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## Recommended Citation

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Survival of the Toughest: An Ethnographic Study of a Collegiate Wrestling Team

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April 21, 2015

Submitted to the faculty of Ursinus College in fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in  
Media and Communications Studies

### Abstract

The purpose of this ethnographic study of the Vespey College Wrestling is to obtain a better understanding of the wrestlers' perspectives on cultural behaviors and norms that appear to oppose masculinity. This ethnographic study is based on observational fieldnotes I have collected and interviews I have conducted over a five month period as a participant observer of the wrestling team. This report includes an introduction to the study, a review of literature pertaining to masculinity and wrestling, a methods section, an ethnographic description, and a conclusion that discusses the implications of the results and suggestions for further research. Future research should be done to understand how members of western male-dominated subcultures perceive masculinity and hierarchy within their subculture.

## Introduction

People have a very strict understanding of masculinity. Connell (1987) defines “Hegemonic masculinity” as the “dominant form” of masculinity within the “patriarchal social order” (p. 183). It is defined by ideals and beliefs about behaviors and qualities that have been socially constructed as being associated with masculinity. As a result of this way of thinking about masculinity, wrestling is not perceived as masculine. The sport itself requires men to act in ways that seem to oppose “compulsory heterosexuality,” as wrestlers must grab one another and display physically intimate contact with their opponent throughout a wrestling match. The wrestlers who have to cut weight often monitor their daily food intake, which is a behavior that is also commonly associated with femininity. It is the existence of the qualities and behaviors associated with “hegemonic masculinity” that leads outsiders of the wrestling culture to overlook just how mentally and physically draining such a sport can be, because they are too preoccupied by these behaviors deemed not masculine. Outsiders may recognize wrestlers’ behaviors as opposing traditional masculinity and therefore, they may discredit their sport and perceive it as less tough than other sports that are commonly associated with “hegemonic masculinity,” such as football (Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 511).

The construction of masculinity is rarely considered in collegiate sports cultures where members often exhibit behaviors that appear oppositional to the socially dominant understanding of masculinity. Specifically, masculinity is rarely considered from the perspective of these cultures’ members. An ethnographic analysis of a collegiate sports team’s culture, such as the wrestling culture, can reveal a subcultural understanding of the notion of masculinity that differs

from the traditional western definition. There may be aspects of a collegiate sports team's culture that both assert but also oppose typical findings and commonly accepted theories pertaining to the behaviors associated with "hegemonic masculinity." Such a study could also reveal that concepts of traditional "hegemonic masculinity" may translate differently within certain collegiate sports teams.

The focus of this ethnographic study is the Vespey College Wrestling team, and much of the analysis consists of the wrestlers' perspectives on certain typical behaviors displayed within the culture and the daily adversity that wrestlers must overcome. By specifically analyzing the wrestling culture, an ethnographer can obtain a better understanding of wrestlers' perspectives of their sport, which reveals their understandings of these behaviors that appear on the surface, to oppose masculinity. This ethnographic study is based on observations I have collected and interviews I have conducted over a five month period. My ethnographic study suggests that wrestling is very different from, and perhaps much more mentally draining, than other traditional sports. This paper begins with the literature review that includes findings from studies and theories pertaining to masculinity, collegiate sport teams as well as wrestling teams. Next, I describe the ethnographic process of this study. After that, I present the analysis which highlights the mental and physical toughness of wrestling as well as the strong team bond, and finally, the conclusion summarizes the main findings and examines the implications of these findings and directions for future research.

### Review of Literature

#### The Construction of Gender

In their works, many gender and feminist theories acknowledged that sex is biological while gender is socially constructed (Butler, 1988; Foucault, 1976; Sedgwick, 1990). However, they also argued that while sex is a natural identity, it is something that has been used to construct the identity of gender. In her article, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” Butler (1988) argued that gender is a socially constituted performance that is perceived as being an expression of an inner truth, while in reality it is “constituting identity as a compelling illusion” (p. 520). Butler distinguished sex from gender by introducing the argument of feminist and phenomenological theories that pinpoint sex as a biological causality and something that is used to “dictate or necessitate certain social meanings” (p. 520) for a person’s experience. In other words, Butler argued that sex is biological but has been used to determine gender, which is a “construction that regularly conceals its genesis” (p. 522). She asserts that “gender is not a fact” (p. 522) and is not a “preexisting identity” (p. 528). Butler asserted her argument that gender is a construction and sex is a biological identity with the example of the transvestite. She used the transvestite to show how there is a distinction between sex and gender, because in the case of the transvestite, he or she acts in various “gendered” ways that contradict his or her sex (p. 527). In their brief Gender Studies introduction, “Introduction: Contingencies of Gender”, in their book *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Rivkin and Ryan (2004) introduced some of the elements surrounding the theories on gender, homosexuality and feminism. In their introduction, Rivkin and Ryan recognized that sex is biological and gender is a socially constructed element, and they drew attention to the 1980’s when “feminism began to change direction” and feminist theorists emphasized the difference between sexual identity and gender identity. During this era feminist theorists asserted that biological sexual identity was a natural element while gender identity was an element that

“seemed more subject to the contingencies of culture and history, more something constructed in and variable across society and through history” (p. 885-886). In other words, the 1980’s feminist theorists shared the idea that sex is biological and gender is a historical element.

In her the introduction of her book, *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick (1990) made the argument that gender is a historical element as opposed to a biological nature (p. 917). Sedgwick made the same argument as feminist theorists about sex and its influence on the construction of gender. She argued that the biological XX and YY chromosomal sex, is the indicator of certain physical and internal working qualities of the body such as “dimorphism of genital formation, hair growth, fat distribution, hormonal function, and reproductive capacity” (p. 915). These feminist theories argue that while sex may be a biological element based on nature, it has been something that the social construction of gender relies on. Sedgwick (1990) argued that the dominant culture’s use of binary oppositions and oversimplified categories to depict reality has worked to maintain the dominant status quo by presenting binary as “common sense” (p. 914). In other words, each binary pair consists of an element and its oppositional aspect and humans have come to internalize these oppositional categories in relation to one another and as common sense. Sedgwick utilizes binarisms and to further analyze and undermine the “common sense” that is associated with the category of homo/ heterosexuality. However, Sedgwick mentions “masculine/feminine” (p. 914) which sets up this discussion that both directly and indirectly relates to gender binaries and how sex is used to construct the homo/heterosexual definition. Sedgwick (1990) agreed with feminist theorists and argued that gender is a constructed identity that is “more fully and rigidly dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors” (p. 915). In other words, Sedgwick asserted that gender is a historical context that is continuously reproduced through behaviors that

are classified using a binary “cultural system” of “male/female” (p. 914) categorization as a means of “expression” of biological sex. The element of “sex”, which defines one’s ability for reproduction and genital activity, has become an issue because it now overlaps with the construction of gender. Sedgwick’s article emphasized how this overlap of two significantly different identities, gender and sex, presents new challenges for conceptualizing and understanding a difference (p. 915).

Gender and feminist theories also acknowledged that society uses binaries to construct certain oppositional qualities and acts as signifiers of the masculine and the feminine (Butler, 1988; Connell 1987; Sedgwick 1990). When introducing the new ideas of the 1980’s feminist theorists, Rivkin and Ryan (2004) asserted the existence of the “generality of the [gender]” (p. 886) in relation to the definition of “women.” Rivkin and Ryan suggested that the “intersection of biology and culture” (p. 886) has occurred because this sexual identity has been used to create a construction of a cultural identity that is used as a way to oppress women (p. 886). Sedgwick (1990) argued that dichotomies, such as those reflecting the male/female dichotomy, have become the places for implicit symbols of the relations of men to women. They stated that these relations have been created under “particular pressures of culture and history” (p. 919). Butler (1988) expanded on Rivkin and Ryan’s brief mention of the categorizing of qualities and behaviors into modes of gender. Butler discussed the idea of certain elements being associated with biological sex, when she discusses how the body comes to bear “cultural meaning” (p. 520). As Sedgwick’s work set up the symbols of gender in a historical context, Butler elaborated on this statement and set up the behaviors associated with gender dichotomies, male and female, in a similar sense by introducing the phenomenon of “gender performance.” Butler stated, “as an intentionally organized materiality, the body is always an embodying of possibilities both



conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention” (p. 521). Butler asserted her argument by using the example of being female which she argued to have no meaning in reality, but she stated that one becomes a woman by forcing the body to conform to this historical idea of what a woman is (p. 522). One prompts his/her body to become a “cultural sign” by conforming and performing the acts that have been historically constructed to belong to their specific gender (p. 522). Butler compared these acts by which gender is constituted as having “similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts” (p. 521). Ultimately Butler made the argument that gender is “an [unstable] identity” because it is associated with certain “gendered” acts that have been “tenuously constituted in time” (p. 519). These “gendered” acts make up a “gender performance” (p. 519). Butler claimed that the acts of gender performance create the actual “idea of gender” and gender would not cease to exist without these acts. The construction of gender has led people to believe that gender performance acts are natural and facts (p. 522). However, Butler undermined this construction when she argued that the acts that form gender are not an expression of an internal self, and she claimed that gender performance is a “strategy” that allows one to conform to society and reap the benefits of performing the respective gender (p. 522).

These theories that undermine and reveal the construction of gender have allowed for scholars and critics to expand on both femininity as well as masculinity. In fact, sexuality becomes a reoccurring theme in relation to gender and this idea of performance among gender theorists and critics (Connell, 1987; Grindstaff & West, 2006; Rivkin & Ryan, 2004; Sedgwick, 1990). While Rivkin and Ryan mentioned how feminist theorists believed that gender dichotomies limited women’s choices in regard to “sexual object, sexual practices, and psychological identities,” (p. 886) there were a few other theorists focused on the limitations of

masculinity. In his book, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, R.W. Connell (1987) introduced the construction of “hegemonic masculinity” which he claimed is “constructed in relation to subordinated masculinities as well in relation to women” (p. 183). Connell briefly mentioned Gramsci’s analysis of class relations and related it to the formation of the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” which uses hegemony in the same manner to mean “a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contexts of brute power in the organization of private life and cultural processes” (p. 184). The real men who hold the social power are the “corporate and state elites” (p. 185). While they do not live up to the “fantasy figures,” such as Sylvester Stallone, who are created as “models of masculinity,” these real men do hold up this cultural notion of hegemonic masculinity. Connell stated, “[t]he public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support” (p. 185). The “patriarchal social order” (p. 183) thrives on the interaction between these different forms of masculinity, and “hegemonic masculinity” has become the dominant form. Connell defines heterosexuality as the “most important feature of hegemonic masculinity” which entails the man’s close connection to the “institution of marriage” (p. 186). He also argued that one of the “key forms” of subordinated masculinity is the homosexual. Sedgwick (1990) stated that without sex or the concept of gender there could be no notion of homo or heterosexuality. In her argument, Sedgwick used sex and gender as interchangeable because she had believed that biological sex is used to construct the notion of gender. She argued that sex and sexuality are expressed only in terms of one another and she used race and class as examples of two elements that, like sex and sexuality, are not the same thing but are intertwined. She discusses how there is “definitional nexus between sex and sexuality” (p. 916); however, Sedgwick also claimed that there is “potential for analytic distance

between gender and sexuality, even if particular manifestations or features of particular sexualities are among the things that plunge women and men most ineluctably into the discursive, institutional, and bodily enmeshments of gender definition” (p. 916). In other words, Sedgwick suggested that like gender performance, the performance of heterosexuality and the socially assigned gender is something that limits men and women’s behaviors, sexual objects, and gender relations. In terms of gender determining sexuality, Sedgwick stated that gender does not determine one’s sexuality; however, she argued that this damaging bias of gender being a determinant factor in sexuality is something that has come to exist in the concept of gender. As an example, she discussed the definition of femininity, and she stated that female identity “is constructed by analogy, supplementary, or contrast to male, or vice versa” (p. 918). Sedgwick’s argument added support to Butler’s theory (1988) on gender performance because Sedgwick suggested that femininity is defined by performances and features that juxtaposed anything or any behaviors considered masculine. Connell (1987) also supported the argument of gender contrasts, which is exemplified when he discussed the construction of “emphasized femininity” as the accepted form of femininity within the patriarchal system. He stated that “emphasized femininity” is a construction that is associated with qualities of compliance with the subordination to the masculine (p. 183).

In chapter two “The Perverse Implantation“ of his book *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1976) argued that since the eighteenth century, sex has not been repressed but has intensified through discourse. Foucault discussed the culturally constructed label of sexual perversion associated with homosexuality, in terms of the historical context. Since the rise of the “bourgeois society” in the nineteenth century, any pleasure that had no purpose beside pleasure has been frowned upon. However, unlike the eighteenth century which used “explicit” codes,

such as canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law, to govern sexual practices and position people as criminals who engaged in “sexual perversion,” the nineteenth century brought about different ways of controlling sexuality. The power that was brought upon sex and the body drew attention to various forms of sexual perversion by “extending the various forms of sexuality” in relation “to lines of indefinite penetration” (p. 898). Foucault stated, “[nineteenth-century ‘bourgeois’ society] did not exclude sexuality, but included it in the body as a mode of specifications of individuals” (p. 898). In other words, Foucault argued that in terms of sexuality in relation to gender (or sex), sexuality is a feature that has long been associated with certain gendered modes and also something that is based on historical reasoning and context (p. 896). Foucault stated, “[t]his new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals” (p. 896). Westphal’s (1870) article on “contrary sexual sensations,” was an example of how “the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized “less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself” (as cited in Foucault, 1976, p. 896). Foucault claimed that homosexuality was transposed from the practice sodomy and became a form of sexuality that appeared to establish homosexuals as a new androgynous species (p. 896). The homosexual who performed these divergent acts was now characterized as expressing this combination of the feminine and masculine. Theorists such as Sedgwick (1990) and Connell (1987) argued that femininity and masculinity are constructed as oppositional, and Sedgwick (1990) elaborated on how this construction limits a person’s behaviors and sexual preference. Foucault (1976) used historical evidence to argue that, over time, sexuality has been constructed in relation to sex as perverse or as appropriate.

The theme of “hegemonic masculinity,” “compulsory heterosexuality” and sexuality in general are reoccurring themes found within literature on masculinity (Grindstaff, 2006; Rich, 1980; Connell, 1987; Butler, 1988). In their ethnographic study of collegiate cheerleading, “Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport,” Laura Grindstaff and her co-author Emily West (2006) demonstrated how studying collegiate co-ed cheerleading teams can provide insight on the relational constructions of gender and sexuality within sports and society. Grindstaff and West found that male cheerleaders often feared being labeled as gay and the ethnographers used Connell’s theory on “hegemonic masculinity” to suggest that this fear stemmed from the idea that being seen as homosexual would impede on his masculinity (p. 511). Rich (1980) defined “compulsory heterosexuality” as the act of behaving in ways that dictate heterosexuality and that results from a cause of “panic” to conform to the ideal of “heterosexual masculinity” (as cited in Rivkin & Ryan, 2004, p. 886). Rivkin and Ryan stated, “compulsory heterosexuality” has led friendships between men to become suspicious. They argued that even if men were to act out “compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 885) there would still be suspicion in regard to their friendships with other men. Homosexual behavior, like inverse gender behavior, is “stigmatized as ‘perversion’” (p. 885). Butler (1988) asserted her argument of gender performance as a “strategy” because she stated that if people do not perform their gender correctly then they are “regularly punished” (p. 522). Connell (1987) supported Butler’s argument when he argued that there is “ideological warfare” and socially and culturally constructed repercussions or “transactions” that are associated with being homosexual and that help to maintain the man’s disdain for homosexuality as well as the homosexual man (p. 186). Connell used the example of the AIDS scare which was a time “marked less by sympathy for gays as its main victims than hostility to them as the bearers of a new threat” (p. 186). The dominant media maintained this

disdain for homosexuals as it referred to the disease as the “gay plague” and presented it as a threatening disease that “[would] spread to the ‘innocent’ [straight people]” (p. 186). Foucault (1976) also mentioned the AIDS outbreak and he argued that at this time, homosexuality was considered something that had to be detected “as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skins, or among all the signs of behavior” (p. 896). In other words, Foucault claimed that homosexuality became associated with a negative disease as well as irregular behaviors, and every part of the homosexual man was perceived as being contaminated and infected with his homosexuality.

Foucault (1976) used historical evidence that can help to explain some of the historical reasoning behind the social punishment of homosexuality. As discussed previously, Foucault (1976) emphasized the fact that the idea of sexuality as perverse has been reproduced from historical context in the eighteenth century when institutions severely pushed ideals and beliefs on people that positioned heterosexual marriage as the enactment of a “legitimate” relationship and a “regular” sexuality (p. 893). Foucault argued that the dominant power of nineteenth century drew out these perverse sexualities by identifying them and bringing attention to them to establish this element of surveillance. Foucault also talked about the pleasure the people obtain through evading this power, fooling it and resisting it. One way perhaps people would fool and resist the power of the social controls of sexuality was by conforming to the “polymorphous conducts” that were both extracted from and solidified in “people’s bodies and from their pleasures “ and which were used to draw out, reveal, isolate, intensify certain sexualities by “multifarious power devices” (p. 898). Performing “compulsory heterosexuality” is one of the strategies that is used to avoid being punished for the sexual perversion and the inversion of gender.

### Masculinity and College Males

Gender theorists have helped to undermine gender role norms and explain why people continue to unconsciously accept the gender constraints that are socially constructed as opposed to natural. In their study, “Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory,” Mahalik, Locke, Ludlow, Diemer, Scott, Gottfried, and Frietas (2003) paraphrased Mahalik (2000) when they stated, “[g]ender role norms, or those rules and standards that guide and constrain masculine and feminine behavior, are believed to have the same properties as social norms” (as cited in Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 3). Along with recognizing gender as a construction, it is important to also recognize the actual behaviors that result from these gender constraining rules. Several scholars studied college men in an attempt to achieve a better understanding of masculinity and the norms and rules that are associated with the male gender (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Mahalik et al., 2003; Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Locke & Mahalik, 2005). In their study, “Putting My Man Face On’: A Grounded Theory of College Men’s Gender Identity Development,” Edwards and Jones (2009) conducted three interviews with ten college men who attended a large research institution on the East Coast. Edwards and Jones found that the college men in their study came to recognize that society defined masculinity or “manhood” by certain behaviors that were oppositional to their perceptions of themselves. Their findings revealed that in response to “external expectations,” the expectations of being a “man,” the men who participated in the study claimed that they put on a performance so that they would be seen as men (p. 216). Edwards and Jones compared this performance to a mask, and this performance that the college men put on appears to be in line with Butler’s (1988) theory on gender performance. Gender performance, like the college man’s mask, is a “strategy of survival” and “[it] is a performance with clearly punitive consequences,” because “those who fail to do their

gender right are regularly punished” (Butler, 1988, p. 522). In order to better understand this masculine performance, the acts associated with masculinity must be discovered. The same scholars that have studied college men and masculinity have attempted to reveal the performative acts that are associated with contemporary masculinity in the college setting (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Mahalik et al., 2003; Blazina & Watkins 1996; Locke & Mahalik 2005).

There are several characteristics and behavioral elements that are associated with male expectations which were identified in the studies that were done on college males and masculinity. The male gender expectations that have been identified in these studies can be broken down into five specific categories. All of these specific categories share the theme of “compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, 1988, p. 524; Rich, 1980, p. 632; Rivkin & Ryan, 2004, p. 886), which suggests that this is an act that men are expected to perform. Butler and Rich’s notion of compulsory heterosexuality has been a prevalent theme throughout several studies on masculinity among college men. As some of the studies revealed, compulsory heterosexuality led men to unconsciously fear feminine behaviors and therefore, strive to prove their masculinity (Davis, 2010; Kilianski 2003). In her study, “Voices of Gender Role Conflict: The Social Construction of College Men’s Identity”, Davis (2010) interviewed ten male undergraduate students who ranged in age from 18-21 on topics based on identity development. The purpose of their study was to explore how gender role conflicts among men may impact gender identity development. Davis attempted to find out how her participants saw themselves, the important factors in their lives and how these factors influenced who they were, and what it was like to be a man on campus (54). Davis found that many of the men interviewed were frustrated, and the root of their frustrations came from their fear that they would be seen as “feminine” or “unmanly” (p. 58). The fear of being seen as “unmanly” or not “masculine” was a factor



emphasized in several of the studies discussed below and this fear was often associated with being the cause of many college men behaving in ways categorized as “masculine”.

Along with many other studies, the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI) revealed a wide variety of significant qualities and behaviors that are associated with masculinity within the college setting. Developed in 2003, the CMNI is one of the more recently developed, multidimensional scales that contained a more complicated evaluation of masculinity than other measures before its time (Mahalik et al., p. 4-5). It was developed as a factor-validated scale that assesses a larger number of salient male norms in comparison to other scales during its time (p. 4). In fact, the inventory identifies specific norms, such as “self-reliance,” as opposed to “broad constructs of masculinity,” such as “masculine ideology” (p. 8). The inventory assesses “normative masculinity” (p. 5) more broadly by assessing the elements of affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions of masculine gender norms. It also assesses levels between conformity and non-conformity (p. 5). It was put through an initial long and careful procedure that led to the establishment of a list that consisted of twelve masculine norms. It was then put through a study that aimed to make the list of norms more accurate, and this study resulted in the list being trimmed down to eleven norms. In study three of the development of the CMNI, the CMNI was also compared to other previous scales assessing masculinity, such as the “Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS; Brannon & Juni, 1984), the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O’Neil et al., 1986), and the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale (MGRS; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987)” (15). In Mahalik et al.’s (2003) study, the 269 College male participants’ CMNI scores related both “significantly and positively” to the total scores for the three other masculinity assessment scales (p. 16). The positive relationship between the subscales of the three other masculinity scales and the subscales of the CMNI “suggest that the CMNI subscales were measuring the masculinity

constructs” they were supposed to measure (18). While the BMS and GRCS scales were used in some of the studies examined below, the five categories of masculinity discussed below (Proving heterosexuality through disrespect for women and homosexuals; Appearing in control of emotions and not emotionally vulnerable; Taking Risks: Excessive Partying, Alcohol Consumption; Competitive attitude; Aggressiveness and violence)\_were mainly based on the CMNI scale and supported by studies that were done using other masculinity assessment scales.

*Proving heterosexuality through disrespect for women and homosexuals*

One element that appeared to be a continuous theme throughout studies done on college men, as well as men of all ages, is heterosexuality. According to Butler’s (1988) theory, to fulfill the role of a masculine man, men are expected to prove their heterosexuality to society by fulfilling certain “performances” that are associated with heterosexuality. One of the elements that came up in multiple studies was the ways in which college men attempted to prove their heterosexuality through their relationships with women. This included having sex with multiple partners and not having an emotional connection with these women. The central purpose of Edwards and Jones (2009) study was to investigate how men came to understand themselves as men. Edwards and Jones found that the college men in their study came to perceive that society defined a “real” man as heterosexual as opposed to gay (p. 221-222). After coding several of their interviews, Edwards and Jones found that men’s fear of appearing homosexual was a reason that many of the young men “hooked up” with many different women and would participate in unfulfilling relationships. In another study, “Examining Masculinity Norms, Problem Drinking, and Athletic Involvement as Predictors of Sexual Aggression in College Men,” Locke and Mahalik (2005) gave surveys to 254 male college students from undergraduate classes from four colleges and universities in the northeastern and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. The

purpose of their study was to examine how sexually aggressive behavior and the endorsement of rape myths were predicted by masculinity within a college population. Locke and Mahalik found that men's sexual violence and the acceptance of rape myths were most strongly linked with the acceptance of certain masculine norms, one being the belief that "emotional involvement in sexual relationships is not a good idea" (p. 282).

Another common theme found in the results of a few studies was this need to establish and overcompensate for heterosexuality as well as masculinity through the attempt to gain the upper hand over women. Locke and Mahalik (2005) found that men's sexual violence and acceptance of rape myths were strongly linked to the masculine behavioral norms of "taking action to control women" or "conforming to power over women norms" (p. 282). Edwards and Jones (2009) found that one of the ways that men would take control of women was by "degrading, objectifying, or demeaning women" (p. 219). Edwards and Jones claimed that these behaviors that men directed toward women were some of the common ways men would perform society's expectations; however, they noted that the participants in their study expressed frustration about this particular aspect of masculinity. The male participants also claimed that they would objectify and demean women as a way to overcompensate for their masculinity (p. 217). After the completion of the initial development process of the CMNI, "Power Over Women" was identified as one of the masculine norms (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). Mahalik et al. stated that there was a second study that was conducted to examine the "internal consistency estimates of the CMNI and data from distinct groups" and "examine its discriminant validity" (p. 5). This study was successfully completed with the help of 752 undergraduate and graduate men, and 245 undergraduate and graduate women who completed different measures in order to assess whether the CMNI could differentiate between men and women's answers to questions about masculinity

norms and questions that reflected aspects of health (p. 9). One of the nine items that men scored significantly higher on than women was the variable of “Power Over Women” (p. 9). While this study was done with the purpose to test the CMNI scales reliability in relation to past studies, the fact that “Power Over Women” was one of the nine masculine norms that significantly more men reported conforming to in comparison to women suggests that “Power Over Women” is a significant masculine norm in the U.S. college culture. According to Connell’s (1987) theory on “hegemonic masculinity” (1987), this form of masculinity is constructed in relation to women and the dominance of masculinity is preserved within a patriarchal society through the maintenance of an “emphasized femininity” (p. 183). As mentioned previously, “emphasized femininity” is the form of femininity that is characterized as compliant with subordination to the masculine (p. 183).

The same studies that showed that masculinity was associated with achieving power over women also found that men would attempt to show dislike and discomfort towards homosexuals. Locke and Mahalik (2005) found that men’s sexual violence and the men’s acceptance of rape myths had, in part, to do with the masculine norms of “being uncomfortable and angry at gay men and not wanting to be perceived as homosexual” (p. 282). Edwards and Jones (2009) found that men who were feeling insecure about their manhood would often overcompensate with masculine behaviors, which included “making homophobic comments” (p. 217). After a careful development process of the CMNI, “Disdain for Homosexuals” was identified as one of the masculine norms (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). In the second CMNI study, one of the nine items that men scored significantly higher on than women, in terms of conformity, was the variable of “Disdain for Homosexuals” (p. 9). In Kilianski’s (2003) study, “Explaining Heterosexual Men’s Attitudes Toward Women and Gay Men: The Theory of Exclusively Masculine Identity,” 150

undergraduate male participants that were enrolled in introductory psychology classes underwent two procedures. The purpose of Kilianski's study was to find out if there was a relationship between the co-occurrence of heterosexual men's negative attitudes towards gay men and women and their masculinity identity and/or their acceptance of masculinity ideology. The results suggested that masculinity ideology was at least partially related to heterosexual men's negative attitudes towards gay men and women (p. 49). The results also showed that in relation to "exclusively masculine identity," more men put feminine qualities as what they did not desire to be and more masculine qualities in what they did desire to be. The results of the study also suggested that "exclusively masculine identity" was one individual-difference variable that constituted heterosexual man's negative attitude toward women and gay men. Kilianski stated, "[t]o the extent that their identities were exclusively masculine, the men in this study held negative attitudes toward both women and gay men" (p. 53).

In Mahalik et al.'s study, the masculine quality of "Playboy" was found to relate to the masculine qualities relating to "Power over Women," but there is question as to whether a "masculine" man's attitude towards women reflect his attitude toward homosexuals (Mahalik et al., 2003; Kilianski, 2003). The purpose of the fourth study in the development of the CMNI, was to examine "the concurrent validity of the CMNI" (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 19). This was done by examining 157 undergraduate and graduate college men's CMNI scores in relation to "measures of social dominance, aggression, and the desire to be more masculine" (p. 19). Mahalik et al. never directly defined the masculine norm "Playboy" within their study. However, they do described "Playboy" using other masculine qualities when they stated, "Playboy" should relate to adventure, anti-femininity, concealing emotions, and subordinating women" (p. 14) in the hypothesis of the third study in the development of the CMNI. Mahalik et al.'s vague

definition appears to match the Oxford's English Dictionary's most contemporary definition of the term: "[a] person, usually a wealthy man, who leads a life of pleasure, *esp.* one who behaves irresponsibly or is sexually promiscuous" ("Playboy," 1898). Interestingly enough, the results revealed that "Power Over Women" and "Playboy" subscales related positively to social dominance while "Disdain for Homosexuals" did not (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 21). In other words, men who had a higher degree of preference for inequality among social groups, were more likely to conform to "Power Over Women" and to the "Play Boy" variable, but they were not as likely to conform to "Disdain for Homosexuals." This finding that suggests that "Disdain for Homosexuals" did not mirror respondents' preference for unbalanced relationships with women contradicts Kilianski's (2003) statement and finding that show a relationship between heterosexual men's attitudes toward women and gay men. However, the CMNI masculine norm of "Disdain for Homosexuals" was still found to be one of the most significant masculine norms in the second study of the development of the CMNI (Mahalik et al., p. 9). According to Connell's (1987) writings on hegemonic masculinity, this form of masculinity is constructed and maintained within a patriarchal society that works to maintain dominance over women, as well as "subordinated masculinities" (p. 183). Connell suggested that being heterosexual is a very important feature of hegemonic masculinity, and he stated, "key form of subordinated masculinity is homosexual." (p. 186) The interactions and "ideological warfare" that make up this subordination of homosexuals are linked to the man's disdain for homosexuality as well as the homosexual man.

*Appearing in control of emotions and not emotionally vulnerable*

Several studies revealed that men associated the display of certain emotions and even emotional expression in general with feminine behaviors. Jones and Edwards (2009) found that

men in their study recognized that society defined masculinity, or “manhood,” by what men should not do. The men in this study understood that they should not be “feminine, or vulnerable” and they were expected to “not cry” (p. 221-222). The study also found that when they felt insecure, men would overcompensate with certain behaviors such as “suppressing their own emotions” (p. 217). Edwards and Jones’ study revealed that college men were expected to not show that they cared about their academics or their future during their four years of freedom in college. The men in Edwards and Jones study described how they would prepare for their future as “taking academics seriously, going to class, studying, internships, involvement, worrying about GPA, carefully selecting a major, learning, filling out the resume, and learning about self” (p. 217). However, the men reported that they will often overcompensate for their insecurities as men by “hiding, minimizing, or dismissing the things they did to prepare for life after college” (p. 217). This idea of not caring and not stressing related to the CMNI masculine norm, “Emotional Control,” of the CMNI (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). In study two of the development process, one of the nine items that men scored significantly higher on than women, in terms of conformity, was the variable of “Emotional Control” (p. 9). In study four of the development process of the CMNI, conformity to the masculine norm of “Emotional Control” appeared to be significantly related to social dominance (p. 21). This suggests that men may see emotional control as a way that they can maintain social dominance.

However, emotional control was an expectation for masculinity that restricted men from showing “feminine” emotions but was found to allow for the display of masculine emotions (Blazina & Watkins, 1996). Another study found a relation In Blazina and Watkins’ (1996) study, “Masculine Gender Role Conflict: Effects on College Men's Psychological Well-Being, Chemical Substance Usage, and Attitudes Toward Help-Seeking,” 148 male undergraduate

students were drawn from psychology classes at a Southwestern university and they were each given six self-report measures. Blazina and Watkins' study focused on finding out how and if college men's gender role conflict affected their scores on "psychological well-being, substance usage, and attitudes toward psychological help-seeking" (p. 461). In the study, gender role conflict was defined as the strain or tension that a man feels between what he would or should ideally be according to society's standards and what he actually is. Their study showed that anger or "anger reaction-type" was significantly related to the "success, power and competition variables" of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (p. 463). In the study, Blazina and Watkins used Long's (1987) idea when they suggested that their results assert that anger was one of the only emotions that men were encouraged to express and perhaps became an emotion that was used to channel any unmanly, vulnerable emotions (as cited in Blazina & Wakins, 1996, p. 463). After analyzing their results, Blazina and Watkins' stated, "the restricted emotionality variable is a significant predictor of attitudes toward seeking help" (p. 464). In other words, men who attempt to restrict their emotional expression may be more likely to have a negative attitude toward seeking help. In their discussion Blazina and Watkins drew from Hammen and Peters' (1977) work and Warren's (1983) work, and they suggested that "[m]ore traditional men may believe that feelings are unnecessary, time consuming baggage" which "may be the product of socialization" and "there may even be social sanctions against men who openly express emotions" (as cited in Blazina & Watkins, 1996, p. 464).

Some studies also suggested that men limited their communication in an attempt to conform to social expectations of masculinity. Davis (2010) found that participants communicated frustration as a result of the narrow boundaries that limited their ability to express themselves. She stated, "[a]t the root of this frustration was the fear of being seen as 'feminine'



or somehow ‘unmanly’ (p. 58). Davis’ study revealed that men saw the quality of “openness to talking” (p. 58) as something that made people question their orientation, and therefore their masculinity. However, Davis found that men expressed themselves more freely with women than they did with other men because they saw opening up to women as safer than as opening up to men. Men described their relationships and connections to other men in terms of activity. The study found that when men did have deeper conversations with another man or did express themselves, they did so “side-by-side” rather than “face-to-face” (p. 58). The participants reported that they could be more direct and intimate in their communication when it was just one other man, but for the majority of the time, the participants described “[h]umorous comments and ‘putdowns’” as the “norm” in communication among men (p. 57). When showing affection toward other men, the participants described it as a non-verbal action where they would punch one another, play play-station against one another, and converse in cars (p. 57). Blazina and Watkins’ (1996) study suggested that men saw seeking help as less masculine. They found that men who experienced more masculine role stress viewed seeking help more negatively than participants who did not experience masculine role stress (p. 464). Blazina and Watkins referred to Tracey’s (1985) “model of the therapeutic process,” which is a model that “suggested that shifts in power occur in favor of the therapist, when the client begins to divulge information and express feelings” (as cited in Blazina & Watkins, 1996, p. 464). Blazina and Watkins applied this theory to their results and suggested that men who experienced more gender role conflict felt uncomfortable with therapy because of their expectation that they would have to give up their power. As a result, men may quit going to therapy after experiencing this perceived power shift.

In the third study in the development process of the CMNI, Mahalik et al. (2003) attempted to examine “concurrent validity” of the CMNI by testing “its relatedness to

psychological distress, attitudes toward psychological help-seeking, social dominance, aggression, and drive for muscularity” (p. 5). The study’s results showed that the conformity to overall CMNI masculine norms, and specifically the masculine norms of “Emotional Control,” “Self-Reliance,” “Winning,” “Violence,” “Power Over Women,” and “Disdain for Homosexuals” (p. 16) were associated with negative attitudes towards seeking psychological help. In other words, the study found that men who conformed to masculine norms often associated seeing a psychologist with something negative and perhaps un-masculine.

#### *Taking Risks: Excessive Partying, Alcohol Consumption*

There appeared to be a reoccurring theme of risk-taking in several studies on masculinity and college men. Studies revealed that the risks that college men took included excess alcohol consumption and partying (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Mahalik et. al, 2003; Blazina & Watkins, 1996). In their study, Edwards and Jones (2009) found that college men were expected to perform masculinity in terms of society’s expectation, and they were expected to treat college as “four years of freedom” and four years full of “partying” (p. 217). Partying for college men was found to include excessive drinking, drug use, having pointless and competitive sex with many women, breaking the rules and pretending not to care about academics (p. 216). The participants in Edwards and Jones (2009) study reported that the overall expectations of college men included excessive drinking, doing drugs, having sex and breaking the rules (p. 222). As previously mentioned, during the development process of the CMNI, “Playboy” was identified as one of the masculine norms and in study two of the development process, “Playboy” was one of the nine items that men scored significantly higher on than women, in terms of conformity (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). As mentioned earlier, Mahalik et al. gave a vague definition of “Playboy,” but their definition appears to match the Oxford’s English Dictionary’s most contemporary

definition of the term which includes aspects which relate to the expectations of college men that were identified by Edwards and Jones (2009) such as “lead[ing] a life of pleasure,” “behave[ing] irresponsibly” and being “sexually promiscuous” (“Playboy,” 1898). In the second study of the development of the CMNI, results revealed that the men who had said that they had, at least once, drank so much that they could not remember the things they had done while drinking scored higher on the overall CMNI than the men who had said that they had never drunk enough to black out (p. 12). These men also scored significantly higher in terms of conformity, on “Playboy” than men who had not drunk enough to lose their memory. This suggests that men who reported drinking an excessive amount conform to the masculinity norms, specifically the “Playboy” masculine norm, more than the men who did not report drinking an excessive amount.

Blazina and Watkins (1996) found that there was a significant relationship between certain variables of “success, power and competition” (p. 461) associated with masculinity and college men’s inclination to admit to increased alcohol usage. They found that their results relating to masculinity and alcohol consumption fit theoretical literature on masculinity. They briefly mentioned four theories from Lemle and Mishkind’s (1989) work that fit their findings: “(a) the symbolic meaning of drinking as being part of the masculine realm becomes internalized during childhood, (b) a boy's first drink or first episode of drunkenness represents in U.S. culture a rite of passage into manhood, (c) increased alcohol consumption is equated with a greater sense of masculinity, and (d) men should be able to hold their drinks and not appear out of control” (as cited in Blazina & Watkins, 1996, p. 463-4). Blazina and Watkins also mentioned Wurmser’s (1987) idea about the U.S. culture associating masculinity with the ability to drink without becoming visibly intoxicated or addicted (as cited in Blazina & Watkins, 1996, p. 464). In other words, intoxication results in an individual losing control and alcoholism represents this

dependency, and these are two aspects that oppose masculinity. However, Blazina and Watkins also claimed that a man's perceived masculinity increased with the amount he was able to consume without becoming visibly intoxicated or developing an addiction.

After a careful development process of the CMNI, "Risk-Taking" was identified as one of the masculine norms (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). In study two of the development process, "Risk-Taking" was also one of the nine items that men scored significantly higher on than women, in terms of conformity. Study two's results also revealed that the men who said that they had been in trouble with the law scored higher on the overall CMNI than the men who had never broken the law before. This suggests that men who have broken the law conform to the masculinity norms more than the men who have not broken the law. Edwards and Jones' (2009) results indicated that risk-taking was associated with masculinity because the participants reported that the "traditional definition of masculinity" included willingness to break the rules (p. 221). In the second study of the CMNI development process, the CMNI masculine norms could be used to differentiate the men who had participated in high-risk behaviors such as "being involved in violence, being in trouble with the law, smoking, and drinking to the point of unconsciousness" (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 13) from those who had not participated in such behaviors. From Courtenay's (2000) work, Mahalik et al. concluded that the CMNI's ability to differentiate fit well with much of the literature that related masculinity to behaviors that put one's health at risk (as cited in Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 13).

As previously mentioned studies found, college males were expected to party and drink during their four years of college and they were expected to care less about their school work and future (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Blazina & Watkins, 1996). The masculine expectation of partying in college explain why Mahalik et al. (2003) found that their results contradict previous

research results on masculinity. After a careful development process of the CMNI, “Primacy of Work” was identified as one of the masculine norms (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). However, in the second study of the Development process of the CMNI, “Primacy of Work” was not included as one of the nine items that the men scored significantly higher on than women, in terms of conformity. Mahalik et al. suggested that “Primacy of Work” or “Putting Work First” were two masculine norms that may not be considered a masculine norm in the United States. However, they also suggested that the results are a reflection of the age range and environmental factors of the participants they selected for their study, who were all either undergraduate students or graduate students with an average age of 20.27 (p. 9). Mahalik et al. stated that “college men [may be less] conforming to these two norms than men of other ages and experiences”, such as those men in a competitive work place (13).

### *Competitive Attitude*

There was a reoccurring theme of aggressive and competitive attitudes that appeared in several of the studies done on college men and masculinity (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Mahalik et al., 2003). Blazina and Watkins’ (1996) results suggested that men who were found to conform to the “success, power, and competition” variable were more likely to have negative attitudes toward seeking help. As previously mentioned, Blazina and Watkins concluded that men who experience more gender role conflict may feel uncomfortable going to therapy because they fear having to give up their power. This suggests that men who conform to the masculine “success, power, and competition” variables may see therapy as a competition for power and are reluctant to give in. In Edwards and Jones’ (2009) study, the male participants described the traditional definition of masculinity as including the variables of being in control or in charge, and being competitive. The participants also claimed that the social expectation of

competition between men was a component of social expectations that limited their friendships with other men. Edwards and Jones found that the competitive expectations for college men overlapped with one of the men's expectations of partying which entailed them to engage in "meaningless or competitive heterosexual sex with many women" (p. 216). After a careful development process of the CMNI, "winning" was identified as one of the masculine norms (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). In study two of the development process, one of the nine items that men scored significantly higher on than women, in terms of conformity was the variable of "Winning" (p. 9). During the development of the CMNI, male members of the two focus groups that met over eight months to develop the list of masculine norms, reported winning to be a "very salient message for them and for their male friends and family" (p. 6). These men stated that winning was also a significant message that was produced by the "cultural mainstream" (p. 6). In study four of the Development of the CMNI, the results revealed that the man's desire to be more muscular was associated with the conformity to the masculine norm of "Winning" as well as the variables associated with this norm.

### *Aggressiveness and violence*

Aggressiveness and violence were two other elements that studies and writings on college men and masculinity revealed to be masculine qualities (Edwards & Jones, 2009, Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Mahalik et al., 2003; Connell, 1987). In Edwards and Jones' (2009) study, the male participants stated that the traditional definition of masculinity included the aggressive quality. As mentioned earlier, Blazina and Watkins (1996) found that anger was one of the only emotions that men were encouraged to express. They used Long's (1987) work and suggested that perhaps anger had become an emotion that men could use to channel any unmanly, vulnerable emotions (as cited in Blazina & Watkins, 1996, p. 463). After a careful development

process of the CMNI, “Violence” and “Dominance” were identified as two of the masculine norms (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). “Violence” and “Dominance” were also two of the nine items that the results indicated men conform more to than women. Study two of the development process showed results that revealed that men who claimed to be involved with violence conformed more to seven out of eleven of the masculine norms than men who had not been involved with violence. The men who reported that they had been involved in violence also scored higher on the CMNI than men who had not been involved with violence. These results suggest that men who engaged in violent behavior conformed to the masculinity norms more than the men who were not involved in violence. The third study of the development of the CMNI had results that revealed that men who experienced psychological stress through social discomfort “tended to conform to winning, violence, dominance and self-reliance” (p. 19). Mahalik et al. suggested that trying to defeat others, fight and dominate them could be a way that men deal with their social discomfort or it could be that their tendency to try to beat, fight and dominate others is an aspect that causes men’s feelings of social discomfort. Connell (1987) claimed that “power, authority, aggression” as well as “violence” are qualities and themes that are attributed exclusively to “hegemonic masculinity” and are not associated with femininity (p. 187). He stated that there is less institutionalized power hierarchies existing among women in comparison to those existing among men, and he asserted his argument when he claimed that there is a “much lower level of violence between women than violence between men” (p. 187).

### Masculinity in College athletes

A few studies had findings that suggested that participation in certain sports and collegiate athletics are significant indicators of masculinity (Lantz & Schroeder, 1999; Messner, 1989;

Grindstaff & West, 2006). In Lantz and Schroeder's (1999) study, "Endorsement of Masculine and Feminine Gender Roles: Differences Between Participation In and Identification With the Athletic Role," 173 male and 236 female participants completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory. The primary purpose of their investigation was to "examine the influence of identification with the athletic role on the endorsement of masculine and feminine gender roles" (p. 548). They used their results and compared the differences in gender role endorsement that were reported by the athletes (51 females and 62 males) and non-athletes (185 females and 111 males). The secondary purpose of their study was to "examine the relationship between masculinity, femininity, and athletic identity" (p. 548). The study's results revealed that the athletic role related positively to masculinity and negatively to femininity. The study also revealed that the college students who were classified as masculine reported "significantly higher levels of athletic identity" than college students who were classified as feminine. However, masculine respondents did not have significantly different reports of athletic identity than androgynous participants, or participants "possessing both masculine and feminine characteristics" (p. 546).

While athletics were revealed to be associated with masculinity, one study found that the significance and meaning of athletic involvement meant something different to men of different ages and of different levels of class (Messner, 1989). In his study, "Masculinities and Athletic Careers" Messner (1989) conducted thirty open-ended, in-depth interviews with former male athletes. His purpose was to obtain a critical understanding of male gender identity and apply it to "Levinson's (1978) conception of 'individual life course'" (p. 74; as cited by Levinson, 1978). Messner stated that he specifically wanted "to discover how masculinity develops and changes as a man interacts with the socially constructed world of organized sports" (p. 74). Messner's results primarily revealed that sports have very different roles in regard to masculinity in the



lives of the higher and lower class men. His study also revealed that during youth, boys initially found sports to contain an exclusionary factor that affirmed and established the superiority of certain boys. Messner found that as young men, many middle class and upper class men realized that they had a better chance at success if they obtained a business career through education as opposed to pursuing a professional athletic career. However, that does not mean that these men did not utilize their past athletic careers to their advantage. Messner found that the upper class men that worked in business but had been successful high school or collegiate athletes still valued their athletic past. For these men, sports represented “a badge of masculinity that [added] to [their] professional status” (p. 78). Messner found that the higher class, business male participants often publically displayed trophies and plaques in their offices as “small potatoes” that they used to open doors to them in professional careers and allow them to bond with other men on a masculine level.

Hegemonic masculinity is revealed as being an element that is present as well as significant in athletics (Grindstaff & West, 2006). Grindstaff and West (2006) found that some male cheerleaders attempted to defend their masculinity by comparing themselves to football players. Grindstaff and West reasoned that this was because football players are widely understood as embodying Connell’s (1987) description of “hegemonic masculinity” (as cited in Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 511). In his article, “A Little Pain Never Hurt Anyone: Athletic Career Socialization and Normalization of Sports Injury,” Curry (1993) also identified football as a masculine sport in which the players are able to use aggression and violence to prove their masculinity. When discussing their observations and findings, Grindstaff and West (2006) argued that sport becomes a “powerful site for naturalizing gender difference because it appears to harness ‘nature’ rather than ‘culture,’ reflecting biological differences between men and

women rather than particular gender regimes” (p. 515). Their argument undermined the sense of “naturalness” of gender performance within sports, which is key theme in their ethnographic study. The authors argued that competitive, gender conservative cheer programs, such as the UCA, promote and represent “hegemonic masculinity” because these teams have the men do the “man’s work” and refrain from doing feminine motions (moving hips or dancing). Grindstaff and West noted that the male cheerleaders knew the gender appropriate reasons to offer as justification for taking part in such a “feminine” activity, and they found a number of ways to compensate for the gay stereotypes associated with male cheerleaders. The study found that most of the ways that male cheerleaders compensated “reinforce[s] the notion that being strong and being straight ‘naturally’ go together” (p. 511). For example, Grindstaff observed that the men on the competitive squad at a Kentucky Camp did their weight lifting on the same schedule as their school’s football team to prove that they had comparable strength. The male cheerleaders often exhibited “compulsory heterosexuality” (Butler, 1988, p. 524; Rich, 1980, p. 632) when they defended their participation in a “feminine” sport. One of the male cheerleaders defended his participation in cheerleading by countering his discredited heterosexuality and stating, “[f]ootball players roll around in the grass with other males, shower with each other, and slap each other on the butt” (p. 511). He added that as a male cheerleader he gets to be around the most attractive women in the school and touch them in places many men can only dream about. Grindstaff and West observed that many of the male cheerleaders’ behavior reflected their attempt to compensate for the loss of masculinity that resulted from their participation in a “feminine” sport. These men would exhibit “hegemonic masculinity” and certain behaviors to prove they were “real’ men” through the avoidance of partaking in “feminine” behaviors exhibited by cheerleaders such as smiling and cheering. These male cheerleaders compensated

for their loss of masculinity by appearing “big and tough” (p. 511). The female cheerleaders would sell their routine by smiling, cheering and looking good. However, the male cheerleaders attempted to see the routine in a non-feminine way by appearing strong, muscular and athletic.

Hegemonic masculinity was revealed to be constructed in relation to emphasized femininity within athletics (Grindstaff & West, 2006). Connell (1987) defined “emphasized femininity” as the form of femininity that “is defined around compliance with this subordination [to men] and is oriented in accommodating the interests and desires of men” (p. 183). According to Connell, there is no such thing as a hegemonic femininity because all forms of femininity are constructed within a patriarchal society that emphasizes subordination of women to men. The pressure that is present among men to negate other forms of masculinity is not present among women. This subordination to the patriarchal system limits women’s ability to construct institutional power relations over other women. However, the compliance, which Connell defines as being “central to the pattern of femininity,” (p. 187) is the primary feminine element that is supported culturally and ideologically. “Emphasized femininity” gains cultural recognition while other forms of femininity do not. The production of these ideologies is one of the practices that allows male dominance over women to be institutionalized. Grindstaff and West (2006) discussed the ways in which they observed “hegemonic masculinity” to exist in relation to the power of Connell’s (1987) other definition of “emphasized femininity” (as cited in Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 500). Their observations suggested that the female cheerleaders often enjoyed the “‘girly’ aspects of cheerleading,” which are the feminine notions of performance, and which include “smiling, ‘facials’ (exaggerated facial expressions), being in constant motion, jumping, and executing dynamic arm, hand, and head motions” (p. 509). The male cheerleaders on the

squads feared that they would be labeled as gay if they were to partake in this “feminine” performance.

In their study, Grindstaff and West (2006) found that in many cases, collegiate level cheerleading was not considered to be a legitimate sport, and many of the cheerleaders wanted people to respect cheerleading as a sport. Grindstaff and West stated that the “term ‘sport’ signified high status,” and they found that cheerleading was not classified as a “sport” at many schools because the feminine elements compromised the legitimacy of cheerleading (p. 505). The study found that heterosexual male cheerleaders often assumed that “flaming” male cheerleaders were gay and they often thought lowly of them (p. 511). Grindstaff and West found that the coaches even monitored homosexuality because they perceived it as being a threat to the squad’s respect (p. 512). The study suggested that the feminizing of a sport rendered it vulnerable to ridicule while masculinization has helped cheerleading to actually gain respect and credibility. Heterosexual male athletes have helped the sport gain respect through their display of masculinity within cheerleading (p. 514).

In his study, Curry (1993) found that male athletes come to accept pain and injury as a normality of athletics. Curry analyzed three interviews with an amateur wrestler, Sam, to see how a well-rounded athlete comes to accept pain and injury as a normality of sports. During his interviews, Sam shared several incidents in which he was injured while playing sports, and he described his first injury in T-ball as a young child. He stated that even after the ball hit him in the eye, and his “eye swelled up,” he still wanted to go back into the game (p. 277). His father allowed him to go back into the game but his mother was horrified. His father’s lack of concern for his son’s injury and his mother’s horrified reaction established a pattern for the rest of Sam’s athletic career. He explained that his mother, like his grandmother, could not watch him compete

in contact sports because of the injuries that often occurred. As a result of adopting “his father’s definition of sports,” Sam accepted injuries as a normal part of participating in sports, and he explained that his father would continue to play the remainder of a football game even after receiving a “broken nose” (p. 277). Sam stated that he associated being pampered after an injury by his mother and grandmother as being treated like a baby, and he had come to identify himself as a “rough and tough” athlete who accepted pain and injury as normal (p. 278). In fact, Sam stated that he did not consider any injuries that did not impede temporarily on his ability to compete in athletics as “real” injuries (p. 280). Sam’s establishment of his athletic identity based off of his acceptance of injury and tough exterior in sports appears to reflect Grindstaff and West’s (2006) findings that suggested that men typically use sports as a way to establish their athletic identity as oppositional to femininity.

In Curry’s (1993) study, he also talked about how Sam viewed his involvement in sports as a way to maintain closeness with his father and a masculine way that he could express his love to his father. Sam viewed the injuries that impeded his ability to continue to succeed in sports as also impeding his ability to bond with his father. This idea of males seeing participation in sports as an important way to build relationships with their fathers is supported by Messner’s (1989) study. The male participants reported that they felt that at a young age, sports were not initially about winning but they were important because they promoted bonding. Around ages nine or ten, the less skilled boys could no longer use athletics as a means of bonding because they were weeded out of the competitive system of organized sports. Those who experienced early success received recognition from adult males (fathers, older brothers, etc.) and held higher status among peers.

### *Wrestling and Masculinity*

There is only a small amount of research that is focused on the topic of collegiate wrestling in relation to masculinity. The reason for this may be because most of the studies that have been done on collegiate wrestling are psychological studies that focused on significant behaviors, such as weight control, that are associated with the collegiate wrestling (Baum, 2006; Cooper, 2003; Lakin, Steen & Oppliger, 1990). There were only a few sociological studies that focused on the wrestling culture in relation to masculinity or even just sociological aspects of the wrestling culture (Baker & Hotek, 2001; Curry, 2008; Curry, 1993). However, not all of these studies were specifically focused on collegiate wrestling. There were certain norms, rules and behavioral patterns associated with the wrestling culture that were distinguished in a few of the sociological studies, but for the majority of the other studies, weight watching was the most prevalent element. I broke up the researchers findings into three different sections. In the first section I will examine the findings in relation to making weight, in the second I will talk about the findings in relation to displaying full effort and appearing tough and in the third section I will examine the results in relation to attitudes and encouragement.

#### *Making weight: weight watching/binging*

Making weight was identified in a few studies as a behavior that was accepted as a norm within the wrestling culture. Many of the psychological studies on wrestlers focused primarily on their eating habits. This suggests that weight watching is an element that is recognized and considered prevalent and perhaps an issue within the wrestling community. In her article, "Eating Disorders in the Male Athlete", Baum (2006) discussed several studies and statistics on the prevalence of eating disorders in male and female athletes. While Pope and Hudson (2004) found that eating disorders were more likely to be found in females than in males (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 1), Yang, Gray and Pope's (2005) results revealed that male athletes and non-

athletes, particularly from the West, have been suffering from body image disorders, more than men from other parts of the world (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 2). Baum also discussed studies by Biesecker and Martz (1999), Burckes-Miller and Black (1988), Thiel, Gottfried and Hesse (1993), and Woodside, Garfinkel, Lin, Goering, Kaplan, Goldbloom, and Kennedy (2001) which all suggested that athletes are at a higher risk for developing eating disorders (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 1-2). Baum brought up an interesting finding in Biesecker and Martz's (1999) results that revealed that just as many male athletes as female athletes were discovered to diet more, and exhibit more anxiety and fear of fat in response to "negative coaching vignette" (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 2). Baum talked about wrestling and rowing as sports where eating disordered behavior is most prevalent. Baum drew from her earlier work (2000) and she stated that eating disorders were most likely to occur in sports with principles that were "critical to the judging or scoring process" and especially sports that required athletes to make weight and those in which a low body fat percentage was beneficial to an athlete's performance (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 3). She also stated that these types of sports were also the ones that tended to deny the existence of eating disorders. Baum suggested that sometimes an athlete might already be "predisposed to [the] form of psychopathology" that leads to eating disorders, and therefore, the athlete might consciously or unconsciously choose to play a sport that could help the athlete maintain their eating disorder (p. 3). Baum also suggested that in other cases, these sports might actually produce "eating-disorder[ed] behavior" (p. 3). Baum discussed a study done by Cooper (2003), that revealed that 1.7% of high school wrestlers meet the criteria for bulimia (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 4). Baum stated that Cooper's (2003) results revealed that "[the wrestler's] goal is often to compete in the lowest possible weight class for their size" (p. 4) and they will do this by "binging and purging, extreme calorie and fluid restriction, laxative and diuretic abuse, and over-

exercise” (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 4). Baum discussed Cooper’s results in detail which claimed that wrestlers would normally use all these weight loss mechanisms before a competition and would commonly binge after a competition. Binging after a competition often became “a ritual bonding among team-mates” (p. 4). She stated, “[t]he resultant gastrointestinal discomfort, as well as the knowledge that they will soon again be facing the need to make weight will lead to purging again, often as either a team activity, or with the full knowledge and support of their team-mates” (p. 4). Baum also shared Cooper’s (2003) findings that suggested that the coaches would often look the other way (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 4). Cooper even reported that outside their sport, wrestlers would often have trouble getting away from their weight watching and eating habits (as cited in Baum, 2006, p. 4).

In Lakin, Steen and Oppliger’s (1990) study, “Eating Behaviors, Weight Loss Methods, and Nutrition Practices Among High School Wrestlers,” they examined how common “binge eating and bulimic behaviors, nutrition practices, and weight loss methods” were among high school wrestlers (p. 225-6). Seven hundred and sixteen students who planned to attend summer wrestling camps at a Midwestern university during the summer filled out the questionnaires for this study. From the sample, approximately 55% of the wrestlers reported that they lost more than 1.4 kg during the season. The results of the study revealed primary weight loss methods were used three to four times a week or daily. Weight loss methods included “increased exercise (n = 333, for 84%), restricting foods (n = 296, for 75%) or fluids (n = 165, for 41%), or gradual dieting (n = 260, for 66%)” (p. 227). One hundred and twenty seven of the participants fasted, 255 reported that they dehydrated themselves while using heated wrestling rooms, 156 participants reported that they dehydrated themselves while wearing rubber or plastic suits, 22 participants reported using diet pills, 17 participants reported vomiting, 12 used laxatives, and 11



used diuretics. In total, 40 subjects or 5.6% of the subjects met the criteria for bulimia based on one of the three well known scales (p. 228). While 356 subjects or 52% of the subjects reported partaking in a binge eating episode, the most severe binge eating was most common among the subjects who met the criteria for bulimia based on one of the three scales. Eighty-five percent or 34 subjects of the Bulimic group claimed that binge eating occurred one or more times weekly and lasted less than one hour. Fifty percent or 20 subjects reported eating “until their stomachs were painfully full, or until they could not eat anymore” (p. 229). Of the few purging behaviors that were reported, the methods that were most commonly used were “vigorous exercise, vomiting, and laxative use” (p. 229). In their study, “Weight loss methods of high school wrestlers,” Kiningham and Gorenflo (2001) found that weight loss techniques were also common among high school wrestlers. They sent a two page survey to Michigan high school participating in interscholastic wrestling and they attempted to assess the weight loss behaviors of high school wrestlers. Their findings revealed that fasting and dehydrations methods were the primary methods used by wrestlers for weight loss and the wrestlers who engage in these weight loss behaviors on a weekly basis were likely to binge eat. From their sample, they found that most of the Michigan high school wrestlers engaged in at least one weight loss method on a weekly basis during the wrestling season.

The sociological research done on wrestling also revealed that making weight is a significant element within the wrestling culture (Baker & Hotek, 2001; Curry, 2008; Curry, 1993). In their article, “Grappling with Gender: Exploring Masculinity and Gender in the Bodies, Performances and Emotions of Scholastic Wrestlers,” Baker and Hotek (2001) shared their findings and conclusions of their ethnographic study of three wrestling teams: a youth club, a middle school team and a high school team. Baker and Hotek observed that the scholastic

wrestlers of the middle school and high school wrestlers practiced making weight. Baker and Hotek stated that weight making became more significant at the high school wrestling level, and their observations included multiple stories about making weight. One high school wrestler skipped class to run in a plastic suit in an attempt to make weight, and another high school wrestler went through an entire school day without eating and then ran stairs for ninety minutes to lose ten pounds in an attempt to maintain his desired weight for the tournament. Baker and Hotek even observed that an eight year old wrestler appeared dizzy and almost unable to wrestle during the state competition because of his attempt to lose weight to avoid wrestling a better wrestler. Baker and Hotek identified “making weight” as androgynous, and they defined the term “androgynous” as “include[ing] behaviors that are not traditionally masculine” but are also not “particularly feminine” (p. 57). They stated, “[making weight] is something that is culturally associated with women but is a very important body practice for wrestlers” (p. 57). The ethnographers argued that this behavior of making weight that was traditionally associated with the feminine was classified as androgynous because the wrestlers were focusing on making weight for different reasons than women who focused on their body weight. Specifically, women are focused on “cultural attractiveness” and male wrestlers must lose weight in order to wrestle in a desired weight division (p. 58). Making weight is significant in wrestling because there is only a certain number of competitive weight classes on wrestling teams, and the rules only allow for one wrestler to compete in a weight class during a meet. If there are two wrestlers in the same weight class, they must “wrestle off” to determine who will go on to compete in the next wrestling tournament (p. 58). The less skilled wrestler will choose to either lose weight to compete in a lower class or he will be forced to compete in a higher weight class. Baker and Hotek observed that some wrestlers chose to lose weight excessively to avoid having to compete

against a wrestler who was better than them. Baker and Hotek acknowledged that wrestlers focus on their muscles along with their weight because they wanted to wrestle well and win. In Curry's study (1993) on Sam, an amateur wrestler, Sam talked about a time when he had a severely swollen knee before an important tournament, and despite the potential negative consequences, he quickly made weight before the tournament by riding an exercise bike for several hours (p. 282). In Curry's (2008) article, "Where the Action Is: Visual Sociology and Sport," he discussed some of the findings from his sociological study on a collegiate wrestling team. Curry claimed that "action" provided opportunities for wrestlers to "display character" (p. 107), and he identified "integrity in making weight" as one of the ways that amateur wrestlers would display character.

#### *Display full effort and a tough exterior*

The sociological studies revealed that wrestlers were expected to display full effort and display a tough exterior even when confronting injury in the wrestling culture (Baker & Hotek, 2001; Curry, 1993). In their paper, Baker and Hotek (2001) identified "being strong" and "taking pain" as two significant qualities and expectations within the scholastic wrestling culture (p. 54). They identified these qualities as "masculine wrestling behavior," or behavior that is in line with "orthodox masculine behavior," better known as hegemonic masculinity (p. 54). Baker and Hotek connected the elements of being strong and taking pain when they described an observation in which a high school wrestler was encouraged, by his teammates, to lift a weight that appeared too heavy for him. After he managed to push through the pain, his teammates praised him and referred to him as being "ripped" (p. 55). During practice, the wrestlers were often given endurance drills where they were expected to push through physical pain and if they appeared fatigue, the coach would continue the drill until the wrestlers no longer appeared tired.

One interesting observation Baker and Hotek shared was one in which an opponent slammed a high school wrestler on the gym floor outside the mat as they were falling out of bounds during a match. Hotek and Baker stated, “[a]lthough it is against the rules in scholastic wrestling to intentionally inflict pain on one’s opponent for its own sake, pain is normative for wrestlers, as it takes place within the process of the legal and illegal moves of wrestling” (p. 55). In this case, the opponent had partaken in an illegal move and the young man he had slammed onto the gym floor won through disqualification. However, the injured, young man wanted to wrestle through the pain because he did not feel that he had earned a “real” win even though he had received an illegal slam to the head. Baker and Hotek also observed how many of the opponents showed signs of enduring pain on their faces even during legal moves, such as with the “cross face” and the “double arm bar” (p. 55). Baker and Hotek found that no matter the amount of pain a wrestler endured, crying in public was not acceptable even after being hurt or after losing a match. In two incidents, after losing a tough match one wrestler was seen zipping up a warm up jacket and running to the locker room while another defeated wrestler covered his face with a towel as he laid on the mat and his coach nudged him to get up and go somewhere else. Even in the youth league, a young wrestler who was crying from pain after being pinned down was told to “stop crying” by his father (p. 57).

In Curry’s study (1993) on Sam, an amateur wrestler, Sam came to see injury and pain as a part of his “role-identity” and as something that he was inevitably going to confront as a wrestler (p. 286). Sam stated that in wrestling, the wrestlers get many minor injuries but they “shake it out” and continued to compete through the pain of these injuries (p. 277). When Sam attended a wrestling camp that attempted to teach wrestlers how to be “supermotivated,” Sam learned several lessons about the rules of wrestling. His camp coach had been a former wrestler

and he had been paralyzed from the waist down in a trampoline accident, but nevertheless, the coach would actually leave his wheelchair and crawl onto the mat to do demonstrations and wrestle with the boys. The coach stressed that he did not give up after his paralyzing injury and he still pursued success when he received a million dollar grant from the state to start up this wrestling program. Sam learned that injury should not prevent him from success even if it confined him to wheel chair. The coach made Sam and the more skilled boys do many vigorous exercises such as running five miles with bags of sand on their backs. At this camp, pain was used on those who were believed to have special skills and potential in wrestling and as a result, Sam and the other boys came to associate the experience of pain with motivation to achieve athletic success and as “special treatment” given to the most skilled wrestlers (p. 279). Sam also learned that allowing pain and injury to stand in the way of accomplishing a goal and exhibiting full effort is disdained within the wrestling culture. During his senior year of high school, Sam suffered from an extremely swollen knee before a very important tournament that could potentially affect his reputation in wrestling and his future in collegiate wrestling. The doctors, his coaches, his father and Sam himself feared the consequences of him going forth and wrestling in this tournament. However, Sam went through and wrestles in the tournament with a knee pad over his swollen knee and he ended up finishing first place in the tournament. In college, Sam stated that he realized that injuries are considered to be even more normal at this higher level of wrestling. He observed that coaches would seldom stop a practice for an injury and that they showed “little concern or sympathy” (p. 283). At one point, Sam recalled that the coach told a wrestler who was screaming in pain to “[b]e quiet” and “[to] take the pain” (p. 283). In other words, the norm within the collegiate wrestling culturing was to ignore injury. Even the walking injured wrestlers were expected to come to practice and work out on the rowing

machine or exercise bikes if possible. Sam stated that there were always wrestlers on these bikes and the more experienced wrestlers did not like being seen on these bikes because it meant that they no longer had their high status on the team. At the collegiate wrestling level Sam experienced his most severe injury in which an angry, losing opponent caused an abrasion to his ear. Sam's ear abrasion, better known by wrestlers as cauliflower ear, became a serious matter that caused an infection to spread internally. Sam's infection subsided after a major dosage of antibiotics but he became seriously weak and anemic toward the end of his freshman season. Even after his ear healed, it was still misshapen and red but "it [became] an emblem of his status as an elite wrestler" and as a result of his successful wrestling career, Sam was invited to help at young wrestling summer camp (p. 266). Sam stated that many wrestlers received cauliflower ear during freestyle tournaments because headgear impeded on their ability to wrestle freestyle (284). While many wrestlers are told to beware of cauliflower ear, the study found that many wrestlers thought that "it [was] cool and a 'sign of being tough' to develop cauliflower ear" (p. 286).

The most admired wrestlers are those who not only push through injury but also give each match and practice their full effort (Baker & Hotek, 2001; Curry, 2008; Curry, 1993). Baker and Hotek (2001) described the wrestler archetype of the "cool dude" as a wrestler who exhibited an "orthodox masculinity" (p. 56). The "cool dude" attempted to instill fear in his opponents while keeping a calm demeanor. His attempt to instill fear in his opponent is done in a calm manner as he "walked back and forth behind the row of chairs calmly, often looking at or toward the opposite team's bench, presumably at his opponent" (p. 56). Baker and Hotek described the "cool dude" as attempting to size up his opponent to instill fear and in an attempt to emphasize his toughness. The "cool dude" exhibited full effort as he "stretched and jumped up

and down to keep [his] leg muscles warm” before a match (p. 56). During a match he was “slow and methodical” and he appeared to display “intense concentration” in order to execute the “precise” moves that would allow him to win his match (p. 56). The cool dude is successful at wrestling competitively because he is “balanced, controlled, [and] dignified” (p. 56). In comparison to the cool dude’s display of full effort, Baker and Hotek discussed the “indifferent individual” who they identified as “androgynous,” and who presented a “passive, emotionally detached disposition” which seemed to suggest that he does not give wrestling his full effort (p. 58). He did not show evidence of being competitive or caring about pursuing victory. The coaches did not highly respect the indifferent individual as they respected the cool dude. In comparison to the “cool dude,” the “manic man” was identified as displaying “traditional femininity” as he was “irrational, lacking control and uncalculated” (p. 59). The manic man appeared “agitated and distracted” and he was highly aggressive which resulted in a lack of respect towards him. He often hurried and looked distracted through his warm ups. During his matches, he was out of control, relied on strength and quickness but at the same time he lacked control. His performance during the match was not regarded highly by his coach, teammates or fans because it lacked control and effort.

Curry’s (2008) study is one of the only sociological studies that examine the culture of wrestling teams, specifically in relation to masculinity. In his study, Curry emphasized the significance of showing character through action within the wrestling culture. His definition of “strong character” included qualities associated with displaying full effort, such as “courage,” “gameness,” and “integrity,” (p. 107). He stated that wrestlers were given the chance to display character when they showed “[c]ourage when faced with a superior opponent, gameness when continuing a match in spite of injury, integrity in making weight, and composure when

maintaining self-control in spite of adverse and painful physical punishment” (p. 107). Curry emphasized the importance of “muster[ing] appropriate effort to show character,” and he stated the failure to do so “may jeopardize an athlete's reputation within the wrestling community in such a setting” (p. 107). Curry stated, “opportunities for advancement are limited” and a reputation lost cannot be easily recovered in athletic careers like amateur wrestling, which are normally brief (p. 107). Curry observed that the wrestling coaches shouted encouragingly and embraced the wrestlers who displayed the “appropriate amount of fight” (p. 107). However, “[the coaches] turned away in disgust when a wrestler appeared to give up” (p. 107).

As a few studies revealed, injury was not something that wrestlers believed should prevent them from displaying their full effort in a match (Curry, 2008; Curry, 1993). Curry (2008) referred to a series of photographs that he took of a wrestler while he had tried to make a move on his opponent that failed. This particular wrestler had multiple injuries, such as a jammed thumb, by the end of the match. Curry goes on to claim that this image represents how a wrestler is someone who finished a match and “refus[ed] to give an opponent an easy victory in spite of the pain and injury he endured” (p. 107). As mentioned previously in Curry's other study (1993) on Sam, Sam displayed full effort in the very important Catholic Invitational Tournament (CIT) as he continued to compete with a severely swollen knee. Sam stated that before senior year he had received first place in several state competitions but never in the previous CIT's, and he feared that if he did not receive first place then he would be seen as a “fluke” by coaches and other wrestlers. Sam competed in the CIT through his injury because he was concerned with the way he would be remembered by members of the “wrestling subculture” (282). As a result of his choice to fight through injury, Sam had internalized a sports role-identity in which he identified himself as prepared to take risks to achieve success (p. 282). Later on



during a collegiate wrestling match, as discussed earlier, Sam suffered from a severe abrasion to his ear during a match but he insisted on finishing up the match and beating his opponent even as his ear begins to swell.

### *Attitudes and encouragement*

Several studies revealed that good attitudes and encouragement were expected to be displayed at matches, during practices and even during breaks (Curry, 2008; Curry, 1993; Baker & Hotek, 2001). In his 2008 study, Curry claimed that even after losing a match, a wrestler's succeeding actions provided an opportunity for him to "display character" (p. 107). Curry's definition of "strong character" included a quality associated with having "composure" (p. 107). Curry discussed the importance of attitude and demeanor within the wrestling culture, and he claimed that matches provided wrestlers with the opportunity to show character and have that character acknowledged. Curry briefly discusses how "the pride and shame experienced through victory or defeat were clearly evident" (p. 107) but the wrestlers did not hold these emotions back in an attempt to hide them or be modest. In fact, Curry observed that after losing a match, "[a wrestler's] defeat was ritually acknowledged by the referee, who raised the arm of the victor" (p. 108). The victorious wrestler would go back to his teammates to celebrate, while the defeated wrestler would move away from the wrestlers and crowd to regain composure. Curry argued that a defeated wrestler could still be perceived as having character and being masculine, as long as he had refused to give up during his match, displayed his best effort and was able to gain composure after the match. As a result of these cultural expectations, "[t]he defeated wrestler was expected to adjust fairly quickly and accept his failure in a matter-of-fact manner" (p. 108).

Baker and Hotek stated that the “cool dude’s” calm demeanor was respected by both coaches and fans (p. 56). As mentioned previously, the “cool dude” exhibited behaviors and an attitude that was representational of orthodox masculinity. While competing in a match, he “appeared deliberate, intentional, and in control” (56). In other words, he had the composed attitude that Curry (2008) identified as an expectation within the wrestling culture. After the match, whether he won or lost, the “cool dude” did not appear to show much emotion and he initially continued to exhibit “a calm and controlled appearance” as he shook his opponent’s hand (Baker & Hotek, 2001, p. 56). He was not only successful at wrestling competitively but his calm demeanor and attitude allowed him to be successful at presenting a “cool masculinity” (p. 56). In comparison to the “cool dude,” the “manic man” was identified as exhibiting “unsportsmanlike conduct” (p. 59). He would often show more positive and negative emotions after matches. He was often less willing to shake his opponent’s hand after losing a match and he was more likely to argue with a referee. Being a sore loser was something that Hotek and Baker emphasized as unacceptable within the wrestling culture. Hotek and Baker identified pain as being considered unacceptable to cry over but they suggested that it was more acceptable to cry over injury than cry over losing. They stated that they believe that “many of the younger wrestlers use[d] pain to cover up for sadness after losing a match, in order to perform orthodox masculinity” (p. 57). However, in Curry’s study (1993), Sam’s observations and experiences at the collegiate level led Curry to conclude that the collegiate wrestling coaches believed that wrestling was a matter of having a winning attitude and therefore, the worry of injury would interfere with a wrestler’s attitude and success. In fact, at one point Sam claimed that his college coach took away a wrestler’s high status and position on the team after the wrestler experienced an injury that could not be identified and therefore could not be documented. Those who did not

share the norms that normalize injury within the collegiate wrestling culture risked losing their positions and being dropped from the team.

Baker and Hotek (2001) identified rejoicing as an androgynous behavior but they also stated that it is a behavior that was considered appropriate within the wrestling culture when it is attached to a victory. They stated that they observed wrestlers jumping into the arms of their coaches after a major victory or jumping up and down and slapping the bottoms or backs of their teammates emphatically. Even the most stoic wrestlers would rejoice after a victory by displaying behaviors and facial expressions that indicated “emotional involvement” (p. 59). Baker and Hotek identified “[p]hysical intimacy” as a “feminine” behavior that was considered acceptable in the wrestling culture (p. 59). During breaks, the wrestlers would share “intimate interactions” with one another such as “speaking very closely and face-to-face” and practicing wrestling moves which entailed “intimate physical interactions” (p. 59). Hotek and Baker discussed how wrestlers would exhibit caring behaviors towards other teammates and they identified these caring, nurturing behaviors as representing femininity as well. The wrestlers used this behavior to “psych-up” a teammate before a match. For example, a wrestler might “rub [his teammate’s] neck and shoulders, pat him on the butt, and hold onto his headgear with both hands, putting his face close to talk” (p. 60). They also exhibited similar touchy behavior with one another after a teammate had been victorious.

### The Missing Research

Curry’s (1993) study on Sam did include Sam’s perspective on injury, but it did not include his perspective on all aspects of the wrestling culture. In fact, all of the sociological studies failed to capture the wrestlers’ perspectives on the identified cultural aspects, which included making

weight, displaying full effort, enduring pain, maintaining a positive attitude and encouraging teammates. In my ethnographic study, I hope to better understand how the wrestler's perceive their culture and why they believe certain behaviors are appropriate while other behaviors are unacceptable. I would also like to investigate whether wrestlers' perceive masculinity as being a significant element within their wrestling culture, and if so, how this is reflected in their cultural rules and norms.

### Method

An ethnographic study is a close study of cultures through participant observation, interviews, the analysis of cultural artifacts, and interpretation. An ethnographer examines a particular culture or subculture of interest and works to obtain a better understanding of the beliefs and perceptions of the members of a culture through fieldwork, which includes participant observation and conducting in-depth interviews. Van Maanen (1988) gives a simple, concise definition of ethnography when he states, "an ethnography is a written representation of a culture" and he adds in parenthesis, "or selected aspects of a culture" (p. 1). Spradley (1980) defines ethnography as a social science, and he describes it as a type of scientific anthropology with the purpose of creating a "cultural description" (p. 15). As Spradley states, "ethnography contributes to both regularities and variations in human social behavior" (p. 15). Van Maanen (1988) elaborates on Spradley's statement by bringing in the eventual ethnographic description that becomes of the research, and this description informs human behavior and perspective in a vast amount of ways by revealing the rules, restrictions, codes and choices that are central to but different in every society.

An ethnographer works to capture the certain aspects of the culture through participant observation in the field. The ethnographer hopes to identify certain rules and norms that are

accepted by the studied culture and understand the participants' perceptions of the existing cultural elements. Van Maanen (1988) identifies the "method of ethnography (fieldwork)" and "its subject (culture)" as the two significant concepts that make up ethnography are the (p. 1). Van Maanen briefly discusses how ethnography ties these two notions together. Specifically, the term "fieldwork" means living among and living like those who are being studied, which is specifically defined as "participant observation" (p. 3). "Participant Observation" relies on this idea that one will become better acquainted with a culture by "shar[ing] firsthand the environment, problems, background, language, rituals and social relations of a more or less bounded and specified group of people" (p. 3). Van Maneen shares the idea that fieldwork is "a means to an end" (p. 3) and the end strives to capture this aspect of culture. Van Maneen cites Conklin (1968) Becker (1980) and Swidler (1986) in his definition of culture:

culture refers to the knowledge members ('natives') of a given group are thought to more or less share; knowledge of the sort that is said to inform, embed, shape, and account for the routine and not-so-routine activities of the members of the culture (as cited on p. 3).

A fieldworker interprets culture through the actions and words of a culture's informants while he or she works to accomplish his or her ethnographic goals and answer his or her research questions about the studied culture.

The goals of an ethnographic study evolve around its main purpose of providing people with a better understanding of the culture or subculture of interest and an understanding of the aspects of this culture from the perspectives of its members. Spradley (1980) identifies three major goals of ethnography, and he refers to the first goal as "informing cultural-bound theories" (p. 16). To understand this goal, Spradley specifically uses the western culture as an example of

how people are “culture-bound,” meaning that they accept certain ideas and ideologies as realities. Ethnography aims to identify “alternative realities” that may stand as contradictory to the realities of the dominant Western society and may even offer remedies to theories that have arisen in the West (p. 16). The purpose of ethnography is to reveal a range of explanations developed by humans beings within a specific or given culture, and this helps an ethnographer explore how people of a certain culture understand and define their world and their realities. Spradley describes ethnography as “leading to a sense of epistemological humility” because ethnographers come to see the questionable nature of the seemingly correct reality and theories. Most importantly, ethnographies aim to better understand the realities (“personality, society, individuals, and environments”) from the perspective of others which in turn, can help the west revise their theories to be less ethnocentric.

Ethnography can be used for a vast amount of purposes and it can also reveal more about certain subcultures that make up one larger culture. Spradley (1980) identifies this second goal of ethnography as “understanding complex societies” (p. 17). He explains that in the past ethnography was limited in its uses as it was perceived as being a social science that can only be used to understand small, non-western cultures. Now ethnography is used to undermine the “myth of the melting pot” (p. 17). “American culture” was once used to describe all western cultures but now we are starting to recognize that the west is made up of many complex societies living under multiple cultural codes. Even within one institution there are complex societies that follow different cultural codes and have different cultural rules. As Spradley states, “[ethnography] can show the range of cultural difference and how people with diverse perspectives interact” (p. 18). This is goal is significant because it reveals certain obscure cultural differences that often cause misunderstandings and intolerance.

Behind actions and behaviors of cultural members, there are perspectives and beliefs that the members have come to hold. Spradley (1980) defines the third goal of ethnography as “understanding human behavior” (p. 17). Spradley emphasizes that all humans exhibit certain behaviors and act in certain ways for reasons that may be found within their culture. He states that ethnography aims to uncover the meaning behind certain human behaviors and specifically understand how people perceive their own actions. Ethnographers want to ask their informants questions that aim to understand their outlook on what they are doing and why they are exhibiting certain behaviors. These ethnographic explanations shed light on human situations. Spradley states that any explanation of behavior which excludes the perspective of the actors distorts human situation.

According to Spradley (1980), ethnography hopes to answer questions about how people of a given culture define their world and their own cultural reality. More specifically, the purpose of ethnography is to understand how people perceive their actions and what they believe they are doing when they act or behave in a certain way. An ethnography also hopes to answer questions relating to expectations, rules and norms that are considered acceptable within a given culture. In my ethnographic study of the Vespey College wrestling team, I hoped to better understand the wrestling culture and the wrestlers’ perspectives on their culture by answering three main questions. First, I hoped to dive into the culture and identify implicit rules that are accepted by the collegiate wrestling team. I wanted to use this to get a sense of a code of conduct that the wrestling members expect one another to adhere to. Next, I wanted to obtain an understanding of the wrestlers’ values and beliefs regarding their individual athletic goals as well as their team’s goals. Finally, I wanted to understand the wrestlers’ points of view on their collegiate wrestling experience and their culture.

I chose the method of ethnography for studying the wrestling team because it would allow me to immerse myself in the wrestling culture and obtain an understanding of this culture and the participants' view points and perspectives. As an ethnographer, I strived to achieve entry into the culture and build a rapport through my participant observation so that I could become familiar with the wrestling team culture and obtain the answers to my questions. I believed that the participant observation would allow me to become as close to being a member of the culture and perceived by the wrestlers as being as close to a member of their team as possible, even without being able to actually participate in the physical activities. Ethnography gave me a chance to observe wrestling practice and participate in team dinners and eventually be regarded by the wrestlers as one of the typical practice and meal attendees. As a result, most of the wrestlers began to trust me and act and speak naturally and honestly in my presence during meals, practices and during most of their formal interviews. Getting a chance to finally observe their natural behavior and conversation helped me to discover an answer to my first research question as I was able to identify patterns of behaviors that revealed implicit rules that are accepted by the collegiate wrestling team. The wrestlers would voice their disapproval and praise of certain behaviors, and I was able to piece together a teammate and wrestling code of conduct. As the wrestlers realized that their interests and concerns would drive my study, they began to answer my research questions voluntarily by directing their interview answers and their conversations with me toward their individual values and beliefs regarding their individual athletic goals as well as their team's goals. I learned throughout the study that while many of the wrestlers recognized wrestling as an individual sport, they recognized it more as a team sport which is indicated by the fact that many wrestler expressed far more goals and expectations for themselves and others as members of a team. As the wrestlers became more trusting of me and



my study, they became willing during interviews and conversation to share their own points of view on the collegiate wrestling experience and culture. Their volunteering of information and their willingness to share their perspectives seemed to imply that they wanted me to better understand their points of view and thoughts on certain aspects of their culture. They shared perspectives on many of their teammates behaviors and actions which allowed me to gain a better understanding of the wrestling code of conduct, which included behavior expectations and rules.

There are approximately forty-four wrestlers listed on the Vespey College Wrestling roster, nine coaches, and seven managers. However, there were several wrestlers who quit throughout the season that I had initially observed and there were several ex-wrestlers who continued to sit with the team during team dinners throughout my study. I had to receive approval from multiple parties before beginning and following through with my research. First I had to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, I was able to have my research approved through an expedited review procedure because my study was observational and only included potential of minimal risk to the participants. An expedited review means that only one or more IRB members would have to review and approve my study, but it did not exempt me from the obligation to fill out multiple forms for IRB approval.

I had to go through a three-hour training on protecting human research participants before submitting multiple forms to the IRB. After completing the training, I had to fill out an application form, a protocol form, write up an informed consent form and create tentative interview questions. I had to submit signed hard copies of my completed application and protocol forms along with an IRB training certificate and my informed consent form and tentative interview questions to the IRB Administrator Vespey. Over the summer, before

beginning my IRB forms, I contacted the head Vespeywrestling coach and introduced myself, briefly summarized my project and asked if we could meet at the beginning of the school year to discuss my project further. I met with the coach in the first month of the semester and after explaining my project and providing him with a sample consent form, I received his approval to conduct my research on his team. After receiving the final approval from the IRB, I attended the end of a preseason practice and gave a brief summary of my project to the wrestlers and I distributed consent forms to each of them. The coaches and the wrestlers each signed a copy of the consent form, which can be found in Appendix A.

Most of my research was done in the wrestling practice room and some of my research was done during wrestling team dinners that occurred after practice and during wrestling matches. The entire study took place from October 2014 to the end of February 2015. I started attending practices for a half hour to an hour two to three times a week during the week of October 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, and I continued attending practices on this schedule until the end of November. During this period of time, I attended three team dinners and one home match. After returning for the January term, I began attending wrestling practice for a half hour to an hour four to five times a week starting the January 20, 2015 up until the week of February 23, 2015. During this month, I attended two weeks of team dinners and I attended one home match, and the Centennial semi-finals which were held at another College a few hours away. In the practice room I typed up fieldnotes on my laptop and I recorded the practices on my phone. I was forced to sit in a little tight spot in the corner of the wrestling practice room to avoid being trampled by the wrestlers, and avoid impeding on the wrestlers' routines and practices. Later on I would go back and expand/refine and add more detail to my fieldnotes after listening to the recordings. I initially began attending practices around 4:30 or 5 p.m. which was about thirty minutes to an

hour after the official practice start time. Towards the end of my research, I began attending practice right before the 4 p.m. starting time so that I could get the chance to observe and record the dialogue that was shared between all of the wrestlers without the presence of the coaches. In the dining hall, I would take some fieldnotes on what the men were eating and conversing about in a notebook but I also recorded the men's conversations. I referred back to these recordings and my notes while typing up my fieldnotes in detail. I attended two weeks of team dinners during weeks that led up to weekend matches. I attended two home matches and one away match that was very important to the seniors because it determined their ability to prolong their season.

During the month of February I conducted formal interviews with nine wrestlers. Five of the participants I interviewed were seniors, one of which was declared ineligible and one of which had a life altering injury that disabled him from continuing to wrestle. Two of the participants that I interviewed were freshman, and the final two were juniors. I conducted these interviews in private places where the interviewees could be assured that no outsiders were listening in on the interview. I conducted four interviews in the lobby of a campus building while it was vacant, two in the alcoves of the dining hall at tables that were far away from the other tables, one interview in the participant's own dorm room, and one in a upstairs vacant classroom in a campus building. I developed my interview questions throughout the first month and a half of my fieldwork. I asked each wrestler the same questions but I tailored these questions to delve into the beliefs and perspectives of the wrestlers on some of the situations, rules and themes that had come up as significant aspects in the wrestling culture. For example, one of the major events that many of the wrestlers appeared to have various opinions on was the release of a starting wrestler from the team. In comparison, the wrestlers did not act surprised when another wrestling member was let go from the team for a temporary period of time. One of my interview questions

looked to uncover the reason and thoughts behind the wrestlers' different reactions to these events. Through my observations, I also found that many of the wrestlers seemed to admire and look up to other wrestlers on their team. In the interviews, I asked the wrestlers to identify which wrestler they looked up to most and to explain their reasoning. My formal interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Fortunately, I only faced a few major issues during data collection related to observing, collecting and recording data. During wrestling practices, I observed the wrestlers while sitting and taking notes in a tucked away corner alcove of the practice room. I sat in this spot so that I could avoid being hit by the wrestlers during their practices and so I did not interfere with the wrestlers' drilling. All the other places in the wrestling room were open and would put me at risk of getting hit by a wrestler. This was the only alcove in the room and it allowed me to easily slip in and out without being noticed because it led to a side door. However, this was one of the only advantages of the alcove, and I often had trouble observing an entire half of the room while being position in this alcove. In fact, during practices I was often forced to observe the same people over and over again. When I did attempt to slide outside of the alcove to observe more of the room, the wrestlers would become hypersensitive to my presence and they would often wrestle differently and shuffle around to avoid hitting me. I could not do much about the visual observations during actual drilling and physical activity, but I began scooting out of the alcove as far as possible without interfering with the wrestlers and observing some of the wrestlers in the middle of the room. I also began recording wrestling practices so I could focus all of my attention on recording the movements and behaviors of the wrestlers and worry about typing up the coaches' directions later on. When the wrestlers participated in team talks with the coaches and were not participating in drills or physical activities, I moved out of the alcove into the

center of the room so that I could better observe the behaviors and be in hearing range of the dialogue.

I was unaware of wrestling terminology, positions and drills before doing this project. Initially while observing the wrestling practice, I did not understand any of the directions the coaches gave to the wrestlers. My lack of knowledge in wrestling benefitted my fieldnotes because I had no other choice but to use simple language to describe the wrestlers' body movements and actions during drills. However, I had a hard time trying to write down all of these verbal directions that consisted of seemingly foreign terminology while attempting to get down all of my observations of the wrestlers' behaviors, actions and wrestling moves. My initial observations were filled with holes and missing observations because I was often times too concentrated on trying to write fast enough to keep up with my observations. As a result of being unable to understand wrestling terminology, I was also unable to determine whether certain wrestlers were following the coaches' directions correctly. I found two major solutions that helped me eventually overcome these two major obstacles. I previously mentioned that I recorded the wrestling practices, which allowed me to focus on typing up my observations of the wrestlers' behaviors and movements and worry about typing up the coaches' directions later. I was also able to replay these recordings for one of my key informants, Aaron, so that he could explain the meaning behind certain wrestling terms and drills. Aaron was also sitting out due to a serious injury during practices, and so he would often times explain terms and drills to me while I sat and observed the team. The recording device and the help of a key informant helped me better understand what was going on during practices and take much more detailed fieldnotes.

As an individual who was acting as a participant observer but who was not actually part of the wrestling team, I dealt with a few struggles when attempting to gain entry into the setting.

Bailey (2007) acknowledges the difficulties that accompany the process of “gaining entrée” in an ethnographic study (p. 66). She briefly mentions the “gatekeeper” who is an individual who is typically present in settings that are not just open to everyone. Bailey defines the gatekeepers as “the individuals who play a key role in in granting or denying access” (p. 66). In my study, the head wrestling coach was the gatekeeper because I initially had to seek permission from him before conducting my study on his team. For the most part, the head wrestling coach was very compliant with most of my research requests. However, there was one point where he did not allow me to listen in on a serious discussion he had with the wrestling team after several of the wrestler refused to shake an opposing team’s coach’s hand at the conclusion of the match. The coach later explained to me what he had addressed the wrestlers about during this discussion, and it appeared that having this discussion in my observation most likely would not have changed the overall results and conclusions of my study. I did not experience any other incidents where the head coach denied me access to make observations. I believe that I did not run into any other issues with the “gatekeeper” because I was constantly communicating the evolving purpose of my study with the coaches and I initially explained the rules of consent and confidentiality I would be abiding by before I began my research.

While the head coach could deny me from accessing the setting, the wrestlers could actually deny me entry into the culture. As Bailey (2007) states, it’s important to recognize that everyone is an “informal gatekeeper” to an extent and therefore each participant can deny an ethnographer access from gaining entry into the culture of the environment and setting. Applying Bailey to my experience, I had to “establish rapport” with the help of Aaron, who fit the position as my “key actor” (p. 69). Aaron was an injured, but well respected wrestler on the team, and I had been good friends with Aaron for a few years before conducting my study. At the beginning

of my participant observations, Aaron brought me over to the wrestling dinner table and introduced me to multiple wrestlers on the team. As the wrestlers became more comfortable and friendly with me, they would refrain less from filtering what they said in my presence during dinner. For example, they began engaging in conversations that they would not necessarily share with outsiders, such as where they would make jokes about other teammates. Many times, when I observed them before the start of practice in the wrestling room, I would sometimes go unnoticed by them because I was so tucked away in the corner. After a few weeks of studying the wrestlers, I would often greet and converse with them when seeing them around campus. When I began participating in their team dinners I would often talk with them and converse about their thoughts about wrestling as well as other topics. As I began to meet and talk with the wrestlers, they began asking me more questions about my project and they became interested in my findings and thoughts about the team's culture. However, as Bailey (2007) states, just because I had formed a reciprocal relationship with many of my participants, not all of them put full trust in me. Bailey states, "the issue of trust in field research is not unidirectional" (p. 74). Many of the wrestlers were reluctant to provide me with any inside information about the team that could be seen as reflecting negatively on the team or on their own person. For example, after one of the wrestlers was kicked off the team, some of the wrestlers were reluctant to tell me the true reason as to why this wrestler was dismissed from the team.

Most of my struggles as a participant observer were a result of my inability to engage in the same physical activities as the wrestler and my obvious gender difference that impeded on my ability to blend in with the wrestlers. Schacht (1997) who did feminist fieldwork on the men's rugby team was able to achieve participant observation by becoming a team member of the rugby team he was studying. He participated in team practices, games, social events and

traditions, and he therefore blended in with the team by becoming a teammate. Russell, Touchard, and Porter's (2002) qualitative report is on two young female fieldworkers who do an ethnographic study on the marginalized, older men, who live in the inner city of Sydney, Australia. Like these two women who could not participate in many of the cultural activities of these older men, such as partaking in an alcoholic binge, I was also unable to participate in many of the activities that the wrestlers considered to be a part of their team adversities and shared experiences. I was not viewed as an actual member of the team because I could not participate in the grueling practices and I did not cut weight. In some cases I found that my inability to be perceived as an actual member of the team impeded on my ability to gain the full trust of some of the teammates which was reflected in some of the interviews I conducted with the wrestlers. In particular, my youngest interviewees seemed to be a little reluctant to provide me with any inside information or any strong, personal opinions. For example, during one of my interviews with a freshman, Perry, he became visibly uncomfortable when I asked him to describe his thoughts about one of the wrestlers who had recently been kicked off the team. Many of the senior and junior wrestlers had no problems telling me what was on their mind, and in fact some of them took the time to rant about certain issues. During these times, I allowed them to talk as much as they wanted and I actively listened. While many of the seniors were honest and expressive, one of my senior interviewees actually seemed reluctant to provide me with any information and at one point provided me with some false information. I was able to determine that he provided me with false facts because I had heard from many other sources, including my key informant, very different facts about the same situation. This senior could have twisted the story because he was uncomfortable revealing the truth to me or it might have been because he was uninformed on the situation.



I found that there was attention brought to my gender/sex difference on several occasions and in some cases, the wrestlers treated me differently because of my gender/sex. Bailey (2007) states, “field researchers of the ‘wrong’ gender sometimes are denied access” (p. 67). While I could not hide my gender, I attempted to direct attention away from my gender difference because I felt that it might have impeded on my ability to enter into the culture completely. In other words, I wanted the men to disregard the gender difference as much as possible because it would make them more likely to speak freely in front of me without fearing that their actions would offend me. However, the coach brought attention to my gender difference early on during my fieldwork while I attempted to observe discretely in the corner of the room. During the beginning of one of the practices the coach verbally scolded the men for not paying attention and he looked over towards a female manager and me and stated, “don’t look at the pretty girls in the corner and try to get their phone numbers...wrestle!” (p. 11) Throughout my research I found truth in Russell, Touchard and Porter’s (2002) statement that “in predominantly male settings, gender is an acutely salient dimension” (p. 2). There were a few times when the wrestlers treated me differently because of my gender/sex. One day before practice, while the men were playing dodge ball, one of the wrestlers, Pete, inadvertently hit me in the head with a dodge ball while aiming for another wrestler. The men went wild as they screamed, “Pete hit a girl! Free shots on Pete!” (p. 73). Multiple men came over to make sure that I was okay, and they forced Pete to apologize to me. Even though I insisted that the collision did not hurt and that I was fine, the wrestlers all continued to stay hyper aware of my gender/sex during these dodge ball and kickball games. A few of them began taking turns standing in front of me during ball games to block me, a fragile female, from being hit by the ball. However, the men never did such a thing

for their teammates, and they did not even protect or mind their teammates who were not participating in these games.

As a feminist and a female who diverted attention away from my gender, I also had to temporarily put away my feminist views while acting as a participant observer in this male-dominated environment. This meant that I had to refrain from visibly reacting to certain sexist statements or comments that were made by coaches and wrestlers. As Schacht's (1997) study shows, in male-dominated settings, and specifically in male-dominated athletic teams, gender is a central theme and sexist comments and derogatory statements against women are relatively common and perceived as normal. Schacht's analysis of his feminist fieldwork in a misogynist setting expands on a lot of sexist issues that could contribute to gender-related issues and clashing of beliefs. Luckily, I did not encounter much misogyny or sexism while studying the Vespey Wrestling team as Schacht encountered when studying a rugby team. Although, like Schacht, I did have to forgo expressing my views and values in order to not interrupt the setting by bringing attention to my gender difference and my feminist view. As Schacht points out, by voicing feminist views or reacting to gender demeaning comments in a male-dominated setting, the ethnographer could interrupt the study and lose the trust of the participants. I wanted my participants to speak freely in my presence because if they did not, then my study would not be as complete. As a result, there were a few times when I chose to compromise my values and beliefs for the sake of my research. The wrestlers did not make too many sexist comments, but the coach sometimes directed seemingly sexist statements at the men. During one practice, the coach verbally scolded the men for exhibiting minimal effort during a drill, and he stated "guys, these teams want to beat you down all week, don't patty cake these drills!" (p. 34). In this statement, the coach referenced a child's game that has been constructed as feminine, and

therefore the coach's statement implied that the men would not win their upcoming match if they wrestled like females. During another practice, the coach became frustrated with several of the men who were taking an extended amount of time to get ready on the side during practice. The coach said to them in a mocking tone, "Do you guys need time to shave? A manicure or pedicure?" (p. 7). The coach's statement could be perceived as sexist because he playfully mocked the men by asking them if they wanted to partake in activities that are constructed as feminine which implied that these wrestlers were acting like females due to their inability to get ready in a timely manner. Even though I felt a little awkward just sitting silently and observing these scenes, I refrained from displaying any facial reactions to the coach's sexist comments. I did not want to interrupt the action that was taking place in the environment or as Schacht (1997) states, "put my membership role in this setting in jeopardy" (p. 338). If I were to have reacted in some way, the participants may have perceived this as an indication that they should watch what they say in front of me and that would have defeated the purpose of my research.

In my study as well as in most studies in which female ethnographers act as participant observers in a male-dominated setting, there is question as to whether men will continue to act naturally in the presence of a female researcher. As previously stated, the female researcher has some control over this issue arising if she diverts attention away from her gender/sex and refrains from expressing her own beliefs and reacting to sexist statements or actions within the environment. However, in some cases the female ethnographer's gender/sex has an inevitable influence on the male participants' behaviors and actions. Easterday, Papademas, Schorr and Valentine (1977) analyze the gender-related issues that arose for them as female ethnographers conducting fieldwork. While reflecting on their time in a male-dominated special military photography program, they talk about how their request to remain behind the camera as one of

the men, as opposed to being a model, was turned down. The female ethnographers were told that their request was not possible because the men were a “close bunch” that talked “rough” and these men would not behave in the same manner in the presence of females (p. 338). Easterday, Papademas, Schorr and Valentine state, “on entering male-dominated settings, female researchers often have difficulty gaining access to the setting itself” (p. 338). The wrestlers treated me differently than the other men on the team because of my gender/sex. One example I mentioned earlier was when they guarded me during kickball and dodge ball games, but they went after one another viciously with dodge balls. On top of being treated different, I felt as though my sex/gender limited the information that I had access to at points, specifically during interviews. I was provided with a vast amount of information during my interview with Dennis, a senior wrestler, and at points he even seemed to perceive me as an informed member of the wrestling team. When I asked him who he admired most on the team, he named Ryan and then proceeded to give a variety of reasons why in his explanation. However, when Dennis was about to mention something involving Ryan’s increased maturity and his behaviors involving women, he hesitated and stated that he did not want to explain that reason further. While Dennis could have been protecting his friend’s privacy, I believe that Dennis became aware of my gender/sex and felt that he should not share this information with a woman. I also realized that I never heard much conversation on the topic of women while I sat in on wrestling dinners but I did hear some comments from afar while observing practices. For example, during the first week I was observing practices, I heard one of the wrestlers explaining a move to his practice partner and say “ever go down on a girl? It’s just like that” (p. 5). I had to disregard my preconceived notions and experiences involving young men’s tendencies to make sex jokes and talk about women.

However, I felt that the absence of these comments in my fieldnotes make have been the result of the men feeling unable to make comments of this nature in the presence of a woman.

Ethnographers experience this constant struggle between what is ethically right and what is best for the research. When these problems arise, ethnographers cannot always come up with a solution on their own. Spradley (1980) introduces a set of principals created in 1971 by the Council of the American Anthropological Association. These set of principles, known as *Principles of Professional Responsibility*, are to be used as a guide by ethnographers when facing choices that involve ethical issues. Spradley quotes the preamble of these principles when he states, “[i]n a field of such complex involvements, misunderstandings, conflicts, and the necessity to make choice among conflicting values are bound to arise and generate ethical dilemmas” (as cited in Spradley, p. 20). The preamble states that whenever faced with these certain dilemmas, the ethnographer must make a choice to resolve the issue[s] in a way that will prevent as much damage as possible from being done to the people that they are studying as well as to their scholarly community. Spradley emphasizes that the same values held by the ethnographer will not always be held by the informants. Spradley identifies six ethical principles which are based on the principles that are used by the American Anthropological Association and which can be used to address certain ethical issues that may arise during an ethnographic study. Bailey (2007) emphasizes that the Code of Ethics provides guidance to researchers only but that they are not hard rules (p. 15). In fact, Bailey illustrates how many ethical issues become more complicated than the points addressed by the Code of Ethics.

The first principle that Spradley identifies is what he refers to as “Consider Informants First” (p. 21). He quotes the *Principles of Professional Responsibility* when he states, “In research, an anthropologist’s paramount responsibility is to those he studies. When there is a

conflict of interest, these individuals must come first” (as cited in Spradley, p. 21). He states that an “anthropologist must do everything within his power to protect their physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor their dignity and privacy” (as cited in Spradley, p. 21). He goes on to state that in societies, informants’ lives become intertwined with outsiders, which may include sponsors or any other people aside from the informants. In some cases, these outsiders may have the power to give permission to or withhold permission from an ethnographer in regards to conducting interviews or making certain observations. The ethnographer must recognize that the informants may not have the same interests as these other people, and they must include questions that aim to uncover the interests of these informants. When choices are being made the informants’ concerns and interests must be of primary consideration. Towards the beginning of my observations, I became interested in the Coach’s coaching techniques and style and why he acted differently towards certain wrestlers. Many times the coaches would come up to me during practice and explain why they had the wrestlers do certain activities and drills. Throughout my observations, I had to redirect my focus away from the head coach and coaches’ perceptions and towards the feelings and perceptions of the participants of my study, the wrestlers. I had to give precedence to the wrestlers’ perceptions of the coaching styles over the coaches’ perceptions because the wrestlers’ perceptions would be the driving force of my study.

The second principle that Spradley (1980) identifies and discusses is “Safeguard Informants’ Rights, Interests, and Sensitivities” (p. 21). Ethnographers have a duty beyond just recognizing and considering informants’ interests. The ethnographer must examine the consequences of his or her research with respect to his or her responsibility of safeguarding the informants’ rights, interests and sensitivities. There could be consequences that are not seen

ahead of time by the informants. Spradley shares an example of his own experiences where he recorded the life of a Kwakiutl Indian, James Sewid. When Spradley found out that his transcript could become a published book he safeguarded Sewid's rights and made a full partner who signed the publishing contract. Sewid and his wife were given a copy of the transcript and they were allowed to make any deletions and edits before Spradley submitted the final manuscript. One point to consider is that all informants must be able to say things that are "off the record" and that are not included in the ethnographer's fieldnotes (Spradley, 1980, p. 21). Ethnographic research may appear unobtrusive but it does indeed dig into the lives of informants and ethnographers can invade other people's lives through their actions. As a result, ethnographers must understand that they have a priority to safeguard the informants' rights, values and sensitivities throughout their research.

Spradley (1980) discusses the third principle of the code of ethics which he refers to as "Communicate Research Objectives" (p. 22). Bailey (2007) and Spradley (1980) both mention that informants must have a right to know the ethnographer's aim through the study. Bailey states that "informed consent" is required in almost any qualitative research and that in this informed consent the potential participants should be made aware of an initial purpose of the research (p. 17). Spradley (1980) explains that the aim or purpose of the study can be explained simply but often the communication of aims must become a process of unfolding rather than immediate declaration. The ethnographer must allow the informants' interests to guide the study, and often times the aim of the study will evolve as the informants' interests are revealed since informants often times do not start out understanding the nature of the study. Getting a sense of how to communicate aims is very important when working intimately with the informants.

Bailey (2007) states that deception occurs any time a participant is deceived about the purpose or details of a study that they are involved in or if they are unaware or not fully aware of the status or identity of the researcher. There is some debate involving these ideas because some argue that informed consent can be counterproductive in some cases. As Bailey explains, informed consent may lead to excessive “reactivity” that may lead to meaningless research (p. 20). In their code of ethics, the ASA states that sociologists should not use “deceptive techniques” on participants, and that “Sociologists [should] never deceive research participants about significant aspects of the research that would affect their willingness to participate, such as physical risks, discomfort, or unpleasant emotional experiences” (as cited in Bailey, 2007, p. 21). The code of ethics does allow for exceptions for the use of deception, such as if the deception brings no harm to the participants, the deception proves to be justified by the value of the study, there are no other possible alternatives, or the Institutional Review Board has approved the research (p. 21). If one or more of these conditions are met and deception is a necessity, then the ASA Code of Ethics states that sociologists must correct any “misconceptions” that the participant has by the conclusion of the research project (as cited in Bailey, 2007, p. 21). Informed consent has been brought up as an issue among researchers who are studying powerful groups. Many of these researchers argue that these powerful groups will often be unwilling to grant permission for research with informed consent because of the potential of revealing corruption and faults of the powerful. Because of the difficulty in gaining approval to use deception, some people argue that researchers are more likely to expose the faults of the powerless and leave the powerful untouched.

Bailey (2007) state that researchers from a variety of theoretical perspectives do not believe that deception is acceptable in fieldwork. Bailey shares the thoughts of a feminist theorist



perspective that she claims are also thoughts that are shared by other researchers that come from various theoretical perspectives. She states that the “reciprocal nature of the relationship” is important in fieldwork between the researcher and the participant (p. 23). Just as the researcher does not expect the participant to deceive him or her, the researcher can damage the nature of their reciprocal relationship by deceiving the participant. Sometimes deception is unrealistic and not possible, because many times the participants differ from the researcher in some obvious way which makes it impossible for the researcher to deceive the participants about their dual role. Bailey states that from her experience, she learned that being upfront and truthful about the purpose of the research with the participants can actually flatter the participants and make them more inclined to talk and show the researcher different parts of their culture. In contrast, Bailey suggests that obviously deceiving the participants could lead to the participants becoming suspicious and resentful and undermine their willingness to cooperate.

In my study I could not deceive my participants because my gender/sex separated me from my participants, and I was unable to physically participate in the actual wrestling activities, such as practices and certain training behaviors. I came into the setting hoping to obtain the trust of my participants but also being aware that I would be never be perceived as a true member of the wrestling team. As a result, I initially communicated a tentative objective and purpose to the wrestlers, but I made sure to ensure them that my purpose may change as I found out more about the culture and their perspectives. Many of the wrestlers appeared to be flattered by my interest in their culture, and they wanted to better understand my thoughts on their practices and eating habits. I continued to develop my purpose and keep them updated on the objective of my study as it evolved. As a result of my honesty and obvious interest, my participants willingly and enthusiastically provided me with more information about their culture without being asked to.

For example, one day when I was sitting at dinner, some of the wrestlers were talking amongst themselves about some mobile game that they were playing. One of the senior wrestlers looked over at me and said, “half of the team plays this game Klash Klan by the way, in case you were wondering what we were talking about” (observation 2/04.2015). Many of the wrestlers continued to ask me about my study outside of practices, matches and team dinners. Some of them would come up to me at school and social gatherings and ask me about my findings and evolving objective and provide me with more information about the bond that they felt with their teammates. Initially, I was not sure if I should communicate my true purpose because I was afraid it would affect the way the wrestlers acted in front of me and defeat the purpose of my study. However, I found that continuously communicating my purpose to the wrestlers actually helped me gain entry into the culture by gaining the trust and respect of my participants. Bailey (2007) states that if the researcher is truthful with the participants about their status, identity and purpose, it gives them more leeway to ask the participants certain questions that could be considered obvious, stupid, or too personal during fieldwork. I found Bailey’s statement to be true in my study. When I asked personal questions about their relationships with other teammates and coaches and their perspective on certain situations, many of them were more willing to provide me with a more personal response.

Spradley (1980) states that while observing a public place does not require one to get permission for the study or inform all the people in the area of the study, the ethnographer still needs to protect the privacy of the people when writing up their ethnography. However, when performing ethnographic research of a public place where participant observation does not involve interviewing or intimate contact, one may not need to communicate the aims of his/her research, and one may not need to reveal the goals of the research to anyone. Bailey (2007) states

that in the code of ethics, the ASA provides a few exceptions to the requirement for informed consent. This exception applies to research that has no more than a minimal risk for the research participants, research that could not practically be accomplished with informed consent, and research conducted in public places (p. 18). However, the question of what is considered “private” and “public” in research is often disputed. As an example, Bailey questions whether informed consent is needed when a researcher is observing or listening in on the whispering conversation of a couple in a public place (p. 19).

The fourth principle that Spradley (1980) mentions is “Protect the Privacy of Informants” (p. 23). Spradley states that “informants have the right to remain anonymous” (p. 23) and “this right should be respected both where it has been promised explicitly and where no clear understanding of the contrary has been reached” (p. 23). The informants’ right to anonymity and privacy must be applied to the collection of data which may be by camera, tape recorder or in a face-to-face interview or participant observation. Bailey states that the Code of Ethics requires qualitative researchers to obtain informed consent when using any recording technologies during fieldwork. However, Bailey quotes the American Sociological Association code (1999) when she discusses the one exception to this requirement for consent which is if the activities that are being recorded are “simply naturalistic observations in public places and it is not anticipated that the recording will be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm” (as cited in Bailey, 2007, p. 19). Spradley (1980) expands on this rule by stating that the informants should understand the capabilities of these devices and how they will be used in regard to the study, and they should have the choice to refuse being recorded without any negative consequences.

During the practices and during team dinners that I observed, I often times took notes as well as used a recorder to catch anything I would miss in my notes. My practice recordings consisted of directions given by coaches to the players and they were not used in a manner that would cause any sort of personal identification or harm. However, I did tell my participants that I was recording their conversations throughout meals. They did not object to my recording and in fact, they seemed to have a little fun with this at the beginning by saying nonsense into the recorders. They seemed to act naturally in the presence of the recorder, and they often times pointed out things about other wrestlers' funny eating habits and behaviors that I should make sure to capture in my field notes. However, there were times when I heard some things on the recorder that I knew I was not supposed to hear involving one of the men who had been asked to leave the team during the middle of the season. I overheard from some of the wrestlers that this teammate was made ineligible by the NCAA because he had committed an act considered illegal by the NCAA. This was a serious situation and a situation that could damage the reputation of this participant as well as the team's reputation. As a result, I chose to not include this information in my fieldnotes. When interviewing participants, I also made sure to ask their permission before using a recording device to record the interviews. All nine interviewees gave me permission to record their interview.

There are problems of anonymity and privacy that arise in ethnographic research that involves illegal behaviors or legal matters. While changing names, places and certain identifying features are aspects of privacy protection, they are only minimal requirements. Spradley shares a story about an ethnographer who was doing a study on illicit drug use. When one of the ethnographer's informants was arrested, it became apparent that her fieldnotes may be of interest to law enforcement officials. Destroying her fieldnotes would be considered illegal so she went

in and took out all the names and initials of her informants. However, this still did not allow for complete anonymity. Bailey (2007) states that the ASA (1999) Code of Ethics does not provide an exception for legal pressures and still states that the ethnographer's primary obligation is to protect the confidentiality of informants. The Code of Ethics also states, "researchers need to 'inform themselves fully about all the laws and rules that may limit or alter guarantees of confidentiality'"(as cited in Bailey, 2007, p. 26). Spradley (1980) also states that in cases that involve studying societies that could result in legal matters, the ethical principles should be taken into consideration and perhaps the ethnographer should select a different project.

Bailey (2007) states that sometimes there are exceptions to protecting confidentiality such as if that participant's life is at stake or if a child's wellbeing is in danger. However, these exceptions to the confidentiality protection should be included on the informed consent. Bailey shares a case involving Van Maanen's study of the U.S. police department where he observed police brutality multiple times. Van Maanen struggled with whether he should set aside confidentiality protection and report the incident, if he should intervene or whether it was more important for him to continue his research and publish the results. When called to a trial on a particular incident involving the police brutality, Van Maanen attended the trial but refused to turn in his notes or testify. Not everyone agrees on the issue of confidentiality, and Bailey shares some people's beliefs that researchers should never break the confidentiality of the socially powerless but that it is more acceptable to break that of powerful institutions and oppressors. Other people believe that social status should not be taken into account for exceptions of breaking confidentiality. Overall, most people agree that confidentiality is the desired result. Some people argue that if it became a standard for confidentiality to be broken in any cases

where a researcher saw that one was doing something wrong, then it would be harder for people to accomplish field research

Bailey (2007) states that researchers often experience difficulty finding ways to conceal the participants' identities from one another in the ethnographic description. In fact, she states that researchers may have an easier time protecting confidentiality of participants from outsiders. This inability to protect confidentiality within the studied environment can lead to conflict if certain comments are made by participants that could be easily identifiable and could offend other participants. Bailey states that violating confidentiality is a serious ethical violation and sometimes researchers must withhold sensitive information (p. 25). Spradley (1980) and Bailey (2007) both state that the Code of Ethics make it clear that the ethnographer must clarify to the informants that while they will make every effort to protect their anonymity, anonymity could be inadvertently compromised. However, Bailey (2007) suggests that if the researcher believes that keeping the identities of informants confidential may become problematic in regard to social, moral or legal aspects, then it is best that the researcher not take on this research.

At the beginning of my fieldwork and participant observation, I realized that I would have problems being able to protect the confidentiality of my informants from one another. Another principle that Spradley (1980) introduces also makes it harder for me to protect the confidentiality of my informants. Spradley mentions that ethnographers should "make reports available to informants" (p. 25). This principle is very simple and it stresses the fact that any reports that are made available to colleagues, teachers or the general public should also be available to the informants. If informants are unable to understand the report, then the ethnographer should present them with an oral presentation. However, this principle can impede on an ethnographer's ability to protect confidentiality within the studied setting, when the

participants are all in close quarters and know one another fairly well. I knew that the participants in my study would easily be able to identify one another in my ethnographic description, but I also felt that it was ethical to offer them a copy of my final piece so that they had access to my findings. I also knew that some parts of my analysis included quotes and conversations that could be perceived as insulting by one or two of the wrestlers who were often targeted for their “unacceptable” behaviors and actions. Even though I gave each wrestler different names in the description, many of the wrestlers could easily be identified by a teammate who is well aware of the happenings on the team. Therefore, many of the wrestlers could easily identify which wrestlers say the certain insulting quotes and participate in certain conversations. I felt that my ethnographic description could not possibly be as strong if I did not continuously follow certain wrestlers and use their actions, quotes and perspectives throughout my analysis. Therefore, I did not feel that this could be left out of my final study. However, unlike the wrestlers, outside readers would be unable to identify the wrestlers and link quotes and actions back to certain wrestlers. As a result, I made two different versions of my ethnographic description, one which I gave to my professor, the Media and Communications department, and the administration, and the other that I gave to the wrestlers. The first version included all the quotes and actions that could be perceived as insulting and cause issues between teammates if read by certain wrestlers, while the latter description is an edited version that does not include any quotes or findings that could hurt certain wrestlers or cause issues between teammates. If published, a member of the team could find and read the article if they choose to, but there would be enough of a time delay between now and the publication that the current members would no longer be part of the team.

Another principle that Spradley briefly addresses is the ethnographer's responsibility to make sure he or she does not exploit his or her informants (p. 24). Spradley states that "personal gain becomes exploitative when the informant gains nothing or actually suffers harm from the research" (p. 24). Every ethnographer must recognize that they have the responsibility to decide what constitutes a "fair return" to informants (p. 24). Spradley states that the ethnographer may want to suggest an hourly wage in return for participating in a lengthy interview but he also suggests that this could be taken as an insult. Another aspect to consider is that the informant may receive a direct gain from the results of the ethnographic study when they have some of the say in the aim of the study. In fact, the informant may obtain a new understanding of their culture through the ethnography. As a result, giving the informant a copy of the ethnographic description may be a fair return. Sometimes giving an informant the opportunity to speak and reminisce in their interviews to an interested listener provides the informant with a gain. However, Spradley states that a "fair return" will vary depending on the informant but that the ethnographer should not ignore any of the informants' needs for some sort of gain. As stated earlier, I will be providing my participants with an edited and shortened copy of the ethnographic description so that they can see how their strong feelings have influenced the results of the study.

According to Van Maanen (1988), my ethnographic description follows the format of a "Realist Tale" (p. 45). While completing the analytical process of my data, I had to refer back to the multiple purposes of my ethnographic description. I initially set out to present the ethnographic description in a way that appeals to my audience, captures multiple aspects of the culture, captures the perspective of the participants in my studied culture, touched upon my participants' areas of interest, and supported my particular interpretation of the culture. As Van Maanen states, "little can be discovered in such texts that had not been put there by the



fieldworker as a way of supporting a particular interpretation” (p. 53). An ethnographer writing a realist tale only selects the data from their fieldnotes that supports their analysis. After moving halfway through my study, I came to realize that I had a lot of data from interviews and fieldnotes that I had to separate into categories. The data ranged from being very relevant and supporting a cultural story, to being very irrelevant, and not fitting into my cultural story.

According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), after collecting all the data, the ethnographer must create the ethnography in a two-step analytical process that consists of “analysis and interpretation” of the collected data (p. 2). LeCompte and Schensul define “analysis of data” as the stage in which the ethnographer reduces the data down to a manageable form that allows the ethnographer to then tell the story of the people within the studied culture (p. 2). As I will briefly discuss later on, the realist tale offers one reading, rather than multiple readings, which is why Van Maanen states that “there simply is not space (or perhaps interest for the underanalyzed or problematic” (p. 53). While the analysis allows the ethnographer to create a more manageable categorized description, LeCompte and Schensul (1999) describe this step as a first level that allows the ethnographer to also tell the story in a way that appeals to the “insiders” of the culture (p. 2). The wrestlers’ interests and perspectives, which they often voiced in interviews and while talking with one another, drove my analysis of the data. During this step, I pinpointed certain cultural themes and patterns as well as specific events and situations that the wrestlers expressed as being important aspects and events within their culture and season. LeCompte and Schensul describe the analysis of data as “results,” and she uses Patton’s (1987) description of the analysis of the data as the results which “bring order to the pile of data that the ethnographer has accumulated,” “turns the big piles of data into smaller piles of crunched or summarized data,” and “permits the ethnographer to discover themes and patterns in the data”

(as cited in LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 3). Once I cut my fieldnotes down to specific behaviors and situations, I was able to better recognize themes and patterns within my fieldnotes and organize these into more concise sections. However, this was not the final step of the analytical process required for the description because these results did not speak for themselves. As LeCompte and Schensul discuss, results have to be given meaning by being put into the context of the research questions and they have to be formatted in a way that can be understood by the reader.

The second step of the analytical process, interpretation, allows the ethnographer to describe the meaning of the story to the reader and it involves translating the story for the reader. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) describe interpretation as “going beyond results” and “giving meaning to data” (p. 5). After conducting an analysis of data to identify the themes, patterns and connections within the wrestling culture, I had to interpret the data and find meaning and significance to these elements. I identified the significance of these cultural elements by finding the reasons that these cultural patterns and themes existed within the culture. For example, I observed that most of the wrestlers sat with the wrestling team during almost every meal but one wrestler in particular never sat with the team. I made a connection between this wrestler's failure to abide by this rule and connected it to his distant relationship from his teammates. I then came to recognize, and had confirmed by a wrestler, that the wrestlers' team dinners is a sign of their bond and those wrestlers that do not typically attend team dinners are not as close with the team. Without this step of interpretation, my results would have lacked any visible significance and the description would have required the interpretation of the reader. In other words, my description would have lacked any solid conclusions about the culture.

My ethnographic description contains several of the qualities that are typically found in a Realist Tale description. The author's voice is absent throughout most of my ethnographic description, which is a typical quality of realist tales according to Van Maanen (1988). I chose to stray away from describing the process and collection of data because in Van Maanen's words, I wanted to "let the representation stand for itself" (p. 47). In other words, the only elements visible in my description are what members of the wrestling team said, did and thought. The purpose of my ethnographic description is to capture the perspectives of the wrestlers, and I felt that including experiences from the field and the first person voice would impede on my goal. It did not make sense to include observations in my description using the first person, but it made more sense to just state what happened in the environment. For example, rather than saying, "I observed that many of the wrestlers walked away from the coach when he offered them a hand shake," I would say "many of the wrestlers walked away from the coach when he offered them a hand shake." Van Maanen points out that by eliminating "I" from the description, "the narrator's authority is apparently enhanced, and the audience worries over personal subjectivity become moot" (p. 46). The author does not leave room for his or her audience to question the credibility of his or her interpretation of the description.

Throughout my ethnographic description, I include many of the smaller details that are present in the everyday life of the members of the Vespey College wrestling team. According to Van Maanen (1988), the realist tale is often associated with "a documentary style focused on minute, sometimes precious, but thoroughly mundane details of everyday life among the people studied" (p. 48). I do not have specific sections for each of these mundane elements, which include "rites, habits, practices, beliefs, and, generally, ways of life" (p. 48) but I do present these cultural, mundane features in a systematic way that effectively asserts my final points and

conclusions about the wrestling culture. In order to paint a vivid picture of the wrestling culture for my audience, I felt that the inclusion of these small, mundane details was necessary to include in my description. The presentation of these daily observations differs in one specific way from the typical realist tale. Van Maanen states that “little is told about the particular experiences of the people studied, but much about the categories or institutions that are said to order their lives” (p. 48). The particular experiences of certain wrestlers and their views of these experiences were significant and crucial for the purpose of my ethnographic description which was to uncover the perspectives of the wrestlers. These personal experiences and perspectives were integrated and intertwined with the mundane cultural details. The intertwining of experience and mundane details helped to portray a more clear and accurate picture of the wrestling culture. According to Van Maanen (1995), my ethnography’s presentation of specific events matches one of the major qualities associated with the “Dramatic Ethnography” (p. 9). Typically found in dramatic ethnographies, my ethnographic description includes “narration of a particular event or sequence of events of obvious significance to the cultural members studied” (p. 9). For example, as mentioned previously, the wrestler is expected to sit with his teammates during dinner because it indicates closeness amongst team members. I was able to bring more life to this cultural expectation by sharing the personal experience of Perry, who initially felt left out and did not sit with the team but eventually became close with his teammates. His new found bond was reflected in his decision to attend team dinners. I focused specifically on two major events that were of significance to the wrestlers and that happened during the season in which my ethnographic study took place. These events included a wrestling match in which the wrestlers supported their teammate by violating rules after the match and another event included

a starting wrestler leaving the team. These events are described in detail and are significant parts of my analysis.

One of the most significant aspects of my ethnographic description is the inclusion of the wrestlers' points of views. Van Maanen (1988) emphasizes the element of "the native's point of view" as being a crucial quality of the realist tale, but the way it is included within the description may vary (p. 49). My ethnographic description includes the wrestlers' points of views in the most typical way which is done by "doing descriptions by orchestrating the voices of members of the culture, along with the extensive use of cultural slogans, clichés, and commonly heard, setting specific terms" (p. 50). Throughout my description, I integrate my observations of the wrestlers' actions and behaviors with their personal thoughts, explanations and perspectives on these behaviors and observations. Most of the wrestlers' points of views come from formal interviews and from their dinner conversations in which they reflect on certain incidents that took place during practice.

According to Van Maanen, my description could be best described as having the "convention of interpretive omnipotence" that is associated with realist tales (p. 51). Like the typical realist tale, my description is not a "multivocal text," which means that it does not offer multiple ways of reading the cultural text. There are several ways that an ethnographer can establish "interpretive credibility" (p. 52). If I had chosen to use the theories relating to masculinity and male athletic teams posed in my literature review to assert my reading of the wrestling culture, then this would have been the way that I had established interpretive credibility. However, the purpose of my ethnography drove me to establish interpretive credibility by creating "explanatory constructs" that combine my observations from the wrestlers' everyday lives with their points of views (p. 52). This seemed like the strongest way to

structure my single analytical reading of the culture because this reading drew from the perspectives and views of the actual members of the culture. As a result of wanting to understand the culture with the help of the wrestler's perspectives, this seemed to be the best way to approach the analysis.

### Analysis

There are implicit rules that form a code of conduct that are accepted by the wrestlers as expectations that the members of the team must adhere to. There is evidence that there is a hierarchical scale that can be used to assess the importance of these implicit rules in relation to the wrestler's position within the wrestling hierarchy. The starting-wrestlers are higher on the hierarchy and they are viewed as leaders of their team, and therefore they are expected to set an example through their behavior and abide by the correct conduct. In the case with many of these rules, the starting wrestlers, who have more to lose for the team, are held to higher expectations than the non-starting wrestlers, who are lower on the hierarchy and have less to lose for their team. In other words, the non-starting wrestler who violates an implicit rule will suffer less severe social sanctions than a starting wrestler who violates the same rule. These accepted norms are not openly discussed but when these norms or rules are broken by a teammate, there are certain social sanctions that occur. Many times the violator's seriousness and dedication to the sport will be questioned by his teammates and he will lose their respect, to some degree. The most severe rule violations can only be committed by the wrestlers who are higher on the hierarchy. When these severe violations occur the violator's commitment to his teammates will be questioned by the other wrestlers and the violator's relationship and bond with his teammates will suffer, which will be evident by a decrease in the amount of interaction he has with his teammates and his absence from daily routines. An example of one of these major routines that

signifies a wrestlers' bond with his team is the attending of team dinners after practice. The major rules that form the wrestling code of conduct that apply to all wrestlers include maintaining emotional and mental toughness and composure, retaining physical toughness, verbally communicating thoughts and feelings with teammates, and fulfilling the role as a loyal and reliable teammate. As will be demonstrated later on, abiding by these rules and successfully facing the wrestling adversities as a team strengthens the wrestlers' bond with their teammates by providing them with shared hardships. This in turn, allows the wrestlers to maintain mental toughness which gives them the ability to stay on the wrestling team through the adversities. The wrestlers have to maintain mental and physical toughness to overcome daily wrestling adversities, and this leads the wrestlers to form a strong bond with their teammates.

Many of the wrestlers perceive their sport to be tremendously challenging because they must overcome adversity inside as well as outside of practices and matches. One of the senior starting wrestlers, Stephan states: "wrestling is a tough sport and at least everyone on the team has thought about quitting at least once, and seriously quitting I mean" (Interview). Stephan's statement suggests that he believes that every wrestler experiences a point where they feel that they can no longer continue to overcome the struggles of wrestling. The wrestlers who play or have played other sports besides wrestling, perceive wrestling as one of the hardest and most demanding sports out there. Aaron states, "I played football here and rugby, and I don't think that's even comparable" (Interview). Aaron elaborates on his claim and states: "playing football here is nothing like wrestling here, you get done a wrestling practice here and you feel like you just went to war for two hours, lose like six or seven pound of sweat" (Interview). Aaron's statement suggests that he feels that wrestling practice is much more exhausting and physically draining than football practice. Greg, who is a soccer player as well as a wrestler, states, "Soccer

is a lot of fun, and wrestling is just so much harder” (Observation 2/5/2015). Greg’s statement indicates that he believes wrestling is a harder sport than soccer. His statement also suggests that he does not find wrestling to be as fun as soccer because it is so challenging.

The wrestlers are expected to adhere to the wrestling code of conduct, which includes maintaining mental and physical toughness inside as well as outside of the practice room and matches. An individual must possess mental toughness and physical toughness in order to be perceived by the team as fulfilling the role of a successful wrestler. Greg states, “a wrestler must be physically tough and mentally tough” (Interview). Aaron, describes a situation where a wrestler who was cutting a lot of weight ran out of practice in an emotional state, and he wraps up his story by saying, “it’s about mental toughness” (Fieldnotes p. 29). Greg and Aaron’s statements suggest that they believe that a wrestler must possess physical toughness and especially mental toughness in order to be able to get through daily practices and the typical wrestling routine. Damian states, “it’s a long season and if you lose the mental toughness for like a second on the mat, in the room or outside, you’re ending your success at that point” (Interview). Damian’s quote further asserts Aaron and Greg’s views on mental toughness, but his quote also suggests that Damian believes that the implicit rule regarding the maintenance of mental toughness exists for the wellbeing of an individual’s wrestling career. During his interview, Damian provides a clear definition of what he believes constitutes mental toughness:

It comes down to every single aspect. Mental toughness is the ability to stay in the fire even though there are a thousand reasons to quit, and you have to find one reason to stay in there. It’s so hard because there are so many times when in practice, in a match and outside the room you want to break and like there are so many reasons to break, that even people look at you and say, “well I totally understand where you are coming from”



but it's just like the ability in your head to stay in the fire and just like keep fighting (Interview).

Damian's definition of mental toughness suggests that he believes that maintaining mental toughness is not always easy, but one must find ways and reasons to maintain this mentality. Stephan agrees that mental toughness is an important quality to possess in wrestling and he identifies "desire" as one of the major qualities that defines a good wrestler. He says, "post season is a grind and you got to make weight and then go and wrestle some of the toughest kids in the country, and if you don't have the desire, the determination and the discipline to work your hardest then you're never going to be on top of the podium" (Interview). Stephan refers to "desire," "determination," and "discipline" as the "three D's" and his statement suggests that wrestlers must possess these mental elements to be a successful wrestler.

The wrestlers have various opinions on the coaching style of their head coach, Coach Straub but, regardless of their own thoughts, many of them agree that he attempts to instill mental toughness through his coaching strategies. During his interview, Owen states that he does not see eye to eye with many of Coach Straub's coaching techniques. However, Owen believes that he recognizes the values behind Coach Straub's coaching mechanisms. Owen states: "in our program we are taught to be tough, and physically ready and mentally tough and we don't break, and that is the philosophy that he institutes in the program" (Interview). Despite that Owen does not agree with Coach Straub's coaching style; Owen's statement implies that he does believe that the wrestling program instills mental and physical toughness in the wrestlers. Greg believes Coach Straub's coaching style is effective. Greg acknowledges that his opinion of Coach Straub's coaching differs from that of other wrestlers' perspectives and he attributes this to a cultural difference. Greg was brought up in a different culture where parenting styles are much

tougher and stricter on their children and he believes this is why he perceives Coach Straub as a “father figure” (Interview). Greg states, “he will be tough on us when he has to and I don’t take it personally because I know he has a plan for us, it’s like tough love” (Interview). Greg’s view of Coach Straub’s coaching suggests that he believes that the coach has a reason for being tough on the wrestlers. Many of the wrestlers also believe that Coach Straub motivates each of his wrestlers differently. Aaron states, “everyone has a different way that they’re motivated and he tries to figure out how each kid can be motivated, like some people it’s by yelling at them, some people it’s like... by... just playing mind games kind of” (p. 27). Aaron elaborates on the term “mind games” and states, “Caleb is a really good wrestler, like always does well, cuts the weight but the coach will always yell at him for shit that’s not even his fault until he like proves himself” (p. 27). Aaron’s statement suggests that he believes that Coach Straub is tough on some wrestlers more so than others in an effort to motivate these wrestlers. Greg laughs as he shares a story about one of ways the coach attempted to motivate him. He states, “last week [Coach Straub] told me that Stanley wanted to wrestle me off for my spot and he told Stanley that I wanted to wrestle him off for my spot, so we got heated up for the wrestle off but after the wrestle off I talked to Stanley and he said ‘Coach told me that you wanted to kick my ass’” (Interview). During his story, Greg states that he and Stanley “got heated up” as a result of the coach’s game. This suggests that Greg believes that the coach’s mind game successfully motivated both him and Stanley.

Many of the starting wrestlers, those wrestlers that are higher on the hierarchical scale, are perceived as possessing mental toughness by the other wrestlers. Many of the wrestlers look up to and admire a few specific wrestlers and these wrestlers exemplify what it means to be mentally and physically tough. Aaron identifies Stephan as being one of the best wrestlers on the

team and he states, “if you watch [Stephan], he’s always sweating his balls off, and he’ll always be like getting his weight down, getting an extra workout in, eating right” (p. 28). Aaron’s statement implies that he believes Stephan’s determination and commitment not only makes him admirable, but a successful wrestler as well. Greg has been Stephan’s practice partner since his freshman year and he states that he looks up to Stephan. Greg states, “sometimes when you see me wrestle, you can see a little bit of Stephan in me, when I’m tired, I’ll still like pretend I’m not tired and keep pushing, and I definitely learned that from him” (Interview). When defining mental toughness, Greg states, “if you are able to tell your mind and tell your body that you are not tired and that you’re stronger than you actually are then you can finish through and break that barrier” (Interview). Greg’s statement about Stephan and his definition of mental toughness suggest that he believes that he has acquired some of Stephan’s mental toughness and determination.

Many wrestlers also look up to Caleb, and Owen states “I look up to Caleb because of how hard he works, and how he is physically so prepared and how hard he can go in the room” (Interview). Owen’s statement suggests that he believes a wrestler is admirable if he exhibits behaviors, such as working hard in the gym and in practice, that are associated with a high level of dedication. As exemplified by the statements made about Caleb and Stephan, displaying a large amount of effort, perseverance and commitment to wrestling is considered admirable within the collegiate wrestling culture. This wrestling belief is also evident in Damian’s situation because even though he lost his eligibility this year, he is still admired by many wrestlers for his past dedication and commitment to wrestling. Aaron states that he most admires Damian, and he remembers back to when Damian had his eligibility as he states, “it just sucks that he really could not wrestle because he was definitely the most committed guy on the team, putting in the

extra work, cutting out drinking at the beginning of every season, never touching a drop and he just wanted it more than anybody else” (Interview). Aaron’s statement implies that he views commitment, discipline and desire as admirable qualities. Damian states that he sees a lot of his own qualities in Caleb this season and he states, “Caleb use to be like a big partier, but this year he wants it really bad and I appreciate that because that was me, I always wanted it so badly and he’s just putting everything he has into it” (Interview). Damian’s statement suggests that he did not view Caleb to be as committed to wrestling when he had other concerns, such as partying. However, Damian’s statement also suggests that Caleb was able to be perceived as a committed wrestler by redirecting his energy.

Most of the wrestlers admire and look up to the starting wrestlers and therefore, the starting wrestlers are expected to set an example for their teammates by strictly adhering to the wrestlers’ code of conduct. Perry identifies Stephan and Dean as the wrestlers he considers to be the leaders of the team and he states, “they always do the right things and they’re the kind of people that lead by example, and I think that’s more powerful than any other leader” (Interview). Perry’s statement suggests that he believes that leaders should always adhere to the code of conduct. His statement also reveals that he find the leaders who emulate the code of conduct to be the most influential. Stephan, Dean and Caleb, who are higher on the hierarchy, can be observed working out at the gym before attending practice. After David, a freshman wrestler, names Caleb as one of the wrestlers he looks up to, he reflects on Caleb’s commitment to wrestling as he states, “Caleb is always in the weight room and always getting exercise and that’s how you get better with getting the extra weight off” (Interview). David’s statement suggests that he believes that Caleb’s determination and commitment is what makes him a successful wrestler. David often attends the gym on a regular basis, and many times he wears a sweatshirt, mittens

and a knit hat while he runs for forty-five minutes on the treadmill and spends fifteen minutes on the elliptical. David is a freshman who is not currently a starting wrestler, but he is still required to stay within his weight class and weigh in at matches as a potential stand in. While David is not currently high on the hierarchy, his determination and commitment at the gym and his recognition of these leadership qualities imply that he is working to become a starting wrestler. David states that he also admires Dalton, and he states:

“Dalton obviously lives a very good life style, just everything he does, like he is very positive, he is an RA, I’m pretty positive he doesn’t drink at all during the season and I think that’s a very big factor determining how successful you are going to be” (Interview).

David’s comment suggests his belief that a leader should apply determination and commitment to all facets of his life, even outside the wrestling room. His statement also suggests that discipline, or specifically the ability to resist temptations, is a defining quality of a good leader and a successful wrestler. Aaron reflects back on the previous season’s senior captain, Dylan, as he states, “Dylan was the best captain because he was the best at being a player’s captain and also doing what the coach wanted” (Fieldnotes p. 29). Aaron elaborates on the term “player’s captain” and states: “like not kissing coach’s ass by telling on teammates but setting an example” (Fieldnotes p. 29). Aaron’s statements imply that he believes that a team leader should appeal to his teammates but also follow the code of conduct. Displaying discipline, commitment, determination and a team-oriented attitude are expectations that the most serious and admirable wrestlers, those who are high on the hierarchy, are expected to continue to fulfill in order to maintain their commendable status amongst their teammates.

Maintaining physical toughness is a rule of the wrestling conduct and therefore, wrestling through injury or pain during practice is a common occurrence among starting and non-starting wrestlers. Damian states:

There have been times when I had pinched nerves in my neck, or broken fingers or a broken nose... it's just like you got to figure out what's hurt and what's preventing you from wrestling. You can be like 'ouch, this hurts but that's going to happen all the time in a sport where you're allowed to hurt people (Interview).

Damian's comment suggests that he perceives injuries and pain to be a common occurrence in wrestling and wrestlers should simply accept these injuries as a part of wrestling and work through them. During one practice, Aaron looks around the room as he says, "I could go around to every single person and tell you their injury right now" (p. 28). Aaron asserts Damian's claim in his statement, by implying that every wrestler who is practicing is suffering from some type of injury. Owen states:

You're going to get hurt, hurt is different than being injured, hurt is something you can work through, hurt is something mental, hurt can be physical but it is something that you can just get through. Serious injuries are something that need to be addressed, injury needs time off (Interview).

Owen's statement goes as far to suggest that he believes one can wrestle through minor injuries and pain if they maintain mental toughness.

There are several situations that unfold throughout practices in which a wrestler shows evidence of wrestling through his pain. Tony, Perry, Sam, Ben, Jeremy, Owen, and George are only a handful of many of the wrestlers who wear bandages or wraps around some part of their

body during most of the practices (Fieldnotes pp. 22, 23, 30, 38, 53, 54). This observation suggests that many of the wrestlers perceive injury as a part of wrestling and realize that they are expected to wrestle through the pain. During one wrestling practice, one of the wrestlers, Jeremy, ends up stumbling away from his practice partner during a brief resting period and he winces as he holds his wrapped ankle. Sam asks Jeremy if he is okay and Jeremy replies “I’m fine,” and turns away from Sam and begins untying his shoe (p. 38). After Sam presses Jeremy further on the issue, Jeremy admits to Sam that his ankle is “aggravated,” but he goes back to wrestling after the coach blows the whistle (p. 39). The wrap on Jeremy’s ankle suggests that he was already suffering from an ankle injury. His behavior suggests that while he is experiencing immense pain in his ankle, he does not want to draw attention to the pain. His dismissal of the pain as just “aggravat[ion] of his ankle” and his decision to immediately jump back into the drill indicates that he does not see his injury as significant and that he recognizes that he is expected to wrestle through the pain. Even though Jeremy is a freshman, he has earned a spot as a starting wrestler and perhaps he recognizes that as a member who is higher on the hierarchy, he is especially expected to wrestle through injury. During another practice, at one point while wrestling Ben, George gasps for air as his knee, wrapped in a bandage, makes a cracking noise. Ben gets off of George and asks if he is okay, and George nods but he holds his leg. Like Jeremy, George also jumps right back into practice and continues to wrestle, which suggests that George also believes that he is expected to wrestle through his injury even if wrestling through it may result in more pain (p. 54). George and Jeremy’s attempts to conceal their pain suggest that they do not want to draw attention to their discomfort. George is a freshman and he is not a starting wrestler, and therefore he is not high on the hierarchy, but as a non-starting wrestler, his determination suggests that he still recognizes that he is expected to maintain physical toughness

and work through the pain. During another practice, Owen winces and paces back and forth at the side during a resting period. When Aaron asks him if he is okay Owen replies and says, “I’m afraid to put weight on my knee, they said I tore my meniscus” (p. 41). After the coach blows the whistle, Owen continues wrestling but he touches his hand to his knee subtly every time he and his partner reset to their initial, starting positions (p. 41). Owen is not a starting wrestler and his attempt to wrestle through this diagnosed injury for some practices suggests that he recognizes that he is expected to at least attempt to wrestle through the pain and his injury.

The wrestlers respect and look up to starting wrestlers who attempt to wrestle through serious, legitimate injuries. Aaron is one of the well-respected wrestlers who attempted to wrestle through a serious injury. Aaron has suffered from Compartment Syndrome through much of his wrestling career, and after undergoing a major surgery in high school, he was only able to come back to wrestling during sophomore year of College, which is when he joined the team. However, during senior year Aaron was told by medical professionals that he could no longer wrestle because if he continued to wrestle, his condition could worsen, which could require the amputation of his legs (Interview). Owen has an online wrestling blog called “Wrestling Stories” where he shares multiple stories about wrestlers who have faced adversities. During Aaron’s junior year, while he was still wrestling, Owen writes about Aaron’s story and introduces Aaron’s syndrome as an “adversity he is dealing with” (“Wrestling Stories”). In his blog post, Owen writes, “[d]espite the pain he feels when wrestling, a pain which he has described as feeling like ‘a golf ball being lodged in his calf’, [Aaron] still works hard towards his goals every time he steps on the mat” (“Wrestling Stories”). Owen’s blog refers to Aaron as an “inspiration” and he states that he hopes “this story inspires others just as [Aaron] has inspired [him] to succeed” (blog). The comments that Owen makes in his blog post about Aaron suggests that



Owen believes that Aaron's attempt to wrestle through this serious injury is not only evidence of Aaron's physical toughness but it is also evidence of his perseverance. Owen refers to Aaron as an "inspiration" because of his ability to wrestle through such a serious injury. This suggests the Owen believes that other wrestlers should aspire to obtain the physical toughness and perseverance that Aaron possesses. When asked why he decided to return to wrestling during his sophomore year despite the pain, Aaron states:

I had been wrestling since I was five, and I finally had the opportunity to come back to it and I really love the sport so it was worth it to try and push through my pain as I could still be successful with it (Interview).

Aaron's statement suggests that he believes that if an injured wrestler is passionate about wrestling, then he should wrestle through the pain.

Under a few specific circumstances, starting wrestlers are not expected to maintain physical toughness and wrestle through injury. If a starting wrestler is suffering from a legitimate injury then he is not expected to wrestle through his injury. Stephan states: "If it's a bruise, it's not an injury, if you can still move and wrestle, it's not an injury, but if you sprained your ankle and you cannot really stand on it, then that's an injury" (Interview). Stephan's statement implies that he believes that if a wrestler is in pain but he can physically push through it, then he is not suffering from a legitimate injury that would impede on his ability to wrestle. There is evidence that the wrestlers view Aaron and the former senior wrestling captain from the previous year, Dylan, as two men who suffer from legitimate injuries. Caleb reflects on the former captain, Dylan, as he states, "last year, there were some practices where he tried and tried and he just physically couldn't practice because he was just so hurt on his shoulder, and that was a typical

guy who was hurt and couldn't practice" (Interview). Caleb's statement suggests that he believes that Dylan was suffering from a legitimate injury because Dylan attempted to work through the injury but he physically could not muster up the strength. Aaron states, "this year I was told that I had to stop wrestling or I could lose my legs" (Interview). During his interview, Caleb mentions Aaron as an example of someone who previously attempted to play football as well as wrestle. Caleb looks down at his hands and his smile fades as he says, "and then he gets that compartment syndrome shit, it sucks" (Interview). Before Caleb mentions Aaron's injury, he had been laughing as he shared stories about another wrestler who he perceived as consistently faking injuries to get out of wrestling. Caleb's change in tone and his somber reaction to Aaron's injury suggests that he considers Aaron's injury to be legitimate. Caleb's comment further suggests that even though Aaron could wrestle through the pain, he believes that Aaron should listen to the medical expert's orders and preserve his own health for the sake of his own physical well-being. While Aaron is no longer an active wrestler, he is still listed on the roster and he attends many of the practices to help out and watch, he watches most of the matches, and on most nights he is present at team dinners. These observations suggest that Aaron's teammates still consider him to be a part of the team and Aaron still considers himself to be a part of the team as well.

It is considered acceptable for a starting wrestler to choose not to wrestle through an injury in a less important match because he wants to preserve his physical well-being to ensure that he is able to wrestle in important future matches. Earlier on in the season, Stephan, one of the starting wrestlers, had injured his shoulder and chosen not to wrestle in one of the smaller, less significant tournaments. During his interview, Stephan states that this tournament was

considered less significant because there were only six teams, besides Ursinus College. Stephan states:

I didn't want to go out there and wrestle some joke and end up hurting my shoulder somehow for that so I didn't wrestle in the tournament. I chose to preserve myself for this time right now, it is an important time and even if I was hurt really bad, I would still wrestle in regionals this weekend (Interview).

Stephan's reasoning as to why he chose not to wrestle suggests that he believes that it is acceptable for a starting wrestler that is injured to preserve their physical state for more important matches; however, his statement suggests that a starting wrestler is expected to wrestle in important matches regardless of an injury. By stating that he "chose to preserve [himself] for this time," Stephan's remark suggests that he did not make a choice based on what was best for his own individual physical healing, but he made a choice based on what he felt was the best for his team. In other words, Stephan wanted to preserve himself so that he could wrestle to the best of his ability in matches that were more important for the team to win.

While there is no real way to assess whether an injury is legitimate, the wrestlers perceive reoccurring claims of injury and drawing attention to injury to be a sign of malingering. During his interview, Owen states:

All different types of factors go into people's mindset about injury, sometimes people do need to work through it but sometimes people do need a break. I think there is faking, there is also over exaggeration but there also are people that are hurt and may not show physically but they could be feeling it (Interview).

Owen's statement suggests that there is not an exact definition of injury because it depends on the circumstances. His remark also implies that he believes that injury is not always obvious because some wrestlers do not appear physically injured or in pain but they feel the physical pain. This statement applies to Aaron's situation because he does not show obvious signs of being injured, but he feels the pain on a daily basis. Caleb claims that he can tell when wrestlers are faking injury and he elaborates on his claim when he states:

It's one thing to be happy to get out of practice for a day because you're hurting and then there are these guys who just walk around the training room, and they're the happiest people in the world, and I look at them and I'm like "you're not even hurt or sick" (Interview).

Caleb's remark suggests that acting openly happy about getting time off for an injury is a sign of malingering. He goes on to state, "I mean, 'I guess you're sick, I mean I cannot say you're not sick or hurt, but to me it's like... I don't know'" (interview). Caleb's ending remark suggests that while he is pretty sure that some people are faking injuries or illness, there is no way to be sure that they are actually faking. Aaron explains a situation involving a couple of wrestlers who were released from the team by the coach. Aaron states, "like two got kicked off because they would like always take days off and they would be like, 'aw I don't feel well today' and it's like 'you're fine'" (Fieldnotes p. 28). Aaron's statement suggests that he believes that these wrestlers deserved to get kicked off because their reoccurring requests for days off signified that they were faking.

Stephan states:

There are some individuals on the team that I would say fake injuries because it happens all the time, but if someone gets hurt and I've never seen them hurt before, I'm not going to say they are faking it because I have never seen them hurt before (interview).

Stephan's statement implies that he agrees with Aaron's belief that wrestlers who have reoccurring injuries are often times faking these injuries.

The wrestlers perceive malingering and exaggeration of injury to be most common among non-starter wrestlers that need a mental break, and they are willing to overlook their violation of the wrestling conduct because the non-starting wrestlers are lower in the hierarchy. Aaron talks in a soft tone as he states, "I mean wrestling is tough, and some kids feel like they are not a starter or as big of a role on the team and I have seen these kids milk an injury for longer than they should" (Interview). Aaron's comment suggests that he believes that non-starters tend to be the wrestlers who exaggerate injury because they do not feel as though they play a major role on the team and they want a longer break from the daily wrestling hardships. Aaron's soft tone and the wording of his statement suggest that he is sympathetic towards these wrestlers' situations. Dean also states that he notices that more non-starters fake injuries than anyone (Interview). Dean talks in a serious tone as he states, "[non-starters] may fake because they lose their motivation to keep making weight and keep going to practice" (Interview). Dean elaborates on his belief when he states, "they aren't the guy to go out there and represent the team, so why go to practice? So they come up with something to get them out of a few practices here and there" (Interview). Dean's statement suggests that he believes that non-starters turn to malingering when they lose their motivation to continue overcoming the daily wrestling adversities. Dean's remark also suggests that he believes it is reasonable for a non-starting wrestler to fake an injury every once in a while to get out of practicing. Caleb says, "when wrestlers fake injury it because they either just need a *mental* break or they are actually hurt but most of the time it is that they need a mental break" (Interview). Caleb directly asserts what Aaron and Dean's implied on the subject of malingering, because Caleb's comment suggests that he believes that wrestlers'

usually malingering because they need a break from the wrestling adversities. Greg believes that everyone deserves a little mental break and he states:

I don't lose respect for people that fake an injury once in a while, because I feel like everyone needs that little mental break sometimes, but make sure you come back and when you come back make sure you work harder so that you won't have to go through that again (Interview).

Greg's statement suggests that he believes that faking injury signifies the need for a mental break which suggests mental weakness on that wrestler's part. Greg's statement also indicates that he believes wrestlers need to come back and work even harder after receiving a mental break. Perry states, "some people need a break and faking injury is a way that they can get a break without looking like too much of a pansy" (Interview). Perry's comment suggests that he believes that the only way to receive a break that is seen as legitimate and not a result of weakness, is by suffering from a real injury. Perry's statement further suggests that having to sit out of practice and matches for a legitimate injury is not regarded as a violation of the wrestling conduct, but he implies that requesting a break is regarded as a violation of the wrestling conduct. Therefore, Perry's quote further suggests that a wrestler will fake an injury so that he can receive a break and he will not be criticized for a lack of toughness.

Those who are perceived as constantly faking injury are regarded by the wrestlers as violating the rule pertaining to physical and mental toughness and these malingerers suffer from social sanctions. As Greg and Dean's previously mentioned statements suggest, wrestlers that need a mental break should only fake injury on occasion. When talking about wrestlers who fake or overdramatize injury, Caleb briefly mentions Stanley and states, "he sometimes does that shit

too” (Interview). During one wrestling match, Stanley’s opponent gets on top of him and when the coach blows the whistle, Stanley turns over and lays there, face up, holding his arm for twenty seconds. Stanley proceeds to do a push up in order to prove that he can continue wrestling his match, despite his injury (Fieldnotes, p. 41). While it may appear that Stanley is wrestling through his injury, there are subtle comments made by Dean and Casey later on during another practice, that suggest that there is some question about whether Stanley is actually wrestling through an injury. During one practice, the coach approaches Casey, and says that he wants to have Casey wrestle off another wrestler and give him a chance to compete in regionals. The coach tells Casey who he will be adding into the wrestle off, and he mentions Stanley’s name. Casey asks the coach if Stanley has been competing recently and the coach replies, “nah, his shoulder is bothering him” (Fieldnotes, p. 65). Casey replies in a slow voice while laughing, “oh, his shoulder” and he and Dean exchange looks and laugh as Dean shakes his head (Fieldnotes, p. 66). Casey’s sarcastic verbal response to the coach’s statement about Stanley suggests that Casey does not believe that Stanley has a legitimate injury that should impede on his ability to wrestle. Dean and Casey’s non-verbal exchange in reaction to the coach’s statement about Stanley suggests that Dean also agrees that Stanley does not have a legitimate injury. Their interaction and their laughter also indicate that they do not respect Stanley’s malingering. As someone who appeared sympathetic to occasional non-starting malingerers in his interview, Dean’s reaction to Stanley’s perceived malingering suggests that Stanley exaggerates injury more frequently than what Dean considers acceptable.

Many of the wrestlers believe that Ken, a non-starting wrestler, constantly fakes injury and they perceive him as violating the wrestling rule that pertains to mental and physical toughness. For about a month during the season, Ken was not a part of the wrestling team. A few of the

interviewed wrestlers agree that Ken's continuous malingering was the main reason behind his temporary absence from the team. When asked about why Ken was temporarily dismissed from the team, Owen states, "Ken was kicked off the team because he was overreacting about an injury and taking up space, and he was getting in the way of things that needed to be done" (Interview). Owen's statement suggests that he believes that Ken was kicked off of the wrestling team because he exaggerated injury and meanwhile, he became a distraction during practice. Two weeks before regionals, Ken returns to the team and begins attending practices again. Caleb is interviewed on the day that Ken returns and he says,

[Ken] was going to get surgery and then he doesn't get surgery and now he's back, and just him coming back right there shows that whatever he was feeling in that moment, he just stopped feeling and he changed his mind and wanted to come back (interview).

Caleb's statement suggests that he believes that Ken faked his injury because he was not committed to the sport at the time. Caleb's remark further suggests that he believes that Ken's return to the team after not undergoing the surgery he had claimed he was going to have is direct evidence that Ken faked an injury because he wanted to find a way out. Similarly, Stephan states, "Ken is not disciplined enough to take the beatings and stick with it" (Interview) and he continues, "Ken does care about the sport and loves it, I think it's just a matter of being tough enough to stick it out and be a man about it" (Interview). Stephan's statement suggests that he believes that Ken wants to wrestle, but he does not possess the mental toughness to endure the daily wrestling adversities.

Ken is constantly reprimanded by his teammates for his malingering. In fact, they often create humorous jokes about Ken's malingering. During one dinner conversation that occurs



after Ken temporarily leaves the team, the men begin talking about something they refer to as the “LNV” (Fieldnotes, p. 60). Aaron later explains that “LNV” stands for “Lenny Nevel Virus” and it was named after a former wrestler called Lenny Nevel who had a legitimate back injury. He goes on to explain that Lenny only wrestled for a few weeks out of two seasons because he never returned to the team after his back injury (Interview). During dinner, Stephan laughs as he states, “Ken has the Nevel Virus, the LNV” (p. 60). Damian laughs and responds saying, “maybe [Nevel] had it before... and he sneezed on Ken or something” (Fieldnotes, p.60). Stephan and Damian’s conversation suggests that they believe that like Lenny, Ken has barely participated in wrestling after his initial elbow injury. This is asserted by Aaron who states, “the Nevel joke was mostly making fun of Ken, by saying that he has barely participated in the wrestling season after his elbow injury” (Interview). Earlier during that same dinner, the men laugh as they attempt to recall the time line of Ken’s alleged injuries. Stephan laughs as he states, “it was first his elbow, then his eye, and then his elbow again, and then ...” Stephan pauses and continues laughing. Damian responds with laughter saying “no his rib was first...but whenever we played dodge ball, it miraculously healed!” (p. 59). Even if Stephan and Damian exaggerate Ken’s timeline of injuries, this conversation indicates that Stephan and Damian believe that Stephan’s alleged injuries were ridiculous and unbelievable and they believe his actions contradicted his claim of injury. These conversations about Ken’s malingering, which occur in Ken’s absence, indicate that the wrestlers are not laughing with Ken but they are laughing at Ken’s tendency to malingering. Caleb talks about an incident that occurred at a dual meet tournament where Ken was not starting but was given the chance to participate in an exhibition match. Caleb states, “Ken was perfectly fine like we were just talking with him, and the coach comes up and goes ‘we found you a match, you ready to wrestle?’ and Ken just starts this coughing fit” (Interview). Caleb starts

making a raspy coughing sound in an attempt to mimic Ken's coughing. Caleb continues to laugh as he states, "[Ken] would go up and like sit in back of the coach and start like coughing right in his ear" (Interview). Caleb laughs and says that "Coach knew it was Ken and he knew he was lying so he puts him in anyway" (Interview). This particular comment implies that Caleb believes that the malingering is a quality that defines Ken as a wrestler, and perhaps even a person. Caleb states that Ken started off by winning the exhibition match but then half way through his opponent ties up the match. Caleb laughs and leans his head back as he can barely compose himself enough to end his story. After a few seconds he calms down and says, "and then Ken just starts doing this coughing fit again" (Interview). Caleb's laughter and the story that he shares suggests that he believes that Ken uses injury to not only get out of wrestling but also as an excuse for losing. Caleb's attempt to mimic Ken's cough, and his inability to control his laughter suggests that like Stephan and Damian, he finds Ken's malingering to be humorous and laughable. Caleb laughs as he ends his story by stating, "that's typical Ken just being a baby sometimes" (Interview). Caleb's statement suggests that he perceives Ken's malingering to signify his inability to face certain adversities and outcomes.

As a result of being close with the team, Ken is reprimanded for his malingering more than Stanley is. While telling a story about Ken's malingering, Caleb emphasizes that "[Ken] wasn't starting" and his inclusion of this fact implies that because Ken is a non-starter, he is not high in the hierarchy and his lack of mental toughness does not affect the overall team's performance (Interview). Stanley is not a starting wrestler either which Aaron points out when he states, "Stanley is not a starting wrestler, and he only wrestles in matches when the coach would bump up Greg" (Interview). As non-starters, Stanley and Ken are not high in the wrestling hierarchy and therefore they do not impede on the wrestling team's performance at matches

when they malingering. While there are occasional comments, mentioned previously, made about Stanley's overdramatizing of injury, it is not discussed or joked about very often. This indicates that while Stanley suffers occasional social sanctions, he is not severely or consistently chastised for his perceived malingering. In comparison, Ken is reprimanded much more than Stanley which is evident through the various jokes that many of the wrestlers make about Ken, that were mentioned previously. Greg states, "Ken is always hanging out with us and he even lives in the wrestler's suite" (Interview). Greg's statement implies that Ken has a fairly close bond with the team that enables him to be considered close enough to be one of the eight wrestlers to live in one of the wrestling suites. When Ken was not on the wrestling team, he often sat with the wrestlers at team dinners and he was often observed conversing and continuing to spend much of his time with the wrestlers. Owen states, "even when Ken was not on the wrestling team, he still viewed himself as part of the team" (Interview). This observation of Ken's continued interactions with the team even when he was not officially a part of the team and Owen's statement suggest that Ken not only continued to view himself as a part of the team, but he was also treated as part of the team. In comparison, Stanley often sits with his girlfriend and her friends during team dinners and when he does sit with the team, he is often fairly quiet and does not join in on laughter when the wrestlers make jokes (Observations). While telling a story about a wrestler that did not initially feel like he fit in with the wrestling team, Caleb states, "I knew something was wrong because Perry was not sitting with the team at dinner and he was not socializing with the team" (Interview). Caleb's statement implies that not attending team dinners and not engaging in social behaviors, such as talking and making jokes with the team, signifies that a wrestler does not share a strong bond with the team. By not attending a good amount of team dinners and failing to engage with his teammates, Stanley's behaviors imply that he does not

share as tight a bond with the wrestling team as Ken. When questioned why the wrestlers reprimand Ken more than Stanley, Aaron states, “it’s because we are closer friends with Ken so we can bust on him more and no one is really close with Stanley” (Interview). The previously mentioned observations and Aaron’s statement suggest that the wrestlers reprimand Ken more than Stanley because they feel that they are able to since they are closer to Ken. Aaron’s statement further suggests that teasing is a sign of affection in some cases. When asked whether the wrestlers like Ken, Caleb states, “oh yeah,” and he goes on to say “Ken’s just a baby, and we know he’s a baby so he’s going to do that stuff” (Interview). Caleb’s use of the word “we” and his statement suggests that he believes that his teammates understand that Ken is not mentally tough and that they have come to accept that he is going to continue to behave in ways that signify his mental weakness, such as malingering.

The starting wrestlers are expected to strictly adhere to the wrestling conduct, including the rule pertaining to maintaining mental and emotional toughness and composure under the multiple adversities that they face as student athletes and as wrestlers in particular. The starting wrestlers, who are high in the wrestling hierarchy, are expected to maintain composure under multiple pressures and continue to work through adversity. Caleb, a starting wrestler, states: “there are days when I don’t want to be there but I just push through, especially when school comes around” (Interview). Caleb’s statement suggests that he believes that he does not have the option to skip practice just because he does not feel like attending or he has too much school work. Caleb talks about how he struggled during the first semester when he had to juggle all the adversities that come with wrestling while studying for the MCATS. He states: “

I remember this year, when I had to spend first semester studying for the MCATS, I was blowing my brains out doing that shit, because I was like always working and studying. First

semester, I thought of wrestling as a task, and then I had to do this, this and this after it, but now I look at practice as being more fun (Interview).

Caleb's retelling of his experience suggests that he was so stressed out by his busy schedule, that he came to see a sport that he normally enjoys as being a task. He indicates that he never considered attempting to get out of practice, because he considered it to be a "task" rather than an option. While Caleb states that he finds practice to be "more fun" now, he did not show any evidence of ever being mentally spent or stressed out during the first semester. During some of these early practices, the coach compliments Caleb's "good work" (Fieldnotes, p. 7), Caleb enthusiastically leads the team in group exercises multiple times (Fieldnotes, p. 12), and he cheers for his teammates throughout sprints even during his resting period (Fieldnotes, p. 13). These observations indicate that Caleb continued to wrestle well, lead and motivate his teammates, even while he was overcoming multiple adversities aside from just wrestling. At the end of a few practices towards the beginning of the season, Caleb makes several of the concluding encouraging speeches to his teammates. He makes these motivational speeches to his teammates when they gather in a circle in the middle of the practice room, putting their hands together, for a concluding ritual that is done at the end of most practices. During one concluding ritual, Caleb begins speaking and says, "Good job guys, good practice, we got this! Couple more days to go, keep it going, keep pushing ourselves, get better every day! Hershey on three!" (Interview). Caleb's ability to make these brief motivational speeches while feeling stressed out by his busy schedule, indicates that he was able to stay mentally strong enough to offer motivation and words of support to his teammates. Caleb's continued composure during a stressful time and his sustained leadership indicates that Caleb believed that he was expected to stay composed enough to continue setting an example.

The wrestlers perceive the actions of crying or having an emotional breakdown to signify a loss of mental and emotional composure, and therefore they perceive these actions as a violation of the wrestling conduct. Before failing to make weight multiple times and being kicked off of the team, Corey was a starting wrestler. While Corey was still on the team, Aaron states, “when everyone’s busting their ass, he will be the one running out of the room crying” (Fieldnotes, p. 29). Aaron elaborates on his statement, “[Corey] will like mentally break, because he’s been cutting a lot of weight and by the end of the week, your energy is sucked out and everything starts to fail and you feel terrible and like you’re about to break” (Fieldnotes, p. 29). Aaron’s statement implies that he believes that someone who “run[s] out of the room crying” to be exhibiting a mental breakdown, which is a violation of the rule pertaining to maintaining mental composure and toughness. His remark also suggests that he believes that Corey was unable to handle cutting weight and attending practices and consequently he would have emotional breakdowns. Aaron ends his statement by saying, “it’s about mental toughness” (Fieldnotes, p. 29). Aaron’s final statement suggests that he believes that Corey lacked the mental toughness needed to face wrestling adversities in an emotionally composed manner. At a few points the wrestlers have talked and laughed about times when Ken has cried. During a team dinner at the time when Ken was temporarily off the team, Damian laughs as he says, “remember that time when Ken scored 100 points on Danny and coach said, ‘well he only weighs 112,’ so take 90 points away,’ and Ken next match was crying. Typical Ken match, he was sobbing” (Fieldnotes, p. 59). The rest of the wrestlers react to Damian’s comment with laughter. The laughter in response to Damian’s statement indicates that the wrestlers perceive Ken’s crying to be humorous. By using the phrase “typical Ken,” Damian implies that Ken cries a lot. Before one practice, while Ken was not an active member of the team, Owen laughs as he says, “remember when Ken cried

because he let out a snot rocket and the coach yelled at him?” (p. 72). The wrestlers laugh in response to Owen’s comment and Dean says, “I’ve never seen someone cry so much in this room” (p. 72). Owen, Damian and Dean’s statements suggest that the wrestlers believe that Ken cries more than any of the other wrestlers on the team. Dean’s comment suggests that he believes that it is not typical for wrestlers to cry in the practice room and that Ken’s behavior is aberrant. During his interview, Caleb says, “Ken’s a baby sometimes and gets worked up over stuff” (Interview). Caleb’s comment suggests that he believes that displaying emotion in such a way as Ken does signifies that he is unable to handle certain situations and wrestling adversities with emotional composure.

As a non-starting wrestler, Ken is reprimanded to a certain degree for failing to maintain emotional and mental toughness and composure. As the two previously mentioned examples demonstrate, in Ken’s absence, the men relentlessly laugh about his inability to maintain emotional composure; however, the men also punish Ken for his violation by teasing him while he is present. The coach also sets the mood for Ken’s return as he laughs and announces Ken’s return to the team. He directs his comment towards Ken as he states, “I want to say this now that everyone is here, I want you to pretend that this is intermural, because when you don’t you go all wacky” (Fieldnotes, p. 84). As the other wrestlers laugh along with the coach, Ken laughs lightly and shrugs his shoulders. Ken’s obvious inability to understand the joke and his teammates simultaneous laughter indicates that Ken is not only the victim of the joke, but he is also left out of the inside information that fuels the humor of the joke. Later during that same practice, as the men begin preparing to play a game of handball, one wrestler who is resting at the side slams a ball in Ken’s direction and after the ball hits Ken, the wrestlers all laugh and howl. Ken puts his hands up and wrinkles his brow as he says in a high pitched voice, “it’s not like it’s going to hurt

me” (Fieldnotes, p. 85). Considering that this was Ken’s first practice back, the player specifically aimed the ball in Ken’s direction, and that the men simultaneously howled and laughed, this situation suggests that the wrestlers were teasing Ken. Ken’s reaction suggests that he did not perceive this situation to be humorous and his response to the men’s laughter indicates that he felt as though the wrestler were laughing at him. During another practice while Ken and Caleb are talking, the song “I Can’t Stop” by Flux Pavillon comes on and Caleb begins laughing as he sings along with the lyrics “Ken is gay gay gay gay!” Caleb laughs and he repeats this line in a louder voice as Ken softly laughs while wrinkling his brow (p. 88). This situation indicates that Caleb is using humor to question Ken’s sexuality, and perhaps even shame his manhood. Ken’s confused laughter in response to Caleb’s lyrics suggests that he wants to bond with Caleb over this joke, but he may feel a bit insulted by the joke. The wrestlers punish Ken for his inability to maintain emotional and mental composure by teasing Ken. However, these jokes are the most severe form of punishment that Ken receives for his violation. As mentioned previously, Caleb says that the men are close with Ken and he states, “Ken’s just a baby, and we know he’s a baby so he’s going to do that stuff” (Interview). By using the word “we,” Caleb speaks for the other wrestlers and suggests that the wrestlers understand that Ken is not mentally tough and they expect that he is going to malingering and cry in certain situations. As mentioned previously as well, when comparing the wrestlers’ treatment of Ken and Stanley, Aaron states, “we are closer friends with Ken so we can bust on him more” (Interview). Aaron also speaks for the team, and his statement suggests that the wrestlers have a close bond with Ken so they feel that they have the right, and perhaps the responsibility, to tease Ken for his perceived mental weakness and toughen him up. Aaron also claims that the wrestlers do not tease Stanley because



they are not close with him. This further indicates that the wrestlers' teasing Ken is evidence of a close bond.

The wrestlers also perceive starting wrestlers' inability to overcome certain weekly adversities, such as making weight, to be a violation of the rules that pertains to maintaining mental toughness and emotional composure. In Aaron's previously mentioned quote, he states, "[Corey] will like mentally break, because he's been cutting a lot of weight" (Interview). This suggests that Aaron believes that Corey was unable to maintain mental toughness and emotional composure while cutting weight. During one practice after Corey was dismissed from the team, Damian laughs with some other wrestlers as he states:

Yo, did you hear that Corey was crying about how his grades were slipping because he was cutting weight. It was the third day of class and he was like 'man, I'm so behind' ... how are you so behind? They just finished going over the syllabus, some people don't even have books (Fieldnotes, p. 85).

In Damian's statement, the word "crying" is interchangeable with "complaining" which suggests that Damian perceives Corey's complaining about cutting weight impeding on his ability to stay on top of his school work as signifying Corey's inability to maintain emotional composure.

During the team dinner on the first day that Corey was cut, the men discuss Corey's situation and Casey says: "Coach babied him! Half way through the season he had to drop down, and then he didn't have to make weight a few times, and like everything. Like if anyone else did what he did..." (Fieldnotes, p. 49). By using the word "babied," Casey suggests that he believes that the coach coddled Corey and enabled him to display behavior that is perceived as mentally weak.

Casey's statement also suggests that he believes that the coach does not give other wrestlers that much lenience.

As a starting wrestler who is higher on the wrestling hierarchy, Corey's failure to maintain mental and emotional toughness is perceived by the other wrestlers as negatively affecting the whole team and therefore, Corey is seen as letting down his teammates. On the day that Corey was dismissed from the team, Cam talks with his teammates and states: "[Corey] was .4 over, he had from 8:30 until 11, you could make that weight! And he didn't do it. He didn't run or anything" (Fieldnotes, p. 49). Cam's statement suggests that he believes that Corey could have easily made weight but he failed to because he did not bother to put in any effort. During the same conversation, Casey also states, "like I understand [Corey] lost a lot of weight, but if you say you're gonna make weight, you need to make weight" (p. 49). Casey's statement suggests that he believes that if a wrestler promises his team that he is going to do something as important as making weight, then he has made a commitment to the team that he needs to fulfill, even if that means overcoming multiple adversities. Caleb states: "If you say you are going to do something and you don't do it, I cannot fathom that. Especially doing something that is as easy as making weight, if you say you are going to make 141, then make it" (Interview). Caleb's statement suggests that he believes that Corey's failure to overcome the adversity of making weight was an action that let down the team. Caleb's statement also restates Casey's statement, which suggests that a starting wrestler is expected to fulfill their commitment to the team. Caleb goes on to state: "I mean it may sound stupid, like making weight and keeping your word but I don't know, but it's bigger than that to me and I think also to a lot of other people on the team" (Interview). Caleb statement suggests that he believes that the team feels let down by Corey's failure to fulfill his commitment. His statement also implies that the team is not disappointed in

Corey's inability to make weight, but they are let down by his failure to fulfill his commitment for the sake of his team. Caleb concludes his statement by saying: "when Corey didn't make weight, it was like a slap in the face" (Interview). Caleb's statement implies that he felt that Corey's failure to fulfill his commitment to the team indicated that Corey did not care enough about his teammates to push through the adversities for the benefit of the team. Caleb draws similarities between Corey's failure to make weight and Ken's malingering as he states: "[Corey and Ken] were both looking for a way out. They didn't hate wrestling, but whatever situation they were in, the pressures from wrestling and school, they just hated where they were and they were just looking for a way out" (Interview). Caleb's statement implies that he believes that Corey and Ken had the same purpose behind their actions, the purpose being to find a way to get out of wrestling. Caleb's remark also implies that he believes that both Corey and Ken felt that they could no longer face the wrestling adversities and they wanted to escape. Caleb can hardly refrain from laughing when sharing stories about Ken's malingering. This indicates that Caleb finds Ken's malingering to be humorous and he does not regard Ken's behavior to be a significant violation of the wrestling code. However, when Caleb talks about Corey's failure to make weight, he speaks in a serious tone, and he does not smile, which indicates that Caleb does see Corey's failure to be a significant violation. When asked about the difference between Corey's failure to make weight and Ken's malingering, Aaron states: "Corey screwed over the team and Ken did not" (Interview). Owen asserts Aaron's belief when he states: "Corey's situation is different than Ken's situation because Corey let down the team" (Interview). Owen and Aaron's statements suggest that they believe that Corey's failure to make weight, which resulted in his inability to wrestle in multiple tournaments, let down the team, but Ken's perceived malingering to get out of practice did not let the team down. This further asserts that

the hierarchy exists and as a starting wrestler that is higher on the hierarchy, Corey has more to lose for the team and therefore he is expected to strictly adhere to the wrestling conduct. In comparison, as a non-starting wrestler, Ken is lower in the hierarchy and had less to lose for the team and therefore, he is not required to adhere to the rules as strictly as Ken.

There is evidence to suggest that Corey did not share a strong bond with his teammates because he was perceived as being individualistic as opposed to possessing a team-oriented attitude. Greg states:

Even when Corey was on the team, Corey was always been a lot more distant from the team and he was not very close with the team and didn't always sit with us at dinner. Even people like Lars, he isn't wrestling anymore and he will still sit with us, but it just depends on the situation and the guy (Interview).

Greg's statement suggests that he believes that while Corey was on the team, he did not share the same teammate bond that many of the other wrestlers share with one another. As was mentioned earlier, regularly attending team dinners is perceived as an action that signifies a wrestler's strong bond with their teammates. Greg uses Corey's absence from team dinners as evidence to support that Corey did not share as tight of a bond with the wrestlers. When asked to identify the captains of the team during the time that Corey was still on the team, Aaron responds by saying: "I guess Corey is, but that's because he kisses coach's ass the most" (Fieldnotes, p. 28). Aaron elaborates on his statement about Corey and says: "he will like rat out wrestlers to Coach. It's ridiculous! Like Corey tells on kids for smoking pot and shit" (Fieldnotes, p. 29). Aaron's statement suggests that he believes that Corey attempts to get in the coach's good graces by betraying his teammates. By using the phrase "kisses coach's ass" to describe Corey's behavior

and by enthusiastically adding in, “It’s ridiculous,” Aaron implies that he does not look fondly upon Corey’s behavior. Aaron reflects on Corey’s behavior as a leader of the team and he laughs as he states: “Like everyone doesn’t really like Corey because he kisses coach’s ass and rats on everyone, it’s not really a good leader” (Fieldnotes, p. 29). Aaron’s statement implies that he believes that a captain is supposed to possess a team-oriented attitude. Several of the other wrestlers, including Casey and Cam, refer to Corey as a “kiss ass” (Fieldnotes, p. 49) which suggests that the wrestlers believe that Corey had a more individualistic attitude, meaning that Corey acted for his own benefit as opposed to acting for the benefit of his teammates.

As a result of being higher on the wrestling hierarchy and therefore having more to lose for the team, Corey is reprimanded for his both his failure to maintain mental toughness and consequently, letting down his team multiple times. Before practice on the day that Corey was dismissed from the team, one of the wrestler says in a loud, high pitched voice, “Uhhh... cancel practice today, on account of Corey pissed Coach off, Corey is the only one who has practice and he will be kissing coach’s ass” (Fieldnotes, p. 45). Many of the wrestlers laugh and one of the wrestler responds loudly by saying, “this is why you don’t kiss ass” (Fieldnotes, p. 45). This situation indicates that most of the wrestlers perceived Corey as constantly attempting to please the coach, and they feel resentful towards Corey because of this. By outwardly making fun of Corey in his absence for most of the team to hear, the men are reprimanding Corey for his selfish and individualistic behaviors of failing to make weight as well as constantly attempting to please the coach. The statement, “this is why you don’t kiss ass,” which is made by one of the wrestlers on the day of Corey’s dismissal, suggests that the wrestler attributes Corey’s dismissal from the team with his individualistic actions. In other words, the wrestler’s statement implies that he believes that Corey appealed to the coach by sacrificing his bond with his teammates, and he was

therefore, unable to overcome wrestling adversities because he did not have the emotional support of his teammates. During one dinner, the underclassmen are planning their “initiation” skits, which is an annual ritual in which the freshmen are required to put together several skits and act them out for the upperclassmen. However, this year the freshmen and the sophomores are putting together the skits because the sophomores did not get the chance to participate in the “initiation” during the previous year. The freshmen and sophomores laugh as they discuss one of their skits where they plan to act out a parody of Corey’s situation and which they call, “Corey the Great, Who Couldn’t Make Weight” (Observation). The freshmen and sophomores are reprimanding Corey for his failure to maintain mental toughness and make weight by making a joke out of the ending of Corey’s collegiate wrestling career in the absence of Corey. Therefore, the wrestlers are able to laugh at Corey and bond over their consensus about his failures as a wrestler and a leader, which ultimately let the team down.

There is evidence to suggest that after being dismissed from the team, Corey recognized his behavior as a violation of the wrestling conduct and therefore he cut himself off completely from his teammates. When questioned about why Corey is no longer present at meals and seen with teammates, Owen states, “As far as not hanging around the team, that’s on Corey and that’s probably on him as a personal shame and I cannot say for sure, but I believe Corey does not view himself as a part of the team this year” (Interview). Owen’s statement suggests that he believes that Corey chooses not to spend time with the wrestlers because he is embarrassed by his actions which were violations that let down the other wrestlers. By stating that he believes that “Corey does not view himself as a part of the team this year,” Owen implies that he believes that Corey’s decision to isolate himself from the team reflects Corey’s belief that his violation of the wrestling conduct was so severe that, even though he was on the team for half the season, he will no longer

be acknowledged as a past member of the team by his former teammates. In comparison, even during the time Ken was not on the wrestling team, Ken still attended team meals and he was still observed spending time with the wrestlers around campus. In fact, other former wrestlers, such as Lars, Tony and Harold, also attended team meals. The continued relationships that Ken and the other former wrestlers have with the present wrestlers after leaving the team in comparison to the nonexistent relationship that Corey has with the wrestlers, further asserts that Corey severely violated the wrestling conduct. As mentioned earlier, Caleb states that he and the other wrestlers believe that Corey was looking for a way out and that he purposely failed to cut weight. Caleb states: “Corey has a sense that people think that and he doesn’t feel welcomed because of all the stuff that had been happening with him” (Interview). Caleb’s statement suggests that Caleb also believes that Corey does not spend time with the team because he recognizes that his failure to make weight let down the team and was a severe violation of the wrestling conduct.

While the wrestlers should not express their emotions through a breakdown, the wrestlers are expected to verbally communicate their thoughts and feelings with their teammates. Stephan states: “a good teammate is someone who will listen to you when you’re not having a good day and you want to talk, whether it’s wrestling related or school related, or anything, they are there for you to listen” (Interview). Stephan’s remark implies that he believes that wrestlers should offer a listening ear to encourage one another to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Greg states: “a good teammate needs to have good verbal communication” (Interview). During his interview, Caleb states:

If you're having a problem, you should talk to your teammates. I hate when teammates bottle everything up, and then the next day they quit and it's like 'why did they quit?' and nobody had any clue as to why they were going to quit (Interview).

Caleb's statement reveals that he believes that when wrestlers become discouraged or frustrated with wrestling, they need to verbally communicate their feelings and thoughts with their teammates. Stephan states, "wrestling is a tough sport and at least everyone on the team has thought about quitting at least once, and seriously quitting I mean" (Interview). When asked how the wrestlers continue to cope with daily adversities, Damian states: "we just surround ourselves because we are all just the most miserable guys and we will just like 'talk it out' and be like 'fuck this sucks' and we all just all laugh it out" (Interview). Damian's statement suggests that he believes that wrestlers are able to overcome certain wrestling adversities by finding a way to bond over their negative and discouraging feelings about certain challenges with their teammates who also face the same challenges.

A wrestler can be rewarded for abiding by the rules of the wrestling conduct that pertains to communicating thoughts and feelings with teammates. During his interview, Caleb tells the story of a freshman wrestler, Perry, and he states: "[Perry] like hated the team at the beginning of the year and he felt like he couldn't hang out with the team because he didn't fit in" (Interview). Caleb states: "I saw that Perry was having a rough time, I saw him not sitting with us, I saw him over there just like being anti-social" (Interview). Caleb's statement suggests that he believes that not attending team dinners and not interacting with the team signifies that someone is not bonding with their teammates. Caleb goes on to say:



I went up to talk to him and he tells me how he felt and I had a talk with him and the rest of the team and now he's like a really good wrestler, I found out... I didn't know that he was that good and I hope he sticks with it (Interview).

Caleb's statement suggests that he believes that by communicating his feelings with Caleb, Perry was easily able to solve his problem which prevented him from deciding to quit. Caleb's statement further suggests that Perry's ability to communicate his feeling and form a bond with his teammates allowed him to overcome certain adversities that were impeding on his wrestling performance. In the middle and end of the wrestling season, Perry was attending team dinners regularly, and he was actively participating in team discussions and making jokes throughout dinner. Perry is often observed spending much of his time with the Sam and Ben. He will often sit next to them during team dinners, sit and converse with them before practice, and watch their matches from the edge of mat (Fieldnotes, pp. 32, 57, 81). These observations indicate that Perry has formed an especially tight bond with the two wrestlers. These observations also reveal that Perry's ability to communicate with Caleb has resulted in his ability to form an especially close bond with some of his teammates. When asked what his favorite part about wrestling is, Perry says, "I love the team aspect of wrestling," (Interview). He elaborates on his statement and says, "there are a lot of great guys on the team and it's good to know that you have a lot of guys like that who have your back on the mat, off the mat, on campus" (Interview). Perry's statements imply that he finds one of the best parts about wrestling to be the bond he shares with his teammates. This statement further indicates that by communicating with his teammates, Perry was able to discover one of his favorite parts of wrestling, the teammate bond.

There is evidence that Corey's failure to overcome certain wrestling adversities was the result of Corey's failure to bond and communicate his feelings with his teammates. As was

previously mentioned, Stephan is both a leading wrestler and viewed as a leader of the team. In his interview, Stephan states: “I didn’t know Corey was going to quit, he was cutting a lot of weight” (Interview). When considering Stephan’s leading role on the team, his statement suggests that Corey did not communicate his feelings with his teammates and therefore, he did not utilize his teammate bond to help him overcome adversities. This further suggests that if Corey had a stronger bond with his teammates and had verbally communicated with his team rather than expressing his feelings through emotional breakdowns, then he could still be an active member of the team. Damian states: “Corey wants people to feel bad for him because ‘oh, I’m cutting weight,’ but people do it all the time, and people do what you do every year” (Interview). Damian’s statement implies that he does not sympathize with Corey because he believes a lot of wrestlers are facing the same adversity. As mentioned earlier, there is evidence to suggest that Corey did not share a close bond with his teammate. With this in mind, Damian’s statement further suggests that if Corey had a tight bond with his teammates, then he may have realized that many other wrestlers were facing the same adversity as he was. Damian states, “If you have a bunch of guys around you who are going through the same struggle it makes it easier because if you are the only guy doing it, it’s not fun” (Interview). Damian’s statement implies that he believes that a wrestler is able to overcome certain wrestling adversities by spending time with their other teammates who are also attempting to overcome the same adversities. His statement also suggests that he believes that wrestlers will have a much harder time overcoming these adversities on their own.

There is evidence that the wrestlers believe that they share a very tight bond with their teammates. As stated earlier, Aaron is no longer able to wrestle due to a life altering injury. When asked why he chooses to continue to be a part of the team even though he is no longer able

to wrestle, he states: “definitely because of the kids on the team” (Interview). Aaron’s statement suggests that he believes that he has a strong bond with the wrestlers. His statement also indicates that the sport itself does not keep him on the team, but his strong bond with his teammates is what motivates him to stay around. Aaron’s statement further indicates that despite Aaron’s inability to wrestle and partake in some of the wrestling adversity, the bond that he had formed with his teammates is still strong. While Stephan acknowledges that he participates on the wrestling team because he loves the sport, he also states: “I really love the guys on my team” (Interview). He elaborates on his feeling by stating: “we are like a big family, and without them, the sport wouldn’t be what it is” (Interview). As a senior, Stephan reflects on his wrestling experience and he states:

Even though wrestling may be coming to an end for me in a couple of weeks, the friendships won’t be coming to an end. We truly care about each other and we are going to stay in touch and hang out once we graduate (Interview).

This suggests that the wrestling bond is much stronger than the appeal of the sport itself. During one team dinner, Greg compares his experience on the Vespey College soccer team to his experience on the wrestling team. Greg states, “I feel more welcomed on the wrestling team than the soccer team and I always choose to hang out with the wrestlers over soccer” (Observation). This suggests that Greg’s bond with his teammates keeps him more committed to the team than the actual sport itself does.

There is evidence that once the wrestlers form a strong bond with their teammates; this bond is hard to break. Dean states “whether you’re on the team or off the team, in my mind, you’re still a teammate” (Interview). As a leader and a starting wrestler who is high in the hierarchy, Dean’s statement suggests that he believes he continues to share that teammate bond

with former wrestlers. As mentioned earlier, even when Ken is temporarily off the team, he continued to attend team dinners. As previously mentioned as well, Greg points out that Lars, a former wrestler, will often attend team dinners. These observations indicate that despite a wrestler's current wrestling status, he still continues to feel that he shares a strong bond with the wrestling team. Tony and Harold were on the team during the first part of their season but even after they both ended up leaving the team, they continued to eat dinner and spend time with their former teammates outside of practice. When questioned about his apparent close bond with his former teammates despite his choice to leave the team, he states: "Yeah, I mean that would be fucked up if they didn't hang out with me anymore just because I quit wrestling" (Fieldnotes, p. 55). Harold's statement suggests that he believes that his bond with his former teammates should still continue despite his choice to end his collegiate wrestling career. During Caleb's interview that took place in the "wrestling suite" and after Tony quit the team, Tony walks into the room without knocking and says, "have you seen Dean?" Caleb laughs and he says, "he's in your room I think actually" (Observation). In an Italian accent, Tony says, "Get out of here!" and Caleb laughs as Tony leaves the room (Observation). A few minutes later, Tony could be heard laughing and talking with Dean in the other room. This situation suggests that despite leaving the team, Tony still remains a resident of the "wrestling suite." By coming into the room without knocking, Tony's behavior indicates that he shares close relationships with both Caleb and his roommate, Dean, which enable Tony to feel comfortable enough to come into their private space unannounced. Tony and Caleb's laughter at Tony's joke indicates that they share a private joke which further asserts that they share a tight bond. Tony and Harold's continued relationship with their previous teammates suggests that this bond that they had formed with their teammates through wrestling is not easily broken.

As a result of believing that they share a close bond with one another, the wrestlers are expected to support their teammates. During a match that occurred in the middle of the season, the wrestlers stood up for a teammate, Damian, who was declared ineligible as a result of the opposing team's coach. Damian wrestled at another college for two years, but during his first year he was unable to wrestle much of the time because he was not academically eligible. Damian states, "I only wrestled two matches and the NCAA states that you have the right to wrestle another season if you only wrestled 12.5% of your matches" (Interview). Damian's statement suggests that he believed that he would be able to wrestle this season as a fifth year college student. After the rankings came out during the present season with Damian ranked tenth in the national rankings, his former coach called the Vespey head coach and he threatened to go turn him into the NCAA if Damian wrestled. Damian says, "I should be able to wrestle, like a lot of kids throughout the country do this type of thing, and I fought as much as I could with the NCAA but I ended up losing my eligibility so I lost my season and I am unable to wrestle for my last season" (Interview). Aaron states that at the end of a match the players are expected to come in and shake the hand of all the wrestlers and the coaches on the opposing team (Interview). At the end of the match against Damian's former college, the opposing team coach is at the end of his team's line and he says, "Congratulations," to the Vespey wrestlers and he holds out his hand to the wrestlers as they pass him. Multiple wrestlers look at the coach as he holds out his hand but they continue walk past the coach without shaking his hand (Fieldnotes, p. 43). This situation indicates that many of the wrestlers saw that coach holding out his hand but they purposely avoided shaking his hand. Owen states, "We didn't shake that coach's hand because we found that he screwed our captain out of his senior season and we weren't happy with him, we felt he did it in a schemey way and it was very unfortunate especially for such a good guy such as

Damian” (Interview). Owen’s statement indicates that he believes that the wrestlers did not shake the opposing coach’s hand because they were angry with the coach for Damian’s sake. Aaron reflects on the incident and states:

If it was not for his ineligibility, Damian was probably going to be nationally ranked and it was going to be his best season and he got that taken away from him, and we were definitely sticking up for Damian (Interview).

Aaron’s statement suggests that he believes that many of the wrestlers were not only supporting Damian through their action, but they actually refused to shake the coach’s hand because they felt angry for Damian. This further suggests the wrestlers share such a tight bond with one another that they will often empathize with the emotions of their teammates.

Damian’s situation offers evidence to suggest that many of the wrestlers have a team-oriented attitude and therefore, team camaraderie takes precedence over displaying match courtesy. Damian smiles as he states: “Coach didn’t tell [my teammates] not to shake [my former coach’s] hand, it’s like a thing they did for me out of loyalty for me” (Interview). By emphasizing that the coach did not tell the teammates to act this way, Damian indicates that he believes that the wrestlers voluntarily supported him. This situation further suggests that the wrestlers believe they are expected to show support for their teammates through their actions. Damian states:

It was just an incredible feeling. There have been other coaches of teams that I didn’t like but I shook their hand but it was like they were so loyal to me that they were like ‘fuck this guy’ and that was just so incredible for me (Interview).

Damian's statement indicates that he feels that by displaying actions that deviate from typical match courtesy, his teammates' actions prove that they are very dedicated teammates to Damian. Owen states: "I was among one of the wrestlers that didn't shake his hand and I am totally going to stick to that because I don't think that coach deserves any sort of respect that we would give when you are shaking someone's hand" (Interview). This indicates that Owen places precedence on supporting his teammate over abiding by the proper match courtesy conduct. After a freshman starting wrestler, Jeremy, beats his opponent in that same match, he immediately points at Damian and mouths the words "for you!" After the referee lifts Jeremy's hand to signify his victory, Jeremy immediately runs off the mat and jumps into Damian's arms (Fieldnotes, p. 41). Damian's glossy eyes suggest that he is tearing up as he embraces Jeremy's hug. Jeremy's immediate reaction after winning this match suggests that Jeremy was wrestling to win in support of his teammate as opposed to wrestling for an individualistic purpose. Aaron states, "everyone was wrestling for Damian during this match" (Interview). This situation suggests that wrestling is not just an individual sport, but wrestlers often think of it as a team sport as well.

Many of the wrestlers believe that their tight bond results from the adversity that they all share and face as a team throughout their season. Perry states:

The reason that frats have initiations is because you want to go through a similar trial or some sort of challenge or some sort of adversity as a team or with your brothers essentially. So that's where you get the close relationship, when you go through all the same stuff. For example, we cut weight, we go through all the same practices and we do it as a team together and that kind of brings us together (Interview).

Perry's statement suggests that he believes that the sharing of common struggles, such as cutting weight, is the central reason that the wrestlers have such a tight bond. His statement indicates that without the existence of these common struggles, the wrestlers would not share such a tight bond. Similarly, Greg states: "it's kind of like if you're in a fraternity, you have that same brotherhood but we work hard all season long" (Interview). Greg's inclusion of the statement "[the wrestlers] work hard all season long," seems to reveal that he believes that wrestler undergo a season long initiation, which suggests that he believes that wrestlers experience a longer bonding process. Damian states: "We share a bond, because every day we go in and fight" (Interview). Damian's statement suggests that he believes that the wrestlers share a bond with their teammates because they overcome and fight through wrestling adversity on a daily basis alongside their teammates. This further suggests that when wrestlers think of wrestling as an individual sport and they fail to recognize that they share a battle with their teammates, they are unable to form this special bond.

There is evidence from the wrestlers' behavior and daily interactions that the wrestlers' bond over what many of them define as the major adversities of wrestling. When asked what they least like about wrestling, Stephan, Perry, Greg, Aaron, Damian and David all responded with the same answer, which was "cutting weight" (Interviews). During one team dinner, David reflects on the previous semester when he and a former wrestler were both cutting weight and they were in the same math class. David laughs and says, "[Lars] would just text me and be like 'yo, look at Steve's Gatorade,' it looks so good." In response Perry states, "I hate when non-wrestlers say they are hungry." Damian immediately chimes in and says "Or I hate when we get into arguments with them and they are like, 'why do you do that to yourself?'" David interrupts and states "or when non-wrestlers say 'why don't you just drink water? It's no calories.'" Damian



ends with a final statement where he uses a sarcastic tone and says, “Like ‘why don’t you just work harder than everyone else and cut a bunch of weight?’ Okay, that’s a great idea! Aw man, you guys should wrestle!” (p. 56). This conversation indicates that the wrestlers bond over the adversity of cutting weight by drawing humor from the non-wrestlers or outsiders’ inability to understand the proper and grueling techniques of cutting weight. Their sharing of various quotes from uninformed outsiders indicates that they are establishing an “us vs. them” dichotomy. This dichotomy allows the wrestlers to recognize that they share an adversity that only they can understand and outsiders fail to comprehend. Through these quotes, the wrestlers are able to connect with one another by bonding over the experiences they have with outsiders’ judgments and misconceptions about this particular wrestling adversity. The quotes also suggest that the wrestlers are further establishing that only members of the wrestling culture can understand one another’s suffering. Even though Damian is ineligible and no longer cutting weight, his ability to chime into the conversation and reflect on his previous experiences demonstrates the strength and intensity of the wrestling bond.

There is evidence to suggest that the wrestlers bond over their constant fixation with food as a result of having to overcome certain temptations while making weight. There have been multiple occasions when Ben, Perry and Sam converse about their desire to eat certain foods or eat large quantities of foods, which would impede on their ability to make weight. During one practice, Perry talks with Ben and Sam and he says, “once the season ends, I’m going to sit with my bag of cheerios and put in a bunch of milk, and when there is only milk left, put in cereal, and a little more milk for my dry cereal” (Fieldnotes, p. 53). In response to Perry’s statement, Ben replies, “last night I ate a whole cheesesteak” (Fieldnotes, p. 53). This situation indicates that Perry feels that he can share his food temptations with Ben and Sam because as wrestlers,

they will understand the daily struggle he experiences with attempting to be disciplined. Even though Ben is not expected to cut as much weight at the moment, he still responds to Perry's statement with a comment about food which suggests that he understands Perry's statement and associates Perry's statement with the adversity of cutting weight. During one meal, Perry turns to Dalton and says, "should I have a small bowl of Frosted Flakes or a small bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch?" Dalton replies by saying, "obviously Cinnamon toast crunch!" Dalton and Perry proceed to talk in depth about Cinnamon Toast Crunch and Frosted Flakes (Fieldnotes, p. 61). This conversation indicates that Dalton and Perry both share the same interest in food, which most likely results from the temptation of similar foods that they must overcome during the process of cutting weight. This situation further suggests that the two wrestlers enjoy bonding over this topic. A little later during that same dinner, David, Perry and Damian all discuss the idea of inventing "Cinnamon toast crunch milk" for cereal and Damian says, "forget the milk, and take the vanilla ice cream and mix that with the cereal." The wrestlers continue to debate this topic for another few minutes (Fieldnotes, p. 61). The wrestler's lengthy and consistent conversations about food suggest that they are able to bond over their shared interest in food, and particularly sweet foods, that they must avoid for much of the week during season. Even though Damian no longer cuts weight, he still contributes to this conversation which suggests that he still takes an interest in food as a result of having to avoid certain food while cutting weight in the past.

The wrestlers often bond over finding humor in their daily struggles, which allows them to cope with the adversity that they are expected to overcome on a daily basis. Greg states: "the funny guys make good teammates because they will change the mood" (Interview). Greg elaborates on his statement: "wrestling is pretty serious and it's nice to have someone who will

crack jokes like Tony, or Damian” (Interview). Greg’s statement suggests that he believes that he believes the ability to find humor in serious situations is a positive quality for a wrestler to possess. One night during dinner, Aaron laughs as he says to the Sony twins, “you two are in trouble! I heard that you guys are always in the C-Store buying candy every day.” Cam and Casey laugh along with Aaron as Aaron adds, “twice a day! Both of you!” Cam laughs as he says, “Twice? The truth comes out!” One of the Sony twins responds by laughing and says, “the C-store guy said to me ‘yo, I thought it was one of you guys coming in and buying a bunch of candy bars.” Aaron responds by saying:

It’s Mark! He was like ‘yeah, like the two twins, I didn’t know there was a brother so I just thought he was eating like five candy bars a day’ and then he was like ‘oh wait!’ because you each went in one after the other and he figured it out (p. 52).

This situation indicates that the wrestlers find humor in situations where their teammates are perceived as giving in to the temptations of food. This situation further exemplifies how the wrestlers share the same sense of humor and find the same topics humorous as a result of having to overcome the same adversities. In other words, outsiders may not find Aaron’s comment to be humorous because they do not have to avoid temptation and face the struggle of making weight. During another dinner, several of the wrestlers begin to laugh and make jokes about Dominic’s plate of lettuce covered in apple sauce, and Dominic laughs along with the wrestlers (Observation). At another point, the men laugh as George draws attention to Perry, who has proceeded to take off one side of the outer layer of his ice cream sandwich before eating it. “What does that save you, like five calories?” laughs one of the men and Perry laughs as he responds by saying, “I actually like the ice cream bar without the chocolate cookie” (Observation). These situations indicate that the wrestlers are able to recognize the tactics used

for cutting weight, and they perceive these tactics to be ridiculous and laughable. However, these situations show how that the wrestlers' humor is not directed at an individual but it is directed at the food tactics that wrestlers commonly use when attempting to cut weight. The men are able to acknowledge their own eating behaviors and see them as humorous which is asserted by Dominic and Perry's ability to laugh at their own situations.

Another way the wrestlers bond is through two aspects of competition, which include partaking in playful competition with the desire to win as well as engaging in competition with the purpose of trying to make a teammate into a better wrestler. The men often take part in playful competition before practice and before the coaches enter the practice room. Before one practice, for example, Caleb yells, "dodge ball! Sudden death!" and several of the wrestlers race over to the corner of the room in an attempt to grab a dodge ball (Fieldnotes, p. 73). The wrestlers' immediate reaction to Caleb's announcement indicates that the wrestlers are excited and motivated by competition. During another practice, the men holler and yell from the side lines as they take turns resting and watching their designated handball teammates participate in the action. They critique one another's performances from the sidelines and cheer on their teammates. As Gordon gets the ball past Greg, one of Greg's resting teammates yells "Greg you're better than that!" (Fieldnotes, p. 89). Greg laughs and yells "Travel, travel!" as Jay laughs and runs towards him holding the dodge ball (Fieldnotes, p. 89). The wrestlers' behaviors during this game of handball indicate that while they are enthusiastic and competitive, they also have fun while competing in these games, which is exemplified by the wrestlers' laughter and their banter. At the end of one practice, the coach announces that the wrestlers will be playing a competitive game called "Sumo." In response to this announcement, the men all begin to cheer and jump up and down. In the game "Sumo," a wrestler and his opponent begin in the middle of

a circle on the mat and the point of the game is to push one another out of the circle. The men work hard as they compete against one another. For example, when a man in one of the “Sumo” pairs is close to being pushed out of his designated circle, the man quickly squats down causing his partner to shoot out of the circle. As the men compete, they holler and cheer and a few wrestlers even scream “Out!” as they push their opponents out of their designated circles. One wrestler screams, “Who’s a winner?!” in the midst of wrestling his opponent. The men holler and jump up and down with excitement as the final round takes place where the winner is determined (Fieldnotes, p. 19). The wrestlers’ hollering and physical energy throughout the game indicates that the men enjoy the competitive aspect of Sumo. The assistant coach offers an explanation of the reason they have the wrestlers play this game. He states: “basically the men are tired from a hard week of practice and this is to make them work and have fun.” The assistant coach goes on to state, “we have to give the wrestlers some playtime sometimes” (Observation). The assistant coach’s reasoning suggests that the coaches believe that the men enjoy competition and therefore, the coaches use it as a way to reward the wrestlers and give them a break from drilling.

In the same way that the men bond over their excitement for competitive games, they also bond over competing with the purpose of improving one another’s performance. When asked to define a good teammate, Aaron states:

Good teammates help each other. Cutting weight sucks and it’s a lot easier when you have someone with you, to do it with you, even if it’s just one guy you’re buddies with and you both go running together to cut weight or you’re both on the same diet plan or you’re both drilling in practice together and going hard because you need to push each other to lose that extra weight, and even just trying to make your teammate better all the time, not just half-assing it (Interview).

Aaron's statement implies that he perceives the quality of competitiveness within the practice room to be a sign of a team-oriented individual who makes a good teammate. In his interview, Greg states, "I look up to Stephan a lot and he is the hardest drilling partner that I ever had" (Interview). Greg discusses his feeling about Stephan's competitive quality and he states:

As a freshman, I was like 'oh my god' I'm going to have to deal with this for the next three years of my life, but last year I started to embrace it a lot more, and I started to go with it more and I got so much better from that so I look up to the people like that who like keep pushing you" (Interview).

Greg's statement suggests that he believes that competitiveness is a positive and admirable quality. When defining a good teammate, Stephan states:

a good teammate is someone who is going to push you to make you better every day. Not just a fish on the mat who lets you do everything to them and puts no effort in because that doesn't help you at all. You don't get better (Interview).

Stephan's statement suggests that he believes that wrestlers that want to help their teammates will wrestle competitively during practice and make their practice partner work so that they improve. Stephan says, "wrestling is about team camaraderie" and he elaborates on his comment when he states, "if one of us isn't having a good day, our partner will push us so that we can make it through practice and start the next day fresh" (Interview). Dean also asserts the team value of competitiveness by stating, "a good teammate is someone who is not selfish, someone who is going to not only better themselves but better you" (Interview). This further suggests that the wrestlers view wrestling as a team-oriented sport, specifically within the practice room.

There is evidence to suggest that intense competition and temporary feelings of competitiveness between two practice partners is perceived as a bonding experience and one of the most intense types of teammate support. This experience is only perceived as a bonding experience by wrestlers that believe tough competition within the practice room is a beneficial element. Damian reflects back on the previous year when he and Caleb were practice partners every day. Damian states:

From the time practice started until it ended we were like this close to closing our fists and just punching each other in the face, but we didn't and we hated each other during practice but right after we were friends. During wrestling I wrestle where I'm this close to just fighting you but afterwards we're just friends and I appreciate that (Interview).

Damian's statement suggests that he believes that practice partners should feel competitive towards one another during practice, but that wrestlers should leave these feelings behind in the practice room. Damian's statement also suggests that he perceives Caleb's competitiveness as an obstacle that bettered his own wrestling. The competitive behavior and the close relationship that Sam and Ben share in the wrestling room demonstrates how pushing one another during practice does not only build a bond but can also be a reflection of a tight bond between practice partners. Sam and Ben are often drill partners during practice and while drilling with one another they will talk to one another in a low, aggressive tone. Much of what they say to one another includes curse words and often sounds like a critique of one another's wrestling technique. During one practice while they are drilling with one another, Ben talks in an aggressive tone to Sam as he states, "your fucking hip is out!" (Fieldnotes, p. 9) During another practice Sam says "What the fuck are you doing?" to Ben as Ben locks his hands around Sam's stomach and Sam appears to

effortlessly stand up and walk out of Ben's grip (Fieldnotes, p. 47). These two situations indicate that Sam and Ben will offer one another intense competition while they verbally critique one another's performance. At the Centennial Conference match, Sam and Ben both wrestle and they are both one another's most enthusiastic and intense side-line supporters. When Ben is wrestling in the finals, everyone begins by sitting down on the bleachers but Sam stands at the edge of the mat and yells out words of encouragement and advice to Ben (Fieldnotes, p. 80). After Ben is defeated, Sam immediately goes onto the same mat and begins to wrestle his opponent. Most defeated wrestlers will walk away from the mat and take a few minutes of time to recover in isolation. However, Ben stands next to the mat and proceeds to take off his wrestling gear as he cheers and claps for Sam, yelling things throughout Sam's match such as, "Come on Sam!" and "Sam, you have to stand up!" (Fieldnotes, p. 81). At one point Ben jumps up and down and yells, "Sam, you got 20, get up! Come on get up! Short time, short time!" Ben and Sam's aggressive critiques of one another during practice in combination with their enthusiastic support of one another during matches indicates that competition is a form of tough love that results in a strong bond amongst teammates.

### Conclusion

The findings of this ethnographic study are made up of two parts that relate to one another and contribute to a final conclusion about the wrestling culture. In the first part, my findings reveal that wrestling, as a sport, requires the wrestlers to possess physical as well as mental toughness. This section describes the wrestling code of conduct that contains implicit rules accepted by the members of the culture. These rules center on the theme of mental toughness, which is perceived by the wrestlers as being a necessity within the wrestling culture. The implicit behavioral rules that form the wrestling code of conduct include maintaining



emotional and mental toughness and composure, retaining physical toughness, verbally communicating thoughts and feelings with teammates, and fulfilling the role as a loyal and reliable teammate. Many starting wrestlers believe that they are expected to maintain emotional and mental composure while confronting the adversities of wrestling. While starting wrestlers feel the stress of cutting weight, attending practice and taking on a large amount of school work, they realize that they are expected to maintain emotional composure and lead by example. In relation to retaining physical toughness, the wrestlers are expected to wrestle through pain and injury, and the only times that they are exempt from doing so is when they have a serious injury or they are preserving themselves for the benefit of the team.

There are two main incidents used to illustrate this code of conduct. In one incident, Corey, who was initially one of the starting wrestlers at the beginning of the season, failed to make weight several times and was dismissed from the team. Most of the wrestlers did not know the reason as to why Corey failed to make weight but they seemed to believe that he was looking for a way out. The ambiguity surrounding Corey's situation revealed that Corey was not close with his teammates and failed to communicate with them. In another situation, a non-starting wrestler, Ken, was perceived as being a repetitive malingerer and temporarily left the team as a result of his perceived malingering. Both Corey and Ken were perceived as violating the wrestling conduct and the other wrestlers believed that they had committed a violation in an attempt to find a way out of wrestling. However, Corey's action is perceived as letting down the team and therefore, his situation is regarded much more seriously than Ken's malingering. The quotes from interviews and observations surrounding these two situations, that serve as evidence that support the existence of implicit rules, also suggest that there is a wrestling hierarchy. The starting wrestlers, who are higher in the hierarchy and who have more to lose for the team, are

expected to adhere more strictly to the wrestling conduct than the non-starting wrestlers, who are lower in the hierarchy and have less to lose for their team.

The second part of my findings focuses on the bond between the wrestlers, providing evidence to demonstrate that the men perceive their strong bond to be a result of the adversities they face on a daily basis. This section begins by demonstrating that wrestlers are not only expected to, but must be able to verbally communicate their thoughts and feelings with their teammates in order to be able to successfully overcome certain adversities at times of weakness. This is evident through the story of a freshman wrestler, Perry, who initially did not feel that he fit in with the team and was considering leaving the team. After verbally expressing his emotions to one of the captains, Perry began partaking in team rituals, such as attending team dinners and interacting with teammates. This section also provides evidence that the wrestlers have formed an extremely tight bond and they will support one another on and off the mat. There is also evidence that suggests that many of the wrestlers have formed a tight bond that exceeds some of the former wrestlers' memberships on the actual wrestling team, which is asserted by the fact that many of the former wrestlers attend team dinners and continue to live in the "wrestling suite." This section demonstrates how the men bond over certain adversities as well as similar interests that relate to these adversities, such as the struggles of making weight, food, humor, and two competitive aspects. The two parts of my ethnographic analysis connect to reveal a final conclusion about the wrestlers, which is that the wrestlers share a strong bond because, as a team, they often face and overcome mental and physical challenges inside as well as outside of the practice room.

The findings of my ethnographic study fit with some of the previous research findings that pertain to college males and masculinity as well as those results from studies that center on

wrestling teams. My study is on a culture that centers on certain goals, such as making weight and being able to compete to the best of one's ability. As a result, the culture members define certain behaviors, those which oppose certain aspects of traditional masculinity, to be acceptable and necessary within the wrestling culture. There were some aspects within the wrestling culture that fit with some of the previous studies pertaining to masculinity and college men, which find that a competitive attitude and emotional control are qualities that are associated with masculinity. My findings revealed that the wrestlers often become motivated by competitive games and they are also expected to display a competitive demeanor during practice.

Competition is a reoccurring theme found in several of the studies done on college men and masculinity (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Mahalik et al., 2003).

“Winning” was identified as one of the masculine norms in the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 6). My findings assert the existence of this specific masculine norm within this wrestling culture, where there is evidence that the wrestlers become motivated by and competitive in games like “Sumo,” handball, and dodgeball. My findings also revealed that wrestlers are expected to maintain emotional and mental composure, and having control over one's emotions was a common theme that was found within several previous studies pertaining to masculinity. Several studies pertaining to masculinity and college men also revealed that men associate the display of certain emotions and even emotional expression in general with femininity. For instance, Jones and Edwards (2009) found that men in their study believed that behaviors that presented a man as vulnerable, such as crying, were oppositional to the typical understanding of masculinity (p. 221-222). Throughout my ethnographic study, I found that wrestlers were expected to maintain emotional composure while facing the daily wrestling adversities. If a wrestler had an emotional breakdown or cried, this

wrestler would be perceived as showing signs of mental weakness and he would be reprimanded for this perceived weakness. For example, one non-starting wrestler was relentlessly made the butt of jokes because he was known to cry on multiple occasions.

There were certain aspects of competition and emotional control described in previous research on masculinity and college men that my findings did not support. Much of the previous research that identifies competitiveness as a masculine quality also associates this element with the masculine desire for power. As a result, some of the studies depicted competition between men to be an element that restricted the friendship of two men. For example, Edwards and Jones' (2009) study reveals that the social expectation of competition between men was a component that limited their friendships with other men. My findings are actually completely oppositional to this specific finding. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the wrestlers actually bond over their enjoyment of competition, and become excited over games like "Sumo," handball, and dodge ball. There is also evidence to suggest that intense competition and temporary feelings of competitiveness between two practice partners is perceived as a bonding experience and one of the most intense types of teammate support. The wrestlers do not perceive a competitive attitude throughout practice to signify a wrestler's desire to win and obtain power over his practice partner. In fact, the men who wrestle competitively during practice are perceived as doing so with the purpose of making their practice partner work so that he gets better. My findings relating to certain aspects of emotional control are also oppositional to some previous studies done on masculinity and college men that suggest that men limit their communication in an attempt to conform to social expectations of masculinity. For example, Davis' (2010) study reveals that men saw the quality of "openness to talking" (p. 58) as something that made people question their masculinity. Her study also found that men described their relationships and

connections to other men in terms of activity, as opposed to verbal communication. My findings suggest that wrestlers are expected to communicate and talk through their emotions and feelings with their teammates. For example, Perry, a freshman wrestler that felt that he did not initially fit in with the team, ended up forming a close bond with the wrestlers after he communicated his feelings to one of his senior teammates. My findings also indicate that the wrestlers need to communicate with one another and use one another for this emotional support in order to maintain mental toughness through the adversity and struggles that they experience on a daily basis. This aspect of communication was also perceived by the wrestlers as strengthening the bond between teammates. The participants in Davis' study described "[h]umorous comments and 'putdowns'" as the "norm" in communication among men (p. 57). While the wrestlers bonded over humor, they did not specifically use it as a way to emphasize their masculinity, but they mostly used it as a way to cope with their frustrations with their daily struggles. In general, wrestlers were expected to communicate their feelings with their teammates and it was frowned upon if a wrestler decided to quit the team without communicating his motives with his teammates.

My findings fit with some of the previous studies done on wrestling teams, which tended to center on the topic of making weight and also identified displaying effort and maintaining a tough exterior to be expectations within the wrestling culture. In his sociological study on a collegiate wrestling team, Curry (2008) claimed that "action" provided opportunities for wrestlers to "display character," which include qualities of "courage," "gameness," and "integrity," that are associated with masculinity (p. 107). Curry specifically identified "integrity in making weight" as one of the ways that amateur wrestlers would display character (p. 107). My findings supported Curry's finding, and I found that wrestlers, especially starting wrestlers

who are higher in the wrestling hierarchy, are expected to make weight. My findings suggest that if a starting wrestler failed to make weight, his reputation as a serious wrestler would suffer. The other wrestlers would question this starting wrestler's dedication to wrestling, his mental toughness, and they would also question his loyalty to his teammates. A starting wrestler who would spend more time working out and put in extra effort to cut weight was seen as admirable for his determination and loyalty to his teammates. Baum (2006) talks about how binging is a ritual bonding experience among wrestlers after competition. While my findings do not specifically reveal binging to be a ritual bond, my findings do suggest that the wrestlers would often bond over cutting weight and their interest in food as a result of having to resist edible temptations. In their study on weight loss methods and High School Wrestlers, Lakin, Steen and Oppliger's (1990) found that weight loss methods included "increased exercise," "restricting foods or fluids," and "gradual dieting" (p. 227). Throughout my study I found that many wrestlers avoided eating or over eating certain foods, such as certain cereals, and also increased the amount of times that they went to the gym. In fact, I observed a few of the wrestlers working out while wearing sweatshirts, sweatpants and mittens. This weight loss method I observed fits with Baker and Hotek's (2001) observations from their ethnographic study of one wrestler who ran in a plastic suit in an attempt to make weight. Some of the studies found that wrestlers took diuretics, diet pills and vomited to make weight (Lakin, Steen & Oppliger, 1990; Baum, 2006). I did not observe any of the wrestlers using any such methods during my field research

My observations supported the studies done on wrestling that revealed that wrestlers were expected to display full effort and maintain a tough exterior. The sociological studies on wrestling revealed that wrestlers were expected to display full effort and display a tough exterior even when confronting injury in the wrestling culture (Baker & Hotek, 2001; Curry, 1993).

Curry (2008) stated that wrestlers were seen as displaying character when they showed “gameness when continuing a match in spite of injury,” and “composure when maintaining self-control in spite of adverse and painful physical punishment” (p. 107). My findings also reveal that the wrestlers, especially starting wrestlers, were not only admired for wrestling through injury, maintaining mental and physical toughness and composure, but they were expected to do this. Curry (1993) found that wrestlers often came to accept pain and injury as a normality of athletics. I also found that many of the wrestlers often wrestled through injury and perceived it to be a typical part of the sport. During interviews, many of the starting wrestlers revealed that they believe that injury was a normal part of wrestling. In fact, my findings suggested that wrestlers are expected to wrestle through injury, unless it is extremely serious and could be detrimental to their future health or they are choosing to preserve their physical health for a more important point in the season. Curry found that wrestlers get many minor injuries but they “shake it out” and continued to compete through the pain of these injuries (p. 277). Some of my observations within practice include wrestlers suffering from minor injuries or pain, but proceeding to continue on with practice. In their paper, Baker and Hotek (2001) identified “being strong” and “taking pain” as two significant qualities and expectations within the scholastic wrestling culture (p. 54). They identified these qualities as “masculine wrestling behavior,” or behavior that is in line with “orthodox masculine behavior” (p. 54). Wrestlers who worked through serious injuries are praised for their determination and perceived as admirable for their physical toughness. For example, Nick dedicates an entire blog post on his wrestling website to praising Aaron for his determination to wrestle through his serious condition. If wrestlers do not choose to wrestle through injury, it is perceived as being a result of mental weakness. Several studies found that the most admired wrestlers are those who not only push through injury but also give each match

and practice their full effort (Baker & Hotek, 2001; Curry, 2008; Curry, 1993). In my ethnographic study, I also found that many of the wrestlers looked up to their teammates who exhibit full effort throughout practice and push their partners to their full potential. These wrestlers are perceived as admirable for presenting their practice partners with serious competition. I did not find that wrestlers possessed all the specific qualities that Baker and Hotek (2001) associated with the wrestler archetype of the “cool dude,” who was said to be admired for his behaviors that emulated “orthodox masculinity” (p. 56). I did find that the wrestlers, especially the starting wrestlers, were expected to exhibit emotional and mental composure under multiple pressures which was associated with a behavior that was exhibited by the “cool dude.” Baker and Hotek found that crying in public as a result of pain or a loss was considered unacceptable within the wrestling culture (p. 57). Within the collegiate wrestling culture, I found that crying was perceived a sign of mental weakness and the wrestlers that did cry were often reprimanded for this behavior. As stated previously, the wrestlers who would cry or have emotional breakdowns were made the butt of jokes by their teammates.

My findings could shed light on the understanding of masculinity within male dominated subcultures. I found that wrestlers are expected to exhibit some form of the behaviors that could be associated with “hegemonic masculinity” within the wrestling environment (Connell, 1987, p. 183). They were expected to possess a competitive attitude, an emotionally composed demeanor, and mental and physical toughness. However the wrestlers’ behaviors also diverge from the findings on masculine expectations and college men which often emulate those behaviors associated with hegemonic masculinity. The wrestlers did not necessary partake in “compulsory heterosexuality,” which is masculine behavior that is typically seen as impeding on the friendships between men (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004, p. 885). In fact, wrestlers confront so much



wrestling adversity on a daily basis that they are expected to embrace their friendships with other wrestlers and communicate their feelings and emotions with their teammates. This verbal communication, which is normally associated with femininity, is perceived as a necessity within the wrestling culture because it allows wrestlers to talk through struggles and adversity and repossess mental toughness when they are experiencing points of mental weakness. In fact, the strong bond shared between wrestlers is perceived as a necessity because a wrestler's desire to remain loyal to his teammates is seen as giving wrestlers a reason to maintain mental toughness through the season. Cutting weight may be typically associated with femininity in the western culture. However, within the wrestling culture, it is perceived as one of the biggest struggles of wrestling and wrestlers who consistently cut a lot of weight are seen as admirable for their determination and dedication. These wrestlers are also perceived as possessing a significant amount of mental toughness, which is believed to be a significant quality within the wrestling culture. There is evidence to suggest that some of the themes behind Connell's (1987) "hegemonic masculinity" are relevant to the wrestling culture, but perhaps subcultures, such as wrestling, need to be considered as revealing a different angle of masculinity as a result of the different challenges and situations faced within such subcultures. The wrestling expectations reveal a different type of masculinity that places significance on mental toughness as well as on the formation of a strong, emotionally intimate bond between teammates in which they encourage verbal communication and sharing of emotions. This could shed light on a more complex understanding of masculinity that has different expectations and qualities depending on the circumstances of a subculture within which it is being defined..

My findings from my ethnographic study on the Vespey College Wrestling team can shed light on aspects of collegiate wrestling as a culture in general since many college wrestlers face

the same adversities. I found that much of adversity of the Vespey wrestling team actually shapes the culture and has resulted in a wrestling conduct. There is evidence to suggest that wrestling teammates form a strong bond that does not exist to such an extent between teammates who participate on other sports teams. Previous studies on wrestling often focus on offering evidence to demonstrate the unhealthy weight loss methods used by wrestlers or provide observations to show how wrestlers work through pain and injury. However, these studies often fail to capture certain themes that are found within wrestlers' perspectives on wrestling adversities as well as cultural expectations and norms. My findings shed light on the wrestling culture and show how such adversity is perceived as not only connecting teammates through a shared experience but also as leading to the necessity of such a close bond that entails open verbal communication. My results also reveal that the wrestlers are expected to adhere to implicit rules that make up a wrestler conduct. These rules are based on the wrestlers' belief that the most successful wrestlers are mentally tough. This theme of mental toughness is perceived as influencing the expectations and rules as well as being a determining factor of a wrestling hierarchy. The most successful wrestlers, who are higher in the hierarchy, are understood as maintaining mental toughness.

Gender theorists and scholars can use my findings as way to obtain a better understanding of masculinity and hierarchical scales within male dominated subcultures. My study reveals that certain adversities and obstacles within subcultures can actually shape the members' understandings and perceptions of their own behaviors in relation to their own definition of masculinity. My findings in relation to the wrestlers' hierarchy and an understanding of their perceptions of dominance could be compared to the perceptions of members within other subcultures to help redefine some of the simplistic views of hegemonic masculinity. My findings could also enlighten misinformed outsiders about the wrestling culture and undermine some of

the misconceptions about wrestling. Some outsiders perceive particular wrestling behaviors and actions to be oppositional to hegemonic masculinity, but they fail to understand the intense mental and physical toughness that is required in the sport. My study shows that even the behavior of cutting weight that many outsiders associate with femininity is perceived by the wrestlers as one of the most exhausting struggles of wrestling. In fact, a wrestler who makes weight and puts in extra effort to make weight each week is perceived as admirable, determined and mentally tough. This is just one element that can prove to undermine the misconceptions of outsiders who may possess a narrow view of masculinity. My findings are also useful for members of the wrestling culture because it allows them to recognize the workings of their culture and how certain aspects, such as the adversity, shape their realities.

There are a few limitations of my ethnographic research. Several wrestlers left the team throughout the season. As a result, while observing team dinners I could not keep track of who was no longer on the team so I may have ended up observing former wrestlers. Since the team was so large, it was also hard to remember everyone's names so some of my fieldnotes did not specify the source of certain quotes. In many ways this limitation did not impede on the findings of my study and may have allowed me to capture even more aspects of the culture, because many of these former wrestlers were less reluctant to hold back information in my presence. Another limitation occurred during some of the formal interviews I conducted with wrestlers. Some of the younger wrestlers seemed to hold back certain controversial information during their interviews. This seemed to result from their desire to present an ideal picture of the wrestling team. As a female ethnographer, my gender/sex difference was often brought to the attention of the wrestlers, which could have impeded on my ability to obtain as much information about the culture. For instance, the men could have filtered their conversation in front of me because I was

a woman and they did not want to make me feel uncomfortable or make the team look bad.

Another limitation that I experienced during the study was a result of my inability to take part in the activities of wrestling. For instance, I never got to directly understand what it felt like to cut weight or actually take part in the practices.

There are a few aspects that could be addressed in future research pertaining to the wrestling culture. Further research could be done to see how wrestlers act outside of the wrestling season and environment to see if any of their wrestling behaviors translate to their life outside of the subculture. It may be interesting to look at the way wrestlers regard relationships with other men outside their team, and how they go about bonding with other men. Also, examining whether wrestlers are more capable of coping with overcoming daily adversities outside of wrestling may provide some insightful findings about the culture of wrestling and its impact on wrestlers' abilities to handle challenges in the world. As far as future research pertaining to masculinity, theorists and scholars should examine how members of western male-dominated subcultures, such as those individuals belonging to male team sports, perceive masculinity and hierarchy within their subculture. These sorts of studies could be used to compare certain versions of masculinity that could inform the simplistic, traditional understanding of masculinity.

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## Appendix A



August 27, 2014

An Ethnographic Investigation of the Ursinus College Wrestling Team  
Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study on the culture of the Ursinus Wrestling Team. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of UC wrestlers' perspectives on their role as an athlete on the team. Specifically, the study will focus on the wrestlers' values and beliefs regarding their individual athletic goals as well as their team's goals. If you agree to be in this study, I (Sydney Dodson-Nease) will observe and take notes at your wrestling practices per week and wrestling matches during your winter season.

We do not anticipate any risks for you participating in this study, other than those you may encounter in wrestling practice. You will not receive any direct benefits by participating in this study; however, indirect benefits of your participation in this study include contributing to our knowledge about the cultural beliefs and values of collegiate level wrestling teams.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting any relationships.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Your name and any names to which you refer will be changed. Interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed. Research records will be kept in a password-protected file; only the researchers will have access to the records.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researchers conducting the study are Sydney Dodson-Nease and Dr. Sheryl Baratz Goodman. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact them at

Sydney Dodson-Nease      (609) 468-0922 (cell)  
   [sydodsonnease@Ursinus.edu](mailto:sydodsonnease@Ursinus.edu)  
   MSC #385

Dr. Sheryl Goodman (610) 409-3000 ext. 2586  
[sgoodman@ursinus.edu](mailto:sgoodman@ursinus.edu)  
Ritter Center 145

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Ursinus College Institutional Review Board via email at [irbadmin@ursinus.edu](mailto:irbadmin@ursinus.edu) or phone at (610) 409-2359.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in an audiotape recorded interview

I am willing to participate in an audiotape recorded interview.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

Why do you participate in the wrestling team?

Both Kramer and Morrison got cut this semester, but it seems like everybody looks at their situations differently? Is that true?

- I heard some of the wrestlers talking about the KMV? Can you tell me about this?

What do you like best about being part of the wrestling team?

What do you like least about being part of the wrestling team?

If you cut weight, what is your approach to cutting weight? How does it compare to the way your teammates do it?

What do you think is the best approach to cutting weight?

Why did you and your teammates not shake the opposing coach's hand on Saturday? What was that about?

I've heard that sometimes people fake injury or illness? What is your take on this? Example?

- Have you ever faked injury? Why or why not?

Who do you look up to most on the team and why?

What makes a good wrestler?

What makes a good teammate?

Can you describe your relationship with the head coach?

Is your relationship with the head coach similar to the relationship other members have with him?

What's your understanding of how the coach coaches the team?

I heard from someone that the coach plays mind games? If this true and can you tell me something about that?