Professional Football Players Attitudes Toward Women and Violence

Shannon Marie O'Toole

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PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL PLAYERS ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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Shannon Marie O’Toole
This study examined whether or not professional football players, because of
the violence and aggression associated with their sport, tended to have attitudes that
condoned or were conducive to violence against women. The forty-six subjects in
this study were active members on teams in the National Football League and/or the
National Football League sponsored World League. Information was gathered
through the use of self-reporting, non-random, questionnaires and interviews.

The study also explored the dynamics of domestic violence, the linking of
aggression with professional sports and the characteristics of sport in United States
society, especially as it relates to masculinity and sexism. The findings of this study
indicate that neither gender views, marital status, years of experience nor the presence
of children had a significant impact on attitudes of violence toward women.
Nonetheless, negative, sexist and otherwise disapproving attitudes on the part of
football players toward women were found to exist. Recommendations to reduce
these negative attitudes were discussed.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION/STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To slam, knock, throw or pummel an opponent to the ground in what is called a tackle - is the main goal in the game of football. It is significant to note that in the course of sporting endeavors the use of force and assault is permitted. However, if used off the field these same actions would be considered illegal. "Applications of force which would normally be criminal assaults are lawful when inflicted in the course of a game. The traditional explanation had been that the law recognizes the consent of the participants as providing a defense" (McCutcheon, 1994, p. 267). In essence, this states that athletes, at least in one instance, are above or beyond the law, by legally committing these assaults. This study seeks to determine if this legalization of violence, along with other factors that characterize football at the professional level, make it reasonable to calculate that on the field violence may lead to attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women.

Based on a number of articles, the media tends to suggest that a majority of the nation's domestic abusers play college or professional sports (Nack & Munson, 1995). Of course, this is not true. However, the vital question is, are athletes disproportionately represented among the number of people who batter and otherwise
abuse women? Most importantly, if they are, what if anything, is being done about it? Additionally, if professional football players are found to have a high likelihood of committing violence against women, does the NFL have a responsibility to the community to try to combat it?

The expression of violent behavior by males toward females is embedded in our culture. Domestic violence is a pressing problem in the general society, and professional athletes are not exempt. Some sociologists suggest we disregard this relatively small population, place the blame on a few "bad apples" and find a more "scholarly" topic other than sports to study. However, this would not be sensible. Manly sports, the ones that incorporate violence and brutality, are more than just games. These games have become our dominant culture (Nelson, 1994).

Professional football players are a part of this study because it is believed that there are underlying factors in the sport of football and in the socialization process of its participants, which may cause athletes to have attitudes that condone violence against women. In order to better understand professional football players and their attitudes relating toward women, several topics were examined. These topics included: gender role socialization, the dynamics of domestic violence, the linking of aggression with professional sports, and the characteristics of sport in United States society. Specifically, this study sought to assess traditional gender role attitudes and attitudes towards violence of the athletes in question. Also, this study was interested in determining if the number of years one has played football and the marital status and
presence of children of the athletes were significant variables in determining violent attitudes.

The researcher feels that the topic of athletes, specifically professional football players, condoning violence against women is an important and worthwhile subject to explore. The fact remains that although this group of people is a relatively small sample of the U.S. population, they are a highly visible group of people. With this high visibility comes media coverage, public interest, and (if the team is winning) the support and adoration of thousands. It is because of this high visibility that the sporting heroes receive, that the researcher believes her research will have an impact.

Significance of the Study

The researcher believes that this topic is important in the study of sociology of sport for a variety of reasons. The following paragraphs, will detail two of the major reasons. One of these reasons is that sports has become a highly profitable big business enterprise (Quirk, 1992). For example:

In July 1991, Financial World estimated the annual revenue of major league baseball teams at $1.35 billion, the National Football League (NFL) at $1.31 billion, the National Basketball Association (NBA) at $606 million, and the National Hockey League (NHL) at $465 million, for a total of a little over $3.7 billion revenue for the four major pro team sports in the United States. (Quirk, 1992, p. 2)

One reason that sports, especially football, has become big business is because of the enormous amount of interest among the mass public. This is evidenced by National Football League stadiums selling out since 1980. “A sellout is defined as 90
percent of capacity or more” (Quirk, 1992, p. 142). In addition, according to Neilson Media Research, in recent years up to 133.4 million people have watched the Superbowl, which makes it the most widely watched television event of the year (cited in Nelson, 1994, p. 22).

As Sabo and Runfola (1980) state, “through television coverage and heavy journalistic promotion, mass spectator sports have been made one of the major psychological reference points for American men, perhaps the single most important focus of emotion and energy in their leisure time” (p. 30). Football has now surpassed baseball as America’s number one spectator sport (Sabo & Runfola, 1980). One reason this may have happened is because football’s domineering and violent displays of physical strength give fans, specifically men, a renewed sense of masculinity. According to some theorists, this renewed sense of masculinity serves to give men a feeling of comfort and reassurance in today’s changing society which is, at times, characterized by women achieving as much power and status as men (Nelson, 1994).

Another reason that this topic is important is because of some recent controversies associated with professional sports. One of these controversies include the numerous professional athletes that have engaged in illegal behaviors and actions. Some examples of these behaviors would be players that have been found guilty of driving while intoxicated, abusing illegal substances, and gambling. It is behaviors such as these that allow some people to question the appropriateness of professional athletes as role models, especially for children (Farrell, 1996). “Sports play such an
important, positive role in our society and in the education of our children. It’s stars are our children’s heroes and role models and our national icons” (Farrell, 1996, p. 26).

The topic of controversy within professional sports that the researcher is focusing on centers on athletes engaging in violence against women. Football is characterized as being one of the most overtly misogynist and “manly” sports in America (Nelson, 1994). More specifically, “by creating a world where masculinity is equated with violence, where male bonding is based on the illusion of male supremacy, and where all of the visible women are cheerleaders, manly sports set the stage for violence against women” (Nelson, 1994, p. 7). Media groups and sports organization representatives have recently entered an on-going public debate concerning the overrepresentation of male athletes committing assaults against women. A few highly publicized cases involving athletes and domestic violence include Heisman trophy candidate Lawrence Phillips being arrested for allegedly assaulting a former girlfriend. Also, Dan Wilkenson, a lineman for the Cincinnati Bengals was arrested for allegedly punching his pregnant girlfriend in the stomach. O.J. Simpson, Minnesota Vikings quarterback Warren Moon, former Los Angeles Laker basketball player Michael Cooper, baseball star Jose Canseco and golfer John Daly have all been charged in recent years with battering their wives or girlfriends (Crosset, 1995).

In the past, the press treated domestic violence as a minor infraction and has paid little or no attention to evidence of domestic abuse by athletes (Out of Bounds,
If nothing else, the O.J. Simpson murder trial has done much to heighten public awareness of domestic violence, especially among professional athletes. In addition to this increased awareness, the trial also has raised some questions about the possibility of a link between domestic violence and professional football. According to an article titled Out of Bounds (1996):

Domestic violence experts, sports sociologists, and even former players have speculated on why athletes may be more likely to commit acts of domestic abuse. First, players trained to use violence and intimidation on the field may have difficulty preventing these lessons from carrying over into their personal relationships. Second, sports may cultivate a “macho sub-culture” that equates masculinity with violence, denigrates anything considered feminine, and thereby sets the stage for violence against women. (p. 1050)

In addition to the topic being important to the sociology of sport, it is also very important for the study of violence against women in general. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there is an epidemic of violence that is confronting women every day (Bachman, 1994). Of all violent acts, over two-thirds are assaults of women committed by someone known to them (Bachman, 1994). The perpetrators of this violence are most commonly the woman’s partner, husband or boyfriend. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, “a woman is beaten every 15 seconds” (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Report to the Nation on Crime and Justice, 1993). A 1991 Federal Bureau of Investigation report stated, “domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between ages 15 and 44 in the United States - more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined” (Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1991).
This research is also significant because it incorporates previously unused variables and methods in the data analysis. Specifically, the variables of marital status and the presence of children in the home have not been formerly examined for a possible correlation with attitudes which condone or are conducive to violence against women. Furthermore, past research has mainly utilized police reports and other documented behaviors of athletes to assess the relationship between football players and abuse. However, instead of focusing solely on behaviors, this research project seeks to examine the athlete’s attitudes and opinions on the subject at debate. This was accomplished by employing a previously unused method. Although the topic of sports violence has grown considerably in current literature, no other researcher has had the opportunity, or maybe the inclination, to engage in one on one interviews with the athletes themselves. These interviews, in addition to a survey, provide insight from a unique and previously undocumented standpoint.

The goal of this project was to give valuable insights as to how the ideology of sport may be supporting violent attitudes toward women. This research also sought to identify the individual factors that may lead to, or at least contribute to, violence against women by athletes. The findings of this study, although limited to a certain population, may also serve to give more information to educate and assist in the fight against domestic and interpersonal violence. Therefore, it is because of the new method of data collection and data analysis in addition to the reasons of importance listed above, that the researcher feels her topic will add to the existing literature on violence against women and to the culture of sport.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review focuses on several topics that are pertinent to the question being studied. The main topics include: gender role socialization, aspects of domestic violence including how it relates to traditional gender views, and how the role of violence in professional sports may lead to violence against women. In addition to the topics mentioned above, the researcher will also explore the characteristics of sport in U.S. society including how it relates to masculinity and sexism.

Feminist theory suggests that only in a system that defines women as subordinate to men can the levels of violence against women that occur in the United States be taking place (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). These theorists point out that in most patriarchal societies (like the United States) it is typically legally, culturally, and socially appropriate for men to control women. In recent years, many of the strongest, most extreme forms of support for violence have diminished, but there are still many social supports left (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; McKenzie, 1995).

Since the late seventies, sport is being questioned for its contribution to historical male empowerment and female disadvantage. "Sports, especially as they
are presented by the mass media, help to uphold an otherwise faltering ideology of male superiority. The language of sports is the language of domination, and it permeates the nation's discourse in politics, education, and the boardroom" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 5). Furthermore, "feminist analyses helps reveal how sports, especially contact sports, train boys and men to assume macho characteristics like cutthroat competitiveness, domination of others, tendency toward violence, emotional stoicism, and arrogance toward women" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 190). Males are empowered through sport because it "teaches them to use their bodies to produce effects and it teaches them to achieve power through practiced combinations of force and skill" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 23). Messner and Sabo (1990) explain, "an extremely fertile field for the reassertion and legitimation of ample power and privilege has been sports" (p. 32).

Additionally, the authoritative and domineering forms that sport has taken has caused the exclusion of women from public life and a "support of the construction of (and ideological naturalization of) women's subordinate status in domestic life and mothering" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 4). Despite women's recent movement into sport, "sport continues to bolster hegemonic masculinity by ritualizing and embedding aggression, strength, and skill in the male body and linking it with competitive achievement" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p.18). Specifically:

The associations between violence and masculinity, in part created by sports, appear to reinforce misogynist elements of male sexuality and may be related to the prevalence of rape and wife-beating, the rising tide of sado-masochistic sexual imagery in men's magazines, and the
eroticized violence against women in television and cinema productions. (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. xiii)

Symbolically and linguistically, the worlds of sport, interpersonal relationships, and sex become linked:

Male-female relationships are defined as a “game” in which there are winners and losers and participants vie for dominance. Sexual relations become a matter of conquest and an extension of male competitiveness. For example, by using the phrase, “Did you score last night, Steve?” Females are often perceived as opponents, and various strategies or game plans are developed to get them to submit. (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. xiv)

Gender-Role Socialization

A person’s sex is defined as either male or female. However, the characteristics of a particular gender are learned through a process of socialization. Many experts suggest that this socialization process begins at the time of birth (Kimmel & Messner, 1989). Gender is defined as “socially generated attitudes and behaviors usually organized dichotomously as masculinity and femininity” (Renzetti & Curran, 1989, p. 12).

It is because of these gender role expectations that society has set firm limitations on the socially appropriate and acceptable behaviors of males and females. As for children, these limitations are reinforced in the toys and games that children play. For example, girls are taught to be compassionate and are led to develop a caregiver mentality (Kimmel & Messner, 1989). Girls are encouraged to play games with less physical contact like jump rope and are given toys like dolls. Girls are not
taught to love sports or athletic competition. Instead, girls are encouraged to watch on the sidelines and be cheerleaders for the boys’ teams. On the other hand, boys are expected to engage in contact sports such as football and hockey. These physically aggressive sports have formal rules and regulations that boys must negotiate between themselves in order for the games to be successful. Boys also tend to exhibit aggression and ridicule each other in their play more than girls (Kimmel & Messner, 1989).

The following authors all believe that involvement in boyhood sports is a major reinforcement of society’s gender views. Regarding the socialization process of boys in sports, Messner and Sabo (1990) state that it is “partly through sports, that boys learn that a capacity for violence is part and parcel of the adult male identity” (p. 113). In addition, Sabo and Runfola (1980) believe that “the primary function of sports is the dissemination and reinforcement of such traditional American values as male superiority, competition, work and success” (p. xi). Also, according to Messner (1992):

as young boys come to their first experiences with organized sport, they approach an institution that is by no means “gender neutral”. In it’s structure, values, and ideology, sport is deeply gendered, thus boys’ experiences in sport constitute a “gendering process.” That is, through participation in sport, boys and men learn the dominant cultural conceptions of what it means to be male. (p. 19)

According to Carroll-Wuest (1994), “because men are ranked higher and have more power, they are necessarily more vigilant in their quest to avoid any behavior or action that might be construed as unmanly” (p. 17). An example of a socially
inappropriate or “unmanly” behavior for boys would be to show fear or to cry in public. The insults “You throw like a girl” or “You run like a sissy” are two of the most humiliating insults a boy can have spoken about him (Carroll-Wuest, 1994, p. 16). On the other hand, although this is slowly changing, when a girl displays agility and competency in sports, she is not considered simply a good athlete, instead society labels her a “tomboy”. The above mentioned language and terms are used to disparage children and keep them from crossing the strict gender boundaries set by society.

Domestic Violence

“Domestic violence is a term that incorporates physical violence within the family setting, corporal punishment, wife beating, spousal or wife battery, and spousal abuse. Domestic violence encompasses emotional abuse and physical attacks within the family context” (McKenzie, 1995, p. 8). The type of domestic violence focused on in this study is spousal abuse and it includes the “violent victimization of women by the men whom they are married or with whom they share a marriagelike relationship” (Hahn Rafter & Stanko, 1982, p. 83).

Specifically, spousal abuse includes “a chosen pattern of behaving that involves the use of verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, physical and sexual violence to terrorize, intimidate, hurt, victimize, and impose a batterer’s will on his spouse, ex-spouse, or girlfriend” (McKenzie, 1995, p. 8). Although some women perpetrate
spousal abuse against men, it happens rarely. When husband abuse does occur, it usually happens when a woman is engaging in self-defense (Hahn Rafter & Stanko, 1982). Browne (1987) states that “approximately 95 to 98 percent of the victims of spousal battery are women and 31 percent of all female homicide victims are killed by their male partners” (cited in McKenzie, 1995, p. 9). The major characteristic of spousal battery is the batterer’s need to control and to dominate (McKenzie, 1995).

The statistics on domestic violence are staggering. According to Davis (1994), “on the average of four times a day, or every sixth hour, a husband, ex-husband, or boyfriend murders a women in a ‘crime of passion’ precipitated by some intense emotion such as love, jealousy, fear, or in a state of rage or hate” (cited in McKenzie, 1995, p. 13). Additionally, Smolowe (1994) states that “one in three American women will be assaulted by an intimate partner in her lifetime” (cited in McKenzie, 1995, p. 13). According to Statman (1990):

One in every twelve women is battered while she is pregnant. Half of America’s women are safer on the streets than they are in the “comfort” of their own homes. Two thousand to four thousand battered women are beaten to death each year. A 1983 FBI Uniform Crime Report indicates that nearly one-third of female homicide victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends. Ten percent of the men who are murdered in America each year are killed by their female partners acting in self-defense. (p. 4)

The risk between marital status and victimization is described in the following: within the category of unmarried, it is the separated, divorced and cohabiting women who are at greatest risk of victimization, not the single women. The reason separated and divorced women are at greater risk of victimization is because these relationships
are often characterized by increased stresses and reduced security. McKenzie (1995) estimates that "women who leave marriages plagued by domestic violence are seventy-five percent more likely to be injured or killed by their batterers than the ones who stay" (p. 21). Although, married women are less likely to be abused than separated, divorced, and cohabiting women, they are more likely to be abused than single women (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Additionally, women who are unmarried cohabiters are over-represented among women who are physically abused by their partners (McKenzie, 1995). Cohabiting women may have a higher risk of victimization because of issues of autonomy and control which often characterize cohabiting couples.

Besides marital status, the literature identifies several other characteristics that are representative of domestic violence. One characteristic shows a correlation between spousal abuse and child abuse, with the majority of men who batter their wives also abusing their children (McKenzie, 1995). Straus and Gelles (1990) found that "as violence against women escalates in frequency and intensity within the family setting, children experience a 300-percent increase in physical violence perpetrated by male batterers" (cited in McKenzie, 1995, p. 18). Another characteristic of domestic violence is that "battering becomes increasingly frequent during pregnancy, when there are small children in the home, and when the children of the family become teenagers" (Statman, 1990, p. 4). Also, Gelles and Cornell (1985) found that marital violence occurs most frequently among people under thirty years of age. "The rate of marital
violence among those under thirty years of age is more than double the rate for the
next older age group (thirty-one to fifty)” (Gelles & Cornell, 1985, p. 73).

After examining the writings on domestic violence, there appears to be several
similar characteristics between abusive males and professional athletes. According to
Ewing, personality characteristics commonly discovered in batterers are that they
“exhibit low self esteem, dependency needs, unfamiliarity with their emotions, fear of
intimacy, poor communication skills and performance orientation” (cited in Messner &
Sabo, 1990, pp. 62-63). Consequently, this description of the abusive male batterer
resembles Messner’s (1992) psychological profile of recently retired male athletes.
Additionally, the findings by Gelles and Cornell (1985), stating that younger men are
more likely to abuse their intimate partners/spouses, and thus younger women (who
are typically married to/cohabiting/dating younger men) are more likely to be the
victims, corresponds to the statistics on professional football players ages. It is
significant to note that the game of football is primarily a young man’s game. It is not
unusual for a “veteran” to be no more than twenty-five years old (Messner, 1992).
Along the same lines, athletes retire from their sport at comparatively young ages,
usually, around the late twenties and early thirties (Messner, 1992).

Domestic Violence and Traditional Gender Roles

As previously stated, from early childhood males are socialized to be
dominant whereas females are socialized to be submissive. Based on the following studies, it has also been proven that gender characteristics progress beyond childhood games and into the interpersonal relationships of men and women. For example, in a study conducted by Bernard and Bernard in 1985, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI, 1974) was used to assess attitudes of the sexes. The findings indicated that adult males whose BSRI scores were sex-typed as masculine tended to be more aggressive in their interpersonal relationships than their male counterparts whose BSRI scores were only moderately masculine (Bernard & Bernard, 1985).

In a similar study by Kristiansen and Giulietti (1990) it was discovered that some men hold the belief that we live in a society where people are responsible for their own fate. As a result of this belief, the men in this study felt that women who experience violence deserve to be victimized if they did not follow the traditional gender rules set by society. In other words, “cultural and socialization factors regarding attitudes toward women appear to govern men’s perceptions of violence toward women” (Kristiansen & Giulietti, 1990, p. 188). This study suggests that the men perceive women who are abused as not behaving according to the societal gender expectations. This makes it acceptable for men to assert their control and dominance in such situations. Aizenman and Kelly (1988) conducted a study on dating violence using 800 undergraduate university students. They attributed sex-role stereotyping to their findings that women are the more likely victims of dating violence. Specifically, they argued, “our culture encourages men to be aggressive, to be a ‘real man,’ while
female sex-role stereotypes establish the expectation that women should be more passive and nonassertive" (Aizenman and Kelley, 1988, p. 310). Along the same lines, Sabo and Runfola (1980) found similar sex-role stereotype beliefs to be prevalent in male athletes. Athletes commonly have “personalities that conform to the traditional male stereotype: high in achievement need, respectful of authority, dominant among peers, self-controlled, and low in sensitivity to other people” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 47).

Based on the findings from the preceding studies, the researcher can conclude one dominant similarity. Although the former studies were guided by different researchers using different subjects, they nonetheless reveal a uniformity regarding the belief that traditional gender role expectations play an important factor in promoting violence and aggression against women.

Violence in Professional Sports

“It don’t mind that I’m going to break blood vessels in my forehead when I hit somebody.. I enjoy hearing guys wheeze and seeing the snot run down their faces. I like the rush of numbness that goes through my body” (Young, 1993, p. 381). This statement is attributed to NFL player Ron Wolfley regarding the “adrenaline surge” he gets from “decleating” opponents (Young, 1993, p. 381).

Although shocking, attitudes such as these were common throughout the literature. There seems to be a cult of violence that is especially pervasive at the
highest possible level of sports— the pro’s (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Sabo (1986) explains, “in football ritual pain appears to cement hierarchical distinctions between males, fuse the players’ allegiance to one another, set men apart from and above women, and solidify the coach’s authority within the internal dominance hierarchy” (cited in Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 124). In the following paragraphs Sabo and Runfola (1980) illustrate the ways brutal force and skill are being used by football players to achieve their ultimate goal; to win.

On one side of the field, the ball is called dead as a crunching tackle halts forward movement on the play. On the other side is Pittsburgh wide receiver Lynn Swann, one of pro football’s smaller and slimmer players, who has been distant from the action. Swann starts back up the field. Suddenly, he is clobbered to the ground by a vicious forearm thrown at the back of his head by Oakland safety man George Atkinson. The resulting concussion kept Swann out of action for weeks. (p. 69)

During a Chicago Bears-Green Bay Packers game, Bears quarterback Jim McMahon throws a pass and is watching the ball hurtle toward the receiver. Three seconds have gone by when Packers nose tackle Charles Martin grabs McMahon and slams him down on his neck and shoulder. Martin is thrown out of the game and suspended for two additional games, but appeals the suspensions. (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 69)

NFL star Scott Perry describes the game’s violence:

“Players are taught to run through their opponents body, to accelerate on impact and knock ‘em into next week. There is absurdity in defending the adage, ‘I didn’t really want to hurt him’ when, if you knock your opponent out of the game, you’ve performed your job to the maximum. How do you knock somebody out of a game without hurting him?” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 70)
Additionally, Sabo and Runfola (1980) state, “most biologists today agree that men do not have natural aggressive instincts, but that aggressiveness is a product of two factors—a tendency and one’s environment—and that the two interact to produce aggressiveness or passivity” (p. 26). In addition, aggression is known to vary from individual to individual, within situations, and across cultures (Messner & Sabo, 1990). The following paragraph detailed by Messner (1992) supports the explanation of aggression being a product of one’s environment or a learned behavior as opposed to something innate:

“When I first started playing, if I would hit a guy hard and he wouldn’t get up, it would bother me. [But] when I was a sophomore in high school, first game, I knocked out two quarterbacks, and people loved it. The coach loved it. Everybody loved it. You never stop feeling sorry for [your injured opponent]. If somebody doesn’t get up, you want him to get up. You hope the wind’s just knocked out of him or something. The more you play, though, the more you realize that it is just a part of the game—somebody’s gonna get hurt. It could be you, it could be him—most of the time it’s better if it’s him. So, you know, you just go out and play your game.” - Jack Tatum of the Oakland Raiders. (p. 66)

Eventually, some players react strongly against this learned violence associated with professional football. Disgusted by the fanatical violence and brutality of football, Phoenix Cardinals quarterback Tim Rosenbach quit football while his career was in full swing. In 1992, he told the press:

“I thought I was turning into some kind of animal. You go through a week getting yourself up for a game by hating the other team, the other players. You’re so mean and hateful, you want to kill somebody. Football’s so aggressive. Things get done by force. And then you come home, you’re supposed to turn it off? ‘Oh, here’s your lovin’ daddy.’ It’s not that easy...I felt programmed. I had become a machine”. (Moorehead, 1994, p. 6)
Likewise a former college football hero states, "I think it's barbaric. You're trained to hurt people. Taught to tear the guy's head off. When a guy gets injured, the fans will cheer. That's sick" (Nelson, 1994, p. 111). Despite his feelings toward the sport, this person is still involved in the fundraising activities for his college team (Nelson, 1994).

Football's especially brutal game oftentimes results in severe consequences for its participants. Unfortunately, "football causes more injuries, including deaths, per player than any other American sport" (Nelson, 1994, p. 77). Furthermore, "in the 1992 season, almost five hundred players - 21 percent of the total National football League player list - endured injuries severe enough to keep them from at least one game" (Nelson, 1994, p. 77). Another shocking statistic is that a former professional football player in the United States has an average life expectancy of about fifty-six years (Messner, 1992). This number is approximately fifteen years shorter than the overall average life-expectancy of U.S. males (Messner, 1992). According to a survey of retired professional football players, Wojciechowski and Dufresne (1988) found that "78 percent reported that they suffer physical disabilities related directly to football, and 66 percent believe that having played football will negatively affect their life spans" (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 72).

Athletes and Violence Against Women

In recent years, debates have developed regarding the propensity of male
athletes to commit assaults against women. In the early 1990's, various reports of battering and rape cases involving high profile athletes have led to increased media coverage of violence against women and sports (Crosset, Ptacek, McDonald & Benedict, 1996). The two main groups who are engaged in the debate over whether male athletes have a high propensity to commit assaults against women are some members of the media and the representatives of college and professional sports organizations. Some media members and a few sport sociologists state that there is a direct association between athletic involvement and violence against women, as evidenced by the current police reports and statistics. One the other hand, most representatives of professional sports teams and college athletic administrators do not believe that athletes are any more susceptible to domestic and interpersonal abuse than the rest of the general public (Farrell, 1996).

A major criticism of the media by sport representatives is that the press often and regularly overstates the problem of athletes and violence against women (Crosset et al., 1996). One reason the media do this, according to sport representatives, is that this practice generates more interest by the public and subsequently more newspapers and magazines are sold. Another criticism by sport representatives regarding the media is the complaint that athletes are scrutinized much more intensely by the press because of their high visibility and fame (Farrell, 1996).

Although the National Football League agrees that violence against women is a pressing societal problem, the League does not feel as though there is a larger
incidence of domestic violence in the sports arena than in the larger society. A league representative states:

"We do not believe that there is an empirical or other basis for singling out athletes - professional or amateur - for targeted treatment with respect to these issues. Among other things, to single out athletes unfairly stigmatizes them by inevitably suggesting that they have a particular propensity to engage in such behavior when there is no basis for such implication." (Farrell, 1996, p. 26)

The NFL's employee assistance program director, Len Burnham (personal communication, Sept. 3, 1997), states: "You've got to be careful about what you read in the paper. The media would like to say that we (the NFL) stand and do nothing until there is a tragedy (referring to the O. J. Simpson murder trial). However, nothing could be further from the truth". In fact, according to Burnham, there have been a series of programs from time to time that have been mandatory for the players. These programs may include information on domestic violence, drugs, H.I.V. transmission, marketing and sales promotions, or even the latest updates in the collective bargaining agreement (personal communication, Sept. 3, 1997). Burnham explained, "if we think that something deserves the individual attention of the players, then we'll talk about it" (personal communication, Sept. 3, 1997).

Burnham goes on to explain that although domestic violence programs have at times, been mandatory for the players, he does not feel as though there should be a hidden meaning attached to this. He stated:

the topic in and of itself, does not dictate whether or not it will be mandatory. You cannot extrapolate it from anything you're thinking regarding domestic violence programs being mandatory because a series of programs have been mandatory. It's whether we (the NFL)
feel it’s important enough to share with the players. Furthermore, I feel as strongly about financial education as I do about domestic violence. I think they (the players) make a lot of money and they lose a lot of money. So they need to learn how to not lose it. To me that’s just as important to learn about as domestic violence. It’s (financial education) a life skill. Learning about domestic violence is a life skill. (personal communicaton, Sept. 3, 1997)

Burnham would not specify when or how often mandatory educational and training programs regarding domestic violence are implemented. He simply reiterated that “when we (the NFL) decide that something has to be mandatory, then it is” (personal communication, Sept. 3, 1997). Therefore, educational and training programs regarding domestic violence are not scheduled or conducted on any regular basis.

“All four major professional sports leagues currently discipline players for off-the-field misconduct, including illegal substance abuse and gambling, but none has taken a similar stance toward domestic violence” (Out of Bounds, 1996, p. 1049). Interestingly, according to Rippey (1994), the league drug policies were implemented “despite the absence of any empirical evidence that athletes have a higher propensity than nonathletes for substance abuse” (cited in Out of Bounds, 1996, p. 1051). If this is the case, then why are sports leagues so unwilling to implement the same policies for disciplining domestic abusers? One reason may be the belief shared by some NFL representatives that domestic violence does not have a direct and detrimental impact on the game, like that of gambling or drugs (Brubaker, 1994). In this article, Len Burnham is quoted as saying, “this domestic violence thing is different. It’s a society
thing and there are laws that govern it” (Brubaker, 1994, p. A24). Are there no laws against gambling and drugs? Despite not implementing official policy, the National Football League has aired public service announcements on domestic violence, featuring professional football players (Farrell, 1996).

According to a 1994 study conducted by the Washington Post:

fifty-six current and former professional football players and eighty-five college players were reported to the police for violent behavior toward women between January 1989 and November 1994. Of the 156 reported offenses, 99 were classified as sex-related crimes and 57 as domestic violence. (Brubaker, 1994, p. A24)

Several researchers believe very strongly in the link between on the field aggression in football and off the field sexual or physical abuse of women. Some researchers believe that the players who are committing these violent acts may lack an ability to feel compassion for the pain and terror of their victims (Sabo & Runfola, 1980). Edward Gondolf, a University of Indiana sociology professor, believes that football itself attracts men who have aggressive and violent tendencies. Furthermore, he states, “there is no doubt football reinforces and rewards aggression and there’s no doubt it spills over into their lives outside of the locker room” (cited in Brubaker, 1995, A25). University of Arizona professor, researcher and author, Mary P. Koss, believes that football culture seems to condone the physical mistreatment and sexual exploitation of women (cited in Brubaker, 1995). She believes that since athletes often times receive certain entitlements which come with the territory of being a professional or college athlete, these athletes may also start to believe that they are
entitled to sex or other favors from women (cited in Brubaker, 1995). If a woman objects to an athlete’s advances he may forcibly take what he wants, in the belief that he is entitled to it anyway. Likewise, Catharine MacKinnon (1987), is cited in Nelson (1994) as also agreeing that participation in athletics is closely correlated with violence against women. She states:

Athletics to men is a form of combat. It is a sphere in which one asserts oneself against an object, a person, or a standard. It is a form of coming against and subduing someone who is on the other side, vanquishing enemies...Physicality for men has meant male dominance; it has meant force, coercion, and the ability to subdue and subject the natural world, one central part of which has been us [women]. (p. 141)

Specific Instances of Professional Athletes Committing Violence Against Women

When a major newspaper broke a story about Sugar Ray Leonard abusing drugs and physically abusing his wife, the sports media was quick to accept Leonard’s tearful apology for having abused drugs and alcohol, and chose to ignore or quickly explain away his violent abuse of his former wife (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Juanita Leonard stated in divorce court documents that over a two year period, Sugar Ray Leonard often stuck her with his fists, specifically he would:

“throw me around and harass me physically and mentally in front of the children. He took a can of kerosene and poured it on the front foyer in our house. He told me he was going to burn the house down...that he wasn’t going to let me leave the house or anything.” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 55)

Despite this graphic testimony from Juanita Leonard, the press used vague and neutral terms to describe the violence by stating Leonard “physically mistreated” his
wife. In addition, Sugar Ray Leonard’s admitted acts of violence were presented as Juanita Leonard’s claims and the press also implied a causal relationship between drug and alcohol abuse and wife abuse (Messner & Sabo, 1990). When in fact, it is a common misperception that the majority of wife batterers are also alcoholics (McKenzie, 1995).

By ignoring Leonard’s admitted violence towards his wife, the media failed to explore the link between the role of violence in sports, and the possible link between violence in personal life. However, to have fully explored this possible link the media would have had to question the patriarchal values that underlies institutional sports and the media would also have had to examine the misogyny that is built into the dominant subculture of men’s sports (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Although this act of ignoring or trivializing the violence against Juanita Leonard was not likely a conscious decision, it reasserts the claim that denial of men’s violence against women is widespread in this society (Hahn Rafter & Stanko, 1982).

Professional football players themselves have commented on the physical abuse of women. Bennie Blades, a safety for the Detroit Lions explains, “it’s going to be a lot harder for us to get out of trouble now. Three years ago, you smacked a girl around and people maybe said she asked for it. Now whether she asked for it or not, they’re going to haul you off” (cited in Out of Bounds, 1996, p. 1048) John Nilan, a former guard of the Dallas Cowboys states, “any athlete who thinks he can be as violent as you can be playing football, and leave it all on the field is kidding himself” (cited in Out of Bounds, 1996, p. 1048) “I’m really gonna punish my ole lady tonight,’ declare one pro footballer. ‘Put the wood to her. Make ‘er suffer.’ It is
as if the jocks were so brutalized on their jobs that one of the few consolations left to them was having the upper hand with their wives” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 15).

Mike Tyson, a professional boxer, who incidentally is currently suspended from his profession for savagely biting the ear off of an opponent during a match, was quoted as saying the best punch he ever threw was aimed at his ex-wife, Robin Givens. “She flew backward, hitting every----wall in the apartment” (Nack & Munson, 1995, p. 66). In addition, Tyson who has served three years in prison for a rape conviction had this to say about sex: “I like to hurt women when I make love them.I like to hear them scream with pain, to see them bleed...it gives me pleasure (Nack & Munson, 1995, p. 66).

Vance Johnson, a San Diego Chargers’ wide receiver, was imprisoned in 1991 for attacking his wife. He has since sought counseling and written a book. Asked to comment on O.J. Simpson’s 1989 attack on Nicole Simpson, Johnson states:

“Because Simpson was a professional athlete, he got slapped on the hands [by the judicial system] and everything was thrown in the back pages of the newspapers. If they had gotten his attention early when police came to his home, they could have helped him.” (Moorehead, 1994, p. 6)

Often times, when domestic violence does occur, the wives and girlfriends of sport stars do not go public. One reason is because they may fear no one will believe them. This fear is not unfounded. “Whether stopped for speeding or arrested for battering a woman, the athlete counters a legal system in which the scales are tipped in his favor. The athlete’s status in the community makes it hard for people to believe
that these guys are really batterers” (cited in Nack & Munson, 1995, p. 70). One example of the legal system being tipped in the athletes favor happened in 1990, when Denver Broncos tight end Clarence Kay was arrested for a domestic violence incident involving his ex-girlfriend (Brubaker, 1995). Instead of an overnight jail stay, which usually happens with domestic violence incidents in Denver, Kay was released from jail on bond after only five hours (Brubaker, 1995). This allowed him to join his teammates on a flight to Tokyo for a preseason game. Later, Kay was given a deferred judgment and a sentence which did not require any jail time. Eventually, the case was dismissed (Brubaker, 1995). When asked to discuss this case the Denver prosecutor exclaimed, “we were livid. Mr. Kay got a courtesy that’s not even extended to police and sheriff’s officers who are accused of domestic violence” (Brubaker, 1995, A24).

Another reason some women do not report their abuse at the hands of professional athletes is because they do not want their husbands to get in trouble. Felicia Moon, wife of Minnesota quarterback Warren Moon, and former board member of the Fort Bend County Women’s shelter which runs a program for battered women, downplayed her experience with domestic violence (Nack & Munson, 1995). In 1995, Felicia told detectives that Warren had:

 striker her on the head with an open hand and “choked her to the point of nearly passing out”. She then managed to break loose and flee in an automobile with Warren pursuing her in a “high-speed chase” until she eventually eluded him. (Nack & Munson, 1995, p. 65)
Despite this occurrence, three days later Felicia requested that all charges be dropped against Warren. She explained that what had happened was merely a mistake. Additionally, when she was put on the witness stand she changed the original wording of which she told the police to make it seem as though the abuse she received was really not that serious (Nack & Munson, 1995).

In fact, behavior such as this is typical of battered women. After a cooling off period, the abuser apologizes to the victim and assures her that he will never batter again. She often times forgives him and agrees to give him another chance (McKenzie, 1995). It is likely Felicia Moon is aware of the phases of the battery cycle by her involvement in the women's shelter. However, her behavior in this instance shows exactly how difficult this cycle is to break for many women.

The one known incident where a NFL team has disciplined a player for domestic abuse occurred in 1995 with the Miami Dolphins. After Irvin Spikes was charged with throwing his estranged wife to the ground and choking her, the Sun Sentinel Fort Lauderdale newspaper (1995) reported that “coach Don Shula placed running back Irving Spikes on ‘probation for conduct detrimental to the team’” (cited in Out of Bounds, 1996, p. 1055). Although Spikes was required to enter counseling and the right to impose further discipline was reserved by the team, Spikes never missed one game (Out of Bounds, 1996).

This disciplinary action taken by the Dolphins was unusual. Al LoCasale, an Oakland Raiders executive, stated that like most other NFL clubs, the Raiders focus more on illegal drug use than gender violence in their screening of potential employees. “I don’t think you can make any more effort to check it out than you do
as to whether or not the guy was a draft dodger” (Brubaker, 1994, A24). This attitude suggests that beating one’s wife is not considered any more serious than dodging the draft, according to many NFL owners and executives.

Likewise, the league has been known to discipline only one player for a gender violence related offense. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue denied reentry into the league to former Eagle offensive tackle Kevin Allen. This happened after Allen was released from prison for serving a 33 month term for rape (Brubaker, 1994). Despite this rare occurrence, in cases involving players charged even repeatedly with sexual assaults in either criminal, municipal or civil courts the NFL league commissioner has done nothing (Brubaker, 1994).

The attitude of dominance and control by the players can carry over to the male dominated crowds and the overwhelmingly male coaches that are associated with sporting events. At a Boston Celtics game, the fans hung signs saying they like to beat the opposing teams as much as they like to “beat their wives” (Moorehead, 1994, p. 6). Joe Paterno, the football coach at Penn State Nittany Lions, commented following a loss, “I’m going home and beat my wife” (Moorehead, 1994, p. 6). He later said the statement was “just part of the sports culture, locker room talk, harmless, a joke that did not mean anything” (Moorehead, 1994, p. 6).

Some feminist theorists believe that the meaning of violent acts toward women is generated in a sociocultural context that fosters, shapes, and justifies the use of violence to maintain a male-dominated status quo, a national effort to combat domestic violence requires not only stronger law enforcement, but also the participation of all social institutions that contribute to the development and maintenance of male violence against women. (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Kieta & Russo, 1994, p. 104)
According to this theory, it is the sports heroes, or the leaders of our social institutions, who must act to increase the social costs of gender violence, "create social norms that define violence against women as unacceptable, promote concepts of male self-control, responsibility, and accountability, and foster equitable, nonviolent relationships" (Koss, et al., 1994, p. 244). In other words, athletes themselves must be adamant in their belief that abusing women is wrong and should not be tolerated. The goal then would be to convey this message to the huge, male-dominated fan base.

**Sport in U.S. Society**

"Like other institutions, such as the economy, politics, and the family, the structure and values of sport emerge and change historically, largely as a result of struggles for power between groups of people" (Messner, 1992, p. 8). According to Messner (1992), the values of sport have always been closely linked with "dominant social values, power relations, and conflicts between groups and between nations" (p. 10). Regarding dominant social values, "studies in the 1970's and the 1980's consistently showed that sport remains the single most important element of the peer-status of U.S. adolescent males" (Messner, 1992, p. 189). Sabo (1985) believes that "boys are, to a greater or lesser extent, judged according to their ability, or lack of ability, in competitive sport" (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 196). According to Sabo and Runfola (1980):
through their identification with and participation in sports, many males learn to feel superior to and exploit women, to suppress their emotions, to act aggressively and affect an air of bravado, to seek and exercise power over others, and to enhance or maintain their position in the social hierarchy (p. 334).

The cultural obsession with males succeeding in sport and “being number one” has trickled down from the pros to college, high school and even to Little League baseball and children’s hockey (Messner, 1992). A study by Coakley (1979) quoted a high school basketball coach as saying: “Through the years, I’ve developed my own philosophy about high school basketball. Winning isn’t all that matters. I don’t care how many games you win, it’s how many championships you win that counts” (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 45). The belief stated by this high school coach signifies that the themes of dominance and victory in sports are being imbedded and institutionalized at considerably young and impressionable ages. At the end of the season, if the team does not have a championship to call their own, then the competition itself is meaningless. This attitude gives credence to the saying, “No one ever remembers who came in second”.

Past research has focused on the role of male peer support groups to explain how boys and young men are so effectively socialized into the culture of sports. Support groups helps guide the behavior of the members by “underlying group norms, strengthening group solidarity, and helping members overcome their everyday occupational anxieties and problems” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 143). DeKeseredy (1990) believes:
one of the major values in male peer support groups is that they often provide techniques for coping with stress, and even specific advice on how to interact with women. In some cases, unfortunately, these groups also legitimate and encourage the psychological, physical, and sexual abuse of dating partners (cited in Schwartz & Nogrady, 1996, p. 152).

Former professional basketball player and popular celebrity, Majic Johnson, explains the dynamics of these male peer groups. He stated that he and his teammates “speak a different language among ourselves, a language that’s neither black or white. It’s a language that evolves from a group of people who share the same passion...that transcends race, religion, age, politics, and background” (Nelson, 1994, p. 85). In keeping with the values of male peer supports, Johnson advised his younger teammates to not get “emotionally involved” with the women (whom Johnson called prostitutes, groupies and floozies) that they had sex with while traveling on road games (Nelson, 1994). By recommending this, Johnson believed that he had the best interests of his teammates in mind.

In a national college study conducted by Mary Koss and Thomas Dinero (1990) it was found that “involvement in peer groups reinforce highly sexualized views of women,” additionally, participation in a peer group within organized competitive sports, is an important predictor of “sexually aggressive behavior” by college males (cited in Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 50). In addition, Robin Warshaw (1988) concluded from her research on acquaintance rape that “athletic teams are breeding grounds for rape because they are often populated by men who are steeped in sexist, rape-supportive beliefs” (cited in Messner & Sabo, 1990, pp. 50-51). Although these
studies were conducted on college athletes, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of professional football players enter the professional ranks through a college or a university team.

Being accepted by their peers and the additional pressure of achieving success within their peer group, are representative characteristics of male peer support groups. One former professional football player stated that the friendships he made on the team were extremely meaningful. “The most important persons are your teammates, and to be loved and respected by them means more than anything- more than the money aspect, if a guy would tell the truth about it” (Messner, 1992, p. 87). On the other hand, another professional player describes the professional ranks as businesslike and political with few chances to make friends:

“[When you get] to pro ball, all of a sudden you got assholes out there. It’s the money. The competition is greater. You’re dealing with politics. So you see a lot of good players come and go. You’re dealing with money. You’re dealing with jobs. It’s a business, and that really turned me off. I had dreamed it would be everything, and I got there and it was a job. You know, a fucking job where a man screams at your ass.” (Messner, 1992, p. 90)

Both instances, although differing in sentiments regarding team unity and friendships, show an intense pressure within the peer group. According to one player, the pressure to “be loved and respected” by his teammates and otherwise accepted by the peer group was very important to him. The other pressure which was expressed, came in the form of job competition and the stresses associated with a career in professional football. As cited in Messner (1992) another player stated the following regarding the tension found at the professional level of sports:
"When you get to that level, you think that you are the epitome of what a man’s supposed to be. But in essence, you are still a kid. Mentally, you have not reached the level of maturity to handle the pressures that are gonna come upon you...and all those things that you don’t know how to handle have the effect of causing you to question your manhood, your role as a man. Your realm is the football field. That’s where you feel most comfortable, on the football field—it’s something that you know you can do well.” (p. 62)

“Sport, it is argued, is an institution created by and for men. As such, it has served to bolster a sagging ideology of male superiority and has thus helped to reconstitute masculine hegemony in the 19th and 20th centuries” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 9). To fully examine the institution of sport in the United States, one must examine both femininity and masculinity as they develop in relation to each other within a system of structured social inequality.

**Sport and Masculinity**

Historically, participation in sports have been opportunities for men to display their masculinity. Football is a sport where displays of violence and masculinity are often times linked (Messner, 1992; Sabo & Runfola, 1980). “Football and other professional sports are full of players who have deliberately carved out gladiatorial, Rambo-like images for themselves in accordance with the assumed cultural expectations of their peer groups and notions of manliness” (Young, 1993, p. 381). To be a man in this society is to be a competitor. One of the most famous sports slogans of all times is credited to Vince Lombardi, a longtime coach of the Green Bay
Masculinity in sport has been defined in contrast with, if not wholly separate from, woman and womanhood (Crosset et al., 1996). Todd Crossett, a sport sociologist and former college swimmer, says that there is no place for symbolically weaker, feminine things in sport. “Part of the male athlete’s subworld is not to be a woman. Women are degraded. You don’t want to be skirt-of-the-week. You don’t want to be a wimp, a sissy. To be a man is not to be a woman. Women are not to be respected. Women are despised” (Nack & Munson, 1995, p. 68).

Messner (1992) believes:

the dominate structures and values of sport came to reflect the fears and needs of a threatened masculinity. Sport was constructed as a homosocial world, with a male-dominated division of labor which excluded women. Indeed, sport came to symbolize the masculine structure of power over women. Finally, sport constituted and legitimized a heterosexist social organization of sexuality. (Messner, 1992, p. 16)

Messner’s (1992) theory of sport reflecting the “fears and needs of a threatened masculinity” makes sense when one considers the fact that as more women are joining the work force and achieving more power in society, the game of football, with it’s aggressive and violent style of play, is enjoying a tremendous increase in popularity (Nelson, 1994). Although unconscious, football’s increasing popularity may be a backlash to women’s increasing involvement in the work force.

The game of football has been described as an “extension into adulthood of the
latency phenomenon of young boys pummeling each other and avoiding a more mature relationship with women" (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 123). In addition, “the game says that to be a man one must possess, control, dominate and that domination must be assured by force and violence. Masculinity is interpreted to demand male supremacy” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 140). According to Messner and Sabo (1990), dating and other interpersonal relationships between athletes and women take on the characteristics of a competition:

To be manly in sports traditionally, means to be competitive, successful, dominating, aggressive, stoical, goal-oriented, and physically strong. Many athletes accept this definition of masculinity and apply it in their relationships with women. Dating becomes a sport in itself, and “scoring” or having sex with little or no emotional attachment, is a mark of masculine achievement. Sexual relationships are games in which women are seen as opponents, and his scoring means her defeat. Too often, women are pawns in men’s quests for status within the male pecking order. For many of us jocks, sexual relationships are about man as a hunter and woman as prey. (p. 38)

An example of this male as hunter and woman and prey behavior is found in the autobiography of former professional football star Jim Brown. When Brown played for the Cleveland Browns his teammates started calling him “the hawk” because he was so successful in “chasing women” (Brown, 1989). At age fifty-three Brown continued to view and treat women as sex objects: “My lady right now is nineteen....When I eat a peach, I don’t want it overripe. I want that peach when it’s peaking” (Brown, 1989, p. 48). By this description, Brown depicts his view of the ideal woman as young, fresh and likened to a piece of fruit. When his “lady” gets older and because Brown sees her as a subordinate object to be discarded and
replaced, instead as his equal, he will undoubtedly look for someone new to fit his narrow-minded and sexist view of women.

"Sports are an important organizing institution for the embodiment of dominant masculinity. Sports suppresses natural (sex) similarities, construct differences, and then, largely through the media, weave a structure of symbol and interpretation around these differences which naturalizes them" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 96). In addition, "sport has become one of the most important sites of masculizing practices in cultures (and within classes) in which other kinds of physical prowess have become devalued and in which direct aggression is officially legitimate" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 28). Male athletes legitimate use of violence along with sports suppression of natural sex similarities and the construction of differences between the sexes makes a fertile ground for sexism.

Sport and Sexism

Throughout the literature we have learned that sports is a reflection of societal values. We will now examine how sports serve as a connection to and a reinforcement of societal sexist traditions. Sexism, according to Sabo and Runfola (1980), is defined as a "learned pattern of relationships among men that creates an adversary and domineering style between males and toward females" (p. 118). The major commercial sports- baseball, football, basketball, and ice hockey have almost totally excluded women. Women’s "participation is limited to spectators, cheerleaders and
advertising images” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p.35). Additionally, according to Nelson (1994), “football clings to its all-male status, resisting women’s attempts at participation whether as players, coaches, administrators, or reporters” (p. 11). One reason for women’s exclusion, according to Boutilier and SanGiovanni, is that many males believe “if women can play sports, then men aren’t really men” (cited in Nelson, 1994, p. 63).

Messner and Sabo (1990) believe that the current organized competitive sports for men support male dominance and sexist practices. The support for male dominance is especially obvious in the form of sexist language. For example, our society uses language with words that unconsciously or consciously “reinforce the male preserve: jock, the popular metonym for athlete; tomboy to describe any bright, active girl who likes physical activity and is good at sports; and suck and sissy to condemn anyone who betrays fear or anxiety” (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 41). “Fag”, “woman” and “girl” are insults commonly used by boys on the nation’s playgrounds and elsewhere.

According to Nelson (1994), “sexual and aggressive references in men’s sports language point to a confluence, in many men’s mind, between violence and sex, between dominance and sexual performance” (p. 116). Furthermore, the language used by athletes in male peer groups is often characterized by a sexually aggressive demeanor:

Even the verbiage of a football game goes hand in hand with that of a brutalized sexuality: “Ramming into the middle...sliding into the pocket...smashing in...beating...thrashing...” The words for brutalized
sex seem to be the same as those for brutalized sports, and are used by
the athletes for both. (Sabo & Runfola, 1980, p. 16)

Central to this group dynamic is the denigration of anything considered
feminine. And integrally related to this misogyny is homophobia-
“faggot” and “blow me” are put downs on a par with “woman”. Through this process, boys learn to talk about-and treat-females (and
penetrated males) as dehumanized objects of male sexual aggression.
(Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 34)

Additionally, this sexist use of language serves to:

normalize a way of being male in which sexual desire is detached from
tenderness for a person and indeed from interest in female company
except for the purposes of sex. The effect is to establish a norm that
equates masculinity with domination in male- female relationships.
(Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 26)

Bryson (1983) found an example of this traditional athletic masculine identity
in the following quotation by a male cliff diver: “This is a death-defying activity-the
men are taking a great gamble to prove their courage. What would be the point if
everyone saw that a women could do the same?” (cited in Messner and Sabo, 1990, p.
24).

One high school player found his manhood being questioned after hurting his
knee before a championship game:

“I was hurt. I couldn’t play, and I got a lot of flack from everybody. The coach [said], ‘Are you faking it?’ And I was in the whirlpool and
[a teammate] came in and said, ‘You fucking pussy!’ I still remember
that to this day. That hurt me more than the injury. Later, people told
me it was my fault because we lost, and I just couldn’t handle that- not
just coaches and players, but people in the whole town. It hurt; it just
really hurt.” (Messner, 1992, p. 72)
It is important to note that an objectified, sexualized female body part is used for the ultimate insult (‘You fucking pussy!’) in regards to the athlete’s masculinity and toughness. Kaufman (1987) states, “in this athletic context, misogyny is a key mechanism through which the male peer group enforces its alienated, violent embodiment of masculinity” (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 73). It is also telling that the player admits that being called a female body part hurt more than the actual physical injury.

Knute Rockne, the legendary Notre Dame football coach, was known as a “master of the not so subtle psychological game of keeping his players so insecure that they were constantly trying to prove their manhood” (cited in Sabo and Runfola, 1980, p. 83). An overt example of sexism in sport is described by Sabo and Runfola (1980) in the following scenario involving this legendary coach:

In one well-chronicled game Notre Dame was behind at half time by three touchdowns against a team they had been touted to walk over—even if most of the players had skipped out on the traditional morning mass before the game. Lethargic Notre Dame filed into the locker room and sat down to solemnly wait for Rockne to enter and give one of his blistering wintergreen-in-the-jockstrap pep talks. But the minutes clicked by and Rockne did not appear. The players, assistant coaches, trainers, and team priests sat in silence with bowed heads, the tension growing. A referee stuck his head in and shouted, “Two minutes left in the half time.” Still no coach.

Finally, Rockne stepped inside the locker room door moments before the team would have had to return to the battlefield—they were going out to do battle, most certainly not to play. All heads turned toward the Coach, and he dramatically waited until the room was still.

“Oh, excuse me, ladies,” he began. “I was looking for the Notre Dame football team.” I’m sure you don’t need me to tell you which team won the game. (p. 1)
In many all male terrain’s, such as locker rooms, the degradation and sexualization of women is magnified. Women are often referred to as “cunts,” “gash,” and “pieces of ass” (Sabo & Runfola, 1980). Likewise, “a man might say he ‘needs some pussy’ or that he ‘fucked her brains out last night’. A man may call another man ‘my bitch’ or a ‘wuss’” (Nelson, 1994, p. 230). Furthermore, locker room phrases such as “‘hounding the beef’, ‘catching snatch’, ‘making her bleed’ and ‘keeping it wet’ define women as ‘pornographic playthings, claiming men’s role as that of a successful sexual predator’” (Nelson, 1994, p. 243).

In studying college locker room language, Timothy Curry (1991) found that “sexually aggressive talk about women usually takes the form of a loud public performance” (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 98) Any serious discussions about women and relationships usually take place between two men at the edges of the locker room. “If this sort of talk is discovered by the group, the speakers are often ridiculed and taunted to reveal details about the woman’s body and whether or not she is sexually ‘putting out’” (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 98).

Rick Telander, a former athlete, substantiates the claim that locker rooms are notorious for being an environment in which women are objectified and debased. He states:

“In my years in the locker room I have heard so much degrading talk of women by male athletes- particularly the use of women as sex objects to be conquered and dominated...that I feel certain the macho attitudes promoted by coaches contribute (perhaps unwittingly) to the athlete’s problems in relating to women.” (cited in Nelson, 1994, p. 134)
Blatant misogynist attitudes and behaviors by athletes and their coaches were abundant in the literature. One instance involved the high school football coach in Los Angeles who painted pictures of vaginas on the practice tackling dummies (Nack & Munson, 1995). In another instance, a professional hockey player angrily equates nonviolence in the game with women. “If you take out fighting, what comes next? Do we eliminate the checking? Pretty soon, we will all be out there in dresses and skirts” (cited in Nelson, 1994, p. 110).

Another example of misogynist behavior toward women is the use of sanitary napkins and tampons in response to “wussy” athletic performances. Indiana basketball coach Bobby Knight admits placing sanitary napkins in the locker of a player whose maleness he is challenging (Nack & Munson, 1995). “In this way, heterosexual masculinity is collectively constructed through the denigration of homosexuality and femininity as ‘not male’” (Messner, 1992, p. 96). Incidentally, Bobby Knight is the same coach who told interviewer Connie Chung on national television in 1988, that “if rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it” (Nack & Munson, 1995, p. 68). According to Nelson (1994), Knight’s own son had once stated, “I think that if I had come out a girl he would have shoved me back inside” (p. 87).

Often times when coaches use these sexist symbols they are seen as simply trying to “motivate” their athletes. For example, an article in the Washington Post reported that Catholic University men’s basketball coach Bob Valvano distributed tampons to his players and called them “a bunch of girls” during a team meeting (cited
in Nelson, 1994, p. 87). Tim Shockley, the junior guard of the team, justified his coaches behavior by explaining, “he did it for motivation. A lot of coaches would have done that, and I guess you could say it worked. We won the next six games” (cited in Nelson, 1994, p. 87).

As stated by Sabo and Runfola (1980), “even an All-Pro football player can be reduced to a whimpering mass of flesh by a coach who calls him a ‘pussy’” (p. 84). Likewise, Dave Meggyesy, a former professional football player and author stated, “coaches often develop a talent for emasculating a player over and over again without quite killing him” (Meggyesy, 1970, p. 153). Once a coach told him at halftime that he looked “almost feminine” in making a tackle (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 105). As Meggyesy put it:

“this sort of attack on a player’s manhood is a coach’s doomsday weapon. And it almost always works, for the players have wrapped up their own identity in their masculinity, which is extremely precarious for it not only depends on not exhibiting fear of any kind on the playing field, but is also something that can be given and withdrawn by a coach at his pleasure.” (cited in Messner, 1992, p. 105)

Summary

Some intellectuals have ignored sports, believing that sports are beyond serious consideration. In the past this may have been true. Nowadays, however, sports in this country have a tremendous impact on people. According to Sabo and Runfola (1980), sports are an important socializing institution for the dominant culture’s values and beliefs. Manly sports in America:
constitute a culture- the dominant culture. Manly sports compromise a world where men are in charge and women are irrelevant at best, where assaults that would be legal off the field become accepted, even celebrated, where big men wearing tight pants embrace each other, openly loving men and male power and where “girls” flash their underwear. (Nelson, 1994, p. 7)

As evidenced by the literature, domestic violence in this country is rampant. There are two factors in particular that support male violence against women. The first is a male belief in familial patriarchal ideology and traditional gender views. This is a family arrangement where there is an unequal distribution of power in the household. The male is dominant and the female is submissive (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). The second factor explaining male violence against women is male peer support for violence against women. Male supports (peers, colleagues, fellow group members) may encourage men to feel normal or respected even though they have been violent (Schwartz & Nogrady, 1996; Dekeserdy & Kelly, 1993).

Similar to domestic violence, violence in professional sports, particularly football, is also rampant in this country. The excessively brutal personal testimonies in the previous sections make this statement indisputable. It is important to note that past research has found that many professional athletes proscribe to culturally appropriate gender roles (Sabo & Runfola, 1980). In addition, by the nature of sport teams, athletes also participate in male peer supportive groups (Messner, 1992). “The fraternity of athletes develops as a totemic men’s society; as orgiastic community, exclusively for men and ritually bound together, whose solidarity allows them to transgress moral and social norms” (Dubey, 1990, p. 60). Importantly, the ideology of
dominance and subsequent control, is the force behind men who batter women and it is also the driving force behind all athletic events (McKenzie, 1995; Messner, 1992).

Because sports perpetuate sexist gender views, rationalize the unequal distribution of power, emphasize winning above all else, and teach that physical force is the means to an end, many researchers do feel that there is a common link between professional sports and the abuse of women. Specifically, "young males' individual insecurity, coupled with group sparring to show sexual dominance, too often translates into male athletes learning to treat women as objects of sexual conquest, and thus into rape and other forms of violence against women" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 34). The blatant misogyny and objectification of women in locker room language alone makes the abuse of women by athletes a realistic expectation. Furthermore, when the emphasis on winning is combined with negative attitudes toward women, it is not surprising that some athletes are unable to make the distinction between on the field and off the field rules of conduct.

Although opinions vary, many feel that the aggression utilized in sports could be managed, if not for the institutionalized sexism and disjointed notions of masculinity that are inherent in the socialization aspect of sports. Merrill Melnick, an associate professor at the State University of New York sums up the literature on sports and violence by stating: "aggression on the playing field, sexist language and attitudes used in the locker room and an inordinate need to prove one's maleness can combine in complex ways to predispose some male athletes towards off-the-field hostility" (Nack
& Munson, 1995, p. 68). Additionally, according to Messner & Sabo (1990), although there is nothing intrinsic in sports that makes athletes want to physically and emotionally abuse women, it is the way sports socialize athletes using male peer groups and traditional masculine identities that lead many male athletes to be aggressive toward women (Messner & Sabo, 1990).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

This research project was designed with an exploratory purpose in mind. The researcher desired a better understanding of the topic by examining various attitudes that professional football players have regarding women. The attitudes under investigation centered on those that condoned or were conducive to violence against women and those that measured traditional gender views.

This research project is a cross-sectional study and individual football players are the unit of analysis. The individual's orientation of attitudes and opinions were explored through the use of questionnaires and interviews. By examining these attitudes, the researcher hoped to determine the ideology that underlies professional football and also to satisfy her own curiosity and test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study in the future.

Sample

The sample under study was a convenience sample consisting of players from one team in National Football League and one team in the National Football League sponsored World League. Many of the World League participants were allocated and
therefore, under contract with various teams from the National Football League. These subjects were chosen because the researcher believed that they were an accurate representation of professional football players. The subjects of this study were males ranging from approximately 22 to 35 years old. Eligibility for participation in this study was the inclusion on a team roster. This study did not include any coaches, staff or other personnel of the team, only players. There were 48 subjects in this study.

Data Collection: Method and Instrument

The subjects selected for this study were found mainly through the researchers contacts in the National Football League and the National Football League sponsored World League. Subsequent subjects were identified through a referral process (the first few subjects interviewed referred the researcher to others). The primary method of data collection was surveys, lasting approximately 10 minutes. The secondary method of data collection was minimally structured interviews with the subjects, lasting approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

With permission from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at Western Michigan University, a self-reporting questionnaire was distributed to the subjects. Specifically, these questionnaires were distributed by the researcher's contact person. The contact person distributed the questionnaires to the subjects who were willing to participate in this study. The World League participants' questionnaires were completed on a team bus trip to an away game. After the subjects were completed the questionnaires they placed them in a folder on the seat behind the
contact person. The contact person then returned the folder to the researcher. The National Football League participants' questionnaires were distributed in the mailboxes or personal lockers of the subjects. These questionnaires were completed at the individual's discretion and then returned by the respondent in a sealed envelope to the contact person. The contact person then returned the questionnaires to the researcher. In neither instance of the questionnaire distribution, could the contact person identify which subject completed which questionnaire.

Participants were made aware of the nature and purpose of the questionnaire by verbal explanations by the contact person. The subjects were told that their participation in the project was voluntary and they were also asked to not place their names or any other identifying information on the surveys. An opportunity was extended to answer any questions the participants may have had regarding the study. All data were reported in aggregate form so that no individual participant could be identified.

The questionnaire used in the research was a 17-item question self-report instrument (see Appendix A). Approximately two-thirds of the questions on the questionnaire attempted to assess the attitudes of the participants toward traditional gender role expectations set by society. Some of these questions were taken and or revised from the Spence-Helmreich Attitudes Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972). The other questions regarding traditional gender role expectations were composed by the researcher. A Likert scale was the measurement technique
used. It is based on the standardized response categories of "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree" and "strongly disagree". The use of this scale assumed that all of the athletes had opinions on the questions asked. Therefore, no neutral category was provided. The Likert scale was used to average index scores for the responses of the questions. By disagreeing with statements such as "women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men," (see Appendix A, question # 5) participants indicated their attitudes were more traditional. The questions also covered economical and political scopes.

The other approximate third of the questions on the questionnaire attempted to determine attitudes that measure the acceptability of interpersonal violence. The participants were asked questions such as, "women often need to be slapped during an argument. It calms them down" (see Appendix A, question # 10). By agreeing with this statement, participants indicated they had attitudes which condoned or were conducive to at least some types of interpersonal violence.

Traditional gender views are the independent variable which received the greatest focus in this study. Traditional gender views measure things such as culturally prescribed concepts of femininity and masculinity. Other independent variables measured were the number of years played in professional football and marital status. Marital status includes the categories of married, cohabiting, single or divorced. The presence of children in the same household as the subject was also an independent variable which was measured.
The dependent variable is attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women. "Violence is defined as, an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person" (Straus & Gelles, 1986, p. 467). This definition of violence is used to describe both characteristics of the game of football and the act of aggression perpetrated against women. Although there are various types of abuse such as emotional and verbal, this study only measures attitudes toward physical abuse or violence. The basis for these attitudes was found by measuring support for violence.

In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with 8 different subjects. These subjects were selected through the referral process previously mentioned. It was hoped that the interview would examine the opinions professional football players as a group have on whether they have a high propensity to commit violent acts toward women. Additionally, the researcher was interested in exploring the level of respect accorded to women by football players and how that may correlate with attitudes of violence toward women.

Open ended questions were asked during face-to-face interviews after demographic data (position played and how many years experience) was obtained. The substance and direction for each question varied with the subject's response. Further questions were asked by the researcher only when it was deemed necessary to clarify what the participant described in their dialogue. The interview session lasted 15 to 20 minutes.
At the beginning of each interview introductions were made and the purpose of the interview was explained (see Appendix B). It was clearly stated to each participant that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was told that the information gathered would be confidential, and also that he had the option of leaving the study at any time and that the names of the participants would not be recorded.

The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. No one refused permission to tape the interview process. Later, they were personally transcribed by the researcher and the tapes were destroyed. To insure confidentiality, the researcher was the only person to know the names of the subjects and did not transcribe the names to print.

The methods of procedure needed to be controlled through the use of an interview guide (Appendix B), precise reporting, and verbatim transcriptions of the dialogue. The interview guide was extremely helpful in keeping the interview focused and in keeping the researcher and the participant in their perspective roles. Often, after the interview, the participant and the researcher left their roles and talked of other things which were appropriate at the time. The researcher also took part in various social activities with the subjects. This allowed for sufficient time to both learn the culture of the group and to establish a trusting relationship with the group members.
Ethical Considerations

Two potential risks were identified for the subjects involved in this study. The first risk was the possibility of exploring unpleasant experiences and the feelings surrounding the experience. The researcher was sensitive to issues that potentially caused distress and used probes carefully in the interview. It is important to note that the interviews were informally structured and each subject was allowed to direct the interviews to a certain extent. Although uncomfortable or even embarrassing feelings were a possibility, the interview process had been a learning experience, as it offered the subjects the opportunity to think about, and communicate their attitudes and opinions on a subject that has created a considerable amount of interest and controversy in the recent media.

The second risk was maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects. All surveys were anonymous and the interviews conducted were confidential. Also, all participation was voluntary and the participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The information being solicited was a measure of one's attitudes only. The actual behaviors or personal circumstances of the subjects were not questioned. Care was taken to avoid using the subjects' name during the interview. Verbatim transcription of the audio tapes was completed by the investigator, with the exception of deleting names if mentioned on the tape. Upon completion of the study, audio tapes were erased and destroyed. All documents were maintained in a locked cabinet when not in use by the investigator.
Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are necessary in research in order to ensure that the true state of the human experience is being reflected in the study. Reliability deals with replicability in the sense that, given the same tools and methodology, similar results could be generated in a different study (Babbie, 1995). This study’s multiple methods of data collection, surveys and interviews, enhanced the reliability and allowed the researcher to obtain supplementary data that would not be attainable using only a single method. Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument adequately measures the concepts it is intended to measure (Babbie, 1995). The three types of validity are face, construct, and criterion related (Babbie, 1995). Researcher bias is a part of qualitative research and it can also be a potential threat to validity. Therefore, efforts must be continually made to validate the truth.

To accomplish this task, several specific procedures were implemented throughout the research process. Perhaps most importantly, the interview and survey instrument had questions that were phrased in the participant’s language rather than in theoretical language. Often times, questions were phrased and rephrased so that the participant understood that question. This was done without trying to lead the participant, although at times this was difficult. Additionally, the questions asked sought to draw out the participant’s perceptions of the lived experience rather than reflect the theory of framework being used. The attitudes that condoned or were
conducive to violence were measured several ways to test for reliability. Also, the
data collection procedures and the tabulation process were carefully implemented so
the nature and degree of unreliability of the study was limited.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to
analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data obtained from the
general information questionnaire. Frequency distributions were used to summarize
sample data, for example, the marital status of the participants in the study. Measures
of central tendency were computed from numerical sample data and numerical
instrument scores. In addition, the cross-tab procedure was used to produce bivariate
tables to analyze the independent variables: traditional and non-traditional gender
views, marital status, years played in the National Football League and the presence of
children in the home. These independent variables were observed in relation to the
dependent variable which included attitudes that condoned or were conducive to
violence against women.

In order for the researcher to test the hypotheses, the chi square test was used.
The chi square is a test of significance and is one of the most frequently used tests in
social sciences (Babbie, 1995). It uses the null hypothesis which is "based on the
assumption that there is no relationship between the two variables in the total
population" (Babbie, 1995, p. 437). The advantages of using the chi square are that it
can assist in estimating the significance of association between variables and it helps rule out associations that may not represent genuine relationships in the population under study. (Babbie, 1995). For example, attitudes of violence and marital status are unrelated to one another if attitudes of violence have no effect beyond what would be expected by chance alone on marital status.

Analysis of the interviews was accomplished in various ways. Although each of the eight subjects was asked a similar set of questions, additional questions sometimes evolved throughout the interviews to get at the “lived experience” of the subject or the true meaning of the event. The most common technique of interview data analyses involved utilizing the participants’ language in direct quotations and then synthesizing it into the researcher’s language for further detail and elaboration. By synthesizing the answers into the researchers’ words, the goal was to reflect the meaning of the phenomenon from the subject’s perspective while also bringing a better understanding of the subject to the broader audience. However, at times the essence and quotes extracted from the participants were so succinct that no further analysis on the part of the researcher was needed.

Questions/Hypotheses

The major and most important question the researcher will be asking is, “Are professional football players, because of the violence and aggression associated with their profession, likely to have attitudes that condone violence against women?”
Based on the literature the researcher expects to find a strong association between professional football involvement and attitudes of violence toward women. The specific hypotheses are as follows:

1. *Athletes with traditional gender role views are more likely to have attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women.* The rationale for this statement is based on past literature which indicates males who have sex-typed scores as masculine tended to be more aggressive in their interpersonal relationships (Bernard & Bernard, 1985; Kristianson & Giulietti, 1990).

2. *Athletes who have participated in organized professional football 6 years or less are more likely to have attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women that athletes who have participated in football for 7 years or more.* The rationale for this statement is that athletes who have played football for six years or less are likely to be 30 years of age or younger (Messner, 1992). The domestic violence literature states that marital violence occurs most frequently among people 30 years of age or younger than in any other age group (Gelles & Cornell, 1985).

3. *Athletes who are married, divorced or cohabiting are more likely to have attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women than single athletes. Furthermore, cohabiting athletes are more likely to have attitudes which condone or are conducive to violence against women than both the married and the divorced athletes.* This rationale is also based on the domestic violence literature (Straus & Gelles, 1990; McKenzie, 1995). One reason cohabiting couples may have
more violence in the home is because often times they are more likely to be isolated from their network of kin than dating and married couples. Another reason why cohabiting couples may exhibit more violence is because of the issues of autonomy and control which characterize many cohabiting relationships. Some couples may choose to cohabitate rather than marry because they want to keep their own independence. However, they may find out that when living with another person there may be frequent arguments over rights, duties and obligations, which may lead to violence (Straus & Gelles, 1990).

4. The married and cohabiting athletes that have children living in the same household are more likely to have attitudes which condone or are conducive to violence against women that the married and cohabiting athletes who do not have children living in the same household. This rationale is based on the findings by Statman (1990) which state that battering becomes increasingly frequent when there are children in the home.

Sample and Subject Characteristics

To scale the traditional gender views, each answer was assigned a point ranging from one to four and the direction of the items was taken into account. For example, the more traditional the attitude, the higher score it received. Consequently, the least traditional gender views receive a score of one, and the most traditional gender views received a score of four. For example, if a person answered (a) agree
strongly, to the statement, "Men should have the final word in all family decisions" they are considered to have highly traditional gender view attitudes. Therefore, they would be given a score of four. After each of the eleven questions were scored, the respondent was then assigned an overall score representing the summation of the scores he received for responses to the individual items. The range for the questions which measured traditional gender views was between 11 and 44.

Regarding gender views, the frequency distribution was cut into low's and high's. The approximate median point determined the low and high values. The values ranging from 16 to 26 were considered low, and therefore nontraditional and the values ranging from 27 to 39 were considered high, and therefore traditional. In terms of participant gender views, there was an almost equal split between those with traditional gender views and those with nontraditional gender views (see Table 1). A total of 47.9% of the participants expressed nontraditional gender views and 50% expressed traditional gender views.

The dependent variable of violent attitudes was scaled in the same way as the traditional gender views. In other words, each question was assigned a point ranging from 1 to 4. The more violent the attitude the higher the score it received. For example if a person answered (a) agree strongly to the statement, "Women often need to be slapped during an argument. It calms them down" then they are considered to have highly violent attitudes. Therefore, they would be given a score of 4 for that answer. The range for the dependent variable of violent attitudes was between 2 and
8. Given the frequency distribution, the natural cutting point for low attitudes of violence was either a 2 or 3 and the cutting point for high attitudes of violence were values 4 through 8.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Views</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontraditional</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the years of experience in professional football, the frequencies were distributed by the number of years one has played professional football. Five of the participants had played for one year, 6 had played for two years and 13 participants had played professional football for three years. There were 9 participants that had played for four years, 5 who had played for five years, 1 who had played for six years, and 6 participants who had played for seven years. There were also single participants who had been playing for eight, nine and ten years, respectively (see Table 2).

Regarding marital status, the frequency distributions were examined by assigning the single participants a value of “1”, the married participants a value of “2” and the cohabiting participants a value of “3”. The majority of the participants,


Table 2

Years of Experience of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52.1%, were in the single category. The married participants were the next highest group with 27.1% and the cohabiting participants were at 16.7%. There were two people who choose not to answer the question on marital status (see Table 3). The category of divorced was excluded because it was not found in this version.
Table 3
Marital Status of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To examine the frequency distribution of the married and cohabiting participants with children living in the same household, a value of “1” was assigned to the participants with children in the same household and a value of “2” was assigned to participants who had children but the children did not live in the same household. The results found that 9 participants had children living in the same household and 13 of the married and cohabiting participants had children, but the children did not live in the same household (see Table 4).

Table 4
Married and Cohabiting Participants
With Children in Same Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children in Household</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4-Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children in Household</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Statistical Findings

This section presents the statistical findings in terms of the four hypotheses which were explored in relation to attitudes football players have which condone or are conducive to violence against women. The hypotheses and the results are discussed below.

Hypothesis 1. Athletes with traditional gender role views are more likely to have attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women than athletes with nontraditional gender role views.

The dichotomy of traditional gender views and attitudes of violence was arrived at by performing a cross-tabs procedure with low and high traditional gender views against low and high violent attitudes. This procedure was justified because the researcher hypothesized that violent attitudes depends on traditional gender views. Table 5 shows that of athletes with nontraditional gender views, 29.2% reported accepting attitudes of violence against women, while 71% reported less conducive attitudes of violence against women. In terms of traditional views, 26% of the subjects reported accepting attitudes of violence against women and 74% reported less conducive attitudes of violence against women. The relationship between gender
views and attitudes of violence towards women is not statistically significant. In other words, the likelihood of athletes with traditional gender views having high attitudes of violence toward women is no greater than athletes with nontraditional gender views. The direction of the relationship between the variables is not addressed because the relationship between the two variables is not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was rejected by this data.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Views</th>
<th>Violence - low</th>
<th>Violence - high</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>17 (74%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nontraditional</td>
<td>17 (71%)</td>
<td>7 (29.2%)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34 (72.3%)</td>
<td>13 (27.7%)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 2.362
Critical value = 3.841

Hypothesis 2. Athletes who have participated in organized professional football 6 years or less are more likely to have attitudes that condone or are conducive to violence against women than athletes who have participated in football for 7 years or more.

The dichotomy of years of experience and violent attitudes was arrived at by performing a cross-tabs procedure on low and high levels of experience and low and high violent attitudes. The athletes who had played football for 6 years or less were
assigned a low value and the athletes who had played football for 7 years or more were assigned a high value. This action was justified by the researcher's hypothesis that violent attitudes depend on years played in professional football.

Table 6 indicates that of the athletes who have participated in football for 6 years or less, 28.2% report high attitudes of violence toward women and 71.8% report low attitudes of violence toward women. Among the athletes who have participated in football for 7 years or more, 25% have high attitudes of violence toward women while 75% have low attitudes of violence toward women. The relationship between years playing football and attitudes of violence toward women is not statistically significant. In other words, athletes who have played football for 7 years or more are no less likely to have attitudes of violence toward women than the athletes who have participated in football for 6 years or less. The direction of the variables was not discussed because there was no relationship between the two variables. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Violence - low</th>
<th>Violence - high</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 or less</td>
<td>28 (71.8%)</td>
<td>11 (28.2%)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 or more</td>
<td>6 (75%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34 (72.3%)</td>
<td>13 (27.7%)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 2.213
Critical value = 3.841
Hypothesis 3. Athletes who are married, divorced or cohabiting are more likely than single athletes to have attitudes which condone or are conducive to violence against women. Furthermore, cohabiting athletes are more likely than both the married and the divorced athletes to have attitudes which condone or are conducive to violence against women.

The dichotomy of marital status and violent attitudes was arrived at by performing a cross-tabs procedure with single, married and cohabiting athletes against low and high violent attitudes. This procedure was justified by the researcher’s hypothesis that violent attitudes depend on one’s marital status. Table 7 indicates that of the single athletes, 24% reported high attitudes of violence toward women and 76% reported low attitudes of violence toward women. Of the married athletes, 25% reported high attitudes of violence toward women and 75% reported low attitudes of violence toward women. Of the cohabiting athletes, 50% reported high attitudes of violence toward women and 50% reported low attitudes of violence toward women. There were no divorced subjects in this study. Based on the above percentages, there is no significant relationship between one’s marital status and one’s attitudes of violence toward women. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was rejected. However, it is important to note that although a statistically significant relationship does not exist, statistically higher percentages of the cohabiting athletes, which were the group hypothesized to have the most violent attitudes toward women did, in fact, have higher attitudes of violence than either the single or the married athletes.
Table 7

Marital Status and Attitudes of Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Violence - low</th>
<th>Violence - high</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>6 (24%)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9 (75%)</td>
<td>3 (25%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32 (71.1%)</td>
<td>13 (28.9%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 2.311
Critical value = 3.841

Hypothesis 4. The married and cohabiting athletes that have children living in the same household are more likely to have attitudes which condone or are conducive to violence against women than the married and cohabiting athletes who do not have children living in the same household.

The dichotomy of married and cohabiting participants with children in the same household and violent attitudes was arrived at by performing a cross-tabs procedure with the presence of children against low and high violent attitudes. This procedure was justified by the researcher's hypothesis that violent attitudes depend married and cohabiting participants having children in the same household. Table 8 indicates that of the married and cohabiting athletes with children living in the same household, 22.2% had high attitudes of violence toward women and 77.8% had low attitudes of violence toward women. In terms of married and cohabiting athletes who did not have
children living in the same household, 23.1% had high attitudes of violence toward women and 76.9% had low attitudes of violence toward women. Thus, there is no significant relationship between children living in the same household of the subject and attitudes of violence toward women. Married and cohabiting athletes with children in the same household are no more likely to have attitudes of violence toward women than athletes without children living in the same household. The direction of the relationship between the variables was not discussed because there was no significant relationship between the two variables. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was rejected.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presence of Children</th>
<th>Violence - low</th>
<th>Violence - high</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7 (77.8%)</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (76.9%)</td>
<td>3 (23.1%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (77.3%)</td>
<td>5 (22.7%)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 2.766  
Critical value = 3.841

Interview Interpretations

This section explores and discusses the questions and answers of the interview process. By engaging in an interview, the researcher hoped to discover some of the more detailed attitudes that individual players have on the subject of violence in
professional sports and how they may relate to violence against women. The specific quotations and examples found in the text (answers to question number three, four, five, six, seven and nine) were selected because it was believed these questions best described subject under deliberation. Of the eight interview participants, the average years of experience was three to four years. No player had more than four years experience in professional football. Also, there was an even distribution of offensive and defensive players.

Question Number Three

According to Messner and Sabo (1994), “boys are taught that to endure pain is courageous, to survive pain is manly” (p. 86). Likewise, the phrase “you play until the bone sticks through the meat” has long been used to justify and categorize injury in the NFL. The interview participants were asked whether or not they had ever heard this phase used to describe football. If they had heard this phrase, they were asked to discuss what this phrase meant to them and if they agreed that this is the mentality of football.

The results show that four of the eight players had previously heard this phase used to describe football. The consensus among the participants was that this phrase teaches athletes to play with pain. Basically, you are either hurt or injured and “unless you cannot move, you can play”. Many of the respondents expressed the fact that working through a painful injury was considered both manly and professional.
Player number 3 stated:

A lot of coaches expect that. It varies as to where you’re at (which team), but most coaches expect you to play with a high pain tolerance. It seems to be a little different now, but years back coaches didn’t care if you played with broken hands or broken wrists. Older coaches seem to be more like that. Nowadays, players have more guts to sit out of practice if they are hurt.

Player number 7 described a similar phrase he had heard to describe football: “If you can run or walk, you can still play”. He stated that if the “injury is not life threatening, then you should pull yourself out of it and play. If it is a bruise or a cut or soreness, you need to play through it”. This player also believed that this phrase is the mentality of sports and anything that is competitive in life - from sports to work.

The most revealing statements came from player number 8, who has only been playing professionally for one year, but he already understands how detrimental this sort of mentality can be on one’s body and physical well being. He stated that when you continually play hurt you “kind of almost build an immunity to it. It almost makes you stupid in some ways cause you’ll play when you’re hurt”. By learning this mentality after only one year of experience, it suggests that the mentality of playing with pain begins at a lower level than the professional ranks.

The above descriptions of tolerating pain and playing with injury were not surprising to the researcher. The masculinity literature is abundant with stories of players “being tough” and playing through the pain, no matter what the long term effects might be. The comments made by Player number 3 made the researcher examine why some players may be more confident nowadays to admit they are hurt.
and to refuse to practice. One possible reason is the huge salaries which are now common place in sports gives players the ability to have more control over their bodies and careers. If player does not feel as though he should be practicing or playing in a game because of an injury, he may be more willing to accept a fine or other financial punishment than he was fifteen years ago when the salaries were not as large. These ever increasing salaries, although negative for ticket prices, may prove to have positive consequences as far as a player’s long term health and life span is concerned.

Question Number Four

This question asked the players to discuss what might be their first thought if they opened their locker, after sitting out of practice for an injury, and they found a tampon. What is this telling them? Who is sending this message and why? Additionally, would they get angry or would they take it as a practical joke? According to the players, this had never happened to any one of them personally, but some of them had seen it happen to others. Although most of the players felt if this did happen to them they would take it as a practical joke, they also said they had seen other players get angry when this happened to them. In addition, all eight players agreed that when this does happen it is being done by other teammates. The players strongly doubted that a coach would do this.

Asked to elaborate on this question, player number one stated, “I would laugh. I would think that it’s a practical joke. I’ve seen it before. It’s guys jokingly saying
that you’re a pussy. I would not get angry, I’d take it as a joke. The tampon symbolizes a woman. It’s saying that I’m weak.”

Player number 3 stated he would take it at “face value”. His reaction would depend on who put it there. “Players could have put it there, messin’ with you. There are a lot of jokes that go on in the locker room. This is telling you that you are a pussy. I would take it more seriously if someone that I didn’t hang out with did it as compared to someone that I’m friends with.”

Player number 4 believed that he also would take it as a joke. Additionally, he stated that the idea someone is trying to get across is that he should not be sitting out of practice. “I should be out there. It’s telling me that I’m a wuss and I need to get back in the game. Somebody feels you’re sitting out for no reason. Or that you’re milking it or something like that.”

Player number 6 stated:

Ah, you know, it’s just something derogatory towards women. I mean that’s something that they (women) use for their nature, but, they (players) are ignorant. They just think it’s like a joke. So, when you first open it up (your locker) you’re probably like, “Wow, think it’s funny, you know, a tampon in your locker.” The act of placing a tampon in another man’s locker would probably be like an insult. This is saying, “I’m a woman”. The message is that if you’re injured you need to get tough. It’s a man’s sport, it’s not a woman’s sport. Not being a male chauvinist, but that’s what they (other players) would be saying.

Based on the findings in the literature, there were two statements by the players to question number four which surprised the researcher. The first was the belief shared by all the players that it would be unlikely for a coach to place a tampon
or other feminine product in the locker of a player. Every player felt that this would only be done by a fellow player, not a coach. These beliefs contrast what was learned in the literature. This leads the researcher to believe that overt misogynist behaviors at this level of sports come mainly in the form of peer pressure. In other words, the level of competition and the “will to win” are strong enough at this level that the coach, himself, does not feel the need to “motivate” and control his players in this way. The researcher speculates that the coach is confident his players will “take care of” any potential “wussies” or “pussies” on the team.

The second statement which surprised the researcher was the assertion by the majority of players that they would not get angry if they found a tampon in their locker. Most of the players stated they would take it as a practical joke. However, this is difficult to believe because of what the tampon is said to symbolize to these men. Since this has never happened personally to any of the players (at least no one admitted it) it is not really known how the player would react. If this were to happen on a personal basis and in the context presented (sitting out of practice for an injury) the researcher believes the players would react angrily.

Question Number Five

This question was interested in the overall level of respect regarding women by football players, on a scale of one to ten, with number one being the least amount of respect and number ten being the highest amount of respect. Additionally, the
players were asked if this number would be higher for nonathletes. It is important to note that most of the players hesitated and seemed reluctant to answer the question of whether or not the respect numbers would be higher for nonathletes. The results show scores ranged from numbers two through eight for football players. Five players felt this number would be higher for nonathletes, two players were not sure, and one player did not think that the number would be any higher for nonathletes.

Many of the answers to this question discussed the advantages and privileges that come with being a professional athlete and how this relates to the level of respect that players give women. For example, player number 1 stated, “pro athletes are on top of the world and they think that they can get away with anything which includes disrespecting women”. Player number 2 put the level of respect of women at a two or a three. He states, “most football players treat women like sex objects. Both single and married men are running around with women and... how they talk about women, it’s not right. When guys get around guys, it’s almost like a game - who can be with (sexually) the most women”.

Several players reasoned that football players tend to disrespect women because of the “type of women and groupies that hang around us”. Specifically, player number five states:

For professional athletes, the natural tendency is for women to throw themselves at you. A lot of that (happens) just because you have a uniform on. Some women just get off on that, I guess. Guys don’t respect women like that. It’s just one of those things that comes with the territory, I guess women have a thing for guys in a uniform.
Furthermore, player number 3 explains:

Athletes get an opportunity to do more things and they, therefore, take advantage of women and treat them like tramps, basically. Most of them have wives and girlfriends which they treat differently than the groupies. I do agree that football players don’t treat women like they probably should.

Player number 6 put the number of respect toward women at a 4. He also felt that it is the fault of the women, or the “groupies”, who hang around the players which causes players to have low levels of respect for “certain women”. He explains:

A lot of guys out there have their main, I’m just being honest, they’re married or have girlfriends that they are serious with. But a lot of guys, at this point, have a lot of groupie women, and they (players) know this and that’s what brings the general (idea) of no respect for women. That’s where we get a bad reputation for that. When I was with a certain team, we knew off the bat who were the groupies like every year. And that’s who they (players) targeted to. But for a nice woman like yourself (referring to the researcher) to think that men would treat you like that, it’s not true. It’s just that some women make it bad for the rest of the women.

Disrespecting women is worse in the NFL cause it’s a glamorous sport and the women do flock to you and guys do disrespect women. (Because of this) They (players) don’t give women a chance. You can meet a woman and she can be totally nice but from what you’ve already seen in the past you’re like, “well, she’s just a groupie, she’s just this, she’s just that”. Me, myself, I’ll be honest with you, my wife I’m married to now, even though I was never like that, it’s just when you’re around that environment, you even start thinking of people you’re serious with (wives, girlfriends) are like that. But that’s how bad it can get. People don’t understand that this is a real stressful job and you have so many people coming after you. So, like my wife, she never really was a groupie, she never really hung out, but it just started hitting you. You were like, “Man, everybody want a piece of this. Everybody want a piece of that”. And, therefore, I had to catch myself cause I could have easily let myself go to that, you know. We’ve never had problems because I didn’t let myself do that. When you are a pro athlete, everybody want a piece of you and you don’t trust nobody, that’s basically what it is. Your wife or girlfriend should be the only
ones we can trust but in essence, the way women (groupies) are around us, it even can come off toward you guys, (referring to the researcher) you know? It’s rough, you’ve got to be a strong minded man.

Player number 5 believed that “where an athlete grows up” (referring to social and economic background) and how his parents raised him has a lot to do with how he will treat women:

It’s tough cause some of them grew up in the ghetto, some grew up in middle class, you know. But for me, you know, I grew up in a middle to upper class area and my parents taught me what’s right and wrong and how to treat a woman. What to say, what not to say, you know, to have some decency. As a result of that, you know, I’m not perfect, but I’m able to carry that whole thing to my marriage and I have a better understanding. We are all products of our culture, you know, taken in little pieces.

This class bias is a fairly common misperception regarding violence against women. Many people believe, including this player, that men in lower socioeconomic classes are more prevalent to domestic abuse. However, most researchers believe that domestic violence cuts equally along all class lines (Statman, 1990).

Player number four strongly agreed that the level of respect would be higher for nonathletes because “I just think that athletes think that, you know, that...they seem to attract women more and they can get more women so in some cases they will use women then just kick them to the side.” On the other hand, player number 7 disagreed that the level of respect accorded to women would be higher for nonathletes. He stated, “all men disrespect women. It’s not just us (football players)”. 
Player number eight put the level of respect towards women at a 4 or 5 and he also felt that this number would be higher for nonathletes. "I guess when you get on a team, you’re in the locker room together, you’re with a bunch of guys and you tend to say a lot more stuff". When asked to elaborate on things said in the locker room, Player number eight laughed:

You know, like make comments about the girls at practice or, you know, if someone is sitting out that day you make comments about her body or something like that. I mean I do it with my friends at home, too, but I think it’s done more in this setting. You know, when you are in a hotel or dorm and you see the same guys (teammates) all day and when a girl walks by everybody gawks at her and makes rude comments.

There were several answers to this question about respecting or disrespecting women that surprised the researcher. The first was the belief shared by many players that the reason football players tended to disrespect women is because of the women themselves. The players tended to justify their low scores of respect toward women by explaining that women (at least the women which hang around football players) are basically unworthy of respect. It is because of these certain women, that players may sometimes apply this same low level of respect to all women. Although unspoken, the researcher got the impression that the only thing these “groupies” are good for, according to the players, is sex. This sort of reasoning on the part of the players was interesting to the researcher because it showed that instead of feeling any sort of responsibility for their own attitudes, the players instead placed the blame on the women around them. Also, it was significant that the majority of players felt that
disrespecting women would be higher for athletes than nonathletes. This suggests that the players themselves feel there is something in the environment of professional sports which makes disrespecting women more likely.

An additional insight brought out by this same question centers on the comments made by player number eight. This player stated that “when you are in a hotel or dorm all day with a bunch of guys” and you see a woman walk by, you tend to “gawk at her and make rude comments”. The researcher would like to point out that it may be because of the almost total exclusion of women in professional, high status roles in football which may be contributing to behavior and attitudes such as these described by player number eight. Perhaps if players were not so segregated from women in their daily lives and careers and they had chances to interact with women more often, they might be less likely to think of women as simply groupies and therefore less worthy of respect. Most of the women that these players do interact with are in subservient roles such as waitresses, hotel maids, autograph seekers and decorative cheerleaders.

Question Number Six

This question asked whether the players thought it was true that professional football players have a high likelihood of committing violence against women because of the violence associated with the sport. Also, if the players believe this, then what are some of the things that lead to it? Additionally, do the players think that the longer
someone plays football and have therefore been exposed to the violence of the sport longer, the more likely they are to be violent towards women? Furthermore, if the players do not feel as though professional football players had a high likelihood of committing violence against women, then how do they explain the recent reports of athletes committing violence against women in the press?

The results found three players who did feel as though professional football players had a high likelihood of committing violence against women. Moreover, taking the violence off the field may result from a variety of reasons. According to player number 1, causes may be "bad games, coaches being on you and then you coming home and your wife yelling at you or something. Also, you feel a lot of pressure at this level and there are a lot drinking and drug problems here which may lead to domestic violence". Although player number 8 agreed that football players commit a lot of violence against women, he also felt that often times football is used as an excuse for some people when they commit violence against women.

There were five players who believed that football players did not have any higher likelihood of committing violence against women than non-athletes. Every one of these players felt that the media concentrates on athletes and "blows things out of proportion". Player number 3 explains:

"everything we do is under a microscope, no matter where you are. If me and my girlfriend got in an argument and it got loud and someone came by it might be on ESPN or CNN you know? But if "Joe Schmo" and his girlfriend were doing that and he beat her down to death no one will ever hear about it. I think just as many people argue but just cause we are high-profile athletes it gets blown out of proportion. Where my mom lives, I hear so much domestic violence going on there with the
police coming and stuff, but it’s not in the paper the next day. It’s not anything worse than what’s going on anywhere else.

Player number four agrees:

There’s stuff going on all over the place a hell of a lot more and at a higher percentage than what’s going on in the NFL. Those people are just people on the street that are not noticed by, you know, they are not highly regarded individuals like NFL football players so they don’t get talked about. When something happens with one of us the media blows it out of proportion. A lot of shit happens in the first place, but then everybody in the world knows about it.

Player number five believes that the public perception of football players is only based on about ten percent of the players. According to him, the other ninety percent are “decent guys”. Although this may be true, the researcher believes that one out of ten football players to be considered not “decent” is not very impressive, especially considering their popularity. He continues:

the only difference (between athletes and nonathletes) is everything’s out in the open. If something happens with women with us (football players) it’s, you know, it will be in the front page of the paper the next day. And for everyone who is not in the public eye, you know, it doesn’t come out.

Player number five goes on to state a similar belief shared by several NFL representatives regarding the media’s unfair treatment of some players:

It’s kind of unfortunate, but most of that stuff (media reports of athletes in trouble) happens to the black guys. There seems to be some unfair targeting. I know for a fact that a couple white guys were beating their wives and the media knew about it and it was hush, hush. It’s unfair for the media to manipulate it like that, but that’s what happens.
Interestingly, this same player goes on to state his version of what happened in the Warren Moon domestic violence case. “I know exactly what happened in the Warren Moon thing. All he did was just try to take the credit card away from her, and she lost it. I mean she was spending big bucks”. When the researcher asked, if in fact, this was all that happened in this scenario and there was no physical abuse, why did Moon’s son call 911 to report his father (Warren) was beating his mother (Felicia)?

The player answered:

because the son walked in when he (Warren) was trying to restrain her, to put her down. It got totally blown out. It was like, “Warren Moon the wife beater - boycott this, boycott that”. There are always two sides to every story. Unfortunately, the media wouldn’t listen to her when she came out and shared the truth. The damage was already done.

Attitudes such as these regarding domestic violence are common. According to the domestic violence literature, many people tend to minimize or downplay the effects of domestic violence (McKenzie, 1995). According to this player, Warren had a right to “put her down” because she (Felicia) was spending so much money. Later, during the interview, this player goes on to state that Warren was unjustly accused in this case.

On his opinion of whether football players commit high amounts of violence against women, player number six states:

It’s just certain guys you know. Some guys can’t separate football from life. And a lot of those guys, cause things aren’t going well, they might take it out on their wife of girlfriend, but you gotta separate the game. But a lot of times it’s a stereotype to say the reason why he acted this way is because of football.
Player number seven adds:

I know some players who are real bad and tough on the field but when they go home their wives are beating on them or abusing them. I think it depends on the person and what environment that you grew up in. Since football is such a popular sport and some people have nothing else to do when something comes up in the paper (about an athlete) it is given more attention, than in other instances.

It is important to note that not one of the players agreed that athletes who had played football the longest were more likely be violent off the field. This response surprised the researcher. Initially, the researcher believed that the longer someone had played in this “culture of sports” then the more likely they would be to carry the violent attitudes that they experience on the field, off the field as well. However, according to the players, this is not at all true. They believed that being violent off the field showed a sense of immaturity. People who have played longer “learn to not act up”. In other words, they learn to be “professionals”. According to one player, “from what I’ve seen, older players are more mature and have already dealt with stuff, so I think they would be less likely to be violent towards their wives”.

**Question Number Seven**

This question was concerned with whether the players felt it was possible for themselves and other players to leave the violence and aggression they experience on the field and not bring it home. If this was possible, then how did they accomplish it? The results found that all eight players agreed that leaving the violence on the field was possible. Additionally, several players believed there are some players in which leaving
the violence solely on the field is not possible. A couple of the answers on how leaving violence on the field and not taking it home could be accomplished included knowing the difference between right and wrong and having control over one’s actions.

Player number 3 stated:

some people do not turn it off. Speaking for me, I’m a mellow guy and when I get home I may bitch and moan about this and that, but I’m not going to come home and take it out on other people. Every person is different, so you don’t know how they are going to respond.

Player number 5 describes the process that he goes through at the end of every football season:

In the NFL every Sunday it’s a rush, you know, the intensity and everything picks up and you’re focused. All week you’re putting in hours. You’re going from 8:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon, you know? Friday and Saturday you are prepping yourself to go to war. You know, it’s a rush. We’ve been doing this since we were young and it’s hard to come off of that. I’m just speaking for myself, after the season is over like in January and you drive back home, I have to kind of think about what I’m doing a lot more. You know, your natural tendencies for 6 months are, you know, kill or be killed or fight or flight. And (because of this) most of the times you just react if you’re not thinking clearly. You’ve got to be able to separate that. It takes about a month or 3 or 4 weeks to separate and go back to reality, and after that it’s fine. I can see some of it carrying over if you don’t realize it real quick. But, it’s tough you are on the line.

My first two years, constantly, the first thought that comes to your mind cause you’ve been trained for 6 months is, you know, to take care of it. And you ask yourself, where did that thought come from? You know what I mean? Some of the best games you play you don’t even remember. You just get into that zone and you just react, you know?
Addressing the difficulty of separating between the sport and real life, player number 7 mentioned the role of coaches in a different way. He believes that you need to “distinguish between the sport and real life. However, this is hard to do because coaches say, ‘don’t cut it off when you’re off the field’. They (the coaches) don’t want you to lose your edge.”

Player number 6 credits his relationships with God in helping him to not bring the violence home. “Well, I don’t know about the other guys but I have a strong relationship with God and I think you really need to have a peace within yourself to not bring it home, cause it’s a very easy thing to bring home. The (frustrations) for a player are tough.” He also mentioned the coach as being a possible source of frustration and stress for many players. Additionally, he states:

making the transition from my first to second year, because of my relationship with God, I realize that this is football and that’s all that it is. A lot of guys don’t realize this. They like the limelight and all that. A lot of guys think that football is their life and that is all there is.

He believes that if players and their wives or girlfriends are able to “make a bond” which exists outside of football it will be better for their relationship. Furthermore, according to this player, the NFL needs more programs which help players to understand that football is “not their whole life”. However, unlike this player, based on the literature and conversations with a league representative, it does not appear that the NFL wants players to realize that they do, or at least they should, have a life outside of football. It seems as though the NFL wants players to believe
that their career is everything. After all, if the players stop believing this, then the NFL has lost much of the power and control that it has over the players’ lives.

According to the researcher, the most important statements to this question came from player number 5. The conscious decision to shut off this “game day mentality” after the season is over and before he returns to his family made this player’s remarks very significant. The concept of feeling as though he was in a “zone” in addition to using the words “natural tendencies” and “kill or be killed” describe his way of thinking during the season as being in contrast to his family life mentality. The deliberate decision to put this way of thinking out of his head indicated that the violence inherent in the game had a lasting effect on this player.

**Question Number Nine**

Question number nine asked for any additional comments on the subject at hand or any of the previous questions. Three of the players took this opportunity to add further comment. The following paragraphs summarize the overall feelings of the players on the subject of violence in professional football and how it may relate to violence against women.

The violence thing, it’s just that we are in the spotlight and that’s what makes me mad. I mean anything that happens, if you get a DUI, it’s going to be in the news. That’s the kind of stuff that makes me mad. If it happened to anyone else... But I mean, that’s something that we’ve got to take being athletes and being paid the money we get paid and stuff. There’s good and bad to being a star. People (athletes) have to know this and keep themselves out of these situations or it’s just as much on them. But still it’s tough.
Another player explains the societal perceptions toward professional athletes:

A player's behavior depends on how much his team lets him get away with. Unfortunately in football, how society looks at us, just because you are a good football player does not translate into you being a good person. We all know that we are in the entertainment business. The perception in general is that if we are a good player we are also a good person, you know. That's just the way our culture is.

In conclusion, player number 7 states:

My comment is you gotta know who you are and if you're a violent person or not, you've just got to grow up. Football is legalized war. It's war cut down to its safest form. To me it's about competition, striving to be the best you can be. But you just have to know the difference between the game and reality.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The foundation of this research was based on feminist theory which holds that because of these "domineering and authoritative forms," sports uphold an ideology of male superiority toward women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Also, although it is slowly changing, sports have traditionally been characterized by the exclusion of women. Feminist theory was the basis for understanding both gender views and some aspects of domestic violence. The literature on the linking of sports and violence and how they relate to masculinity and sexism was the basis for understanding the culture of sports in U.S. society.

According to the literature review, traditional gender views promote attitudes of violence toward women. Also, one's marital status, age, and the presence of children in the household are said to have an effect on domestic violence. Despite these previous findings, however, none of the hypotheses regarding the above variables and violent attitudes toward women were supported by the data collected from the professional football players. Nonetheless, primarily by way of the interview process, this study did give valuable insight and clarity on the topic of athletes and violence. The statistical results suggest that neither traditional gender views, marital status, nor the presence of children in the household had a significant effect on players'
attitudes of violence toward women. Yet, the data did reveal an interesting relationship in regards to the variable of years of experience in professional football.

Initially, the researcher sought to determine if 6 years of experience or less as opposed to 7 years of experience or longer would have an effect on one’s attitudes of violence toward women. The hypothesis stated that if a player had played football for 6 years or less (and was therefore likely to be 30 years of age or younger), he would have more violent attitudes toward women. This was based on the domestic violence literature which states that the 30 and younger age category contains the highest proportion of men committing violence against women. Despite the domestic violence literature, the results of the statistical analyses showed no statistically significant relationship between years of experience and attitudes of violence toward women.

In contrast, the interview process discovered several players who felt attitudes of violence off the field were closely correlated with whether one was a “rookie” or a “veteran”. Specifically, the players interviewed felt that “rookies” were more likely to be violent off the field. According to the NFL, a “rookie” is described as a player with no accrued seasons. A player needs to be activated for at least three games on an active roster to be considered a veteran. Theoretically, this process of becoming a veteran may take two or even three years, especially, if a new player is placed on the practice squad or the injured reserve.

Reasons given as to why rookies may be more violent than veterans are that many of the newcomers to the professional ranks are not mature enough to deal with
the pressures on the field and, in fact, these frustrations may carry over into their personal life and relationships. Also, the rookies may be less comfortable with the substantial perks and privileges that come with being a professional athlete and may not yet know how to handle themselves in the limelight.

The interview process was very significant for it consisted of new perspectives and comments on the part of the individual players regarding the subject at hand. Although these men were not the “animals” and “search and destroy specialists” that the media and sportscasters seem to portray in interviews and highlights, the researcher found several characteristics associated with professional football players which encourage at least sexist and negative attitudes toward women, if not violence.

For example, there was a belief shared by several players that the reason women receive low levels of respect by football players is because that is what women deserve. More specifically, it is the behavior of some women who hang around football players which predisposes football players to treat them in disrespectful ways. Most of these players seemed to think of these women as simply wanting something from the players. After a night of sex or other similar activity, (which was said to happen frequently with these women), is it right for football players to disrespect these women while still respecting themselves? After all, both parties engaged in the same behavior. Why is one party and not the other considered unworthy of respect? According to these players, it is due to the behavior of these women that the total level
of respect for all women is low. Additionally, it is notable that most players felt that the level of respect towards women by nonathletes would be higher.

Furthermore, the interviews indicated that four of the eight players did not believe football players had a high likelihood of committing violence because of the violence associated with their sport. These players felt that it was the media “blowing things out of proportion” or focusing exclusively on certain professional athletes which makes it seem as though athletes have a high likelihood of committing violence against women. This argument has been stated repeatedly by various college and NFL representatives, and the researcher agrees that it does have some validity. However, the general understanding by the researcher of this question was that although they did not justify the fact that some athletes commit violence against women, the players seemed to blame the media for exposing the problem. In other words, instead of condemning violence against women by either athletes or nonathletes, some players seem to blame the media for bringing the issue out in the open. They seemed to have the attitude that if not for the media, then they would never get caught in the first place. As one player stated, “a lot of shit (domestic abuse, illegal conduct) happens in the first place, but then (because of the media) everybody in the world knows about it”.

Additionally, it was discovered that the intense pressures associated with football may be the reason why on the field violence is so explicit and intense at this level. After all, this is where one’s livelihood is made. This is where one gains power
and prestige. This is where one is adored and worshipped by hundreds of thousands of people. This is also the place where everything can be swept away by one bad game, or a twisted knee. Everyone is watching, the adrenaline is flowing and the pressure is on. Their ultimate goal is to win and therefore keep their jobs. Having learned to win at any cost, it seems that it would be very difficult to cut off this mentality as soon as one is off the field. One player attested to this fact when he explained the difficulty he experiences when he tries to change his mentality at the end of every football season.

In conclusion, it is unclear whether professional football players have attitudes which highly condone or are conducive to violence against women. But, according to this research, it is apparent that attitudes toward women by professional football players are definitely negative in nature. In fact, according to women news reporters, professional football players lead both basketball and baseball players as far as sexual harassment towards women reporters is concerned (Nelson, 1994). One reason for this may be that some professional sports leagues are more forceful regarding rules and regulations concerning the treatment of women than others. For example, NBA Commissioner David Stern makes a point when “women become beat reporters, Stern phones them, offers his home number, and asks them to report any access or harassment problems directly to him” (Nelson, 1994, p. 250). Is it time for the NFL to take a proactive stance on the issue of negative attitudes and treatment toward women? In fact, does the NFL have a responsibility to the community to try and combat these negative attitudes? After all, this same community is made up of fans, an
increasing majority of which are female. Furthermore, these same fans are the livelihood of the NFL.

Although it does not demonstrate that there is a need for domestic violence policies to be implemented, it is clear from this study that the NFL would benefit from educational and other programs which focus on gender relations and sexism. It would be beneficial if the NFL took the lead of several colleges and started NFL programs to teach athletes about things such as domestic violence, date rape and sexual responsibility. For example, at the University of Maine, athletes are trained to teach other students about “disassociating masculinity from dominance, violence, and sexism” (Nelson, 1994, p. 157). Likewise, Jackson Katz of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, trains athletes as peer educators to combat sexual harassment and other forms of men’s violence toward women. One way Katz does this is by speaking about the terror involved for a women experiencing an assault. He also explains the inner courage that is necessary for athletes to speak out when they hear something that might harm a woman (Nelson, 1994).

The most important indicator of success for these college programs is that instead of passively listening to a lecture, it is mandatory that the athletes take leadership and teach what they know to other students. If this sort of mandatory participation in programs and subsequent leadership positions were implemented in the professional ranks by the league or individual teams, there is a possibility that the rates
of domestic violence against women and disrespectful and negative attitudes toward women would lessen.

In addition to the NFL, similar programs in youth sports would also seem to be important to combat negative and sexist attitudes toward women by athletes. Parents want to make sure that coaches are conveying the right attitudes and messages about sports. Winning at all cost should not occur at the expense of the female gender. The sexist and misogynist behaviors and attitudes by coaches and players should not be tolerated. Although this regulation of coaches could be accomplished more easily at the younger levels, parents and college administrators should also be monitoring coaches throughout high school and college levels. This close supervision needs to be done during the younger ages when youths are first being socialized into the culture of sports. When one gets to college on an athletic scholarship, or they make it to the professional ranks, monitoring the coaches and the environment for negative influences becomes much more difficult because of the political and financial undertone of the game.

Limitations to the Study

This is a study of key informants. Therefore, it is not meant to be viewed as a random sample survey. Because the sampling process was not random, participants may have been selected who were not truly representative of the targeted population. Moreover, because the respondents come from a narrow, homogenous group,
sweeping generalizations are simply not warranted. The researcher believes that the key informants, those who play football at the professional level, are the people who will have valuable perspectives.

The use of a contact person to distribute and return the questionnaires is possible limitation of this research. If the researcher had more financial resources and time, she would have passed out the surveys and collected them in person. The use of a contact person could affect the confidentiality of the data. Specifically, the respondents may have misreported their answers in fear of the contact person reading their responses. To combat this possibility, the researcher used sealed return envelopes for the surveys. Nonetheless, without the researcher being physically present to oversee the distribution and return of all surveys, certain limitations are present.

Another more specific limitation of this research was the survey question which asked whether the subjects had children living in the same household as themselves. Because many of the respondents were in a different country at the time of survey completion and not physically with their families, it is possible that the meaning of this question was not clear. The meaning could have been understood as are children living with you at the present moment or it could have been understood as do children live with you under your usual living circumstances. The researcher meant the question to be understood as under the usual living circumstances.
Finally, another limitation of this research is the inherent design of surveys. Surveys often are characterized as artificial and superficial. Survey questions can be viewed as inflexible, and the researcher is often unable to understand the context of the total life situation of the respondent by simply using a questionnaire form. It is also unknown if the respondents clearly understood the questions being asked of them on the survey. The limitation of the survey is one reason why interviews were added to the data gathering process. Likewise, it is also possible that participants of the interview were unable to completely articulate their thoughts and feelings during interviews regarding their attitudes of athletes and domestic violence.

Recommendations for Future Research

Those who pursue this avenue of research in the future may choose to examine additional factors which may clarify the attitudes which professional football players have toward women. One of these additional factors is to examine the childhood background of the participants. This background would include whether the players had ever experienced abuse or neglect as children, whether or not their mother worked outside of the home and the relationship between their parents. Each of these circumstances is reported in the literature to have a possible influence on attitudes of violence toward women.

Another factor worth exploring is whether or not the wife or partner of the player works outside of the home. The answer to this question would give insight as
to the gender views of the individual player as well as how these views are put into practice. For example, if the wife does work outside of the home, then it is likely that the player has less traditional gender views.

Another recommendation for further research as evidenced by the interview process would be to reexamine the variable of years of experience. Several respondents felt that instead of focusing on differences between players who have played 6 years or less versus 7 years or more, the focus should be on rookie versus veteran players. They believed that the most distinct differences in attitudes toward both on the field and off the field violence would be found between these two groups.

It would also be beneficial to examine the athletic participation of the player starting at the high school or college level in regards to the socialization process associated with football. The reason for this is because the socialization process of sports begins well before a player enters the professional ranks. Many of these players had been playing football fourteen and fifteen years. It would be interesting to explore any changes in demeanor and mentality of the players, when instead of playing for the excitement or the competition which happens at the lower levels of sports, sports now becomes a job. At this level, if the player does not perform his job well, he loses it.

A final recommendation for future research involves tracking the athletes who have participated in the college programs which educate athletes on such topics as rape, sexual harassment, and sexual responsibility. If any of the athletes who participated in these programs made it into the NFL, did these program have any
apparent effect on the players? For example, do these players respect women more than the players who did not have these mandatory educational programs in college? Additionally, have these players ever been accused or convicted of abusing or assaulting women? If these college programs are found to have a positive effect on NFL athletes, then it would reaffirm the need for similar programs and policies to be implemented in the professional leagues.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Questionnaire
"Attitudes Relating Toward Women"

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled, "Professional Football Player's Attitudes Relating Toward Women". Please complete the following questionnaire; it will take approximately 10 minutes. Participation is voluntary, you may skip any question and all information received will be anonymous. You may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. The completion and return of the questionnaire constitutes your consent in the survey. This project is being conducted by Shannon O'Toole (517-781-1335), Dr. Susan Caringella-MacDonald, advisor (616-387-5279), Sociology Department, Western Michigan University, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (616-387-8293), Vice President of Research (616-387-8298). Do not put your name anywhere on this form.

The following statements describe attitudes toward women in society which different people have. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. You are asked to express your feeling about each statement by indicating whether you (A) agree strongly, (B) agree mildly, (C) disagree mildly, or (D) disagree strongly with the statement. CIRCLE ONE ANSWER ONLY.

1. Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man.
   (A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

2. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.
   (A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

3. It is insulting to women to have the “I will honor and obey” clause remain in marriage vows.
   (A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

4. Under modern economic conditions with women being active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.
   (A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

5. Women should assume their rightful place in business and all the professions along with men.
   (A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

6. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children.
   (A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly
7. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

8. It's O.K. to hit a woman, as long as you don't do it with a closed fist.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

9. It's unmanly behavior for men to cry in public.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

10. Women often need to be slapped during an argument. It calms them down.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

11. Women are too emotional to handle political leadership positions.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

12. Men should have the final word in all family decisions.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

13. A qualified woman should be allowed to coach a men's sports team.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

14. Pushing, grabbing or shoving are common outcomes of many arguments.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

15. If a woman provokes a man, she should expect to be hit or slapped.

(A) agree strongly  (B) agree mildly  (C) disagree mildly  (D) disagree strongly

16. How many total years have you played in the N.F.L., including the N.F.L. sponsored World League? (only include active roster and practice squad) ( )

17. What is your marital status? Circle one: married  single  living together  divorced

18. Do you have children? Circle one: YES  NO
   If yes, do your children live with you?  YES  NO

FINISHED. THANK YOU!!!
Appendix B

Interview Script
INTERVIEW: “ATTITUDES RELATING TOWARD WOMEN”

I am here to ask you to participate in an interview regarding professional football players’ attitudes toward women. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. The completion of this interview will take approximately 15 minutes. Your participation in this project is non-mandatory and totally voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question. It is important I inform you that the identity of all participants will remain confidential. No identifying information will be recorded in any way. Therefore, please answer all questions truthfully and also feel free to express yourself any way you wish.

Please do not mention anyone by name. This interview is a measure of one’s attitudes, beliefs and opinions only.

1. What position do you play?

2. How many years have you played in the NFL and the World League (only include active roster and practice squad)?

3. Have you ever heard the phrase, “You play unless the bone sticks through the meat” regarding football? If yes, what does this phrase mean to you? Do you agree that this is the mentality of football? What does this statement teach a player?

4. What would be your first thought if you opened your locker, after you sat out of practice for an injury, and you found a tampon? What is this telling you, if anything? Who is sending this message and why? Would you get angry or would you take it as a practical joke?

5. Including this team and others you have played on, what is the overall level of respect regarding women by football players? On a scale of 1-10 with one being the least amount of respect and 10 being the most. Do you think that this number would be higher for non-athletes? Why or why not?
6. Do you think it’s true that professional football players have a high likelihood of committing violence against women because of the violence associated with the sport?

If yes, what are some of the things that lead to this? Additionally, do you feel that the longer someone plays football and have therefore been exposed to the violence of the sport longer, the more likely they are to be violent towards women?

Additionally, overall, do you think people play football because they are violent people, or has the game of football made them violent?

If no, how do you explain the recent reports of athletes committing violence against women in the press? (ex. Warren Moon, Lawrence Phillips, etc.)

7. Do you think it is possible for players to leave the violence and aggression they experience on the field and not bring it home? If yes, how can this be accomplished?

8. Do you think the violent behaviors that are exhibited off the field vary by position played?

9. Do you have any additional comments or insights on this subject, including any advice for me on how I can better conduct these interviews in the future?

Thanks again and, “Good Luck on the rest of the season!”
Appendix C

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Form
Date: 15 April 1997

To: Susan Caringella-MacDonald, Principal Investigator
    Shannon O'Toole, Student Investigator

From: Richard Wright, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 97-04-06

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Attitudes Relating Toward Women" has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 11 April 1997


