's that?

GEORGE: I think a shootout deciding a win is ...

JOHN: It should just be like the old days win, loss, and tie?

GEORGE: I think it should go four on four and then three on three.

JOHN: Oh yeah. That would be exciting.

GEORGE: And then people would see how skilled guys are when they're three on three.

JOHN: Yeah.

GEORGE: Because it would be end to end but I don't know it's uh ... you know now you've got teams having to have certain guys on their bench just for the shootout or ... or

JOHN: I guess that does you ... all of a sudden you have a shootout specialist.

GEORGE: If you can tie every game and then know that you're going to have a shootout.

JOHN: It doesn't make for exciting hockey that's for sure.

GEORGE: No.

George's phone vibrates. He looks at it, then at his watch.

I've got to go.

Reaches out to shake John's hand as he is getting up and leaving booth.

JOHN: Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule.

GEORGE: No problem.

Exits and he is heard answering his phone.

Hello. Go ahead.

Spotlight is back on John. Lights to main stage dim as he gets up and walks to the front stage. He sits down hanging his legs over the edge of the stage, looks at floor in front of him before raising eyes and looking at the audience.

Soliloquy Four – Summary of first participant’s interview

JOHN: Well that concluded my first interview with a former NHL hockey player. It took me six months to schedule the interview and I travelled to his hometown in order to meet with him. It wasn't that he was unwilling, he was just out of the country on business for the most part. We, my supervisory team and I, had targeted him as the type of player who's story would provide a rich narrative from which to get a glimpse of the lived world of an NHL player. From the outside it appeared to us that he would have had to change the focus and adapt the manner in which he carried himself on the ice, in order for his career to unfold as it did. He was undrafted. He had work to do. He had to think about developing himself. He had to look for opportunities. I think it is safe to say: "He didn't disappoint."

I began by transcribing and coding relatively soon after the interview took place. As I analyzed the carefully recorded and documented conversation looking for emergent themes and patterns, doing my due diligence as a researcher, I started to look at representational options. I was guided by a kind of epistemological curiosity. How to write, explain, and describe the social world to a wide variety of audiences. The next step for me was to find a representational strategy through which I could illustrate the very nature of his reality and the reality of the research process. The sharing of this story as a drama encourages reflexive inquiry and hopefully serves to enlarge the scope of scholarly analysis. This research explores the integration of an art form into the process of scholarship. Hopefully this technique will extend to

the audience an empathetic understanding or attachment to the complexities that NHL players are situated in.

Smiles.

But, enough of the research rhetoric. In Act Two, I interview a different player, a player with a very different NHL beginning.

CURTAIN

Act Two

CURTAIN

SCENE

It is eight months later. The set is basically the same as in the first act. The stage is fully lit. John is already set up in the booth waiting for his scheduled interview with Brian.

Scene 1

Ruta escorts Brian to the booth.

BRIAN:

Extends hand. John and Brian shake hands.

Hello. Brian.

JOHN: John. Great to meet you.

BRIAN: How you doing?

JOHN:

Chuckles.

Pretty good. You?

BRIAN: Excellent.

JOHN:

Smiling.

You have a couple of minutes for me?

BRIAN: Yeah I booked off some time.

RUTA:

Interrupts in a professional manner.

How is your coffee John?

JOHN: It's fine thank you.

RUTA:

Addresses Brian

Is there anything I can bring you?

BRIAN:

An Americano?

RUTA:

With room?

BRIAN:

Please.

RUTA:

Cream? Sugar?

BRIAN:

Cream please.

Ruta nods and exits to the left.

JOHN:

Awesome. Thanks for agreeing to meet with me. It is great to officially meet you in person!

Motioning to papers in the table top.

So part of my thing ... rules, withdrawal etc.

BRIAN: Sounds like you're prepping me for some sort of hostile date.

JOHN:

Laughs

No it's just I have to go over everything ethically, right.

BRIAN:

Brian signs consent form.

I know I'm just teasing you.

JOHN: Nice, a sense of humour.

Brian laughs easily, settles into the booth, and faces John.

Now I need to go through a quick verbal explanation. Thank you for agreeing to participate. If for any reason you do not want to continue, you may exit the study at any time.

Looking over glasses at Brian, slight grin.

I do not have any predetermined answers, of which I am fully aware, as this is a qualitative study. This is your story, your perspective, and ... we are now recording. I have an ethically

approved written format, but the conversation may stray from the document from time to time.

Think of it as providing structure to refer to or from.

BRIAN:

Smiling.

I think I am ethically ready.

JOHN: Nice touch. So ... we might just as well get right into it and I'm going to start with:

“When did you become aware of a “code” or “the code” in hockey?”

BRIAN: I'd say it ... I started to be aware of it in Junior Hockey in the OHL¹⁷. Um you know different kind of like ... I doubt it was any different from coming into a fraternity house in a college somewhere at a university in the states where you move on in and there's just a code of conduct and expectations that are kind of built in and you have to figure them out on the fly. I'd say the OHL is the first time I started to see that in more ... of I guess ... obvious way.

JOHN: Yes. So, how ... how did you learn about it ... socially?

BRIAN: Uh ... I would say I learned about it by being bullied into it and or making mistakes.

JOHN: And ... how do you mean by making mistakes Brian?

BRIAN: Well you know not understanding the, the behaviour or the expected behaviour and then being called out on it in derogatory negative ... you know ... if you didn't act a certain way or do a certain thing. It was always brought in some derogatory way to make you feel ... um ... you know ... less. You know just negatively try to bring you out I'm ... um ... I'm trying to think.

¹⁷ The Ontario Hockey League (OHL) is one of three leagues that comprise the Canadian Hockey League which represents the premier level of junior hockey in North America.

JOHN: Maybe this might help you? Who, who explained it to you in this way?

Chuckles and leans forward toward Brian.

Because they're really telling you. You know what I mean ... in a derogatory way ... who was it in your life that did that?

BRIAN: Oh ... it was always ... the guys ... it was ... the biggest participants in it were usually the tough guy leaders ... the ... usually the kind of the mouthier guys in the room ... the cockier guys in the room or were those that defined the ... the behaviour. They were often the ones that kind of set the tone and I often largely attribute those people to the kind of dressing room bullies if, if there is such a term.

JOHN: So these are ... so that's basically peer-to-peer. So, it's not coaches. So, it's not somebody that's ... a trainer ... not somebody in the management group.

BRIAN: Largely not coaches. I think coaches in many ways were ... uh ... complicit in it ... but a lot of the, the ... they left us alone in terms of following along ... following along with the code or being introduced to the code. I think it was accepted by the coaches, but certainly not informed by most of my coaches.

JOHN: Right.

Pause.

Ruta enters carrying Brian's Americano on a tray. Sets it in front of him along with a small jug with cream.

RUTA: Anything else while I have your attention?

BRIAN: No.

JOHN: No thanks Ruta. I'll come and get you if we need anything else.

RUTA: As you wish.

Exits to the left.

JOHN:

Looks at his computer.

Test, test. It's still working.

Laughs a slightly nervous laugh. Looks at Brian.

Always ... I worry that it is not recording.

Pause.

Now this is ... uh ... sort of looking at you as a player, looking at you as a player when you were playing in the OHL. How did that code help to define or not define you as player?

BRIAN: Um ... well ... how did it define me as a player? I would say largely ... you know again it's my own perceptions ... the code defined me as a bit of an outsider. A lot, a lot of the time because I didn't follow the code a whole lot. An example being the first year I was in junior our captains and the leaders on the team you know ... they did the rookie, the rookie hazing ... I had my head shaved and there was a little drinking thing. It was more of a rookie abuse ... it was a level of rookie abuse. It was kind of acceptable. I ... um ... I the next year I was the captain and I did away with all of that ... I changed the rules and I changed the, the accepted behaviour. Oddly enough there were a couple of guys that were rookies, that year I was captain that were almost heartbroken that they weren't going to get abused and shaved. I turned it instead into a team party and a team atmosphere that I've heard since most guys that were

rookies at that time admired and had, and had built upon in their own leadership as they moved forward.

JOHN: So you were able to do that as a captain? Nobody told you otherwise?

BRIAN: No. I did as a captain just because I was influenced less by the bullies by year two ... and some of them ... the main ones had gone. But, I just didn't believe in what some of the code in the dressing room ... I don't believe that some of the code actually benefitted the team in terms of bringing us together and making us be a team. Certainly there's some areas of, of ... some things that teams do, I would say, that do build bonding and team compatibility. But when it becomes like uh ... hurtful, bullying accepted behaviour ... I kind 'a got rid of that stuff.

JOHN: Right. So that's in the dressing room and so how were things on the ice ... then? Did anything change on the ice? For the team? Or? How was that ...?

BRIAN:

Interrupts.

No ... cuz those are again ... when I was re-reading the focus of your study. You know there are levels of code and expectations that ... you know... that range from just outside of just the fighting around outside of the ice outside of the dressing room ... off ice codes. I mean there's just so many bloody expectations of behaviour. But, on the ice.

JOHN:

Thoughtful.

Mm-hmm.

BRIAN:

Leans forward in booth toward John and speaks in a quicker and elevated manner.

We didn't stop being a physical team. We didn't stop being ... but I believed that in our second year we ... I thought we played well as a team. The problem with junior at the time and obviously today is ... you're basically re-inventing your team almost every year. That's why ... when you see teams in junior hockey that stay on top year after year, it's quite a feat because you're turning over players all the time.

JOHN: Yes.

BRIAN:

Sinks back into the booth and speaks in a more relaxed manner.

But in our case, you know I thought we had a really tight unit and I thought we did more things together and I thought we played better on the ice due to that. But I don't have any references to back up ... that ... statistically.

JOHN: Yeah. I know ... but that's how you actually feel about it though?

BRIAN: Yeah!

JOHN: Which is of value as well. Because that will influence how you do things.

BRIAN:

Nods in agreement.

Yes.

JOHN: So, so that's like you say you don't have any details there but ... emotionally ... it sounds to me as a captain being able to do those sorts of things you had this good team

chemistry. There wasn't hazing involved, and people weren't being belittled. In the dressing room itself, there wasn't overt bullying.

BRIAN: No ... it actually seemed pretty healthy.

JOHN: If we can fast forward a little bit into your actual NHL career. It ... from the little bit that I have seen in the email I think things were a little bit different with the organization you went to. So, maybe what I can do Brian is to get you to tell me your NHL story from the events leading up to the draft and then into your first year.

BRIAN: OK. So ... yeah largely my ... oddly my career was defined by two specific fights ... that ... you know considering I wasn't really a fighter. I didn't see myself as a fighter. The career really book ended with that as kind of my calling card. But ... um ... so going back to junior to getting ready my draft year. I ... really didn't fight a lot. I had average penalty minutes. I wasn't considered a fighter and in the year leading up about three-quarters of the way through the season maybe half way through the season of my draft year we had a bench clearing brawl. And we had players on our team specifically one player like who was a tough guy. We had, we had some guys who could handle themselves that way and so did the other team. They had a well-known tough guy with a huge reputation. Who oddly enough or interestingly enough at the beginning of my rookie year was part of the hazing routine that I suffered through. He was sent home for a period because of that behaviour ... oddly enough. We had a coach who had tired of his out of control behaviour and, and sent him home. There were a lot of things going on with him at the time: alcohol, he got a girl pregnant and then he didn't follow the coach's orders and was sent home. Anyway, so bench clearing brawl in the middle of it all he and I square off and I fought him. It wasn't necessarily my choice but we partnered up and I did very ... did

quite well considering I wasn't a fighter and it ironically ... the fight was broadcast live all through Ontario.

JOHN:

Chuckles and shakes head from side to side.

Timing.

BRIAN: Yup, and my ranking, after that ... he was two years older than me at the time which is seen as a big difference in junior. We were about the same height same size but he had age and a track record. My rating went from deep in the second round in the draft rating system to top of the second round as we got closer to the draft. As we got even closer to the draft I went ... my rating went to later in the first round. The week of the draft I was kind of mid first round projected. So there was a lot of buzz and clearly it was because of that fight. Ultimately when the draft came along I had not expected it but at the 6th pick, I was picked. It was a bit of a shock that I went 6th overall but in hind sight I know exactly why because they thought I was a decent player, and boy he's tough as nails. Which wasn't really what I was but that set up ... that ... so I got a good start into the league being drafted 6th overall. But it also set up the expectations that I was something I was not, which was the problem throughout the entire third ... first three years of my career was ... that the team wanted me to be that guy all the time. There was no talking explicitly saying it ... this is where I guess the "code" comes into play. No one sat me down and said here's the kind of player you need to be. They just treated you in a way that they tried to kind of punish you until you did the kind of behaviour they were hoping for ... and by punishing that is either through sitting out through making you feel uncomfortable just in terms of how they address you in a room. Sending you to the minors and then calling up the tough guy. Then,

bring you back up, sending down the tough guy, thinking you can do that ... you know the expectation was never explicitly said certainly the behaviour was ... and if you didn't become that guy then you'd be back in the minors. They would put you out on the ice against other team's tough guys on their line at the time to see what would happen and if you didn't step up and kind of you know prove yourself, you didn't get ice time. So there was just an awful lot of ... jockeying around in those first three years which really was brutal ... I, I, I had ulcers ... I had stress ... I couldn't sleep cuz I couldn't do what they wanted me to do, couldn't be what they wanted me to be. You know in all the unspoken pieces that you talk about ... there's a code of behaviour and then there's just an unwritten tap on the shoulder or an unsaid tap on the shoulder. Coach not ... saying explicitly to go out and fight or just putting you on the ice in a situation it's the same thing ... but you know often times coaches say: "We'll I didn't send him out there to fight. I didn't say that. I didn't tell him to fight." You don't have to in those situations tell someone to fight. You know the situation of the game. You know who is on the ice at that time ... and if they tap you and you haven't played in most of the game and now all of a sudden you got to go out there ... patterns, repetition and historically seeing that behaviour ... NO ONE NEEDS TO TELL YOU WHAT YOU'RE BEING ASKED TO DO!

Said with emphasize fully engaged. Then pauses head down. Lifts head and says in a quiet voice.

You know.

JOHN: Yeah. I know.

Lights dim, John rises from booth and walks slowly, thoughtfully to the front stage with the spotlight following each step.

Soliloquy Five – Brian’s identity crisis

JOHN: Wow! A lot going on here. A lot to take in.

Pause, breathes in deeply and lets air out slowly.

According to social identity theory¹⁸, Brian is experiencing an “identity crisis.” He is not ready to make a commitment to or willing to accept the role of an NHL team tough guy. The sport environment and the NHL in particular may offer a unique context through which role identity may be developed. An NHL player is a member of a limited number of athletes that have attained a professional status associated with high levels of prestige and the obvious monetary rewards. They have a specialized skill set and a body of social knowledge that allows them to practice their profession in a predictable way. But, Brian’s behaviour is inconsistent with the concept of NHL players as living breathing individuals capable of only hegemonically masculine behaviours. How will Brian proceed?

Returns to booth and sits. Spotlight fades and lights slowly illuminate set.

Scene 2

JOHN: Please continue.

BRIAN: And then getting on the ice there’s a whole other level of code ... that is the actual act of fighting and some players ... you know ... think there’s an honour to how fighters go about it. So professional fighters in the league. Take their hats off ... that’s part of the code ... we’re going to honour each other in our taking our hats off.

JOHN: Basically a fighter’s ritual. Right?

¹⁸ Social identity is the part of an individual’s concept of self that is derived from perceived membership in a social group that has relevance to their lives.

BRIAN: Yeah but it's a ritual but it's, it's dripped in some sort of honour.

JOHN: Yes.

BRIAN: It's almost like Samurai ... guys getting together and saying well I'll take my hat off so you don't hurt your hands. I'll take my hat off to respect you're doing that and let's have a ... let's do this. So I think there's a bit of a ritual that's kind of honour and respect and then within that fight ... you know ... there's a code I guess when you get to a point and ... someone's either beat you or you beat the other guy and then there's a pause and you just release and so ... if you've got the guy down you're not just going to keep pummeling the guy. You've proven your point done, done, done and you go to the box. There's codes though that I think are somewhat like a staged play ... and then you see just guys that will sucker punch you those are guys that will poke your eyes out at the bottom of a scrum. There's guys that will do ...

Slowly shaking his head.

None of that stuff is within honour of the code. That ... so but I think it all gets locked in together. But there's just a whole bunch of expected behaviours. I kind of lump ... almost all of that quite frankly into similar categories but then you've got these extreme dudes and yahoos that ... all are just more dangerous, wild and cheap shot kind of guys. But there's this code of how to engage and when to engage. If a guy asks you ... you know to fight, the fight guys you know will tap you on the shin and look at you and if you don't respond then that's you know, you know you didn't step up and so by way of the code you now are less of a guy you know you, you have less value with, with respect to kind of if there was a measurement of honouring the code and all of that stuff I just for the first three years honestly I avoided, I fought, sorry I fought

falling into those patterns and it wasn't good for my career, my career suffered ... tremendously ... just because I didn't play along.

JOHN: So what's this ... can I just ask you a question about that? So, so you're there and I hadn't met you face to face until today, but you're a decent sized guy for hockey. Right?

BRIAN: Yeah at the time I was yeah.

JOHN:

Laughing.

You look about six four, I'd say about two-twenty. Brian you are not a small man.

Brian smiles in agreement and seems to relax a bit, leaning back into the booth.

So, in that ... how were you? ... because there's ... it sounds to me like there's a lot of pressure on you and you probably had the "skill set" to do this but you decided not to do it. Maybe you could just work me through that process?

BRIAN: Yeah ... I guess. Almost every guy that came into the league that I ever played against that was a tough guy or could fight and understood what fighting was all about either came from a family of brothers or came from a family situation or a neighbour situation when they were part of a ... they grew up around fighting. I never did. I grew up ... uh ... soft. I guess in comparison. So, I did take at some point ... for a couple of summers I went to kick boxing and boxing courses. Just to get some experience in terms of how to handle myself. But it's, you know ... it really didn't help it didn't build up ... it wasn't like I was trying to become a fighter I was just trying to protect myself in those situations. I just ... A. I didn't believe in fighting; B. I rarely, I mean I'm kind of ... I'm a typical long fuse sleeping giant guy. You know. I have a ...

I don't believe in the sentiment or the expression "heat of the moment"; "I didn't know what I was doing"; "It was just heat of the moment." That's bullshit as far as I'm concerned! If you literally ... I mean to me ... I know what my actions and outcomes are when I'm hammered drunk. I mean I've never been so drunk that I somehow didn't know what my actions were. I've just never believed in that, in that kind of lame excuse of action: "Uh it was the heat of the moment." It's the biggest cop out that I've ever heard particularly in the NHL. If you can't control your actions because you've got heated or the situation you know damn well what you're, you're ... everybody I believe knows what their actions and outcomes should be. So, for me I was always kind of like traditional sensible about what the game is ... a guy gives you a little shot, I'm going to get him back with a hit or you know ... but I don't necessarily ... I'm not going to spear the guy. I don't think I'm going to grab and I've got to fight this guy now! I, I never understood this ... this need to do that ... understanding the game now with distance and time ... I understand that the game really hasn't changed that much in regards to ... uh ... that kind of that code of conduct and maybe if I understood what it meant to me that I wouldn't be as ... I don't know ... maybe I would have.

Pause. Gathers thoughts before proceeding.

I'm kind of second guessing myself now in terms of ... uh ... being reluctant or being more open to the idea of you know protecting my honour and building myself back up you know as though I some sort of ... I was honouring this code. But I just always hated it so much and I was ... I always hated the notion ... I was something less than because I wasn't ... you know this hot head fighter dude that ... was able to kind of play I guess at that level that maybe I was expected to. So, I struggle with that ... um ... I ... particularly there was a point in time where ... I had ...

what is that word? Yeah I had kind of the first part of my career ... I had kind of gone through this fought a bunch of tough guys not by choice but by necessity.

JOHN: So when you're saying not by choice but by necessity. Is that like a ... why those situations?

BRIAN:

Brian is agitated. Inflection rises and falls. Pauses at times and blurts out words at other times.

Because you're put on the ice in situations ... that ... you're just always just always playing guys that were looking to fight. I was never playing ... early in my career I wasn't playing a lot of the top lines on the other side who aren't going to fight you.

JOHN: Right.

BRIAN: I was playing third and fourth line guys that were trying prove themselves all the time. So you know God forbid you bumped them wrong ... they just wanted to fight you and I was a big guy. So they just thought: "Let's beat the shit out of this guy." But it came to the point where the one game in particular ... because this is the important atypical moment in my career.

Brian pauses and thinks about what he is going to say. He repositions himself in the booth, sighs and begins to speak in a quiet measured manner.

Playing on home ice and I got a boarding penalty ... that ... yeah it was a bit suspect but yeah a guy turned and I hit him from the back and he went into the boards hard and I got a boarding penalty and during that time I was a ... in the box ... arguably one of the toughest guys ever, he's up there, and probably maybe even the hardest puncher when I'm talking to guys.

JOHN: And he's ...

BRIAN: He barely left the front of the penalty box, play was going on, and he skated by he's yelling dude you're, you're toast, you're toast ... so I'm getting ready to step it up, well I'm thinking about it ... so my penalties done and I come out and I spent ... I don't know ... you know I actually wish I knew the time frame because it felt like a day and a half ... it felt like six periods were played. But, every time after that penalty my coach just kept putting me on the ice with that tough guy.

JOHN: But, you didn't drop the gloves?

BRIAN:

Pauses, seems at a loss for words. Whispers looking at his hands spread palms down on the table top. Barely audible.

No, not right away.

JOHN:

Short pause as John looks, observes Brian for a moment without speaking, then quietly suggests.

Try and remember what was going through your mind in that moment.

BRIAN: I was questioning it. Like they needed me to ... to fight, to fight at that time. Why? The other player wanted me to fight because he needed to prove his end, that's what he's there for ...

Pauses. Long Pause.

JOHN:

Encouragingly. Gesticulating with his hand.

Go on.

BRIAN:

Takes big breath and proceeds.

And I didn't fight him for the longest time. I just avoided all situations. I just ... we faced off against each other he'd give me a hack and I'd hack him back and the puck would drop and we'd start skating and I'd avoid ...

Pauses.

JOHN: So ...

BRIAN:

Breathes in and breathes out before speaking.

Other guys would have made a stand there ... as the puck dropped the gloves would have come off and they would have fought him.

JOHN: So is there, is there now tension created for the other players in the game?

BRIAN:

The words fly out of his mouth.

Oh shit everybody was like watching this to the point where finally after several shifts of avoiding him ...

Pauses.

Uh ... the linesman as he's about to drop the puck ... pauses and looks up at me ... and says:
"Are you going to get this over with or not?" Like I was the guy holding up what needed to
happen here.

JOHN:

With surprise.

He actually addressed you and said that, like out loud ... clearly at you?

BRIAN: Yeah ... and my thought is: "Alright so the last guy on this ice that is here to actually
make this not happen wants it to happen. I'm screwed!"

JOHN: Right.

Leaning in towards Brian as he asks.

Did you feel, feel betrayed?

BRIAN:

Turns head to one side.

Hmm. No. I was adding up the people who were not happy with me. My coach was pissed off
at me because I haven't fought him. Now the linesman is added saying dude you've got to get
this over with like the linesman knew the code. Here's the linesman and the referee who ...
ultimately are going to punish you for it, they want you to get it over with.

JOHN: Right. So what happened next?

BRIAN:

Leans forward toward John makes and holds eye-contact.

So that play ... we skated and the puck was in our end and I just knew that the moment we meet at the boards it's on ... and we're going to do this thing ... and so we got there, bumped each other ... dropped the ... dropped our gloves finally ... and fought.

JOHN: Immediately?

BRIAN:

Obviously agitated.

Yes, and ... in context of fighting, I was doing I thought I was holding my, I was kind of holding my own and we were ... uh ... fighting. I had him tied up I was swinging I think I hit him once or twice ... he was swinging and then we kind of locked up and he couldn't get me because I had his ... you know when you're fighting you grab the inside of the shirts and you kind of hold by the elbow and you just ... it's hard to punch and ... uh ... and then the refs at that point in almost every other fight you'll see that's when they'll come in and break it up.

JOHN: But they didn't?

BRIAN: No, no they ...

Looks down at his hands flexing them into fists, a few times, as he speaks.

... and the ref was standing there after that moment in time and said: "Well let's get it out of your systems boys ... keep 'er going."

JOHN:

In a low voice, barely audible.

Wow ... unbelievable.

BRIAN: I'm like well it's out of my system so ... you know ... if you wouldn't mind stepping in here and doing your job!

Sighs.

I didn't say that obviously. But it was what I was thinking and ... so that's all the time my opponent needed. All he needed was another ten to fifteen seconds and he pulled his arm out of his jersey, that I was holding on to, and he came with a big round house ... BANG! ... popped me in the temple and cracked my skull in three places.

JOHN: Wow!

Moves back in disbelief.

Your face?

BRIAN: So, the left side of my face, the cheekbone, the eye orbit, and where the cheekbone connects down had a little crack that pushed my cheekbone in. So, that whole piece of my face collapsed.

His hand traces the spots on the side of his face where the punch landed years ago.

JOHN: So in retrospect ... do you think the referee was doing that to teach you a lesson? To reinforce the code ...

BRIAN: I don't know what the motivation was I honestly ... I, I, I to this day wish I could do a forensic on that from the time I got the penalty to the time my face broke ... to see.

JOHN: How do you feel about it now?

BRIAN: I can't really say. I just wish I could think clearly back ... I think about it and I go back in my mind and see clips of the fight but I can't see the game I can't seem to find to remember the game visually.

JOHN: Do you think about finding it on line?

BRIAN: Yeah, but I'd probably be sick to my stomach looking at how much I was running away from him just you know embarrassingly ... being put out in situations that I don't think I should have been put out in. It wasn't my role on the team to do that but I guess, based on the code, I had to stand up for myself and stand up for my team and my honour. I got in ... ended up in a fight which was just ridiculous in the first place.

Slowly shakes head from side to side.

JOHN:

Nods in agreement. Stands and walks to the front of the stage with a spotlight focused on him. As the lights to the main stage dim a second spotlight not as bright as John's lingers on Brian and fades as John speaks the first three sentences in the soliloquy...

Soliloquy Six – Brian's shattered face

JOHN: I think when I first heard this part of Brian's story I was shocked and so drawn into the emotion of it in the moment that I actually felt sick to my stomach. I couldn't help thinking, later on, there was a parallel or a similarity to the process of marginalization by looks common to female discourse. Brian too is marginalized into a presumed role by the NHL code, and perhaps larger society in general, due to his size.

Turns away from the audience. Pauses, contemplating. Turns to the audience and asks:

Isn't his reluctance to engage in a "fight," an act of rebellion? Isn't he rebelling against political, social, and cultural oppression? Now, with even further distance from the original interview, I see this event as an emotional catalyst. Brian's shattered face allows for an emotional dialogue which drives the conversation before he falls back into the common discourse and function of the unwritten rules. The unspoken which strongly, perhaps coercively, suggest that a big strong male should protect and serve despite his objection and the peril to his person. Again when I re-read, re-write, and re-think, I see the plot here as rich with cultural politics, folklore, and even superstition to an extent. Brian is struggling with the conflict, the concept of identifying the person he is expected to be and the person he really is.

Returns to booth and sits. Spotlight fades and lights slowly illuminate set.

Scene 3

Brian jumps back into his narrative of the incident.

BRIAN: But I get it now. But you know the minute I got hit I knew something ... it felt like an egg broke in my face. I went right off the ice ... and ... the team didn't think anything was wrong. They didn't give a shit quite frankly and it was ... of all the hospitals that I could have been taken to ... I was dropped off by the team Doctor at the closest one to his house which was the least capable of actually looking after anything. But it was just like a lazy bullshit ... um ... situation and so I spent the night there under observation and it turned out I had all these fractures in my face and then I had to have surgery to repair it. The season's done.

JOHN: Phew.

Pause. Then asks questions in quick succession.

Did you need rehab? Did the team take care of you? Did you think about quitting? I probably have a hundred more questions about this.

BRIAN:

Forces out a half-hearted laugh, shakes his head, gathers himself and continues.

I come back ... but from that day by the way ... from the last time I'm in the dressing room to ... next year's training camp, which is probably six months, the team doesn't call me. I don't have any ... and there's no, no support system in place and I am struggling mentally to kind of find the confidence to do this thing.

JOHN: Nothing?

BRIAN: Nothing ... so I show up in camp next year with a visor on and it was about a week into camp and my agent calls and says: "Brian the team wants to know when you're going to take your visor off?" Well I'm not sure if they remember but my face broke and I almost lost my left eye because the way the bone structure is there ... my eye was sinking. So I answer: "So I'm thinking I was going to wear this for a while." ... he says: "Well their probably going to ... they're not going to want you on the team if you're wearing the visor."

JOHN: Really? Just like that?

BRIAN: Yeah. Holy crap! So, I can't even wear a god damned visor after losing ... having half my face reconstructed because it's ... you know if you want to talk about stupid codes and I think largely the league moved away from that a little bit in terms of respectability but I couldn't

wear a visor being a guy over six feet two ... uh ... because it didn't fit the MO¹⁹ of what a big player needed to do.

JOHN: So what happened?

BRIAN:

Obviously agitated.

So training camp ... the first cut day or the second cut day or the final cut day one of those things and I see on the bulletin ... I'm going to the minors and so when I go directly to the big, big, big dressing room ... two chairs in the middle and they're calling guys in one by one and the GM²⁰ was sitting there telling everyone one by one.

JOHN:

Speaks empathetically.

Must have been difficult.

BRIAN: And so I finally get in there the GM sits me down and he goes: "Brian. I think we need to talk." And I just ... I remember saying: "Yes we do have to talk." And then he paused and said: "You first." And I said: "Well I think I need to tell you that I, I'm done. I'm going home. I'm going to pack it up." I said: "I think there's a lot more I could be doing with my life at this point than beating my head against the wall to try to find something here that's ... that's not something I, I, I want to do.

JOHN: How did he take that news?

BRIAN: He just said "no," a real quiet "no."

¹⁹ MO denotes modus operandi.

²⁰ GM denotes General Manager.

JOHN:

In obvious surprise.

That's it?

BRIAN: No. He went out ... I can't remember for how long. Then ... the whole god damned organization come into the dressing room to kind of find out why I'm thinking this ... but I did, I did quit. I walked out of there. I quit and I quit the NHL. I left the whole thing behind.

JOHN: But ... you went back? Why?

BRIAN: Hmm.

Pauses. Thinking about what he is going to say.

And I had not intended to go back but during that year living ... starting a business, finding out a little more about myself. What I found in that year was the courage to actually confidently be the guy I wanted to be and not ... uh ... not struggle with the person they wanted me to be.

JOHN: So it ruminated in you for a year?

BRIAN: Yes. Near the end that year off, I was like shit if I only could have had this same centered self or this belief in myself then ... I think I could have dealt with those pressures differently.

JOHN: Did you ... who did you talk to about this, this decision?

BRIAN: OK. So later that season I went and I met ... I went and watched an old team-mate's game, not with the intent, by the way, of ever thinking I was going back. At that point I still ... I

was done. I had no interest in going back. But I went to see a few guys that I knew after the game and I bumped into my old team-mate as he was walking by.

JOHN: So you talked to him ... then?

BRIAN: Not really. Just a quick hi and then chatted with some fellows. But, the next morning he called my agent. What's Brian doing? He looks great. What the hell's going on? Would he be interested in coming back?

JOHN:

Spoken slowly.

Were you thinking this ... uh, consciously?

BRIAN:

Very quick reply.

I'd never considered it.

JOHN: So ... what now?

BRIAN: Well, then ... I did consider it and I thought shit, I think I'm a different person. I think I can deal with it differently. So I did, I went back.

JOHN: How did that go?

BRIAN:

Half smile.

First day of camp first shift because it was a scrimmage ... from what I know now ... there weren't a lot of guys really thrilled I was coming back again. I was labelled a quitter. I was you know ... I was ... some guys who had jobs now jobs because I wasn't there ... they felt threatened. I'm a quitter. All the code shit that I you know ... I was labelled with.

JOHN: How did that play out?

BRIAN: So they were going to kill me. Let's kill this god damned guy. Let's send him packing. He's not going to last.

JOHN: You found this out after the fact?

BRIAN: Yeah.

Anger creeps into his dialogue.

First shift I get my jaw broken by a cross check to the face, lose four teeth ... and I picked up my teeth went and got them wired in. I don't know why. I just showed up with my teeth. They wired them in and ... uh ... the next day I asked the guys what, what are the chances my teeth will stay? And he said: "Oh well 50/50." I said I'm a professional hockey player. He goes: "Oh right not to good." Took all my teeth back out ... left the hole there ... put like a jaw protector on and I went back two to three days later and I kept going. But, I was able to deal with that in a way that ... kind of psychologically. You know the psychology of sport.

Brian pauses, then begins spitting out the words.

I learned how to channel that into strength and not a weakness ... and ... I ... came back and I ended up making the team that year. And uh ... you know I had another six years practically. You know I was largely a third line guy but I was I, I played with a visor for most of that and I

kind of set these rules for myself with these parameters. You know I defined my own code basically. I said to my wife: “If I do this, here are the things I’m going to want. I’m going to want to do this ... I’m not going to fight ... if they want me to be this type of guy, then this is going to be over before it starts.” And so I came back and I became, I think, a useful, you know, decent hockey player ... kind of a third line checker. We had a couple of really, really good years in there you know thirty, thirty plus point years, in the conference final. I was a large part of those teams and I built back ... a lot of that ... you know I guess ... the, the ... the confidence of my team but kind of built back those relationships that maybe weren’t there particularly after quitting and coming back.

JOHN:

Leaning back into the booth.

Wow! That’s ... is quite a piece ... in itself.

BRIAN: There’s more ... kind of a last piece. I’ll say and it may or may not speak to your code ... or story.

JOHN:

Nodding encouragement.

Go on.

BRIAN:

Brian is very calm and seems to measure his words.

It about ... it is during that climb back.

JOHN: Mm, Hmm.

BRIAN: In the first year or two, you know, you go through these valleys and struggle, struggling to kind of find your spot on the team where you fit in and where you offer value. I wasn't playing, wasn't playing that much ... you know ... and I was getting sick and tired of hearing stories of "NHL Tough Guys." There was a string of guys that had drunk driving arrests. One tough guy, Bob Probert²¹, in particular got caught drunk driving and they found cocaine in his underwear ... um ... these are like guys that were just living on the edge and everybody loved them.

With emphasis.

People loved them! How many chances do we want to give this guy? Endless chances because we think he's awesome! He is the epitome of the "tough guy." The epitome of crazy cool stories. Nick names it was ... and I was kind of really looking back going ... sucks to be trying to do this thing living an honest life.

JOHN: Yeah. I've actually read his book "Tough Guy" and parts of it are actually quite disturbing ... when you look at it in a retrospective way because he would have all these people around him that idolize him and he's just leading a largely dishonest, and dysfunctional life.

BRIAN:

Spoken with emphasis.

Most of those guys largely were dysfunctional! I've met many since that ...

Long pause.

²¹ A former NHL player and tough guy. Died in 2010. Suggested reading, Tough Guy: Bob M. Probert, Kirstie McLellan Day.

JOHN: Yes?

BRIAN: Anyway, I want to tell you about a particular point ... or maybe it's an event.

Big breath.

I was getting frustrated that I wasn't getting a sniff. I was sitting in the back of a bus after a game and I was kind of lamenting ... the fucking game. God damn it you know ... coach was not playing me and I just, I just I was questioning and I said: "You know I'm sick of these guys getting second chances!" And this guy and I were rattling names off ... blah, blah, blah and my team mate was like: "We let's ... we got to create ... we need to invent a character for you."

JOHN:

Probably a little too loud.

A persona?

BRIAN: I was kind of like no I don't need to create a character. I just need to become some wild asshole guy. I was saying it jokingly but he came up with a nick name called "le train noir" [the black train] and we just both put up our hands and laughed at the back of the bus. Le train noir is the last guy to leave the party. You know I wouldn't go out and drink too much because I was always afraid I'd be sluggish for practice and I'd lose my job. I wasn't hanging out ... you know in terms of the code. I wasn't a guy, early in my career that would stay out late or be part of the chaos. I wasn't sleeping around. I wasn't getting in bar fights. I wasn't ... you know on the bus in the morning part of the chatter about what happened the night before and that's a huge missing ingredient.

JOHN:

Obviously interested in Brian's new direction.

How so?

BRIAN: I'll tell you in terms of being part of that "in" group and that group that drives the code. And so as part of my character le train noir, you know le train noir is the last guy to leave the party. We made up a few stories about DWIs and all the stuff and we had fun making the story up and then I started to pretend. Guys would go: "Are you coming out?" Oh yeah: "Le train noir's going to roll tonight."

JOHN: And you'd go out?

BRIAN: And I'd actually go and I wouldn't get drunk but I'd leave a lot of beers in the washrooms and I said to myself: "I can be tired but I can't be hung over." So I'd stay up late. I'd be one of the last guys and then the next day on the bus ... you're now part of the conversation. Now you're part of the inner circle of what's going on and I started over the years ... oddly enough there was a bit of a method to what I was trying to do ... I was trying to kind of do a bit of a fakee but at the same time staying true to what I wanted to do and this whole le train noir thing became an interesting add on to that come back experience and I think it actually ... it became ... it started as a joke and it actually became something that became somewhat real to everybody.

JOHN:

In a questioning manner.

Mm, Hmm?

BRIAN: Is le train noir coming out? We want le train noir out. You're not just ... you're not judging them anymore. You're not, you're not there sitting on the bus with your lunch box looking like you're the fifteen year old kid going off to class. You're part of it without diving in.

Pause.

... so I found a way, I thought, to live within the code of conduct, of honour, of sharing those ... the team secrets to being, you know, to being a guy that someone would actually share those secrets or experiences with.

JOHN: You fit in? You felt like you fit in?

BRIAN: I wasn't that guy before and so ... that was this kind of new found kind of self-confidence ... helped the last six years of my career be ... feel more valuable. Oddly enough when I talked to ... I've talked to one of the big CBC Hockey²² announcers about the le train noir experience.

JOHN: What did he think about it?

BRIAN: He actually has two strong opinions that I thought were interesting. He was ... he loves the fact that I quit the NHL and he was heartbroken that I came back. Because he felt ... he loved the fact that I went out and stood up for something and, and was willing to pay the price for it ... and so coming back kind of diminished that he thought ... and secondarily ... uh ... the ... this notion of becoming somewhat you know creating a character or the persona of le train noir. He's not sure whether the system is playing me, that I felt I had to do that, or he didn't quite buy into the fact that I thought I was kind of finding a clever way to ... uh ... belong within this world that I didn't fit, in terms of the social norms and find a way that ... uh ... uh ... you

²² CBC Hockey Night in Canada is a Canadian institution.

could create, a you know, create a role in that environment with this guy. I look at it as an interesting social experiment ...

JOHN:

Chuckles, shaking his head.

BRIAN: ... that helped me tremendously ... but again the media guy I shared this story with looks at it from a purest stand point. He would love somebody, he would have loved, and he would have loved me to have stuck through being this kind of outcast character through thick and thin and not bending to the outside pressures. But I felt in hindsight, I did the best I could to kind of evolve within that world and find a place for myself.

JOHN: Well you're trying to feel comfortable or perhaps the least uncomfortable, right?

BRIAN: Well ... in ... honestly ... the more le train noir became the norm ... the more I played, the more opportunities I got, the more confident I was on the ice that I was you know ... someone had my back or ... my career ... you know ... got better when le train noir was invented.

JOHN:

Chuckling. Shaking head from side-to-side.

Yeah.

BRIAN: And that's bizarre to me.

JOHN:

Nodding in agreement.

Yeah.

BRIAN: But I ... you know ... I know you're, you're, you're talking about the code. I think this all fits in the code. I think this ... all ... is a big part of the code.

JOHN: Well I think it is too because you, you've actually developed this persona so that you can participate and enter into the culture of that hockey team.

BRIAN: Participated in it without, without full buy in, if you know what I mean.

JOHN: Well yeah. So I ... not so much with the NHL ... but I've also done some work with Lacrosse enforcers and that's one of the things that sticks out ... is they have to be ... they have to assume a role. So, you're assuming a role, right? So le train noir becomes the thing that you're assuming to, to then go out and do your job, in a sense.

BRIAN:

Nods in agreement.

Yeah.

JOHN: And, and that's, that's the part that I've found, talking with those other people, that sometimes that's the difficult part for them because they've just left their family or they've got to go to work the next day or whatever the heck it is and yet they've got to go to the ... you know they've got to go to the arena and be this guy or whoever it is that stands up for other people, when they're in trouble.

BRIAN:

In agreement.

Yeah.

JOHN: I don't think ...

Pause collecting his thoughts.

My understanding after having talked to people that are asked to play that role is in a sense, a lot of these guys are assuming that role by developing a persona. So, they think it's really not them. They are somehow distant from their actions.

BRIAN: Exactly.

JOHN: That's not them.

BRIAN: No ... and most of them ... you talk to them ... for instance, the player who was known, in the league, as "tough guy of the world," really struggled with it, the persona part. The having to live with this title. Although he built his hockey career around being the tough guy, he spent his life ... uh ... trying to disprove his identity by going to Harvard and becoming a lawyer and becoming or proving he was smart ... like he's fought on the ice and fought the persona off the ice. Whereas a lot of guys ... funny I did a, a communications class with a bunch of alumni guys. We all had to kind of speak at the end of the day and what I chose to speak about was about transitioning from ... you know being this hockey persona to having to kind of invent yourself in the real world ... in the business world.

JOHN: Really?

BRIAN: Yeah ... and kind of allowing yourself to break from what the accepted perception of you is whether ... I know guys who were ... they still when they go to charity games ... oh it's a tough guy ... you're that guy ... if you want to be in the real world and have a career you've got

to be kind of ok with allowing yourself to be a different character now or this authentic person. You don't need to keep acting like the dumb hockey player. Which a lot of guys do because that's what they think people are looking for.

JOHN:

Interrupts.

And it serves them in some way.

BRIAN: Well it serves them, it actually serves them ... and this is my point in my conversation my, my the speaking thing that I did was that it only serves to fill the need of that person or those people that know you from that specific experience but it does nothing to build, ... you know ... um ... because ninety-nine percent of guys can't turn, that into a living, if you know what I mean.

JOHN:

Nods in agreement.

You can't.

BRIAN: You can't commoditize it in that way. What it does is it limits people's willingness to actually allow you to be another person and by, by that I mean, I want to come in, have you allow me to study the logistics of your business and coordinate a program. But reality: "Oh yeah I'd love to meet with you ah you're an interesting story guy and you've got these great tough guy stories and you're a hockey player. Yeah. It was great meeting you but why would I give you money? Why would I trust you with this? You're a dumb hockey player." And we ... I've spent my career after hockey ... for the longest time I didn't ... I, I hid ... I didn't talk about it. I

didn't want anybody to know because I couldn't ... I ... people ... I heard more than you can imagine. Oh you don't strike me as a hockey player, after they'd meet me and I'm like it took me a while to realize: "What the hell are people thinking then?" Because that's a huge handicap. So I'm walking into every situation if I hear "oh you don't strike me as a hockey player" is what people end up saying after they actually get to know me a little bit that tells me everybody else has a different perception and that's not a great one. So, I spent a lot of years not talking about it, not leading with it. I've added it to my profile now. I've started talking a little bit more because I have you know ... fifteen years body of work that is worth something. I have valuable experience. So people know me for my actual professional business career more than they know me for my hockey and so now it's a nice add on story, it's a nice add: "Oh my god you used to play hockey?" That's a much better story than: "Oh you were a hockey player and you're still acting like one." You know. So in terms of what social norms are even outside ... people expect and love this idea of you know Chris "Knuckles" Nilan²³ being like an old tough guy. The old dummy hockey tough guy. A lot of the guys in that session, after I finished my, my speech stood up applauding in this little room of ten people and went: "Holy shit you're talking to me you've given me hope!"

JOHN: Really?

BRIAN: No-one's ever, no-one's ever allowed me to believe that I can actually be something different than this ... and it's a stunning revelation to some guys.

JOHN: Well it's a role. It's a role. It's not a ... it's a dysfunctional role in many ways.

BRIAN: It is.

²³ Retired NHL hockey player known for fighting.

JOHN: The more members of the media get on their horses and talk about the honour of it, you know it's not necessarily true. Much of it is not honourable. Especially when you get into specific places, like the playoffs. Where, if a goalie gets hot, then people are going to run him!

Shaking head as he speaks the next line.

And there is no honour in that!

BRIAN: There are a handful of situations where ... you know when you talk about fighting and outlawing fighting ... I, I ... banning fighting ... not allowing fighting ... you know whether it's through an ejection whether it's through, whether it's through a ... game suspensions or whatever. The punishment has to go up "A," but I don't for a minute think that fighting will be, will just never happen ... of course it will happen in situations largely those things happen because refereeing is inconsistent and, and they create an environment where one team feels they're being put at a disadvantage ...

JOHN:

Leaning forward.

Yeah. I agree!

BRIAN: ... through refereeing. So then, when you talk about refereeing yourself, this is when teams get frustrated, this is where ...

Pauses.

I look at my god damned men's league team in downtown Toronto a bunch of thirty to forty-five year olds and I've got one or two guys on our team ... I just want a nice gentleman's hockey game ... you know, work hard and play well, then pat each other on ... you can have so much

fun playing that way and you get one guy that just feels like somebody's taking advantage of him and he chops someone or he hacks someone. Now the entire temperature of the game has just risen ten degrees.

JOHN: Yeah, I agree.

BRIAN: And now I don't want to go into a corner because they're all hopped up thinking they're going to get chopped and the next thing you know people are coming to blows in front of the god damned hockey net after a play. It's because the referees ... they're making twenty-five to fifty bucks a game and they don't really want to get involved and ...

JOHN:

Interrupts.

But it's also a rec league right?

BRIAN: Yeah but it's the same god damned motivating factors that happen in the NHL!

JOHN: Really? I can see your point. I've heard it thousands of times. I know it. But, but here's my point. They shouldn't be fighting! Especially in a rec league! In any other sport rec league those people that fight are kicked out and not able to get back in. We, in Canada, only accept this behaviour in HOCKEY! Even in rec hockey.

BRIAN: No but ... what I'm saying is these things are largely driven by the controls that are there to protect and keep this stuff from happening ... they don't work well.

JOHN: Really?

Shaking head.

BRIAN: And they're inconsistent. It's hard to call them consistently and you know if someone starts a fight and is punished more than the guy that ended up being fought against even though the guy that was fought against was the guy speared another guy in the nuts and boom, boom, boom ... that is the current situation I think exists because often times a fight is due to a reaction to something else that happened. Rarely, and when it is the space kind of nuclear bombs going off kind of off the draw to begin the game ... um you know ... often that's, that's just the fake drama bullshit stuff ... but often times the game the fighting that happens within a game in retribution or retaliation for something else but this is rarely I'm going to go beat up that guy. So I think the NHL has kind of created an environment that doesn't really punish the, the instigator because the instigator rule was, was oh everybody hated that ...

JOHN: What it doesn't ... what I think Brian and maybe I can just ask your opinion on this train of thought? What I think the refereeing and the NHL in general doesn't do, is a good job of stopping a lot of the stuff that would lead to fighting. There's a lot of the extracurricular stuff that if they decided that wasn't going to happen, then I don't think it would necessarily ever lead to fighting. But you know I've played other sports and sure there's fighting in basketball, fighting in baseball, there's fighting in soccer, and in rugby. But in all those sports, those guys get kicked out! So it doesn't happen on a regular basis. But, I do agree sometimes the temperature of the game is such that those things do happen right, things do get out of control, in all sport.

BRIAN:

Nods in agreement.

Of course and it ... that's my point I think. Yes there'll be the odd ... there'll be fighting for sure, the consequences should be different.

JOHN: Yeah and I agree with you there. Part of my research was to look at the responsibility of governance. I think that the NHL, especially with the damage that seems to have been done to players that fight as part of ... the very nature of their job, the league needs to a better job. They're suffering brain damage which is pretty obvious and it's, it's an area that I think if it doesn't get stopped by the NHL, it will get litigated out of the NHL ... eventually!

BRIAN: Yeah. Well and there's been threats at times to go down that road and nothing has ever come of it. The challenge is when the league does clamp down on things, call things tighter, the media and GMs ... here's what's happened ... also we've had a shift in the last five to ten years in the NHL where there's still some old dudes ... kind of old school ... code guys ...

JOHN: Absolutely!

BRIAN: The code guys within organizations, although it's diminished from the eighties ... with the eighties pretty much ... maybe short of one or two ... everybody from the GM to the coach level was of this kind of Fred Flinstone²⁴ style of hockey. That's how it's done. Every year the team, I played for, would flirt with bringing in a university training group to put together ... to study our fitness levels and put together a comprehensive plan. The team, the coach even though the plan says we need a day off here just for recovery and to optimize our recovery. All that shit goes out the window as soon as you lose two in a row! They immediately go to no that's not working and they resort back to the Fred Flinstone things they know.

JOHN:

²⁴ A blue collar cartoon caveman.

Laughs at the second reference to Fred Flinstone.

Yeah.

BRIAN: I'm going to punish them. Out of the fear of god they're going to want to ... so it's old school. What's happening bit by bit is there are people in organizational decision making key influencers that I think if you ask them, if you ask them on the right day in the right room without the wrong people around will give you a different answer.

JOHN: Oh yeah. I've already experienced that.

BRIAN: They also don't want to necessarily be ... no one wants to be the first one through the god damned door.

JOHN: A lot of people don't want to be ostracized you know in the sense that ...

BRIAN:

Interrupts.

The GM comes out vocal ... going back prior to le train noir ... imagine if I was a GM and I was on the outside. I wasn't one of those guys that was perceived to be part of that old boy network. I didn't work ... I didn't admire them I didn't validate them ... by not associating. If I picked up the phone to do a trade, they'd say "F you."

JOHN: Yeah.

BRIAN: I would not be able to do my job. So that's the other thing with the NHL that pisses me off is anybody that has a role to play in an organization broadcasting, rarely will you hear a strong contrarian voice to anti-fighting, to changing, to new contemporary ways of managing and officiating because they all ...

Pause for effect and looks directly at John.

Everybody's, everybody's pay check in that whole ecosystem is driven by being complicit!

JOHN: I think they're afraid of it. They have their own kind of golden goose and they're afraid somehow.

BRIAN: That's what I mean. Certain guys in the media they make their living writing and reporting on ... they have a much stronger anti-fighting, anti-stupidity belief systems and they're willing to share them because they are the third party and they're safe within their own kind of bubble. They do have a hard time getting certain interviews from people within the league because they say screw you. You're not one of us. It drives me mental that everybody within the bubble of the NHL ... um ... plays along because they are ... they're motivated by the dollar and they're motivated because the system punishes people. They'll punish you from the media. They'll punish you ... they punish you and they've got ways to kind of making people fall in line. It drives me mental when I hear debates on TV where all the people are actually getting paid through organizations that are on the NHL's side.

JOHN: Yeah.

BRIAN:

Shaking head.

It's lame discussions ... lame debates.

JOHN: So, just a quick change of direction here. Did you hear or did you happen to be watching that Calgary-Vancouver game where two seconds into the game there was a line brawl?

BRIAN: I only saw highlights.

JOHN: You only saw highlights?

BRIAN: I didn't see it start.

JOHN: OK.

BRIAN: I only saw highlights of Tortorella²⁵ in the hallway.

JOHN: Yeah. OK. I just wondered whether perhaps you'd actually seen it. Do you want to talk about the incident? Like what you think's going on there? I guess my question would be: "Do you actually think that either of those teams sent a message to each other?"

BRIAN:

Long pause.

I don't want to be so biased in my view or my anti-view but, I will ... to be fair ... there was a message sent. I don't think it's entirely the message that was intended, but it's certainly one that's ... would make ... what it will do is actually send the message that ... the men's league hockey team that I referred to ... it's like someone throwing the gauntlet down saying: "Alright the gloves are off playing us is going to be really ugly and we're going to put our bone heads out on the ice." Which interestingly, I couldn't believe that the other team didn't see that and go alright we'll protect our guys so they sent out the wrong guys anyways. I think it sends the message that ... I can't remember actually ... who of the two teams had there tougher line up out?

JOHN: Well it was it's Hartley²⁶ that because he's the visitor he puts his line up out first right.

²⁵ Vancouver Canuck's head coach at the time.

²⁶ Calgary Flames head coach at the time of the incident.

BRIAN: Well I think he had McGrattan²⁷ on the ice. So I can't believe Tortorella didn't at least counter that in some way.

JOHN: He put his fourth line out.

BRIAN: Oh he did.

JOHN: Oh yeah, yeah. That's exactly what he did. The only thing that I saw in that whole situation that I thought was noble to certain extent was there was a guy playing his first NHL game and he was against that friggin huge guy because he was actually taking the face off. So not only was he not playing his normal position he was, he was taking the face off you know to send another unwritten message and Biekse²⁸ actually traded places with the kid.

BRIAN: Wow that's ...

Laughing.

... that's, I've had teammates do that for me a couple of times or I got the shit kicked out of me and someone went out and made the other guy pay a price. But that's, that's ... those are bits of the code as well right. And that's why I said there's some ... certainly when you look at it as a ritualistic you know honour the one ... the codes that fall within this honour piece of fighting are things like that you can find almost ...

Pauses, and then says with emphasis and a slight grin on his face.

romantic.

JOHN: Well in that sense, Biekse did an honourable thing.

²⁷ Brian McGrattan is best known for the enormous number of penalty minutes he has accumulated.

²⁸ Kevin Biekse is known as a physically aggressive defenceman capable of handling himself in difficult situations.

BRIAN: Right.

JOHN: Right. He, he in fact did but he but it's still not a ... it's a dysfunctional event because ...

BRIAN: And depending on what that rookie. I don't know anything about what that rookie's MO is ... I don't know. Did he come up from the minors as a tough guy or he's just a young rookie?

JOHN: He's just a young rookie. He's not a particularly big guy. He got his first fight and his first goal taken care of in his first two games.

BRIAN: Well I was going to say from a ... Tortorella would argue that it was the right thing to do. But I would question putting out a kid when you could absolutely shatter his confidence day one. He might say how else is he going to build his confidence might as well put him out there but ...

JOHN: OK one question specifically about that before we lose this train of thought. If you were an NHL coach faced with this situation, what do you think would have happened if, instead, you had put out your top line?

BRIAN: Well ... here's my thing. If you put out your top line, you should say: "I don't give a shit if they're running around without their gloves on ... DON'T FIGHT THEM!"

JOHN: Yeah. I think you would have to make it clear or even the top players might be confused.

BRIAN: Does that make you ... do you lose face ... do you lose ... I don't know ... I would have loved to have seen the attempt to fight guys that wouldn't fight ... and if god forbid one of

your good ... one of your top players gets pummeled on the ice because he gets hijacked. I mean, I can only imagine the punishment that would be handed out by the league. I guess you want to protect your top players but ...

JOHN:

Interrupts smiling.

Well that's the thing. I think, I think because they can skate faster and they can handle the puck better they could have got a goal.

BRIAN: Well sure ... and then again I don't want to fall into this ... I've always hated the kind of nuclear bomb to nuclear bomb, fourth line to fourth line idea. The best hockey I ever played was when I was third line and I was checking the top line.

JOHN: Yeah, and I bet it was rewarding.

BRIAN: Yeah, I got to play against some really good players. But this notion kind of matching up just your stupidity and go out there and kill some time and rack up some penalty minutes is stupid. So sending a message there ... you know Tortorella obviously didn't know how to handle it.

JOHN:

Nodding in agreement.

I think Hartley was playing Tortorella pretty well there too, right.

BRIAN:

Leaning back in the booth.

He pushed every button Tortorella had and Tortorella was stupid enough to fall into that trap ... and to that point I love the line of questioning: “What would have happened if you put your top line out and you tell them don’t get sucked in?” It would have sent the message, I think, to Calgary, if you’re on that bench, oh these guys aren’t going to ... we’re not going to influence these guys with our muscle heads. Which means ... we have to be a smarter team. Vancouver is a better, a more skilled team than Calgary.

Pauses and says with force.

Act like it! Act like it!

RUTA:

Enters from the left.

Excuse me gentlemen, we have to get ready for a private party.

JOHN: Oh, that went quickly.

BRIAN: Yes it did.

JOHN:

Addresses Ruta.

Thanks, perfect timing as we’re at a convenient place to stop.

Ruta leaves the set and John returns his attention to Brian.

That’s great Brian! Thanks. I want to thank you very much for that, it gives me lots of stuff to add and think about now. So over the next little while I will make a transcript and send it your

way for you to look at. At that time, please review for accuracy and make any suggestions you feel necessary.

BRIAN: Alright.

JOHN: OK.

BRIAN: Good luck with that.

Brian gets up from the booth, shakes John's hand, John speaks briefly, then Brian exits to the left.

JOHN:

As they are shaking hands John speaks slowly, full of thanks.

Thank you ... very ... very much.

John gets up from the booth, the stage lights dim as the spotlight becomes fixed on John. He proceeds to the middle of the forestage, as the curtain falls behind him. He pauses collecting his thoughts.

Soliloquy Seven – Summation of my feelings and emotions

JOHN: I'm trying to recall how I felt about Brian's interview when it took place. I think I was overwhelmed by the depth of the interview and not just the telling of his story. But, the manner in which he articulated his story. I had a sense that a lot of thought, perhaps a better word is reflection, had gone into an examination of the nature of his emotional relationship with the NHL, during his career as a player. He had given me much more than I had expected, even though I approached the "semi-structured" interview with what I thought was an open mind. Later, when I listened to the recording, there were parts of the interview that I played over and over again. I came to realize they were points

when I felt myself respond empathetically. I felt connected to his story in such a way that I experienced rising levels of anger around what I consider social injustice.

Pauses, shakes his head. Pauses again before a half smile crosses his lips.

I felt connected to the ... my perception of his pain surrounding his experience of abandonment was not only interesting as a researcher, but heartfelt as a reader, as a listener, and as a writer. Now, having experienced this realization, how on earth could I present and share the research so the capacity of these emotions could be better understood. After much internal wrestling as a researcher, graduate student, and perhaps a little bit of a rebel, I approached my supervisor and asked his opinion regarding the remote possibility that the interviews could be written as a play. Much to my surprise, it was more the speed of the answer than the answer itself, he said he thought it would be a great way to disseminate my research. You are now witness to my multi-layered social drama, where the conflicts of the research participants have been acted out on stage. Hopefully, by participating as an audience, your understanding of the complex and violent world that they negotiate their existence has been extended.

Pause.

So, that's it.

Bows to the audience. Spotlight is extinguished. John exits stage left.

THE END

Chapter 5: Discussion

Poem:

We are (a work in progress)

under construction

irony

emotionally

active

no longer a disinterested

spectator

but,

feeling

embodied

vulnerable

we are...

... movement toward

telling

stories...

by

John Buxcey

2012

Discussion

The above poem is symbolic of the manner in which I became involved in the writing of this thesis. We are always under construction, ever changing positioning and re-positioning of

ourselves places us in different situated and varying perspectives, even in the story of our own selves. The sharing and telling of stories and the representation of personal narratives happens in a multi-layered or multi-faceted space somewhere between the speaker and the audience, or an audience. It is, somehow, in this space that sense, connection, knowledge, and acceptance occur. Just as there are spaces between the words in the poem, there are spaces, gaps, and distances between the researcher and the researched, the writer and the director, the director and the actor, and finally the actor and the audience. In all these relationships the parties participate with varying levels of commitment and attention throughout their interaction.

Moving toward an ethnodrama

The use of an ethnodramatic representation of my research on the “code” developed out of an increasing awareness of the difficulty in bringing out or increasing accessibility to the emotion and multiple levels of meaning within the NHL sport culture. It was the germinating of a seed that was planted in the summer of 2012 by Dr. Richard Tinning. He is a professor of pedagogy in the School of Human Movement Studies at the University of Queensland, Australia. Dr. Tinning was at the University that summer as a Lansdowne Scholar. He was sitting next to me in Dr. Hopper’s qualitative genre class. He had previously showed an interest in the scope and type of my research and had discussed it briefly. During the class, he leaned toward me and mentioned that I might want to think about writing my thesis as a play. I believe I thanked him. However, I did not, at that time, plan to follow his counsel and use this genre to disseminate my research. I, in a sense, had not arrived at that conclusion yet.

The formulation of this idea as part of my dissemination of findings needed more time. Ironically, the research timeline was initially delayed due to two separate events. The first was bureaucratic in nature. I had applied to and was rewarded with two back-to-back part-time

cooperative terms. As a graduate student one cannot graduate and be actively employed through the university's coop program at the same time. So, the work delayed my ability to graduate by eight months. As a result of the delay, the second event occurred. I was sharing the scope of my research, and the bureaucratic road block to completion, with a member of the faculty, who then suggested that I interview a particular former NHL player, a player that had a story that may be of interest. I did some basic web research, contacted the player, arranged an interview, and proceeded. The interview, transcription, etc. led to further delays in the projected completion date.

Interestingly enough, the second participant's narrative engaged me emotionally at a different perhaps more personal way than the first. I was consciously aware of its affect on me. I went back to the original recording and transcript with renewed vigour. It was not that I was originally disinterested in participant one's story. I was just more emotionally active and connected in a different more complete way. I now felt more like an active partner in their interviews rather from the position of spectator or researcher positioned on the outside. So, I re-read, re-listened, re-examined, and re-thought out the complexities of their lived emotional world. I knew I had or felt a responsibility to tell their stories in a manner that could give a voice to the cultural tension and emotional conflict revealed in the text and audio of their personal reflections.

Dr. Tinning's voice: "You might want to think about writing the interviews as a play." As my response, "Yes. What a great idea!" precipitated into reality in my mind, I was overcome with a deep feeling of vulnerability. So, as I was thinking "yes," it was only a small easily dissuaded "yes." So, I thought I would run it by my thesis supervisor, Dr. John Meldrum. He

responded with: “Sounds like a great idea!” So, the presentation of the interviews as an ethnodrama became the new direction.

I moved in the direction of telling their stories as an active participant no longer distanced but actually purposefully involved. My engagement in the material began as a story analyst, it now changed to storyteller. I returned to my previous work determined to use the idea of ethnodrama and transform data from interviews, participant observation, books, literature reviews, personal experience, and/or ethnographic accounts, into a theatrical script and performance piece (Smith & Sparkes, 2009). An “ethnodrama is, at its best, an equal collaboration between theatre artist and qualitative researcher, resulting in an artistic work based in the reality of a particular social circumstance” (Perry, 2007, p. 230). In this particular case, it was the genre chosen to newly negotiate old ground, to give a voice to the seldom spoken or seen rebellion against the “code” in the NHL. A unique form of representation that would connect an audience to iconic NHL hockey players in an intimate emotional manner revealing the players as unique very human beings.

The writing

At this stage, I poured myself back into the transcripts and began the process of an ethnodramatic construction. The act or process of building something becomes a thread or theme that intertwines itself and binds this story/narrative together from the idea that I, personally, am constantly in a state of “under construction,” to the construction of identity and the use of persona by players in the NHL, and finally resting in the fabric used in the construction of this particular ethnodrama. All aspects relating to the representation of their story are, from the writer’s point of view, going through a continual process of transformation, until the final copy is keyed.

I decided to leave the basic linear structure of the interviews in tact. The first Act centered around the interview with my first participant. I felt in not only an artistic sense but as a researcher that participant one's story was a great introduction to a lived experience in the NHL. I began the process of going through the interview line by line and transforming it into a scripted play.

Participant Interview # 1 (2012):

P1: Yeah. Well I mean my first really, really bad one was in Washington. I had a lot of them before that too. But, my first bad one was in Washington. Where I went to the hospital.

JB: OK.

P1: And I got released that night and it was on a Saturday night in Washington.

JB: Was point was that in your career ...

P1: That was in [actual date]. So that was when I was having my best season and basically got taken off in an ambulance. I was sick in the ambulance all the way to the hospital. I was sick at the hospital. Got released early in the morning the next day and uh played two days later. If that happened today, you'd have been out for at least a month. (Appendix E)

These passages were very easily transferred into dialogue that fit the format of a play. They were simple, well articulated, and there did not seem to be any particular emotional attachment revealed when listening to the audio portion. I just changed from the actual date given in the interview to a much more general "six years into my pro career." This change was made to help protect his anonymity. Yes, I also gave him a name.

Identity Construction (2014):

GEORGE: Yeah. Well I mean my first really, really bad one happened playing in Washington. I had a lot of them before that too. But, my first bad one was in Washington, where I went to the hospital.

JOHN: OK.

GEORGE: And I got released that night and it was on a Saturday night in Washington.

JOHN: What point was that in your career?

GEORGE: That was six years into my pro career. So that was when I was having my best season and basically got taken off in an ambulance. I was sick in the ambulance all the way to the hospital. I was sick at the hospital. Got released early in the morning the next day and uh played two days later. If that happened today, you'd have been out for at least a month. (p. 66)

Participant Interview # 2 (2014):

And I'd never considered it. I did consider it and I thought shit I think I'm a different person. I think I can deal with it differently. So I did, I went back. First day of camp first shift because it was a scrimmage ... from what I know afterwards ... there weren't a lot of guys really thrilled I was coming back again. I was labelled a quitter. I was you know ... I was ... some guys who had jobs now jobs because I wasn't there ... they feel threatened. I'm a quitter. All the code shit that I you know ... labelled with. So they were going to kill me particularly the other room. Let's kill this god damned guy let's send him packing he's not going to last. First shift I get my jaw broken by a cross check to the face, lose four teeth ... and I picked up my teeth went got them wired in I don't know why I just showed up with my teeth. They wired them in and ... uh ... the next day

I asked the guys what, what are the chances my teeth will stay? And he said oh well 50/50. I said I'm a professional hockey player. He goes: "oh right not to good." Took all my teeth back out ... left the hole there ... put like a jaw protector on and I went back two to three days later and I kept going. But, I was able to deal with that in a way that ... kind of psychologically you know psychology of sport. I learned how to channel that into strength and not a weakness ... and ... I ... came back and I ended up making the team that year. (Appendix E)

The second interview had large sections similar to this passage that needed to be broken apart and converted to dialogue. Large sections of the second participant's interview transcript were in large blocks of dialogue, perhaps because it was a telephone interview. The majority of the research interviews I have done were face-to-face and much more conversational.

Identity Construction (2014):

BRIAN: Well, then ... I did consider it and I thought shit, I think I'm a different person. I think I can deal with it differently. So I did, I went back.

JOHN: How did that go?

BRIAN:

Half smile.

First day of camp first shift because it was a scrimmage ... from what I know now ... there weren't a lot of guys really thrilled I was coming back again. I was labelled a quitter. I was you know ... I was ... some guys who had jobs now jobs because I wasn't there ... they felt threatened. I'm a quitter. All the code shit that I you know ... I was labelled with.

JOHN: How did that play out?

BRIAN: So they were going to kill me. Let's kill this god damned guy. Let's send him packing. He's not going to last.

JOHN: You found this out after the fact?

BRIAN: Yeah.

Anger creeps into his dialogue.

First shift I get my jaw broken by a cross check to the face, lose four teeth ... and I picked up my teeth went and got them wired in. I don't know why. I just showed up with my teeth. They wired them in and ... uh ... the next day I asked the guys what, what are the chances my teeth will stay? And he said: "Oh well 50/50." I said I'm a professional hockey player. He goes: "Oh right not to good." Took all my teeth back out ... left the hole there ... put like a jaw protector on and I went back two to three days later and I kept going. But, I was able to deal with that in a way that ... kind of psychologically. You know the psychology of sport. (pp. 106-107)

I had carefully listened to portions of his audio recording over and over to determine what I interpreted to be varying levels of emotion. It was also a time for me to reflect on what participant two would be doing with his body language. I was able to get some great clips from YouTube and study patterns of behaviour when speaking conversationally.

Not only did I become a character in an ethnodrama, I also became an intruder/narrator as the speaker in seven soliloquys. The use of the soliloquy as a tool to speak directly to and include the audience in a more intimate and thoughtful way has been used historically throughout written and acted drama. Shakespeare uses to great effect in Richard the Third. It is an effective tool, when used well.

Identity Construction (2014):

Lights dim as spotlight illuminates John. He rises out of the booth and walks to the front of the stage and begins to address the audience.

Soliloquy Two

JOHN: There it is. He isn't or doesn't appear to be quite what they want and so begins the process of identity construction and confirmation. It is a distinct point in his pursuit of a career in the NHL. It is this actual focused process that I draw your attention to, as George begins the process of socialization into the embodiment of a prospective professional NHL player. He has in effect decided to take on a new role, a new job, to become more violent, and this changes who he is and how he thinks of himself.

Complementary to this is acceptance. Will the NHL confirm the new identity through an expression of interest? One cannot hope to fully participate unless both occur.

Pauses thoughtfully. Smiles.

Let's see what happens.

Walks back to booth. Lights return as spotlight fades. John returns focus to George.

It is an opportunity to connect with the audience as a researcher by relating my state of mind and the intention of research design at particular points in time. It is also an opportunity to foreshadow events and draw attention to particular themes by naming them or reflecting upon them directly to the audience. In this sense the audience becomes incorporated as part of the ethnodramatic process. Not only is an actor carrying on a conversation with them, limited by its one way capacity, but the narrator is also posing questions to them to think about as the play unfolds.

My subjectivity was and is continually moving and shifting through the active process of re-reading, re-listening, re-evaluating, and re-writing. The connection or my sense of connection to the participants and the literature surrounding violence and masculinity are constantly re-formed and re-shaped as I move through this process. I found myself deeply and emotionally affected by the process of moving into the dialogue and shaping the narrative of the play. The play, now, today, is as finished as it has ever been. I may be able to leave it alone?

Peer-to-peer (P2P) responses

As mentioned in the rationale section of Chapter 4, I had the opportunity to view 6 extracts from the play being acted out by fellow graduate students. I was able to read a soliloquy out loud to an live audience for the first time. I was cognizant that this was a different place to be placed. In fact, quite distanced from researcher or writer as I was now an actor. The idea of actors, directors, and critics becoming involved in the ethnodrama was exciting but also brought back a sense of discomfort or vulnerability. The actors and directors would bring their own belief and experience to the roles, they would influence the tenor of thought or meaning intended in my carefully written script. They would bring something different to the narrative, themselves, which creates or opens up another window of understanding. Finally, the critic's response. What would be revealed? Would the audience connect?

It was the intention, when selecting the genre of ethnodramatic representation, to help an audience to connect to the socially constructed world of the NHL. Hoping that they would empathetically move toward an emotional understanding of the tension and loss in their, the player's privileged world.

I asked the class, via email, to respond to three questions:

Question 1.

1. Did you feel emotionally connected to characters? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Answers:

P2P 1: Very much so. I was the hockey player in scene 6, and I felt what came through in his words so powerfully. I wondered, at times, if I could continue, and funny at some point I realized I was in it - that I was retelling his story and that it was so important I had to continue, but I was deeply affected.

P2P 2: Yes. I felt that the characters revealed their inner thoughts through the dialogue. This gave the audience a feeling of connectedness with their struggles.

P2P 3: Yes - I could really see that the interview participants were struggling with their own identity and the one they are expected to assume in the game.

Question 2.

2. Do you view this inquiry as a useful educational tool? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Answers:

P2P 1: Absolutely. For me it was seeing how a qualitative research method could convey the data in powerful ways a more traditional representation couldn't have. Outside the feelings it stirred up for me around violence in the NHL, and our society, it made me excited about what a future in research could be. I can absolutely see this as a powerful unit in a Phys Ed, or other course curriculum.

P2P 2: Yes. As an English teacher I have used plays to help students become more confident with their reading skills. It was also a great way for students to better understand the elements of a play being important...setting, characters, conflict. It is

important for teachers to use a variety of teaching strategies because it engages students with diverse learning styles.

P2P 3: Yes - I think the way this information has been communicated is powerful and potentially transformative for athletes, coaches, referees etc. across athletic disciplines.

Question 3.

3. Did it evoke an inquiry at a personal level? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Answers:

P2P 1: Very much so, and I am not sure I can articulate it, except to say I could feel his brokenness, and that the brokenness is still there..... and I felt as though I had a glimpse into what the 'code' means and to what really goes on "on the ice". I'm a good Canadian girl who gee up with many brothers watching hockey night in Canada. I don't think I'll ever see it the same way again. We never hear what the refs, the players and the coaches say to each other, yet we watch them on the big screen. It was as though the scenes in the play ripped open what's really happening down there, Its got me asking so many questions about our society and violence, and what's really at the root of what happened.

Oddly enough, its reminded me that these guys on the Ice, most of them are kids. I remember when I was a kid, they looked like men, but now that I am a mother, I see they are kids. I have to admit, as I read through that scene, the maternal part of me wanted to make it stop. I didn't realize that until I typed it just now and quite honestly, that; evoked emotion.

I am honestly very curious to see where this goes. Its a very powerful piece.

P2P 2: Yes. I thought about the unwritten code of a school hierarchy. There are certain, certain norms and traditions which are expected but left unspoken. Sometimes not conforming can impede a person's ability to "climb the ladder." Why do these codes remain unchallenged?

P2P 3: Yes - While I don't personally participate in hockey, it made me think about the power people can hold with their viewership and acceptance of this type of behaviour.

This is a form of peer debriefing in order to bring credibility to my research by reinforcing the choice of an ethnodrama as an effective manner in which to convey cultural nuances in the NHL experience. "Peer debriefers can provide written feedback to researchers or simply serve as sounding boards for ideas" (Creswell et al., 2000, p. 129). All three respondents were emotionally connected to the characters, viewed this type of inquiry as an educational tool, and the ethnodrama served to begin an examination of unwritten rules or "codes" they were situated in, not just the ones described in the play.

Final Soliloquay – Self Reflection on the movement away from enforcers

Canada has two national sports. It has hockey and it has lacrosse. They are the only team sports that allow fighting. They don't kick people out! That's our culture. I was originally looking at a small code of conduct that would revolve around how enforcers operate. Or how I perceived that person as an enforcer would operate. But what happened is I found that even the most prolific

fighters in my lacrosse study never ever did they want themselves to be associated with the word enforcer or goon or anything like that and talking about people that had two to three hundred minutes in penalties. One participant claimed to have had over 500 fights in his junior and senior lacrosse career. But he was actually just a good guy. When they were talking about their roles they always talked about it in a disconnected manner. As if it was something over here.

I don't want to call them untruthful, but I wasn't finding an emotional connection to them. I was finding a story that I was seeing on TV. I was hearing the same story that the NHL tries to give everybody. It's the same manner in which Gary Bettman talks about concussions, as if fighting doesn't play a role in brain trauma. But there was one particular guy who had to play a number of different roles. He was of more interest to me in the interview because he actually looked at specific situations. He wasn't a fighter even though he was very, very competent with his fists. But he only fought when you wanted to fight and he'd only fight you if you were not a goon. He was very truthful about or I felt that he was being truthful about how he felt during the situations. He wasn't noble in any way. He was fighting guys he knew he could beat. He wasn't being a good guy. He was capable of reflection. So that was when I went back and talked to Tim and John about it. Then, we decided to pursue a particular type of player, a player that we thought would have to think and reflect about his role just to make the team and the NHL.

I have told the story of my thesis and my research to the best of my ability and focus at this point in time. I hope you have found something that may cause emotional reflection.

Epilogue

Sunday February 23rd, 2014 up at 4:00 A.M. to watch the Olympic Ice Hockey final. Canada defeats Sweden 3-0. There are no fights. There are five minor penalties, ten minutes in total, called during the entire 60 minute game. There was very little jostling, posturing or extra-curricular activity after the whistle. The game was a pleasure to watch and was enjoyed by a rumored 15 million number Canadians. This was one of the highest ratings for a sporting event in Canadian Television history. It would seem that the attraction of a highly skilled game without deliberate violence is a very attractive game after all.

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Appendix A

Snowball Sampling Interview Guide

- “Code”

Hi (addressing former Junior A player), my name is John Buxcey. I am a master student in the School of Exercise Science Physical and Health Education at the University of Victoria.

I am conducting a study titled: Unwritten Codes: An Examination of the “Code” or “Code of Conduct” in the National Hockey League.

I am consulting with you in order to develop a list of potential participants in the study mentioned above.

I am looking for participants who played professional ice hockey in the National Hockey League and assumed the role of enforcer at times during their careers.

Could you identify players or former players living in the Victoria or Lower Mainland region of British Columbia who would fit this description?

Great!

Here is my contact information:

1. Email: jbuxcey@uvic.ca
2. Cell Phone Number: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Please let the contact(s) know they can contact me at any time.

Thank you!

Appendix B

General Interview Guide: Ice Hockey Code

Welcome and thanks for agreeing to participate!

Remember from our introduction and the consent form you signed that your participation is voluntary and you may choose to answer only the questions you wish to. You may also exit the study at any time and request that your data not be used. We will honour all such requests.

Thank you again your participation is very much appreciated and will help us to find out more about your impression of the “code” and the way in which it is exhibited during an Ice Hockey game in the National Hockey League. There are no right or wrong answers. It is your perspective that is most helpful and what we are looking for!

Any questions?

As I mentioned earlier I will be recording is that ok?

TURN RECORDER ON!

Please describe your involvement in sport of ice hockey chronologically. Probe for how or why they got involved and continued to play.

At what point did you realize you were a good player? What was your skill level like? Ask for behavioral examples.

So how far did being a good player take you?

What do you love? Find difficult? Has that changed through your career?

How do you see your own role? Do you identify with the enforcer role? If not, then why? Can you explain how that developed?

How did that impact your role on team? Time played? Value? Identity? Thoughts on the game?

What happens if one party views the rules of engagement one way and the other party views the rules differently?

In your opinion, why do levels of violence increase or decrease?

RECAP: and ask for examples of behaviour?

Let's talk more broadly about that role in the sport today?

Do you have any thoughts or advice, for other going down the same path?

Is there anything we did not ask you that would help us understand this role in a better way?

Appendix C



University
of Victoria

School of Exercise Science,
Physical & Health Education

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Unwritten Codes: An Examination of the “Code” or “Code of Conduct” in the National Hockey League* that is being conducted by John Buxcey.

John Buxcey is a master student in the School of Exercise Science Physical and Health Education at the University of Victoria, and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at jbuxcey@uvic.ca or by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. John Buxcey will be working as the principal investigator on this project.

Purpose and Objectives

Canada’s national winter sport, Ice Hockey, has some defining characteristics. It is a physically demanding contact sport played at high speed. The game is played with 6 players, a goaltender and five skaters. Professional Ice Hockey is a team game which has rules for fighting other than an automatic ejection and suspension. In the National Hockey League, fights are governed by rule 46. Rule 46 – Fighting – A fight shall be deemed to have occurred when at least one player punches or attempts to punch an opponent repeatedly or when two players wrestle in such a manner as to make it difficult for the Linesmen to intervene and separate the combatants. The referees are provided very wide latitude in the penalties with which they may impose under this rule, as there are obvious degrees of responsibility. Professional Ice Hockey also has unwritten rules of engagement termed the “code” that govern the conduct of players. The research will examine and interpret the “rules and meanings” implicit in the “code” by interviewing former National Hockey League players.

Importance of this Research

Codes and specifically unwritten codes are present in society to varying degrees. The examination of the “code” in the National Hockey League will provide insight into the problems that present themselves in relationships that are governed by unwritten rules. What happens when one party views the rules of engagement one way and the other party views the rules differently? Why do levels of violence increase or decrease?

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as having played in the National Hockey League.

What is involved

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include participating in an individual interview and reviewing you transcribed comments following that interview. Audio-tapes/and-written notes, observations/ will be taken. A transcription will be made and shared with you.

THE INTERVIEW WILL BE FACE-TO-FACE. THE INTERVIEW WILL BE RECORDED USING AUDACITY® 2.0.2. THE INTERVIEW WILL BE TRANSCRIBED AND EMAILED TO YOU FOR REVIEW. THE RESEARCHER WILL CONTACT YOU AFTER A PERIOD OF TWO WEEKS. THE CHECK BACK PROCESS WILL BE COMPLETED BY TELEPHONE OR BY ANOTHER FACE-TO-FACE MEETING, AT YOUR DISGRESSION. AT THIS TIME YOU WILL BE ASKED IF YOU WISH TO CONTINUE PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH. YOUR RESPONSE WILL BE DOCUMENTED BY THE RESEARCHER.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including your time of 45 mins to 1 hour for an interview and approximately 30 mins to review the transcript of that interview IN A TELEPHONE OR FACE-TO-FACE MEETING.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

The participant may learn from the study. Although exploratory in nature findings that move toward a better understanding of how unwritten rules operate in a sport environment can lead to healthier and more effective atmosphere all participants including coach, athlete, referee, administrator, and spectator and may further the knowledge in the field of sport psychology.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will not be used in any way and will be destroyed.

Anonymity

Given the nature of this study, face to face discussions, anonymity is not possible however your identity will not be revealed and will be protected beyond the research team.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by the use of pseudonyms and changed location or other identifiers in all written work. Despite this, given the size of our potential sample, there is a small chance that your confidentiality may be limited.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways academic papers and presentation and in more general forms through speaker's bureau or other presentation to those in similar situations as yourself. In addition a summary of result will be presented to you in a format of your choosing.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of in 5 years by the erasing of any electronic or digital material and the confidential shredding of paper material.

Contacts

Please contact the lead researcher on this project John Buxcey jbuxcey@uvic.ca or at xxx-xxx-xxxx if you have any questions

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix D

Telephone Contact Introduction and Participant Request

Hello, is this _____ (name)?

Please let me introduce myself.

My name is John Buxcey and I am a master student at the University of Victoria.

I am involved with a research study on the “code” in ice hockey. You have been identified as a former or current NHL player. I was given your name by (Former Junior A player or another participant or both as they may both have recommended the prospect) and would like to know if you would be willing to be a participant in the study?

It would involve a 45 – 60 minute interview at a location of your choice. For example, it could be at your home or at a coffee shop. Wherever you choose I will meet you there. The interview will be recorded. I transpose the audio recording into text. I will then ensure a copy is emailed to you. The procedure allows you an opportunity to check it for accuracy and to explain events in more detail and depth. I will follow up with a phone call in two weeks from the date the email is sent. We can complete the check back process during the telephone call or we may meet face-to-face, if you wish.

1. Yes, I will participate. _____ 2. No, I decline. _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

Scheduled Meeting: _____

Thank you for participating! I look forward to meeting you on (date booked). If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me (give contact info). I will be sending a confirmation email.

Thanks again!

Follow up phone call and/or meeting.

Date of telephone contact and/or date of meeting _____

1. Yes, I will continue to participate. ____

2. No, I decline further participation. ____

Appendix E

Participant # 1 – Face-to-face Interview

Vancouver BC

JB: Thank you for agreeing to participate. You may exit the study at any time. If for some reason you do not want to continue on with it. I do not have any predetermined answers. This is a qualitative study. This is really your story, your perspective and we are now recording. I do have a format. There are certain parts of the game that are governed in certain ways. Certain parts of the game that players kind of take care of.

When you were a player coming up, whether it was in bantam, midget or junior, when did you become aware of a code or a code of conduct in hockey?

P1: I would say probably not until I was pro in Boston.

JB: Wow.

P1: Because I think that in junior hockey it's every man for himself and everybody's not wanting to be intimidated or back-down or ... you know will basically sacrifice themselves in unfair situations. And then when you turn pro it changes to the enforcers enforce, the players play, and there's not often that there is a lot of uneven matchups.

JB: Right.

P1: Where in junior there is.

JB: So, as a pro, when you started being a pro, how did you learn about that? Is it just ...

P1: Well I think that in Boston there was a code that if anybody hit Ray Bourque or messed with Ray Bourque that they would pay and it would be if let's say that a ... let's say that I was 180 pounds. If it was a hundred and eighty pound guy, then I would know as a 180 pound guy that I would have to go after that guy. If it was a 210 pound guy, which was usually the enforcers, a

210 pound enforcer would go after him. But, that's where the respect really took place and I, I refer to the Naslund situation to a lot of people.

JB: OK. Could you just go through that with me?

P1: So, when ... I'm sure when Moore knocked out Naslund after that game, you know it was an elbow, and after that game all the guys on his team were high fiving each other in the shower laughing about the hit. In my era early in the 80s, in Boston, if someone hit Ray Bourque like that, they would not have gotten off that ice alive or without a really good beating.

JB: On that day?

P1: On that instant! The benches would have cleared.

JB: Why would you think there would be a difference from when you played to 2004?

P1: Well I think that basically the rules have changed it to the point where its guy's risk fines, suspensions. You know I think that the instigator penalty created a situation where if the game was

P1: Yeah. Well I mean my first really, really bad one was in Washington. I had a lot of them before that too. But, my first bad one was in Washington. Where I went to the hospital.

JB: OK.

P1: And I got released that night and it was on a Saturday night in Washington.

JB: Was point was that in your career ...

P1: That was in 89. So that was when I was having my best season and basically got taken off in an ambulance. I was sick in the ambulance all the way to the hospital. I was sick at the hospital. Got released early in the morning the next day and uh played two days later. If that happened today, you'd have been out for at least a month.

Participant # 2 - Telephone Interview

#2: Hello, participant speaking.

JB: Yah hi participant, John Buxcey here.

#2: Hey how you doing?

JB: Pretty good (chuckle)

#2: Excellent.

JB: You have a couple of minutes for me?

#2: Yeah booked off some time.

JB: Awesome. So part of my thing ... rules, withdraw etc.

#2: You there?

JB: Yeah still here.

#2: I just went to speaker phone and I thought I hung up.

JB: (Chuckle)

#2: Sounds like you're prepping me for some sort of hostile date.

JB: No it's just I have to go over everything ethically, right.

#2: I know I'm just teasing you.

JB: OK Good. So ... we might just as well right into it and I'm going to start with: When did you become aware of a code or the code in hockey?

#2: I'd say it ... I started to be aware of it in Junior Hockey in the OHL. Um you know different kind of like ... I doubt it was like any different from coming into a fraternity house in a college somewhere university in the states where you move on in and there's just a code of conduct and expectations that are kind of built in and you have to figure them out on the fly. I'd say the OHL is the first time I started to see that in more ... of I guess ... obvious ways.

JB: Yes. So, how ... how did you learn about it ... socially?

#2: Uh ... I would say I learned about it by being bullied into it and or making mistakes.

JB: And ... how do you mean by making mistakes [name]?

#2: Well you know not understanding the, the behaviour or the expected behaviour and then being called out on it in derogatory negative ... you know ... if you didn't act a certain way or do a certain thing. It was always brought in some derogatory way to make you feel ... um ... you know ... less. You know just negatively try to bring you out I'm ... um ... I'm trying to think

#2: And so I finally get in there [name] sits me down like and he goes [#2 name] "I think we need to talk." And I just ... I remember saying: "[name] we do have to talk." And then he paused and said: "you first." And I said: "well I think I need to tell you that I, I'm done. I'm going home. I'm going to pack it up." I said: "I think there's a lot more I could be doing with my life at this point than beating my head against the wall to try to find something here that's ... that's not something I, I, I'm want to do. And he went "no." The whole god damned organization come into the dressing room to kind of find out why I'm thinking this ... but I did I quit. I walked out of there. I quit and I quit the NHL. I left the whole thing behind and I had not intended to go back but during that year living in [city] starting a business, finding out a little more about myself. What I found in that year was the courage to actually confidently be the guy I wanted to be and not ... uh ... not struggle with the person they wanted me to be and I always ... near the end that year off I was like shit if I only could have had this same centered self or this belief in myself there ... I think I could have dealt with those pressures differently. So later that season I went and I met ... I went and watched an [old team] game not with the intent by the way of ever thinking I was going back. At this point I still ... I was done. I had no interest in going

back. But I went to see a few guys that I knew after a [game] and I bumped into [person] as he was walking by ... a quick hi and then chatted with some fellows. The next morning he called my agent. What's [#2] doing? He looks great. What the hell's going on? Would he be interested in coming back? And I'd never considered it. I did consider it and I thought shit I think I'm a different person. I think I can deal with it differently. So I did, I went back. First day of camp first shift because it was a scrimmage ... from what I know afterwards ... there weren't a lot of guys really thrilled I was coming back again. I was labelled a quitter. I was you know ... I was ... some guys who had jobs now jobs because I wasn't there ... they feel threatened. I'm a quitter. All the code shit that I you know ... labelled with. So they were going to kill me particularly the other room. Let's kill this god damned guy let's send him packing he's not going to last. First shift I get my jaw broken by a cross check to the face, lose four teeth ... and I picked up my teeth went got them wired in I don't know why I just showed up with my teeth. They wired them in and ... uh ... the next day I asked the guys what, what are the chances my teeth will stay? And he said oh well 50/50. I said I'm a professional hockey player. He goes: "oh right not to good." Took all my teeth back out ... left the hole there ... put like a jaw protector on and I went back two to three days later and I kept going. But, I was able to deal with that in a way that ... kind of psychologically you know psychology of sport. I learned how to channel that into strength and not a weakness ... and ... I ... came back and I ended up making the team that year. And uh ... you know I had another six years practically. You know I was largely a third line guy but I was I, I played with a visor for most of that and I kind of set these rules for myself with these parameters. You know I defined my own code basically and I said to my wife: "If I do this here are the things I'm going to want to play this style of hockey. I'm going to want to do this ... I'm not going to fight ... if they want me to be this type of guy,

then this is going to be over before it starts. And so I came back and I became, I think, a useful you know decent hockey player kind of a third line checker. We had a couple of really, really good years in there you know thirty, thirty plus point years, in the conference final. I was a large part of those teams and I built back ... a lot of that ... you know I guess ... the, the ... the confidence of my team but kind of built back those relationships that maybe weren't there particularly after quitting and coming back and the last piece I'll say to this may or may not speak to your code ... story ... is during that climb back ... first year or two, you know, you go through these valleys and struggle, struggling to kind of find your spot on the team where you fit in and where you offer value. I wasn't playing wasn't playing that much ... you know ... and I was getting sick and tired of hearing stories of [NHL Tough Guy] ... there was a string of guys that had drunk driving arrests [NHL Tough Guy] had drunk driving he had cocaine in his underwear ... um ... these are like guys that were just living on the edge and everybody loved them. People loved them. How many chances do we want to give this guy? Endless chances because we think he's awesome. He is the epitome of tough guy. The epitome of crazy cool stories. Nick names it was ... and I was kind of really looking back going ... sucks to be trying to do this living an honest life.

Appendix F

Peer-to-peer questions

The questions were emailed to Dr. Tim Hopper's EPHE 585 class the day following the acting out of scenes from John Buxcey's ethnographic drama, *Identity Construction*.

1. Did you feel emotionally connected to characters? Yes No (Then brief description)
2. Do you view this inquiry as a useful educational tool? Yes No (Then brief description)
3. Did it evoke an inquiry at a personal level? Yes No (Then brief description)

Appendix G

Peer-to-peer responses

Three responses:

Response # 1

Thank you for bringing your ethnodrama to class. I learned and thought about a lot while participating in it, as well as through reflecting on it after - which I am still doing.

1. Did you feel emotionally connected to characters? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Very much so. I was the hockey player in scene 6, and I felt what came through in his words so powerfully. I wondered, at times, if I could continue, and funny at some point I realized I was in it - that I was retelling his story and that it was so important I had to continue, but I was deeply affected.

2. Do you view this inquiry as a useful educational tool? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Absolutely. For me it was seeing how a qualitative research method could convey the data in powerful ways a more traditional representation couldn't have. Outside the feelings it stirred up for me around violence in the NHL, and our society, it made me excited about what a future in research could be. I can absolutely see this as a powerful unit in a Phys Ed, or other course curriculum.

3. Did it evoke an inquiry at a personal level? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Very much so, and I am not sure I can articulate it, except to say I could feel his brokenness, and that the brokenness is still there....and I felt as though I had a glimpse into what the 'code' means and to what really goes on "on the ice". I'm a good Canadian girl who gee up with many brothers watching hockey night in Canada. I don't think I'll ever see it the same way again. We never hear what the refs, the players and the coaches say to each other, yet we watch them on the big screen. It was as though the scenes in the play ripped open what's really happening down there, Its got me asking so many questions about our society and violence, and what's really at the root of what happened.

Oddly enough, its reminded me that these guys on the Ice, most of them are kids. I remember when I was a kid, they looked like men, but now that I am a mother, I see they are kids. I have to admit, as i read through that scene, the maternal part of me wanted to make it stop. I didn't realize that until I typed it just now and quite honestly, that; evoked emotion.

I am honestly very curious to see where this goes. Its a very powerful piece.

Response # 2

1. Did you feel emotionally connected to characters? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Yes. I felt that the characters revealed their inner thoughts through the dialogue. This gave the audience a feeling of connectedness with their struggles.

2. Do you view this inquiry as a useful educational tool? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Yes. As an English teacher I have used plays to help students become more confident with their reading skills. It was also a great way for students to better understand the elements of a play being important...setting, characters, conflict. It is important for teachers to use a variety of teaching strategies because it engages students with diverse learning styles.

3. Did it evoke an inquiry at a personal level? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Yes. I thought about the unwritten code of a school hierarchy. There are certain norms and traditions which are expected but left unspoken. Sometimes not conforming can impede a person's ability to "climb the ladder." Why do these codes remain unchallenged?

Response # 3

Really enjoyed the session yesterday in Tim's class. Here are my responses to your questions:

1. Did you feel emotionally connected to characters? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Yes - I could really see that the interview participants were struggling with their own identity and the one they are expected to assume in the game.

2. Do you view this inquiry as a useful educational tool? Yes/No (Then brief description)

Yes - I think the way this information has been communicated is powerful and potentially transformative for athletes, coaches, referees etc. across athletic disciplines.

3. Did it evoke an inquiry at a personal level? Yes/No (Then brief description) Thanks.

Yes - While I don't personally participate in hockey, it made me think about the power people can hold with their viewership and acceptance of this type of behaviour.

Best of luck with your ongoing revisions!

