

ULTIMATE FRISBEE: COMMUNICATIVE ACTION  
IN A SELF-OFFICIATED SPORT

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ULTIMATE FRISBEE: COMMUNICATIVE ACTION IN A SELF-OFFICIATED SPORT**

by

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May 2011

#### **SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: STEPHEN AWONIYI**

Ultimate Frisbee is the fastest growing sport in the United States. Traditionally, Ultimate has been self-officiated, implying there are no active referees, leaving the players themselves to self-regulate the game. In recent years the practice of employing Observers to help monitor games has gained currency in the Ultimate community. I will examine the impact of self-officiating on the individual player, how (s)he constructs meaning in context of the officiating system, and how ethical discourse and communication may explain self-government on the Ultimate field. Qualitative methodology is necessary in order to investigate the experience of an Ultimate player, his or her perspective on current practices within the sport and the cultural significance of self-officiating. A phenomenological approach is used in effort to gather the essential

account of the individual experience of persons who actively participate in Ultimate, representing a vested group concerned with the current state and future of the sport. The analytical framework of critical theorist Jürgen Habermas will support the qualitative research collected from player-participants. Through in-depth interviews and field observations I will systematically investigate the personal experience of Ultimate through the players themselves.



## I. Introduction

Ultimate Frisbee (hereafter referred to as Ultimate) is the fastest growing sport in the United States with a 20.8% increase in participation from 2008 to 2009<sup>1</sup>. Given the rapid growth in recent years, Ultimate is in a pivotal evolutionary stage as rules, policy, and procedure are quickly being developed and solidified into the broad character of the sport. Little academic research has informed the current organization of the sport, which has come into existence through player-based democratic processes. Ultimate is a phenomenon in the sporting world as it is the only athletic competition in the World Games<sup>2</sup> that is self-officiated, making it the only international sport that is self-officiated at its highest level of competition (Robbins, 2004). As a democratized sport, the success or failure of Ultimate in the future relies on the players themselves.

Self-officiating in the sport has been a point of contention since its inception in 1968 (Leonardo & Zagoria, 2005), and continues to be a charged debate today. In contrast to traditional third-party officiating systems (employed in soccer, American football, basketball, hockey, etc.), self-officiating places the burden of in-play management on the active participants themselves, not an external authority. Self-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cnbc.com/id/32238333>

<sup>2</sup> The World Games, first held in Santa Clara, CA in 1981, is a multi-sport event organized by the International World Games Association (IWGA) as a subsidiary branch of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The World Games provides organized international competition for non-Olympic sports and events.

officiating has become a totem of Ultimate culture, and an intersubjective system through which Ultimate players have defined norms, practices and an ethos (Robbins, 2004).

Meaningful communication is key to self-officiating and paramount to the success of each Ultimate game as it frames intersquad dialog, game fluidity, and perceived quality of the competition.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Ultimate, like other ‘alternative’ sports such as skateboarding, snowboarding, and surfing, evolved in the United States during the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Griggs, 2009). Mocking contemporary athletics, the student council of Columbia High School (CHS) in Maplewood, New Jersey passed the sport of Frisbee into its roster of club sports in the fall of 1968 upon the request of Joel Silver, an unconventional yet charismatic student. The original CHS Varsity Frisbee Squad met nearly every day to enjoy this sport of their collective design. A system of self-officiating became necessary for expediting play, since norms, practices and policies were still emerging during this embryonic stage of Ultimate. Without an established set of rules the group could not have an official whose purpose it was to mediate between policy and action on the field. As a result, it became common practice for the athletes to ensure the success of the game of their own volition through a system of individual monitoring. Without a referee the group had to “play on the honor system, and [they] had to play a game that was gentlemanly” (Leonardo & Zagoria, 2005, p.9). What seems like a simple necessity—self-monitoring to ensure a quality game—has since emerged as a fundamental tenet of Ultimate in its current form.

The term *Ultimate community* is a common phrase used by Ultimate players to describe the communal culture of the sport. Traditionally, Ultimate tournaments foster an environment where people from different areas, states, regions, and nations come together not only to compete, but to celebrate the sport itself. This sense of unity found in Ultimate is indicative of its counterculture history—Ultimate remains defiant of mainstream social norms through anonymous fraternity and self-governance (the absence of bureaucracy). Critical to the structure of Ultimate, and a prominent display of its counterculture upbringing, is Spirit of the Game (SOTG):

Ultimate relies upon a spirit of sportsmanship that places the responsibility for fair play on the player. Highly competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of mutual respect among competitors, adherence to the agreed upon rules, or the basic joy of play. Protection of these vital elements serves to eliminate unsportsmanlike conduct from the Ultimate field. Such actions as taunting opposing players, dangerous aggression, belligerent intimidation, intentional infractions, or other “win-at-all-costs” behavior are contrary to the spirit of the game and must be avoided by all players.<sup>3</sup>

*Spirit of the Game* is the foundation of self-officiating and the reason why the system works in Ultimate. In some form it prefaces the Ultimate Players Association (UPA) rules, the UPA Observers Manual, the World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF) rules, and every other international handbook governing the procedures of the sport<sup>4</sup>.

Sportsmanship and mutual respect between competitors has allowed for self-officiating to

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.upa.org/ultimate/rules/11th>

<sup>4</sup> Each manual can be found on the USAU and WFDF websites respectively, see reference list for specific citation.

survive as the in-play management system of Ultimate, and often (even at the UPA National Championship) ‘spirit awards’ are given to teams and individual players who best exemplify SOTG. The culture of Ultimate is undeniably tied to SOTG. In recent years, the increased use of Observers in Ultimate games has challenged the traditional understanding of self-officiating, causing players to negotiate between the original incarnation of self-officiating and the quasi third-party officiating introduced through Observer presence. This is an exploratory study which will (a) examine the perspectives and experiences of Ultimate players as they pertain to self-officiating, and (b) consequently propose a course of action for the future of the sport.

### **Rationale**

May 25, 2010, the UPA launched its new website coupled with its new corporate identity, USA Ultimate (USAU), after over thirty years under the Ultimate Players Association title. This change marks a significant shift in the expected appearance of Ultimate in the national and international sporting community. USAU CEO Tom Crawford, Ph.D. stated in his inaugural web address that USAU will “be more externally focused” than the UPA, and the new brand will “tell the rest of the sporting world” more about the sport than the previous title<sup>5</sup>. In order for Ultimate to exhibit a comparable identity to other competitive sports it needs to align more with the organizational and cultural character of those sports. This adjustment is what is driving the recent policy changes by USAU executives and has provided for the bolstering authority of Observers.

Observers came into regular use in the late 1990’s after the UPA decided “it [was] fairly well settled that some form of third party judging or appeal process is necessary in highly competitive situations,” (UPA Observer Manual, 2010). Sanctioned Observers

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.usultimate.org/multimedia/default.aspx; attn: “Welcome to USA Ultimate!”](http://www.usultimate.org/multimedia/default.aspx; attn: )

posses the authority to penalize time infractions, make active calls in certain situations, and make discretionary calls on player and team conduct which may lead to an ejection from the game or disqualification from the tournament. In 2009 the UPA ran a series of experimental events testing new Observer policies and seeing how they were received by the Ultimate community. The testing occurred at three elite level college tournaments (two open, one women's) and one elite level club tournament, each introducing expanded Observer influence over the management of the game in the form of active calls or instant referrals. At one event the Observers were allowed to make active travel calls, while barring player initiated travel calls during these particular games. Observer feedback gathered after the experimental event listed the following as one of many cons to the potential policy change: "allows 3rd party to stop the game (*unprecedented*) [emphasis added]."<sup>6</sup> This new direction of in-play management in Ultimate has the potential to create a dramatic shift in Ultimate culture and how the game is played.

This study is timely and significant in addressing current practices that may permanently alter the history and culture of Ultimate. I will examine the impact of self-officiating on the individual player, how (s)he constructs meaning in context of the officiating system, and how ethical discourse and communication may explain self-government on the Ultimate field. Ultimate is a phenomenon unto itself by creating a management system based on trust and the assumption that Ultimate players *want* to act morally in the context of one another. With increasing practices and forces that have potential to push back intersquad communication and the foundation of trust from the sport, Ultimate is at risk of giving way to the purposive-strategic rationale of mainstream

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.upa.org/ultimate/rules/experimental\\_events/2009\\_spring](http://www.upa.org/ultimate/rules/experimental_events/2009_spring)

sports while losing the unique character that has been a substantial part of its history. It is currently difficult to find research produced with the intent to uncover trends specifically on the meanings ascribed to self-officiating in Ultimate or on patterns of communicative reason in the sport. It is necessary that we understand how players negotiate through the system of self-officiating. What this will provide for the sport is new look at the value of self-officiating to the individual player, and reciprocally, the impact and reason of the individual actor in the sport.

### **Objectives & Goals**

Objectives (what I intend for my study to produce):

- create a model for understanding individual meaning in the context of the Ultimate officiating system
- define third-party officiating through the lens of critical theorist Jürgen Habermas
- examine individual attitudes of rationality and how they translate into action on the Ultimate field
- create a context of communicative action and purposive-strategic action in Ultimate through on-field interlocution
- expose communication trends or patterns in the sport as both an objectivist nonparticipant observer as well as a performative player-participant in the sport
- create a reference between communication trends or patterns in Ultimate as a self-officiated sport and third-party officiated sports from the perspective of those athletes who have participated in both

- provide recommendations for future policy changes in the sport of Ultimate supported by my original research

Goals (what I hope my study will produce):

- discover overarching themes of meaning generally applicable to the individual Ultimate player's interpretation of self-officiating
- expose a general trend of communicative rationality across different styles of participation in the sport of Ultimate
- create a rational link between the communication trends (i.e. communicative action, discourse ethics, moral reasoning, etc.) in Ultimate and the systematic organization of the sport in its current form

### **Research Questions & Hypotheses**

As I attempt to accomplish my goals and objectives through in depth interviews and observation I would like to examine the following general question about the meanings that Ultimate players ascribe to the system of self-officiating: how do Ultimate players perceive that self-officiating has shaped the culture of Ultimate? I speculate that Ultimate players derive meaning from self-officiating in innumerable ways based on their subjective interpretation and the situational context (i.e. level of participation, influence of team mates, exposure to other competitors, variable on-field infractions, etc.), but there are also general trends in the significance of self-officiating for how people explain the sport, anticipate interactions, and create expectation for the enjoyment of the sport among others things. Due to the organization of Ultimate tournaments, members of the Ultimate community have constructed expectations and meanings for the playing Ultimate experience. I believe these expectations and meanings, in-part regarding self-officiating

and their sport's culture, link them to one another and strengthen the social bonds present in the sport. Consequently, it is my strong assumption that self-officiating has had an indisputable and crucial role in the development of Ultimate culture and the emergence of norms, mores, and social practices within the sport.

### **Assumptions**

#### Assumptions about Paradigm:

1. It is assumed that there are aspects of reality that meaningfully transcend quantification. Examination of such phenomena may be well-served by nonquantitative means of exploration.

2. It is assumed that all individuals construct their own version of reality that is built on both personal and social experiences.

3. It is assumed that human experience and behavior are integrated and exploration of human action should take that integration into consideration.

#### Assumptions about Participants:

4. It is assumed that every participant in the study will have participated (as either player or official observer) in several "proper" games of seven-on-seven since it is expected that a player with no real game experience will have limited comprehension of the sport and limited participatory knowledge of the culture of Ultimate.

5. It is assumed that participants in the study will have an understanding of the rules of Ultimate as they serve as self-officials in the sport. Every Ultimate player is responsible for knowing the rules of the game in order for the self-officiating system to function.



6. It is assumed that the participants in the study will have an understanding of the notion of Spirit of the Game.

### **Limitations**

1. I will be conducting the research—gathering the sample, conducting interviews and observations, coding the data, etc.—myself. Constraints posed by this and other resources will limit extensiveness of the project.

2. There is absence of a significant body of literature that has examined the current topic. This limits the range of references that can be drawn upon.

3. The in-depth and intensive nature of qualitative inquiry will limit the sample size of the Ultimate community that will be involved in the project.

4. Language barriers may prevent investigation within the nonEnglish speaking segment of Ultimate players.

### **Delimitations**

1. The state of Texas will be the boundary for my research.

2. Only current Ultimate players who have played in at least one USAU sanctioned event will be included in my study as they have a current understanding of the cultural climate of the sport.

3. Experiences analyzed, while potentially generalizable to all Ultimate players, will be particularly applicable to groups identified above and near-identical Ultimate cultural communities.

## Definitions<sup>7</sup>

**Active calls.** Those calls for which an official is empowered to rule immediately, without player request or initiation.

**Inactive calls.** Calls or rulings which are not offered unless requested by the player(s), or if the dispute cannot be resolved in a timely fashion [in Ultimate, approximately 20 minutes according to the UPA].

**Observers.** Third-party officials who maintain the procedures of the game of Ultimate during game play under the authority of the Ultimate Players Association. “Observers are allowed to resolve disputes on foul and violation calls if requested to do so by players or event organizers.” Observers are permitted to make active calls regarding time violations, disc placement, boundary decisions, and player conduct issues.

**Meaning.** The personal constructs and interpretations of reality developed through the fluid interaction of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional processes in the contexts of the external world.

**Self-officiating.** Self-officiating is a system of in-play management in which the participants self-govern the given competition by upholding the rules, policies, and procedures on their own volition without the aid or intervention of a third party.

**Spirit of the Game (SOTG).** “Ultimate relies upon a spirit of sportsmanship that places the responsibility for fair play on the player. Highly competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of mutual respect among competitors, adherence to the agreed upon rules, or the basic joy of play. Protection of these vital elements serves to eliminate unsportsmanlike conduct from the Ultimate field. Such actions as taunting

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<sup>7</sup> All quoted material in the “definitions” section of the Introduction come directly from the official UPA 11<sup>th</sup> Edition Rules or the UPA Observer Manual and can be found at <http://www.usultimate.org>.

opposing players, dangerous aggression, belligerent intimidation, intentional infractions, or other win-at-all-costs behavior are contrary to the spirit of the game and must be avoided by all players.”

**Third-party officiating.** A system of in-play management characterized by one or more referees who are “empowered to make any call authorized in the rules, bylaws, officiating guide, or any set of tournament ground rules,” and who are not participant athletes in the game being played.

### **Summary**

With the rapidly growing popularity of Ultimate Frisbee across the United States, the culture, expectations, and administration of the sport are showing noticeable change. One change, with increasing mass behind it, is the expansion of the Observer Program. This reconfiguration of self-officiating, where Observers are given some controls over the pace and action of the game, has the potential to influence the meanings athletes ascribe to the game, as well as the communication acts between the players, in turn creating a new cultural shift. How people interact while participating in this unique sport is necessary to explore, as academic research has had little hand in the evolution of the sport in its current form. It is because I seek to explore the game in its contemporary constitution that finding current players with UPA/USAU series experience is necessary.

## **II. Review of the Literature**

### **The Research Problem**

There is a lack of substantial research on the officiating system of the sport of Ultimate Frisbee and the consequent relevance of the system to the culture of the sport and its participants. Self-officiating in a highly competitive international sport is an unprecedented phenomenon that demands better understanding of its function and how it is maintained by the individual athletes. The primary research question is: an exploration of Ultimate players' attitudes toward self- and third-party officiating in the sport of Ultimate, their actions and the attendant or emergent systems of relations within both officiating systems. The goal is to arrive at an understanding of the wider significance (roles, effects, outcomes, etc.) of self- and third-party officiating on the sport and culture of Ultimate.

### **Concept Map**

The question will be examined through an exploration of meaning formation as a basis of value and motivation towards action. Theoretical frameworks that will be explored include the structure of meaning and theory of communicative action, as shown in Figure 1.

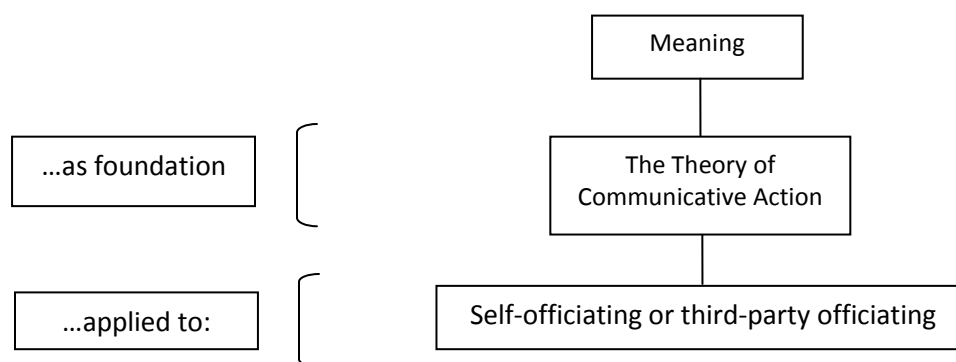


Figure 1. Map of Conceptual Macrostructure.

### ***Meaning: Dimensions and Relations***

The primary goal of this project is to advance our understanding of the culture of Ultimate through a direct analysis of ways in which events involving participation of Ultimate players may be meaningful to members of the Ultimate community.

Specifically, attention will be focused upon the matter of the introduction of a third-party officiator (an Observer) into a game of Ultimate, that situation constituting a defined event. The assumption is that the presence of this additional actor, the Observer, may precipitate a restructuring of meaning for the Ultimate player, thereby playing a moderating role within the experience of the immediate game event and possibly beyond.

Meaning is a multifarious construct. For Casakin & Kreitler (2008), “meaning is sets of cognitive contents used for defining, expressing and communicating significance for a variety of purposes” (p.81). Meanwhile, Radford (2006) believes meaning “can be understood as the intentions that we want to convey,” thus appearing as a subjective construct (p.40). Although it may be difficult to identify a single definition that perfectly encapsulates the complex and dynamic nature of meaning, Chen (2001) has suggested that it may be seen as “interplay between cognitive, behavioral, and emotional processes”

(p.317). In this section I will explore the way meaning may serve as a basis for how individuals interpret their world and move themselves to action. I will pursue that objective by outlining several dimensions of meaning and their implications.

**Indicator of value.** A common synonym coupled to “meaning” is *significance*. Though “significance” is deficient some of the more abstract qualities of “meaning,” it does provide definition to one aspect of the word: that of value. Individuals assign value to a place, object or action based on the person’s internal reality. When a person assigns a significant amount of value to a place, object, or action (s)he is more inclined to give priority to it, or use more resources to obtain, experience or interact with.

**Motivation to action.** Meaning is a motivation to behavior. Meaning encourages us to act through our cognitive interaction with the objective world. Internal references to personal meaning constructs allow individuals to discern, using judgments based on prior experience to influence future actions. Reflecting internally inspires behavior. As per Radford’s statement that meanings are “the intentions that we want to convey,” *conveyance* entails behavior. Actions are therefore the medium through which we communicate our subjective meanings, with intention being the crux of communicative acts. Conveying meaning is, in a sense, imparting understanding to a person or group, which, upon response or reflection, engenders meaning formation.

Embedded in the idea of motivation is the *teleological* nature of meaning. Purpose and intent, wrote Chen (2001), are the tools through which humans make sense of their experiences and form meaning. Felt needs, Chen continued, bestow significance on ends and so, individuals act purposively to satisfy an end. What can be derived from the teleological facility that meaning possesses is that the significance of a place, object,

action or any phenomenon towards which one retains an intent bears emotional and cognitive weight on choice and course of action.

**Creational force: Manifesting phenomena through definition.** Meanings, however, in the function of instigating action, point to a more fundamental role. According to Lofland and Lofland meanings may be viewed as “transbehavioral in the sense that they...define, justify, and otherwise interpret [behavior],” (in Krauss, 2005, p. 762). Meaning thus becomes an armature upon which making sense of phenomena is hung. It serves as a revealer of phenomena, a foundation without which certain forms of understanding may not be attained. Human action, for instance, appears to us in a new light as a result of this capacity of meaning to help make sense of things or shape understanding.

Human action represents just one tangible phenomenon in the world. Meaning grants definitional context to other phenomena as well. It assists in making sense of such things as places and objects. In the process, it may be informed by prior definitions which individuals consciously reflect upon, or subconsciously attend in the situation. Understanding actions, places, objects and other things in the world thus results through association of meaning. Awareness of the capacity to frame, shape and reveal or manifest these phenomena for the purpose of human understanding illuminates our conception of the energetic dimension of meaning.

**Existential function.** Meaning is a human phenomenon through which individuals create existential understandings of the world in the context of the self, and vice versa. This transcendental element of meaning is tied to human inquiry (Jo, 2000). The desire to know and understand the inner workings of one’s self, the external world,

and the “pan-social” experience drives human behavior. Embedded in human reason is the urge to distinguish ourselves in the world, which we do by the individual conception of meaning. For instance, a person may find enjoyment in reading a book, but beyond that, recognizes leisure as a unique phenomenon and revels in the luxury of leisure. Another person may find significant meaning in a daily commute to work. That meaning may take the form of an association with stress as (s)he attributes the drive to *a job*, to the anxiety of being late and the consequences therein entailed. In such ways by which categorization and order are imposed on the world, writes Krauss (2005), people generate meaning. Mosak believes “life has no intrinsic meaning [but] we give meaning to life, each of us in our own fashion” (in Chen, 2001, p.319).

**Grounding in experience.** Meaning is grounded in *experience*. The existential scope of meaning grants significance to the role of experience. Krauss (2005) finds that meanings are generated and enriched by life experiences, and through our individual encounters with the world around us we become free to create and attribute meaning in myriad ways.

No simultaneous experiences of the same thing by two separate people are the same because no two people are exactly alike. Even though context of an event may be shared by two people, the meanings derived from a mutual event will most likely be unique for each individual.

That people derive differently-toned experiences from the same situation raises another conceptual distinction. Erikson (1963) made a categorical separation between *common meaning* and *unique meaning*. Groups of people socially construct *common meanings*, which are those meanings where people recognize the place, object or action



collectively. However, the socially understood place, object or action may have a *unique meaning* to an individual because (s)he attributes significance to it due to some experience had. The union of common and unique meaning informs every one of a person's "thoughts, actions, and even the interpretation and application of knowledge" (Krauss, 2005, p.763).

**Existence in cognition.** Meaning is innate and does not exist out there in the world. It is an exclusive dynamic of internal processes. Meaning, writes Krauss (2005) "lies in cognition not in elements external to us" (p.760). Information, he adds, is "screened, translated, altered, perhaps rejected by the knowledge that already exists" in the cognitive process of meaning creation (p.760). In essence, external phenomena are grasped through intellectual processes inherent in human cognition. Radford (2006) asserts that concepts of meaning are "based on presuppositions concerning the relationship between the cognizing subject and the object of knowledge" (p.40).

Raskin and Rogers' (2000) *person-centered approach* to meaning construction maintains that both experience and reality mirror internal frames of reference. Although, it is widely understood that meaning construction is rooted in personal psychology, meaning breeches the division between the internal world and external world. Referring back to the teleological property of meaning, intention arises in the situational context of a meaningful end. Intention, while directed at the external world, is an internal subjective construct, but it is connected to the external world because intent is purposive and directed at objective facts in the world (Radford, 2006). Meaning can be understood as the intentions people try to communicate, but where communication is an action, *intention* is a cognitive process (Radford).

**Binding to context.** There are two applications in which I would like to consider meaning as context-dependent. The notion of relativity of experience (discussed above) suggests that meaning is variable depending upon the mind in which it is constructed. Diversity is a phenomenon of humanity that is informed by the contextual nuances of a person's life. The internal context encompasses a person's biography and how events (s)he has experienced have been assimilated through categorization, rationalization, interpretation, and so on. A person's mental character is the lens through which (s)he views new experiences and interprets them while simultaneously developing and reforming the meanings uncovered in the occasion. These subjective life experiences create differentiation through which people's own meanings of phenomena are distinct from one another. "Knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena...and knowledge is context and time dependent," (Krauss).

Meaning, however, is constructed not solely on internal phenomena. As Chen (2001) observes, meaning formation is founded on a person's interpretation of internal and external contexts. In the second sense, meaning is influenced by events in the external world. External stimuli—whether in simplified conceptualization as elements of the physical world or in more complex conceptualization as dynamic processes, such as culture—play a role in shaping experience and meaning. In this project, I am particularly interested in the cultural dimension. According to Husserl, human thinking needs to be understood against the background of the cultural context encompassing the phenomenological experience (in Radford, 2006). Such contextual variables such as the character or interactions, intersubjective dialogue and cultural signs derived from symbols come together to shape meaning.

**Transactional core.** Meaning evolves in a transactional medium: there is exchange between elements (including humans) involved. Humans exchange things with one another through social or relational situations. Explicit examples are verbal and nonverbal communication through which dialogue and exchange of social messages take place. These forms of communication allow individuals to respond and react to one another in an interpersonal engagement. Morals, for instance, hold a great amount of meaning to many people, and a perceived moral transgression by one party to another will without question influence how the first person views the transgressor as well as how (s)he acts toward the transgressor.

Transaction can also occur between an event and an individual. Using the example of sports, athletes are in a state of constant reevaluation of circumstances. As competition becomes heightened an athlete will respond to the perceived demand of the event, a response which tends to be accompanied by “spikes” of adrenaline and/or sensory awareness. Through responding actively, however, the athlete, in turn, further increases intensity of the game. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes the union of competition, skill, feedback and other things as *flow*. In the transactional context of competition and action, a unique experience is created for the participant.

**Culture signification.** For any socially-bound individual, meaning is formulated within a cultural framework. The gravity of social norms, values and practices is inescapable, making an individual’s view of the world often a partial view of the culture of which s/he is part. Meanings are influenced by “social frameworks such as family, community, relationships, and so forth” (Edgington, Edgington, DeGraff, Dieser, 2006). Krauss (2005) also notes that the social construction of meaning is evidenced in the

norms, values, and shared practices of a culture. Rules, for instance, are social policies representing culturally relevant values that exemplify shared meaning, usually with “some positive moral preference attached to them....Whether explicit or implicit, [rules] communicate meaning through the value behind them” (p.766). All of the foregoing point to one thing: whenever we observe an individual’s actions that are contingent on experience and derived meanings, we are also partially observing a culture in its manifestation. Meaning, therefore, points (at least, partly) to something else. It is a sign.

### **Application of the Meaning Model to Ultimate**

The dimensions and processes of meaning that have been discussed above have valuable implications for understanding the culture of Ultimate. Several of them are elaborated here as examples.

The transactional process of meaning, for instance, provides a structure for analyzing how players interact and are influenced by one another. Competition has the potential to inspire heightened emotional states in its participants, which can be a catalyst to highly expressive exchanges that inform us about the character of the actors and the intellectual and social shaping of behavior during a game. Given that Ultimate is typically self-officiated, implying that all arbitration regarding infractions on the rules will occur between the players, the communicative exchanges that signal the function of meaning in shaping behavior *and* events becomes important. Through on-field discourse (which includes verbal and nonverbal exchanges) we learn more about one another and the ways we act in the context on one another.

Lofland & Lofland (1996) provide us with two tenets of interaction that specifically pertain to communication and its effect on the social exchange of meaning:

- (1) That face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participating in the mind of another human being, understanding not only their words but the meanings of those words as understood and used by the individual,
- (2) that one must participate in the mind of another human being in order to acquire social knowledge. (p.16)

Through self-officiating and the tournament structure players are more interactive with one another than in traditional sports, therefore allowing for more frequent and richer understanding of the other actors in the environment.

While the rules of Ultimate represent *shared meaning* that is agreed upon and upheld by the players and institution, we might also be able to uncover the *unique meanings* that individuals hold through their verbal and nonverbal communication with each other on the Ultimate field. Specifically, the self-officiating system in Ultimate encourages the construction of shared meanings by requiring communication between competitors, during which Ultimate players internally reference the common meanings instilled in the *Spirit of the Game* clause of the official rules. In a third application of the forgoing discussion of meaning, it can be said that positive moral values sustained in the policies of the sport such as sportsmanship, respect between players, and honest competition are signs that point to the values of the greater Ultimate community.

Each player brings his or her own meanings of the sport to the Ultimate. These meanings have been formulated through *experience* and the immeasurable *contextual variables* that have played a part in the construction of the player's personal meanings. The diversified landscape of the Ultimate field allows for different meaning orientations

to collide, causing constant reevaluation of one's own meanings. These relational exchanges bring with them unspoken intermingling of meanings.

I believe self-officiating has meanings attached to it in the sense that the officiating structure represent shared values in the form of a socially agreed upon moral preference (Lofland & Lofland in Krauss, 2005). However, self-officiating also has personal meaning to the participants in the sport. The officiating system gives many players a significant sense of meaning through the active use of knowledge of the sport during play. Self-officiating is a tradition of the sport that bears on the construction of meaning for the individual. It influences his or her behaviors on the field and the individual's overall concept of Ultimate.

### **Theory of Communicative Action**

The theorist whose work I will primarily use to frame my examination of the self-officiating system of management is Jürgen Habermas. Habermas has a unique stake in critical theory as he approaches his criticism of the globally preferred market economic system through the lens of *communicative action*. In his two volume publication *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984 & 1987), Habermas argues that after the Industrial Revolution and the passive acceptance of the capitalist system “processes of bureaucratization and commodification became too powerful,” overwhelming traditional communication roles of communicator and receiver (Smith, 2001, p.50). Communication marked by community dialogue centering on mutual need and reciprocity was replaced with an institutional engineering of producer-consumer marketing. Wage labor emerged as the primary system of labor, and with it, discourse for shared benefit was diminished. During this process there was a paradigm shift from what Habermas refers to as

communicative action—both actions informed by prior consensus and actions aimed to reach a consensus of undistorted mutual understanding—to one of purposive-strategic action—individualistic actions employed to maintain autonomy and maximize self-interests. Strategic action utilizes communication acts which appeal to another actor's desires or fears without the intent of reciprocating the provoked emotion. Concession is the result of purposive-strategic interaction due to avoidance of unwanted byproducts (fears) of the interaction or of strategic self-gain (desires). In this model of rationality, the logical person would act in a way solely to maximize his or her self-interest. Habermas purports that communicative action, as opposed to purposive-strategic action, is “driven into the realm of apparent irrationality... [in the] capitalistic process of rationalization,” therefore devaluing reciprocal beneficence (Morgan, 2004, p.175). In this shift we see that the life sphere (including leisure activities like sports) has evolved to mirror the rationality and value system exhibited by the institution of wage-labor as per how it is practiced, organized, and financed (Morgan). Sports, therefore, have become contests of self-interest where the participants train and compete in the systematic fashion of capitalistic enterprise.

Rationality is not limited to the possession of particular knowledge, but rather in “how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge” (Habermas, 1984, p.8). Communicative rationality, then, is “the rational potential built into everyday speech,” which establishes meaningful, interactive dialogue between participants (Bohman & Rehg, 2009). Communicative action occurs when two or more participating actors engage one another with a “practical attitude” expressed through rational speech embodying an “inherent telos.” Habermas argues that “reaching understanding is the inherent telos” of

dialogue and can only occur through meaningful discourse (Habermas, 1984, p.287-288). Meaning thus possesses a meaningful, teleological pulse because it promotes substantive understanding between participating communicators. Norms, mores, and practices in sports are gestated through communicative action and require validity claims to give them meaning. People reach consensus by agreeing on what they perceive to be truth in the matter as well as if they perceive that they are being treated 'right' by the other person. Central to the idea that you must believe you are being treated rightly in an action in order to come to an agreement is the concept of morality. Consensus cannot then be founded on immorality, or at least perceived immorality. It is in this light that Habermas argues against the corrosive nature of our adoption of instrumental reason. Instrumental reason is the notion that we rationalize our actions of self-interest as principal to our life success, but more over, our self-interest is the foundation of every rational choice we make. The common preference of instrumental reason is a byproduct of wage labor winning out over traditional labor. The controversy inherent in instrumental reason is its license over morality which allows people to exploit one another and rationalize their favored agendas despite the implications it may have to another individual. There is perhaps no better example of instrumental reason overpowering rational morality than in the sphere of contemporary sports, where an ethos of win-at-all-cost has prevailed over any other mode of rational choice.

As capitalism overshadowed traditional definitions of labor, the ethic that we rationalize the use of the "means that most effectively satisfy the ends" became dominant in other forums like sports (Morgan, p.179). The endemic practice of using whatever means necessary to achieve your goal in sports has superseded communicative



rationality. Because socially we have less investment in one another, given our instrumental reason/strategic action orientation, we have a weakened obligation to act morally in the context of one another. Under the system of self-officiating the players have complete ownership of the game, and therefore must operate under a system of reciprocal beneficence to guarantee the success of the game. The historic structure of Ultimate succeeds only so long as moral reason succeeds in the culture of its participants. Ultimate players, as individual regulators of the conduct of the game, are primary actors in each situation. This structure requires the athletes to place morality at the fore of how they communicate. As we have seen, consensus occurs only when both actors perceive the way they have been treated is right and what they agree to is “truthful and accords with appropriate norms of conduct” (Morgan, p.179). Strong discourse ethics become important to the production and maintenance of norms that guide in-play conduct and regulate the tempo and quality of an Ultimate game.

A third-party official acts as an intermediary between the rules of the sport and the action of a sport, being active only through observation but never through the player-participant role. Habermas describes two ‘attitudes’ of social practice that directly pertain to the divergent natures of self-officiating and third-party officiating: the performative attitude and the objectivating attitude. The *performative attitude* is taken on by someone who actively “participates in the communicative practice” of the sport (Morgan, 2004). In contrast, an *objectivating attitude* is adopted by the nonparticipant observer who is external from the action of the sport. Though the referee in a game plays a role that is critical to the success of the sport (s)he remains an objectivating personality because (s)he has no capacity to rationalize the emotions, dialogue, and actions concurrent in the

game from the perspective of the participant. Objectively looking at the physical actions of the sport suspends communicative action and promotes instrumental reason as the content of the game becomes an unmitigated means. Habermas argues that when we take the perspective of the objectivist over that of the performative “we are cutting ourselves off from the range of reactive feelings and attitudes which belong to involvement or participation with others in interpersonal human relationships...[in which others] feel reciprocally for one another” (quoted in Habermas, 1990, p.46).

The sporting field is a unique setting of “structured conflict and competition...rarely found in other aspects of social life” (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). Conflict by design is distinctive of sports, but conflict itself is found in every facet of human life, most instances of which we are the arbiters of the conflicts we create. Being judge and jury in a performative conflict requires the use of one’s own rationalized morality to guide actions and determine outcomes. In a situation where a third party regulates the assertive actions of two or more people in conflict, the moral reasoning of the participants is deferred to that of the objectivist third party. In the case of self-officiating, moral reasoning is requisite to the efficiency and reciprocity of interaction. On the other side of the argument, third-party officiating allows for moral deficit and instrumental reason to seep into the performative attitudes and actions of the participants. Athletes playing a sport under the externally officiated framework do not have the existing need to treat others affably or even respectfully because they submit to the rationality that even if they commit an infraction they might not be caught. The bureaucratically founded external officiating system distances the actors in the game from the ownership of the game, and

that distancing permeates through rational morality and sustains the *win-at-all-costs* culture of sports.

Interlocution is an important vehicle for meaningful exchange. Habermas believed “arguments played out in the individual consciousness or the theoretician’s mind are no substitute for real discourse” (Habermas, 1983, p.9). He would argue, should he take up the conversation on contemporary sports, that in an externally regulated system where athletes are not the authority of their own productive ends the participants have no obligation to act morally in the context of one another because one would expect the referee to hold them accountable should an infraction occur. In this reasoning there is no need for reciprocal beneficence nor communicative action between active participants in sports. The end product of the third-party officiating system is a collective conscience that does not regard morality or communicative reason to be necessary of the culture.

Habermas’ analysis of speech acts focuses on their “context-sensitive *acceptability*” as they “distinguish different speech situations” (Bohman & Rehg, 2009). Therefore, meaning to Habermas is used to articulate the validity basis of social order. With no objective validity to instigate universal truth construction, the participants in a communication exchange create an agreed upon truth founded by contextual elements.

Validity involves a notion of correctness analogous to the idea of truth...[indicating] that a claim (statement) merits the addressee’s acceptance because it is justified or true in some sense, which can vary according to the sphere of validity and dialogical context. (Bohman & Rehg).

Validity in an argument is bound to the context of the performative actors. Meanings are expressed and developed in a performative speech act, and in-turn they become a context for the dialogue that forms the internal interpretation of the interaction. If two people agree on any social arrangement it is valid given the context of consensus. A person's ability to rationalize and reason is subjective and individual. This can be understood as a binding interface between the individual's internal context and the external context that allows for individual meaning construction. In meaningful exchange, contextual intricacies are reproduced and preserved in an act of cultural re-signification. Dialogical patterns and modes of interpretation and interaction are framed by the cultural parameters to which the actor is subject.

### **Primary and Subsidiary Questions**

As stated earlier, the primary research question is to describe Ultimate players' thoughts, actions and reactions as they pertain to the officiating system(s) as an institution interacting with the culture. To accomplish that task five constitutive elements will be considered: actors (e.g. individual Ultimate players), objects of action (e.g. players to whom actions are directed), actions (e.g. player interaction and conflict arbitration), events (e.g. competitive gain), and institutional context (culture that surrounds Ultimate) (see Mohr, 1998). These five elements are vital to any analysis because, as Mohr observed, any cultural system [i.e. institutional context] is "structured as an embodiment of the range of activities, social conflicts, and moral dilemmas [actions and thoughts] that individuals [actors and objects of action] are compelled to engage with as they go about negotiating the sort of every day events [events] that confront them in their lives" (p.353). Additionally, it is useful to evaluate all observations made in the field in light of the

cultural context because, as Mohr added, examining relations of elements within a cultural system on the basis of how “the elements are linked to the practical demands of the institutional systems of which they are a part” is instructive (p.353).

In the current study, it is particularly essential to come to a penetrating understanding of the complex role actualized by the Ultimate player. The player as self-officiator during on-field action occupies a near-autonomous role as actor arbiter and authority. Therefore, in order to answer the primary research question, the following subsidiary questions are posed:

1. How do Ultimate players [actors] construe the presence or absence of third-party officiating within a game and, more broadly, within the culture of Ultimate?  
(Note: Within these questions, absence of third-party officiating is to be understood as de facto reference to self-officiating)
2. How do Ultimate players act toward the other [object(s) of action] as a result of construal of presence or absence of third-party officiating within the game and, more broadly, within the culture of Ultimate?
3. How do Ultimate players interpret, accept or resolve outcomes of events based on construal of presence or absence of third-party officiating within the game and, more broadly, within the culture of Ultimate?

Communication is not a unilateral expression from producer to recipient, but a continuous bilateral exchange of validity claims and expressed meaning that are constantly internalized and interpreted. Understanding the meanings Ultimate players derive from and ascribe to the presence or absence of third-party officiating will lead to a more comprehensive knowledge of the officiating system in the sport, its influence on the

culture of Ultimate, and how communicative acts between participants influence both the culture and the officiating system. The theory of communicative action has provided a structure through which meaningful interaction may be examined for normative behaviors and beliefs that bear heavily on the officiating system of the sport. By dissecting multiple behavioral influences we hope to arrive at a more holistic account of player-player interaction, player-sport interaction, and player-culture interaction.

### **III. Methods**

This chapter lays out the framework of the study including participant selection, data collection strategies, instruments of data collection, and structure of data analysis. Data collection and analysis focused on individuals who were able to render a first-hand account of the intended area of exploration.

#### **Participants**

Participants for this study were selected from Ultimate players registered with USAU in the state of Texas. Texas has a prominent Ultimate community with over 60 teams throughout the state competing annually in USAU series events in one of five categories: Open, Women's, Mixed (Co-ed), Masters, and Grand Masters (information compiled from teams registered for the 2010 club Ultimate season at <http://www.usau.org>). The diversity of teams and athletes range from elite teams who routinely place well at USAU Nationals events to teams who never advance past Sectionals, representing a wide variety of perspectives on the state of the culture of Ultimate. College and club players had equal consideration for participation in the study so long as they meet the requirements for inclusion (as will be clarified below).

Purposive sampling was used. Prospective research contributors were current participants in the sport since the goal of the study was to reflect upon the current cultural climate of the sport. In effort to gain an understanding of the contemporary mode of the

culture of Ultimate (personal perspectives, intersubjective actions, and interlocution), research collaborators were expected to have immediate experiential knowledge of the rules, norms, and culture of the sport to reference and cite during data collection. It was assumed that any current Observer interviewed for the study also has personal experience as an Ultimate player outside of his or her Observer role. This is necessary because, although Observer presence in the sport is one of the key facets of Ultimate being investigated, the Observers themselves are not the actors with whom I am ultimately concerned. Rather, how they impact the developed and developing meaning constructs of the players is the relevant interaction I seek to understand. After interviewing initial participants *snowball sampling* was used, where participants put me in touch with one or more people to contact as potential research aids (Burgess in May, 1997, p.119).

In order to be included in the study participants were required to have played a minimum of one USAU series event (a college or club series sectional, regional, or national tournament), since it is assumed that a player with no experience in a USAU sanctioned event would have deficient comprehension of the sport and limited participatory knowledge of the current culture of Ultimate. Both the USAU club series and college series include sectional, regional, and national tournaments where the official rules and policies of the sport are upheld. Also, especially at the regional and national levels of USAU series competition, Observers, with whom some players may have had in-game interaction, are regular actors in many of the games. Inclusion of such participants that have played under Observer officiating is useful in understanding how Observer presence influences meaning construction. The sample included both men and women with no preference attached to the selection of either gender for inclusion in the



study. Men and women participate at the same levels of competition in Ultimate and have equitable exposure to the policies and practices of the officiating system which is a significant point of investigation.

### **Data Collection and Description of Strategies**

Due to limitations of the study, data collection is confined to in-depth interviews, which is sufficient to gather personal experiences and understanding of contemporary Ultimate. Other data collection techniques that may prove useful in further exploration of the problem are discussed in chapter V.

Interviews were held one-on-one in a public location of mutual convenience. The interviews were framed around questions developed prior to the meeting. It should be understood that the established questions were a guide for the interview and that the flow of conversation in most cases deviated from the original framework. However, interviews were redirected if the interviewee strayed too far from the original research question. Any significant physical changes in the subject's demeanor, noticeable tonal shifts, or other observable variations in his or her behavior were noted corresponding to the time at which they occurred during the interview.

Examples of questions that were used in the interview guide include the following:

1. How long have you played Ultimate?
2. Tell me about some of the competitive games in which you have participated.

For instance: how was the intensity of the game, competitiveness, attitudes, behaviors, fouling, calls, etc...

3. What does "Spirit of the Game" mean to you?

4. Have you ever played a game where an Observer was present and actively involved?
5. Would things have happened differently if the Observer had not been involved?

A comprehensive set of questions may be found in Appendix 1.

Questions or prompts that pertain to personal experience of the culture of Ultimate were asked first. They preceded questions that pertained to Observer roles and effects. The order was applied with intention to first paint a picture of personal experience of the culture of Ultimate absent Observer intervention. The anticipated flow of conversation was patterned with the original and subsidiary research questions in mind.

Personal subjective responses and the directions the research participant took questions yielded the depth of description required by phenomenological investigation. It was expected that in expressing personal views and recounting personal experiences an interviewee would provide more than direct answers. Such contextual information was useful in interpreting data at later stages.

### **Pilot Interview**

A pilot interview was conducted, which became a basis for refining subsequent data collection processes. The interview was carried out with Alexander. Lessons learned during the first interview were useful in informing later data collection. Alexander was chosen to be the first research participant because his biographical involvement with the sport was known. He had played Ultimate in a host of different venues and at varying levels of competition, which were decided to be valuable attributes of a participant.

The preliminary interview helped me as a researcher to develop the awareness to push responses further and encourage more generative thought from the participants.

During the Alexander pilot each guiding question was addressed, but follow up after many responses asking him to elaborate, clarify, or approach the question differently in order to yield the richness of response desired was not carried out.

After interviewing Alexander it was apparent that not enough guiding questions satisfactorily investigated the respondent's mental approach to his/her opponent, which was a point that needed to be examined for an honest exploration of the research questions. The questions developed after the pilot interview to investigate this point of interest are presented below. Considering the attempt to examine perceptions of officiating through the Habermasian paradigm (implying a need to investigate interpersonal communication), need was felt to address specifically the approach communicators had toward one another. On multiple occasions earlier in this study the term *Ultimate community* was used. The communal aspect of the sport is thought to be grounded in some underlying cultural dictum, which could be found in on-field interaction. How competitors consider and identify one another and respond to that identification may prove significant to interactions in competition, which is one of the central points of investigation.

Following are the new questions:

During a game how do you think about the opposing team?

Do you ever communicate with them (before, during, or after)?

Does it affect your interactions with them during the live competition?

Alexander's interview allowed me to initiate myself into the role of the researcher and develop mechanisms to facilitate conversation that would benefit the study. After transcribing the initial data I found flaws in my own speaking ability and the potential for

reaction when I heard something unexpected. Awareness of these enabled me to correct the behaviors in subsequent interviews.

### **Enframing Tradition<sup>8</sup>**

Many distinct yet interrelated traditions provide insight into the meanings and behaviors inspired by psycho-social relationships. Symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, phenomenology and structuralism, among other historical frameworks have lent perspective to social and institutional interaction with the self. It is important to attend to these independent studies' similarities understanding that many domains overlap and augment the understanding of the phenomenological world.

Owing significant debt to the work of anthropologist George Herbert Mead, among others, symbolic interactionism focuses upon the individual as a member of a social group whose construction and perception of self is inextricably bound to the interactive processes occurring within the group (Ashworth, 2004). Herbert Blumer, who is credited with providing significant structure and defense of symbolic interactionism, argued the following three fundamental elements of the tradition:

1. Humans act toward things (including objects, institutions, ideals, activities of others, situations encountered in daily life, etc.) “on the basis of meanings that the things have for them.”
2. Meaning attached to each thing “is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.”
3. Meanings are “handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with” the things encountered. (Blumer, 1969, p.2)

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<sup>8</sup> The “Enframing Traditions” section is rendered from an unpublished document by Dr. Stephen Awoniyi. Citation can be found in the list of references.

Blumer elaborated on the three previously mentioned assumptions by introducing two critical points. First, Blumer asserts that human behavior cannot isolate the behavior of interest from the context of the behavior and meanings permeating the context. Those meanings, he argued, are “central in their own right” (p.2). Second, Blumer found interpretation (reflection, categorization, eliminating or segmenting information, etc.) to be a core process involved in human behavior. Interpretation is thus a “formative process in which meanings are used and revised as instruments for the guidance and formation of action” (Blumer, p.5).

The work of Blumer, Mead, Cooley, and the early Chicago School of ethnographers regard culture as action, and key to each tradition is the idea of interpretation. Regarding the social psychology of these traditions, the notion of interpretation occurs on two separate planes: that of the individual (as object and actor) and that of the researcher. Working to unwind the knot of human interconnectedness and explain each kink, the researcher uses observation and analytical processes to engage the mind of individuals of interest. This second definition of interpretation is founded in hermeneutic tradition, but affords strength to the arguments laid out in symbolic interactionism (Stanford, 2005). Hermeneutic inquiry “is designed to reveal the roots of interpersonal understanding,” implying, therefore that our understanding of things (texts, gestures, actions) is shared (Gergen, 1999, p.143; Prus, 1996).

Lofland and Lofland (1995) state that in order to acquire social knowledge “you must participate in the mind of another human being” (p.16). Making correct interpretation of words and actions (which are “outward...expressions of an inward mind”) requires “access to the mind of the author/actor” (Gergen, 1999, p.143);

nevertheless, all products of research—analyses and interpretations—are representational. Meanings, for instance, “cannot be brought to show except in terms of something else” (Bruzina, 2006, p.75). Intangibles and objects/ideas constrained to cognitive processes require interpretation and representation, rendering an appearance for something that is otherwise unrelatable. This is the product of research. By engaging another’s mind, the researcher, through interpretation and representation, may find meanings that embody more than what was directly observed. The researcher then engages in construction, in addition to interpretation and representation.

Returning to interpretation as fundamental to the individual in the world, *being* in the world has much more meaning to a person than simply existing in a place and time. Heidegger argued that understanding and interacting with the physical world involves more than just tangibles colliding with one another; rather, interpretation, reflection and other cognitive processes create a person’s sense of being in the world (Stanford, 2005). Blumer, like Heidegger, understood behavior to be reflective, interactive, and emergent (Prus, 1996). The contributions of Charles Cooley to cultural theory and human behavior were great and provided Blumer with a stepping stone when he brought symbolic interactionism into prevalence. Cooley’s concept of *sympathetic interaction* was that driving theory. He promoted the idea that humans must participate in the minds of those we interact with, interpreting their gestures and language in order to make intelligible behavior. Taking the importance of cognitive reflection and assimilation further, Cooley observed that society is perceived in the mind through processes of interpretation and integration. He wrote that “imagination which people have of one another” form a crucial part of society and “to observe and interpret these must be the chief aim of

sociology” (in Prus, 1996, p.50). The significant meaning behind Cooley’s words is the value of subjectivity as a formative dimension, an integral aspect of Blumer’s first and third statements about symbolic interactionism. Blumer made clear in these tenets the centrality of human agency to cultural studies (Pruss, 1996).

Individuality is a recurrent theme in Blumer’s (1969) work as he further elaborated that people collectively as well as individually are influenced to act based on the meanings they derive. Each actor then becomes a responsive agent. Therefore, for academic understanding of human behavior and interaction it is necessary for researchers to “see their objects as *they* [emphasis added] see them” (p.51). Understanding the individual offers a pathway to understanding social processes.

Internal deliberation, or what Smith (2001) calls *interrogating conscious experience*, “can be seen as an *internal conversation* [emphasis added] in which the person considers whether and how to bring his or her behavior into line with the expectations of others” (p.59; O’Brien, 2006, p.53). Symbolic interactionism, though its primary ambition is to understand the person as a part of the group, is also concerned with “what meaning people give to a social context and how they negotiate and enact [that] meaning through interaction with others” (O’Brien, 2006, p.53).

Some researchers have questioned “the idea that society is somehow ‘out there,’ independent of human actors but able to shape and direct human thought” (O’Brien, 2006, p.51). Subjectivity and interpretation as a cognitive requirement of social beings then becomes a central argument of those dissenting scholars. Symbolic interactionism, for instance, “suggests that the potential for society exists in the minds of the people who share common expectations.” The theory, then, “retains a strong element of

individualism” (Gergen, 1999). O’Brien added that there is no society “independent of the human mind” (p.52). Expectations, while collective, are not devoid of the mental processes of the individuals who create them. While the importance of individual psychology may be trumped by social exchange in symbolic interactionism, its focus on observable behavior “is assumed to be nonobservable processes of individual interpretation.” He added that, “in other words, behavior is based on subjective interpretation of the social environment instead of being a direct response to objective stimuli” (p.54).

Jürgen Habermas takes up the argument of the individual component of society by locating society in the behaviors and interactions of those who comprise it. Assimilating values, beliefs and so on are grounded in the mind of the individual, though the information is transactional and based on external events. Each person engages in a process of examination, interpretation and elimination prior to acting on an internal decision. Therefore, it is the individual who constructs the event. This construal of the goings-on of an individual are what interests us.

Because of its emphasis on the individual experience and sense of being, phenomenology is an applicable strategy when examining interhuman relations. Gergen (1999) addresses the problematic idea that phenomenology is expressly individualistic, saying that “the conventional split between conscious subject and the object of awareness has never been a happy one for phenomenologists” (p.128). Conscious experience is fundamentally relational, where social interchange and personal experience are intimately connected. Phenomenology, though no applied theory will yield all the answers of human



phenomena, provides us with a framework for examining and learning more about the diverse landscape of human interrelations.

### **Phenomenological Analysis of Interviews**

Data analysis in phenomenological research involves systematically examining the content of the data to probe the essence of the experience. By investigating each phrase of the data, treating each as equal, phenomenology provides us with means to consider the implications of the minutest nuance of a person's experience. The process of arraying the data, giving each utterance equal consideration, known as horizontalization, is the initial step in phenomenological data analysis. Data analysis will follow this structure:<sup>9</sup>

Step 1—Transcription: Transcribe the data collected from the interview or observation.

Step 2—Listing and Preliminary Grouping: Horizontalize the data. List every phrase or behavior relevant to the experience.

Step 3—Reduction and Elimination: Identify horizons that appear to be “invariant qualities of the experience” (Moustakas, p.97). They are statements or expressions that are nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping, repetitive, and are not vague. Each one should satisfy the following two questions:

( i ) Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?

( ii ) Is it possible to abstract and label it?

Step 4—Clustering and Thematizing Invariant Constituents: Condense and code meaning units. Group meaning units into prominent, consistent themes of the experience.

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<sup>9</sup> The phenomenological data analysis process in the following pages is based on that outlined by Moustakas (1994).

Step 5—Testing Against Data: Reference meaning units and themes against the whole transcription of each person’s interview. Check with the following questions:

- (a) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription?
- (b) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?

Step 6—Construction of Individual Textural Description: Create a narrative integrating invariant textural constituents and themes of each research participant. This process will express *what* the person experienced.

Step 7—Construction of Individual Structural Description: Structures are conditions that underlie things described texturally. They emerge based upon reflection and analysis. Imaginative variation, which involves assessment of each phenomenon from a variety of vantage points, is employed.

Step 8—Synthesis of Textural & Structural Descriptions: Merge the textural and structural narratives to create a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomenon as pertains to each research participant.

Step 9—Composite Descriptions:

- (a) Write a composite textural description that includes all participants.
- (b) Generate a composite structural description that includes all participants.
- (c) Construct a composite textural-structural description that involves data pertaining to all participants.

After conducting each interview, the dialogue was transcribed and horizontalized to give each phrase equal consideration in the review of the data. Any answers to the guiding questions that are irrelevant, “overlapping, repetitive, [or] vague” were eliminated from the document (Moustakas, 1994, p.121). Once the data had been

collected, transcribed, and horizontalized a grouping of the relevant material by meaning units<sup>10</sup> or invariant constituents (all remaining relevant statements of the experience) occurred. Invariant constituents must contain a moment of the experience that is definite and understandable (Moustakas, 1994). Such meaning units were labeled and, in the next step, clustered with other related meaning units in order to identify core themes. Themes derived from each participant's interview were checked against the participant's data for compatibility.

Using meaning units and themes generated, individual *textual descriptions* were generated for each participant. During this process the experience of the individual were described using relevant excerpts from his or her transcript. Ihde (in Moustakas, 1994) explains texture as “that which is experienced and described in concrete and full terms, the ‘what’ of the experience” (p.79). Textural description show the relationship “between phenomenon and self” taking into account feelings, sensory experience, and the pensive state of the individual among many other dimensions (Moustakas, 1994). It is a richly-detailed investigation of the phenomenon where “each angle of perception adds something to one’s knowing of the horizons of a phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p.91).

Following creating individual textural descriptions of the experience, individual *structural descriptions* of each participant's experiences were also generated (Moustakas, 1994). Integrating a structural description into the data analysis helped me understand what precipitated the experience, or ‘how’ it came to be. According to Moustakas, structural descriptions will focus on “the conditions that precipitate textural qualities.”

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<sup>10</sup> Meaning units include two components (in Casakin & Kreitler, 2008):

1. the referent: input, stimulus or subject to which meaning is assigned
2. the meaning value: the cognitive contents designed to express or communicate the meaning of the referent

The structural narrative is derived from the textural narrative, helping to frame the experience by creating an ecological description of the phenomenon. Keen (cited in Moustakas, 1994) finds structures to be “order embedded in everyday experience which can be grasped only through reflection” (p.78-79). Moustakas also added that structural description involves “conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining, and recollecting” (p.79). Necessary to the development of structural description is the concept of *imaginative variation*. The task of imaginative variation is “[seeking] possible meanings through utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference...and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, p.97-98). By working over the material from different imaginative perspectives, rounding the approach of the data, I was able to enrich the structural description of the experience. Finally, a composite textural-structural description which integrates experiences of all research participants was constructed. The integrated textural-structural description will be introduced in the ‘findings’ section of chapter IV.

## **IV. Results**

### **Introduction to the Research Participants**

Throughout the data analysis process I have focused on six out of the nine participants interviewed. Of the three excluded from analysis, two were omitted because the character of responses were not consistent with goals of the study. Two of the last athletes interviewed, Todd and Ira, did not provide the depth of responses that was consistent throughout the other interviews. Although Jack was interviewed after Todd, it was deemed necessary to include his perspective since he was the only participant who had not competed in a sanctioned national tournament, which was thought to be a necessary demographic position to include in the study. Alexander was the first interview obtained and was excluded from later data analysis as his interview was a pilot study from which investigative techniques were refined for subsequent interviews. From Alexander I was introduced to Ernesto, Conrad and Roger who helped me access the other research participants following the snowball sampling process described in chapter III. For a complete account of the succession of sampling and who was recommended for participation by who see Appendix 3.

Snowball sampling allows participants to retrospectively evaluate the interview questions prior to supplying the researcher with candidates for further investigation of the research question. After each interview I asked the participant to provide me a few

possible athletes who exhibit either similar, divergent, or unique perspectives from their own concerning the questions asked. This elective subjectivity both helps and hinders the sampling process. Positive aspects of snowball sampling include the participant being able to think of conversant individuals who would meet the demands of the interview and make an insightful decision as to appropriate future interviewees. On the other hand, snowball sampling limits the potential sample to just those athletes that are known by the persons already involved in the study, possibly leaving out a unique and significant perspective from having the chance of analysis and inclusion.

The sample group includes a diversity of perspectives and experiences that find commonality in some areas and dramatically conflict in others. Some participants have played in many international tournaments and all have participated in state and regional tournaments, with every participant (save Jack) having competed in a UPA/USAU sanctioned national tournament. Referring to the previous paragraph, since the first interviewee (Alexander) was a high level competitor in the competitive scale of the sport, he in turn introduced me to other players who play within his same level of competition, as they are the athletes he has the greatest exposure to and understanding of their perspectives on the sport. The benefits of interviewing players who compete at the upper levels of the sport are numerous; a) they generally have played at multiple levels of the sport in order to have gained experience and skill enough to ascend to the elite level of Ultimate, giving them a broad understanding of how the sport is played on various competitive planes, b) by spending their personal resources (time, effort, money, etc.) on Ultimate they have shown a vested interest in the sport, which requires high levels of motivation and introspective support from which we are able to source valuable

information in an interview, and c) they reflect the demographic upon which USAU has for the last few years based its efforts to bolster and promote the sport. For a complete rendering of possible Ultimate experiences, including pure-informal pickup and elite level club, see Appendix 2.

The age range of my sample spans from 22 to 50, with Clair being the severe outlier at 50. Of the six athletes selected for complete data analysis and integration into the document, five are in their twenties. While I had no intention of selecting men and women in that stage of life intentionally, I will again state that these are individuals who are relative to one another and it seems sensible that they are of a common age range because they compete together. Clair, however, is a prominent Ultimate player across the state of Texas and is one of the leading figures advocating Texas youth Ultimate. Her presence and voice in the Texas community has made her well known to athletes of many ages, and she was referred by both Ernesto and Eileen as someone who would provide a unique perspective on the current state of the sport. As you will see from Appendix 3, the group is fairly well known to one another as multiple people referred me to the same person on several occasions.

Outlined here is a brief biographical introduction to each athlete interviewed, which will provide context for the subsequent sections. The following individual abstracts will pattern the chronological order in which they were obtained beginning with Alexander and will include each athletes name, age, and length of interview (represented in minutes : seconds) (for each participant's complete transcribed interview see appendices 4-10). Although Alexander's interview was not included in the integration

portion of data analysis his biography is included here to generate context for the presence of the other research participants there included.

**Alexander, 24, 25:01.** With one year of experience playing Ultimate prior to college, Alexander began his competitive career in the sport his freshman year while attending a major Texas university. During his time in college he attended many regional and extra-regional tournaments, which helped expand his skills and encourage him to aspire to higher levels of competition. Alexander shows an incremental progression in his Ultimate career having first played pure-informal<sup>11</sup> pickup games with his friends in high school, which he considers to have “been the most fun [he’s] had playing,” followed by municipal leagues where he was taught the sport, then collegiate competitive Ultimate, and eventually elite<sup>12</sup> club Ultimate, which he has played the last two seasons (Alexander, L 32). He has participated in one USAU College National Championship and his club team was positioned for high contention for the club open national title in both 2009 and 2010 (for Alexander’s complete transcription, see Appendix 4).

**Roger, 22, 35:06.** After a lifelong string of mainstream sports, Roger found Ultimate the first semester of his freshman year of college having never previously played the game. “[He] play[s] collegiate in the fall and spring, and [he] play[s] club in

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<sup>11</sup> *Pure-informal* Ultimate broadly form of recreational defines any Ultimate where a) no established or registered team is involved in the competition, b) the game is organized and operated by those individuals directly involved, c) the outcome of the game has no significant value apart from that derived by the players involved, and d) all processes of the game are determined by involved participants, not an external government. See appendix xxx for a full account of possible Ultimate experiences an athlete might participate in.

<sup>12</sup> *Elite* is a widely used term in the Ultimate community identifying the uppercrust of athletes within the sport. Described best by Jack, “elite players they traverse the globe playing Ultimate... they’re stellar athletes, they’re really fast, they have really sound throws, and they’re just spectacular play makers” (Jack, L 254-259). Elite Ultimate is a micro-culture unto itself with its own barriers to entry and social expectations apart from those of other strata of Ultimate. For example, Ernesto would contend that some teams that make the USAU Open Division National Championship are not *elite* teams despite them being ranked in the top 16 teams in North America because of a lack of success in the top level of competition.



the summer and fall” and was the captain of a collegiate team in Texas last year (Roger, L 16-17). Fraternity and reciprocal commitment are characteristics of collegiate Ultimate spoken highly of by Roger. In contrast, his club Ultimate experience is limited to one team that has a constantly changing roster and does not practice together. He has played in one collegiate national championship and no club national championships (for Roger’s complete transcription, see Appendix 5).

**Ernesto, 29, 65:43.** Ernesto began playing Ultimate when he was a freshman in college. He was encouraged to attend a practice by his roommate who had previously played the sport in Chicago. During his collegiate experience Ernesto began playing club Ultimate on the elite level. He now captains this elite club team which lost in the semi-finals at this year’s USAU National Championship. Ernesto is a certified Observer, having overseen approximately ten collegiate level Ultimate games, but no club level games. He has participated in seven club level national championships, but his participation in any collegiate national tournaments was never addressed in the interview (for Ernesto’s complete transcription, see Appendix 6).

**Clair, 50, 61:35.** Playing her first tournament in 1982 in Mars, Pennsylvania, Clair has played Ultimate regularly for nearly three decades. She believes the ethic of competition in 1982 was significantly different than it is now. Her first year playing in the club series was 1992, and her annual participation in USAU events ended this past 2010 season. Her club series participation is primarily restricted to the South Region, but she makes mention of playing a club season in the Founders Section in New Jersey. Other than series events, Clair has played tournaments across the USA and is still an active Ultimate player across the state of Texas. She has participated in at least seven club

national championships, but her participation in a collegiate national tournament was never addressed in the interview (for Clair’s complete transcription, see Appendix 7).

**Conrad, 24, 71:48.** Conrad began playing informally with his friends toward the end of high school in Austin, Texas. While still in high school a friend of his was on the B-team<sup>13</sup> of the University of Texas Ultimate Disc Club and encouraged him to come and watch the UPA Collegiate National Championship being held in Austin that May. Conrad was impressed by the sport and investigated schools where he might play Ultimate on the same level he had observed it at the National Championship. The school in California he attended a few months later has one of the longest running Ultimate programs in the nation and with it a well established reputation for “aggressive play, and no nonsense...with foul calls” (Conrad, L 224-225). The same reputation followed the club team Conrad played on in California, which was comprised predominantly of past captains and top tier players of his University team. He has played in both collegiate and club national championships multiple times (for Conrad’s complete transcription, see Appendix 8).

**Eileen, 28, 55:44.** Eileen’s experience playing Ultimate is very broad being a collegiate coach, regular league participant, captain of an elite club team, pick-up participant, selected Team USA athlete, and previous collegiate player. Her Ultimate career began in college, but she has since played Ultimate year round and in several countries. Eileen considers the way she played in the early part of her collegiate career ‘old school’ in that they prioritized socializing through the sport above competition, they

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<sup>13</sup> Often times an Ultimate club is stratified into A-, B-, and (occasionally) C- teams, whose members are determined based on evaluated skill level (*club* here is used in the general sense, not referring to the *club division* of USAU). Typically, Ultimate clubs hold tryouts where individuals compete for a spot on a desired team. For instance, the University of Texas at Austin Men’s Ultimate Disc Club has a USAU registered A-team (“Tuff”), B-team (“Graze”), and C-team (“Stampede”).

were regularly late to events, and they played co-ed pickup with the men's team. About midway through college her team began attending to the competitive aspects of Ultimate, playing what she thinks is "the most common form of Ultimate now," which is the "legitimate level sport," "media friendlier...high level of competition" mode of Ultimate "that USAU is trying to push" (L 137-139). She has supposedly participated in the collegiate national tournament six times (calculated from her recollection of annual tournament participation, but not stated outright) and club championship six or more times. She was also a selected Team USA athlete and has participated in the World Games twice (for Eileen's complete transcription, see Appendix 9).

**Jack, 26, 66:56.** Upon being asked about his history playing Ultimate Jack was immediately reminiscent about his youth throwing a disc with his brothers and the neighborhood kids. Once in high school he regularly played pure-informal pickup games with his friends who he later recruited to travel to a major regional university to compete in tournaments against collegiate and club teams. He then moved to Missouri where he continued to play recreational Ultimate and occasional tournaments. After moving back to Texas, Jack joined a university team who traveled regularly to tournaments but "put socializing first," so he and other team mates "factioned" off and started a new competitive Ultimate club at the university (Jack, L 40). Jack captained his university team for years and regularly tried out for elite club teams, though he never made one. He regularly participates in local pickup and regional tournaments. Jack has not participated in either a collegiate or club national championship (for Jack's complete transcription, see Appendix 10).

It is clear that collegiate Ultimate has been a significant part of most of the participant's early Ultimate experience, and that there are already trends that unite each individual's Ultimate biography. Any commonality in the presented biographies will be addressed for their parallels and divergences in the 'findings' section. In the following section I will describe the analysis process which generated the findings and theories laid out in later sections.

### **Researcher's Interactions with the Data: Process in Phenomenological Analysis of Interviews**

Data analysis under the phenomenological model follows four sequential phases—initial rendering, deconstruction<sup>14</sup>, reconstruction, and narrative generation—which contain the specific steps outlined in the method chapter, see Figure 2. The initial rendering of data is the examination of the interview throughout the transcription process before it has been reduced and divided for further examination. Initial rendering is specific to transcription, step one, as it is purely a phase to bring the interview around to a workable format. Deconstruction follows transcription and is defined by the identification and isolation of invariant constituents. In deconstruction the interviews are changed from a linear conversational character into a disjointed yet relevant amassment of isolated statements, which is the process of steps two and three. After the data have been reduced to relevant and concise units of experience, thematization and categorization are used to draw relations between meaning units across an entire transcription. This process of reintegrating the data back into thematic, associated meaning units should be thought of as the reconstruction of data. Steps four

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<sup>14</sup> In the body of this work, deconstruction and reconstruction are each used in a straightforward sense: i.e. as analysis and synthesis.

and five of data analysis assist in reconstituting the data under newly uncovered themes and categories. Once data have been thoughtfully reconstructed under branching themes, narrative generation may take place, which is the aim of steps six through nine. Data are expressed in the descriptive process in narrative format where ideas about the data, founded in the logic of the previous three phases, are described in rich articulation concerning parallels, dissimilarities, oddities, far reaching implications, and myriad other streams of importance.

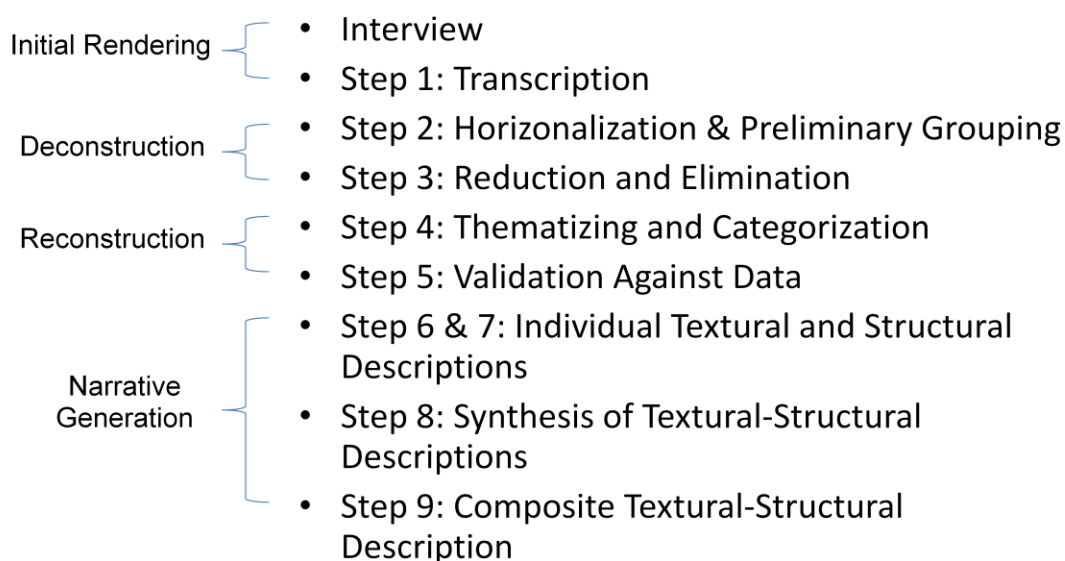


Figure 2. Four Phases of Phenomenological Data Analysis. During analysis, the nine steps of phenomenological methodology appeared to follow four distinct and successive phases here represented.

**Transcription and reduction.** The initial rendering of data is specific to drafting individual transcriptions for each interview and reading them for initial reactions prior to horizontalizing the data. By reading the transcriptions and making notes directly on the document I was able to come into a beginning level of intimacy with each person's data. This was useful to help guide future thoughts and points of investigation once I embarked upon the deconstructive and reconstructive phases of analysis. Initial examination of the

data, including personal note taking, is not housed under the deconstructive phase because it is a general preliminary attempt to draw meaning from the data without dissecting the document. Deconstruction begins when the transcription is systematically segmented to isolate and categorize statements (invariant constituents of experience) for further exploratory refinement.

At the onset of deconstruction transcribed interviews were divided into general questions areas that emerged organically in each conversation. This was done on the original transcription document. Meaning units were then isolated within each established question area. For example, in Roger's interview the following response "I think Ultimate should have refs to make active calls, if that's what you're asking. I think there are too many subjective calls, like in Ultimate the most devastating call to me is a travel, because on any throw you can call a travel," fell under the general question area "prevalence of call making in college games". The aforementioned question area spanned lines 173-174 and contained six individual verbal exchanges between Roger and me. After question areas were defined meaning units were bracketed off and all overlapping, repetitive, or otherwise extraneous information was eliminated via strike through. The data underwent a second edit to isolate invariant constituents within a spreadsheet categorized by the defined general question areas, solidifying meaning units conclusively for the further use in the study.

**Emergent themes.**<sup>15</sup> For comparative purposes each participant's data was thematized under six overarching categories. A separate subsection of the findings portion is reserved for "significant ideas concerning Ultimate culture" found after the

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<sup>15</sup> An alternative approach to thematization of data, which is consistent with this research, can be found in Appendix 11.

specified theme sections, and contains unique perspectives of the participants that required additional consideration. These perspectives were therefore separated from the other results of data to isolate and afford them special attention. The six primary themes emerged as follows:

1. Positioning Within Competitive Space as Index of Ethic
2. Early Exposure as Framer of Current Game Ethic and Communicative Action
3. Interpretations of Self-officiating and the Evocation of Rules
4. Ideas about Spirit of the Game
5. Perspectives on Third-party Officiating
6. Examination of Non-competition Elements of Ultimate

Thematization follows step four in the analysis process and can be described as a reconstruction of the data. The intensive demands of transcription and reduction required me to reread and interpret the data of each participant multiple times prior to ever compiling related invariant constituents into concise identifiable categories. Throughout transcription and reduction I kept diligent notes on each participant, seeking experiences or ideas that were common across participants. These findings evolved to become the themes used to categorize and examine data in the reconstruction phase of phenomenological analysis. Thematization of each transcription produced skeletons from which textural descriptions were generated, serving as a guide for investigative points of interest. Establishing relationships between meaning units through thematization assisted in drawing insightful conclusions about previously independent statements.

Thematization was used as the initial process of the reconstructive phase of phenomenological research. Prior to this stage of analysis transcriptions had been stripped of their linear-conversational formats and fractioned into well over one hundred invariant constituents per interview. Defining the themes evident in the document has

given a new cohesive structure to each interview that is cogent and interdependently relevant, while not being restricted by the linear progression of conversation.

**The narrative generation process.** Articulating the thoughts gestated through the previous three phases of analysis is the succinct aim of narrative generation. A textural rendering of each interview is made by looking at what occurred in experience or thought for an individual to have generated a theme. Those experiences and thoughts are discussed in narrative format to relate the interpreted information in an accessible form. Personally, the psychological process of answering “how can I best explain this thought or association” became the mechanism for generating intelligent and informative conclusions about behavior. By being forced through process to articulate information intuitively and with due accuracy to the transcription I was able to comprehend the experiences and implications of the data much more coherently. Narrative generation required multiple rereads of categories and themes, as well as the whole transcription. When describing the experiences in textural context comparing personal thoughts against the transcription base is essential for accuracy. Since data has undergone a rigorous process of deconstruction and reconstruction, often in multiple waves, it is necessary to ensure when describing the findings that they have not been too far removed through process from the original intent of the statement in conversational context.

Structural descriptions require more interpretive thought. Essentially, *structure* is a description of a description. It serves to communicate how an experience or thought came to be, or what is necessary for an experience or thought to be sustained. I generated the individual structural descriptions from the textural descriptions, thus a description of



a description. Structure provides support for the expressed experiences in the textural descriptions, validating the described findings.

Since all the textural descriptions were based on the examination of themes across a participant's interview, and each theme crosscut all participants' data, commonality was easy to access when integrating descriptions because the individual renderings were common due to the commonality of themes. Description became an exercise in relating common or divergent experiences or thoughts of a similar vein. What emerged were assertions about the common culture of the sport which is related in the following section.

## **Results and Relevance**

Contained in the following section is the product of the previously described four phases of phenomenological data analysis. Individual participants' data is here collectively rendered into an interconnected picture of how different experiences within the sport generate the culture of the sport and vice versa.

The *Findings* section is, in its edited form, the integrated textural-structural description of each research participants' data. This first subsection represents the integration of all descriptions of individual experiences, the precipitates of experience, and my own interpretations of the data as it pertains to the research questions. The concluding section defends the rationality of the findings from the distant reference of the interview questions and subsequent processes of analysis.

## **Findings**

**Positioning within competitive space as index of ethic.** The competitive experience is the general unifying point for participation in an Ultimate game across

participants. Although each research participant places more or less importance on how much the competitive dynamic drives his/her desire to participate in a game, the fact is plain that the contest aspect of playing Ultimate is a requisite determinant for participation. When comparing each interviewee to others there is a range of competitive ideologies which evinces itself hierarchically as follows:

High Competition Primacy    Conrad

Roger

Ernesto

Jack

Eileen

Low Competition Primacy    Clair

What is indicated by this spectrum is the positioning of individuals within an intellectual and action space that expresses a degree of competitiveness. I have labeled it the “Competition Primacy Space.” The continuum allows an additional inference—one supported by the data—that as one moves into different positions within the ‘competition primacy’ space, there is a reordering of the importance of various dimensions of the culture of Ultimate for individuals. Importance of competition relative to those dimensions is suggested by the individual’s position along the continuum. For example, Conrad perceives little reason to play in an Ultimate game other than the competitive contest of the sport, where as Clair maintains many other reason for participating in an Ultimate game (or in her current case, advocating the social benefit of the sport) other than the competitive dynamic.

Conrad is perceived to be the most competitively driven athlete, which is supported strongly through his argument against recreational Ultimate being fun and the direction of his focus in a game away from personal relationships and toward resolved mental toughness. His consistent approach to the sport is through a tactical and competitive lens, much preferring the highly competitive games where the expected skill level is equally high. Roger operates similarly in how he seeks an Ultimate experience, expecting the players around him to display a knowledge of the game comparable to his own. He has gone so far as to refuse to participate in Ultimate games where talent is substandard. During a particular experience very soon after he began playing, Roger broke his hand during a pickup game. The experience has disinclined his further participation in any ‘unorganized’ type of Ultimate, including league play and pure-informal games. One can speculate that Roger’s introduction to the sport as a collegiate club sport, as opposed to playing pickup type games prior to experiencing competition-primary Ultimate, led him to construct a standard for the Ultimate experience he would like to have.

Ernesto too has expressed a need for participating with people of similar talent to his own. The three—Conrad, Roger, and Ernesto—all require elevated skill levels (at least to the competence of their own) in order to truly enjoy an on-field experience. On the other end of the spectrum, Clair, Eileen, and Jack all attempt to participate in Ultimate in any venue available, often seeking new experiences to further promote the sport and the communal culture characteristic of Ultimate. Jack is closer to the High Competition Primacy side than Eileen and Clair because he has had a steady evolution of trying to participate in more and more structured and highly competitive modes of Ultimate,

beginning in pure-informal recreational Ultimate with his high school friends and progressing to trying out for national caliber Ultimate teams. His mentality that “some pickup may not be as skilled...but the attitude may be more enjoyable” supports the claim that there are elements beyond the scope of competition that encourage his participation in certain Ultimate games (Jack, L 77-78). Jack goes on to describe that “you may play with a pickup group that’s really skilled, really athletic, really talented, but they may just be jerks” (Jack, L 79-80). When considering participating in a game, Jack is aware that some individuals bring to the field undesirable characteristics, despite impressive talents, and prefers to play a game where more positive attitudes and respect between opponents is present. Interpersonal relationships and his appreciation of individuals within the sport is very important to Jack, and when faced with an opponent or circumstantial team mate he does not get along with his enjoyment of the whole experience is diminished.

Clair and Eileen, coincidentally, share similarities in their offsetting of the competitive drive with other desired elements of the sport, departing their competitive natures from those of the men involved in this study. Eileen plays at the highest level of competition possible for the sport having participated in the last two World Games in both the co-ed division (Team USA, 2009 Kaohsiung, Taiwan) and women’s division (club team, 2010 Prague, Czech Republic). She cites her upbringing in soccer as the inspiration for her thirst for high competition, but reproaches the bad ethics sustained through competitive soccer culture. The high competition level of play is Eileen’s favorite mode of Ultimate, but that is due to the creational potential of participating at the elite club level. For Eileen “the process of taking a team of people who don’t work well

together...have different strengths, and then working together to make them succeed in...what's seen in that society as a successful way, which would be going to competitive tournaments and doing well, and winning" is the most rewarding aspect of competitive Ultimate (Eileen, L 147-151). Therefore, indicating that sorority and the value she derives from developing these women and transforming them into a publicly successful team hold much intrinsic meaning for her. For both Eileen and Clair the communal culture of Ultimate and the trust/respect created by Spirit of the Game (SOTG) between two opponents is a significant reason for their participation in the sport. More adamantly, Clair plays Ultimate for the participatory experience, desiring to spread community and promote respect and understanding for each other. Clair *is* aware of her own competitiveness, which she likens to a desire to win—a universal want for all humans.

Ernesto, Jack, and Eileen all try to maintain an equilibrium between their competitive desires and their respect for fair play and community as the sport was originally conceived. The athletes on the upper and lower ends of the spectrum, Conrad and Roger who allow competition to overshadow all other reasons for playing, and Clair who allows community and the participatory experience to overshadow the competitive element, all react to contentious opposition on the field in a way that matches their professed ethic. While each of the middle three noted previously has confessed that (s)he has reacted negatively to on-field situations (Jack, L 354-398, Eileen, L 310-359, Ernesto, L 451-458), each perceives his or herself to have an instantaneous negative reaction, which is quickly succeeded by 'cooler heads' and then followed by meaningful discourse with his/her respective opponent (Eileen's reaction can be understood as less dramatic than both Jack and Ernesto, but follows the same pattern). Both Conrad and

Roger admit to being ‘explosive’ on the field, and have cited times when they knowingly did not honor their own perspective, but still argued the point under the pretense that the lies were true. For instance, Roger defends that if he has had an negative interaction with a competitor he feels justified in immediately calling a foul on a throw or contesting every call that his opponent makes. Clair’s reaction starkly contrasts those of Roger and Conrad. She opines her reaction to be non-reaction or to allow the person to proceed with his/her call just to maintain the pace of the game even if she disagrees with the call.

**Early exposure as framer of current game ethic and communicative action.**

Conrad articulated this point the best saying, “the culture of Ultimate has an expectation for the more advanced players because there’s a culture of teaching in Ultimate” (Conrad, L 180-182). Similar to how ancient stories were passed down orally from generation to generation before script became widely used, Ultimate is still in its youth as far as the lifespan of sports is concerned and there are few artifacts and little literature on the techniques of Ultimate and its culture. Most of the trends in behavior and attitude reflect the teachings of the previous generations of whatever subset of Ultimate players one is exposed to, such as a collegiate team if that is an athlete’s introductory exposure to Ultimate.

Each research participant alluded to socio-cultural pressures during his/her formative years of Ultimate, as well as objects of the sport directly taught by their peers and elders. For instance, Eileen feels “super lucky to have been at the very very tail end of what we would call kind of ‘old school’ Ultimate” (Eileen, L 126-127). Throughout her interview Eileen associates ‘old school’ Ultimate to an ethos of “respect for each other and Spirit of the Game” (Eileen, L 166). Similarly, yet on the other end of the

spectrum, Conrad was introduced into a collegiate program that had a reputation for aggressive play and very contentious call making. That ethic became perceived as normal for Conrad, and was therefore adopted into his competitive attitude which persists to this day. Remembering past college games, Conrad would “run into situations where another team [would] come into a game expecting unfair play and they [would] try to counteract that with extra calls or maybe playing unfair themselves,” which he believed “reflected more poorly on [the other team]” because it was expected of his own team, but the opposing team lost their own ethic and pandered to the negativity of their competitor (Conrad, L 228-229, 234). The contrasting ethics learned by both Eileen and Conrad in their early experiences playing Ultimate, particularly in how they were taught to navigate through the competitive experience, has persisted in their current attitudes toward competition. For instance, as of our interview Eileen retained deep seeded regret for calling an erroneous foul at the national tournament this past season, and feels a constant burden to uphold the ‘old school’ quality of her early years in the face of the current competitive system. On the other end of the spectrum, Conrad, who is a self-professed ‘rude’ player, would like to see the introduction of referees into the sport in order to push the limits of aggressive play. He feels as though the aggressive elements of on-field action are significantly hampered by self-regulation and SOTG.

When considering Jack’s early biography with Ultimate it is essential to understand his exposure to a multitude of perspectives on the sport. Having played in high school, Jack, unlike any of the other research participants, thoroughly investigated the sport and sought out new Ultimate experiences without being a part of an already defined Ultimate culture (consider the following: Conrad—university team,

Eileen—university team, Ernesto—university team, Roger—university team, Clair—unknown early experience). Due to this self-fulfilling search for Ultimate Jack traveled to different tournaments, picked up on any team that would take him, and tried to form teams to compete at various levels of the game, all before settling down at a university where he claims to have established a new team. Because of his rapid succession of isolated experiences it is hard to say that he was predominantly affected by one specific subpopulation of Ultimate society. One could speculate that his cultural pluralism has informed his humanistic approach to competition and conflict resolution:

I've been in the wrong in some on-field arguments and other people have been in the wrong in some on-field arguments and we've been able to resolve things once the day is done and the competition is over, but it's an added kick in the face whenever there's some kind of negative scene that happens in the course of the day and you just can't resolve things that evening, you know just work things out like gentlemen, and almost like comrades of the same silly, very silly athletic subculture we're all a part of. (Jack, L 340-347)

Roger and Ernesto both began playing Ultimate as college freshmen with no prior exposure to the sport. Similarly, the two both men joined established competitive teams that regularly attended extra-regional tournaments where high caliber play was expected. Because of the early introduction of the two into the competitive culture of Ultimate, which Eileen understands to be the “most common form of Ultimate now” (Eileen, L 137), Ernesto and Roger were exposed to competitive Ultimate and no other venue in their early careers. Having played competitive sports throughout their lives, exposure to



the competitive Ultimate scene early in their careers carried over many of the same schematic approaches to sports in general. Jack's interpretation of the phenomenon is as follows: "Once upon a time Frisbee was a sport for alternative athletes to get involved in, and now it's a sport for mainstream athletes to get involved in who didn't make it at whatever sport they wanted to make it at, and they've taken that very similar mentality" with them from their previous mainstream sport (Jack, L 311-314). When Ernesto first moved to Austin after graduating from a major Texas university he wanted to try playing league Ultimate because "there were no leagues" in his university town and "[he] thought it would be fun" to try this newly available experience (Ernesto, L 29, 28). He was further encouraged to sign up for the municipal league by the men he played club Ultimate with in the fall. The drop off in talent created "times that were incredibly frustrating" to the point that he has chosen not to participate in leagues since (Ernesto, L 36-37). For Ernesto "it was frustrating because of the level of competition" and he prefers to "go out and compete at a very high level" that is unsatisfied by a league experience (Ernesto, L 40-41). An analogous drawing can be made to Roger's experience playing pickup (he has never tried to participate in an Ultimate league). Roger's pickup experience in his home town occurred after competing on a nationally recognized collegiate Ultimate team for an academic year. His expectation for a high competitive experience, which was solidified by his early exposure to competitive collegiate Ultimate, may have been the primary deterring factor that led him never to play pickup again and inspire his want for "[Ultimate] to be more organized" and to "play within a system" that a league or pickup experience can provide (Roger, L 40, 43).

Regarding specific involvement with teams or events, Clair divulged very little about her early Ultimate experience. Rather, she made blanket comments about the ethics which characterized the era she started playing in, speaking in generalities like ‘in 82’ or ‘back in those days.’ The most distant recollection Clair conjured up as a first person experience, not merely a generalization, was her participation at club nationals concerning Observer involvement during “the quarter finals in ’03,” which was over two decades after she started playing (Clair, L 53). Clair remembers operating under the 7<sup>th</sup> edition rules of the UPA (now in its 11<sup>th</sup> edition) when she began playing in 1982. During that period she recalls there being “more leeway in the rules” allowing the competitors to adapt the rules to fit situations as they arise (Clair, L 115). She believes that now “the rules have really changed to accommodate the more competitive attitude,” shifting from an attitude of “‘well you know, let’s try and do the right thing’” to one that requires Observer involvement “because people[will] argue for their own advantage as opposed to trying to see the perspective of the play” (Clair, 121-123). Her early experience, though we know little of her first-person exploits, is useful for her as a base for comparison of the current temperament of Ultimate (often reading more like an indictment of the current system). Clair’s perspective on the direction of competition closely mirrors that of Eileen’s who, the reader will recall, sees the structured-competitive mode of the sport to be the most in vogue of styles right now. Due to the commonplace of the competition primary structure in Ultimate today, it is understandable that Conrad, Roger, and Ernesto were exposed to that form of competition within the sport at the onset of their careers.

Multiple participants made mention of how leadership dictates the behavior of a team. Although Ernesto’s statements concerning leadership involve literal captains, it is

more accurate to consider leaders as those players with strong, attention commanding personalities. Such is the case of Clair's experience. No specific example could be brought forward from her decades of experience, but she recalls being "controlled by [her] team mates because...[she has] reacted negatively, perhaps cursed" at a person in retaliation for a perceived egregious call (Clair, L 461-465). Situations that inspire heightened negative reactions in Clair occur when she perceives a blatant abuse of the rules. She also regularly enacts the now archaic practice of calling fouls against herself, and in situations where she would not call the foul against herself she finds the opponent to be acting unscrupulously. Conrad, who we know adopted a highly competitive attitude once ensconced in his university team's culture, was told by his captains to argue a call adamantly and without regard for the opponent's perspective if he felt convicted he was right. In another contrasting section Conrad discusses his captains instating a system where if a player was unsure of his call he could look to his captain and receive non-verbal call coaching via a tug of his shorts, indicating that he should retract the call. These leadership methods are the two types of call coaching identified by Ernesto. The two stated distinctions are teams with leaders that a) back up a player's call "no matter how shitty or good the call was, whether [they] agree or disagree" with the call made, or b) "their captain and leader if he has a good perspective, he'll walk up to that player and say 'my opinion is that it wasn't a foul'" (Ernesto, L 211-212, 206-208). As a leader of his own team, Ernesto does not believe he has set a policy for his team mates in such situations. Ernesto believes his team possesses a host of vibrant personalities and varying interpretations of SOTG and on-field propriety. For instance, he has one team mate (who he believes to be in the extreme minority of individual personalities) who "at all costs

wants to make sure that you...respect the game, you respect your opponent,” and will possibly compromise competitive goals in order to maintain that ethos (Ernesto, L 218-219). By contrast, he recognizes other team mates (in the majority) who “at all costs...want to put [their] team in the best position to win the game, so that might mean making a shitty call here or there” (Ernesto, L 220-222).

**Interpretations of self-officiating and the evocation of rules.** The competitive spirit most definitely affects an individual’s interpretation, use, and reaction to the rules. Clair stated that with each subsequent edition of the official rules the UPA has “addressed more and more problems that arise with people who are genuinely concerned with the outcome” of the situation (Clair, L 117-118). Under the self-officiating structure, personal knowledge of the rules and a fair interpretation is necessary for a successful game. The topic of rule interpretation and use inspired some of the most invigorated responses from the interviewees with the term ‘grey’ popping up in multiple interviews. “There’s so many grey area kind of plays in all sports” according to Jack, who believes “it’s impossible to say that this absolutely happened and that absolutely didn’t happen” (Jack, L 292-293). The self-officiating system is productive in his opinion because of the ambiguity of most foul situations. Self-officiating provides two competitors with the right to discuss the event in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the infraction. Many competitors are willing to argue a foul call as an undeniable fact, often attempting to make the opponent feel silly for disagreeing. This type of intimidation and coercion is becoming more common in Jack’s eyes. When confronted with a situation like that, Jack errs on the side of non-confrontation because it is not worth bringing discord into the game unnecessarily. Referring back to the attitudinal distinctions Jack made between

different types of games, maintaining civility (within reason) at the expense of losing a call that may or may not have been accurate is acceptable to him. While situational without a doubt, Jack tries to foster an environment where egregious calls do not occur due to the positive social pressures he tries to bring to the game.

Ernesto first used “grey” to describe instances of travel calls on the field where he might have not made the most genuine call for the circumstance saying, “travel calls, you know that’s a very grey...uh, you know your interpretation of when the disc left a player’s hand versus when the toe dragged, or was the travel on a pivot” (Ernesto, L 502-504). He is very aware that calls are made erroneously, but he believes he personally makes calls within the accuracy of reality. There is almost an element of disillusionment in Ernesto’s response, where he may try and convince himself that he has made calls that were more objectively justified than is true. Ernesto described situations where he had initially made a travel call, but upon further internal deliberation concerning the accuracy of the call feelings of regret emerged. He does not believe he makes calls based on the outcome of the play, but shows a significant amount of internal debate as to how he makes calls and validates their use. Eileen also believes that some violations are *grey*, citing marking fouls for her example:

You really can interpret the rules totally differently in Ultimate, they’re just so broad, so, you could interpret, for the best example would be foul calls, what’s a foul on the mark or whatever, so, there’s teams that take that and just hack right, and say, well you know, it’s *grey*, there is *grey* you know, ‘I don’t think it’s a foul,’ and it’s frustrating to me when another team is, they have a different interpretation and you think they’re

trying to take advantage of the game (emphasis added). (Eileen, L 207-213)

Her opinion of call accuracy is very similar to Jack's, both believing "you never know 100%" that a foul occurred, and that it's "a ludicrous idea...to *expect* the human eye to detect something that is impossible for it to detect in terms of speed" (Eileen, L 314-317, 458-460). This misalignment of circumstantial opinion and rule interpretations between competitors is the most universal point of frustrations felt by those athletes interviewed.

Jack, Conrad, Eileen, and Roger each directly stated the aforementioned aggravation as an event that commonly happens and is an annoyance that brings down the enjoyment of any game (as might be deduced from Eileen's comment above). The three men each have very similar opinions, feeling cheated when they are playing an opponent and perceive a standard to be set where they choose not to call fouls on physical play, but the opponent calls a foul once the action is done to him. Jack's reaction to other players is tied tightly to what he perceives to be transgressions against unspoken agreements. For instance, his overarching behavioral ethic is to "treat your opponent...the same way he's been treating you," which, when contravened by an opponent, contributes significantly to the negative emotions Jack experiences on the field (Jack, 270-271). When an opponent is playing very physical, but calls a foul on Jack when he gives them "the same recipe," Jack feels as though the opponent has broken an unspoken "gentleman's agreement" (Jack, L 277, 279). Likewise, Conrad reacts negatively if "another team is playing very aggressive on [him]" and he lets it go, but when he tries "to get physical with their player there are a lot of calls" (Conrad, L 409-412). His base strategy then is to try and talk to the opposing player and explain that they are doing the same thing he is, which often

leads to an explosive argument. The conflict is a direct result of a perceived violation of the rapport built between the opponents, which is strengthened throughout the game as the two competitors create a necessarily investigative, albeit antagonistic, relationship. Roger makes the most mention of this competitive attitude throughout his interview, but makes his most concise statement saying, “If someone wants to play really physical and they don’t want to make calls that’s fine with me, I want to play like that, but like, will like rub me the wrong way then like when someone wants to play really physical and then they’re being like a baby at the same time” (Roger, L 235-237). Again, reciprocity of the players’ competitive ethic is necessary for Roger to perceive his given opponent as playing fair.

The unknown element in each of these foul calls that transgress the rapport built between competitors is whether or not the opponent calling the foul is honoring his/her perspective. It can be understood that in each instance the four interviewees are assuming some malice or competition-driven strategy is the underlying reason for the foul call that they find frustrating. This is the complex idea of what Conrad calls the “battle of perceptions”. Under the guiding ethic of the sport, Spirit of the Game (SOTG), each player has the “responsibility for fair play...[and] adherence to the agreed upon rules,” which theoretically, *should* amount to a binding trust between two opponents (Ultimate Players Association, 2007). Therein lies the problem—each athlete is competing under the assumption that his or her opponent interprets the rules as (s)he does and intends to compete under the same moral and behavioral standard. Each of these Ultimate players react as if the person calling the foul against him or her is acting dishonestly because (s)he would not react in kind were the situation reversed. Trust between opponents, then,

becomes a difficult element to observe. Once an opponent shows that (s)he does not adhere to the same on-field propriety then distrust and conflict are free to enter the relationship. The point that neither competitor perceives his or herself to be acting immorally or against SOTG is moot. For each athlete perception is reality, and the difference of personal attitudes can either be celebrated as a reference for investigating the objective truth of the circumstance, or is a source of anger where the *battle of perceptions* must proclaim a victor.

**Ideas about Spirit of the Game.** It was decided early in Ultimate history that the sport was to be played as a gentleman's sport and therefore needed a guiding ethic to support and maintain that decision. Spirit of the Game has been a functioning monument in the sport of Ultimate since it was first written into the rules. It is a short paragraph prefacing each legislative document drafted by USAU (and all other Ultimate governments worldwide) and is a significant social totem in Ultimate.

The following are the personal definitions of SOTG provided by each athlete during the interview (in alphabetical order):

I know it's such a broad concept, but really I just think that...it's the player's responsibility to learn the rules so that they play by the rules so that they don't have to have someone else tell them that you know, they've broken the rules, I think it's a personal responsibility to try to do the right thing even in the heat of competition, which is a difficult thing, it's a difficult thing, everybody wants to win, even I want to win. (Clair, L 340-348)



I don't like to think of it as Spirit of the Game because I think that that is, it's kind of creating an unknowable, unsayable alternate to sportsmanship, and I just take it as sportsmanship, and like good sportsmanship, I don't think there necessarily needs to be this, this *specialized* idea of it for Ultimate. (Conrad, L 241-245)

I guess Spirit of the Game would to me be following the rules that are put forth by the organization....to interpret them fairly number one...respect your opponents, respect the game, respect the joy of competition...you have to be respectful of yourself as well...I mean just not being a douche bag, it's essentially what it is. (Eileen, L 175-201)

I guess my definition of Spirit of the Game would be respecting my opponent, my team mates and the game of Frisbee enough to make the right decision in specific circumstances that I'm involved in...for me it's more of a respect level than Spirit of the Game. (Ernesto, L 381-385)

Yeah, they have an actual definition of it and I don't really subscribe to that...my personal definition is that you just treat your opponent the same way you know, the same way he's been treating you...just give your opponent as much respect as he's giving you, however, unfortunately, a lot of competitors aren't respecting each other anymore. (Jack, L 269-304)

Spirit of the Game...has no real definition, it is your interpretation of what you think is fair at the moment, and lots of things go into that decision...if you're playing a team that is out to have it on every single foul call for you to make the same calls, because that's the Spirit of the Game that like they're setting for that game. (Roger, L 157-163)

The *battle of perceptions* can be better understood by intuitively analyzing each of the previous statements concerning SOTG and recognizing that the governing organization of Ultimate in the U.S. has very concisely and publicly defined the term for all players. Given that each athlete is redefining a public term it can be assumed that their response embodies their desire for all on-field behavior to follow suit. Considering Eileen's drive to maintain the livelihood of the 'old school' Ultimate ethic, her response displays the greatest adherence to a fundamentalist interpretation of SOTG, whereas Roger's contrasts it the most. Even though Roger does not attend to the finer points of SOTG, in his statement he recognizes the individuality inherent in self-officiating, providing each player license for "interpretation of what you think is fair" (Roger, L 157-158). An ill-natured game might fall under "Spirited" for Roger if both teams act reciprocally to that expected character of the game. Ernesto's definition, despite his conflict with the diction of "Spirit" (along with Conrad, Roger, and Jack), shares the most similarities with Eileen's fundamentalist interpretation. Both Eileen and Ernesto seek to afford respect to their opponent as well as the game itself, and trust in the autonomous player. The significant comment that separates Eileen's statement from Ernesto's is her mention of following the rules and giving them a fair interpretation. In that respect

Eileen's definition correlates to Clair's (her peer at the low end of the Competition Primacy Space).

Clair links following the rules to a duty of all players to maintain the health of the self-officiating system. One could gather from Clair's statement that if people (a) do not learn the rules, and (b) do not follow the rules then it becomes necessary for an external party to intervene for the sake maintain a fair competition. Ultimate cannot succeed as a self-officiated sport if the officials (players) are not knowledgeable of the rules. Some welcome the introduction of third-party officiators because of the benefit it will have for the progress of the sport. Conrad being the most vocal supporter of referees coming into the sport, believes that the current cultural interpretation of SOTG "hinders the idea of referees entering the picture" since Ultimate is defined by Spirit, and Spirit being something different than sportsmanship, Ultimate players will fear the withering of Spirit in the face of active third-party officials (Conrad, L 263-264).

**Perspectives on third-party officials.** Previously we have identified how each of these athletes navigates through competitive games, how they interact with opponents, and how perspective has the dualistic power to both convolute and enrich the on-field experience. The data also reveal study participants' feelings toward external actors entering the officiating system of Ultimate and the implications there entailed. In our group alone there are those who adamantly want referees to enter the sport (Conrad, Ernesto, and Roger) and those who adamantly oppose the introduction of referees to the game (Eileen and Clair).

We can represent Conrad's earlier comment here concerning SOTG stymieing the entrance of referees into high level Ultimate. He sees benefits in allowing players to play

a win-at-all-cost game, wanting to see how far the limits of competition and unmitigated high caliber play can take the sport. Conrad's aversion to the diction of *Spirit* is due in part to the cultural perception of the majority of players that "Spirit is somehow eliminated by refereeing" (Conrad, L 265-266). He is implying here that most Ultimate players would view the acceptance of referees into the system as a significant cultural restructuring that would contradict their current ethic. However, under Conrad's definition of Spirit this would not be the case. It is interesting that Ernesto, who would like to see the sport refereed along with Conrad, *does* foresee a newer, aggressive mentality seeping into the culture as a byproduct of referees becoming regular actors in the game. Ernesto adamantly believes that if the goal is to have Ultimate "more visible and at a more professional level, Observers aren't the answer, you have to get referees...you *have* to" (L 236-238). However, the attitudinal and behavior changes would be dramatic. For instance, players would be taught "to break the rules in a discrete way to where the referees don't see it," the game "certainly might get more physical and more aggressive," and "respecting the game...[is] not your responsibility anymore, your responsibility is to win the game...and you want to win the game at all costs" (L 246-248, 324-326, 265-269). If the sport went toward referees in place of self-officiating or Observer officiated games, Ultimate players would act more strategically in how they use the rules and use other players as a means to their competitive ends. The officiating structure of Ultimate in its current manifestation does allow for players to abuse the rules in certain ways (i.e. freedom of travel calls and in/out calls, among others), but he foresees an abuse of the rules under the referee guidance to take the form of strategic fouls, cheating discreetly, and excessive aggression. The underlying point is that he

perceives competition-primary attitudes seek a way to circumvent the rules in any system, whether that be a self-officiated or third-party officiated system. Respecting the game and your opponent is a necessary component of a successfully self-officiated game, but will be reduced if not diminished entirely with the introduction of referees.

Roger agrees with both Conrad and Ernesto that “Ultimate should have refs to make active calls,” but his opinion is less welded to the rationality of the sport’s prospective future as are the others, and is more a reaction to his distrust of other players (Roger, L 172). Whereas both Ernesto and Conrad believe the current system works but limits the potential growth of the sport, Roger “think[s] there are too many subjective calls” acted on under the attitude that if “you make a throw and you realize it’s probably not gonna be completed you’re gonna call a foul, and when someone makes an awesome throw that you see your guy’s beat on you’re probably gonna call a travel” (Roger, L 173, 194-197). He perceives that type of unchecked strategic call making occurs in “90 to 100% of all competitive games,” and is inspired by clutch, ‘do-or-die’ type of games where “the calls really matter” (Roger, L 189, 193). In other games when the score is severely slanted toward his team and they are “winning thirteen-one [they] discourage [their] players from making any kind of calls” (Roger, L 137-138). It would appear that Roger has deep rooted distrust of his competitors, and an awareness of pervasive cheating throughout the sport. He is a self-proclaimed “asshole” on the field who admits that he makes calls strategically in high competition scenarios (Roger L 231). He also believes that out of the seven opposing guys on the field at a given time, at least two will approach the game similarly to himself, while the other five are “out there to just play Ultimate and they want it to be a fair game,” but for most teams “you put your assholes on their

assholes to guard them and let them duke out the foul calling” (Roger, L 217-218, 227-228).

The mentality expressed and employed by Roger is the reason that Observers are necessary according to all of the research participants and USAU. Eileen believes the opposite of Roger, that there are very few people in the sport who use the rules and self-officiating structure maliciously or for strategic gain. “One of the things [she] love[s] so much about the game is that it is you know, *player oriented*, you *do* have to talk through this you know, or give your perspective and listen to theirs” (Eileen, L 544-547). Self-officiating and the culture wide ethic of self-imposed fair play is a commanding reason for her participation in the sport. Her positive on-field experiences and the valuable social experience the self-officiating system supports has led her to trust in and defend the officiating structure. Although she vigilantly resists active third-party officiating (primarily concerning contact between two players, but is further reaching), she has had many positive experiences with Observers and finds much utility in some of their responsibilities, namely calling in/out, time keeping, and passively making calls if needed by the acting competitors. Unanimously, every athlete interviewed cited some grievance against the way opponents use travel calls in games. Eileen was fortunate enough to have been coaching a college team who played in an experimental game where USAU was testing the efficiency and appreciation of Observer making active travel calls. With little more elaboration she stated “the travels [were] nice because they were calling them actively so you didn’t have to worry about it,” implying relief from the responsibility to make the call and also not have frivolous travel calls made against them (Eileen, L 532-533).

Jack's appreciation of Observers is very similar to Eileen's, diverging from congruency only on the topic of time keeping. Travel calls are a point of frustration to him because when an athlete "makes a spectacular throw...the natural reaction...is to just be like 'oh, you traveled'" and "that's what makes the game silly, and hard to watch at times"<sup>16</sup> (Jack, L 508-510, 512-513). Due to this dishonest, reactive strategy Jack believes Observers, not players, should possess the power to actively call travels. He has admitted that he has apologized to opponents for players on his own team for their use of obvious strategy calls. The negative side of Observer presence, which Jack admits is "a very tiny complaint," is "they are very militant and stern" regarding time maintenance. Because Jack's team was historically undermanned, rigid time keeping was a hindrance to his team's physical endurance.

Clair cannot easily be compared to the rest of the research group since she has never played in an Observed game, while each of the other research participants has played in a dozen or more. Clair remembers the early part of her Ultimate biography to have included much more cooperation and understanding between opponents than is displayed in the current culture. Remembering the way things were back in 1982, Clair recognizes that they were still trying to win the tournament, but if a travel were called back then a typical response would be "'okay, I did travel then, you're right, let's take it back and do it over again,'" whereas now and days "there's going to be an argument that might last five minutes" (L 268-279). Because this mentality has seeped into the Ultimate competitive culture, Clair understands that "at the higher level the Observers...have helped keep the game moving," though she is reticent to admit this (L 374-376). She recognizes that at the high levels of play athletes become blinded by the desire to win so

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<sup>16</sup> Consider Roger's quote above and his use of strategic travel calls.

desperately “that they cannot truly be objective in that particular situation” (L 371-374). Only once was a game Clair participated in offered Observers to oversee the game. Clair’s team as well as the opposing team, in the semi-final game at Club Nationals, refused to play under Observer authority and staged a ‘sit-down’ in protest. The UPA asked the Observers to watch the game from the sideline, but to stay uninvolved, after which the Observers commended the two teams on the well managed game and Spirited play. Oddly, Clair recognized that despite her consistent high-level play that Observers were never offered in any of her other games including regional championship games. She believes that women’s games are Observed with less frequency than men’s games having noticed Observers being sent to the men’s field of the same level of qualifying game. Eileen made the same observation. In addition to that commonality, both women believe that players in general go to an Observer so the Observers will tell the deferring player what (s)he wants to hear rather than wanting an objective opinion on the play. Clair specifically recalled two personal friends who became Observer certified and both men felt as though that was the way their perspective was treated each time a player asked for their involvement. The pervading ethic of self-officiating through moral integrity leads both Eileen and Clair to believe in the current officiating structure, but they both recognize other forces acting conversely to that traditional understanding between opponents. Observing then becomes necessary to help players remain honest, while not stripping the responsibility of self-regulation from them wholly.

**Examination of non-competition elements of Ultimate.** It is undeniable that some Ultimate players make self-officiating difficult to legitimize as the sport grows. What was once a sport known only to a group of twenty high school friends now has



grown into a sport played in more than twenty five industrialized countries. Along with the rapid increase in population comes inevitably more diversity of opinions on how the sport should be played, organized, and officiated. However, even to this day the population of the sport is still referred to as the *Ultimate community*, implying a culture of teaching and fraternity across social strata and geographic region. With the exception of Conrad, every research participant addresses the social qualities and benefits of the sport. Interaction with opponents Conrad leaves to on-field interaction. “It’s not really part of [his] focus to say ‘hi’ and buddy up to people before the game” (Conrad, L 454-455). After the contest is over he prefers to stay within his own team because “one team obviously won and one team lost,” so he sees no need for additional interaction to occur after the results are posted (Conrad, L 471-472). In competitive tournaments he focuses on the next step, and will put off having a conversation with some opponent for a time where he might run into them in a non-competitive environment. Conrad does not believe his approach to competition to be abnormal in the elite level, which is one of his arguments for introducing referees into his type of game. He feels comfortable and justified in his attitude because he surrounds himself with likeminded players.

For Clair, Ultimate is currently a project in communicating good morals to the next generation through cooperation, valuing multiple perspectives, and developing relationships. “[She] really believe[s] that if people know each other they’re not going to try to cheat against each other as often as they would cheat against a stranger,” so through knowing your opponent and creating in them a friend you will treat them more humanly than you would someone you have no relation with or name for (Clair, L 504-505). One of Clair’s beliefs is that “at the beginning of the game we should get to know each other

and at the end of the game we should say ‘it’s great to know you’” (Clair, L 486). Clair is aware that most of her social practices in the sport are rare and out dated, but are necessary in order to create far reaching community and social solidarity. Otherwise, teams isolate themselves from one another, creating a stronger sense of ‘us versus them,’ which easily allows more aggressive play and disregard for your opponent to enter the game.

A significant part of Eileen’s motivation to captain various levels of teams (elite club through recreational league) is ensuring people are “learning to love the game...[and] feel a sense of community” (Eileen, L 82-86). Through captaining she is provided the social stature necessary to maintain her ‘old school’ ethic. Authority is therefore concentrated in good moralistic hands. As a teacher by profession, the didactic attitude is common for Eileen to adopt and is the vehicle through which she guarantees the virility of her ideals. In addition, she and her partner traverse the globe during their summer break, scheduling their travels around Ultimate tournaments or events in effort to “build a larger community of international Ultimate players” (Eileen, L 64-65). Eileen reinforces Clair’s idea that people act more morally when competing against friends as opposed to strangers. For Eileen, her sense of regret is compounded when she makes a perceivably bad call on the field in the presence of friends. Roger too has shared that he is more disappointed in someone making what he considers to be a poor or illegitimate call if it is a person in the community who he likes and respects. Claiming to have friends across the region, including his university’s four main rival schools, Roger is more likely to feel regret after making a possibly erroneous call because of his friends being on the sideline who he met through involvement in the sport. These friends of Roger’s “are the

people that [he] 1) become[s] most disappointed in when they make a bad call, and...2) just, you want to hold like the same values to the game that you're holding, which goes back to 'one,' that's why you're so disappointed" (Roger, L 326-328). Relationships build expectations for fair play. Such is Clair's argument for athletes meeting and knowing each other prior to the competition. Although Roger never discussed meeting players from opposing teams like Clair did, his transcription contains many instances where he discusses personal relationships with opponents.

Jack's need for a positive social environment was evident in an earlier quote where he stated his preference for games where the attitude is good despite lower skills over games that are highly skilled but the common attitude is negative. The attitude of his opponent is very important to Jack much the same as it is for Eileen. Both of them are highly affected by external factors. With the exception of Clair, all athletes interviewed discussed prior athletic history as some base for comparison of the Ultimate experience. Jack has summarized through his experience with mainstream sports that "Frisbee is kind'a more of a social sport than other athletic activities" (Jack, L 314). He sees this as a designed experience goal of Ultimate tournament directors, saying,

I'm a tournament director myself, and every Ultimate Frisbee tournament director I've ever come across have wanted all their competitors to have a great time from top to bottom, beginning to the end of the weekend, you know I've never encountered that talking to people who organize baseball tournaments, basketball tournaments. (Jack, L 338-342)

He implies here that Ultimate tournaments have within them premeditated elements that perpetuate the communal culture of Ultimate and the vibrant social experience there

entailed. Organizing and running tournaments has become a mechanism for Jack to control the experience he and others have, allowing him to enjoy a highly social event as he desires out of an Ultimate tournament. The expectation of a social experience precedes Jack's tournament participation in much the same way that the highly competitive experience precedes Conrad's tournament participation.

**Significant ideas concerning Ultimate culture.**<sup>17</sup> Previously we have seen how Ultimate has been taught from one generation to the other. Clair has spent the last five years dedicated to teaching Ultimate to the youth of Texas with SOTG at the fore of her educational philosophy. For Clair, "learning the rules and actually playing by those rules, [she] think[s] there's a very valuable lesson learned in actually admitting that you've broken the rules" (Clair, L 639-640). Values are the principal lesson Clair teaches her youth players who she allows to compete as they see fit, but tries to root in them an unwavering respect for the game and their opponent. This educational strategy goes counter to what is sometimes encouraged in mainstream sports. Ernesto first mentioned being taught to cheat in basketball games by his coach in high school. Eileen took up the topic with what appeared to be frustration saying,

I grew up with like playing soccer, like you're taught how to cheat at like, whenever it goes out, because I played at a really high level, whenever it goes out put your hand up in your direction, or how to pull a jersey without the ref noticing, you know these are things we're taught, and *that's crazy, that's really crazy*, if you're trying to build good citizens of

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<sup>17</sup> In this last section I would like to address two isolated quotes that are especially far reaching beyond the choice words used to craft them. The following two block quotes are important to divide from the above narrative so that they are not lost within the bulk of this document, and are examined independently with the respect they merit.

the world, why in the world would you teach your children to take advantage of someone else or a game, a game which doesn't even matter.

(Eileen, L 230-236)

The impassioned remark from Eileen shows a deep internal belief in the ethical treatment of opponents. She considers using other actors in a game to satiate competitive goals to be abusive to the other athlete and teaches bad ethics which have significant consequences on the development of moral character. This statement implies that individuals who adhere to an ethic where cheating is morally acceptable are likely to act immorally in other aspects of their lives. Even though Eileen believes her drive to perform ethically on the field is bound to the social pressures of the Ultimate community and SOTG she shows an intrinsic disgust for cheating, especially when taught by a trusted authority figure.

The type of strategy Eileen was taught as a soccer player, Ernesto believes will invade team and personal strategy should active third-party officials take control of game regulation. Having been one of the few Ultimate players in the US to have competed in a refereed game before, Ernesto has firsthand experience to support his stance on referees entering the sport. Concerning the topic, he provided us with one of the most convoluted and complex statements gathered across the interviews (if one recalls his belief that referees are requisite for Ultimate to become a professional sport):

I do love the sport the way it currently is, I think if you start adding referees it would for sure change the whole dynamic of the way teams strategize and the way your mental approach is to the game...I guess I would probably like to see Ultimate get to a point where it is a

professional sport, though not for me, I don't think it will happen while I'm playing Frisbee, um so I guess if I wanted to see that I would be in favor of referees...but for me I'd prefer the way it is now. (Ernesto, L 299-208)

This quote is enigmatic on multiple fronts; (a) Ernesto is candidly professing his satisfaction with the current system while readily wanting change, (b) he shows concern for his experience playing Ultimate, but shows little to no regard for how future generations will derive meaning from the game he is so devoted to, (c) he makes long-sighted assumptions on how professional status will affect the development of the sport, but does not desire the changes that he predicts. As an Observer himself, Ernesto has faith in the training certified Observers must undergo; however, he and Conrad both comment on the varying quality of Observers, and the detriment to the game brought on by an Observer with subpar officiating abilities. In his experience, Ernesto believes that upper level games are well observed and need no additional structural modification in order for the games to succeed. His qualms with Observers being inferior to referees, in respect to Ultimate becoming a professional sport, are married to his preconceived expectation for professional sports viewership. Since no other professional sport is modeled under the same system as Ultimate he does not see that the sport can ascend to the professional level without adapting to the common officiating model. Ernesto makes little to no overt statement as to why he prefers the current system, and leaves much to inference. It can be assumed that Ernesto enjoys the autonomy he is granted by self-officiating, and would like to maintain the personal responsibility to act morally in the heat of competition, which he constantly strives to do.

## **Conclusion**

At the beginning of chapter II the primary research question was articulated as follows: an exploration of Ultimate players' attitudes toward self- and third-party officiating in the sport of Ultimate, their actions and the attendant or emergent systems of relations within both systems. To gather information that would illuminate the unknowns of this 'exploration,' interview questions were crafted with the intent to extract from the participant experiences of navigating the officiating system and how interaction within the community affects meaning construction and behavior.

Interpretation of the officiating system is the principal concern of this study, and naturally was the topic most thoroughly investigated during each interview. It should be understood that the system of self-officiating a) requires verbal interaction between opponents in order to succeed as an applied officiating structure, and b) confirms the presence of some form of conflict between actors for which the system is necessary to help negotiate. All conflict arbitration between two athletes should be seen as an exercise of the officiating system, and is otherwise only altered with the introduction of a third-party actor installed for officiating means (i.e. Observer or referee), which itself is of relative interest. Therefore, a single response may provide insight to more than one of the subsidiary research questions. An experiential understanding of the officiating system was explored through such interview questions as:

- Describe differences in player attitudes and behavior across the various forms of Ultimate (pickup, league, competitive club, etc.) you have played.
- What is your personal definition of Spirit of the Game?

- Do you apply SOTG on the field?
- How do you typically react when faced with a foul call?
- Have you ever regretted a call that you have made on the field?
  - Did you try to rectify that regret?
- Have you ever played a game with Observers present?
  - Has an Observer ever overturned a call you have made?
  - Do you think Observer presence influences player interaction? How?

An example of the interview process working overtly to investigate the research questions is the general opinion of, and experience with Observers asked of each athlete. Every participant had at least some exposure to Observers, which became a deep focus of conversation during each interview. Clair, for instance, recalled being offered Observers only once in her thirty year long Ultimate career. She draws a speculative conclusion as to why none of her other games were offered Observers despite playing in semi-final and final games, her gender. Clair recalls there being an insufficient amount of Observers at past tournaments to officiate all the games, but if there were Observers to be appropriated they always were sent to the men's fields.

Clair's account of her experience with Observers vivifies her opinion of self-officiating for the reader. Her protesting Observer involvement showed a deep reverence for and belief in the self-officiating system, which is consistent throughout Clair's transcription. Such statements as, "I think definitely Ultimate is controlled by Spirit of the Game, and I think that people who play Ultimate take a certain amount of pride in playing a sport where we don't have referees, where we say that we're self-regulated," as well as, "I think if you can teach a person to just respect the value of competition,



win/loss, you know then it's gonna effect and enhance their lives," articulate her personal reasons for enjoining the sit-down protest in 2003 (Clair, L 389-391, 448-449).

A less obvious link to the appreciation of the officiating structure of Ultimate can be found in questions pertaining to the social elements of the sport. Jack was one participant who referred often to social and behavioral dimensions being different in Ultimate than in other sports. For instance, his opinion that Ultimate is a more social sport than the others he has participated in is understood as a cultural element consciously created by tournament directors. This phenomenon of high social interaction is constantly reinforced in the tournaments he both organizes and participates in as a demand of the athletes participating in the event and a goal of the tournament directors. Although the obvious link to the officiating system is hard to derive from Jack's experience, multiple participants discuss the requirement of engaging opponents during conflict arbitration, and how tournament based interaction has fostered longstanding relationships. Such instances help us create a more whole picture of Ultimate culture and the expectations for experience that are maintained by individuals participating in the sport described in the *Findings* section above.

## V. Discussion and Conclusion

### A summary of the Study

Up to this point in the study we have become familiar with Ultimate as a sport with a diverse roster of personalities and opinions in its participants, having seen how those personalities must work within the self-officiating system in order for successful competition to occur. The six research participants have introduced us to varying ideas about self-officiating, interpersonal interaction, and personal meaning construction among many other emergent thoughts, which elaborate on the history of the sport and inform its current cultural state. As we can understand from Clair's interview, Ultimate is most definitely different now than it was in the 1980's.

**Background and theory.** Ultimate is changing, this much we know. When this study first began in January 2010, Ultimate in North America was governed by the Ultimate Players Association. As of May 25, 2010, four months after work had begun on this project, Ultimate in the United States became governed by USA Ultimate, representing a new corporate identity that replaced the UPA brand known to Ultimate players for the last thirty years. Nevertheless, the sport is still self-officiated and publicly governed by Spirit of the Game. The meaning derived from these two institutions is significant for a large population of the Ultimate community, as discussed by Conrad who understands the majority of Ultimate players resist the introduction of referee because of the high degree of value Ultimate players place on self-regulation as a defining characteristic of the sport. Clair supports this claim by arguing that Ultimate

players take pride in being able to say that they play a sport that is self-officiated. With arguably the two most defining aspects of the sport still intact it is understandable that some may not see the changes in the sport very clearly, or may dismiss the nuances they do see as passing whims of broader social motions in Texas. Either way, as we have learned from the data amassed there are many points of contest in how athletes understand the sport to be in its current manifestation.

In *Ultimate: The First Four Decades*, Leonardo and Zagoria describe the officiating structure as being a topic of debate since the sport's inception, and oddly (concerning the impassioned opinions the officiating structure currently inspires), the sport was originally established as an externally officiated sport. The first edition rules written in 1970 state: "A referee or referees may officiate, and if so their decision must be final. If no referee is available the two teams play on the honor system and may settle disputes by flipping a coin" (Leonardo & Zagoria, 2005). Only after Ultimate grew to contain a diversity of opinions did the sport solidify into its current officiating system of strict self-regulation where the introduction of third-party officials requires an "Ultimate friendly" version of external authority that is specific to the sport—the Observer. All the same, the above quote concerning how the game should be played if no referee was present, "on the honor system," is the anchoring point for the current system of self-officiating.

Ultimate is currently played in over twenty countries<sup>18</sup> and is being further divided into smaller categories of competition including Junior Worlds and Under 23 Worlds. As Ultimate grows bureaucratic complexities will increase exponentially to provide consistent organization and control for the sport. The current climate of Ultimate

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.wfdf.org/index.php?page=ranking/wucc2010\\_final.htm](http://www.wfdf.org/index.php?page=ranking/wucc2010_final.htm)

was the topic of interest throughout the study, and will serve as a basis for comparison as the sport expands and subsequent research is embarked upon to investigate similar themes in the sport as have been discussed in this research.

In chapter I *meaning* was defined as “the personal constructs and interpretations of reality developed through the fluid interaction of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional processes in the contexts of the external world,” and was significantly expanded upon in the review of literature. Meaning is the basis of *the theory of communicative action* and is the creational force that provided the depth of responses sourced from the research participants. Invariant constituents were isolated as individual experiences where meaning could be identified, categorized and later described for its necessity for an individual’s interpretation of objective life events. Communication acts between two individuals requires the expression, exchange, and internalization of personal meaning in a fluid cycle often without the conscious mind ever aware of the complex transaction occurring. Habermas discussed communication acts as resulting from two general sources—investigations of truth (communicative rationality) or exploitation for strategic gain (instrumental reason). Communicative rationality is a required cognitive approach towards another actor with whom you are communicating for the purpose of reaching genuine accord. No ulterior motive can be present that would detract from the sincerity of the previously mentioned communicative aim. If strategies—any psychological device used to inspire an emotional response in the receiver—are employed in a communication act, (s)he who is acting strategically cannot be seeking uninhibited truth in the situation.

**Findings.** The cohort whose data substantiates this investigation comes from an assortment of backgrounds and early exposures to the sport. Collegiate Ultimate

participation and UPA/USAU nationals participation are the two most unifying experiences within the group of participants as only one athlete is precluded from each association (Clair from collegiate participation and Jack from nationals participation). Examining early Ultimate experience was important to establish the argument for how formative years help inform attitudes and behaviors in future Ultimate participation. Most participant athletes gained fluency in Ultimate culture during collegiate participation. What was discovered was that the subpopulation of players each athlete was exposed to left a standing influence on the individual's current behaviors and attitudes toward Ultimate. Jack proved to be a unique exception seeing as though he had played for years prior to his college Ultimate career, providing him a diversity of experience unknown to other participants. By directing attention to the early years of an athlete's participation in Ultimate we can make assertions about the formation of meaning constructs as one is introduced to the sport, as well as how those meanings inform current attitudes toward the sport.

As one moves up or down the Competition Primacy Space (CPS) there was a division in the research participants' appreciation of games concerning what 'type' of player each athlete prefers to play a game with. The athletes at the upper end of the CPS (Conrad, Roger, and Ernesto) prefer to play games with athletes who prove to possess similar skills to their own. On the other hand, Jack, Eileen, and Clair have shown that they are content playing games regardless of skill level so far as the on-field attitude is to his or her liking. For the latter three, the participatory experience holds importance over the competitive experience. However, each athlete described actively seeking a *preferred* experience while attempting to avoid an *undesired* experience. Prioritization of

preference entails the cognitive assignment of meaning values to different experiences. For an athlete to seek one experience over another (s)he is referencing an internal construct of meaning previously established through interaction with the objective world.

Considering the exploratory aim of the study, the investigation of meaning construction circling the officiating structure was the main point of interest. Each athlete described ethical and unethical behavior that either they partook in or observed in others' behavior. Spirit of the Game (SOTG), which serves as the guiding ethic of Ultimate, was described differently by each participant despite them all being aware that SOTG has a formal definition established by USAU. The expressed definitions mirrored the on-field behaviors and approaches to competition consistent in each athlete's data. Third-party intervention is reacted to differently by each participant, though the majority of athletes responded favorably to their employment in games. Observer use is more common in tournaments today as Clair's account has shown us. USA Ultimate is actively seeking out more efficient strategies of officiating, which can be seen in the now four Observers required during the national finals as indicated by Ernesto.

Despite the differences in opinions concerning Observer involvement, every research participant described some form of cheating in the game that (s)he personally observed. Conrad and Roger both admit to not honoring his perspective in a given situation to satisfy a competitive goal. Both athletes in this case express personal meaning of justifiable behavior that can be interpreted in a multitude of ways specific to those other actors involved in the situation, establishing a transactional exchange of personal meanings from opponent to opponent. The presence of cheating such as confessed to by Conrad and Roger makes trusting opponents difficult for many athletes. Multiple

participants refer to the “unknowns” of the sport where human error can easily seep into a decision made by an athlete. Eileen emerged as the most forgiving of athletes, relying heavily on the perspective of her opponent in order to best uncover the objective facts of an on-field occurrence.

Noncompetition dimensions of an Ultimate experience were expressed by all athletes interviewed; however, there were those who dismissed those elements or severely downplayed their importance in his or her motivation for participation in a game. Conrad was the most notable athlete who did not desire to fraternize with opponents and made short mention of any positive aspect of Ultimate community. This does not assert that he does not socialize with Ultimate players definitively, but he very clearly places competition at the fore of his motivating factors of play. Conrad’s evaluation of the significance of socializing through Ultimate did not yield significant meaning value to motivate him to act more sociably in the context of an Ultimate experience. Other athletes fondly discuss the personal benefits of joining in the lively social culture of Ultimate. Jack for instance, discussed how each tournament director he had interacted with wanted the athletes participating in his/her tournament to have a positive social experience to complement their athletic/competitive experience. Therefore, the tournament structure, as Jack understands it, is very socially driven.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

In the following section we will relate the findings exhibited in chapter 4 back to the Habermasian paradigm and take a critical look at what the data mean to the future of the sport. Clair’s perspective has proven invaluable because she argues often the differences between today’s Ultimate culture and that of the past. Having that basis for

comparison allows me to make more informed assumptions about the cultural progress of the sport founded in the perspective and recollection of someone who participated in the sport throughout the 1980's and beyond. After discussing the existence of communicative action and different argumentative rationalities in on-field interaction in Ultimate, I will draw some conclusions about the trajectory of the sport if it remains consistent on its current path.

**Communicative action in the on-field experience.** I will be so bold to say that the attending pages are not an argument for the presence of *communicative action* in Ultimate, but rather, they are an examination of the current health of communicative action in the sport. A patient examination of the history of the sport, its officiating system and common cultural ethics yields an understanding that Ultimate has a longstanding tradition of communicative action. Spirit of the Game (SOTG) is a statement expressly encouraging the on-field application of communicative action. Additionally, SOTG provides us with a stark opposition to some of the more severe sports related byproducts of strategic action. For example, if one recalls from the introduction of Habermas in chapter II, strategic action is an act designed to exert some form of influence on another person for self gain, typically provoking fear or desire in the recipient. Contained in the four short sentences of SOTG are five specific actions that should be avoided by all athletes: taunting opposing players, dangerous aggression, belligerent intimidation, intentional infractions, or other “win-at-all-costs” behaviors. Self-serving strategy is the root of each aforementioned behavior cautioned against by the government of the sport, representing professed meaning that is culturally significant. Communicative action, however, can be understood as the foundational structure of the positive expectations



outlined in the clause such as personal responsibility for fair play, mutual respect among competitors, and adherence to the agreed upon rules.

The last ethical expectation stated, *adherence to the agreed upon rules*, is the most literal evocation of Habermas' theory of communicative action, being bound to both truth and mutual understanding which we know to be requirements of a genuine communicative act. Not without its reasons, "adherence to the agreed upon rules" is also the cultural expectation that provokes the greatest amount of controversy and contention amongst players. Addressed previously in the results section of chapter 4, the most consistent point of frustration for each participant athlete of the study was when (s)he perceived that his/her opponent was not honoring the objectivity of their (the opponent's) own perspective, and therefore the opponent was not adhering to the agreed upon rules. Perception and trust are key to a successful communicative act. If trust is not reciprocated between opponents then strategic action is at play in the illocutionary exchange. There entailed, one or another opponent is not adhering to the agreed upon rules. Whether or not either actor believes (s)he is not honoring his/her objective perspective of the play in contest is superfluous. If one of the two actors perceives a lie exists in the argument of his/her competitor then communicative action cannot exist. The required presence of "truth" in communicative rationality will be examined in the following section.

**Truth and consensus in meaningful discourse.** The word *knowledge* itself commonly invokes a degree of authority and objective truth, yet knowledge is a creation of human understanding and is bound to imagination. Knowledge has a fluid life in the perception of the human mind. As new information is presented, knowledge is created, deconstructed, or otherwise reformed into a new rendering of personal conviction. In the

sport of Ultimate Frisbee, a fact of occurrence does exist. When a foul is called, in context of the stated rules it either did or did not occur, so the objective facts of the play do exist in the world. There is a correct ruling that can be made of the circumstance because of the objectivity of action. However, as humans we are fallible and constrained to our own perceived knowledge of the play. “Knowledge” does not preclude accuracy from existing in an athlete’s perception of an on-field situation, but neither does it confirm the objective facts of the circumstance. Since we have no way of accessing the objective vantage of an isolated play during a live game (short of video documentation found in some rare cases), the accumulation of facts aimed at piecing together the best interpretation of a situation is left to the agreed upon perspectives of players. The patterns of dialogue then, dictate how an event is interpreted, related, and settled.

For a rational statement to be made, the speaker must have sufficient knowledge and conviction to defend his statement. Explanation, grounded in honest interpretation, becomes a forging tool in successfully communicating an idea to another actor. In making a rational statement one is defending the point of interest’s authenticity in the objective world. Referring to communicative action, rational statements are those that are not conceived in error, and when contested, can be explicated with support from personal accounts of an event. Habermas describes a need for “truth” to exist in a rational argument. Here, argumentation is not resolvedly coupled to “dispute,” but should be thought of as the process of reaching agreement. A rational argument requires two essential elements, truth and effectiveness. In *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume One* Habermas states, “as *truth* is related to the existence of states of affairs in the world, *effectiveness* is related to interventions in the world with whose help states of

affairs can be brought into existence” (Habermas, 1984, p.9). Communicative rationality, therefore, cannot exist under any known falsehood of the circumstance. The truth inherent in rational argument is necessary to effectively reach consensus between two actors. Habermas goes on to say, “anyone who systematically deceives himself about himself behaves irrationally,” removing any belief in a falsehood to the realm of irrationality (Habermas, 1984, p.21).

The rules of a Frisbee game can never prevent a player from either believing a falsehood or lying for personal gain, both of which would eliminate the possibility of him or her arguing rationally in a contested violation. Rational arguments can be effective in reaching accord on-field if both players approach the situation seeking truth. Expecting that an opponent is acting truthfully is where many Ultimate players depart from rationality and operate under an attitude that (s)he alone possesses the objective truth of the situation and the opponent is arguing for his/her strategic self-gain. The preface to the 11<sup>th</sup> edition rules describes an expectation that players act honestly and not utilize false arguments that would provide a player/team strategic gain:

The *Official Rules of Ultimate 11th Edition* describes how the game is played. It is assumed that no player will intentionally violate the rules; thus there are no harsh penalties for inadvertent infractions, but rather a method for resuming play in a manner that simulates what most likely would have occurred absent the infraction. In Ultimate, an intentional infraction is considered cheating and a gross offense against the spirit of sportsmanship. Often a player is in a position to gain an advantage by committing an infraction, but that player is morally bound to abide by the

rules. The integrity of Ultimate depends on each player's responsibility to uphold the Spirit of the Game™, and this responsibility should remain paramount.<sup>19</sup>

By declaring the “integrity of Ultimate” to be in jeopardy if communicative rationality is not adhered to, the preface implores each opponent to rational argumentation. In this statement, “integrity of Ultimate” should be interpreted by the reader to imply the self-officiating structure of the sport. The integrity, that which gives the sport form, of Ultimate is inextricably bound to the processes of play, which includes the means of officiating. What can be derived from the argument above is that if strategic rationality is employed by just one of the actors in a situation, true consensus cannot be reached; therefore, one player/team is placed at an advantage through intentional or unintentional means.

**Communicative action in thought and practice.** Like many things, communicative action is easier to maintain as a theoretical ideal than exhibit in practical behavior. If taken in a pragmatic sense, communicative action is bound to morally sound rationality, making successful argumentation contextually constrained to *rightness* of thought. During locution each party must believe (s)he is being acted towards *rightly*. What is meant here is that the perceptions of the individual, developed through experience, creates an understanding of whether or not (s)he is being treated *right* in a communicative exchange. What we learned from multiple sources in the data is that being treated *rightly* on the Ultimate field requires a belief that an opposing athlete is adhering to the rules of the game, and that that opponent is not attempting to manipulate the rules for strategic gain. This communicative approach precludes both self-deception

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.upa.org/ultimate/rules/11th>

of the objective real-world situation, or an attempted reconfiguration of truth to deceive one's opponent.

Eileen exemplifies the greatest adherence to communicate rationality in her on-field interactions out of the collected sample. While drawing a correlation between her respect for diverse perspectives and her profession as a history teacher, Eileen discussed how “multiple perspectives need to be taken into account for any decision to be made” (Eileen, L 598-599). To buttress her opinion of multiple performative perspectives being needed to produce an accurate rendering of the occurrence, she “think[s] it's ridiculous to have an outside person make a decision for a situation they were not involved in...which is not accurate at all really when you're talking about tenths of a second” (Eileen, L 510-512). Constative discourse, in Eileen's perspective, cannot loan space to the rationality of an actor external to the experienced situation. Her approach to individuals with whom a contested foul occurs is toward seeking an accurate assessment of the questionable event. Eileen removes the objectivating perspective to that of absurdity, arguing that “it's almost ludicrous to have the expectation that the human eye would be able to detect something like a foul, you know consistently and accurately” (Eileen, L 495-497).

Throughout Jack's interview he made multiple references to showing “humanity” when interacting with opponents after contention enters the communication plane of the interaction (Jack, L 265, 582). In the context of Jack's speech, “humanity” embodies a truth or understanding seeking character, where two athletes should be able to approach each other without personal agenda seeping into argumentation. By referencing situations where he believed interaction void of strategy-driven motivation should occur, but did not, Jack shows himself to be highly affected by individuals who don't approach

argumentation with the goal of reaching understanding. For example, when describing his orientation to SOTG versus conflicting orientations he commented that “it’s an added kick in the face whenever there’s some kind of negative scene that happens in the course of the day and you just can’t resolve things that evening, you know just work things out like gentlemen” (Jack, L 321-324). This type of interaction helps illustrate how the priority of competitive expectations can in times deflect any other ideas from interrupting the competitive rationality.

**Examination of strategic action and its on-field use.** For some, prioritizing self-oriented goals can inhibit his/her ability to respond rationally to the argument of an opponent. Meaning values are then reorganized to fit the context of the occasion, constituting a personal restructuring of meaning as experience changes situationally.

Conrad remarks that:

Once you get to these games that are much more highly contested with people, working out for six months to get to this point you know, you know they’ve made five trips across the country that year to make sure that their team was well positioned for this one run at a first place...that’s when I think that it might be interesting for people to have that third-party to rely on. (Conrad, L 631-636)

The previous statement supports the claim that competition impedes communicative rationality from being employed in discourse if the stakes of winning are high enough. In the above case, Conrad would prefer to remove communication between opponents entirely to allow for unmitigated prioritization of self-serving strategy. By disengaging from the opponent one does not have to entertain the idea that the person (s)he is in

contest against is going to hold one accountable to the rules. Instrumental reason can then take precedent in all on-field action, because no performative actor can be held accountable by another performative actor.

In general, it is difficult to maintain strong communicative action all the time. As fallible beings, we fall victim to social patterns unsupportive of communicative rationality when we perceive an end would be easier obtained through less than honest means. That is not to say that the end would not be obtainable if genuine communicative acts ensued, but strategic rationality may prove thrifty in obtaining the coveted product quicker or with expending fewer opportunity costs. While Ernesto and Eileen both observed that they may or may not have acted entirely honestly in an on-field occurrence, neither of them can be said to have employed strategy in illocutionary acts to gratify their competitive lusts based on the information they provided during their respective interviews.

On the other hand, Roger has shown resource in crafting his arguments to gain advantage in certain on-field situations. He describes that as a handler<sup>20</sup> “[he] feel[s] more the pressure to, like, control the game...part of [which] is dictating the pace maybe through foul calls” (Roger, L 129-130). He goes on to say—

If you throw a throw and it’s a good throw and you get fouled, a lot of times you don’t call the foul to keep the pace going, a lot of time when you want to slow the game down you call like disc space, just calls that don’t really

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<sup>20</sup> *Handler* is one of the three main offensive positions in Ultimate, and is generally considered to be one of a small group of persons who controls the possession of the disc most regularly for a given team. A handler is typically expected to maintain a close proximity to the disc as it moves around the field since (s)he is relied upon to have sound throws and has proven (s)he is dependable with maintaining his/her teams possession of the disc.

affect the game, but it's really to slow the pace down.

(Roger, L 131-134)

Instrumental reason is adopted in situations such as that above when strategy is the underlying point of bringing an infraction to the attention of the other players. Clair believes that it does an injustice to lesser skilled teams when superior Ultimate clubs choose not to call an infraction of the rules because the better team decides it is either a) not worth the time expenditure to call the infraction, or b) they do not deem their opponent "worthy" of the attention calling such an infraction would afford. Roger admits that he has coached his team not to make calls in situations where his team is winning significantly over an opponent, while he also recognizes that in games with a skillful adversary he employs a significant amount of strategy in the calls he makes. Strategic action does not necessarily indicate an increase in behavior driven toward self gain. In the aforementioned scenario Roger adopts a strategic action orientation by not addressing an infraction even if he believed it occurred. The satiation of individual goals is what strategic action seeks to accomplish; therefore, not acknowledging an infraction is an example of an actor not honoring his/her perspective.

While Roger is the most forthcoming of the participants concerning the use of strategy in call making and argumentation, the majority of athletes interviewed believe that Roger's behavior is common, which justifies their distrust in opponents. Athletes who do not trust their opponents would be better served by a third-party officiating system. Due to their distrust in their opponents it is easier for those athletes to receive information from an objectivating actor who is responsible for being both impartial and accurate, rather than a performative perspective that may be employing strategy for self-



gain. Above, we sampled from Conrad's interview his perspective that in the final rounds of high stakes tournaments referees would be serve a unique purpose. It can be interpreted from Conrad's statement that he believes goal oriented strategy is too common to ignore in games where the outcome of victory is the top priority for both teams to the extent that relying on the perspective of an opponent is irrational.

### **Implications of the Findings**

At the very end of her interview Eileen described watching a semifinal game in the open division of this past 2010 club nationals tournament. She discussed watching the game and "a foul was made, or a disc came in and he got a D, and the guy caught it and was like I'm gonna call a foul [very impassioned] *instantly, didn't even look at the guy*, didn't even look at the opponent who called 'foul' and just turned strait to the Observer and said 'what do you think'" (Eileen, L 557-560). The fact that the athlete showed no concern for the opinion of the opponent Eileen considered a gross transgression against SOTG and the traditional processes of Ultimate. "It takes away the responsibility of the players to work it out" when Observers allow players to automatically defer to them without requiring the opponents to discuss the play in earnest (Eileen, L 556-557). This action witnessed by Eileen, though she claims to have never observed such behavior before, cannot be tolerated if self-officiating is to succeed as the regulatory structure of Ultimate. By disengaging from the communicative requirements of self-officiating and immediately referring to an Observer for a ruling, the competitor has removed his opponent from the participatory experience of self-regulation. The performative attitude is completely eliminated from the judgment process and one of the two actors decided that the objectivating position of the Observer should decide the accuracy of the

contested circumstance. This is utterly contradictory to the way the current system is described in the rules and Observer's manual, which states "an Observer's paramount consideration is to help players uphold the Spirit of the Game,"<sup>21</sup> strongly discouraging the action displayed in this situation.

Dishonesty in sports is not something that can be stifled by the addition of rules no matter how dense and complex any rule book becomes. Instrumental reason will always have its place in athletics so long as there are people in a given competition who rationalize its use. Ernesto helps us understand that regardless of the officiating system, personalities prone to evading rules will find a way to satisfy the ends they are trying to meet by any means necessary. It is a cultural choice of Ultimate players whether or not to accept that mentality as part of the self-officiating system and remain self-regulated but admit that there are people in the sport who will abuse the system, or to relinquish personal accountability for the more common structure of American sports. In the small sample of Ultimate players discussed in this study we know that there are players who abuse the rules for strategic gain, and those who admonish such behavior. It is necessary to observe that throughout all the interviews collected, not one participant described physical violence on the field or a game devolving through conflict to the point where it could not be played out to completion, indicating that there are limits to how far instrumental reason can take the competitive spirit.

In my personal experience I had a similar moment of surprise concerning recent on-field behavior. On May 31, 2010, five days after the UPA became USAU, I sat at home watching the 2010 USAU College Championships Open Finals between the

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<sup>21</sup> Ultimate Players Association Observer Manual (Revised January 2010), p. 3, *Observer Code of Conduct, Spirit of the Game*

University of Florida and Carrolton College streaming live on my laptop. The play was impressive to say the least, but I was taken aback by the conduct exhibited by both teams as well as the Observers involved. In my own Ultimate career I have played in no fewer than twenty Observer officiated games, and have had contested fouls overturned by Observers even when I felt steadfast and convicted of the accuracy of my side of the debate. However, never have I witnessed an Observer distribute a Personal Misconduct Foul or Team Misconduct Foul in a game that I have either participated in or watched as a spectator prior to watching that particular collegiate finals game. During the 2010 collegiate open finals each team received three Team Misconduct Fouls at which point a “misconduct penalty” was assigned and field position assessed in accordance with the “Components of the Misconduct System” dictated in the Observers Manual (p.25). While watching this I could only assume what was happening had to be one of the following phenomena:

- The Observers officiating the game were being newly assertive in their roles compared to my previous exposure to their intervention in games, constituting a refocusing of their intended presence on the field.
- The players were playing inordinately aggressively, therefore requiring an *unusual* amount of Observer intervention to preemptively quell an explosive situation.
- The players, on some plane of consciousness, decided to relinquish the responsibility of fair play to the authority of the Observers, committing their motivation wholly to the competitive strategy of the game.

- There has been a broad cultural shift in collegiate Ultimate toward the strategic rationality of mainstream competitive sports that I was previously unaware of.

As I watched I began to think that Ultimate may be changed forever. The on-field behavior was unprecedented. That is not to say that the way the athletes competed was previously unheard of, but how the argumentation was arbitrated and then decided I had never previously witnessed.

### **Contributions to Knowledge**

During an early examination of the current literature on Ultimate, no phenomenological investigation of the common behaviors of Ultimate culture was found. The results of this study help us to understand the meanings players derive from interaction in the sport and how participant athletes interpret the officiating system that they play within. The impassioned well articulated opinions of participant athletes of the sport produced a depth of information that could provide valuable insight for future researchers. Research participants in general were very energetic about discussing this sport which is such a large part of their lives. Collecting Ultimate player's perspectives in the degree that the data amassed provides a snapshot of how the sport was played and understood by multiple athletes with different backgrounds. This study, benchmarked in 2010, can also be used in the future as basis for a comparative study.

My research owes a great debt to William J. Morgan's essay, *Habermas on Sports: Social Theory from a Moral Perspective*, which inspired my interest in and use of Habermas' *theory of communicative action* in approaching the subject matter of on-field action in Ultimate. Considering the conflict nature of sports, it is surprising that Habermas has not addressed the place of athletic competition in the leisure life of society

himself (Morgan, 2004). I feel fortunate to be able to contribute to Morgan's work on understanding contemporary sports through a position of Habermasian argument.

A useful model provided by this study is a compact investigation of constitutive dimensions of meaning. Once compiled, the model assembled elements of meaning into a dynamic interpretation useful for this project. The dimensions and relations of meaning discussed might provide insightful reference for future researchers interested in qualitative analysis of similar problems.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As an active Ultimate player myself I have a current understanding of the culture and state of administrative motions, which has assisted in me in being able to relate and interpret the ideas expressed by the research participants. Over the last decade I have participated in two national tournament, competitive collegiate and club tournaments, recreational leagues, regular weekly pickup games, and over twenty Observer officiated games. This past year I received the Spirit of the Game award for my team at the USAU National Club Championship in Sarasota, Florida. Despite my personal aversion to the expansion of Observer authority in on-field action, I have made effort to fairly report and assess the opinions of research participants favoring their use in games at the upper levels of competition (i.e. regional and national title games). The athletes interviewed unanimously desire expanded Observer intervention in the game concerning active travel calls and time/line keeping. On the subject of referees, Eileen and Clair adamantly admonish the idea of the former entering the sport while Ernesto, Roger, and Conrad all desire referee introduction. Jack did not express his opinion for or against the introduction of referees. Every athlete interviewed encouraged the implementation of

active travel calls by Observers and I have made effort to report that position accurately. I am left to defend their position regardless of my own. On the subject of referees, because there are those players who are energetically opposed to referee introduction, aligning with my own objections, I cannot support referee inclusion in the officiating of the sport.

I was introduced to the sport of Ultimate when I was in middle school and continued to play regular recreational pickup games until late high school when I was introduced to league Ultimate. During my final two years of high school I organized multiple teams composed of my friends and classmates to compete in various leagues and tournaments. After high school I was recruited to play for the University of North Texas where I was president of the club for the duration of my time at the university. I have continued to play recreational and league Ultimate, and have been a youth Ultimate sponsor since my undergraduate studies. Regardless of my own affiliations with the sport, the information was presented in this document with as little concern for my personal opinion as possible. As a verification strategy I have included the lines of each quote which can be cross-referenced with the transcription of each participant's interview in the appendix.

### **Validation Strategies**

The two primary validation strategies used to support data analysis were rich description and an external audit. Phenomenological analysis itself encourages rich description throughout the nine step process as outlined in chapter 3. Generation of textural and structural descriptions for each research participant, and the integration of each document into one whole composite description, yields a dense illustration of experiences. An extensive description of each participant experience was presented and

later compared and corroborated with the other participants' narratives. This process produced a depth of character for each.

Additionally, an Ultimate player with no prior exposure to the research was asked to audit my use of participant perspectives. He examined the data for accuracy, attending to how the use of quotes matched up with the original intent expressed in each participant's transcription throughout chapter's 4 and 5. Any misuse of quoted material he uncovered was addressed and either struck from the document if found to be an abuse of perspective or rephrased if the quote was a semantic mistreatment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One noticeable shortcoming of my study is the category of research participants. I believe my sample displays a wealth of diverse perspectives and experiences, however, all research participants currently compete at comparable levels/venues of competition with the exception of Clair. There are large populations of Ultimate players not represented in the included sample. Some of those populations include youth Ultimate players, athletes who exclusively play recreational or league Ultimate, collegiate exclusive players, and those club players who do not entertain realistic national directed ambitions. By limiting the study to Texas I was only able to include perspectives specific to the region. It is possible that different attitudes are socially maintained in different regions of the United States and would require research specifically centered in those geographic areas outside of the means of this study.

### **Recommendations**

It was surprising to find out that Ernesto, an athlete who competes at the highest competitive level of the sport, had never read the official rules of the game. In a sport that

requires each participant athlete to be responsible for maintaining fair play through accurate employment of the official rules, a problem of legitimacy occurs when the athletes do not equally and accurately know the rules. To competently evoke the official rules in an on-field circumstance it is necessary to in fact know the rules. Some mechanism controlled and administered by USAU such as a test of an individual's knowledge of the rules prior to participation in sanctioned or series tournaments would benefit the sport by ensuring that the officials of the games (participant athletes) have a necessary comprehension of on-field procedure. All players should be subject to examination on the same rules of the game and be required to score a predetermined percentage to be allowed to participate in official games. I believe this would potentially soften some of the current distrust held between opponents which was evident in the data. Due to the common knowledge that the opponent one is playing against had to display an applicable understanding of the rules may incline an opponent to more readily trust another player's perspective.

In addition, Observer use was not wholly condemned by any player. Clair, who articulated the most dislike for Observers, admitted their necessity in certain situations because of the current character of play in high-intensity competitive games. However, with the exception of Clair who did not breach the topic, all participants favored the augmentation of Observer authority over a game to include active travel calls. It was essentially unanimous amongst the current competitive players included in the study that individual travel calls are too ambiguous and tempting to evoke self-asserting strategy for the authority of travel calls to be left in the hands of the players.



### **Directions for Future Studies**

The continued existence of self-officiating in Ultimate is a cultural phenomenon that cannot be conclusively described by one researcher or one study. As more participants enter the sport, the demand for uniformity of policy will increase in order to manage games uniformly, lending legitimacy to the sport through consistency. USA Ultimate is currently working toward this goal. Under the current structure, Ultimate employs Observers only occasionally while all other games are otherwise self-officiated in pure form. Ultimate, as a rapidly growing sport, would undoubtedly benefit from more academic interest concerned with the ramifications of the officiating system. Provided Clair's three decades of experience in the sport and her belief that there is a value shift occurring in the sport as evinced by the current tournament structure and increased strategic rationality, a broader study concerned with the questions investigated in this study would prove very helpful in understanding the dynamic changes in the sport.

A study targeting other groups of Ultimate players, possibly those less interested or less able to compete in the upper echelon of Ultimate participation (elite club), may supply valuable information to help render a more encompassing picture of the competitive experiences of Ultimate. Another segmentation worth investigating is gender. Clair and Eileen both made gender distinctions within their interviews concerning different competitive attitudes between men and women (Clair, L 502-532, Eileen, L 225-230) while none of the men interviewed made comparative statements about gender differences in the sport.

In addition, multiple participants discussed the variability of officiating talents possessed by Observers (Ernesto, L 593-636, Roger, L 357-359, Conrad, L 461-533). An

examination of what makes some Observers perceivably more effective officials than others would benefit the sport by helping uncover positive and negative attributes possessed by Observers. Such a study would be informative for the global governments of Ultimate.

Since Ultimate is still such a new sport when compared to the longevity of traditional sports like tennis, baseball, and soccer there are many areas of the sport than can be examined and refined as it is accepted into the ranks of popular sports. Academic research focused on meaning construction, observational studies of behavior, and examination of Observer variability, among others, would be beneficial to the sport as it grows both domestically and globally.

### **Conclusion**

It cannot be debated that sports play an important role in American culture. Professional sports represent a multibillion dollar industry, and it is not uncommon to witness many Americans scheduling their leisure time around sporting events, be they participatory or observational. As a society, Americans have agreed that athletic contest holds many positive cultural values, which is a statement socially arguable based on the perpetuation of our sports culture across generations. In 2008 there were 60,316,548 registered youth sports participants in athletic organizations across the United States, representing an increase of over 10 million participants since 1997<sup>22</sup>. Considering how much attention we afford sports in the United States, it is important that we consider the social implications of what is being taught and learned through athletic contest.

Ultimate Frisbee is a sport unlike any other played in the world today. It gathers uniqueness from its inception as an alternative sport, its professed ethic of

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<sup>22</sup> National Council of Youth Sports: Report on trends and Participation in Organized youth Sports.

uncompromised respect between opponents, and the unorthodox use of the self-officiating system at all levels of play. Traditional sports rely on the verdicts ruled by an objectivating third-party, which as we have seen, may allow a different organization of competitive priorities in participant athletes. The NBA for instance, describes the purpose of penalties as a way “to compensate the player who has been placed at a disadvantage through an illegal act of an opponent.”<sup>23</sup> By contrast, the rules of Ultimate state that there are no “harsh penalties” defined in the official rules because it is expected that no player will infract upon the positive aspects of sportsmanship professed in SOTG. The NBA rules, as opposed to those of USAU, do not outline the positive expectations of sportsmanship, yet still admonish and penalize “unsportsmanlike conduct.”

As we have understood through examination of the data, there are Ultimate players that blatantly disregard the fundamental ethics outlined in the rules that support the effectiveness of self-regulation. There are also those that believe wholly in the beneficial values of self-officiating as it allows multiple perspectives to collaborate for the investigation of the truth of the circumstance. The *battle of perceptions* cannot ever be diminished entirely, nor does it need to for self-officiating to survive and support successful Ultimate games. Instruction has the creational force to instill in the next generation of players the strong moral values on which Ultimate itself stands. As USAU attempts to become more present across Ultimate venues and display stricter management in the processes of the sport, the taught aspect of Ultimate could bring about a renaissance of high Spirited play if that were the wish of USAU in their expansion. The UPA was conceived as a player owned organization, and it is too early to understand the direction USAU intends to channel the sport. The players however, regardless of the

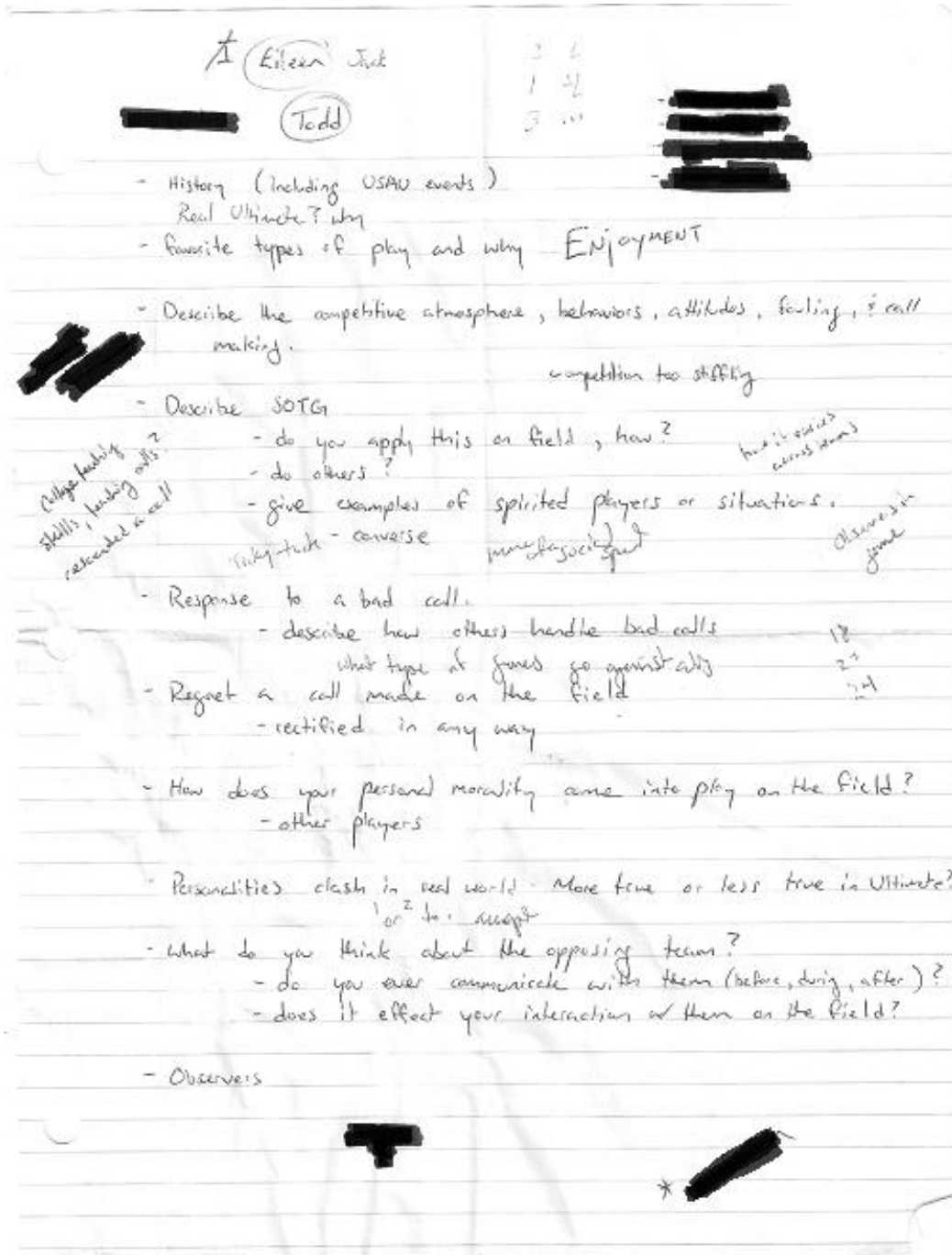
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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.nba.com/analysis/rules\\_guides.html?nav=ArticleList](http://www.nba.com/analysis/rules_guides.html?nav=ArticleList)

forces at work in the administration of the sport, remain the ones in charge the on-field behavior, and it is the on-field actions of the current players that will decide how the sport is governed for future generations.

## Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Note: When meeting with each individual athlete interviewed I brought with me a note pad, pen, digital voice recorder, and the following page. This page was the only guide containing question areas used during the interview process. Any name of an existing person was marked out for confidentiality purposes. All original question areas are horizontally oriented and prefaced by a dash on the lined page; other notes on the page were used for in-interview reference during the specific interview they pertained to only.

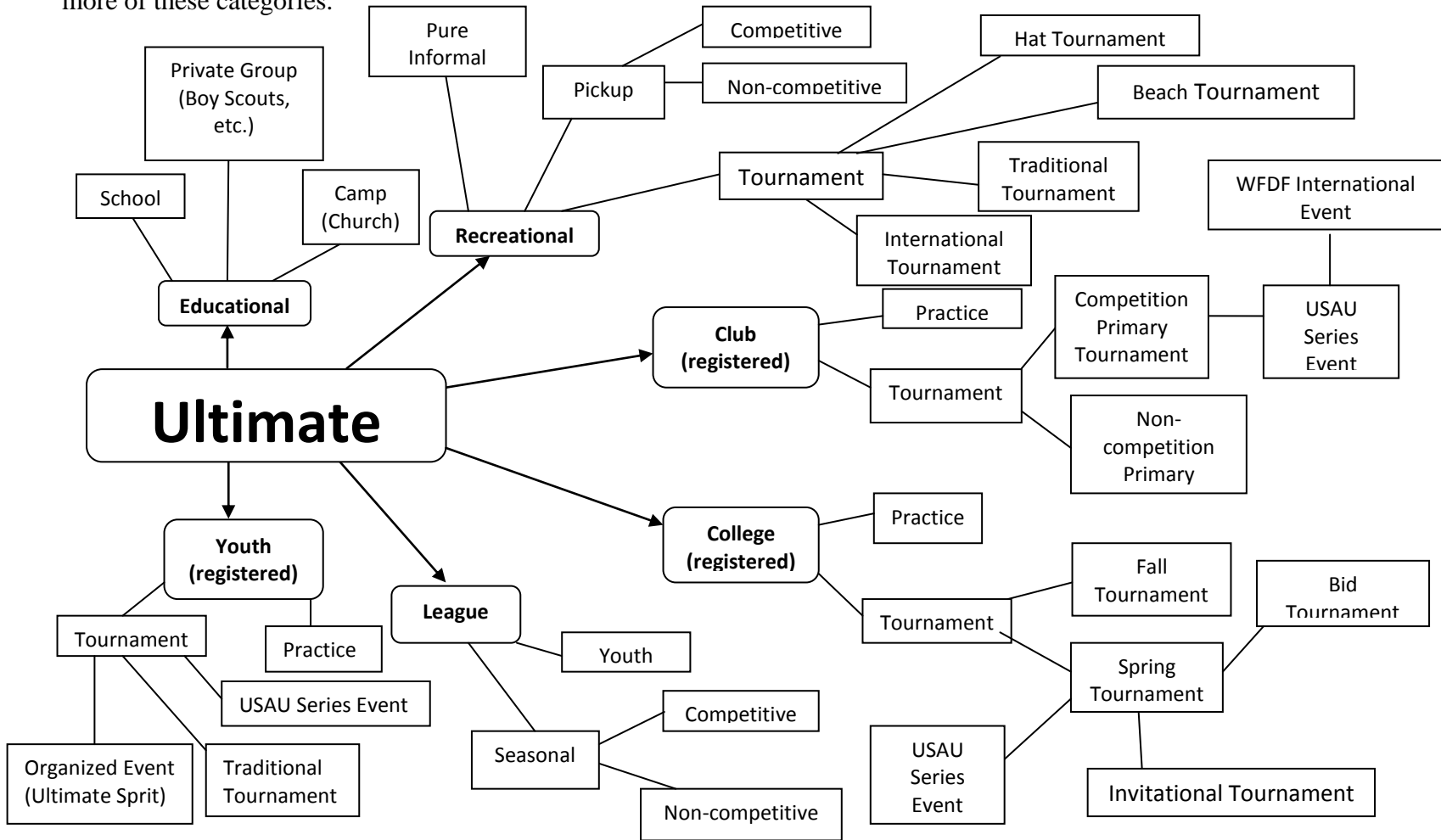


A comprehensive outline of questions which guided the interview process can be understood as follows:

1. How long have you played Ultimate?
2. How many UPA/USAU series events [collegiate or club sectionals, regionals or nationals] have you played in?
3. What other forms of Ultimate have you played outside of the college or club series?
  - Describe differences of attitudes or behaviors found in each venue.
  - Describe differences in call making and player interaction.
4. In your own words describe Spirit of the Game.
5. Do you feel as though you apply SOTG when you are playing?
6. How do other Ultimate players define SOTG in your opinion.
  - How do you interact with players who have a different interpretation of SOTG than your own?
7. How do you typically respond when you believe an opponent has made a bad call?
8. Have you ever regretted a call that you have made on the field?
  - Did you attempt to rectify your regret in any way? How?
9. Do you think personal morality comes into play on the Ultimate field? How?
10. When engaging in competition, how do you approach the other team?
11. Do you ever try to engage your opponent either before, during, or after the game?
  - Does this in any way effect how you interact with your opponent during the game?
12. Have you ever played in an Observer officiated game? How many?
13. Have you ever had an Observer over rule one of your calls?
  - How did you react to the overturning of your call by the Observer?
14. Describe some situations where Observers were involved in the on-field action.
  - Would things have happened differently if Observers were not present?
15. In your opinion, does Observer presence influence player interaction?
16. Do you like the use of Observers in games?
  - In what capacity do you think Observers should be involved in on-field action?
17. What would you like to see different concerning the officiating structure of Ultimate in its current form?

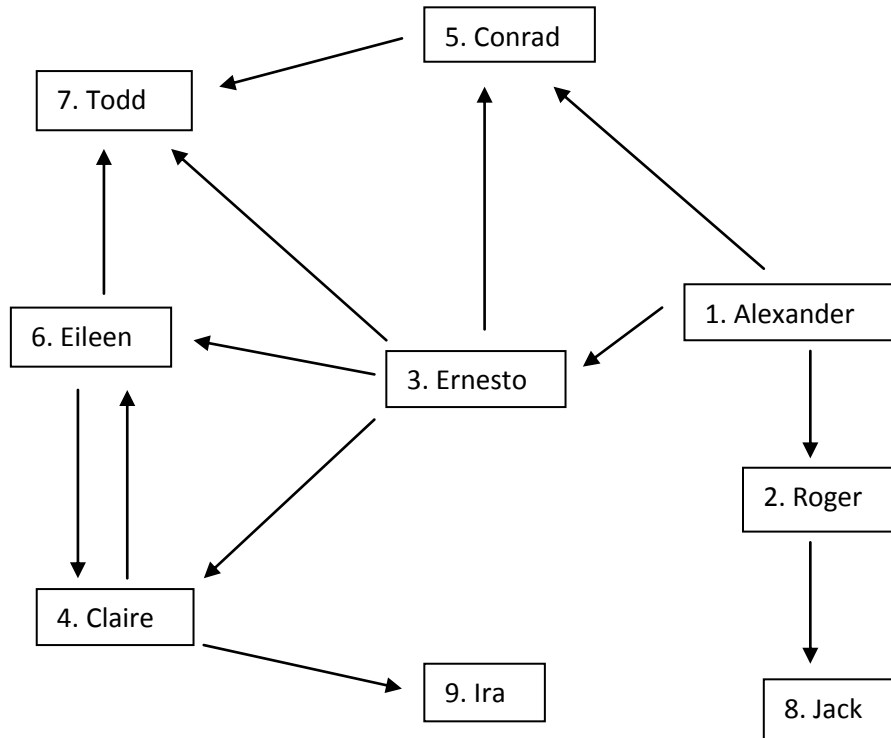
## Appendix 2: Potential Experience Web

This web displays the potential Ultimate experience one could participate in. Note- not all areas are accessible by all populations, gender qualifications, age restrictions, and team tryouts among others are potential barriers to experience to one or more of these categories.



### Appendix 3: Sampling Web

Note: This web shows the relation of research assistants by snowball sampling. Numbers correspond to the successive order of interviews.





#### Appendix 4: Alexander Transcription

5 Alexander, 24- 9.1.10 (7:39PM) 25:01 minutes

P: So this is just gonna be kind of informal. Just tell me what you know, but I have to ask you a few stock questions just to make sure you qualify, but I feel confident that you do. So how long have you been playing Ultimate?

A: Let's see...five, six years.

10 P: Six years. So since you came to college?

A: Uh...a year, one year before I came to college, one year in high school.

P: Okay. So out of that experience how many UPA series events have you played in, like including college and club?

A: Every event, so every tournament...um...

15 P: UPA events, so that would be like sectionals, regionals, and nationals.

A: Oh, okay.

P: Or I guess USA Ultimate at this point.

A: Yeah okay. Um...about twenty, twenty or so.

20 P: About twenty, okay. So assumedly you've had kind of a broad range of experience. You've played...

A: Actually definitely more than twenty because I'm forgetting other club sectionals and regionals, so that would be more, I guess, like fifty to sixty.

25 P: Yeah, okay. So you've played a lot of like, anywhere for pick-up games, to scrimmages, to like casual tournament play, to highly competitive. Tell me about your experience with each one, like, some attitudes you would distinguish between each one, like the feel of the game.

A: Alright. Well I guess I'll go from like least competitive to most competitive.

P: Okay.

30 A: That's from like high school playing with your friends, that's probably the most fun I've ever had, just 'cause you don't have rules really, you make your own rules, you play barefoot, and you're out just with your close knit friends playing. Those might have been the most fun I've had playing. And, let's see, so next would be organized maybe club, uh, Austin Winter League or something like that. That's also pretty...it's more like educational Frisbee, like it gets you into  
35 the game, teaches you how to play, and I guess it's really cool you can move into a new environment and, or, yeah...I don't know. I don't really enjoy club...

P: Like league stuff?

A: Yeah, like league stuff, because I guess I don't like fit in with all the people. It's usually an older crowd and I guess I'm still a little bit younger, and I guess  
 40 I'm from Dallas and that's especially an older crowd down there. I mean, all the club guys are I think well established guys in their thirties or something like that. Then I guess the most competitive starts in college and goes into the elite club. College is like probably almost on the same level as when you're playing with your friends to me, 'cause it's another group of friends and, I don't know, you're  
 45 growing and becoming like a new person in college. So that was a good experience. And then elite, that's a whole new game, like people expect a lot from you and it's defiantly more about the sport and not having fun or just enjoying yourself, it's about winning and I'm not 100% about that, so I have a hard time.

P: So the player attitudes on the, uh, let's take the college and club level. Those  
 50 two, uh, those two stratifications, like, describe to me the on-field attitude. Can you distinguish between the on-field attitude of club and the on-field attitude of college, or are they similar?

A: Um, I guess it depends on a lot on the team you're on 'cause there's some college teams that take things extremely seriously, and there's always gonna be a  
 55 team that's maybe known for doing things over the top or some players on the team that are going to make the team act a certain way, so the on-field attitudes of players depends a lot on the team dynamic and how everyone meshes together, but from my personal experience the college team was a little bit more lax because everyone was a little more appear and everyone could speak more freely  
 60 to each other. And, on the club level, like on Double Wide there's captains and SAG leaders and stuff like that and I have, there's like a hierarchy.

P: Okay. So like, how long have you played with Double Wide?

A: Two years.

P: Two years. So, with Double Wide do you notice like...how many captains do  
 65 you have?

A: Three captains and three SAG leaders who are in charge of like getting the, the, tournament stuff organized, and getting people's rides organized, hotels, stuff like that.

P: Okay. So you feel as though the captains kind of dictate a lot the mentality of  
 70 the team?

A: They're...yeah, they're like 100% the mentality of the team, like, they're tell us how we're gonna play, and like how to act on the field and stuff like that, so the captains drive the team.

P: So how do they kind of encourage you to act on the field because I assume that  
 75 you would...

A: They lead by example. Then they also, like aren't afraid to like vocalize and tell you what you're doing like, "we need you to stand up, we need you to do this, we need you to like, you know, step your game up, we need to get you on our level." They're not afraid to tell you that, and I guess they also have a certain  
 80 intimidation factor cause of, they think, I mean, not that they think, but I mean they're the elite club team and people want to be on that team and if you don't want to play for them then they're not, they're not gonna be at a loss, so you should probably fall in.

P: Do you feel, so you said they dictate a lot of the attitude on the team, do you  
 85 personally agree with that attitude, do you get on board with it, or is it something that...

A: Yeah. I mean I fall in line, and I mean I'll go with how they want to play. It's more like on-field stuff, it's not off-field. They don't try and like dictate what you do off field except for...unless it effect you on-field I suppose, so...you know I  
 90 don't see any problem with it, we're playing something competitively and we're like ask, we're asking them to put us on the team. It's not something that's just like, uh...I don't know, it's a privilege to play on this team so, and like thinking it's a big deal, so people look at us.

P: Okay. So can you describe to me, like in your own words, I'm sure you've read  
 95 it at least once before, probably back when you were a freshman, what Spirit of the Game means to you?

A: Spirit of the Game, I guess means playing fairly and honestly and allowing the game to be played, uh, I guess smoothly, and, uh, not calling something unless it actually happens, and not being, uh, I don't know, whatever you want to call it,  
 100 unfair.

P: Yeah. Do you feel as though you apply that on the field?

A: Uh, I mean, that doesn't really exist I think now. (laughs)

P: Really?

A: Yeah, I mean, I've heard of plenty of times said on the sideline people say  
 105 "Spirit of the Game," and then someone will shout "That doesn't exist," or, I mean, I have a guy on the team, Rory, he's maybe the least spirited guy I know, he hates everybody, he's just a ball of evil, I don't know.

P: (laughs). Okay. What about your captains? Do they try and like, instill any of these things you just said in your team?

110 A: Yeah, I mean, I guess they're going to a little bit.

P: A little bit? So what about when it comes to on-field infractions, there's, if there's a foul called do you...

A: Look to them?

P: Well, do they have any bearing on how you'll react in that situation?

115 A: I mean, no. They told us that like, make your own calls and we'll back you up no matter what. So...

P: Okay. So there's that fidelity.

120 A: Yeah, I mean there's that brotherhood aspect where they're gonna stick up for you even though you might be wrong in a situation. So, they have your back. That helps I guess you fall in line and follow the plan 'cause you know, they respect you if you want to respect them and do what they ask.

125 P: Okay. What about competitive teams, or like teams that you competed against, do you feel as though, uh, some people do, some people don't, like what is the kind of general perspective you have on other people paying attention to the spirit of the game, or dismissing it?

130 A: Um...I think it just comes down to the individual person and their personality because they're either going to be naturally like, pre disposed to want to be nice, be fair, and like do the right thing, and some people are going to cheat their way to trying to get their way making sure that everything goes the way they are planning. So nothing really matters, it's up to the person if they follow or even believe in the spirit of the game.

P: So even though, like, Spirit of the Game is very present in all documents governing the sport some people choose to just say "fuck it."

135 A: Yeah, I mean I would say a lot of people don't necessarily even read the documents of USA Ultimate, so it's not hard to believe that they wouldn't believe in Spirit of the Game if they don't even realize it's in the bylaws.

P: Okay. So, you're saying that personal morality is one of the, uh, how do you say it, main predictors or something like that?

A: Yeah, definitely.

140 P: So it's a person by person thing though. Have you ever seen a...

A: I mean there's bad calls made all the time and you're wondering "how could they make that call? If it was me I wouldn't have made that call," but...

P: What do you do in those situations? How do you react to somebody when they make a bad call?

145 A: If they're on your team you keep your mouth shut. If it's on the other team you kind of snicker to your friend or yell, but if it's on your own team keep your mouth shut definitely.

P: Describe to me a situation where you were the active player and somebody made a bad call against you.

150 A: I can remember a time when I, this was in college, that I made a layout trying to get a D on this guy on A&M and I hit the disc and I hit him during the motion and he called foul on me saying I hit him and made him unable to catch the disc and of course you know and I just yelled at him and told him he was wrong. But in the end we just had to throw the disc back because that's how the game works, and I got over it. I mean, that's just the game, that's how it's played. If you don't think it's fair and you can't handle it then you should try to find a different game to play. Unless I guess, they do have Observers sometimes, but those are only in the, I guess most top level games.

P: So, have you ever made a call that you regretted?

160 A: Humm, that's an interesting question, most people would probably say "no." I mean, I think, I say all the time that I've never made a bad call, I say that all the time, but I'm sure someone would think that's wrong. Man, I don't know, maybe (laughs).

P: So, I mean that's definitely...

165 A: People yell at me, I mean I've definitely called something on someone and they've yelled at me so... I can remember at practice one time I was up going for a jump disc on someone and someone grabbed my shoulder and I called a foul on them and they told me that it was a bad call, blah blah blah, and that I couldn't have jumped in time and blah blah blah. Anyways I just got over that too. So, maybe that was a bad call, but that person got over that, but we were on the same team, it was practice.

P: So that practice situation, that will change how intense you get about a call?

A: Maybe, that definitely will change the way the dynamic is played between two players on the field if the point is not over, because in that instance, after the play was over, um, the disc was turned and I got to be on offense and I was running to the disc and I made an in-cut to catch the disc and the guy barreled into my back after I caught the disc, and afterwards he's just like "oh, sorry", and I pushed him off. We were getting kind of, what do you call it, chippy with each other.

P: And this is one of your team mates?

180 A: Yeah this, that was Kierin on Double Wide with me. I got pretty chippy with him (laughs).

P: Dang, that's crazy. Other than that I would assume most people have made a call that they'd take back, like, so your solution to that is to just slough it off, and just keep playing the game?

185 A: Yeah I mean, the fight will probably just amp up the intensity level, but I'm all for that so...

P: So you've played in games where Observers are present right?

A: Um hum.

P: How many would you say?

190 A: Well, all nationals game I've played so that's both at club nationals and at college...

P: All of the college nationals?

195 A: Yeah, every college nationals game and every club. So, maybe around...I don't know those were a lot of games...uh, twentyish. Plenty, I don't know I can't really...I mean we play maybe, oh yeah Centex too...

P: So what's your...this is gonna be a loaded question, but what's your opinion of Observers in the game?

200 A: I mean, they serve a purpose, they get the job done sometimes, but I've had plenty of instances what I've thought they flubbed the call, and uh were useless, but I don't know what else there could be, I mean ref's in all sports can make bad calls. So, I mean, they're better than not having them.

P: You think it's more useful than not having them...

A: Because it eliminates, I guess, the player to player conflict because at least they can take it out on a referee instead of a player.

205 P: Yeah, have you ever seen an on-field explosion that couldn't, that needed to be handled by an Observer, and could not be handled by the players or captains themselves?

210 A: Yeah, I mean I've seen some explosions that definitely took like fifteen minutes to talk about between a bunch of dudes and an Observer would definitely have taken care of that. So, helping...that would definitely help the situation that they're in if they were at every game because that would ensure no more situations like that, and the time of the game is pretty important and all these stoppages and talking about what the call is and trying to discuss what happened, that just eats away the clock.

215 P: Okay. So, the sport by definition is self-officiated.

A: Yeah.

P: Does that have...did that originally have any influence on you joining the sport or playing the sport at all?

220 A: Not really, I came from hockey, I have a hockey background, so I'm used to refs and I assumed there are going to be refs when I started playing I didn't really understand when started playing competitively that there weren't going to be. I understood there were going to be Observers, but I didn't understand how infrequent they were going to be.

225 P: So if there were Observers all the time that would be something you would be comfortable with?

A: Yeah, I mean it would change the game but it would make it definitely more legitimate.

P: Explain that. How would it change the game?

230 A: Well, it's kept on a more tightly scheduled clock 'cause there's certain amount of time allotted for each part of the game, like for pulls, and for breaks, and for halftimes, and for timeouts, and those are not followed during a non-Observed game because it's governed by the two captains who are just agreeing on an ambiguous time or whatever. So, it would be better probably if there were  
235 Observers because everything's gonna get done on-time and there wouldn't be so many game that would get hard capped and stuff like that.

P: So just for time situations they would be useful?

A: Not just for time situations, but also for resolving conflict because there are numerous conflicts that occur in every game.

240 P: Okay, can you describe to me, like, first, a conflict that an Observer ruled on that you agreed with, and then a conflict that the Observer ruled on that you disagreed with?

A: Okay. Well, this is the most recent one I can think of, the same game, Texas sectionals. Texas State was playing University of Texas and uh...the game, the  
245 Observer made a call that I thought he messed up on. I thought I made a defensive play on this handler they had on UT and I jumped on the disc and hit it and he said that I kind of inhibited him from him jumping, and I said I hit the disc before he could get it. Anyways, I said that he was wrong, but he overruled me and the game continued. Later in that game, he overruled a call that UT made on one of our players in the endzone where he said he fouled him on a throw, instead he  
250 said it was a handblock , so that would turn out good for us, so I guess that evened out.

P: So you're favoring in the spirit of Karma at that point, you think things are just going to balance out?

255 A: I'm definitely not thinking things are just gonna balance out, like, I can just use that as an example.

P: Sop they mess up on both sides?

A: I can just use that as an example of for like a time when they [inaudible]

P: How did it make you feel when the Observer said that you didn't get the D, did you feel...

260 A: Awful, 'cause, you know, we work hard for those and they're hard to get, and you're so sure you did something and someone who's not even participating in the game actively it telling you they saw something different. So, that's not a good feeling, but like I said before I'd rather have them there still.

P: So, how do you think the situation would have panned out if the Observer wasn't there? Was it Allen?

A: I don't really know who it was. It was, one guy was Moose, and one guy was someone else. It was someone I don't recognize.

P: So how do you think the situation would have panned out if the other person wasn't there?

270 A: Well, if it wasn't there then we would have kept the disc and it would have gone back, instead it was turned over, even though...

P: You said you would have 'flipped' the disc?

A: No, no, no. So, hold on. I made the D. It would have just gone back to them. So, no matter what they would have retained possession.

275 P: Okay. So what did happen? It was ruled that he had possession of the disc?

A: He ruled that I fouled him and didn't allow him to jump, or he couldn't jump 'cause I was skying him so hard (laughs).

P: So, the person you allegedly fouled retained the disc at that point?

A: Yeah, he kept it and I was making him.

280 P: And, a situation without an Observer it would have gone back to the thrower?

A: It would have gone back to the thrower that threw to him, yeah.

P: Okay. So, I want you to think about this and you can take a second if you want, but how do you feel as though instilling Observers in more situations, and giving them more power will, as has been kind of a trend, will influence the culture of the sport?

285 A: Probably make it more palpable to, like outsiders maybe, 'cause they respect authority and they're an authoritative figure on the field instead of just "where's the referee?" it's just two guys, two team playing each other. So, maybe it will get people from other sports more, like into the game, 'cause you find people that play Ultimate are not really athletes from other sports, they're just track runners, kind of new guys to sports, skateboarders or something like that.

290 P: So, you see essentially positive outcomes of having Observers more involved?

A: Yeah.



295 P: Okay. What do you think it will do to recruiting efforts? You said it will bring more athletes. Do you think it will be more isolating?

A: I mean, I don't think, unless they look at the game it won't necessarily help the game unless it gets more publication, but more notoriety or whatever, but, I don't know.

300 P: Okay. So, do have anymore thoughts, anything you want to say about officiating, or self-officiating, or Observers?

A: Well, definitely, that it's not a perfect system what they have got right now it could be improved.

P: How so?

305 A: I don't know if it's with Observers being more powerful or being more present, have more sanctioned events, or if it means, I don't know, but the system, although it's not perfect, it works right now, and it's fine by me.

P: Obviously, you've been playing for six years year round.

310 A: Yeah, so, I don't have that big of a problem with it. I mean the game plays out. You're never gonna lose a game because of one call, and if you did then you're fooling yourself, 'cause there's a lot of things happening in a game, not one particular call should lose a game. So, in the end, it's not that big of a deal.

P: Okay, cool. Well, thank you.

## Appendix 5: Roger Transcription

Roger, 22- 9.30.10 (5:42PM) 35:06 minutes

P: So, first of all just give me a little bit of biography about you, your sporting history, and your historical involvement with Ultimate up to this point.

5 R: Alright, uh like how far back, like all of sports or just high school sports?

P: Let's just start with high school. That sounds fair.

R: Okay. I played baseball, I ran track, the hurdles specifically. And I played high school football, I played corner back.

P: For how many years?

10 R: I played football since I was in seventh grade. I played baseball since I was four years old, and I ran track since my sophomore year of high school.

P: And these were all through your senior year?

R: Yep, except baseball, I stopped sophomore.

P: Okay.

15 R: Umm, I started playing Ultimate as a freshman in college. I didn't know anything about it and since then I haven't missed one summer of club. I play collegiate in the fall and spring, and I play club through the summer and fall. And, I was captain last year of Texas State's team, and... I guess that would be as much as my Ultimate involvement has been.

20 P: Okay. How many, uh, just ballpark it for me, you don't have to go back and count it, but how many series events have you played in?

R: Okay, series events like sectionals, regionals, nationals...

P: Sectionals, regionals, nationals including college and club.

25 R: College and club... I guess you have to figure like four a year, regionals, sectionals for both sections, so, sixteen, probably like seventeen or eighteen.

P: Seventeen or eighteen. Okay. So, tell me a little bit about your different experiences with Ultimate, different ways you've played. Tell me about...

30 R: Well, I guess for most players when you start out and you're young you're almost always a defensive player or a lethal threat receiver for the most part. I mean when we were freshmen and we run a horizontal stack our job was to get D's, get open on offense and dump the disc and that's what we did.

P: Yeah. Have you ever played any league Ultimate? Have you ever played Austin summer league or anything like that?

R: I've never played winter league, summer league. I want it to be more organized.

P: What about pickup games outside of college teams?

5 R: I, uh, played a few pickup games in the Woodlands my freshman year and I stopped when I broke my hand.

P: That's fair. So, you've only played college competitive and club competitive?

R: Yeah, I try to stick to well organized competitive Ultimate.

P: Why is that?

10 R: It's just, um, I'm pretty competitive. It's like more fun to play with people who know what they're doing. You want to play within a system I guess, like, you play like pickup basketball with people who don't know how to play basketball, like you, there would be no picks set, there would be no offensive plays running, no one knows how to rebound. When you play Ultimate with people who know how to play Ultimate it's more fun. They know how to swing a disc, they know how to  
15 break the mark, they know how to set a force. It just makes the game more fun.

P: So, it's the knowledge base and the experience that makes...

R: It's the organization that makes it more fun. You feel like you playing an actual team sport not just playing like shitty pickup.

20 P: Okay. Do you feel as though you've been locked into one group of people with how you've been exposed to the game?

25 R: No, I've always played club and the club team I play for, Dr. Seuss, they're always like a plethora of personalities or however you want to say it, they're just like a mutt dog, like there's no one system, no one team, it's mostly made up of just a bunch of miss matched guys, so I feel that I have been pretty diverse in how I've learned Ultimate, like I definitely can't say one player like I try to emulate their throws or how they play the game or anything.

P: Tell me, like what are, do you notice any differences between college and club? Like, can you talk about competition wise, practice wise, intent, what team goals are and stuff?

30 R: I mean for sure like when you play college man, that's way more prideful, like you're playing school against school, like little Texas State against big Texas or big A&M, like it feels good to beat those teams, but when I play for Seuss it's like we're a bunch of guys who like playing Frisbee, who are pretty good at Frisbee, but we're not gonna train and we're not gonna have practices and we're just  
35 gonna go out there and beat some teams. When you play like college it's like with your friends that you hang out with and you go have beers with after practice and like you're just not gonna get that back, like once you graduate it's just kind of,

you're subjected to this life of mix matched team mates of who wants to be serious and who doesn't.

40 P: So culturally, there's more fraternity in college Ultimate?

R: Of course. I mean those guys, they're your friends. They're your real friends, roommates. I guess the best way you can put it is guys you can share beers with. You go to practice, you run, you puke and you talk about the sacrifice you make for each other, where as in club the only sacrifice I make is putting down ten  
45 dollars to buy a case of beer.

P: So tell me about, you mentioned practices, how do you interact with your own teammates in a competitive situation at practice, because you're going to scrimmage, you're gonna run drills where y'all better yourselves through assertion...

50 R: Competition. Um...I mean it's tough uh we want to practice being competitive, but you know people's feelings get hurt when like, Ultimate's a self-officiated sport so given a whim you can call travel, fouls or anything, when you do that against your friends you know like people get pissed, get like butt-hurt about it or whatever I mean, these guys like [chuckles]...

55 P: Will that influence whether or not you make a call?

R: For me I don't think so. Like, I think you get better by playing under those rules, like, one of the best players I've ever played against is Steven Presley, he played for Tuff and, man, that dude like it didn't matter what call you made on him, he was just like 'okay' and it didn't faze him at all and I think that's a sign of  
60 like a good Ultimate player, like you don't really get raddled by calls like you just, you know it's part of the game, you take them as they come, you play the game anyways, and I just think it's good to just like install that in your practices and people should get used to making calls, like if you want to call a travel call a travel, and you should get used to having that called on you. You accept it and it's  
65 part of the game.

P: Do you think anyone holds back a call in practice that they would possibly call in a game?

R: Oh, for sure, all the time.

P: Why is that?

70 R: Just cause you have the relaxed mentality, like 'these are my friends, and you know I'm not gonna call it.'

P: Do you have teammates blowup on each other?

R: Um, not normally. There's been a few like contact plays where there's been, you know someone gets mad. I can think of like one instance where me and  
75 another veteran player like collided on the goal line, and I was a young player and

I was just trying to make a play and he was a veteran player not thinking there was a play to be made and he got pretty in my face about it, but at the end of the day I think he realized I just wanted to make a play.

80 P: Yeah. So what's the difference then between that kind of mentality and your game against A&M or Tuff or someone like that?

R: It's just more cutthroat I guess, like, uh...you see players calling things versus Tuff and A&M that you would *never* see in practice even going against the rules of the game or like your rules as like a...just a fair person. I mean, last weekend we had a tournament against A&M and ah I kind of got in like their other  
85 captain's face about it because I thought he was teaching his freshmen to play to win instead of play by the rules, and I don't think that's how Ultimate should be played. If there's refs that's one thing, but there's not, it's self-officiated.

P: Do you, honestly, do you find yourself making specific calls more regularly than other calls, do you like call contact fouls or travel calls or anything like that  
90 more regularly?

R: Um, not like when I'm throwing more than when I'm receiving. I definitely am much more sensitive to contact when I throw. Like, if I go to make a throw and I receive a little bit of contact I'm much more in tune to calling a foul on that when, as a receiver, there wasn't really a whole lot of things I would call unless I was  
95 blatantly in the air like trying to make a grab or something you know, like as a thrower though I think you feel more the pressure to like control the game, and you know, I mean part of it is dictating the pace maybe through foul calls or maybe not foul calls. Like, you know, if you throw a throw and it's a good throw and you get fouled a lot of times you don't call the foul to keep the pace going, a  
100 lot of time when you want to slow the game down you call like disc space, just calls that don't really effect the game, but it's just really to slow the pace down, like you just want to get the game cooled down.

P: Do you do that in all games or just highly competitive games?

R: I mean surely when we play like TCU and we're winning thirteen-one we  
105 discourage our players from making any kind of calls like that. I mean that's just, it's tickey-tack, but we, I feel like at least at Texas State we try really hard to play by how the other team wants to play like. If they want to play, you know, let's play physical, let's play hard, let's not make calls I were gonna do that. And for me, that's why I, like, respect Wisconsin, because I feel like Wisconsin will play  
110 you, you know, balls-out let's just play hard, like let's just grind it out and let's see who has more physical toughness or mentality, who has the better mentality to like wear that out, where you know, you play teams like...that are just gonna get in a call-fest with you, and at that point it becomes like mental toughness, like just who's gonna out call the other team and that's something I just don't really like  
115 about Ultimate.

P: Does it ever work against you?

R: It depends on if you won or not [laughs]. If you win then it didn't work against you, and if you lost, then yeah, of course, everyone's gonna complain. You know, I've played in games where at the end of the game everyone says 'oh man, you  
 120 know they were making all of these calls, duh, duh, duh,' but I've played in games where we win and the other team is like 'oh man, they were making all those calls,' and you just, it's part of the sport it being self-officiated.

P: Yeah. Okay, so in your words describe to me what Spirit of the Game is.

R: Spirit of the Game...has no real definition, it is your interpretation of what you  
 125 think is fair at the moment, and lots of things go into that decision, like what I said earlier about being up thirteen-one, it's in the Spirit of the Game not to make bad foul calls, like ticky-tack foul calls on a team you're beating, but I feel like it's in Spirit of the Game that if you're playing a team that is out to have it on every single foul call for you to make the same calls, because that's the Spirit of  
 130 the Game that like they're setting for that game. Like, I feel that...

P: Do you think it's subjective?

R: It is very subjective, like game-to-game it definitely differs, you know like you play a game with your friends you don't make the same calls, you play one of  
 135 your rival opponents and they're you know down your throat about every little call and of course you're gonna make more calls 'cause you try to even the game out somehow and it being self-officiated you certainly can with calls like that.

P: So you think that in a sense self-officiating will work in your favor as you might not have a ref being objective, you can take it upon yourself?

R: I think Ultimate should have refs to make active calls, if that's like what you're  
 140 asking. I think there are too many subjective calls, like in Ultimate the most devastating call, to me, is a travel, because on any throw you can call a travel, and you can't, the disc does not, it always has to come back, it doesn't matter what happens, and if you call travel and it's a turn then it's a turn, but if you call travel and it's a completion then the disc has to come back, and you and do it at any  
 145 time and there's nothing the thrower can do to contest it, they have to accept that you called travel, and so I think the only people that should be able to call travels are Observers, which are like our refs, they can call actively. It's like the only call that I just feel, besides in and out of bounds that Observers should call actively, and like travel, for one if you want to be just like an asshole, or just, and you're  
 150 playing a team and you're losing every throw they make that's deep down the field you can call travel. It doesn't have to be immediate either, like the disc can go up and you can be just like 'oh, travel' and they can be like 'well you traveled on [?]' and you don't have to have any reason you can just be like 'you traveled.'

P: How normal do you think that is, that someone will do like a tit-for-tat kind of  
 155 thing like that?

R: I think it probably happens in 100, 90 to 100% of all competitive games, and games that aren't competitive I think it happens like 20 to 40% of the time.

P: Really? That's a huge jump.

R: I know it's a huge jump but when you're locked twelve-thirteen, thirteen-thirteen with a team and the calls are really mattering, I mean the calls really matter...ticky-tack stuff is gonna come out. You make a throw and you realize it's probably not gonna be completed you're gonna call a foul, and when someone makes an awesome throw that you see your guy's beat on you're probably gonna call a travel, and when you're playing like Sam Houston State or Stephen F. Austin and you're up fourteen to one you're not gonna care, you're just gonna dismiss it, it's not gonna be real ticky-tack. It doesn't matter how many calls Stephen F. Austin makes you're gonna be like 'we're crushing them we're not gonna make those calls.'

P: Well, describe to me then, like different mentalities on the field, because you already gave me the, the example of Stephen Presley, and how you think that, well you didn't really go into too much detail about it, but how nothing like really fazed him. Did he ever get up-in-arms about a call that was made?

R: I have never seen that guy get up-in-arms about a call that's made, but he's also one of the best players that I've seen play, and one of the nicest guys I've seen play, but it really just matters like you play a team like Florida and they make tons of calls and you roll with it and the second you make a call man they're up-in-arms, like it just really varies team to team, player to player, like you could play one team that's full of nice guys and they have one bad apple and that's...

P: How much do you think personal morality...

R: Personal agenda is a huge part of it, it just is.

P: Describe how like that actually happens player to player, like give me examples of player to player...

R: Okay, so, um, we play Texas really competitively every year and probably five of seven guys out there on the field they're out there to just play Ultimate and they want it to be a fair game, but there's two guys that like, when they mark they're gonna foul you every time and when you call foul they're gonna contest, and when you're guarding them they're gonna tick-tack anything they can get, I mean if you even grab a jersey at all they're gonna call a foul and when they're guarding you they're gonna grab your jersey and if you call a foul they're gonna contest, like and it being a self-officiated sport that's like the luxury you have, you just...and I'm not saying there's not players on our team like that, there certainly are, it's just part of the game though. It's almost become an accepted culture in Ultimate that every team has their nice guys and every team has their assholes, and you put your assholes on their assholes to guard them and let them duke it out the foul calling and you have your nice guys guard each other and play a really friendly game and then, it's part of the culture now.

P: Where do you fit on that asshole-nice guy continuum?

R: Um, I definitely have, uh, more the asshole side, man, like, uh, but even I myself am, you know, I'm subjective, like if I'm playing a guy that wants to play really physical and doesn't want to make foul calls I'm not gonna make foul calls, I'm gonna play physical, it's in my nature, maybe I get that from football or something or maybe it's just competitive spirit, but you know if someone wants to play really physical and they don't want to make calls that's fine with me, I want to play like that, but like will like rub me the wrong way than like when someone wants to play really physical and then they're being like a baby at the same time.

P: Give me an example of like a guy that like, you have to remember a guy specifically that was a dick to play against because of foul calls.

R: Um, we had this incredible player named Jason Best who, he was just one of like the best throwers, just really good athlete, really great player, and when I was a freshman we were playing A&M and they had this guy name Clay Merit, and Clay Merit was an ex-Colorado tightend, had like a knee injury and couldn't play, and one time Best caught a disc, clapped it, turned up field to throw and Clay Merit just tackled him and knocked the disc out of his hand and Best was like 'foul' and Clay Merit just goes 'contest, send it back,' and I don't know if I've ever seen a play like that to where it was so blatant, such a blatant foul, such a hard foul, and someone just blatantly contest it just to be an asshole, like you always see plays that are boarder line, like someone lays out, hits another player, they drop the disc, a foul is called, you know you get into it and you send it back, but this was a play where there was no play on the disc, Best had it caught, turned up field and then pretty much just got laid out into, the disc knocked out of his hand, and Clay Merit contested it, like just slapped it out of his hands and uh, I'm not sure I've ever seen a play like that happen.

P: What happened after that?

R: The disc went back and A&M got the turn and they ended up beating us fifteen-thirteen.

P: Okay. So, if somebody makes a call like that against *you*, what's normal for you, if somebody makes what, like you think would be a bad call?

R: I mean normally it's like some verbal abuse from the sideline [chuckles], and then uh, and then it just depends, like if I'm not matched up on that player I don't wanna bring his issues to his other nice team mates so I try to stay within the game, but you know if I'm matched up on that guy then it's um, it's a whole new ball game, I mean it's like as physical as you can be like you're not willing to give an inch on any kind of calls or anything. I mean, you know if a guy like that calls any kind of foul it's immediately contested of if I go to make a catch...

P: It's contested if you knew it was a foul, would you contest it anyways?

R: [Long pause] I think that happens a lot in Ultimate. I think I'm guilty of it. I think so many people are guilty of it. I think you get so caught up in the game of...you want to be like a vigilante, you wanna like right the wrongs, so when



240 someone like that makes a bad call you wanna like make them pay for making a bad call, and I think it's just normal in our game of Ultimate because there is no like officiating, it's just, just player versus player.

[Break for restroom and drink]

P: So, have you ever made a call on the field that you've regretted?

245 R: Oh, for sure. I mean, you definitely make, uh, calls a lot of times that maybe you even immediately apologize for or you take back immediately, or after the game you say, um, man I'm sorry, I shouldn't have made that call and... it's pretty crazy to me, like, how generally understanding players are of you doing that, but I think it's because it's so understood in our sport that that's just what happens. Every player make those kinds of calls, you'd be so surprised about how heated  
250 arguments can get over calls and within ten seconds you're just forgiven, I mean it's part of the sport.

P: Why is that part of the sport? Like, how do you think that that happened?

R: I think that like every person they want to like believe in Spirit of the Game and they want to keep it self-officiated and so you wanna have a like, fairness, but  
255 I also think there's like a really big competitive nature, so like last year we went to Nationals and we went against Wisconsin and when you make throws if you get bumped on your throw at all, if there's any form of contact it's a foul, and I threw three straight throws to the breakside and I called a foul on every single one of them and a guy from Wisconsin just blew up on me he was just... you know  
260 cursing at me and shit like that and at the end of the point he came up to me and he was like 'you know man I know was mad, but I probably was fouling you, and like, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have gotten so mad.' I think that's just in the nature of like, competitive sports, he wanted to be competitive and he wasn't happy because he thought he had turns and I thought he had fouled me and uh... at the  
265 end of the day we both were just competitive athletes that wanted to win and we were both okay with that, and it's part of the sport.

P: So going into a game what's like, what your personal attitude approaching the other team?

270 R: I mean first and foremost like, you wanna win like even if you play against your friends you wanna win.

P: Who would you consider your friends like outside of that team, outside of your own personal team you mentioned friends, like who are your friends?

R: Man, I like guys from UNT, like I like guys from TUFF, I like guys from  
275 A&M, TUFF is Texas, and I mean I guess those are like our main three rivals, but like I like guys from all those teams, and I like guys from Arkansas who are regional rivals, I like guys from Oklahoma you know every team has just guys you like playing against and like, you don't want to like come down on their team, but I guess like at the end of the day there are rules for our sport and those

280 rules are put in place for like a reason so you do your best to like, call the rules  
 like you see fit, which is always gonna be subjective, it's like as you see fit so  
 someone gonna see one thing a certain way and another person another way and  
 so there's really no...there really is like no right or wrong answer. You're going  
 to go into a game and you're gonna make some calls you might regret and you're  
 gonna make some calls that are probably really good calls that are gonna be...not  
 285 go your way, but that's just part of Ultimate and that's what makes the sport great.

P: I'm stuck on this word 'friend', like do you ever try and communicate with  
 these people before, during or after a game that doesn't specifically involve the  
 on-field competitive aspect of the sport?

290 R: Oh, of course, man, like, I would hang out with a bunch of these guys like off  
 the fields, but I guess when I say the word 'friend' it's like someone that like, you  
 see them on the field and you go out of your way to say 'hi' to them, tell them  
 good luck or good game, or you know, whatever you want to say to them, and I  
 guess those are the people that you 1) become most disappointed with when they  
 make a bad call, and I guess number 2) just, you want them to hold like the same  
 295 values to the game that you are holding, which goes back to 'one', that's why  
 you're so disappointed, like umm...you know when I was captaining and you  
 know another captain that was really nice, and then he gets in the game and he  
 starts making calls it's just tough, it's tough to stay friends with that guy 'cause  
 your competitive nature starts taking over and you want to win the game, you  
 300 don't really care about being his friend anymore you just wanna win.

P: Okay. Well, how is that different in a game that's Observed?

305 R: Well, I guess I can best put it like...when I was a freshman we played A&M  
 early in the day at Sectionals, we lost 15-13 without Observers and we knew a lot  
 of those guys, a lot of those guys were our friends, but we lost, and there were  
 calls that we were unhappy about, and so we requested that if we played them  
 again we had Observers and we won 15-7.

P: So you think the Observer present actually made that happen?

310 R: I felt like there was the same amount of calls in both games, but I felt like your  
 ability to differentiate what is a foul and what isn't and have a higher authority  
 step in and say 'this was a foul' and 'this wasn't' allowed you to just play the  
 game more honestly and to stop using bias to control the game or just your own  
 personal want to win the game control the game.

315 P: How do you feel an Observer being there effects the attitude of the players on  
 the field, like their behaviors? Is their presence there a big determining factor in  
 the on-field play?

R: I think people are definitely effected by it, 1) because they know they can  
 either call more calls and they are gonna be upheld by the Observer, but that's  
 mostly for throwers, and I feel like receivers aren't gonna make as many calls  
 because they know the Observers...you know, are gonna be a little more harsh

320 and like they're probably gonna give the defenders a little more of an advantage  
 than they normally would have, I mean when there's no Observers and there's  
 contact you can call foul anytime you want and it's just gonna get sent back at  
 worst, when an Observer's there he's just gonna call it like he sees it, like if he  
 thinks you got D'd up and he thinks there's no foul it's gonna be a turn and like,  
 325 that's not an option when there's not an Observer there.

P: Has an Observer ever ruled a call on you that you disagreed with?

R: ...um...it happened like for the first time last year, we were playing, um, we  
 were playing TUFF, which is Texas, and a disc went off of a TUFF receiver's  
 hand and one of our players, Ed Freiner, caught the disc and got knocked to the  
 330 ground and the guy on TUFF called a foul on him because he went over the top of  
 the player when he caught it and the Observer actually upheld it, and for me off a  
 deflection when the disc is up in the air it's just a free-for-all and Ed went up and  
 made a play and the other guy stood on the ground, I think, um...that was a pretty  
 bad call and other than that I don't know if I've ever disagreed with an Observer's  
 335 call, most of the time I feel as though they're pretty, pretty on top of the game,  
 because most of them have played as well and they know what is a foul and  
 what's not, and...

P: Don't they have to, I'm pretty sure they have to have played before in order  
 to...

340 R: Yeah, well they definitely have to know the rules, for sure, and I'm sure they  
 have to have played, but I'm saying most of the time they can put themselves like,  
 when you make a D they're gonna put themselves in your position and try and  
 understand your side and the other person's side and it's usually gonna be a fair  
 call, but that game where I was unhappy with the call the guy that made it was a  
 345 Texas alum, and I guess I just wasn't really surprised to see that call made, but it  
 was still disappointing.

P: Okay. What's your, uh, opinion on Observer involvement in the game like...

R: I think they should make active calls, I think they should call out travels, in and  
 out, and everything else should be called by players and then if there's a  
 350 disagreement then it should go to the Observer.

P: You think they should, I'm sorry, say that again, they should make active travel  
 calls...

R: Yes. So, you catch the disc if you travel the Observer immediately stops the  
 play and is like 'you traveled' and just shuts the play down. The other one is in  
 355 and out calls, like when you catch it he's like 'in bounds' immediately or 'out of  
 bounds' immediately, there's no argument, there's no 'aw, you were out', 'no, I  
 was in', none of that.

P: Have you ever played in a game where they made active travel calls?

R: No.

360 P: Okay. Have you ever played in any games where Observers made any active calls?

R: No.

P: Okay. So, do you think Observers should be more or less present, would you like it more regulated or less regulated?

365 R: I feel like Observers, just like what I've said before, should have the power to make active travel calls, they should make active in and out calls, and they should be present in every game. I would say...

P: In what kind of situation? Present in every game in what situation, like just in The Series or at every tournament?

370 R: Just in Sectionals, Regionals, and Nationals.

P: Okay.

375 R: Maybe if there's a big tournament that has something depending on like your power ranking or something and everyone knows it's a big tournament the team should probably, that's hosting, provide Observers, but other than that... I mean I think the whole thing about what you do in other tournaments determining your ranking is stupid anyways, but that's what USA Ultimate, that includes Canada and Mexico, wants to do.

380 P: Okay. The only thing that I want to backtrack on and touchup on is like, is how you interact with other people. You said that you say 'hi' to them, like off the field, and like afterwards, if you were playing another sport do you think that would happen with the same kind of frequency?

385 R: Um, it's a different, like social scene, like there's a kid I played little league baseball with that was a captain for A&M, he still plays for him this year, and man, me and that guy we're, we don't hangout outside of Ultimate, but when I see him at Ultimate functions I mean he's my friend and I give him a hug before every game, and after every game I tell him how well he played and how much that I enjoyed playing against him where you know, other guys I don't do that for, but I mean he's like my childhood friend so it's just part of interaction, and you know there's guys like you respect and look up to that you play against and like  
390 you wanna keep it civil I guess, or just you know some guys you have fun playing against, like uh, this old captain of ours I would agree with him, if I could play every college game every day it would be against Arkansas. Arkansas is a bunch of athletes who, they don't cheat they just want to play the game the way it should be played, they just want to be competitive and I'll be when we play them in a  
395 game to fifteen there's two calls the entire game, and that's...

P: Would that be the case if you guys were playing in the game to go to Nationals?

R: We played them two years ago in the semi's and we had two calls all game.

P: But that wouldn't happen against another team like A&M.

400 R: We played like UNT in the quarters or maybe even just group-play and I remember that we had twenty-plus calls in the game.

P: Okay. Arkansas is an awesome team. I like those guys a lot.

405 R: They just, sometimes you just play a team and you just understand it's a competitive game but you both are respecting the fact that there's no calls being made and you're both just putting yourselves out there athletically, and uh, other times that's just not the case.

## Appendix 6: Ernesto Transcription

Ernesto, 29- 10.8.10 (6:51PM) 65:43 minutes

P: Alright, just stock questions real quick. How many USA Ultimate or UPA series events have you played in?

5 E: Which includes Sectional, Regionals, and Nationals, um...so, I would say for club, it's been, this is my ninth year with Double Wide so eighteen, and...we didn't qualify twice, so that's twenty five, and then for college, I would say roughly forty.

10 P: Roughly forty. Okay, and you differentiated college and club, both competitively, um have you played anything outside of that on a competitive level or noncompetitive level, or just college and club Ultimate?

E: Uh, I've played competitively on some teams that were international teams, but they weren't Ultimate tournaments they were Beach tournaments I guess, so I don't know if that qualifies.

15 P: What kind of rules do you play by, are they...

E: So they're very similar, but it's five on five, and, uh, it's basically the same rules as in Ultimate on a playing field but it's different numbers of players.

P: Okay. Do you play any leagues or pick-up games at all?

E: I try not to, but I have.

20 P: Why do you try not to?

E: Um, it frustrates me a lot because I kind of feel like I pick up a lot of bad habits when I play league, and, um, I'm also a pretty competitive person when it comes to Frisbee, so it's frustrating even, even when you play in a somewhat competitive league, uh, the competition is still...it's frustrating to me. I just feel like you  
25 know, it's not worth my time, maybe not it's not worth my time, it's just uh, not fun for me to go out and play league.

P: Why did you choose to do it if it's not fun?

E: Well, when we initially moved to Austin I did it because I thought it would be fun, there was no leagues in College Station, so everyone was talking about  
30 summer league, let's play let's play and so [Yves] and I played and I had a miserable time. Um, and you know the people are nice and they're great, but the playing for me just wasn't worth going out there, uh, and then, so I didn't play leagues for about four years and then I heard from everyone that winter league was a lot of fun and so I signed up for a winter league team 'cause all the, all my  
35 team mates were doing it on Double Wide, so I signed up, and my team actually won winter league, which was great, uh, but it still, there were times that were incredibly frustrating, so...

P: And it was frustrating solely because of the ‘play?’

E: Yeah, uh...yeah. It was frustrating because of the level of competition, I felt like, I just wanna go out and you know, try and compete at a very high level, so when I play leagues I feel like you know you really have to tailor your game completely different and it’s just not ideal.

P: Was it a drop off in athleticism or disc skills or...

E: Certainly. Both yeah, yeah.

P: What about knowledge of the game and the rules?

E: Yeah, it’s a significant drop off. I would say that I don’t know every single rule out there and I’m gonna be the first one to admit that my knowledge of the rules is lacking, um, and I’m a certified Observer, and it’s, well yeah, in leagues I mean you just have people that they don’t know much of the rules they know like the basic you know like ten rules of Frisbee, you know hold a pivot foot, you’ve got ten seconds to throw it, um, but yeah you know I mean some people when it’s being pulled they wanna knock it down out of the air so that it doesn’t go any further ‘cause they don’t know that that’s a turn over. I also think part of it is when um, I’m in those positions in league I tend to be, people tend to look to me to kind of lead the team or talk in a huddle um, and I don’t really want to do that ‘cause I do it so much with my club team, so it’s nice to not you know have to, you know I don’t want that type of leadership or role outside of club, and sometime it just so happens that it falls in my lap when I play leagues, and so that’s another reason that I don’t enjoy like, playing.

P: That leadership role.

E: Yeah.

P: I want to touch on something. Have you *ever* read the rules, like front to back, have you ever read a...

E: [shakes head ‘no’]

P: You haven’t.

E: Uh...I would not say front to back, like start to finish, um, but when I was doing the Observer training I definitely um, had to bone up on the rules big time. Um, ‘cause we took two tests, like at the beginning and at the end uh of the weekend of certification.

P: Pretest, posttest?

E: Uh, it was, yeah, it was a pretest like before...um, and I think they do it to see really how effective the teacher is, um, that the head Observer, it’s just really to see how effective he was teaching the, um, Observer training. But, part of that test

was your initial knowledge of the rules, um, so...I have not read it, I have not sat down and read it front to back, but I've read most of the finer points.

40 P: Yeah. I'm gonna bring this up a little bit later, but when did you get Observer certified?

E: At College Centex this year.

P: College Centex this year.

E: Yeah.

45 P: Okay, interesting. Um, okay, so how many game have you Observed since then?

E: Let's see...that weekend I think I Observed four and then at College Regionals when it was in Austin I Observed a game every round, which was (...four...) I think I Observed seven. I've Observed a total of about ten, approximately.

50 P: Alright, we'll definitely come back to that because I want to hear more about you in your Observing...

E: That, that, that's being a *certified* Observer, but before being certified, yeah, I Observed at some tournaments where I Observed like probably plus or minus you know, like, probably a total of fifteen games.

P: Is that because of your stature in the community that they just asked you?

55 E: Yeah they asked, uh, like at College Regionals where, uh sorry, when College Nationals were in Austin in '03 they asked me to be an Observer. I don't think it was my status, you know I think it was just that we want people who know the game well there. They didn't have an Observer training system set up back then, so they would, they just needed Observers. Um, and then I definitely Observed  
60 some Centex games as well prior to being certified.

P: Okay. I'll definitely come back to that, but, uh, real quick when did you start playing Ultimate, was it during college?

E: Yes. It was my freshman year in college.

65 P: Freshman yeah, and it was like a recruiting effort and you went out and then it was...

70 E: Uh, not really, no. I, uh, what happened was my roommate, my college roommate was from Chicago and he had played Ultimate Frisbee back in Chicago, and I had actually, my Young Life leader when I was in high school, I went and played with him once at Rice University in Houston and uh, had a good time, didn't really think anything of it. So, my freshman year my roommate had just come back from the like, freshman orientation, I didn't go, and he was like



‘hey, there’s Frisbee team, they practice like right by our dorm, I’m gonna go out, do you wanna come?’ So I went with him and that’s kind of how I started playing.

P: Did you play any sports prior to Ultimate?

75 E: Yeah I played basketball my whole life, um, when I was in high school I also ran track and cross country.

P: Track and cross country and basketball.

E: And I played football up until I was in high school, and then I was just too small.

80 P: Okay. You still had basketball goin for you.

E: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Basketball was definitely, like my true love.

P: Alright, can you differentiate for me, if you can, or if you notice any differences, between college and club, like your experiences with college and club?

85 E: Yeah, I think, um, I think college, the college game, um, can be dominated by a few players, and the college game is also, I think it can be dominated by a few players because you can be very risky in college, because a lot of times, um  
 90 you’re going to be able to get those turns back if you do turn it over, where as club is very, um, you know at the elite level club you’re taking, you’re poaching from the best players from all the colleges when they all, most club teams all the players were the top or top two or three players on their college teams, so you’re taking all the best players in the elite level and bringing them to one team, and so the skills are significantly better, um, so you have to, you just have to be a lot smarter player I think, on the club level, and you have to recognize mismatches,  
 95 uh...turnovers are just not, it’s not like you can’t have a turnover, but, um...you pay for it a lot more on the club level than on the college level. Uh, I think college teams in general, like the top college teams are in as good of shape if not better shape than a lot of the club teams just because they’re able, ‘cause you’re in college and you can practice and train like three times a week [interrupted by  
 100 waitress]...so, I think as far as like a fitness level you’re going to see, in my opinion, that the fitness levels are generally the same, but in terms of Frisbee skills the club level is significantly higher, and I think just, uh, players’ overall, um, the way they approach the game is different in club versus college, in college I think their best players are much more aggressive and risky, versus in club you don’t really have, uh, I mean you can still do that, but you’re really going to pay  
 105 for it, um, a lot more on the club scene I guess if that makes sense.

P: Let me ask, despite disc skills and athleticism, if you control for both of those would there be a difference in intensity?

E: No. I don’t think so.

110 P: So you think that even if you have, like in college a few descent throwers and then a lot of athletes like, the game will be comparably intense as an elite competitive game?

E: Yeah.

115 P: Okay. Um, so can you give me a few examples like, of being in just a competitive environment, since you said you've played upwards of forty elite level games, um, sorry, elite level series', which is exponentially more games, what the general attitude is between teams, like between you and an opposing team?

120 E: Um, I think that probably depends on...the level that you're at. So, if you're at Sectionals, um, just for example like, Sectionals this year for club, you have the team I play on that you know plays at the elite level versus one of the teams you're playing is um, Texas Tech you know and half the team can't even throw a forehand, uh, so, those games you know there's no, intensity doesn't even factor in to the equation. It's really just let's get through this game this group of players  
125 they're unskilled you know, I mean the goal is to not get hurt and not get injured. Um, but when you get to the national level on the club scene I think it's, I think really it's a team by team basis, so um, I think some teams look at the game differently and they break it down matchup by matchup, and I think other teams rely on that intensity and emotion and energy to get through games. For instance,  
130 I think a team from North Carolina, uh Ring of Fire is a very emotional team and that means that they can either beat the best team in the country if like, emotionally they're really charged and they're playing really well, or they could lose to you know a non-elite team, usually they don't, but they could, because you know maybe, they're an emotional rollercoaster and maybe they make three or  
135 four mistakes and all of the sudden the sidelines are you know not in the game and you know their body language you can tell is negative, um, versus a team like Revolver, which is um, a really good team and they have all these Stanford you know grad that I think break down the game on a little bit more on a professional level and while they still play with some emotion it's not, they don't play with  
140 like a chip on their shoulder like I think the North Carolina team does, so I think it's a team by team basis. Double Wide, um, has always had...I think we've always lacked that emotional intensity, um, so, when we go into a game for instance against like our biggest rival, Chain, from Atlanta, that's a very intense game, I mean there's a lot of history there and you just don't, I mean you don't  
145 really need to say anything, I mean everyone's charged up to play that game, but if you go into a game with you know, some team that you hardly ever play, for instance Ring of Fire, it's hard to generate that energy and emotion. Um, so, I think at the national level it really depends on what team you are and what leadership there is and what um, you know just what type of team you are. Some  
150 teams are gonna come into every game with a chip on their shoulder, very emotional, um some teams are gonna look at it with less emotion and more tactical I guess. I don't know if that answered your question.

155 P: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it did, like in a lot of ways, but you've mentioned like teams have kind of like a *character* or *demeanor* that kind of personifies the entire group, like is there...I'm going to make this strictly about the rules, like is there a character that follows each team on how they approach making calls and how you interact with them on the field based on a rule basis?

E: Can you, can you phrase that question again? I'm a bit confused, are you asking like...say that again.

160 P: Sorry, like, are there um...you talked about how people's intensity levels are, or how they mentally approach the game, but I want to know a little about the behavior on the field. Is there like, any typification about the way people actually interact if like a call was made. If there are certain teams that make calls a certain way, or is it just ambiguous?

165 E: Um, I...from my experience the past couple years, I feel like that's, the answer to that question is, is dictated by the leadership of the team. So, for instance, I've seen the Seattle team, you know a call is being made by a player in the heat of the moment and he makes a travel, he makes a foul call, or you know, something that could be um, you know...a controversial call, and then their captain and leader if  
170 he has a good perspective, he'll walk up to that player and say 'my opinion is that it wasn't a foul' or 'it wasn't a travel' or you know will kind of say 'hey listen I'm unbiased, I'm not emotionally charged right now, and I don't think that you're making the right call.' Whereas other teams you know I feel like the leadership is, says if a team mate makes a call we're going to back you up no matter how shitty  
175 or good the call was, whether we agree or disagree with you, um, I've seen it both ways, I think you know, and people have asked me before like, how do you approach you know when there's a call made that you know, you believe is wrong, or you know, or what's the team's philosophy on like backing up their players or trying to tell their player 'hey, that's probably not the right call,' um,  
180 and to be honest with you I don't think my team has set really a philosophy I think we kind of, we have some players that we've had uh, at all costs you know you want to put your team in the best position to win the game so that might mean making a shitty call here or there, and we also have so players that at all cost want to make sure that um, you respect the game, you respect your opponents, and will  
185 ultimately, maybe you know take back a call, or not make a call just to prove a point that um, you know we're a spirited team, or I'm a spirited player etc. etc., but as far as rule based I think that's very difficult because you know my guess is I'm very similar to a lot of players that they know most of the rules, but they don't know them 100%, um, and you know the bottom line is that at the level that we  
190 play at you train to win, and everybody is super competitive, so when you're put in positions to self referee a game you you're playing at you know, the top level of the sport there are players and teams that take advantage of the rules, and um, I mean it is what it is, that's the way our sport is governed and that's the way we play it.

195 P: How do you feel about that?

E: Um, yeah, that's, that's a tough question I mean I feel like the way the sport is now It's going to remain the same if we don't move towards, um, referees, in a sense, I mean Observers are great and I'm an Observer myself um, and I think they help the game get to a certain point, you know they help move the game  
 200 along, they keep it flowing a little faster, it's more um, spectator friendly, um, and it's an unbiased opinion, most of the time, but at the same time an Observer could never be used in a game if the players choose not to use him, so what that means is it's still, I mean the rules could still be broken on purpose and the players are still in charge of you know, deciding outcomes of calls and making calls.

205 P: Are you saying with Observers, or if they choose not to have Observers?

E: Both.

P: Both?

E: Both. An Observer is on the field and they only make calls, excluding in/out, they only make calls if they're, you know if like a player actually goes to them.

210 P: Defers.

E: Yeah. So, if there is a horrible travel call and I'm an Observer and I know for sure he didn't travel and the guy was making a really shitty call just because the guy threw a beautiful sixty yard huck and his team got scored on, if that player that threw the travel doesn't know to go to the Observer, and so, that's, you know  
 215 that's a instance where you know a player is probably taking advantage of the rules and an Observer could be worthless at that point if they're not deferred to. I mean I think Observers are still good, they do a lot for the sport, but I think at some point if the sport wants to get to the point where a lot of people want it to be more visible and at a more professional level, Observers aren't the answer you  
 220 have to get referees to do it, I mean you *have* to.

P: What would that do to the sport, if you had referees?

E: That would change it for sure.

P: How?

E: Um...[long pause]

225 P: I could have touched on a few things but that was an interesting tangent to start, so.

E: So, I think with any sport that you play, um, there's ways to break the rules and try to break the rules and do it in a discrete way to where the referee or official doesn't see, like basketball, I played basketball forever, and at practices our coach  
 230 would give us tips on how to break the rules like in a discrete way to where the referees don't see it, if the referee doesn't see it then he can't call it. Um, so currently Ultimate is at a point where it's self-refereed meaning every player should respect the sport and your opponents and your team mates enough to

235 follow the rules, if it goes to a point where you have referees it gets to a point  
 where the game is played, it's, I mean the game is still gonna be played the same  
 but now, you know, if the referee doesn't see it you know no harm no foul, you  
 know I'm gonna pull his jersey as much as I want um, you know I'm going to  
 travel as much as I can because if they don't call it what's the harm, um, so I think  
 240 once, once you get a person who's a referee and not an Observer each player is  
 still responsible for policing themselves and their team mates then I think it can  
 possibly alter teams' philosophies. For instance, I played on an MLU team like  
 three or four years ago, which was a team where they tried to bring the top players  
 from four different regions and play at a huge tournament in Seattle, and part of  
 the strategy, it was refereed, you didn't have Observers, so the referees were in  
 245 charge of making the calls on the field, part of your strategy was to run your  
 player through a pick, you know 'cause as a player you can't call pick anymore,  
 the referee has to see it and call that pick for you, if they call a pick what happens  
 is the play stops, if they don't call a pick then you get a significant advantage in  
 the game. So, um...[waitress interrupts]. So I don't know if that made sense but I  
 250 fell that still at its current state you have players that are responsible for still being  
 referees and respecting the game, when a ref gets involved then you can almost  
 throw that out the door 'cause that's not your responsibility anymore, your  
 responsibility is to win the game and you want to win the game, and you want to  
 win at all costs.

255 P: Well I'll ask you to pass judgment on that, is that a good or a bad thing?

E: [long pause] And you're just asking my personal opinion?

P: Yeah.

E: Um, man...that's a really tough question for me 'cause I love professional  
 sports, um, you know every athlete growing up as a kid, you know I wanted to  
 260 play professional sports, a lot of kids playing sports they all do, um, but I think  
 Ultimate is in, I have no belief that I'm the most athletic player, um, I feel like  
 I'm solid, I'm a good player and I do love the sport the way it currently is, I think  
 that if you start adding referees it would for sure change the whole dynamic of the  
 way teams strategize and the way your mental approach is to a game. Um, I  
 265 would, I guess I would probably like to see Ultimate get to a point where it is a  
 professional sport though, not for me, I don't think it will happen while I'm  
 playing Frisbee, um so I guess if I wanted to see that I would be in favor of  
 referees. Uh, but like me personally and the fact that I do love the way it's setup  
 right now I'm fine with...[interrupted by waitress] Yeah, I don't know if that  
 270 makes sense, like I would like to see it in the future because at some point I'd like  
 to see Frisbee as a professional sport, but for me I'd prefer the way it is now, um,  
 and especially at Nationals when you're playing in games that matter you have  
 four Observers and I feel like when you have that many people watching during a  
 game it's policed really well, each Observer has you know, a quadrant of the field  
 275 that they're watching and uh, it helps to minimize a lot of the bull shit calls that  
 people tend to make.

280 P: How would that effect, how will, uh, refereeing, this while we're on topic, effect in inter-squad interactions? Like...I'll tell you what, prior to that, no, I'll stick with that, how will that effect how two teams interact on the field or off the field, either way?

E: [long pause] Um.

P: I know it's a hypothetical, if you want to give me a basis of comparison as to the way teams interact now that would be better.

E: How they interact now?

285 P: Yeah, like tell me because you, you've obviously played against an inordinate amount of teams for the standard Ultimate player, how do you interact with other players on opposite teams?

290 E: Yes, I feel like the draw to playing Frisbee is the community. Um, you know most everyone in the Ultimate community for the most part is a great person and they, um, they're fun to hang out with and they're easy going and um, they like you know, they like to do the same shit that I do you know. So, in general even the elite teams you know, I know most people on every single team, I'm friends with them, and um, mind you there are some teams where I know some players that I just don't like uh, but for the most part I think that the community is just  
295 very um, it's very open and especially outside of the fall club series I think individuals and, individuals try to branch out and meet new people, and you know just try and you know, I guess...I guess referees, how that would change the game...you know to be honest I don't know that it would. You know, I look at a sport like basketball for instance and it, you have the best players in the world  
300 let's say LeBron and Dwayne Wade, prior to them being team mates you know, whenever they would go against each other they would battle as hard as possible and the goal was for their team to win and they would do whatever it took for their team to win, but you know, off the court and outside of that game they could still recognize that they're friends and you know, probably not in a post season  
305 setting where it's uh, a seven game series, but um, outside of their teams going against each other I think that they would hang out and maybe get a beer. Um, so I think, I think just 'like' people are drawn to each other in general and I don't think referees would change that aspect of the sport, um you know there might be, the game might get a little chippy-er, um but I think that the interaction off the  
310 field would probably remain the same. Um, on the field it could get you know, with the fact that you know, people might be trying to like stretch the rules in terms of like physical contact because there's referees now and the player can't call a foul, yeah it certainly might get more physical and more aggressive, um so that might change, but I think that off the field there's probably be very close to  
315 the same you know everything.

P: Feel free to use a personal example for this, but have you ever, um, have you ever competed against a guy that you have me through the sport that you might

have restrained yourself from making a call, or thought differently about making a call because of your personal relationship with that person?

320 E: Ah...I'm trying to think of instances, um...[long pause]...I think maybe not a  
specific player, but a specific team, and I know this from my personal just,  
playing against Chain from Atlanta every single year we're going to see them in  
the Regional finals, playing them at other tournaments like Baton Rouge we  
would usually play them in the past five years, um, I think our team in general  
325 tends to call a lot of travels, uh, whether they're, whether they are a travel or not,  
uh, I think we just have that like, stigma about us, like when Chain you know  
looks at us and we're playing a tight game and all of the sudden a travel is called,  
you know they're like 'oh, here they go again.' Um, so yeah, I feel like sometimes  
against Chain there might be a travel that I see and I might say 'aw, well, he only  
330 dragged it minimally,' maybe against another team I'd call that, but because it's  
Chain and there's, in the past we have made a lot of calls against them that tend to  
be the same call, yeah, I definitely know that I have withheld a call. Um, against  
the individual player I would say I don't think that happens a lot.

335 P: Alright, so I'm gonna backtrack a little bit, like just something you mentioned  
earlier that was kind of said in passing that I want you to kind of expand upon, but  
you mentioned whether something was 'spirited' or 'not spirited,' can you give  
me just your personal definition of what Spirit of the Game is?

E: Man, I, I...that may be the toughest question because I really don't ever think  
about it. Um, to me like Spirit of the Game I understand it and I recognize its  
340 place in our sport, but for me it's more of a respect for an opponent, uh, which  
maybe just another way of saying spirit, you know like I respect my opponent so  
I'm not going to go diving into his back, you know I respect my opponent to  
where if he makes a great play you know I'm not gonna try and make a shitty call.  
Um, Spirit of the Game to me is...I don't know, uh...I guess my definition of  
345 Spirit of the Game would be respecting my opponents, my team mates and the  
game of Frisbee enough to make the right decision in specific circumstances that,  
that I'm involved in, you know plays, or uh...I guess, yeah. I mean for me it's  
more of a respect level than Spirit of the Game.

350 P: You gave me kind of your personal approach to Spirit, um do you ever deviate  
from that or have you ever deviated from that situationally or on a blanket scale?

E: Yeah.

P: Give me an example, please.

E: Um...[long pause] this past weekend we were playing a team from Tennessee  
and we were winning like 14-4, um, and they had a captain on the field and I was  
355 actually marking him, and there was a play in the field where their player called a  
foul and our player contested, I didn't see it and I had no idea what happened,  
their captain started like jawing and barking you know and saying 'aw, you guys  
are up 14-4, why are you contesting, that's bull shit, blah, blah, blah.' Um, I

360 didn't really think anything of it at the time, I was just like he contested let's get  
 the game going, they end up scoring and their captain the whole time is walking  
 down the field and just barking and saying stuff, and so at that point um, I  
 somehow flipped switch in my head and I just started barking at him, and we were  
 on the sidelines just barking at each other for about the next ten, fifteen minutes,  
 and so I think that you know, [chuckles] there's a point where you know you just,  
 365 your competitive juices start flowing and you know, I just I guess I lost respect for  
 him at that point, and um, you know it's not something I'm proud of I probably  
 could have just left it alone and no one would have ever known about it, um and I  
 felt like he was disrespecting our team so I took it upon myself I guess to um, jaw  
 at him, and that's certainly an instance where Spirit of the Game or respect for an  
 370 opponent probably would have dictated that I just left the situation alone, and um,  
 it would have been a nonissue, but at that point I decided to you know let him  
 know that I thought he was a clown and then from there we were just telling each  
 other our opinions of each other for the next ten minutes, so that's certainly an  
 instance, um...

375 P: But that's not your current attitude right?

E: Uh, no, I mean I try, that occurs very rarely...

P: That's my fault because I thought you were entailing it was a rarity.

E: That occurs very rarely. Um, yeah I've...I would say, I wouldn't call the team  
 we were playing an elite team. Uh, and that's why, oh no that's not why, but I  
 380 would say on the elite level, when like at a national level that never occurs, um,  
 well not never but very rarely occurs. So yeah, it's a rare occurrence, I don't  
 really get charged up that often like that, um, but it does happen, I mean I don't  
 really know what triggered it.

P: Was that a status thing? Like, was it because he wasn't an *elite* player?

385 E: No, no, no. I don't know why I said that. I guess I was just trying to make a  
 statement of like at Nationals, like elite level, uh, that hardly ever happens,  
 but...um...No, it wasn't a status thing, I wasn't, I don't think that I was trying to  
 let him know that my team's elite and his team isn't, uh, I think it was just  
 because his team was in a sense disrespecting my team, and I didn't, I guess I felt  
 390 like I wasn't just gonna lie down and let it happen, and that doesn't rarely occur at  
 a Nationals level maybe, um...

P: Well I'm not gonna beg that anymore, but do you feel as though your approach  
 to Spirit, because you've mentioned, uh, you tied it really tight to *respect*, like  
 'respecting your team mates, respecting your opponent and so forth,' like do you  
 395 feel as though you're in the majority or the minority of your level of play?

E: I would say I'm in the majority. Like in terms, like if I were to talk to another  
 player on a, another team that qualifies for Nationals on a consistent basis would  
 they say that they adhere to Spirit of the Game or would they say they approach it  
 more as a respect for...is that what you're asking?



400 P: Yeah.

E: Yeah, I'd say that I'm in the majority.

P: Okay. Do you know people personally that would have a converse opinion?

E: Yeah.

405 P: Uh, how do you think that they would approach a situation differently than you would, not the same situation you just exemplified, but like, just a general situation? What is their take on like, maybe just a basic controversy on the field?

E: Yeah, I think that, um...

P: Feel free to cite specifically.

410 E: So I think we have a player on our team that regardless of the call, at-all-costs, regardless of the situation he wants to make sure that Spirit of the Game is adhered to, uh, and...um, I guess in certain situations he would probably...he would probably make a decision based on, on how, I think he would want the opponent to come away from the game thinking we were a spirited team, not that we were a superior or inferior team, like I think that you know, part of his drive to  
415 play is the Spirit and um, and it, in similar situations...[under breath] god I'm trying to think of...

P: That's okay.

E: I don't know. I guess my overall statement would be that I think his overall goal at the end of the game is to remain a Spirited player and that the opponents  
420 think of him as a Spirited player or that the team is a Spirited team, versus winning the game and the opponent thinking we're inferior or superior team to who we just played, um, and I think sometimes you know, in his, in situations where a foul or a potential foul has occurred, he is going to ere on the, the opponent not being upset or not being frustrated with our team so that we look  
425 like we are Spirited instead of, 'you know, maybe that was the right call' you know, and the team is just upset because it was you know, a turning point in the game or something like that. Um, so, I mean I think there are players out there that that might be their overall goal, which I think is the minority, and we have one of those players on our team.

430 P: Okay. Can I uh, can I ask do you have anybody that would be like kind of an antithesis of that, like anyone that may be just a complete asshole?

E: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

P: you have some of those on your team?

E: Sure.

435 P: Okay. And how do they approach a similar situation?

E: Uh, to win the game.

P: Okay. So even if a call was made that might have been a *right* call it would still be contested?

E: [nods yes]

440 P: Okay.

E: Or um, just an overall abuse of the rules whether it be marking or, um...marking is probably the biggest one, but yeah, I think that when a call, when it would come down to them and a call—what's best for the team. You know whether they believe it or not, whether they think the call happened or  
445 not—what's the best call for the team.

P: Okay. Alright, um, give me a situation where you had a call made against you that you disagreed with and how you kind of, what's the standard mode for you to react? Like, if you disagree with a call that's made, how do you usually react?

E: Yeah. I think initially I'm heated, um and I tend to tell the opposing player that  
450 like I adamantly disagree and that I think that's the wrong call, um, but probably in a condescending tone, and, and then I will try to discuss what I feel like happened and I'll listen to their discussion and then we'll go from there, but I would say my initial reaction is frustration, um, and uh...and probably after a  
455 couple ten seconds you know, we can talk it out and come to a consensus or we can just disagree about it, but for the most part I would say initially I'm frustrated and, and then you know, cooler heads usually prevail in terms of my reaction I guess.

P: Yeah. Have you ever made a call yourself that you regretted?

E: Yeah.

460 P: Give me an instance.

E: Uh...

P: Well you said that casually like you've done it a million times.

E: No, well, I for sure have. I think most people do. Um, I think not, maybe not that I've *sincerely* regretted but that I've, I know has pushed the boundaries of, for  
465 instance travel calls, you know that's a very grey...uh, you know your interpretation of when the disc left a player's hand versus when the toe dragged, or was the travel on a pivot, what, you know it's, I know that there's times where I've made a travel call after a player just hucked it and you know, I don't make it, I don't make the call based on the outcome of the play, yeah, but it's a travel and  
470 in my mind it's like 'ugh, that wasn't egregious' you know, maybe he slid a little bit, but it probably wasn't really a travel. Um, but yes, I have made calls that, not one that's like, I don't think one that, I can't think of one that I'm just ashamed of, um, but I know I've made calls...

475 P: Were any of them like, strategy calls? Have you ever made a strategy call, like it might not have been exactly truthful, but you did it because it was good strategy for the game?

E: I don't, I, ah...I don't, I don't think I, like what do you mean? Like...

480 P: Well you were mentioning a couple of times today like, I don't know, like in basketball you can do things and get away with them, but like in Ultimate you can't, travel is something that has been brought up a few times about like there's not much somebody can do about it, you make a travel call and the disc kind of has to come back.

E: Sure.

485 P: Have you ever made a call that's strategic to the game that might not be completely...

490 E: The right call? Uh, I would probably say the travel call is probably the, um, is probably the one that I've been guilty of the most in terms of making the travel call, um, and maybe there's times where I've done it and a team's going up wind and they just get off a huck and I think it was you know, a travel, but probably not the best call. I don't, I know I don't look for the outcome of what happened, and I mean I know that's one thing that I don't wait on the outcome, I'll call it right away, but yeah, I think there's times where you know, I've made travels, but I guess I don't think about it as like a *strategy* call, um, I don't think of it in that terms, like in those terms I guess.

495 P: Alright. Um, I want to go touch back on Observers real quick. I want for instance, exclusively your opinion, like in playing with Observers in it, not necessarily your opinion as an Observer, um, but, so give me for instance, general opinion—yea or nay on Observers.

E: Yea.

500 P: Yea.

E: Yeah. Okay, and can you give me an instance where you have *not* liked the Observer presence?

E: [bluntly] No.

P: None.

505 E: As a player?

P: Yeah.

E: No.

P: Has an Observer ever turned down a call that you thought was correct?

E: Yes.

510 P: How did you feel about that?

E: Uh, you disagree with it, um, but I guess it, like it also is part of my background, um, I reff'ed basketball for every single year I was at A&M, and I was like a head basketball official, and so being an official you just know that you miss calls, you make the wrong call, it just happens, it's human error, um, but I think you know, 90% of the time, if not more, you know probably more like 95% of the time they're right. Um, so with Observers you know, there's times when I disagree with their call, but uh, I believe that they end up making the right call probably 90% of the time, and if you don't have that Observer you know, there's probably going to be more calls and more hotly contested calls, and with an Observer you know, you just live with the outcome, but I do think that they make the right decisions. Like, this past weekend for instance, we're playing Chain and we have the same Observer Observes our game every single year and he used to live in Austin, and I feel like he makes calls against us on purpose just so everyone knows like he's unbiased, and I just know that going into the game, but for the most part, of the like ten calls that go his way I feel like he's going to get most of them right. Um, so, I'm 100% for Observers, and there has been times where in my opinion they've made wrong call, but in their opinion they probably made the right call, um, and so you live with the outcome and you know, an Observer's ruling is not going to win or lose you a game. It could be like the last point of a game where they call him 'in' and you thought he was out, but there was probably ten other turnovers in the game that you could have avoided to put your team in a position to win where it wouldn't have had to go to the Observer. So, they don't win or lose you games, and I think for the like, 100% of the time, uh, I like them doing games.

535 P: Okay. So you as an Observer, do you like, do you feel as though your experience as a referee has kind of informed your calling strategy at all? Actually, I'm going to backtrack and ask you a different question. Do you feel as though you know the rules better for Ultimate of for basketball in the context of your officiating?

540 E: Ooo, basketball.

P: Basketball.

E: No doubt. Yeah.

P: Okay. Interesting. So you still approach the Ultimate field do you, have you ever, I'll ask you the regret question, have you ever regretted a call that you've made as an Observer?

545

E: No.

P: And you've Observed you said I think fifteen times if I recall, correct?

E: Since I've been a certified Observer.

P: Since you've been *officially* Observing.

550 E: Yes.

P: And, you've never thought second about a call that you've made?

E: No.

P: Can you give me a...

555 E: But, also though, I mean I've never been in a game where it's been like a you know, a super tight game and a call comes to me on ultimate-point. Most of the games I've Observed have been blowouts or you know, and I also feel like, not trying to toot my horn, but I feel as an Observer because I've played basketball I position myself really well to see calls and so if a call does come to me I feel like I've put myself in the best position to make the right judgment call. So, I don't,  
560 and as a basketball ref you also know that 50% of the people are going to disagree with your call. So, on the Ultimate field it's similar you know, like is gonna slap you on your ass and the other team is gonna be like 'what the fuck' you know, you just know that as a referee or an official in any sport, um, but I think that maybe not all my calls have been correct, but I have never regretted one and I  
565 think that when it's come to me I've felt very confident in the rulings I've made.

P: Do you, have you officiated or Observed both college and club, or is it just college?

570 E: Just college. I don't think I've done club. I haven't done club since I've been certified and I don't remember doing club beforehand, I'm pretty sure it's all been college.

P: Have you ever had any college athlete like, really give you shit for anything you've ruled?

E: No.

P: No?

575 E: No.

P: Very surprising. Very surprising. Um...

E: I haven't.

P: That is interesting.

580 E: Yeah, but I also, again I also think it's a product of like um, the way I Observer is I'm in the middle of the play, you know, I put myself in position to like make the call and I feel like college players recognize that and they see like how much I'm hustling to like, um, you know Observer a game to the best of my abilities,

whereas other Observers you'll see them just like walking up the field and you know, they could be talking to some spectators, um, I take it pretty seriously. So, I  
585 have never had, you've had some college players that have disagreed with my call, but I have never had players that adamantly are just like 'you're miserable, you're the worst Observer, you're terrible,' I've never encountered that.

P: So, do you have faith in the Observer program, because you've mentioned that there are people that you know, saunter across the field...?

590 E: Yeah, so...you know, I mean, I think it's on an individual basis you know, I mean there's, the way they train you to be an Observer, I have faith in that training, because they train you to get in the play, they train you to be as close as possible and to you know, hustle and run up and down the field, but um, I think, I think again you're gonna have, it's just, it's innate in people if they're lazy or  
595 whether they're not, uh, so, you could get a person that's lazy that loves Frisbee and wants to Observer and it's probably gonna happen in games where they're lazy, and a call's gonna come to them and they were twenty yards out of position to really get the best you know, angle or view on a call. Um, but I do have faith in the training, for sure.

600 P: Okay. [cordialities]

## Appendix 7: Clair Transcription

Clair, 48- 11.24.10 (6:05PM) 61:35 minutes

- 5 P: So I asked you earlier, just in order to qualify for this study you have to have participated in at least one USA Ultimate or UPA event, um, have you?
- C: I have, more than one.
- P: More than one. How many would you say?
- 10 C: How many would I say...I probably started competing at that level in maybe '92 and I played at that level for about twelve or thirteen years. The last time I played at the National level was '05, but I actually played in Regionals last year, I just didn't play this year, this year was the first year that I haven't played a UPA event.
- P: Okay. How many teams have you played with, like in...
- C: How many teams have I played with?
- 15 P: Yeah, in different series' do you think?
- C: I was always the person who would like gather up all the leftovers, so you know I had my competitive teams but in other tournaments I would, the people who would get cut from other teams I'd put them together as a team, so, there's no telling, as far as national caliber teams...
- 20 P: They don't have to be national caliber teams, like just teams that you played in a series event with, like Sectionals, Regionals, or Nationals.
- C: Uh, I played Ovaryaction, I played Holes 'n Poles, I played a team called Swear, I played Weird Alice, I played Lone Star Disc, I'm gonna say those are like the five teams that I played on and then I really did try to go gather people
- 25 just to participate in any tournament you know, it would hurt my feelings when people would have a tryout and there's all these women would come to practice and then they wouldn't get invited to play on a team yet like, the practice was so empowering to them, like they really discovered themselves in a different light because they'd never done anything physical before and you know, truthfully as a
- 30 physical educator they really didn't have a great deal of athletic prowess, but to me it was just amazing how it created a situation of self-esteem you know, in their lives, so I would gather, I don't know how many teams I've actually put together and played on, I mean probably one hundred in those fifteen years.
- P: Yeah. How many uh, how many times have you graduated, or like qualified for
- 35 Regionals or Nationals?

C: Well we're in the Southern Region so it's pretty easy to qualify for Regionals [laughs], so you know, I've qualified for Regionals every year from '92 to 2009, every year I've played in Regionals 'cause it's not hard to qualify for Regionals.

P: Have you ever made Nationals?

5 C: I've been to Nationals in '97, '8, '9, like '97 to '03, '03 was the last time I played at Nationals, that was Holes 'n Poles, we were a mixed team. We finished third, it was good, that was the year they tried to require Observers on the field and we were the renegade team that we did a sit-down, we wouldn't play if they made us have Observers, we told them we could handle it ourselves and we didn't  
10 want Observers, so we had a sit-down.

P: What kind of reaction did that get?

C: Well what they, what the UPA decided was they made the officials, the Observers, sit down on our field and we played the game without them, so they wouldn't let the Observers actually leave our field, but because we wouldn't play  
15 they made the Observers sit down and we played the game against, uh, Red Fish Blue Fish without Observers.

P: So the UPA mandated that they stay, but they weren't active?

C: They were not active, yes. That was in '03. That was the quarter finals in '03. Right? Would that have been the quarter finals? It might have been the semi-  
20 finals because we finished in third place, we did not make it to the finals. We lost that game, yeah, it was the semi-finals of the UPA mixed-Nationals '03, but yeah, I went to Nationals on a regular basis so we had a standing reservation for our condo, that's how it was back then. We we're from the Southern Region and you know it wasn't hard to make it to Nationals because there weren't that many  
25 teams in the South back then.

P: Is it harder now do you think?

C: I think it's easier in the Southern Region than it is in many other regions. You know when I had to go spend time with my parents we, I was living in the Founder's Section, and when I played Sectionals there, I was on a women's team,  
30 there were *twenty eight* women's teams at Sectionals [very emphatic], twenty eight women's teams at sectionals, they had an A division and a B division, so they wanted to know if you wanted to try for Regionals or not before you even played for Sectionals, so they divided the Sectional tournament into those who want to qualify for Regionals and those who don't, twenty eight women's teams.

35 P: I've never even heard of that.

C: At Sectionals.

P: Huh. When did you start playing?

C: In 1982.



P: 1982.

40 C: Was my very first tournament in Mars, Pennsylvania.

P: Okay. Man, that's a lot of years.

C: It's crazy isn't it.

P: It's awesome.

C: Don't really tell anybody, I guess I just told everybody.

45 P: Oh, nobody knows. Um, okay, so like what, other than UPA events what other kind of Ultimate do you play?

C: I play league all over the state of Texas, I play Huck'n for Laura is a hat tournament, my friend Laura Higgins got murdered in Houston, so the Houston Ultimate community called it Huck'n for Love, it was on Valentine's Day, the year that she got murdered we renamed it Huck'n for Laura, this guy Pete Rove, do you know Pete Rove from Houston? He was the instigator who actually said we're going to make this a fundraising tournament for uh, Laura left a daughter, two years old, Sydney, so for the first couple of years Huck'n for Laura was a college fund tournament for her, now I don't think it's a, now I think it's a random fund, it's still a fundraiser tournament, but uh, they donate to a different cause every year, I think this year it was a women's group, last year, the year before it was a homeless group, but I, since I am trying to develop youth Ultimate I try to go around to the different communities and become part of that, I play winter league in Dallas and spring and fall league in San Antonio, and I work as an Austin ISD student coordinator here in Austin and run the off-campus PE programs, so we train coaches, I go do training sessions for kids at University of Texas who are learning how to be PE teachers, they're our biggest group of volunteers, I train the staff at the Boys and Girls club and you know, just let them create ownership in Ultimate however they feel it should be, because it definitely takes a different form depending on what community you're involved in.

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P: Can you um, since you mentioned that you played in series events and also in various leagues, hat tournaments, um, can you give me, if you notice any, attitudinal differences between those there or other types of play?

C: Well just last weekend when I was playing in San Antonio, um, there's a wide spectrum of players who are brand new players to you know, veteran players who have twenty years experience on each team, and we were playing and somebody D'd the disc and taco'ed it, bent it, so we wanted to stop the game and change the disc and someone who has experience playing at a much higher level said 'no, no, you can't change the disc in the middle of a point,' so you know, we honored his anal retentive wish and played the rest of the point with a taco'ed, flimsy, wavering disc until the point was over and then we switched the disc for a, for one that wasn't warped, but I think that's um, you know, that's, that's the difference between a person playing according to the competitive rules, the uh, 11<sup>th</sup> edition

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80 rules, and the rules have changed, when I started playing Ultimate we were using  
 the 7<sup>th</sup> edition rules and there was so much more leeway in the rules that whatever  
 group was playing they could make the rules fit that particular situation and with  
 each new edition in the rules they've addressed more and more problems that  
 arise with people who are genuinely concerned with the outcome and trying to  
 take those rules and use them to you know, control the outcome, so as the UPA,  
 85 which is now USA Ultimate, has changed the rules from you know, according to  
 my knowledge, from 1982 until now, the rules have really changed to  
 accommodate the more competitive attitude. When I first started playing it was  
 more about 'well you know, let's try and do the right thing,' and I think the um,  
 the involvement of Observers on the field became a necessity because people  
 90 would argue for their own advantage as opposed to trying to see the perspective of  
 the play.

P: Why do you think there was a *shift*?

C: Well, as a physical education teacher I've seen kids be exposed to competitive  
 experiences sooner, and sooner in their lives, and kids these days have been  
 95 playing competitive sports from the time they're three, four, five years old, put a  
 soccer uniform on them, keep track of the score, point them in one direction, so  
 they've been a victim of adult attitudes from the time that they were really young,  
 and they've brought that attitude of 'competition is purely to see if you can win,' I  
 mean if you're a competitive player you wanna try to win and you'll do whatever  
 100 you can to win, but I think the founders of our sport in 1968 *founded* our sport  
 because they were generally opposed to the win-at-all-cost behaviors that were  
 developing as football became more competitive at the interscholastic level, and  
 you know, back in those days there wasn't even soccer you know, in the United  
 States and I think that as soccer came and started the youth movement towards  
 105 soccer, that's really what changed the attitude toward competition in our society.  
 Just as a physical educator I notice the difference even in PE classes of kids  
 who've played competitive activities from the time that they were very young to,  
 I've actually seen kids who say that they're 'burned out' by the time that they're  
 ten years old they won't, they don't want to play sports anymore, which is  
 110 something that never occurred in my childhood you know, when I was younger.

P: So, I don't wanna out words in your mouth, but are you trying to say that this is  
 like, a more pandemic social shift than just in Ultimate?

C: Well I feel that human beings are competitive by nature, and I feel that, that  
 sports are perceived as the ultimate venue for competition and um, somewhere  
 115 along the line no one really uh, felt like there was social value in kids  
 participating in sports for any other reason except competition, so I don't know,  
 do you call that pandemic? You know, I don't know. I think it really comes back  
 to you know, one of my first jobs when I was teaching in Dallas, as youth sports  
 were developing one of my first jobs was to work for the YMCA and try to train  
 120 parents who volunteer to be coaches for their kids, you know, how do you train a  
 parent who is reliving vicariously through their kids their own athletic experience,  
 I don't know, their just was really, um, a whole scenario of adults who were

125 taking great pride in ‘we have the team with the best record,’ even though the kids  
who were playing were only five. Personally, working with those kids on a day  
day basis, they didn’t remember whether they won or lost, they remembered what  
130 flavor the juice box was [chuckles], you know, so it was really more the adult  
attitude being kind of pushed upon the kids, I think if we just would have let the  
kids go out there and play how they wanted to play, and you know I’m not really  
sure how that all fits together, but I know that our society now is, is struggling  
135 with ten year olds with plaque in their arteries, and you know, ten year olds who  
are showing signs of adult onset diabetes, they’re not *born* with their pancreas not  
working properly, it’s because of diet and lack of exercise, and because they feel  
like they’re not competitive they don’t participate in sports. I don’t know how  
many kids we get in our youth program who say ‘you know, I don’t wanna play  
140 because I don’t play sports,’ and then you just have to talk to them and say ‘you  
know, there’s much more going on than, you know we’re trying to get you  
healthy and active, and responsible for your own body,’ and I feel like *Ultimate* is  
the perfect venue for that, so, I don’t preach competition, I let them compete  
however they do and I really just teach cooperation, and whenever they become  
145 competitive I really just let them work it out on their own, which is not the  
traditional way of coaching, you know I really have to try and get coaches who  
volunteer for our program who let the kids be in charge of their own movement  
experience.

145 P: Okay. I’m gonna backtrack just a second to uh, your experience in different  
like, settings, because we’ll touch on coaching in a minute, but you played in a  
wide gamut obviously for a few years, um, what is your preferred venue to play  
Ultimate, and why?

C: Well, I don’t, this is the first year that I didn’t play uh, USA Ultimate, because  
I feel that, um, I don’t know, It’s just too competitive for my personal tastes.

150 P: In general?

C: In general. So I didn’t even try to be on a team that would go to Sectionals or  
Regionals this year for the very first time ever, um, I participated in the Grand  
Masters event that was held a year ago, and I was really soured by the competitive  
155 structure that was developed by USA Ultimate because it was not about getting  
people together who have played together for the past fifteen or twenty years,  
which is what most women were about on my team, it’s really about who is  
determining who is going to be the champion. So, the format and the structure  
was set up that um, once you lost you didn’t get to play anymore, and it was a  
great deal of effort and energy and travel money and uniform expense and  
160 tournament expense to um, play a couple of games and once you lost you were  
out, you know there was the um, it wasn’t a participation experience it was a  
competitive experience, so I, I think probably I appreciate participating in the  
league experiences because whether you win or lose everybody’s still there and  
they’re participating, and I personally have a value of people staying active for the  
165 rest of their lives.

P: Um hm. Uh, you mentioned ‘competition’ a couple of times can you, what are some things that you notice that tell you it’s too competitive? Do you have like a litmus test for ‘wow, this is too competitive because of “this action, this attitude or this behavior”?’

170 C: I don’t know if that goes down to the players, I don’t know if I can say that  
about a player that I’m actually participating against, but um, I think my  
opposition is just to the way that the competition is structured, just uh, you know  
the way that teams are seeded and the format of the tournament and it’s just, um,  
not worth the time and expense and travel you know, that it costs. To be a person  
175 who really believes that every single person should participate, so, I don’t know  
that I can say that about you know, I get offended when a player is too close to me  
personally on the field, although that hardly ever happens, you know I get  
offended by a person who is argumentative over every call and not really trying to  
see the perspective of exactly what happened in the play, that they’re  
180 argumentative just trying to you know, gain an advantage for their team, for their  
person, but you know truthfully I don’t see that, it’s not, when I played in the  
Grand Masters tournament I was never offended by any of the players on the  
field, I was just offended by the fact that we traveled all the way to Denver, we  
spent all that money and because you know, we lost twice now we’re sitting and  
185 watching, you know we didn’t get to play, you know the pure joy of play is so  
valuable, and you know because of what I do on a daily basis I just see how that  
can enhance people’s lives. So, I think that I’m offended by the way that USA  
Ultimate has adopted a purely competitive structure to really be rewarding the  
elite players instead of rewarding the players who participate on any level, and I  
190 think that’s why I consider myself not a competitive player anymore.

P: So the structure is tailored toward the elite, and that’s kind of a...

C: And that’s offensive to me. That word’s even offensive to me ‘elite.’ Yeah.

P: How would you structure it differently?

195 C: Well, you know I, I think that um, if I’m organizing a tournament I’m going to  
create a structure that um, that allows a round robin format where every team  
meets every team who’s there you know, and you know maybe the second day of  
the tournament maybe you seed the players that are there, you know competition  
is innate, so people are not going to come to an event unless they get to feel like  
they’ve had the opportunity to compete, but usually when I organize an event I  
200 make the first part of it ‘everybody plays against everybody, just so that y’all get  
to know each other,’ and then the second half of the event is ‘okay, now that we  
know who’s on each level’ you know we’ll let everyone participate on their own  
level, so it becomes competitive for everyone instead of the *traditional* format  
where the first place team plays against the last place team and then that’s what  
205 moves them on to the next round. I organize competitions so that the top teams  
play against each other, and the bottom teams play against each other so that by  
the end of the competitive experience everyone is feeling that they actually played

a game at their own level, and you know, they're tired, they've felt that they've had the opportunity to compete.

210 P: Do you notice a difference in interaction between, once they're matched up those top teams and then the bottom teams?

C: Yeah, I notice that they become, especially when you're coming down to the final games, if people would just call traveling the very first time that it happens and get a player to not travel, even if one team is completely lopsided over  
 215 another team, you know the score might be 7-2, and somebody feels like 'that person is traveling, but it doesn't really matter because we're winning,' but if they would actually call traveling and get that player to not break the rule when they're playing at the beginning levels of competition then, uh, I think there wouldn't be so many stoppage of play calls when the, when it feels like the point really  
 220 matters. So, as competition progresses at the end of the tournament, I notice that there are more calls and if, as a teacher or a coach, if you could get people to just not break the rules at lower levels of competition, then I think that it would really enhance higher levels of competition and there really wouldn't be so many arguments over: 'you're calling that just to stop play right now.'

225 P: Okay. Just to clarify this real quick, you had an eight team tournament, you had four, you had already played your round robin, and you divided them in half: top four teams, bottom four teams, so you're saying that travel incidents where competition would flare on both the lower end and upper end?

C: I think both the lower end and the upper end because once you've divided  
 230 those people into a competitive experience they're playing on their own level and now they feel like they're, they really feel like they have an opportunity to actually compete and they're, *it's innate* [emphatic], it's human nature to wanna win, so you know, in both of those divisions I think in the first round you'll see less calls and in the last round you'll see more calls where people are actually  
 235 stopping play because they don't want somebody to score on them.

P: Okay. Are...

C: I, I'm not saying that happens if you're having like an eight team tournament and if you structure the tournament that you know, the eighth team plays the first team, I think that the first team is going to run away with the game and the eighth  
 240 team might not be as skilled so they violate the rules more often, but the first place team is not going to call, make the calls because they're winning the game. I think it's natural for people to want to stop the game more often when they're in a position of self-regulation when they feel like they have an opportunity to actually win the game, no matter what level they're on.

245 P: Did that happen uh, in situations, you know you've said that 'it's too competitive right now,' did that still happen when you didn't think it was as offensively competitive? That people would still do that back then?

C: In situations when uh, you mean like back in 1982 when I was playing in Mars?

250 P: Sure.

C: [laughs] We were trying to win the tournament, but back in 1982 people were playing in their bare feet and trying to win the tournament, and if there was some kind of an altercation there was never the consideration of an Observer, and people really had the initiative and internal strength to evaluate the situation and admit that you know, they had made a mistake and ‘okay, I did travel then, you’re right, you know let’s take that back and do it over again,’ where as these days it seems like somebody calls travel on someone in a game that might be the final game in the tournament there’s going to be an argument, there’s going to be an argument that might last for five minutes, and the whole reason that you know, the UPA invoked Observers is because the people who are sitting and watching the game don’t appreciate that part of self-regulation where you and I are standing there having an argument, not willing to waver till either you accept my point of view or I accept your point of view. I think that compromise was more prevalent you know, back in 1982.

265 P: Really?

C: I do. I mean I think that people were willing to admit their mistakes, and actually that’s what the problem was that sometimes they felt like a championship meeting, you know I went to some of those meetings when the UPA trying to decide about how to have Observers and the UPA was, um, worried that if they didn’t have somebody to kind of referee those discussions that were happening towards the end of those higher level tournaments that the outcome was not a true reflection of you know, the competition that was actually demonstrated at that tournament you know, perhaps the wrong team won because one team was ‘okay, I’m not gonna argue with you anymore, whatever you say is fine, we’ll just take it back and play it over,’ and you know, it didn’t come out the right way, so, so the UPA went to Observers and then they went to active Observers, and I just really feel like there are so many lessons to be learned by a person regulating themselves and actually being able to admit ‘wow, I just broke the rules right now and you caught me.’

280 P: What do you think the difference is in people approaching each other now and days and people approaching each other back then?

C: I think that Ultimate players in general are you know, some of the more compassionate people in the world and they definitely appreciate perspective more than anyone else, but I also think that in the heat of competition *now* Ultimate players are, uh, willing to maintain an argument to, uh, just to, um, make sure that they don’t compromise their point of view, to make sure the outcome of the discussion is in their favor, you know it’s almost as if the reason we’re having a discussion now is because, is because I wanna win the discussion [laughs], you know and it seemed like back then when we were having a discussion somebody

290 would break the rules and they'd be like 'really, you think I was out of bounds, okay, if you think I was out of bounds I guess I was, I didn't realize, sorry about that,' and um, now people are more willing to create a confrontation to, um, just promote their agenda.

P: Have you witnessed the younger people that mantra that you just described of  
295 'oh, you think I'm out of bounds, well okay?'

C: I have, but only because I think I'm brainwashing them [laughs].

P: But, of their own volition you haven't...

C: Of their own volition, but I haven't witnessed that among kids that I don't  
300 teach, younger people who I don't teach. You know, it really is an attitude that comes from me, and it's an attitude that's appreciated on the campuses, and uh, it's just my interpretation of the Spirit of the Game.

P: Okay. Can you uh, define for me Spirit of the Game?

C: Oh it's such a...

P: I know you have it memorized, but give me your own interpretation.

305 C: I know it's such a broad concept, but I really just think that, um, what we're trying to teach kids by utilizing a concept of the Spirit of the Game is that they want to try and do the right thing all the time, I think that's the Spirit of the Game. You know, it's the player's responsibility to learn the rules so that they play by the rules so that they don't have to have someone else tell them that you know,  
310 they've broken the rules. I think it's a personal responsibility to try to do the right thing even in the heat of competition, which is a difficult thing, it's a difficult thing, everybody wants to win, even I want to win, you know, I'm a gracious loser but I have to tell you it is definitely more fun to win, everybody wants to win.

315 P: For sure. How do you apply that in your own play, not necessarily your coaching?

C: How do I apply that in my own play? Uh, I'm willing to, um, and I think, I would have to look at the rule book, but I think that, um, the etiquette section of the rule book has changed, but when I learned how to play the etiquette of  
320 Ultimate was if someone was breaking the rules and they didn't realize they were breaking the rules then you informed them of their infraction. So, you know, in my situation as a player if I fouled somebody while I was playing against them, although it's their responsibility to call the foul, I would admit that I fouled them and I would call the foul, and you know, we would play it as if they called the  
325 foul, and I would tell them you know, 'you're the one who has to call the foul, I just fouled you right now and I'm going to call it right now, but you know, next time if I hit your hand while you're trying to let go of the disc then you're going to have to call it.' So, I think that's how it plays, or applies in my, and you know,

I still do that as a league player, but I think I'm a teacher in my heart, so I think  
 330 I'm probably a teacher before I'm a player which makes me a little different than  
 most players, although you know, when I was playing at Nationals you know, we  
 were trying hard to win and I didn't, I didn't admit it when I thought I fouled you  
 know, at those levels of competition, I would wait to see if someone called it on  
 me, which was hard for me, because I always call it when I foul them, when I  
 335 commit a foul I call it, and some people even get angry at me, they're like 'what!?'  
 I didn't foul you!' and I'm like 'no, no, no, I'm calling it because I fouled you,'  
 and they're like 'oh, oh, okay, thanks.'

P: So at Nationals did you consider that a deviation from your, your Spirit? Was  
 that hard for you to do?

340 C: It was hard for me to do, but you know, I had to keep my mouth shut or, or uh,  
 be severely chastised by my team mates, but those are the same team mates who  
 you know, refused to have an Observer, and honestly the mantra on most of the  
 teams I've ever played on was: if somebody really wants to argue a point, then  
 we're just gonna let them have it and we're not going to stand there and argue  
 345 because everybody wants to play. So, I've played on many a team where we felt  
 like we were violated by an opponent, yet our perspective was not appreciated and  
 it really wasn't worth the time that it took to maintain the argument to you know,  
 hold the game up. So, I come from a whole group of players who, you know if  
 somebody calls a foul and you disagree, then it's 'foul' and 'contest' and there is  
 350 no discussion about it.

P: Okay. Um, you gave me a little bit of an example, how do you think Spirit of  
 the Game is understood now and days by a majority of the people? Do you think  
 it is still prevalent?

C: I think definitely Ultimate is controlled by the Spirit of the Game, and I think  
 355 that people who play Ultimate take a certain amount of pride in, uh, playing a  
 sport where we don't have a referee, where we say that we're self-regulated, but I  
 really think, um, at the highest levels of competition where it really comes down  
 to you know, trying to win a world championship or a national championship,  
 when uh, people become blinded by, uh, completely objective perspective,  
 360 everyone really sees the play in their own advantage, and um, they're willing to  
 argue that point, and I think that Spirit of the Game has changed a bit because  
 people are willing to, um, perhaps perceive a falsehood you know, because it is, it  
 is their own personal perspective, and you know, I can see *why* we need to have  
 an outside, objective Observer, because a person a person really wants to win that  
 365 point so much that they cannot truly be objective in that particular situation. So, as  
 much as I hate to admit it, to keep the game moving at the higher level the  
 Observers have uh, you know have helped keep the game moving, you know at  
 those higher levels of competition. It breaks my heart when I'm showing those  
 films; I don't feel like I can show, uh, competitions to kids when there's a person  
 370 with an orange shirt, because I really believe that we can change the world by  
 asking kids to be responsible for themselves, and try to see the perspective of their  
 opponent. So, I'm not gonna give up my personal definition of the Spirit of the



Game, and I'm gonna keep teaching to that ideal, but as a player, in a higher level of competition you have to have a special person to actually be able to, um, be in  
 375 a high level of composition and be able to actually have an objective perception of the situation, and you know that's like getting to Maslow's Hierarchy of Learning, not everybody ever becomes self-actualized in their lives, it's not that they're trying to be difficult, they really just perceive the situation differently than someone else, and sometime you just need a completely objective, outside  
 380 Observer to—you know if you had video tape and you could show them exactly what happened, that's the thing about teaching high school kids, I go around with the Boy's and Girl's Clubs in the summer time and go to their sports leadership clubs and what they're trying to do is teach kids leadership through sports, so when they expose them to sports that they've never played before: lacrosse, and  
 385 Ultimate, and bocce ball, and you know they let them compete and they host tournaments and get them to try to win and if you talk to these boys, about high school guys, 'hey, you just fouled that guy, you just crashed into that guy,' those two guys who just had physical contact are gonna say 'no we didn't,' but if you video tape them and you show them how hard they crashed into each other they're  
 390 like 'oh, you know, we did.' So, it's really, it's just I don't think Ultimate players are *trying* to be un-Spirited, I just really think because we've placed so much emphasis on competition, and you know, who wins the tournament, who's the world champion, who's the national champion that it kind of dilutes the person's ability to be objective in that situation...or maybe it's because they've played  
 395 since they were five years old and they've been taught that, you know, I can take every single advantage that I can get, maybe, I don't know.

P: Have you ever played with or against somebody that you just think is completely ill spirited, that goes utterly against what you believe in?

C: Yes.

400 P: How did you interact with that person?

C: No interaction. I mean, I can't, I can't change, um, I can't change the way they play, but once I discovered that was who that person was that's a person that I would not play with again...

P: Just avoidance?

405 C: I guess avoidance. Yeah, just avoidance.

P: Okay. So how do you think, uh, personal morality comes into people's interpretation of Spirit?

C: How I think, that's what completely controls the person's definition of Spirit. I mean, no set of rules is ever going to replace a player's respect for one another,  
 410 you know to respect your opponent, you know cannot be defined by a set of rules, but the way that a person applies those rules, you know is definitely a reflection on their morality and if they actually respect the competition or are really goin' for the win, and you know I think it's, I think if you can teach a person to just

415 respect the value of competition, win/loss, you know then it's gonna effect and  
 enhance the quality of their lives, you know it's much better, I mean look at  
 what's going on with our society now, we've got so many kids sit'n on the couch  
 because they can't be on a team that wins, you know because all of their coaches  
 had been saying you know, 'we're the winning team,' if we could just get people  
 to say 'the team that wins is the team that gets every kid to show up every week,  
 420 or during the whole league,' but you know that's not the society where we are,  
 and it's not who we are.

P: Okay. How do you, uh, how would you react if someone made an egregious  
 call against you, it's something you just thought was an asinine call, how would  
 you react?

425 C: Well, at higher levels of competition that's actually happened in my life, and  
 you know, I've been known...not to react, I've been controlled by my team mates  
 because I really feel like I give every person that I play against the opportunity to  
 you know, play well, play within the parameters and it's really pretty offensive  
 whenever somebody just blatantly abuses the rules and I'm involved. So, I have  
 430 you know, reacted negatively, perhaps cursed at that person and then you know,  
 just sent the disc back or, you know been controlled by a team mate where a team  
 mate comes up to me and says 'Clair, you of all people know it's not worth the  
 argument.' So...

P: Do you have a specific example you can give by any chance?

435 C: Uh, you know, it happened so long ago I can't give a specific example. I mean,  
 you know, a general example is you know, if someone just called a foul and I  
 didn't commit a foul because I always call a foul on myself, so you know, if I  
 didn't commit a foul then I would contest it and keep the count at the same place,  
 but probably throw a few choice words in there you know, before I put the disc  
 440 back in play. You know, it's been so long since I've really cared that much about  
 it that, uh, I can't give a really specific example.

P: Have you, uh, you do throw, as you say 'choice words' at somebody, is that the  
 end of your interaction with that person or do you interact with them anymore?

445 C: No, usually at the end of a game I go up and apologize for my inappropriate  
 behavior, and I believe in shaking their hand and giving a hug and saying 'I'm  
 sorry' and ask 'em if I can buy them a beer...share something that they would  
 appreciate with them, because I really, my morality is I just don't think that we  
 should be that competitive and it's actually offensive to me if I lose it a little bit.  
 So, I usually, *always*, no matter whether I lost it or not, I always go and talk to  
 450 every single person that I played against. It's my policy to shake every single  
 person's hand, even those people who walked to the sideline to take their shoes of  
 right away, I go walk up to them and say you know, 'thanks for playing—it's nice  
 to know you—this is my name.' So, no it's never the end.

P: How common do you think that is that people act that way?

455 C: I think it's uncommon. I think that most people are willing to, um, write that person off as a ill-Spirited competitor and go on to their next game. I don't know. You participate at the, you know, the higher level, is that how it is? I don't know. I don't know how it is these days. Honestly, it's been like...the past couple years I've been playing Regionals I've always been on the team that got squashed, so  
460 you know, it's never been, it's never been easy for me.

P: Why is it that you do that? What's the...

C: Well, because I'm embarrassed that I acted that way, so I'm apologizing for my inappropriate behavior.

P: Okay, but you said that you, uh, that you shake everybody's hand anyways,  
465 that's your goal, like why do you do that?

C: Well, because I really feel like you're actually, if you know the person that you're playing against it's gonna create a social environment where you're actually going to be able to you know, make a more valid call. I really believe that if people know each other they're not going to try to cheat against each other as often as they would cheat against a stranger. That's kind of an educational philosophy that I have, I really believe that we should all try to know each other, and uh, it's been my experience that if people *do* know each other they're not going to create those egregious violations, because they just have a higher level of respect for that individual as a person because you know, they know them a little  
470 more on a human level. So, I feel like, at the beginning of the game you know, we should get to know each other and at the end of the game we should say 'it's great to know you.' So, that's always been a personal goal of mine, not my team's, just what I do as a person.  
475

P: Okay. Have you ever regretted a call that you've made?

480 C: Have I ever *regretted* a call that I've made? [long pause] No. I would say no, because I may have regretted a non-call. I may have regretted that I didn't call it.

P: Why?

C: Because sometimes I let it go in the spirit of, you know the pure joy of play and allowing play to continue. So, I can say I've probably regretted a non-call, or  
485 I've probably regretted that I've made a call and somebody argued with me and I took it back, I've regretted that.

P: How common is it for you to take back a call like that?

C: If the argument goes on, I'm a person who just says 'it's not worth arguing,' so you know, if somebody is gonna argue with me I bet I take, I bet I take back the  
490 call half the time if somebody's gonna like, continue to argue with me, which is *exactly* why we have Observers because there are those people who argue for the sake of arguing, not that they believe they're actually correct, they just actually

believe that they can break you down in the argument, and I'm easily broken down.

495 P: So you're one of the people that they do that to and get away with it?

C: They do that to me and I get away with it, they get away with it, and then my team mates are upset with me because you know, I didn't stand my ground.

P: Okay. That's interesting. Do you, have you ever deferred to an Observer before?

500 C: Oh, I've never played with an Observer.

P: You've never played with an Observer?

C: I've never played with an Observer.

P: That one time where they sat down, that's the only time?

505 C: They sat down and, um, they didn't participate in our game, and then the way that women's Ultimate works, there's usually not enough Observers at a tournament to, uh, put Observers on the women's fields. So, even though I was playing at higher levels the women's games didn't have Observers for those you know, like '04, '05 even though we were playing at regional competition, and you know, like Centex was a UPA sanctioned tournament that, where the standings  
510 went to UPA, so there were Observers there, but never, not so much in the women's division. So, I honestly have never played with an Observer. Never.

P: Why do you think that's it's just not in the women's division?

515 C: I just think that, um, there are not enough Observers that show up at the tournament, and uh, I don't know if they don't think that the women's competition is as valuable or maybe it's the social scenario that women can work it out more amongst themselves than the guys, I'm not really sure, but I know that I've seen Observers on the men's fields and you know, even though they say when you start playing that tournament that starting at the quarter finals there's an Observer mandated for each field. We haven't had that on women's fields. I don't  
520 know why.

P: you don't know why?

C: I just think that there's not enough Observers. You know, I...

P: But, you're under the impression if there were, there were Observer and they could either observe a quarter final men's game or a quarter final women's game  
525 they would go to the men's?

C: Yes, I've observed that. I've known, I know that that's how the tournaments are organized.

P: But you don't really know why...

530 C: Because I've played in the quarter finals as a women, as a women's team, and there have not been Observers, and the quarter finals are going on at the Regional Tournament and there are Observers on the men's fields, on the open fields.

P: Why do you think that is? Do you have a theory?

535 C: I, you know the games went on with the women playing, and uh, we managed to make it through without the Observers. I don't know if the men could have done that or not you know.

P: Okay. Um...

540 C: I don't know. I don't have an opinion as to why that happens. I've never organized a tournament, I quit being a regional coordinator in, I was the Texas state coordinator from '92 till '99, and that's the last time I ran Sectionals. So, I haven't been a Sectionals coordinator since 1999, that's the last time I, uh, ran a UPA event, and that was before we had Observers. So, I've never coordinated a UPA sanctioned event to actually assign Observers. Um, as a coach I went to the youth club championships, and when they didn't have enough Observers you know, I was coaching an open team, we had boys and a couple of girls on those  
545 teams and we never had Observers on our fields because you know, we were the lower level of competition, the *higher* level of competition always had Observers on the fields, and that was uh, 2006, '7, '8 I took kids to participate and I was actually the coach in that situation, but we, we didn't have Observers on our fields because we were losers. You know, because we were not playing for the  
550 championship, we were playing for you know, fifth through eighth place, so they put the Observers on the fields where they were playing first through fourth place.

P: Yeah, okay. Um, just to make sure that I understand this, the only time you've played in a game where Observers were *offered* was that game at Nationals that you had the sit-down, but other than that you've never played in a game where  
555 Observers have been *offered* to your game.

C: I've never played in a game with Observers. Offered or otherwise, I guess, I mean I've played in a game where they were offered in the semi-finals of UPA Nationals in 2003, and the Observers sat down, watched the game, and actually complemented us on you know, how well we played the game.

560 P: Okay. Um, what's your interpretation of games that you've watched being Observed, just the interaction of players and Observers?

C: Um...

P: you've already mentioned that you think it's necessary at times.

565 C: It's offensive to me that the Observer automatically makes the call. I think that's probably my biggest reaction that, um, it would be better for me if the game would still be in the hands of the players and they would make a call and then if perhaps that call was contested then you know, the Observer would come into

play. Games that I've watched where there's Observers it, um, I was offended that the people who are on the field their Observer rules about how the disc is put back  
 570 into play, you know so, if there's an Observer on the field and the disc goes out of bounds it's kind of offensive to me that the people who are playing the game just stand there and wait for the Observer to go get the disc that's out of bounds and actually place the disc where it needs to be to be put back in bounds, it seems to me that the players should be able to still you know, hustle, go get the disc, put it  
 575 back into play at the right place and if they do something wrong then the Observer might correct them.

P: Okay. So, other than that like, what if, uh, have you noticed anything like a player makes a call with an Observer that you've liked or disliked?

C: Well, I can say some of the coaches who have been working in our youth  
 580 program, uh, went to go become trained Observers and I've had a conversation with those guys who had become trained Observers and their feeling, uh, when they were an Observer on the field is that the players would actually, uh, use them to try to advocate their points, that they felt like an Observer was on the field, you know, a call had gone against them but they had registered a complaint with the  
 585 Observer just to see if they could get the point turned over even though they absolutely, positively knew you know, that the way the call was made you know, was correct and according to the rules. So, they asked the Observer to participate in making the call just because they didn't like how the play came out, you know they, they wanted it to come out in their favor, so they would engage the  
 590 Observer, and you know, there were two guys who became trained as Observers and I had a conversation with both of those guys, and um, that was their feeling is that the players on the field use them whenever they you know, wanted to gain an advantage, that they were you know, they were not used as a purely you know, *objective* viewpoint, you know, they just wanted to engage the Observer if the call  
 595 didn't go their way.

P: Okay. Um, so what do you think is going to be the future of Observing, just predictively?

C: Well, I think that, um, USA Ultimate is trying to move in the direction that we can be a more spectator friendly sport and it's their philosophy that people don't  
 600 want to watch the interaction that goes on between two opponents. So, I really feel like, uh, you know we're gonna move more and more in that direction and there's less and less player control in the game, but my philosophy about Spirit of the Game and the fact that a player actually has control about you know, being accountable, you know learning the rules and actually playing by those rules I  
 605 think there's a very valuable lesson to be learned in actually admitting that you've broken the rules, so in my idealistic world I'm going to continue to teach young people to play by the Spirit of the Game that I learned a long, long time ago, and in my head I really believe that this little group of kids that I'm influencing, you know ten years from now will be elite players and won't need to have Observers  
 610 in their game, I think that they really will be able to, even though they want to win, I think that they really will be able to admit that you know that they traveled,

or the disc really was out of bounds, or their foot was on the line even though nobody else was watching, I really do believe that if you teach kids to be responsible and accountable then it'll make 'em do that. So, you know, we'll see, we'll have to wait until the kids I'm influencing grow up 'cause you know, it's going to take a little while for that to happen, so...I hear from their classroom teachers that they you know, *value* that attitude, and I hear from the people who supervise their play on the playground that you know, there's less bullying, there's less roughhousing, and there's less injuries on the campuses where we're actually teaching kids to be respectful and responsible and include everyone in their, in their games whether they're in Ultimate or touch-football. So, I'm gonna keep working in that direction and you know, you'll have to get back to me in five to seven years when these kids grow up to see if we really need to have Observers on the Ultimate field. Five years ago when I started working with kids that was my goal, you know, by the time they get to this higher level of competition they're not going to need Observers. I kind of think that the trend is moving more and more away from me, so they're not even going to have that opportunity, I think there's just going to be Observers on their field, but as long as I can avoid it you know, I'm going to keep training coaches to be hands off as far as the competition, to coach when the kids are learning and coach when they're at practice, but when the game happens then the competition has to be in the control of the players, and you know, it works, it works for us, the parents appreciate it, their teachers appreciate it, and you know, they're actually amazed, so, I'm going with it. It works in my classrooms, it works in my life, so, I'm stick'n with it. And I'm in the minority {both laugh}, I know I'm in the minority [more laughing].

P: Awesome. [cordialities]

## Appendix 8: Conrad Transcription

Conrad, 24- 11.24.10 (10:49PM) 71:48 minutes

P: So, how many UPA or USA Ultimate series events, like Sectionals, Regionals, Nationals, or any other sanctioned events have you played in do you think?

5 C: [long pause] Over thirty.

P: Over thirty. Okay. Um, what's the range?

C: The range of events?

P: Yeah...

C: Like how many, or what type of events?

10 P: What type.

C: Um, just like from informal leagues, pick-up, leagues, all the way up to obviously sanctioned college tournaments, like regional tournaments, um, yeah pre-season regional college tournaments and also just, uh, UPA/USA Ultimate series' Sectionals, Regionals, Nationals, and club, um uh, club, elite club  
15 tournaments and Sectionals, Regionals, and Nationals.

P: Okay. When did you start playing?

C: Um, 2003, I started a little bit and then I started playing in college, um, my first UPA was like in spring 2004, um, and I played for, for five years in college and I played three, uh, three years of club while I was in college, um and now I've  
20 played two years of club outside of college.

P: When you started in '03 how did you start, like before college?

C: Um, at a um, summer tournament, or a summer league in Austin, Texas.

P: How did you get drafted for that, or...

C: Um, I had started playing informally with some friends that knew about  
25 Ultimate in high school, um, started throwing Frisbees around, started hearing about it, um, when I was looking at colleges I started hearing more about it, and actually the college National Championships were here in Austin that May when I went to high school, and I uh, came and checked it out and I was like 'wow, this is pretty cool.' I had a friend who was at UT at the time and he was on the B team  
30 and he know about it so we went and checked it out, and uh, yeah I just kind of caught the Ultimate bug, I knew that where I was going to college had a decent team, it'd be fun to play, so I checked out Summer League, I had some friends who played before.

P: Yeah. I like that uh, that phrase that you 'caught the Ultimate bug.' What was it  
35 specifically that you latched onto?



C: Um, I don't know, I, I was never, um, I was never big on organized sports, uh I played like football in middle school and had kind of taken a disliking to like the hierarchy of it, um and so, I just played like some rec basketball, and some different rec leagues during high school, but had never really done sports, team  
5 sports at all, um and I just liked the fact that yeah, it was like, I mean I got into as an alternative sport kind of, it was like I wanted to try my hand at athletics and it was kind of informal, and it was just, yeah, no coaches or anything like that.

P: So you could maintain your autonomy in it?

C: Yeah.

10 P: Did you play sports in high school?

C: Um, I started running track at the end of high school just 'cause I thought it would be fun, I don't know, it was like half way through my junior year and I needed like some PE credits and I started running track.

P: You thought *track* would be fun.

15 C: [laughs]

P: I never think of track as like a *fun* thing to do.

C: No, it wasn't at all. It was [stutters], it was kind of like the challenge interested me, and I knew that I had some, I knew I was like decently athletic, I had never done any organized athletics really at that level, um, yeah, like above youth level  
20 you know, I was way, I was way into skateboarding for probably like eight years, from middle school through high school, and like I'd just do that all the time.

P: But you never played any uh, like other team sports?

C: No...I was never very good at basketball, I mean I played like rec league and stuff, but it was just messing around, having fun, um, like I said I played football,  
25 I wasn't like very big you know, nothing really caught my interest 'cause like I wasn't like excelling at it for whatever reason, either I didn't know or other kids were more advanced skill wise or growth wise, I, I never caught on to those things.

P: Okay. Um, you said that you played like, a couple of different things, you said  
30 that you've done leagues and you've done, uh, obviously college, you said college and club events. What are all the different kind of subsections of Ultimate that you've played? Sorry, you have uh, you have league, you have college and club, like competitive, have you played at like miscellaneous tournaments?

C: Yeah, just like, I played a couple of just fun tournaments with people, like uh,  
35 like just a hodgepodge of friends or like people from a certain area, a couple tournaments like that, um, a lot of pickup games in Austin and some in California just like, just to mess around, have fun, get some exercise, stuff like that, just you

know where the skill levels aren't, aren't good at all, it's just a fun thing to do and there's almost no structure other than throw the disc and get it to someone else.

40 P: Okay. What makes it fun?

C: Um, those, those less structured situations, um, they're just fun for running, you know, you take it as serious as you want and Ultimate at that level you don't have to, uh...you don't have to be ultra competitive who aren't, or you know there's a lot of turnovers so you can just focus on doing your thing, running  
45 around getting exercise, you know if you get the disc you don't have to turn it over if you don't want to or you know, there's no pressure if you think you can kind of just throw it to somebody, you know and try to make them have a good play or test their skill level, their speed, their jumping ability, their ability to make a reception on somebody, and you can kind of test the people around you and  
50 have you know, you can make them better by having them expanding their game or their mind of what can be done on the field, stuff like that.

P: Okay. Can you, uh, differentiate your experience playing college and club for me?

C: Um hum, um, college, um, college isn't very interesting, um, there's a couple  
55 people on your team that are mostly teaching you skills and they know how to throw well, so you're kind of um, so you're just kind of learning where to be, where not to be in the way, um, how to be useful in the smallest sorts of situations and how to do the least amount of damage, say if you get the disc you can't turn it, stuff like that. Um, I would say you work your way up, and the way you work  
60 your way up is by being an athlete, um, playing good defense and if you're a smart defensive player you know, you'll know how to get open on offense because you'll kind of know what people...the most difficult situations someone will put you into on defense, that's what I've found, is you'll learn how to turn somebody's hips or get them looking the wrong way or you'll just be able to use  
65 that knowledge of where the throw is going or what your thrower is going to do knowing he was a receiver, and you'll be able to use that advanced knowledge against your defender because, because you have that advantage of practicing with someone else, their just kind of reacting to what you do and they're trying to stay one, *literally* one step ahead physically, but um, if you can use that  
70 receiver/thrower knowledge you can kind of get around that. So, that's, that's like yeah, you kind of build up from a defensive player to an offensive player and then if you're lucky and you know how to throw you kind of switch sides and you grow in a college program, you play some more offense, you start teaching people how to play, and then if you're a good all-around player you restart playing club,  
75 and so like, on a club team, most club teams like when I started in California it was mostly people who had captained a college team, um, who captained Santa Barbara, um, now playing on the Santa Barbara Condors and plus, um, you know some all-star types who had moved to California from other parts of the country, and so you're at a higher, everyone's at that next higher level and they're kind of,  
80 uh, you kind of restart, you do the same thing, you use your athleticism to play defense, to be doing the right things in a kind of a higher pressure situation where

there's less turnovers, less room for error, and then if you excel at that and you know, then you can start, you know if you are able to turn your, you know make your throws really perfect and reduce your turnovers then you can flip back over to offense again and kind of work your way up teaching people offense, it's the same thing just at that next higher level.

P: Okay. You talked about like, kind of a physical and athletic progression, like how people can you know, display their game athletically. Is there a difference in a mental approach to the game at all?

90 C: Yeah. I think that when you're playing, trying to play on a winning team, uh, a team that's very focused on winning, um, very competitive and people are depending on you to make the right play, um, there's definitely a mental toughness that is required especially, yeah you, 'cause the smallest mental lapses could lead to, I mean the two things you don't want, the one thing you don't want  
95 on defense is to be scored on or to easily let a big play off, and then on offense you don't want to turn the disc over or make, I guess uh, or be in somebody's way so they turn the disc over. So, you have to have an awareness to make sure you're not in, creating situations that are bad for other people or yourself. So, I guess what I'm trying to say is yeah, there's, that, that's like the mental aspect, and  
100 some, a lot of levels people don't take Ultimate that seriously to where that mental get to be so important, but yeah, I would say at the highest levels, the most competitive where the team is, the team prides themselves on good form, um, and winning then that's a necessary quality.

P: So you find that more, uh, in college or club?

105 C: Um, college you're playing with, you have, you expect a lot out of your young players because you're putting them out on the field, um, maybe over an older guy, but you expect highly of them, I mean there's going to be turnovers in college, um, but there's gonna, and there's going to be more opportunities, there's going to be larger discrepancies I would say in the best players and the worst  
110 players, so there's more opportunities for the more skilled players to create D's without, um, without opening up the field to, uh, to getting scored on, so like maybe a poach D or just, um, forcing it to a lesser player to make a less accurate throw, um, more pressure. So, on the club level less people are getting flustered, um, you can't, you can't poach off your guy, you can't leave your guy quite as  
115 open as you might be able to cheat off someone in college and create a D, that won't occur in club. So, you're expected to do more in club because everyone you're facing is also [interrupted by waiter], everyone you're facing is kind of doing that on that same level, um, and college is a lot larger discrepancy of skill levels so, um, so the games aren't as, either aren't as tight or they can have larger  
120 swings, more fluctuations, things like that, just more, there's just a higher number of D'd plays in one point or over one game.

P: How can you, uh, differentiate a mental approach to a league game as opposed to a collegiate game?

125 C: Um, I've...I guess I would have to preface this with most, all leagues I've  
 played in are co-ed, which doesn't in itself mean anything, um, there is uh,  
 [stutter] there's an expectation of less radical or more thoughtful, less dangerous  
 play, um, to know your limits around somebody that's, you know either  
 somebody who's smaller than you whether a male or a female, somebody that's  
 130 just less experienced you don't want to, you know when there's a larger level, a  
 larger discrepancy of experiences there's...there's less, there's more  
 opportunities for someone to get injured on a freak accident I think, just because  
 two guy who play at the same level they may, there's an expectation that someone  
 will be diving next to you, maybe near your, you know even if they're diving at  
 you in a way that might be dangerous, you know like low and in your knees,  
 135 you're gonna expect that and you're gonna maybe catch the disc and step away  
 from where you expect them to be flying, you know where they're landing, things  
 like that, you might expect contact, um, the more varied ability situation there  
 might be something, um, may be a situation where if you dive you catch the disc  
 but a lesser player might not expect you to be there and then that could create a  
 140 collision, um, or you know, a third party could just get in the way not expecting  
 for someone to make a play and they could be, you know...I had a situation where  
 yeah, you go up for a disc and somebody not looking undercuts you, they get  
 scared because it's like 'oh, you jumped and you landed on me,' but from a third  
 party perspective it's like 'well that person didn't know where they were, they just  
 145 put you in your head kind of,' so, so yeah, I think I those situations Ultimate, the  
 culture of Ultimate has an expectation for the more advanced players because  
 there's a culture of teaching in Ultimate, so like, it expects the more advance  
 players to lookout for those situations, kind of dial it back a little bit, um, not be  
 over aggressive, things of that nature so nobody gets hurt in just a fun situation,  
 150 and most of those leagues I've played in are in, fall under that category I'd say.

P: What makes them fun?

C: Um...I don't know, for me it's not the most fun type of Ultimate, so I would,  
 so I wouldn't say, so 'fun' is kind of like a, it's a label that doesn't mean exactly,  
 155 it's not the most enjoyable for me, but calling it 'fun Ultimate' is more of like a  
 'no worries,' 'care free,' um, it's kind of a situation where you can hang out with  
 your friends, maybe have a beer or you know, a purely recreational, um, not  
 highly competitive, um, you know just, you kind of let loose because if you're in  
 that mind set of a highly competitive winning team you're not going to be able to  
 do situations where you know, make risky throws, um, things of that nature, you  
 160 know you can't make risky throws, lazy defense, um, you know, so kind of you're  
 experiencing Ultimate as just [stutters], just a recreational type deal, it's not a  
 competitive, the competition's an afterthought, it's just the fun aspects come out.  
 See 'fun' is the wrong word because to me, you know, to me the competition is  
 one of the most enjoyable, most rewarding parts.

165 P: That's what I was going to ask, is what's your most enjoyable mode of  
 Ultimate?

170 C: Yeah, um, I would have to say the really high level games, um, where you're just, you know you've worked, you know that you've put in the work for your endurance, your strength, your speed and you're on the field and you kind of just, you kind of just, you know you're putting that together and you're performing, you know you're trying to perform at your peak, and when your team's doing well that peak performance for me is like, it's the best part. Um, Yeah, just knowing that your abilities and your work that you've put in are spot on and if you concentrate on playing your best your team will win.

175 P: Okay. Uh, how do you interact, since your most enjoyable mode is that high competition, like extreme game, how do you interact with your opponents, or how do you mentally approach your opponent?

C: Um, it's different...I do treat different opponents differently, um...

P: You'll have to explain that.

180 C: Yeah, um...sometimes you'll have a rival, and uh, well I think the easiest way to explain it is maybe a style of play will be more or less aggressive, and uh...that's not the best way to explain it either...some people just get on your nerves, and even though it's your responsibility to self-officiate and um, and do everything you can there's always going to be people who purposefully or like, 185 ignorantly get on, get under your skin, and it changes the way that you play or you react to a certain situation. Um, one example would be if you team, um, one example I've played on a few teams that both my teams in Santa Barbara and uh, they were known as [interrupted by waiter], both my teams in Santa Barbara had kind of bad reputations for just uh, no nonsense, uh, and aggressive play, like no 190 nonsense with, we'd be willing to call fouls, we'd be willing to foul, just hard aggressive play, um, which is considered by some people unfair. So, I run into plenty of situations where another team will come into the game expecting unfair play and they will try to counteract that with extra calls or maybe playing unfair themselves, and I guess the idea there is they don't want to give you that 195 advantage or they want to beat you at your own game, uh, and that can turn kind of ugly fast because either, if another team comes in there with the expectation of playing you, um, with a bad attitude, if the other team has a bad attitude either you're going to give it back, like cause your better at that, you know negative feedback, or um, or it's gonna just kind of put a black mark on the game, like 200 'these people didn't, they kind of didn't respect the way we play,' but also the way that they played against us reflected more poorly on them. It's just, it's just a battle of perceptions, I guess that's part of competition, um, yeah it's tough.

205 P: No, no, that's awesome. Um, I want to piggyback on that though because this is kind of a big facet of our sport, what is your personal definition of Spirit of the Game?

C: Um, I don't like to, I don't like to think of it as Spirit of the Game because I think that that is, it's kind of creating an unknowable, unsayable, um, alternate to 'sportsmanship,' and I just take it as sportsmanship, and like good sportsmanship.

210 Um, I don't think there necessarily needs to be this, this *specialized* idea of it for Ultimate, um, it's just, it's a game where you know, it's played at high speed, a lot of opportunities for dirty play and I guess that that is what Spirit tries to eliminate, but all-in-all if you call it good sportsmanship that you're covering the same ideas without, um, without trying to redefine Ultimate as an alternate sport. I think it's a successful sport as it is. I don't think it needs to have an alternate idea  
 215 of sportsmanship, because even, it's created on the idea of self-officiating, um, which, and so that, it felt a need to redefine sportsmanship and the Spirit of sportsmanship, but um, I think that as Ultimate grows that definition, I think that definition fails Ultimate's growth as a sport in general.

P: How does it fail it?

220 C: Um... I think that on some competitive levels it holds it back because there's always, um, there's always another definition of Spirit that is, um... Spirit relies on the perceptions of two people, or you know, two, more than one person perceiving an event in a game, and if you, just because you believe something happened—a disc is up or down, or a foul occurred or didn't occur—and just  
 225 because another person is conflicting that view, um, you know you, it's not, people are fallible, they make mistakes on those views and I, I know that, I think that a third party arbiter, or referee of type, could sort those things out, and it could be interesting in Ultimate also. It hinders the idea of referees entering the picture, and somehow if, if Ultimate's defined by Spirit and Spirit being  
 230 something that's different than sportsmanship, and Spirit is somehow eliminated by refereeing, or like uh, or just like Spirit is, or some people think that Spirit is eliminated by, um, over-aggressive play, or over-competitive, or some people would define win-at-all-cost, a win-at-all-cost mentality which is something that is defined in the rules of Ultimate as being against the rules, um...

235 P: But you don't?

C: Um, I think that the idea of win-at-all-cost is too loose, like, 'cause obviously, um, you don't want to see somebody being injured to win and that would fall under 'win-at-all-costs,' but um...but yeah, I don't know, but something else like uh, aggressive play, over-aggressive marking, fouling, things like that which are  
 240 pretty much commonplace in some areas, just like systematic, systematic *blurring* of the line, of the rule, you know just always pushing what can and can't be done, that could also be defined as win-at-all-costs and which, and that's, you know I think that's a big distinction between, um, you know playing aggressive, playing physical and since most contact in Ultimate can be considered a foul if it's not mutually agreed upon, um, I think, there's just a lot of instances that rules have  
 245 been abused like that I think, so.

P: Okay. So, since you're kind of averse to the diction of *Spirit*, I'll go ahead and use your preferred term, do you consider yourself a good sport, are you sportsmanly, if that's a word, on the field?

250 C: Yeah. Um, see that's, I also think that that's difficult, um, because I can be  
 rude on the field, and um, I think that that's, it reflects poorly, um, being a rude  
 player on the field, or like snappy or condescending can reflect poorly on you, uh,  
 and that, that could be labeled as like, poor Spirit or poor sportsmanship, um...so  
 255 yeah, but I don't think, but there's also another level of where people can call  
 infractions or systematically calling infractions, or doing things to slow down the  
 game that are outside the rules, time wasting, things like that, um, and they can do  
 it with a smile or courtesy, or they could peacefully or nicely agree with, you  
 know disagree with someone and that is on the same level, or just you know,  
 yeah, [stutters] that's unsports, you know, there's Spirit, unSpirited play with a  
 260 smile and unSpirited play, or even, um, even sportsman like play that I would  
 consider sportsman like play that can be rude, you know...that you know, as a  
 player personally when I am super like amped up for a game, um, just like trying  
 to get in the zone I put, I put those kind of uh, put some of the etiquette behind me  
 and like just, to the point, very blunt, sometimes rude and I don't think that, that  
 265 shouldn't be considered 'outside the rules,' some people think that's unfair play.  
 So, yeah, that's one thing I think is debatable, I would say that I'm a sportsman,  
 um, but being rude is definitely, um, definitely on the boundary.

P: Do you have, uh, players that you play with on a team that have a noticeably  
 different opinion of Spirit or sportsmanship than you do?

270 C: Yes.

P: How do you interact with those people?

C: Um...I would say that, um, a lot of these sort of *character* fluctuations will  
 happen to a different person depending on what situation they're in, but there are  
 definitely people who are, um, a lot more light hearted, always calm, always on  
 275 the field for the, you know 90% of the time, and yeah, you, if someone is on your  
 team, um, and you're playing against someone else and if your goal is to win and  
 you know that acting a way that your team mate would think is bad behavior that  
 might take them out of their game, so maybe you would lessen it or tone it down,  
 um, if you're practicing against somebody, um, sometimes on purpose team mates  
 280 will try to get in each other's heads, try to rattle them because those situations will  
 occur in competition, so as long as you're not being, you just have to what, if  
 someone has a different view you have to know what they think would be  
 disrespectful and every once in a while there will be a situation in practice with  
 your team mate and you'll make a call or have an opinion about a play that they  
 285 would think is disrespectful and you just have to look at it and say 'well we're  
 team mates,' um, and you kind of back off, but when you're in a competition and  
 it's someone on like another team, that's where, that's where maybe it's like 'well  
 I could back off, um, but this is a very unique situation and where we don't agree,  
 and maybe me changing my opinion to your opinion would give you an  
 290 advantage,' and so yeah, with your own players there's no harm in giving them an  
 advantage, um, but you know, you just have to know their boundaries.

P: Okay. Alright, something you mentioned earlier is that, um, in college people are teaching you skills and kind of coaching you up through the game, you mentioned that there are kind of like older players that help develop your skills and you kind of progress through this thing. Do you, did you receive any kind of coaching, or uh, just advice on how to approach a call on the field or how to interact with an opponent on the field or whether or not to make a call on the field?

C: Um...[long pause] yes, I uh, I played in a culture where if you made a call you thought you were right, you would make it and stand by it, um, even if people were upset, but there was also, um, there was also a very subtle, you could make nonverbal contact with an older player around you or a team mate and make sure you made, you know make sure that people on your team supported you and you had made the right call to where, to where you know, your team mates will kind of police you if you're making a wrong call either verbally, or nonverbally is a great way to do it I think. Um, we used to have a signal actually, it was a short tug where you would look at your captain and if he thought you had made a bad call and you needed to take it back he would tug on his shorts after you made eye contact. So, there's like, someone can help you through a call, calls get talked about at practice, um, in the heat of the moment calls can get made and, um, it's up to your team to kind of police you to check your back, and that's where it gets difficult because if there is an iffy call a team mate might not say anything, you know, he might withhold his opinion because he wanted to see what you thought, or something like that, so there are failures in that system just because your team mates want you to win, so it's just, it took me a long time to gain trust in other team's players, and you have to have some level of respect for what they think and what they say, but you need to take all advice or all perceptions on a situation, and you know you just have to keep a cool head and make the right decision, and it's definitely a skill you need to develop, and it can't be taught exactly, but you learn enough situations, enough pressure situations where you know a foul may or may not be called and what kind of physical play is or is not allowed in that sort of situation. So, you, yeah it's, there's a taught aspect, there's a learned aspect through repetition through your own team, then in competition, um, the situations change, but your team mates are there behind you to help you make the right call.

P: Have you ever rescinded a call that you've made?

C: Yes.

P: Why did you do that?

C: Why did I rescind a call?

P: Like after, have you ever done it after dialogue with an opponent?

C: Um, yeah, mostly on, um, I can't think of a particular situation...[long pause], yeah well, yeah, say is you're making a particular throw and you release the disc and, um, someone catches you on your follow through, um, you know some



335 situations it's natural to make the call, um or maybe you know it may be a strip  
call or a down call and you talk about it and you talk about the situation and you  
kind of have a better idea of what happened, maybe you get some input from a  
team mate, um, a lot of situations where a receiver makes maybe, or a defender is  
coming from behind you where you can't see them to make a play on the disc,  
um, and it feels like they hindered you, but you can't see the timing of the play  
340 and a third person perspective had a much better vantage point for the timing of  
the play, they obviously made the play before you, they didn't hinder your ability  
before they made their play, things like that.

P: Okay. Uh, if somebody makes a call against you that you thought was  
absolutely not true, can you give me your typical reaction to that? Feel free to  
vary the levels of competition or stratify that if you want.

345 C: Yeah. Um...yeah, at a lower level of competition you might, you could be  
somewhat incredulous and be upset, but you kind of have to realize what the other  
person's skill level is at, so if something like that happens at a league game or  
against a Sectionals team, you know a team that's not going to advance, and  
maybe you're ahead by ten points or something like that, you just need to talk to  
350 them about it nicely afterwards, you know tell them what rule that you're  
perceiving is not violated or violated, um but in a high competition where things  
are tight you expect calls to be made and some of them are gonna be wrong, but if  
you start, and that's not really a problem for me, but when you start to see a  
pattern of abusing calls or incorrect calls, um, I'll give someone a piece of my  
355 mind, I'll usually get pretty upset, um, especially systematic fouls on the thrower  
where the thrower, uh, where the mark refuses to acknowledge that it's a foul, um,  
where he challenges that or contests multiple times, things like that, um, foul, or  
combinations that give the other team an unfair advantage where maybe a player  
will foul the thrower and then the thrower still gets the throw off, but maybe you  
360 bumped him enough to where you traveled, so you foul him gets the throw off  
then a travel called, you're kind of creating a situation, a second situation where  
you can send the disc back and have a redo, and those kind of abused and  
infraction calling, um, they get under your skin pretty much when, when you see a  
pattern, or you perceive a pattern.

365 P: Okay. How common do you think that is?

C: Um, it's definitely built into uh, definitely built into people's game plans...

P: Really?

370 C: Yeah, and I think, um, I think one thing that's common is uh...is that  
somebody's defensive team will, they will have an aggressive strategy where  
somebody will bump you, uh, maybe block you with their arms every once in a  
while, you know I wouldn't, you know very slight pulls or something like that,  
and uh, once you're playing defense on that same team's offense they will have a  
large discrepancy on how they perceive that, and that's the type of thing that will  
start to upset me as a player, where you experience both sides where another team

375 is playing very aggressive on you and you kind of letting it go and the game is  
going to be a tough physical game, and when you try to get physical with their  
players there are a lot of calls, um, that's when you kind of know that a team is,  
um, trying to change, to use the rules to their advantage because  
they're not playing evenly in that sense, where it's, the aggression and physicality  
380 is not agreed upon or it's falsely agreed upon until it's not working in their favor.

P: So what do you do if a person does that?

C: Um, you try to talk to them, to tell them you know, their defense is playing the  
same way and see if that changes their opinion of, um, of calling or a worst case  
scenario, um...

385 P: Wait, wait, wait, do you talk to the person, or do you talk to their captain, or do  
you wait till it's like the other point?

C: Uh, yeah, you kind of as things progress on each call you kind of have a  
rapport with the player that you're playing with and you can talk about it, discuss  
it, and things like that, um, and even if you're not involved in the play players will  
390 kind of discuss how things are going call wise or if they saw something you  
know, you know so you kind of get a sense if people are thinking bad calls are  
being made or if tight calls you're not sure, you know you get an idea of whether  
the other team thinks that calls are being, calls are being un... yeah if calls are  
being disputed or not, you know or if it's just too close to know, or if it's, or if  
395 they're starting to see a pattern in your players, things like that.

P: Okay. Have you ever regretted a call that you've made on the field?

C: [long pause] Um, I've regretted *reacting* to certain calls, um...

P: Like a call that's been made against you?

C: Yeah, just like people just, even if, even if like I would say I have uh, just like  
400 very emotional and I can blow up, you know at times be immature on the field,  
but um, even when emotions are high there's always a situation where you can  
take back a call, there's never um... you know, yeah, you have those tight calls  
that you regret making because maybe someone didn't say at the time was like,  
tells you you know, later one of your team mates was like 'yeah, that was closer  
405 than you thought,' or 'you were wrong,' and then you're like 'well, I wish you  
would have told me,' but calls get, calls get misperceived and made, made  
incorrectly going both ways, so it's kind of built in, you don't try to make up  
calls, but even those happen, so it's hard for me to be regretful of any one call,  
because any one call doesn't usually change a game and there are situations at the  
410 end of a tight game when it could, but overall one call, those kinds of disputes  
over one call, you know I would, I would feel worse about reacting poorly and  
then, you know not being able to just kind of like brush it off then make a call  
itself.

415 P: Okay. Well you've mentioned, uh, like that as you compete against an  
opponent, like more and more you'll build a rapport with them and so you can  
like, hash things out on the field if a call occurs. Do you ever personally, um,  
interact with opponents, in a positive or negative way, before, during, or after a  
game?

420 C: Um, it's not really part of my focus to like say 'hi' and buddy up to people  
before the game, um, maybe one or two players if I know them I'll shake hands  
and say 'good luck,' but I'm not gonna like discuss like, 'let's try to have a clean  
game,' this or that, um, if during the game if something, if something crazy is  
happening or if something's not to your liking is going on and if for some reason  
you can't communicate with the person that, you know if someone calls  
425 something against you might try to, you know you guys didn't have a very good  
communication, you might try to communicate with somebody you know on the  
sideline afterwards or if they're near you on the field at the time you may be like  
'hey, what'd you see, talk to this guy, we're not seeing eye to eye,' um, but then  
there's also those opportunities where on the sideline after a contentious call you  
430 know, you'll just say 'hey, no hard feelings,' to this person you probably don't  
know very well at all, um, you've just been playing against them, you don't know  
them, so there's opportunity for that during the game, but, but I don't know, I take  
those opportunities, but I try to stay as focused as possible.

P: Okay. Um...

435 C: But, yeah, after a game, um, after a game usually you don't, you don't discuss  
the nitty-gritty things for after the game, 'cause one team obviously one and one  
team lost, and really nothing's really gonna change that in my eyes, so you might  
exchange a couple words but you're not gonna, unless something really, unless  
something that really struck you emotionally and you're really upset about  
440 something you're probably not going to exchange words about a certain situation,  
it's just one team moves on one team lost.

P: So, unless you're, uh, upset about something you generally won't talk to the  
other team?

445 C: Um, I mean if something positive happened, usually like, there's no situation  
where it's really like necessary like, say you lost but something really positive  
happened you're not gonna go up and say 'hey, you guys won, but that one play  
that you know, went kind of awkwardly I'm glad that turned out alright,' like  
there's not, you know you're kind of just within your own team after a win or a  
loss, you know that's like, discussing that is more of like a social thing for like  
450 when the day is done you might run into that person, um, I don't you know,  
'cause in tournament play when you're in a competitive tournament you're kind  
of just focusing on the next step, what it's going to take to win the next game or  
you know, on the next day, um, so like those conversations that happen, um, I like  
to keep them short until I'm in a different setting, a non-competitive setting.

455 P: Okay. Um, how many games have you played in, just ballpark it for me, with Observers present in the game?

C: Um, I've played in quite a few games with Observers, maybe, maybe twenty, um, yeah, maybe more even. So, I, a lot of experience with them, the problem is their abilities they range because it's not like a very codified [?] position and the  
 460 experience level is, um, widely variable, a lot of situations where they will be training Observers and Observing games at the same event, um, and it leads to some really uneven Observing, which um, you know I guess this is why people don't like refereed sports in some instances, because they feel like the third party is interfering with the game, and so sometimes you'll feel like an inexperienced  
 465 Observer will do that, will kind of interfere with the flow of the game, um, but yeah, I know I'm giving more opinion than...

P: No, no, no. So, have you had an instance where uh, where an Observer has ruled against you, and if so how did you react?

C: Um, well...there is an instance where an Observer had been getting on my  
 470 nerves throughout a game, um, because they were kind of, they were positioned at a spot on the field where they were kind of in the way, and um, I had been short with them you know, because it was during play, I was just like 'move, get out of the way, you're in the way, I'm going there,' and uh, you know they became flustered and probably a little bit irritated, but later on they made a call, they  
 475 totally had blown a call where uh, the whole sideline full of a third team, an impartial team, they all saw it, they were very vocal about it being a bad call, they were very confused, and it's basically, it was just like the Observer just didn't, they kind of switched their mind, flipped offense and defense at the time, and I had position as a defensive player but the offender just kind of jumped into me,  
 480 and they just, she made just the opposite call than she should have, and uh, you know I just, I just, I was very rude to her about what had happened, uh, and you know...it's just they're the authority on the field, but um, but then they don't have the absolute responsibility sometimes to make calls, um, they can kind of say that they didn't see something, it kind of puts, it makes it a really awkward situation  
 485 when they miss a call that they said that they saw and it's obvious that they missed it, that's kind of, they don't have like the same responsibility as a referee to make calls, or you know, you have to listen to their calls because it's the absolute word and they make a call in every situation, an Observer has the responsibility to not make a call if they didn't see the play in question, so those  
 490 are the situations that are kind of, um, memorable, when an Observer rules on a play that they shouldn't have because they couldn't see, but they made a choice anyway.

P: Do you prefer to have the Observer there?

C: Yeah, I've had a lot of positive experiences with Observers, um, an Observer  
 495 that's in-tune with the game, um, kind of knows, especially one, um, like I have a certain throwing style where um, where it just generates a lot of foul calls, um, on, you just kind of, using inexperienced or overaggressive marks, using their like

overaggressive marking against them and getting contact while I'm throwing, and some people will say on the mark 'no, I didn't foul you, that's not a foul,' or 'you made the throw at the wrong time,' or you know, there's a laundry list of excuses, when you have an Observer that's in-tune to what's going on if they can see that what you're doing is legal and they can tell the marker that they are in the wrong, um, it takes away a lot of disputes, so, an Observer that's really in-tune to what's going on is helpful, um, and some Observers it only takes them a couple of points in a game um, and they get a feel for the calls that are, they get a feel for the types of calls that are being made and what to look for, they can be, they can be very valuable, but if they never get into the game and are kind of just uh, recently some of my Observers have just been trying to maintain order uh, maintaining time delays, off sides, which are somewhat important facets of the game, but not as important as uh, as other things, so, if they're just trying to maintain order and then like maintain their authority on the game it, it's not quite as helpful as somebody that has a better grasp, and so that, that may have to do with the level of play that the Observer, um, is experienced in either Observing or playing at, knowing what to look for, the pace of the game, things like that, so I believe in most situations that the Observer should be matched, um, with a style, a pace, an experience level with the game that there are most familiar with, um, and I don't think that that is necessarily like a golden rule, like people that haven't played at a high level might have an ability, might have an eye for it and be able to Observe it, like men Observing women, women Observing men, like I don't think that's impossible, but I think that especially on like, it's easiest to grasp what you have the most experience doing, so, just you should start, you should feel comfortable with what you're experienced watching, seeing, playing, and match those up as well as you can until you build that kind of experience or rapport with that level that you're trying to Observe at.

525 P: Okay.

C: I have a lot of experience with like, one of the times you'll have one Observer that's really good and the other Observer will be much less experienced, or in training, so that kind of brings the level of both Observers down sadly, because the Observer that's more experienced he's trying to cover for the less experienced Observer, or um, he just has to make more calls that he wasn't in position for because the other guy either wasn't looking at the right thing or didn't know, you know they had to confer a lot because you know, they had to discuss a rule or opinion of a play, uh, so it brings the level of both Observers down. I think it's very common for an experienced Observer to be paired with a less experienced, or training Observer, um, for a game.

530 P: Okay. Um, so are you content, or do you like the current state of officiating in the sport? Do you like self-officiating?

C: Uh, I think that there's, I think that there's room for variation on more professionally officiated, um, just like yeah, they can call it whatever they want, if they don't like referees or umpires or officials, Observer is fine, you know the term, that's another terminology thing that, it just bothers me that they're so

against the idea of referees that the person, you know the third-party arbiter  
*Observer* is something, it's different, it has to be, for them, for the governing body  
it has to be a totally different idea, um, where it doesn't have to be, it just, it could  
545 be defined differently, but I think that if you're going to give somebody the  
responsibility to make some calls, um, there's situations where I'd like to play, I'd  
like where they had the responsibility to make all the calls, or just, you know,  
yeah, you're held to a different level of attentiveness, um, and I don't know if it  
needs more Observers on the fields or on the sidelines, um, it definitely needs a  
550 little more experience for the Observers, and yeah, I think that, um, in the culture  
of Ultimate right now it's very against refereeing in such a way that, um, or fully  
relying on a third-party uh, official is so slanted against that that there's not really  
a good argument for or against it's just totally unknown. there's only a handful of  
people that have really played a refereed Ultimate game, they had one a couple of  
555 years ago that was like an all-star thing that went on during Potlatch, um, yeah,  
but other than that it hadn't been like ten years since the last one before that, and  
people talk about it all the time, but there's not really like, there's not really like a  
viable idea of where people can play in that, it's just you know, I've never done it,  
it sounds interesting to me, um, but see I also, yeah, it interests me to see what  
560 you could do pushing uh, pushing the limits you know, being more aggressive,  
physical you know, but yeah, there just aren't, there's no rules, there's not a  
broader interest in getting those rules, but like, see the crazy part is that self-  
officiating is great for pick-up games, it's even great for leagues, it's great for  
learning how to play Ultimate, it forces people to learn the rules, um it's great for  
565 scrimmaging at practices, everyone gets to discuss what's going on, discusses the  
rules, things like that you know, when you're playing pick-up you know, there's  
just, all of those, um, all those you know, all those levels can be played with self-  
officiating and it makes the game rich, it gives people um, mostly if you know the  
rules better than somebody else you probably have an advantage because if you  
570 see a violation you can call it, and another team might not know that violation,  
and just, your knowledge of the rules can save you if someone calls a violation on  
you unfairly, you can counter that with what the actual infraction would have  
been had there been an infraction, you could say why or why not that was a rule  
violation, and so, it helps everyone to become a smarter player by self-officiating,  
575 but I think when you get to a certain level, um, everyone has, has a you know, an  
advanced grasp of the rules, and the things that are being...the essence that, the  
essence of the rule at that point is just like it's very nit-picky, um, ideas that are  
just, you know perceptions or philosophies of the game, which how much pushing  
or shoving you know, uh, hand checking, fouling, bumping, you know just things  
580 like that, how much can be in the game, and at that level I think it would be  
helpful for there to be a third-party to, to calm everyone down, to call certain  
things the way they see them and not, and not kind of have a battle between two  
philosophies of team play and just have a game that's more mediated by one  
person. So, the reason that there isn't that one person is because all the other  
585 levels of Ultimate they work so well by self-officiating, and they also pride  
themselves on it, and so, but yeah, as a, um...as like an identity to Ultimate, like  
self-officiating is part of its identity, it's, it's good, it's a good, um, it's a good

590 trait and it's also like, it's very helpful uh, logistically you know, all these things,  
it ties into all these things people are in-tune with playing Ultimate, like they  
don't want, like they just want it to be community, they don't want an outside  
person saying who wins or loses a game, if you like have a small league it's the  
cost or logistics of getting well trained referees there, it you know, or viable, um,  
most of the well trained referees are gonna wanna play in these leagues or  
595 tournaments around town, um, so there's all these logistical reasons, and like  
officiating doesn't work at you know, 90% of the levels of Ultimate, but I think  
that, um, once you get to this, once you get to these games that are much more  
highly contested with people, working out for six months to get to this point you  
know, you know they've made five trips across the country that year to make sure  
600 that their team was well positioned for this one run at a first place, or a you know,  
that's when I think that it might be interesting for people to have that third-party  
to rely on, like just recently when I went to Worlds our team you know, uh, we  
had a dispute and Worlds doesn't even have Observing, so uh, there was a dispute  
at the end of our elimination game where a player said that he had scored a goal  
and uh, everyone else said that he hadn't, uh and he, just because that person  
605 believed that he was in, um, and his team wanted to win and also believed that he  
was in, and uh, you know those things happen, but you know you go to the  
sideline and there's a photographer with a picture and he's like 'well, he wasn't  
actually in,' it feels cheapened because you lost but you didn't lose, there's no  
dignity to losing on a missed call or you know, it's not like 'oh, we were the  
610 better team, but we didn't advance,' we know we were kind of robbed of that  
chance. So, I mean, so I don't know, I don't want to say that you place blame on a  
third-party but that's, you know that's what happens, it's just I think you could  
leave more on the field and you know, less things, you know one thing that  
always happens is you know, people are fast counting, you know the length of a  
615 second in Ultimate is barely a half of, between half and three quarters of a second,  
so, just things like that if they were more systematically taken care of you know,  
stall counts would be more regular, um, just all, all those things could be  
tightened up, and all those rules could be looked after better by one person than  
they can be perceived by two team that are, have different goals in the end, um,  
620 each team their goal is to win, so it's, when each team's goal is to win there is  
going to be mistakes made in the perception of plays in the game.

P: Okay. [cordialities]

## Appendix 9: Eileen Transcription

Eileen, 28- 12.18.10 (2:05PM) 55:44 minutes

P: So, just standard kind of information, can you give me a brief history of your experience specifically with UPA or USA Ultimate events, like Series events?

5 E: Oh, yeah. Um, let's see, the first time I participated in a USA Ultimate event, besides college, I guess I'll start with college, I started playing in college at the University of Texas and the first official USA event, the first USAU, I'm gonna say UPA, sorry, a lot...

P: Go for it...

10 E: 'Cause it's hard to remember, but it was the college series my freshman year in 2000- 2001, um, but at that time you know, the UPA didn't have its stuff together quite as much, so as a new player I didn't really feel the presence of USAU, or UPA, um, I was just like at a tournament right, so we just went to tournaments and we played, I didn't have an idea of the larger organization until the like,  
15 probably a couple of years later, but that fall I did play with a Houston team and we did go all the way to Florida to play in Regionals, we played Sectionals in Texas and then Regionals uh, in Florida, and that felt like a much bigger deal, it felt more organized, much more, and then uh, continued to play college and club for many more years, um, and then you know, became a little more involved in  
20 the actual organizational side of things through captaining an stuff, so becoming more familiar with the UPA, and you know, working directly with them more in uh, in that capacity, like as a captain you have to turn in rosters and you have to you know, submit official things, you're not just like running around and playing a little bit more, so I got to see a little bit of that from there, and then I became a  
25 Sectionals coordinator, and uh, for club, in, I can't remember what year, but it was a couple of years ago and I did it for two years, so, that's the most official capacity I've ever held though, the Sectionals Coordinator within the USAU structure, um, and then we, I was also, I don't know how it happened [laughs], but I was amazingly chosen to play with Team USA and USA Ultimate ran the  
30 whole, that whole thing, so you know, the coach was you know working closely with USA Ultimate, USA Ultimate was supporting us in a lot of ways, and you know gave us a stipend to go, helping us fundraise, and providing support in a lot of ways, so, and we were running youth clinics with them at a lot of our practices, not only do practice but also do youth clinics at all of the places we went to  
35 practice, and so, they were working with us with that, so that was also like I got to know people within USAU a little better, um, and then captaining club as well.

P: Yeah, how many events do you think you have played, like Sectionals, Regionals, Nationals? Just ballpark it for me.

40 E: Okay, well, I've played for ten years, and I've played in a college series for six of those, so that's six times three, so eighteen, you might have to write this down for me, eighteen and then I've played probably nine years of club going up all



three and then a couple of Nationals we didn't make it, so nine time three is twenty seven minus like...three probably, maybe twenty five, so, twenty five plus eighteen, plus worlds, plus...yeah.

P: So forty plus?

5 E: Yeah, yeah.

P: Awesome. Um...

E: That seems pretty amazing [laughs], I've never actually sat down and thought about that. It's crazy.

10 P: So, you uh, you've played college and club what other like, modes of Ultimate do you play?

E: Well, like, local leagues I've played in almost every year, if we're in town we play local leagues every year, so winter leagues, summer leagues, and lately we haven't been in town for summer leagues because we're always traveling now that we teach, so we haven't played summer league in a while, but winter league,  
15 and there's kind of an informal goaltimate league that is going around that a bunch of people play in which is fun, um, we go out and scrimmage the UT women sometimes when they ask us to, um, informal pickups in the off-season, not really during the season, but in the off-season, and uh, then there's the tournaments that [Todd], my partner, and I have traveled to you know, all over the  
20 country and world that we, whenever we're traveling we try to find tournaments to structure our travel around so we can meet other people around the world who play, like you know, it's just awesome to see how Ultimate is played in different countries, and meet people who do that and like build a larger community of you know, international Ultimate players, so...

25 P: Okay. Can you uh, kind of differentiate for me like your experience with kind of college and club and league, and how you interact with people I guess or how people behave in those kind of situations?

E: Um, we certainly it's totally different in terms of level, well the biggest difference is obviously the level of competition between the club that I play and  
30 the leagues and stuff, so, I guess the difference, well the biggest difference for me between league, and even in college there's just you know, it's a lower level of Frisbee, obviously, um, because people haven't been playing that long, although that's probably changing now that people have been playing Youth for so long, but when I was playing, you know college players weren't that good [chuckles],  
35 like no one was, so the difference for the most part would be like you know, who they're catered to, at the highest levels of club, like the levels that I play at in the fall, it's catered to elite players, so the expectation is very very high, you know to perform and to do well, succeed as a team, and at the league level you know, the expectation is more based, I would say, towards the players that are learning, the  
40 beginner and the middle tier players in terms of them improving, uh, learning the game and learning about the game and I think like learning to love the game, like

you, you know the expectation is really, it's structured for them, the emphasis in a league for me, and I'm captaining a team this year and it's especially important when I'm captaining obviously, to make sure those people are fostering a love of  
 45 Ultimate, like learning how to play, learning to love the game or uh, feeling a sense of community, and not focus on performance [chuckles] 'cause that just gets frustrating to be honest, you know not everybody plays for the same reasons, I play for the reasons I play in the fall, and I can't impose those on other people in the winter when, when that's not the goal, so yeah, I really like doing well and  
 50 winning, but you're going to have to adjust your expectations for you know, for who's out there and what they want to get out of it.

P: Okay, and how do you decide what those different goals are, because you said that you have different expectations for different modes, like what would they be kind of?

55 E: Well, I would decide based on if it's a, you know a competitive league or not, like there's a competitive summer league and in that on there's people that play consistently, I think all want a similar thing out of it, they want to be playing hard, they want to be playing well, they want to be winning, they want to get a really good workout out of it because it's pre-season, so the expectations there it feels to  
 60 me are more just like, the general consensus is just 'we wanna do well as a team, we wanna do well, we wanna work hard, um, work on specific skills or whatever' that will help us in the fall, and then the leagues it's, my expectations would be based on the personnel like, you know what experience you want, why those people are out there, it's not full top to bottom with experienced players or people  
 65 that want to win, so you can't base your expectations of the team on that, so, I mean we don't sit down and have a conversation as a team, but there is from UPLA, um, they do have a talk with the captains at the league meeting, the captains meeting, like 'hey, here's the expectations for this league, like it's fun, people have a lot of fun playing, you know people equal playing time,' you know  
 70 like, you're all supposed to have equal playing time in a league, and I mean, I firmly believe in that philosophy, um, if the people want to play that they have equal playing time, and if you end up losing then who cares, like the people are learning and having a good time and that's what matters, so, not only is it imposed on us by, or encouraged, it's not imposed it's encouraged by UPLA, the  
 75 Austin player's association, but it just feels like that's what the team wants because not everyone's out there to like win, or you know if they are then you can still set higher expectations but not as high as they would be you know, in a club situation, or a competitive, a competitive 'anything' situation, like a competitive summer league or whatever.

80 P: So, what's your favorite way to play then, since you have an exposure to all these different types of Ultimate?

E: Um, I mean obviously I would say, I, for different reasons, totally different reasons, I have things that I love about each league that I participate in or way that I play Frisbee I guess, because, and I think, I'm going to go on an aside for a  
 85 second, I feel super super lucky to have, I think, been at the very very tail end of

what we would call kind of ‘old school’ Ultimate, like the very tail end of it, but just enough of it to really understand what it is, and understand people that play that way and believe that as the way that Ultimate should be played, and I was, I was like because we were that college team, we were that team that would have  
 90 like four people at practice and like, it was more about being social, and we weren’t good, we didn’t care, we didn’t have like a trajectory for the future, we played like co-ed pickup with the guys after practice, it was more important that we socially hung out than were an actually good Frisbee team, we were late to everything, you know just typical cliché like ‘old school’ Ultimate type things,  
 95 but then you know, two years from then we started on that trajectory to become what I think is the most common form of Ultimate now, which is like you know, as a more legitimate level sport, so I feel like I got to see that and participate in that and participate in the newer style of Ultimate that USAU is trying to push, you know the media friendlier and then high level of competition kind of  
 100 Ultimate. So, I have to say I miss things about the way that it was in the beginning, but as a person with my personality and as competitive as I am, and how much I like, you know feel passionate about and love Ultimate I want to be the best player that I could possibly be, um, the competitive Ultimate and the club fulfils that for me, the competition and the drive to be the best that I can be and  
 105 the best team we can be, and like achieve something great with a group of people that I love, like that is just, that’s my favorite way to play Ultimate because of the process of taking a team of people who don’t work together well and are all different, have different strengths, and then working together to make them succeed in like, what’s seen in that society as a successful way, which would be  
 110 going to like competitive tournaments and doing well, and winning, and that feels great and I love that so much, but I also really loved, and still love, but it is like missing, it’s not missing, it’s ‘different,’ how for instance the men’s and women’s programs in college who, before we were both set on that trajectory, we were a lot closer because we weren’t competing with each other to be you know, the better  
 115 team at Texas, or we weren’t practicing so often that we were always hanging out and stuff, so um, that definitely like, I definitely miss that aspect of it ‘cause Double Wide and Showdown are not close as teams, like we don’t support each other you know, in obvious ways, or it’s, we’re very separate entities, where as back in college it was very supportive in the first couple years, sorry, I feel like  
 120 we were more one program, um, so socially it was totally different...and, well yeah, that doesn’t really [\_\_\_\_\_] that was just personal experience...

P: No that’s awesome, um...

E: So, I would say that I prefer the high level competition, but that’s *because* I feel like you can achieve high level competition without losing too much of the  
 125 ‘old school’ Ultimate kind of ideas of respect for each other and Spirit for the game and things like that. So, that’s kind of why I, I think it’s possible to maintain both of those...not in its purest form, but a form that’s...what real Spirit of the Game is to me I feel like I can make that happen at a high level.

130 P: Well, I'm going to take that since you're giving it to me. Can you give me your personal definition of what Spirit of the Game is?

E: Yeah. This is really funny that we're talking about this because it's changing, it's evolving, it's always evolving, but um, playing like high level for a long time and going to the world competitions and it's really interesting to see how it varies across countries and teams, and anyway, um... I guess Spirit of the Game would  
 135 to me be following the rules that are put forth by the organization, in this case USAU, the rules of the game right, trying your hardest to follow those rules, your interpretation of what those rules are, to interpret them fairly number one, because I think some teams you know, I think, it's not necessarily that they're not Spirited it's that their interpretation of the rules is not what I think it to be a little bit, you  
 140 know, *loose* I guess I would say, but um... you know a fair interpretation of the rules, you know what you think the actual goal of those rules and how it's supposed to be interpreted, which is ultimately, you know, they wrote the rules, even the new edition, they wrote them with respect for your opponents, respect for the game, respect for the joy of competition, all those things, um, and you  
 145 know trying to put that into whatever level you're playing, respect for whoever you're playing against, respect for yourself, um, and yeah, mostly just respect for the game, the community, and don't, just don't treat people like shit [laughs], and also yourself, don't be, you have to be respectful of yourself as well, 'cause even if you're like a good team mate, but you're constantly getting yourself down, which is what I used to do all the time, like turn over the disc and be like 'fuck! God damn it!' and just start cussing, I mean that's not really respecting the game, it's not respecting yourself, and all my team mates it would bring them down, so, um, interpreting the rules fairly I think and then trying, *constantly* trying, and maybe not always succeeding, but constantly trying and keeping it in your mind  
 155 that you're supposed to have this fair and fun interpretation of the rules in mind where you're not trying to take advantage of anyone, you're not trying to you know, uh, be unfair to the other team, um... am I allowed to cuss?

P: Yeah, as much as you want.

E: Okay because it's really hard for me not to cuss [chuckles] I'm like 'how do I  
 160 replace this word with,' I mean just not being a douche bag, it's essentially what it is, and it's uh, it's hard, and I think one of the things...

P: It's hard not to be a douche bag?

E: No, no, no. It's easy not to be a douche bag, but at the highest levels it's hard not to be uh, it's hard to be fair all the time, to like, to honor that interpretation of  
 165 the rules, especially if another team is not honoring the same interpretations as yours are, right, so, you really can interpret the rule totally differently in Ultimate, they're just so broad, so, you could interpret, for the best example would be foul calls, what's a foul on the mark or whatever, so, there's teams that take that and just hack right, and say, well you know, it's grey, there is grey you know, 'I don't  
 170 think it's a foul,' and it's frustrating to me when another team is, they have a different interpretation and you think they're trying to take advantage of the

game, or you, and it's hard to stay cool about that, totally hard, but um... you've just gotta do it, and I think one of the things that helps me is that I care a lot, uh, like I react a lot to society, like whatever kind of pressure is put upon me by the community I'm in, and I think Ultimate has a pretty, it used to be stronger, but  
 175 um, it's just expected, that's the expectation, the expectation is that you follow the rules, you have Spirit of the Game, it was ingrained in me when I was playing in college and club from the beginning you know, I was lucky enough to have people who cared about that, talking about it all of the time: Spirit of the Game,  
 180 we did cheers after every game, you know stuff that hardly ever happens anymore, and I like react really well to expectations that are set by a society or a group of people, 'cause I feel really, really, really pressured to uh, to continue those, or you know, to meet those expectations, basically because I care a lot of what people think of me, but in that way it's good 'cause it keeps me like thinking  
 185 about things like 'how am I supposed to react to this kind of situation,' where as [Todd] is just that good of a person I think [laughs], he just like, I think that it's internally ingrained in him, the fairness of the game and stuff which is why I'm glad you're talking to him, he grew up with it, and I did not grow up with it at all, I grew up with like playing soccer, like you're taught how to cheat at like,  
 190 whenever it goes out, because I played at a really high level, whenever it goes out put your hand up in your direction, or how to pull a jersey without the ref noticing, you know these are things were taught and, [very impassioned] *that's crazy, that's really crazy*, if you're trying to build good citizens of the world, why in the world would you teach your children to take advantage of someone else or  
 195 a game, a game which doesn't even matter, why would you, I don't even understand why anyone would ever do that, teach kids to do that, it doesn't make sense to me at all, so, but [Todd] he was taught from his dad and from his family, and they did a great job of it, of like that just how you treat people, like this, even if it's high competition, so I think he really does it because it's like, it's *in* him,  
 200 where as I think it's partially in me, but also a lot of what the expectation is set out to be... it's interesting...

P: That is interesting. Um... that's pretty cool. Can you, kind of back track, one of the first thing you said when you started talking about your interpretation of Spirit is it's very variable, that you've played in, nationally it's different, internationally it's different, can you give me...  
 205

E: A specific example...

P: Yeah, some examples, um, what you have seen people interpret it as and how it effects other teams' interactions...

E: Yeah, for sure. It's a little more different on the world stage because you're playing like WFDF rules which are a little bit different, but they're still Ultimate rules, right, so it shouldn't matter, so there are rules that are set in place by the world Ultimate of all the countries, WFDF, and there's like really interesting, uh, pick rules with them, the pick rules are really interesting, so, and to be honest I totally forgot exactly what it is, but like a lot of the team in Europe uh, were really  
 210 really upset when we played them in Prague this summer with the way that we  
 215

called picks, because we're used to picks, um, you know in our interpretation it's *anything* that keeps you from being able to guard your girl at any time basically, or your guy, is a pick, and in Europe I think they're a little bit looser about that in terms of, they don't call it as often and the rules are written a little differently in

220 terms of picks uh, where, they just, I think their culture is that you just don't call it because it interrupts the game too much, you go around somebody if you need to, you know if it doesn't keep you from actually, oh, I remember, sorry, I remember it now, it took me a while to talk around it, in the US if you get picked, if you're prevented in any way from guarding someone you call a pick, even if you

225 wouldn't get that D, 'cause you're, you have position and you're allowed to make up position, okay, but in WFDF they're more likely to only call it if it prevented you from, you know if the disc was in the air for instance, getting the D, so, um, we came into, I can't tell you how many games we played against European teams where they would just get so frustrated with us because we would

230 call picks on things they didn't think were picks, and you know, when we tried to explain that we were used to this pick rule they would say 'it just seems like you're taking advantage of, trying to stop the game, trying to stop our flow,' and we're like 'yeah, but were not doing this maliciously this is just what we're used to, you know you're getting in my way so I'm going to call a pick 'cause that's

235 what I'm used to,' and they're like 'yeah, we wouldn't call that, we never call that,' and so we had a lot of games that were really contentious simply because like you know, just the variations in what we think that the rules are, and we did read the WFDF rules, to be honest I can't remember what they are, but uh, 'cause I just played them and then they left my brain, but um, it's the same thing with

240 fouls, they think all the American teams are super aggressive and really nasty kind of, not all, but their idea is that American teams play dirty in general, um, which is interesting, um, but interpretation of rules in the States, I think it can, since we all play under the same rules, the 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, that gives, the way that some teams interpret the rules, for instance hacking on the mark, I assume, I guess you could

245 possibly interpret the rules where, because marking violations are so cloudy that like who initiates contact, and if you're not moving, but you could essentially get away with a lot of things, there's teams that hack, just instantly when you get on the mark for intimidation purposes or whatever, or you know I'm marking you from like this far away [shows small space with hands] because there's no disc

250 space anymore, um, and those teams develop a terrible reputation, you know for the rest of the teams, they'll go like 'you know, I hate playing so-and-so because they hack on the mark every time, or I hate playing so-and-so because they're constantly riding you like a back pack,' it's just, ultimately I guess the worst part of it is that people don't want to play you or don't enjoy playing you because of it,

255 it's not that fun to play teams that you have contentious relationships with.

P: How common is that?

E: In the women's game, I think less common, I don't know if a male player would agree with me, but it is a little bit different, and it might be because women care more about what, like I was saying they care about what each other thinks

260 more, and I, just as, you know playing women's sports and co-ed sports my whole

life it does seem like girls care more about what other teams think of them, in general what people think of them.

P: Really? Why do you think that is?

E: Have you ever read Ansen Dorens?

265 P: No.

E: Okay. So he's a, he's um, the UNC soccer coach, he like one of the most winningest coaches in all of history, he's an incredible coach, he does great books, uh, one's called *Vision of a Champion*, and that, I consider myself a feminist, so this is hard to say out of context, but like, there are certainly  
 270 differences with the way that females are brought up in our society, and I think that one of them is that you know, whether intentionally or not intentionally, because my parents are you know, all about equal rights and things like that, our society puts more value in like, in girls think more about what other people think of them in terms of looks, in terms of what beauty means and things like that, um,  
 275 and I think it applies to sports as well, and so, I'm not sure exactly how much this has to do with it, but um...he has an interesting section in his book *Vision of a Champion*, but when I was reading it I was like 'man, that is so true, I know exactly what he is talking about because I feel that way,' but I don't think that guys care quite as much, maybe they do, I don't know if it's societal or primal or  
 280 whatever, but in terms of the aspect of following Spirit of the Game because of being worried about what other people's perceptions are of you, I don't think that, I think that would probably be more prevalent in the women's game...so, you just develop a bad reputation as a team, we don't get paid to do this so why would you want, I don't know, why would you want to have a bad reputation as a team, or is  
 285 a team that interprets rules unfairly or cheats even, like isn't fun to play, most of all isn't fun to play, that sucks, I would hate to be a team that no one wanted to play, ultimately.

P: Yeah, that makes sense. Um, let's say for instance you had somebody make what you considered an egregious foul, like they contested something that you  
 290 thought was a very obvious foul, what would you, what's a typical reaction for you?

E: Um, I don't usually lose my cool too easily, um, I usually if someone, the most I would do is probably say like 'are you kidding me,' or something like that in a raised tone, like uh, I don't tend to lose my cool too much over that 'cause I think  
 295 that...I can understand, in Frisbee there's so many, here's what I think about fouls and things like that: you never know 100%, you never know, you know you might have felt an arm, you might have whatever, uh, seen them, seen their foot move, but without video data of being able to slow it down and play it back or whatever, I feel like it's so ridiculous to me when someone is like [excitedly] 'I saw that  
 300 happen! I felt your arm here!' you know, and it's really actually, really embarrassing because I did that twice at Nationals this year, I like got pushed and I felt it and so I called a foul, um, and I was on defense actually so that's why it

was worse, I was on defense and I felt a girl like push me, you now and I felt like that was an egregious push, a very away from here [points to her body], I don't  
 305 mind like 'bodying' and 'shouldering' but it was like an arm, and then another  
 time a girl was grabbing my arm and holding me down, and I was like 'okay, I  
 felt that, that was egregious, I'm calling that,' and then this is, that's what it felt  
 like to me and I was so sure, I was like 'I felt you push my chest away, duh, duh,  
 310 duh,' and then one of them happened to be videoing it, videotaping it, a friend of  
 mine actually from the other team, and I got off, their team was livid, their team  
 was livid that I had called it, and I got off the field and she was like 'do you  
 wanna see that on tape?' and I was like 'yeah, totally,' because I felt like so  
 justified, and it looked like from that tape that I had made the worst call in history  
 315 [both laugh], in history, and I was like 'oh my god,' and I think it was an ultimate  
 point game or something and we ended up losing the game and it was probably  
 because I called that, that's what I felt like it was karma, but uh, it looked terrible,  
 it looked like I you know, so unless you're involved in the play, and even then I  
 really don't think that a person can be like '100% this happened, you're making  
 the most terrible call in the world, you're wrong,' because I don't think that  
 320 there's a right and a wrong, I think there's things that are more obvious than  
 others, uh, and especially fouls I think it's really hard to tell, you're both moving,  
 you're both vying for position you know, unless someone takes your legs out or  
 does something *malicious* that's obviously not intended to get to the disc but get  
 to you, in that case I would be really upset, but that has not really happened to me,  
 325 um...

P: Have you ever seen that happen anywhere?

E: No, I haven't actually, no I haven't, luckily. I would totally lose my cool if that  
 happened, but uh, it hasn't so, I don't feel, I don't get worked up about things  
 usually because I can understand there's two sides to this foul call or whatever,  
 330 both people believe what they believe, and usually it's not going to change, and  
 uh, try to talk to them about it like 'here's my perspective, what's yours, okay,  
 let's make a call, like this, 'like this is what I think happened, but I'm not going to  
 know 100%, what do you think happened, okay let's move on,' if it's a bad call I  
 would say, the only time I would lose my cool is if like I said, if I think someone  
 335 is actually like, not actually honoring their perspective, but doing it because um,  
 they don't want to lose the game or because it would change the play, or because  
 they're mad at me or whatever, for reasons that are impure in my mind, uh, which  
 happens sometimes, but...

P: How often?

E: Not very often, not very often, but you know, if it's ultimate point and there's a  
 340 foul call it determines your you know, whether you possess the disc anymore or  
 not, that's the kind of shit where your just like 'man,' you know honoring your  
 own perspective is tough, it's like, it's really tough, so...

P: Do you do it?



345 E: I try to, yeah, I try to.

P: Have you ever done it?

E: I...um, not mindfully, no, not like 'oh, we're going to turn this over if we don't get it,' I've been more stubborn than I would have been about contesting something than I would have been or, and I'm sure it's you know, but I've never  
 350 fought through like 'if I turn this over, you know this isn't, we don't maintain possession,' I've never thought through it like that, but I'm sure when it comes down to it...I made some calls at Nationals, like that one, that literally are haunting me, like I've had dreams about them, I like almost want to contact the people and be like 'I'm sorry I did that,' [chuckles] like you know just stuff that, I  
 355 have an incredible amount of guilt associated with this, and uh, self-doubt because I know that it could go either way, so it's very hard for me to say like 'I know 100% that this happened, you're wrong, I'm right,' and I did that, I didn't say like that I'm 100% right, but I was like 'this is what I think happened and I'm going to honor that,' and it turned out, I think in both cases, that I was not right and that  
 360 was really hard for me, so, I felt *really* terrible about it, I still feel terrible, I feel terrible about it. I don't want to be the player, *that* player that people are like 'they take advantage of the rules.'

P: Absolutely, one of the things I was going to bring up was whether or not you have ever regretted a call, which you obviously have, and how you tried to rectify that, um...  
 365

E: Usually I, if I recognize that it's a terrible call, I just go, I try to get up next to the person and explain why I did it, and um, these were a little bit like uh, they laid eggs, they sat up there and laid eggs, and they hatched weeks later and I was like [dramatically] 'oh, god!' I especially made one terrible, this is really probably  
 370 pretty cathartic for me to talk about this [chuckles], but it was, it was ultimate point and I uh, collided with a team mate and I was poaching so, my girl was like in the endzone, she was about to catch the score, I don't know if it was ultimate point or tied, but it was a really important point, and I like went in for a poach so I left my girl and she was wide open, they were going up the line so I thought I was  
 375 going to get the D and I collided with my girl and I fell down on the ground, and it hurt and I couldn't get up fast so I called an 'injury' you know, um, I don't know if I was injured enough to not be able to get up and play, but I called it because it hurt and I called it right away, but I also knew that my girl was, I thought about it later and was like 'you know I probably could have gotten up, why did I do that' and then I, my girl was wide open in the endzone so by getting  
 380 someone in, you know she came in and in the same place I was, but I was on the ground and like disoriented and worried about my ankle, and you know we got the benefit of putting someone in and in that position that could recover to get on that girl, and I couldn't have done that, and I was like 'I think I just cheated on  
 385 that, [chuckles] I just cheated.'

P: So, you're unsure whether or not that recovery factor really played into your call?

E: Yeah, like they would have, I'm pretty sure they would have scored, and when I realized that I was like uh, I'm not sure I really called that because I was actually  
 390 too injured to play, because I think I ended up playing later that day, like maybe that game, it was just like you know, painful things that sting a lot but you're fine, so, and they didn't end up scoring, they ended up scoring later but not on that possession, and I was like, that's the one that actually the two fouls that I felt really bad about because they were involved with, you know 'cause I had friends  
 395 on the other team and they were both like, they were both those situations that looked really bad from the outside, like I felt this [grabs arm] but the Observer didn't see it you know, because I was sandwiched between people, so those I'm embarrassed about, but this I'm ashamed of, I'm ashamed of all of them, but I'm especially ashamed of this one, I don't know who it was, I don't even know what  
 400 team it was, but...

P: Well, you said something kind of interesting there that's kind of a different topic, but you mentioned that you had friends on both these teams, um how did you develop friendships with these people?

E: I played with them at Potlatch, I played with them in fun tournaments together  
 405 through mutual friends, so, oh so I do know what team it was, um, but yeah I played with them, a lot of these people you meet at tournaments and you become friends and they invite you to play on teams with people you don't even know and so you make totally new friends, like it's through that process and traveling and picking up at tournaments and meeting random people, we met just incredible  
 410 people all over the country that play, so, it's like pretty normal to have a friend or uh, at least know a person on the other team like pretty well, and uh, at the highest level I think, just from going to these tournaments it gives you a whole, and getting invited to fun tournaments with people.

P: How do you start like a relationship with these people like outside of the  
 415 competition?

E: Well, it's at these fun tournaments like you know, 'cause at these fun tournaments you're not, it's not, you're not enemies or 'frienemies' whatever you wanna call it, so you're not 'frenemies' you're just you know, drinking on the sidelines, or we're playing together so it's fun, it's so fun to play with people who  
 420 you usually play against, so in this case at Potlatch of course you party all night and hang out, and we went camping with these people afterwards actually, so like it totally went off the Ultimate field and we became like really actual friends, so, not, not just Ultimate friends, but friends off the field, and we still have mutual friends so we usually see them a couple of times a year, and uh, so that's  
 425 especially, it's especially hard to let friends down, like people you know on a more personal level who you know are going to be like actually disappointed in you as opposed to being like 'aw, that was a terrible call,' but being like 'man, I'm disappointed in you.'

P: So, have you ever restrained making a call because of your personal  
 430 relationship with somebody?

E: No, uh, no way, no because I, I think it could be, that's what's so cool about Ultimate because the rules are like 'okay, here's my perspective, here's yours, alright cool, let's move on,' that's what's, no, so there's no reason to restrain a call because there's, it's not like you know, I mean sometimes you lose  
 435 possession, it's not like you get kicked out of the game or anything, the rules are in place so it's a compromise I guess, 'here's what I think, here's what you think, okay, let's compromise,' you're in the same position where the count stays or whatever, like no, I've never restrained a call because of friendship, unless you're talking like Celebration where it's, unless they didn't make a call like in a league  
 440 game or whatever or a Celebration game where I feel like the stakes aren't as high.

P: Okay, well one thing that you mentioned is that an Observer didn't see your arm tugged. How many games have you played in with Observers?

E: Ever?

445 P: Ever, don't count back, just give me an idea.

E: Uh, around twenty...twenty five, maybe.

P: Okay.

E: Maybe more, not too many actually, I don't, I don't really, you remember what I was talking about how you could never be 100% sure?

450 P: Yeah.

E: I think it is almost a ludicrous idea, and I think this about all sports, to have the human eye, to *expect* the human eye to detect something that is impossible for it to detect in terms of speed, and then also you add you know, perspective in where there's a bunch of people talking, it's almost ludicrous to have the expectation  
 455 that a human eye would be able to detect something like a foul, you know consistently and accurately, um, I do however think that Observers are very useful and helpful for very specific things like non-active calls or in and out, 'cause you cannot see if you are catching the disc, you're not looking at the line if you're catching the disc, I think that it's actually really helpful to have people there  
 460 saying 'oh, you were in,' or 'oh, you were out,' so that's helpful, um, you know for the things that you cannot notice yourself I think they're really helpful, I don't like the idea of referees at all, and I think I'm one of the few, I don't know, I know a lot of high level players are like a fan of, and I don't know in what capacity they want Observers, but I am not a fan of active, of the idea of the game  
 465 going toward active Observers, uh, you know calling fouls on the mark or even like receiving fouls, I don't mind them in there calling things that it is helpful like lines, in/out, um, and I also don't mind that they're passively there to agree with your opponent to go to them, however, like I don't mind that so much, but I still think it's ridiculous to have an outside person make a decision for a situation they  
 470 were not involved in, and you know, could only see with the human eye, which is not accurate at all really when you're talking about tenths of seconds.

P: And that's referees making active calls that you're associating that with?

E: Yeah, like specifically foul calls and things like that.

P: Have you played, you said you played soccer competitively?

475 E: And I think that referees, and that's partially why I feel this way so strongly, I  
 feel like in other sports like basketball, you'll talk to people who play  
 competitively, referees like make or break games for teams, you know if a referee  
 was biased towards a team in soccer they could win or lose the game for you with  
 foul calls or handballs or whatever you know, calling them on one side and not  
 480 calling them on the other, you know not having a good idea about what their  
 threshold is for fouls you know, and not calling it evenly, I just think it can  
 change the game in a totally different way, and I don't like the idea of a game  
 being effected by an outside part in that way, I feel like if they were making  
 active calls on everything, they've played around with doing it where the  
 485 Observer stall counts and the Observer calls travels actively...

P: Have you ever played in a game with them doing that?

E: Yeah, uh huh, well actually, sorry, I coached in a game where they were doing  
 it where they were trying out in college...it wasn't President's Day, Stanford, at  
 Stanford Invite and my kids played in, the UT girls played in [indiscernible], it  
 490 was, it was interesting to be sure, it did however, it was a consistent stall count,  
 which is kind of cool, um, and the travels was nice because they were calling  
 them actively so you didn't have to worry about it, but like I said, I don't believe,  
 I just, strongly in human error, I don't think a human can do that consistently the  
 whole game, across the board for both teams and not have a bias in some way,  
 495 even if it's not an obvious bias, like 'I played with you,' or 'I know you,' you  
 know people just have biases, just natural biases towards things for whatever  
 reason and I think that that taints the game.

P: Yeah. Um, do you feel as though Observers change the way that players  
 interact at all?

500 E: Oh yeah.

P: How so?

E: Definitely, the guys, watching Double Wide play in the semi-finals this year,  
 the guys, it takes away the thing I love about the game so much, or you know one  
 of the things I love so much about the game is that it is you know, *player*  
 505 *oriented*, you *do* have to talk to your opponent, you have to try to work through  
 this you know, or give your perspective and listen to theirs, and it's not like I'm  
 giving my perspective and then I'm shutting down and not listening to you, if it's  
 really truly you know, you're supposed to listen to what they say and give it some  
 thought, and uh, I think players with Observers, a lot of players, this happened  
 510 very obviously in the men's semi's game, when the Observers are there it's, of  
 course there's someone to go to, you don't have to have that interaction, like 'I

don't have to talk to you about what I thought, I'm going to this guy over here because he's going to tell me what I want to hear, like I don't care what you think, I don't have to listen to you, so I'm gonna see what this guy knows, 'cause that's  
 515 what he's here for,' I think that it takes away the responsibility of the players to work it out, so a foul was made, or a disc came in he and got a D, and the guy caught it and was like I'm gonna call a foul, [very heated] *instantly, didn't even look at the guy*, didn't even look at the opponent who called foul and just turned  
 520 strait to the Observer and said 'what do you think,' and I'm like 'dude! that's not how it's supposed to go,' like you're supposed to talk to the person and if you can't agree then you go to the Observer, at least that's how they have it in play right now with Observers, they weren't making active calls so you're supposed to talk it out and then go to the Observer, he didn't even acknowledge, didn't even look him in the face or the eyes, he just went straight to the Observer, and I was  
 525 like 'that was weird, that just happened,' and usually with girls, like I have personally never come upon that like someone completely disengaging from the 'respect for the opponent' aspect of the game with the Observer there, just going straight to them, 'cause I think that's pretty disrespectful to the opponent...

P: Did you say you *haven't* experienced that?

530 E: I haven't, no, with Observers, but I haven't played in a lot of Observed games, um, I haven't seen someone just completely disregard their opponent and go straight to the Observer, and my definition of Spirit of the Game is respect for your opponents and that would feel disrespectful to me if someone wasn't even going to listen to what I had to say or was just like going straight to the third  
 535 party, to me that was pretty surprising.

P: How common do you think that is?

E: This person is also not known for being a Spirited person.

P: Oh really. Was it a person on Double Wide?

540 E: Uh huh, he was playing for us...unfortunately...not unfortunately that he plays for us, but that that attitude is on there.

P: Yeah, how common that is now and days that people interact that way with Observers on the field?

E: Like that way where it's taking away from the respect for the opponents?

P: Yeah.

545 E: I don't think it's super common, no, like I said that's the first time I've ever seen it like *blatantly*, I've seen people not have respect for their opponents but talk about it anyway, it's like, they're not really listening, but of course if you think you're right on something and someone is saying, like you think someone is trying to take advantage of you personally and be like 'I don't want to listen to  
 550 you,' so I've seen people like be frustrated or ornery and then go to the Observer,

but usually [chuckles] that's after some sort of frustrated talk, I'm not sure that's any better to be honest, but it still seems like they're both getting their perspective out...um, I'm just big on you know, being able to voice your perspective about what happened and then 'if you're not listening, then whatever,' but at least you  
555 got to say it, I think that's the history teacher in me...

P: The history teacher...

E: Yeah, like multiple perspectives need to be taken into account for any decision to be made or any you know, when you're studying an event you've got to take in multiple perspectives, not just like one just, you know...

560 P: Awesome. [cordialities]

\*\*\*After I told Eileen that we were done with the interview we began speaking continuously, without prompting or a long break, about the topic still at hand. I then decided to maintain my audio documentation of the exchange in case any valuable data arose. No ensuing interaction I consider to be 'foul play' or  
565 unethical occurred within the 4 second gap between the two recordings.

P: Well, I'm going to continue recording then just for fun.

E: Okay, uh, yeah, I don't know if this is related at all, but I, this season I was really frustrated because I had been hearing from a lot of people 'hey, what happened to Double Wide, like why are they so unSpirited this year,' and of  
570 course my partner, he plays on them, he helped start the team essentially, he was there when it started, he's like a mainstay on Double Wide and people associate *us* very closely, so when Double Wide was being talked about negatively it like worries me, effects me, you know it started to get to me, and I was like, so I approached him and I was like you know, 'why has your team become so  
575 unSpirited, why are *multiple* people from you know, outside of Texas coming to me and saying you know, "what's up with Double Wide,"' and I was like 'first of all I don't [chuckles] play on the team, so don't associate me with them, that's not fair, and second of all that's bothering me too,' really I'm bothered by it a lot because it seems like they're a lot less Spirited this year, they just, they weren't  
580 honoring you know, some of the things that I think are important for Spirit of the Game, and uh, making bad calls, it seemed like not honoring their own team mates, like acting crappy to each other and of course their opponents, just like it was really getting to me until I finally came to [Todd] one day and approached him about it and we had a really good conversation and he was like '[Eileen],  
585 we're not any less Spirited than we ever have been, we've never been that Spirited of a team, like think of all the people who have played for our team in the past, we've made terrible calls all along, or we've had people on the team that make more calls, we've had people on the team that are hot headed and blow up,' and he named off a bunch of people that are hot headed or who tend to get  
590 frustrated and tend to make you know, poor calls by a lot of people, and I was like 'oh yeah,' like 'the only reason that people are saying that now is that we're winning games, we only, no one bothered with our Spirit earlier, like it wasn't a

big deal until we started winning games, now that we're in the lime light, of course people are saying we have worse Spirit, but we don't [chuckles], it's  
595 always been like not the greatest,' which sucks, but, um...

P: That's interesting.

E: It is interesting, and I was like really frustrated with him, I was like 'why aren't you doing something to change this, I mean people look up to you, why aren't you trying to change the Spirit of your team, why aren't you trying to instill...' of  
600 course he is, of course he is, but he's only one guy, and um, I think he's right, I think he's absolutely right that they never were, it's just that no one cared as much because they weren't winning, they weren't getting beat by them, of course you're going to be like 'well that wasn't the most fun game, but we won,' you know as opposed to, 'those guys made total calls and they beat us,' so, I just thought that  
605 was interesting, and something that probably need to be talked about because I think it's true, it's not that their Spirit got any worse, it's just that people are, they're being beat more, which doesn't make a lot of sense to me, but I guess yeah, it's more annoying I guess. That's all, I just wanted to say that.

## Appendix 10: Jack Transcription

Jack, 26- 1.12.11 (7:12PM) 66:56 minutes

P: So, can you tell me a little bit about how you came into Ultimate and a little of your history including UPA or USA Ultimate events?

5 J: Sure, um, from the time I was little I always threw a disc, um, the kids on the block, my brothers, we always tossed Frisbees, we would even prefer playing  
jackpot with a disc than we did with a koosh ball or a football or whatever, so um,  
from the time I was in like third grade I was throwing Frisbees. Um, I grew up in  
a North Houston suburb only like an hour and fifteen minutes away from A&M  
10 and also since our generation came up with the internet it didn't take long for you  
to search 'Frisbee' and found there was a governing body of Ultimate, the UPA,  
and there they would post leagues and tournaments, and even as a high schooler I  
would recruit high school teams to go to A&M and play in collegiate tourneys,  
like A&M would host tourneys as just a fundraising gimmick right, and anyone  
15 could come, especially in the fall, one of which is Del Sol, another is a Savage 7  
tournament where you can only bring seven people, and from the time I was a  
freshman in high school I was recruiting my old buddies to go to those  
tournaments.

P: Okay, so you did that when you were how old?

20 J: Sixteen.

P: Sixteen. And you played collegiately right?

J: After that once I went to college.

P: Okay, well tell me about your collegiate and any other experience you have playing Ultimate outside of college that you've had.

25 J: Outside of college?

P: Both in college and outside of college.

J: So, that was like the beginnings, was me as a high school student and recruiting, trying to piece together teams to go play wherever, um, then through family events I ended up moving to St. Louis and there, I tried to get it going you  
30 know, um, trying to get as many people as I can to play the sport of Ultimate Frisbee, um, I graduated from there and ended up going to a little college outside of St. Louis and couldn't get anything really going, I couldn't really find a good place to play Ultimate, and I drove into St. Louis to play pickup, but you know, the situation I was in I wasn't able to play *real* Ultimate, so I ended up  
35 transferring to Texas State and from there, um, from there I came upon a place that had Ultimate Frisbee, there was a group of people who were cognizant of what Ultimate Frisbee was, they were cognizant of the fact that there was this UPA and that they hosted tournaments, however, they didn't put too much effort



behind it and they didn't really...they didn't put competing first, they put socializing first, and even those fellas have told me that much, so I guess what I just did was I took a look around and recruited some other people and tried to kind of mesh the organizations together, but we just went ahead and decided to  
 5 start our own Frisbee team at Texas State, we founded ourselves, we called ourselves the Buckets, and we got to kind of gain a reputation and respect throughout the South Region of the College Series, the college region.

P: Okay. I'm going to touch on something you said, you said 'real Ultimate' with kind of some intent behind it. What do you consider 'real Ultimate' and why are  
 10 you making that distinction?

J: I couldn't find what I guess I call 'real Ultimate' just 'cause, when I was talking about the humble beginnings you know, I know this is kind of academic and stuff but I would phrase it as 'high school jerk-off Ultimate' because every high school has that goofy group of kids who like to goof around with a Frisbee instead of a  
 15 football, or baseball, or basketball or whatever, and um, nobody really taught them how to play the game of Ultimate, even those great players from Memorial I went and played with them and they played fourteen on fourteen with no out of bounds, and there's not too many rules, it's just get this disc, advance this disc beyond this tree or something, it's not like a real field or something, and the way I  
 20 played growing up is we played on a soccer field, and we played, um, that the endzone was a goalie box, like we had an idea of what Ultimate was, we played within the parameters of the soccer field, but if you know a goalie box you know it doesn't extend the whole width of the field, or of a football field or endzone in Ultimate, so, no high school organization really has it down I would say in the,  
 25 unless you're in Oregon or say some place where the sport is really thriving, but as far as the Mid-West, as far as Texas is concerned, anyone under eighteen years of doesn't really play, or when I was growing up they never really played 'real Ultimate,' so when I mean 'real Ultimate' you know the rules, you know the proper dimensions of the field, you know how many players you have out there,  
 30 and you know certain things like zone defense strategies, you know how to force, and things of that nature.

P: Okay. So, in regards to your experience with 'real Ultimate' and your experience with 'high school jerk-off Ultimate,' how did you interact between those, did you not enjoy one, or did you enjoy one more than the other?

J: Oh, I love, I love playing the game of Ultimate, but I loved it playing 'high school jerk-off Ultimate' when I was in high school, but that was high school you know, and when I learned more about structure and rules I really enjoyed it too, I guess it depends too on the attitude of the people I'm playing with, like some pickup may not be as skilled, like random pickup in any city may not be as skilled  
 40 as other pickup groups, but the attitude might be uh, more enjoyable, you know you may play with a pickup group that's really skilled, really athletic, really talented, but they may just be jerks you know, where you may play with a team that or pickup group that may not be as athletic and possibly not as talented but at least the keep friendly or light spirits about it, it's not a 'do or die' type of

45 atmosphere, so, I don't know, um...there's a, there's a lot to equate to decide what's more fun or what I enjoy more, I think it's more about the attitudes of the people involved more than it is whether or not they know the rules backwards and forwards I guess.

P: Okay. So, I'd like for you to expand a little more on your experience with college and club, um, first of all can you tell me, just in general terms, how many UPA or USA Ultimate series events you have played in, just guesstimate/ballpark it?

J: Series events?

P: So that's...

55 J: Sectionals, Regionals, Nationals, so, Sectionals and Regionals of college, so five years, that's ten, so ten USAU/UPA events, then uh, count that with basically Regionals and Sectionals for most of those years, so at least twenty, if you include the fact that some of those tournaments we play in are sanctioned you know, for instance we played Just Plain Nasty and they were sanctioned for a few years, so  
60 basically no fewer than twenty no more than twenty five or so, and that's just college, but the last few years I've played, so yeah no less than twenty no more than twenty five, twenty six.

P: Okay. How many series have you played club?

J: Um, I actually had played a year or two before I went to college, but I played  
65 with crappy teams and I was never put on the roster, I don't know...

P: So you just picked up with them?

J: Uh, one was Nerd Frisbee League, uh and yeah just walked right on to the UT IM fields, I, I couldn't even throw that real of a flick, like uh, one of my buddies, they called themselves the NFL, they were based out of A&M, and he was one of  
70 those high school kids, one of those guys I played with and took those high school kids up to College Station way back in the day, well he went on to go to A&M and he played club with this group of guys called Nerd Frisbee, and that must have been in 2002, and uh, that was my very first Club Sectionals, [laughs] we qualified for Regionals, it was disgusting, but Regionals was way out in the  
75 boonies, it was like in Florida or Atlanta and none of us were going, like we were a team of, I might have been the youngest guy at like eighteen or nineteen years old and then our oldest dude was like forty eight, like he, we weren't, we beat, we either beat Riverside or we finished right behind Riverside that year, and that was hilarious, the next year, and by the way I still haven't played a college tourney  
80 yet, so the next year I played with, um, Riverside's B-team, uh, the uh, Messengers of Truth, [shocked] they wouldn't let me on their A-team, uh, Adam Foster and a few other guys, Ryan Pickins, were running their A-team and said 'hey, do you want to go up to Dallas and play Sectionals with us,' and I was like 'yeah,' but they thought I was just going to be able to cleat up and play with them,  
85 but then they were like you know 'no, he's unproven, he's hasn't practiced with

us, he can play with the B-team,' and again that sudden play, I think both these tournaments are off the books as far as the UPA is concerned, and I'm glad for it [chuckles] because it might have saved me a year or two of eligibility.

90 P: Yeah. Okay, so, other than those two experiences what else have you done club wise?

J: Um, I went on to try out with, uh, well I went on to um you know, get really involved in the Texas State Ultimate community and from there uh, I you know, made college my priority, and from there I tried out with as many groups as I could, um, including Double Wide, and I played a few tournaments with Sucker  
95 Punch just so I could get the feeling of how good Ultimate is played, because both those teams at the time, both Sucker Punch and Double Wide, were very UT, um, they were both comprised of players and coaches who had been through the UT system, and that was, those were the methods we were kind of modeling ourselves after, it was the most successful Ultimate program in the area, so um...just so I  
100 could have a good idea about how to run practices and run tournaments I did as much Austin area high level Ultimate, or high level Ultimate functions as I could, um, practicing with Sucker Punch, being invited to do scrimmages with Double Wide, things of that nature, and I tried out for Double Wide three years, went through the process, uh, great team, played in a few big tournaments with them, a  
105 tournament they host every spring, um, Live Logic Shoot Out, got to play against arguably some of the better teams in the nation, um, Johnny Bravo, Goat, um Ring of Fire, um, Chain, what have you, and that's the highest level of Ultimate I've seen as far as club is concerned.

110 P: Okay. So, other than college and your club experience what other types of Ultimate have you played?

J: Uh, pickup across this country, I've gone to hat tournaments where you sign up and they just put you on a team and you don't even know, you're with complete strangers, especially when I was in New York I played pickup every week while I was there, I played on the weekends most of the time, um, just either pickups or  
115 hat tournaments or what have you, um, basically I've played tournaments throughout the country, um, inside of college I've played tournaments throughout the country, outside of college of college I've played in St. Louis, Chicago, New York, all over Texas, across the South East I guess.

120 P: Can you uh, so, since you made that distinction of 'inside of college,' and 'outside of college,' can you give me a little, um, explanation as to what the differences are between a collegiate Ultimate experience and an outside of college Ultimate experience, or at least tournament wise?

J: It matters much more collegiately, um, you know how...you know how the, um, they say with the whole college bowl system that every game is like a little  
125 miniature playoff game, you know if you lose a game then you're out of the talks for being considered a national champion, well it's not that devastating at the college Ultimate level, but when I was going through school, every tournament

and every showing, um, kind of decided where you were going to get seeded or what other programs were going to think of you, or what the whole college world at large will think of your program, um, that being said I was Texas State, UT, 130 UNT, and um, Kansas, we were all South Region rivals, and uh, if we went to say, Mardi Gras, or if we went up to MLC, and we lost to some, I don't know let's just say Team-X, but one of our rivals beat Team-X it would give them an argument to say 'well, you know we can get seeded come Regionals or Sectionals higher because of, based on the performances,' at the club level, in my experience that's 135 not a huge issue because the disparity between who will make it and who won't, you play Ultimate, and you go through the series to make Nationals, every team whether it be college or club does it, but there's much more parity, or disparity between...who is actually in contention to go to that National Championship, to 140 go to that Nationals tournament and actually be a Nationals contender and then who's just wasting people's time or who's just competing just to compete, just showing up because they just like Frisbee and this is just something they do, um, you look at any collegiate Regionals and you point out you know, there is a six team pool that if they just show up and play their best that any one of those six or 145 seven, maybe six or seven teams are actually legit contenders, the rest are, no matter how good they play they just won't win, whereas on the club level it's really only three or four, if that, I mean if you look at Club Regionals, Open Club Regionals, uh, you know that, the only reason that there was so much buzz about Club Regionals this year was that the South Region got three bids, because every 150 other year you just know that Double Wide and Chain are going to make it time and time again, I mean shoot, two years ago won [question], they won the Championship, and last year, two years ago Chain won the National Championship and last year Double Wide was looking like they were pretty good favorites to at least go to the Championship game, and they ended up losing to the 155 eventual champions, which is neither here nor there, but that's the difference between college and club is that at the club level Regionals is almost like predetermined, whereas at the college level it's not, it's kind of anyone's game at the beginning of the season, a giant injury here, or a setback there, or a really great tournament showing there can really propel a team that wasn't considered a 160 contender into contention and could rip down a good program that...that was like guaranteed a spot, but because some setbacks here or there or maybe just good practicing they didn't get the chance I guess.

P: Okay. So, when you came to Texas State was getting to Nationals and making a shot your overarching goal?

165 J: Yeah, I got there in the fall of '04, and the goal was just to qualify for Nationals, that was the very simple goal, um, which all that means is given, generally speaking, um, getting in the top two in the Region, um, which doesn't sound like too far a goal, but you know...so, yeah, that was the goal.

P: Okay. So, out of these experiences, and I'm definitely going to touch on 170 college a little bit more, but what's your most enjoyable method of playing Ultimate, like what's your best venue, what would you prefer to do the most?

J: [long pause] I don't know if you're asking where, like what tournament, what fields, or...

P: I don't want to know where, I want to know like what kind of situation.

175 J: I really enjoyed Sunday of Collegiate Regionals every day, um, me as a competitor, whether it be any of my previous sports or what I do today: Ultimate, the whole field is abuzz with 'who's doing what,' 'how the games are going,' you know everyone's asking 'what's the score here, what's the score there,' everyone is focused, like the sidelines are focused, crowds are focused and all the players, 180 coaches, and personnel are focused on Sunday at Regionals, plus you have the eight or so teams who aren't in contention anymore and they're all kind of waking up over their hangovers and walking, pacing across the fields looking at, they're thinking about next year, they're thinking about this they're thinking about that and just kind of in, they're cheerleading, they're pulling for people, and just 185 basically Sunday of Collegiate Regionals is the greatest sporting experience I've had, just ever.

P: Is that only when you're in contention for a spot to go to Nationals, or is that if you're one of the guys on the sideline?

J: No, um, no, one time, more than one time unfortunately we got knocked out the 190 very first game on Sunday of Regionals, and it still is I mean, honestly you're consoling yourself and your team mates and saying you know, 'we'll get 'em next year,' but just being around the environment of everybody just pumped up and watching those college teams go after it is a blast, it's a blast, so um, as a spectator, as a player, as a fan, as someone who really cares about South Region 195 collegiate Ultimate, uh, Sunday of Regionals is where it's at.

P: Okay. Um, if you take a situation like the Sunday of Regionals and one of your club tournaments that isn't necessarily a title masterpiece, what's the difference between the way you behave on the field?

J: [long pause] I mean to be perfectly honest I haven't played too many club 200 games that...matters to all, everybody involved in the experience, um, like I was saying about Sunday of College Regionals, um, everybody cares, everybody who's there cares, they care, they have an opinion, they are paying attention, but I've never been in a club situation, and to be honest there aren't too many club situations where everybody does truly care, um...they're rare, and the few club 205 players who go on to get to be in those situations, like I'm happy for them, but unfortunately for my, um, for my experience, I've made some plays, I've been in some kind of big games for club, for club teams, but you can tell there's not a fan base, the clubs haven't been practicing together all semester or for two years, for three years together, club teams are thrown together a lot of times on a whim you 210 know, and so it's, it's not as important, it's just in my experience, it's just not and that's possibly because I never got to play elite club level, and so I could just be talking from that outsider who wasn't groomed to be a top notch, elite uh, club

performer, and I've just been I guess above average as far as a club player is concerned.

215 P: What does the word elite mean in that situation?

J: I mean elite players they traverse the globe playing Ultimate you know, like I feel like I can go to most pickup games across the country and be a pretty good player to whatever pickup game is being offered, an elite player can you know, they are stellar athletes, a lot of them can just 'windmill dunk' as you know, um,  
 220 they're stellar athletes, they're really fast, they have really sound throws, and they're just spectacular play makers, I feel like I just know the game, and I'm an average athlete, and I know the game and I'm an average athlete and that's about it, I make above average throws and I'm not too careless with the disc, so, and that's just my opinion of my own game, but elite Ultimate players have speed,  
 225 they have agility, they have vertical jumps, they have a lot of those tools that I just don't have, I was good, I want to say that I was a great collegiate Ultimate player, but that might have been just because I had a few years on the competition, but I'm a very average to above average club player for the reasons I just gave.

P: Okay. Please give me in your own words what your definition of Spirit of the Game would be.  
 230

J: Yeah, they have a actual definition of it and I don't really subscribe to that, well my personal definition is that you just treat your opponent the same way you know, the same way he's been treating you, for instance, you develop a rapport with those people who are guarding you, and that's why a lot of good teams mix  
 235 up match ups so that you don't find each, um, each player's tendencies, however, that was never really a problem with me, usually one guy ended up guarding me the course of the game, like 'you're guarding him,' and like generally speaking you know, if they're getting physical on D whenever I was either cutting or when I had the disc, then I would try to give them the same recipe they gave me you  
 240 know, and hopefully all would be clear, because you almost have like a gentleman's agreement when you're playing, like nobody wants to be that guy that called the cheap foul, nobody wants to be the guy that's complaining and has no reason to be complaining about, and that's the way I looked at it, it's just we're all here to play this game, we're each here to score, the opposing team is trying to  
 245 keep the opposing team from scoring, just like...be human about it, we don't have any officials, or any playground teachers, or school yard cops or any kind of authority figure watching over us, just you know, I always felt like I tried to play, the kind of guy who wasn't going to call a foul, but I was going to contest garbage fouls, and that was just maybe my attitude, or reputation, or whatever it happened  
 250 to be, but I remember even asking someone like 'did you foul me?' just to see if there was a rise, because if they were like 'yeah, there was a lot of contact there, you fouled me' then I would call a foul, and if they would blow up and cop an attitude then I would say 'fine, it's not worth you being all pissed off about just to call a foul,' so, cause there's so many grey area kind of plays in all sports, it's  
 255 impossible to say that this absolutely happened and that absolutely didn't happen, that's why Ultimate and self-officiated sports give you, give you the reason for

you and the other guy to work it out, and unfortunately so many people are just unwilling to work it out, to even have a conversation about it, and I've been a hot head, I've been like 'that's absolutely not a foul,' like I've been that person  
 260 before, because like I said, I'll get angry and very animated about someone who's making a really...a really suspect call, a really tiny ticky-tack little tiny call, because I feel like in all sports you just play the game and play the game hard and you know, good things are going to happen, but I don't know, so, my definition of Spirit of the Game is, um, and this probably goes right along with the UPA, now  
 265 USAU, just give your opponent as much respect as he's giving you, however, unfortunately, a lot of competitors aren't respecting each other anymore.

P: Do you think that's a broad, across the board kind of thing?

J: At the elite level, at the high level, any time I get...

P: What about collegiate?

270 J: It's getting more and more prevalent at the collegiate level too.

P: Why do you think that is?

J: I could speculate as to why I think that is, possibly because once upon a time Frisbee was a sport for alternative athletes to get involved in, and now it's a sport for mainstream athletes to get involved in who didn't quite make it at whatever  
 275 mainstream sport they wanted to make it at, and they've taken that very similar mentality, it's even happening at Texas State, um...[long pause] most programs that I have come across are upping their intensity and not working on the finer points of the game, and that's not to say I'll discourage that or I'm upset about that, I don't really have an opinion, it's just my observation, and uh, I can  
 280 definitely see that there's almost like an every man out for himself mentality, and I don't mean to sound out on some hippie trip or anything, but uh, most, most programs, club, college, doesn't matter, if they're all working to make Nationals, compete at Nationals, and be a top program, uh, they've kind of left pride or certain things at the door and have just been you know, call rules and infractions  
 285 when it happens and be adamant about it.

P: Okay. Um, that's interesting, okay, so how does your definition therefore differ from another person's definition of Spirit, like have you met other people who have a dramatically different approach to the game than yourself?

J: I haven't engaged in too many conversations with, um, people that didn't come  
 290 from my program don't really know what I was about in playing Ultimate, so, no, there haven't been too many conversations, because I really only talk shop and talk Ultimate you know, with people I enjoy playing the game with, and so the people I enjoy playing the game with know exactly what I'm talking about, otherwise I've probably gotten into an altercation with them on the field for some  
 295 shenanigans or some garbage that may have happened in the past, so, unfortunately no I haven't, and that's been an issue too, um, Ultimate Frisbee is kind'a more of a social sport than other athletic activities and uh, it stinks

whenever you uh, it's just a crummy feeling whenever you have a bad episode with a competitor on the field and as most tournaments do, they have a party, and  
 300 you go to that party and the same guy you might have gotten into it with, or might have had a negative scene with, he can't just relax, have a drink, and talk to you, that's another issue, 'cause I feel like uh, you know I've been in the wrong in some on-field arguments and other people have been in the wrong in some on-field arguments and we've been able to resolve things once the day is done and  
 305 the competition's over, but it's an added kick in the face whenever there's some kind of negative scene that happens in the course of the day and you just can't resolve things that evening, you know just work things out like gentlemen, and almost like uh, like comrades, the same silly, very silly athletic subculture we're all part of you know.

310 P: Okay, so, what makes Ultimate more of a social sport than another sport, and if you can give me an example of your experience with another sport as opposed to Ultimate...

J: I've played tons of basketball, volleyball, baseball, tons of baseball mainly, baseball, basketball, volleyball tournaments, sand volleyball, and I've never really  
 315 had that kind of like 'hey, I'll see you later this evening and we'll hang out,' kind of feel, it's just kind of like 'the game is played and then I'm going to go back to the hotel with my team mates,' you know and there's not, baseball tournaments don't really encourage all the teams to socialize together at the end of the day's competition, neither does basketball, neither does the few sand volleyball  
 320 tournaments I've competed in, none of those sports are very... I guess cultural based, but Ultimate Frisbee kind of, they acknowledge that those that play Ultimate Frisbee are in this culture together you know, um, they encourage socializing, they encourage getting to know one another, every tournament director I've ever know, I'm a tournament director myself, and every Ultimate  
 325 Frisbee tournament director I've ever come across have wanted all their competitors to have a great time from top to bottom, beginning to the end of the weekend, you know I've never encountered that talking to people who organize baseball tournaments, basketball tournaments...

P: How does that change the experience for you?

330 J: Oh I think it's a total positive you know, um, as a tournament director I try to make all the competitors who are competing in my tournament to know that, I don't try to host meaningful, hardcore elite tournaments, so I try to keep all the blood low and keep them, try to have fun, let's make it a learning experience, let's make it a fun experience, and just keep that in mind when socializing afterwards  
 335 that this, whatever tournament I'm hosting doesn't mean all the marbles, it's very much a growing situation, so that being said uh, it's very important.

P: Okay. Um, I'll switch up a little bit, and not badger the point, but if somebody made a call against you that you thought was just a really shitty call, how do you generally respond to that?



340 J: [long pause] Well, unfortunately it doesn't, it hasn't happened to me that often, I'm not the kind of player that flies around the field and make spectacular D after D, and it really hurts those players that make great D's, um, because any kind of, if I get called for an offensive foul, which is generally the case, um, our team, or I still retain possession of the disc for the most part, it's never been terribly  
 345 egregious, it's always kind of been a silly thing to do at this moment to call that foul considering I have the disc in my hand or what have you, um, because the people who get fouls called against them mostly are defensive players who make D's, and fortunately or unfortunate depending on how you want to look at it, I haven't been in that situation where like 'I clearly D'd you, and you're calling a  
 350 shit foul right now,' so, what I have done is whenever a team mate of mine has just made a tremendous D and somebody has been like 'oh, well, you might have barely nicked my hand,' or 'oh, well, your foot hit my foot as you jumped to sky me, so I'm calling a foul,' or something like that, um, I've just been like, I've been very vocal that they're wrong and they're just trying to not let somebody get  
 355 the better of them, like it's just, I feel like that's the case that happens, it's just offensive players call a foul because they didn't make the play, and that's frustrating as a spectator, as a player, as a coach, as whatever, that's always a frustrating thing to see, so...

P: Do you ever act in those situations?

360 J: Yeah, I...I was the leader of my team, and a lot of my stellar players who went on to play elite club Ultimate made D's, they made D's, they made defensive stops time after time after time and they always had some silly, ridiculous, um, person on the opposition call a nonsensical call that had no merit whatsoever, and as a person who had good perspective and as a person who was very aware as to  
 365 what was happening I would get very verbal, as I've been known to do, it never came to like pushing or shoving but it got to the point where I yelled at somebody, Edward Freiner had a D, he got an inside stop against a team and there was this guy who was standing flat footed, he was on his heels just waiting for the disc to come to him, and Edward Freiner came flying over the middle, I was  
 370 playing behind the disc so I was guarding the extra handler, and the guy was trying to throw a disc kind of up the middle of the field, and Edward Freiner was completely two feet in front of this guy who was on his heels not coming to the disc, not making any type of effort to box Edward Freiner out, and Edward Freiner just made a spectacular D, and I yelled, this was at college sectionals a  
 375 few years back, and I just looked at the guy straight in the face and said 'look, you can't call a foul, you weren't coming to the disc, you weren't even vying for competition for the disc, you thought you had him beat, he made the play, there was no contact,' 'I'm calling a foul,' adamantly repeating himself 'I'm calling a foul, it doesn't matter,' and I said 'look, you don't catch a Frisbee on your heal,'  
 380 and I even mimicked, I said 'you don't catch a Frisbee like this,' and I put my heels down and just said, you know just, I let him know that 'if you're gonna play the game, play the game, 'cause your gonna have defenders, you're gonna have Texas State coming at you on the underneath side,' and I don't know, just, that's how I responded to nonsensical, non-merit calls that have no business being

385 called...it's just, people just yell at each other is basically that, it happens, at the high level college tournaments that I've been a part of...looking at the National Championship game for collegiate league I've heard very much the same reports, it's an hour and a half of people playing and it's an hour and a half of people yelling at each other.

390 P: Have you ever yelled at, or sorry, I'm not even going to ask that, have you ever regretted a call that you've made on the field?

J: [long pause] I'm not, this is not a very elite level kind of tourney, it was a very social tournament, it was a drinking oriented tournament, and this was the last time I apologized for making a call, my team was down by like six or seven, it was the twilight of the game, it didn't even matter, I threw a flick and it was one of those things, I released the disc and then the guy hit me and my disc kind of fluttered out of bounds and I just kind of called foul, and uh, I remember, their team kind of ran away with the game anyways, but I did definitely make it a point to find that guy and just be like 'I'm sorry, that's just a frustrated moment and had the roles been reversed I would have been like "it sucks that you're calling that, but I can understand it,"' 'cause like I said it was just a wham-bam thing, it's like the disc was out of my hand and I get kind of chopped on my wrist, and he even said like 'hey man, I think you let go of that disc before there was contact,' and I was like 'yeah, but it still made me you know, botch the throw,' which it may have, it may didn't, I don't know, but I remember going up to him and just being like 'hey, I'm sorry about uh, that sketchy throw, that sketchy call you know, yadda, yadda, yadda,' but that was more of a, like I said more of a lively social atmosphere, we were all kind of heckling one another, but if you're talking about real game, real time, no party involved, just we're here, heat of the moment, no, like, no, like the biggest, we we're playing the game to go to the championship game at Mardi Gras against UT, um, Texas State versus UT in I want to say 2008 or 2007, and there was this huck, this uh, disc that was thrown in the endzone and it was me and Steven Presley, and uh, it was over both of our heads, we both laid out for the disc, it hit my hand, I didn't catch it, and my knee-jerk reaction was to call a foul, and then I saw a lot of people get very upset they were just like 'there's no way that was a foul, we both just laid out for the disc you know, you're wrong,' and I was like 'you're right, I'm wrong, turnover,' and that was, that was the most like the most hotly contested foul call I may have ever made in my life, and it was like five seconds after I said 'foul' that I kind of realized 'you're right, we both laid out, I didn't make the play, it's your disc guys,' and so, as stated, that's the most hotly contested call I've ever made and I reversed it five to ten seconds after I made it.

P: Okay. Um, so is the level of competition a variable for whether or not you're gonna make a call?

425 J: Yeah I think when you have more things on the line I think you're going to make, your grey area, or your sketchiness of calls expands.

P: Why is that, just because there's something on the line?

J: You know, like I said uh, when you're with a team that you haven't known forever and you haven't works so hard with for a long time, or if you're playing a  
 430 tournament that really doesn't mean anything, why would you call something that would piss off half the people who are on the field right there you know, there's no reason for you to get thirty people angry at you for nothing, literally nothing, but if you have a regional title on the line or a national title on the line, or the trip to the championship of a pretty prestigious tournament you might, you might risk  
 435 getting thirty people upset at you for, 'cause you know your thirty team mates are gonna have your back, I mean your sideline's gonna be like 'yeah man, whatever you say, whatever you say I accept and respect and agree with you know, no matter what, because you're my team mate,' so I mean, when you have something on the line you're gonna stretch the rules or just try to get the advantage if you  
 440 can, but if you're playing for no, nothing, why get thirty people pissed off at you unless you just want to be a jerk, and just, I mean it's happed, I've played club pickup, or just pickup in rare areas where people have just called silly things, I feel like it's in genes, or probably someone's attitude to just uh, just call silly things, I don't know why...

445 P: These things that people call, why do you call them silly?

J: Calling one travel when *everybody's* traveling is silly, say it's a muddy field, or say you're playing with a bunch of newbies, or a bunch of people who really don't know the game, they can barely throw a flick and they're calling travel on a  
 450 guy who barely can throw a flick instead of just taking him aside and being like 'hey, you've really got to set that pivot foot,' that's silly, I mean if *everyone's* doing it just put a smile on your face and if the game means nothing and club games, sorry, pickup games mean nothing you know, or um, you know like sometimes you play pickup games and you play with people who don't know the sport very well and there will be a pick that will happen, unless it's for a score, in  
 455 which I still don't see the merit in calling it because you generally don't keep score at a lot of pickup functions, but you know it's silly when people call silly picks or travels, kind of things you can call at any given point in the day, unless you're playing at that level, I don't want to say elite, but that certain level where people know what they're doing on the field, people know how not to travel, but  
 460 I've even seen elite games where like every successful completed huck is taken back on a travel call, so to me it's pretty silly, and whenever they're talking about Observers being able to call active travel calls I like that.

P: Okay, so those elite games that you watched where people do that, do you think it's purposefully defeating the play, the completion?

465 J: Yeah, no, I rarely see travel calls on five yard throws, or throws that just advance, or dump throws, have you ever, I've never experienced a travel call on a dump throw, I really haven't experienced it, but any time somebody airs it out and throws a fifty yard bomb you can tell a lot of people are looking at those feet and they're going to get that opportunity to call that travel, and it's kind of sad  
 470 whenever somebody makes a spectacular throw and it's just kind of like, the natural reaction as soon as that throws completed or as soon as the mark allows a

big throw to get off to just be like ‘oh, you traveled,’ and there’s going to be just like a little argument back and forth to be like ‘are you sure, what did I do?’ ‘oh, you did this,’ ‘oh, really I did that?’ ‘yeah, you did, travel,’ you know, it, that’s  
 475 silly, that’s what makes the game silly, and hard to watch at times.

P: Okay. Um, I’ll take it from there then, so how many games have you played in with Observers there?

J: No fewer than a dozen, no more than sixteen.

P: Can you give me a little experiential opinion on pros and cons with Observers?

480 J: Pros: they don’t allow any of that silliness to take place, um, [chuckles] cons: they are very militant and stern about getting that game going, and going on time, and going fast, um, speaking from a team that was generally undersized and didn’t have too many subs, we would take time in between pulls, but Observers  
 485 don’t allow that to happen, and it’s a different ball game you know, uh, it’s a different ball game when you only get thirty to sixty seconds or whatever it is, so it’s like yeah, sure those silly travel calls are going to be reduced, and sure certain calls are going to be eliminated because you just can’t bend the rules because you have somebody, who hopefully is objective, is just gonna weigh in on the arguments that are happening on the field side with whoever he thinks, he  
 490 perceives to be right, which I like, I like that, um, however, I believe it’s like sixty seconds between pulls sometimes isn’t enough, it’s not even enough to strategize, it’s hardly enough to get the new line on, tell them what the game plan is and get the disc up in the air, um, but that’s a very...that’s a very tiny complaint...I mean I don’t know how much time, uh, how many minutes NFL teams have between  
 495 touchdown, extra point, and kickoff, but they still get way more time than we do between score and pull you know, but I’m just throwing that out there, each, each pull, each difference of line, each difference of stance has a whole entirely new objective than the previous one, and sometimes you know, you need a little more time.

500 P: Okay. Do you find games to be different if they are Observed or if they are not Observed in the way that you approach them?

J: Not in the way that we, not in the way that Texas State approaches them, because when I was head of Texas State we never, ever, ever, ever, ever promoted egregious call making it wasn’t...

505 P: And other teams do that?

J: There are rumors, or you know whenever you play the same teams year in and year out you can feel like certain teams either have a reputation or have a habit of just making, or it’s not even the same player year in and year out, it’s like a group of players on the same team will be like that team that will set that and, and  
 510 unfortunately Texas State even had a player or two who I feel like the rest of the team more or less had to like ‘accept’ that it was gonna happen at least once a tournament they were gonna make some goofball call that, it was just gonna

happen because it was in their... it was in the way they competed, like it almost seems like certain teams are more encouraging of that and certain teams are more apologetic for that, I've had competitors apologize to me for one of their team mate's bad calls before, and I, unfortunately, have had to be the one to apologize to a competitor for one of *my* team mate's bad calls before, but certain teams encourage like 'hey,' they get behind them, they rally behind them for whatever unfortunate circumstance has happened, certain teams can rally behind that and be like 'hey, if that's how you feel argue it till your death,' and other teams will be like 'I'm sorry this is happening, that situation shouldn't happen, your guy made a good play or blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,' and there's always just like a little side story line, side conversations that you can kind of sense that these people you know, this group of people don't want this game played this way, and this other group of people generally don't give a shit if this game is played this way, they're gonna win call, or win this possession, or win this whatever just through arguing.

P: Okay. So, if an Observer's there for that kind of situation, how is it played out differently?

J: It's completely reduced because you don't have any of that happening, 'cause I don't even have to talk to my competitor about what call is made because hopefully the two people involved in the play are going to discuss it, or just more likely yell at each other, while the Observer, the Observer's going to give his ruling and that's it, then it's game on, and that stinks that that, in this twenty first century we can't compete as adults and talk about things and just work it out, as the game intended, but was actually, I feel like we actually have to have people come in and side with whatever competitor is right or wrong.

P: Alright, um, have you ever had an experience where an Observer has disagreed with a call that you've made and over ruled it?

J: I don't make calls.

540 P: [both laugh] You don't make calls?

J: I mean, I'm telling you, every single time I've had an Observer, um, okay I apologize [both laugh], I was getting marked by Vinny from Kansas, and uh, Vinny got his piece, uh, his hand on the disc, and um, I didn't think I had let go of the disc yet, Vinny thought I did, I called strip, we uh, Observer came here and he said 'yeah, Vinny, you stripped it,' and all of Kansas thought of course the disc had left my hand, yada, yada, yada, but I made the case that the disc flipped end over end, which mean that it wasn't a mack, I mean he knocked it out of my hand, and that was a contested call that was uh, that the Observer settled real quick, so I made a call, I'm sorry.

550 P: That was the only call you've ever had that an Observer's been involved with?

J: Like I said, I don't make very many calls, um, I mean I called foul a bunch of times on Vinny during that game, because Vinny was playing really really tight on me that whole game, but Vinny never went to the Observer except for that one

555 time, I called fast count on him, I called disc space on him, I called a lot of things  
 on him, but we never went to the Observer because we took care of it right then  
 and there, um...yeah, I'm thinking back, and uh, that was the most contested  
 game that I had ever played because that was the game to go to Nationals and  
 both teams were really amped up and I've played with a lot of Observers, but uh,  
 never quite on that stage, so I mean I've always played like in semi's or in  
 560 quarters or, of both Sectionals and Regionals and stuff like that, but never like,  
 rarely in the game to go, and uh, as stated, emotions were never that high for me  
 as that game, um, and that's everybody on the field involved, and that was the  
 only like highly contested call and the Observer agreed with me without really  
 giving it much thought.

565 P: Okay. Um, so Observers in general do you think they are more beneficial to the  
 game or detrimental?

J: As of right now they're more beneficial because I really don't think that there's  
 any kind of flopping happening as opposed to basketball, like in basketball the  
 people with the ball are trying to bait the defenders into fouling them and stuff  
 570 like that, horrible things like that, soccer same arguments, but right now because  
 so much of Ultimate is played without Observers, you don't really see Observers  
 until very crucial moments that...players don't really practice or try to get good at  
 winning the Observer or official's opinion you know, there aren't any flops, it's  
 rare, it's a veteran move to when you get high in the stall count to try and bait the  
 575 mark into fouling you, but it's also kind of a shiesty, kind of looked down upon  
 maneuver, and so far these things aren't being practiced, or mastered at the Kobe  
 Bryant levels that they are in the NBA you know, so I like Observers right now,  
 um, I wish more though that teams...could just learn to communicate better with  
 their competitors, teams on the whole, and this comes from somebody who yells  
 580 at competitors, but like as I said as that foul happens and me and my competitor  
 are sitting there fifty yards away from the foul, like I wish I could talk to him and  
 be like 'oh, well, what do you think,' without him having to be like 'of course I  
 going to agree with my guy no matter what, no matter what reason, this, that, and  
 the other thing,' I, you know if we're both at a certain perspective or we're both  
 585 on the sideline out of the play, it would be really nice that we can actually be  
 human about the situation instead of just root'n on our respective team mates, just  
 fight it till the death you know, that feeling stinks, whenever a guy is guarding me  
 and he's yelling eighty yards away that he obviously had no perspective in it's  
 kind of frustrating, when you don't have Observers there you don't have that kind  
 590 of awkward moment, so that's nice, but it'd just be nice if you could take that  
 argument or break just to forget that you're competing against each other for a  
 moment and just be natural, and I think a lot of other sports do that you know,  
 when a player's shooting free throws the two point guards are generally in the  
 middle kind'a shoot'n the shit, and baseball when you have someone just hit a  
 595 single or he just walked, the first baseman and the base runner just kind of  
 casually talking conversation, you see that all the time on football fields when  
 they're not jarring each other, you know opposite, a lineman who's just sacked a  
 quarterback is, if he's not celebrating and hoot'n and holler'n he's picking up the

600 quarterback, I don't know, Brett Favre slapping a lineman from the opposition on  
the butt you know, that camaraderie just isn't, I'm not going to say it's just a few  
rotten apples, but it's just sometimes not encouraged, and I wish it were.

P: So you don't think that that's like a normal thing, you think that that's an  
exception?

605 J: I'm saying very broad generalizations here, but you know I just like seeing that  
in all sports, whenever players of opposite teams can just enjoy competing so  
much that they can even have fun playing against somebody, um, I wish that  
happened more in college Ultimate, um, I haven't played too much elite club  
Ultimate, especially against the same teams year in year out, but in the college  
610 Ultimate scene you just brainwash yourselves into hating these teams so much  
year in and year out, or tournament to tournament, and tournament in tournament  
out, it's frustrating and I wish you know, everyone wants to do the same thing and  
they all want to qualify for Nationals, and they all wanna succeed at Nationals,  
but I feel like a lot of those programs in the South are willing to sacrifice... I guess  
615 personal responsibility or, I don't want to say dignity, that's a little too farfetched,  
but just personal I guess, respect just for an accomplishment they wanted to  
accomplish or achievements they wanted to achieve, and maybe they didn't know  
that that's exactly what they're doing, but I mean, as I said I've taken the field  
with people who do that and I've played against people who do that, and to me it  
620 more like some programs encourage... overreaching or extending the rules, or  
encourage doing whatever it takes to keep possession, or what have you, and then  
other programs say just play hard, play fair, and hopefully the better team wins,  
and that was just my experience.

## **Appendix 11: Themes and Categories**

The following is a structured outline of 8 overarching themes and the subcategories contained there within, which represents an alternative means for data analysis other than that included in the research. All invariant constituents of experience can be housed under one or more of the following themes and categories.

1. Feelings and Memories of On-field Experience
  - a) Expectation of Enjoyment
  - b) Expectations not met
  - c) Stratification of Skills as a Variable for On-field Experience
  - d) Competition as a Motivational Force
  - e) Officiating Structure as a Variable for On-field Experience
  - f) Negative Reaction to Experience
  - g) Reaction to Observers
  - h) Personal Interpretation of the Rules
2. Impact of Call Making and Self-officiating as Strategy
  - a) Impact of Leadership on Team Behavior
  - b) Utility of Observers
  - c) Attitudinal Ideologies
  - d) Potential Impact of Referees in Ultimate
  - e) Experience with Invoking Rules On-field
  - f) Experiences with Cheating
3. Behavioral Influencing Factors
  - a) Competition as a Motivating Force
  - b) Perceived External Expectations
  - c) Perception of Competition
  - d) Reaction to On-field Events
  - e) Leadership
  - f) Officials
  - g) Maintaining Respect for Opponents
4. Interpretation of SOTG and its On-field Application
  - a) Deviations from SOTG
  - b) Maintaining Respect
  - c) Personal Definitions of SOTG
  - d) Impact on SOTG with Introduction of Third-party Official
5. Presence and Function of the Social Factors of Ultimate
  - a) Expectation of New Experience
  - b) Effect of Common Culture on Social Interaction
  - c) Attraction through Similarity
  - d) Constraints due to Competition
  - e) Negative Experience with Individuals
6. Regret Associated with On-field Behavior
  - a) Automated Call Making
  - b) Emotional Response to On-field Action
  - c) Self-awareness of Wrongdoing
7. Reaction to other Players
  - a) Competition as a Motivation to Action
  - b) Perceived Disrespect to Self or Team
  - c) Distrust in Other Teams' Call Making
  - d) Reaction to Mental Pressures
8. Impact of Officiating Structures
  - a) Knowledge of the Rules
  - b) Necessity of Third-party Officials
  - c) Personal Ideologies
  - d) Prevalence and Strategy of Cheating
  - e) Implications of Adding Referees to Ultimate
  - f) Effect of Observers on On-field Action
  - g) Effectiveness of Observers



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