Division I Female Soccer Players:

Development of the Self Across Time and Interactional Groups

by

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Division I Female Soccer Players:
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(Abstract)

This study is intended to explore the interactive effect of various interpersonal groups and longitudinal maturation on the socialization of individuals within a culture. It will deal with conflict resolution and the formation of a transitory sense of self informed by George Herbert Mead's perspective with an emphasis on symbolic interaction. I have chosen as my sample group a division I female college soccer team in the eastern United States. My time as an assistant coach has given me access to the daily lives of these players for a two year period during which I have acted as a participant observer. Although the study is limited to a small group of elite athletes, it is presumed that similar processes are at work each time an individual enters a new social setting or attempts to reconcile conflicting norms between different groups. When such groups collide, the individual is forced to conform to one at the expense of the other(s). This creates what I will call deviant conformity.
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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Self is that part of a human being which allows us to understand and verbalize feelings, opinions, and emotions. It is the reflective part of our nature or the application of the mind to social situations which separates us from lower life forms. (Mead 1934, pp. 118) Many different terms such as personality, nature, consciousness, or character have been used to describe this concept of self, when in fact each of them is merely a part of the whole picture. One of the functions of this paper is to elaborate on the role of the self.

A second function is to discuss the means by which the self is formed. A common debate is that of nature versus nurture. Proponents of the former believe that each individual's self is determined by genetic heritage and would turn out much the same in spite of environmental conditions. Supporters of this theory site examples of children who turn out very differently even though they were raised together, or twins separated at birth who develop in a similar manner. Proponents of the latter believe that the self is a reflection of the society which surrounds it. In short, they believe that social process determine the development of the self.

(T)he structure of the complete self is thus a reflection of the complete social process. The organization and unification of a social group is identical with the organization and unification of any one of the selves arising within the social process in which that group is engaged, or which it is carrying on. (Mead 1934, p. 144)

It is my contention that society imparts its values and structural framework on its members using multiple cohort peer groups. These groups introduce, define, and enforce values and behaviors which are necessary for the maintenance of the macro social order. The values of any single member will reflect an amalgam of that person's social groups. Gary Alan Fine calls each of these small groups an idioculture and describes them in the following manner.
The experience of knowing and using culture is inevitably tied to situational contexts of group life. To understand the dynamics of cultural creation and cultural change, we must analyze this knowledge within its mode of transmission.

In focusing on the interacting unit, I argue that every group has to some extent a culture of its own, which I shall term its *idioculture*. Idioculture consists of a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and employ as the basis for further interaction. Members recognize that they share experiences in common and these experiences can be referred to with the expectation that they will be understood by other members, and further can be employed to construct a social reality. (Fine 1979 A, p. 734)

This description is useful in recognizing the force that a social group is able to exert on its members. Members must learn the language and behavioral norms appropriate to each group in their social network before they can define their appropriate self in relation to that environmental other. They must then synthesize and prioritize different and often conflicting cultural mandates in order to define their sense of self in relation to the generalized other. As this statement implies, the third purpose of this paper is to examine how individuals deal with the cognitive dissidence and labels of deviance inherent in such a process of role development and the formation of group solidarity.

My research will focus on the social behavior and development of a group of division I female college soccer players. These women exist within a complex social environment which includes coaches, parents, professors, peers, and employers. Each of these authority structures attempts to establish a dominant position within the social matrix and ensure that the players will conform to its values and normative structure. The conflict engendered by these competing actors will promote the development of a transitory sense of self. When this transitory self is established, the players are capable of
operating successfully in multiple social settings with minimal conflict due to normative transgression. When such avoidance of conflict is impossible, individuals must prioritize one normative structure at the expense of another and accept temporary status as a deviant within the secondary group or groups. In particular, this paper will examine these instances of conflict and how maturation within a small group environment influences the individual's tendency to prioritize one authority structure above another. In a general sense, I will suggest that these same mechanisms operate whenever an individual attempts to establish membership in a new social group.
Chapter II
Group Context in the Formation of the Individual:
Sensitizing Concepts

Researchers within the discipline of Sociology have committed significant time and intellectual resources to the issues of the self, role development, group interaction and deviance. As I indicated in the previous chapter, I will attempt to gain insight into the formation of a transitory sense of self and its function in an individual's daily struggle to gain approval and avoid conflict in an environment composed of multiple normative structures. In an attempt to gain perspective, we must draw on the work of previous researchers and the findings which they have recorded. In the following pages, I will attempt to examine and synthesize an overview of this information. This section will include general theoretical models proposed by George Herbert Mead and followers of Symbolic Interaction; theories regarding concept, role, and formation of the self; role development and group interaction; deviance and group norms; and a summary of my procedural methodology.

Mead and Symbolic Interaction

George Herbert Mead laid a foundation for the Symbolic Interaction movement with a variety of writings and lectures. The most famous of these was his book *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. This work was compiled from a series of lectures given at the University of Chicago and unpublished writings by Charles Morris. (Fine & Kleinman 1986 A, p. 131) As the title would indicate, Mead described himself as a Social Behaviorist. From this perspective, he attempted to explain how society imposes its values, customs, and meanings on its individual members.

Mead feels that any social science must be concerned with the process by which the objective social environment enters the experiences of, and affects the behavior of individuals. (Wood & Wardell 1983, p. 87) Mead particularly emphasized the roles of language, gestures, and significant symbols in the transmission of culture. Language is the central component in the organization of any society. (Mead 1934, p. 253) In the next chapter, I will elaborate on Mead's theory as it
relates to the development of the self within the context of division I female college soccer players.

Although they are often closely associated, the theory of Symbolic Interaction (if we can limit it to such a tight definition) is not exhaustively defined by the writings of George Herbert Mead. In fact, the primary contributor to this theoretical framework was probably Herbert Blumer. Blumer and his followers hold to three basic tenets:

(T)hat we know things by their meanings, that meanings are created through social interaction, and that meanings change through interaction. (Fine 1993, p.64)

This statement clarifies the interactionist belief that things have no intrinsic meaning beyond what we bestow on them. It further implies that members of society may exert some sort of intentional control over the objects and symbols which surround them. Mead on the other hand clearly indicates that he believes certain objects and symbols to not only have intrinsic meaning, but also to precipitate action on the part of the socialized actor. For instance, he believes that the symbol of a chair causes a person to go beyond recognition to the actual response of sitting. (Mead 1934, p.58-63) Callero expands on this thought when he says,

According to Mead (1938), all action is defined by an organism's adjustment to its environment, and each act of adjustment can be described in terms of four general stages: impulse, perception, manipulation, and consummation. The impulse stage represents the organism's inherent tendency to act, and as such it produces a searching for stimuli that can "answer" to the impulse. Thus, at the physiological level, food answers to hunger since food represents a stimulus that can satisfy the hunger impulse. (Callero 1986, p.345)

During the perception stage, the actor evaluates the object's ability to actually satisfy the stimulus. Manipulation defines the period of time in which the individual and the object are actually in contact. Consummation will occur if the manipulation stage did in fact satisfy the anticipated stimulus. (Callero 1986 p. 345) For instance, within the framework
of this research topic, a high school player may see a college soccer game. If she sees this team as a possible avenue to satisfy her desire to express her athletic, social, or academic potential, she could be described as being in the impulse stage. Further investigation and reflection upon her role with a particular team would move her into the perception stage. In order to move into the manipulation stage, she must become a member of the team. During this time she will either be frustrated by unrealized hopes and redefine her roles or her relationship with the team, or she will move into the consummation stage by concluding that her initial impulse coincided with the reality of her life as a college soccer player. The difficult part of this whole process lies in the fact that each player brings a different set of expectations with her to preseason and each of these may be different from the expectations of the coach.

In addition to the ambiguities produced by conflicting expectations, we must also consider the slight but often significant interpretational differences various individuals will bring to similar situations, writings, or oral statements. Even within a cohesive group, there will be differences among members. This is sometimes due to the listener's bias and sometimes the fault of the speaker's poor communication skills. (Fine & Kleinman 1986 A, p. 131) Mead has been criticized for writing ambiguously or incompletely in *Mind, Self, and Society* by a number of writers who feel that his ideas are murky or lacking substance. (Fine & Kleinman 1986 A, p. 133-136) Much of his writing in this book, while conversational and easy to read, may be considered to lack the exactness expected in academic works.

While Blumer seems to think that the meaning or significance of an object is created by the collective and Mead indicates that society simply comes to understand the inherent meaning of that object, Gary Alan Fine proposes a sort of middle ground wherein the object and the actor "negotiate" meaning through a process of interaction. The key to understanding and utilizing this perspective lies in a careful analysis of which responses are possible and likely given both the object and the social environment surrounding the actor in a given situation. (Fine 1993, pp. 69-70) I particularly like this perspective's ability to give an explanation as to how meanings can change from time to time and setting to setting. Such flexibility will be crucial to my thoughts on the transitory sense of self.
All of these seemingly contradictory theoretical perspectives combined with the diverse interests of proponents of the Symbolic Interaction perspective have led to harsh words by some writers. This has even led some writers to say that the entire system is astructural in bias. (Wood & Wardell 1983, p. 85) Writers such as Fine and Wood both go to great lengths to defend the position in general and the works of Mead in particular. In my mind, Symbolic Interaction has a great deal to offer in the study of the self and group interaction and it will provide the theoretical foundation for this study.

**Concept and Role of the Self**

As stated earlier, the self is the reflective part of our nature which allows us to enjoy self awareness or self consciousness. Indeed, most of our memories are organized and referenced from the point of view of ourselves. This is evidenced by our use of personal pronouns in narratives of life events. As such, it implies that we remember past events only in reference to ourselves, thus demonstrating a constant, though sometimes unconscious awareness of our own being. Imagine how strange it would sound if we described our day from a third person perspective. One exception to this principle of viewing life from the perspective of the self may be found during periods of intense emotional distress such as when a person is being pursued. He may be so intent on the environment around him that he fails to reflect and conceptualize the experience in terms of personal feelings. (Mead 1934 p. 137) Our language reflects our internal thought process as well as our external mode of communication. This process of seeing the world through the eyes of the individual self may explain why opinions and even recollections of the same event can vary significantly from individual to individual.

It is therefore the self which allows us to understand the concept of social structure and how we fit into it. Issues of assertiveness, leadership, and social interaction are a direct function of the self. I should pause here to make a clarification. Each person is in possession of multiple senses of self which can be applied to various situations. We adapt ourselves to the situation as we understand it and thereby divide our whole self up into multiple selves which will be called upon according to social necessity. (Mead 1934, pp. 142-143) These selves can be called roles. Certainly, the role we play with close friends or family members may not be appropriate with authority figures such as an
employer or a law enforcement official. Therefore, the possession and use of multiple selves is a very useful social construct. In discussing roles, Peter Callero says, that roles are social constructions dependent upon social interaction for existence. (Callero 1986, p.346)

The difficulty arises when we are unfamiliar with a certain situation and cannot select the appropriate self in accordance with social and environmental factors. Everyone can remember a time when they made some sort of careless mistake in allowing a certain aspect of their self to surface at an inappropriate time. Fear of such action is what causes newcomers to a group to tend to be rather reserved until they feel that they understand the norms of the group. Ultimately, the success and enjoyment as well as the group salience and commitment level of a newcomer will depend upon her ability to learn the rules, roles, and norms of the group. (Murrell and Gaertner, 1992)

It should also be understood that the self is more of a process than a substance. (Mead 1934, p. 178) As social conditions change, we are able to redefine our selves in order to adapt. Take for instance the small high school basketball star who decides to attend a major basketball college where she is unable to make the team. She must reevaluate her interest in the sport in order to reduce her frustration level. Her other option would be to harbor a bitter attitude toward the coach or the team in which she portrays herself as the victim of some sort of discrimination. This process of adaptation and role adjustment to external circumstances demonstrates the transitory sense of self. It is in the nature of most people to conform, in most regards, to the society around them. Although conformity is usually mentioned with negative connotations, it is this conformity to group norms which allow society to exist at all. If therefore conformity is so desirable, how can we account for the individuality we see when we study people? The answer lies in the multiple perspectives each individual holds as she attempts to understand and approximate the structure of society. (Mead 1934, p. 201) It should be remembered that social structure is an abstract which can only be seen by observing members of that society. We are each like mirrors which reflect the sum of what is being reflected by the mirrors around us. Society is a framework into which each of our selves are placed both to adjust and be adjusted by that society.
I have so far emphasized what I have called the structures upon which the self is constructed, the framework of the self, as it were. Of course we are not only what is common to all: each one of the selves is different from everyone else; but there has to be such a common structure as I have sketched in order that we may be members of a community at all. We can not be ourselves unless we are also members in whom there is a community of attitudes which control the attitudes of all. (Mead 1934, pp. 163-164)

Therefore, the self serves to let us see ourselves and how we fit into society. This is known as role identity. The struggle for role identity is one of the female college soccer athlete's major preoccupations throughout her college career. What is more, this role will be constantly evolving throughout the four or more years she spends at the university, so she will never completely reach a point where she can find real closure on the issue. Of course, it will be most pronounced among freshmen. They come to the team with no clear understanding of the expectations or customs of their teammates. They are completely unfamiliar with college life and for many of them, life away from their parents. Such an experience would be difficult for any of us even without dealing with the added pressure of extensive training, travel, and competition. This sense of confusion is probably the main reason why very few freshmen are willing to step into a position of vocal leadership even if they are exceptional players and were leaders in high school. There is too much of a risk that they will inadvertently transgress some unspoken norm. Although freshmen are most vulnerable, sophomores, juniors, and even seniors must deal with some level of anxiety about group perception. The very nature of promotion from one class to the next implies a redefined role on the team, so none of the players can ever really stop adjusting their behavior to meet the expectations of the group. As the following sections will demonstrate, each individual class carries with it specific demands and challenges which will require an adjustment in the player's transitory sense of self.

**Formation of the Self**

In a more general sense, Mead says that there are three major processes which go together to form the self. They are language (significant gestures), play, and games.
(Mead 1934, pp. 152-153) These three constructs work in a specific order to bring about the socialization of a child or a primitive. I would take this one step further to say to say that these steps apply as well to any group or individual undergoing a significant change in social structure such as students in college or new players on a team.

Language, or the conversation of gestures, is the most basic and most pervasive component of socialization. Our first interaction with other human beings was based upon gestures. A gesture or symbol is said to be significant when it evokes a common response among most members of a group. (Mead 1934, pp. 45-46) Actions such as a smile, a frown, or a gentle caress would be significant in modern western society. Language is based upon these significant gestures and commonly accepted symbols. Not only is language a necessary component for communication within a group, it is also the tool we use to communicate within ourselves. It would be impossible for us to carry on a train of thought without the use of symbols.

The internalization in our experience of the external conversations of gestures which we carry on with other individuals in the social process is the essence of thinking. (Mead 1934, p.47)

When a person thinks of something such as a chair, he relies upon a representative symbol or word picture involving a chair. Not only does this symbol describe the chair, but also indicates the action of sitting. (Mead 1934, pp. 66-67) Therefore, language defines our ability to conceptualize ideas. The first thing that a newcomer to a group must do is to gain fluency in the language of the group. Until this task is accomplished, she will be unable to understand or communicate with the other members of the group. (Mead 1934, pp. 144-149) This can sometimes be very difficult since gestures which are universal within the group may not be universal or may have an entirely different meaning outside the group.

When freshmen arrive in August for preseason training, they are responsible to learn all necessary terminology needed to communicate academically, socially, and athletically. This terminology could include locations of buildings, tactical concepts, or procedural jargon. They must also relearn certain symbols pertaining to positional responsibility if their former teams played a different style. The most obvious example of
this is the player's understanding of the position known as "sweeper". Many youth teams use this player as a pure defender who prefers to tackle hard and send long clearances up the field. Most colleges, on the other hand, use the sweeper as a skilled position with a responsibility to stay on her feet and begin to build a controlled attack out of the back much as a point guard would in basketball. Time must be spent learning that old interpretations of symbols may no longer be appropriate. Much of this time is spent watching game film and defining the expectations which the new players are expected to meet. Watching film in this manner with a coach to supervise the exercise allows a new player to observe older players and either imitate success or avoid replicating failure. Another area which often requires new definition is work rate. All players receive a guideline for summer workouts in May and are expected to come into preseason in shape. It is interesting in November to hear the freshmen describe how they interpreted those guidelines before they arrived and how they would interpret them after their first season. Most of them laugh at their understanding of an intense workout before they came to college. Herein, we see a change in the player's interpretation of language.

The second major socializing action is the play stage. Mead describes play as an activity which a child uses to explore or try on various roles or identities. This play is often an individual activity wherein the child may act out multiple roles as if he is carrying on a conversation with himself. It may be that of a mother, an Indian, a policeman, or any other character in the child's imagination. (Mead 1934, pp. 150-151) Imitation is the key element in the play stage. Through the process of imitation, the child is able to experiment with various selves and see how they fit together. Just as we may sometimes rehearse what we plan to say to someone by imagining how the conversation may proceed, a child rehearses how she will interact with the world by role playing multiple parts. Such behavior is also common in religious ceremonies and primitive rituals. (Mead 1934, pp. 152-154)

Perhaps the most obvious indicator of the play stage is the transience of the role identities a child experiences. Therefore, I contend that the first year or two of the college athlete's career can be likened to the play stage. The student will try on many "different hats" during her freshman and sophomore years. On the team it is likely that she will change positions several times before establishing the one which is best suited to her
abilities. Imagination and dreams will be the driving forces during this period. At the same time, they will probably experiment with several different possible majors before they settle into their chosen field of study. Likewise, their social lives will be marked by multiple casual friendships as they search for long term compatible relationships. Although this sounds unpleasant, it is this time of flux which allows the young woman to begin to define her sense of self consciousness in terms of the generalized other. Karen Prager performed a study on identity development and self esteem in college age women and found some interesting results. Her study tested for the presence or absence of a crisis or questioning period and for the presence or absence of commitment to an identity. Using these criteria, her subjects were put into four classifications as follows:

(a) Achievement- the person has been through a crisis period and made ensuing commitments; (b) Moratorium- the person is actively engaged in a crisis with vague commitments only; (c) Foreclosure- strong commitments have been made without going through a crisis period; (d) Diffusion- the person is neither actively involved in a crisis nor making strong commitments. (Prager 1982, pp. 177-179)

The group showing the highest scores in self esteem was the achievement group. The lowest group was moratorium. (Prager 1982, pp. 177-179) This would tend to indicate that a person who is under stress without a clear sense of self will experience low self esteem, whereas the person who has come through a difficult time and established a clearer sense of role identity will enjoy high self esteem. Most freshmen and some sophomores probably live in the moratorium stage to one degree or another. The typical junior or senior will be moving into or existing in the achievement stage in most areas of their life. This would be demonstrated by the ability to clearly define their academic goals (major), athletic responsibilities, and social responsibilities. Some degree of the transience seen in the play stage must be left behind in order to be in this achievement category.

The final stage in the socialization process is the game stage. This stage will be marked by a greater degree of organization and rigidity than the play stage. It would
include such games as hide and seek or tag as well as most team sports. Although the child will still be acting out a role, he or she will not be at liberty to change that role at will.

If we contrast play with the situation in an organized game, we note the essential difference that the child in the game must be willing to take the attitude of everyone else involved in the game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other…In his game he has to have an organization of these roles; otherwise he cannot play the game. The game represents the passage in the life of the child from taking the role of others in play to the organized part that is essential to self-consciousness in the fullest sense of the term. (Mead 1934 pp. 151-152)

If the play stage can be compared to a costume fitting, the game stage can be compared to a dress rehearsal. During this stage, a person learns how to adjust to various roles in relationship to other people. Only through this interaction will the child achieve true self-consciousness by comparing role identities. We should note that this would include unpleasant role identities such as "it" in the game of tag. This ability to perform an undesirable role in order to achieve a desired goal will be the foundation for success financially, athletically, academically, and socially. Further, it is this process of identity comparison through the game which allows a person to evaluate himself critically. It is from the actions of others on the individual and the actions of the individual on others that self-consciousness is achieved. (Mead 1934, p. 171)

It is most common to see this stage of socialization in juniors and seniors on the soccer team. By this time, they have a good idea of the role they will play on the team and they endeavor to develop these identities. They should have established a position and a role on the team. It may not be the role which they would have chosen, but it is one which gives them a secure place in the group. It is during this time that dreams are often traded for security. This is a time of goal adjustment and accommodation. It is also a time where leadership begins to emerge. Many younger athletes look to their older counterparts to set an example for them to follow through their formative years.
After a difficult period of transition, the upper class player is usually eager to assert herself and enjoy the increased prestige which comes with stability. Consistency through difficult times is expected of these players. This is one reason that high pressure positions such as goalkeeper are usually reserved for upperclassmen.

As we have discussed the effect of sport participation in the socialization of college women the question arises: How does the action of playing varsity soccer make a difference in comparison with the non-athlete? Henschen, Edwards, and Mathinos performed a study on achievement motivation in female athletes versus non-athletes and found a significantly higher level of achievement motivation among the athletes. (Henschen, Edwards, & Mathinos 1982, pp. 183-186) Although this study was on high school track athletes rather than college soccer players, I believe that the results can be generalized to our population. If in fact the generalization is valid, participation in varsity soccer could give the players a great advantage over their peers both in school and in the workplace. However, a more recent study by Finkenburg, Mitchell, and Weems indicated that there was no significant difference in self esteem between elite female athletes and the general population of women in their age group. (Finkenburg, Mitchell, & Weems 1991, pp. 509-510) It is obvious that further research is needed to answer these questions and understand the full effects of participation in varsity athletics on the college level in regard to personality formation. This research should begin with a better understanding of the role played by cohort peer groups on the behavior of the individual.

**Role Development and Group Interaction**

In order to create and maintain functional awareness, individuals must understand their roles within society. In particular, they must recognize the expectations placed upon them by each of the small groups with which they interact. Peter Callero says:

> Recognizing that roles are social objects establishes two important defining characteristics from a Meadian perspective. First, it establishes that roles are social constructions dependent upon social interaction for existence. And second, it establishes that roles are stable
and objectively real features of the social structure which are recognized and used by all members of a community.

(Callero 1986, p. 346)

Therefore, Callero would contend that individuals must adopt a role which is recognized and accepted by society at large before they can become a functional member. These roles will be the product of interaction with other members of society. Mead's discussion of language acquisition supports such a claim. Individuals must adhere to the expectations of society in order to find meaning. (Fine 1993, p. 70)

The concept of society replicating culture in its young members is a cornerstone of modern sociology which is particularly evident in the study of social psychology. The term "culture", however is rather vague and difficult to apply in anything other than the most general of senses. For this reason, most writers have abandoned the attempt to describe the culture of a given group. (Fine 1979 A, p. 733) In an attempt to study the effect of a group on an individual without becoming mired down in the difficulties of defining culture, Gary Fine has narrowed his analysis to the study of small interaction groups and introduced the term idioculture. (Fine 1979, pp.733-734) It refers to the micro-cultural values held and espoused by these groups. Such values may or may not reflect the perceived cultural norms of society at large.

This narrowed view of culture is particularly useful as we observe the behavior of individuals moving from one contextual group to another. Rather than attempting to predict or explain the behavior of an individual in reference to their age, race, gender, or nationality, we would attempt to understand their actions in light of the social and cultural groups to which they adhere. The shared understanding of significant symbols is made possible by the existence of cultural institutions. (Fine & Ross, 1984 p.237) Such cultural institutions may be obvious organizations such as schools, churches, or day care centers, or subtle such as art museums, sport teams, or interest clubs. Such organizations are commonly accepted tools of social preservation. (Macleod 1983, pp. 15-27) Fine chose little league baseball teams as his unit of analysis. (Fine 1986 B, p. 63) Within these teams, he studied the formation and maintenance of negotiated orders. (Fine 1984 p. 241) These negotiated orders include formal rules as well as "understood" customs and expected ranges of behavior. (Strauss 1978, pp. 5-6) This would imply that while some
facets of a cultural convention may be rather constant, others may be subject to change when the group encounters new members or situations. Observation of the members of a division I women’s soccer team records both overt and covert components in the negotiated order.

The selection of athletic teams as a unit of analysis for the observation of societal reproduction is particularly useful due to the exact nature of its membership, the existence of publicly expressed common goals, and the need to regularly repeat the socialization process as new members are added or veterans finish their careers. Such teams combine the two crucial elements of task orientation and socioemotional orientation. (Fine 1979, p. 735) They give us a chance to compare their subcultural parameters with the expected parameters of the macro society in which they exist. (Williams 1989, p. 315) Fine says,

Members construct meanings given a set of social constraints which are perceived as affecting the boundaries of acceptable behavior. (Fine 1979, p. 738)

Any such group must expend energy to develop mechanisms capable of educating new members and enforcing standards within the organization. (Blankenship 1973, pp. 89-91) In many cases, these sport teams are even created with the goal of socializing young people and teaching them "values". Such federal programs as Midnight Basketball and the Special Olympics as well as many recreational leagues are evidence of how we attempt to use sport as a vehicle of cultural input rather than simple entertainment or exercise. Eric Dunning has gone so far as to say that the primary function of sport is the promotion of civilization. (Dunning 1994, pp. 331-333) Sport not only helps to form society, but is also a good indicator of cultural priorities and traditions. (Akindutire, 1992, pp. 27-32)

In addition to gaining an understanding of the role played by small groups in the socialization of individuals, we must also attempt to understand the mechanisms employed by these groups to maintain and enforce their normative structures. Without such an understanding, it is impossible to understand how individuals determine which structural values to follow in a situation of conflict. The following section will explore some of these mechanisms.
Deviance & Group Norms

Although much has been written about the power of groups to influence their members, more attention needs to be focused on the struggle faced by members as they move between different groups or as their role within a group changes over time. Fine briefly addresses this issue when he mentions the effect of multiple idiocultures or latent cultures on individuals. (Fine 1979, p.738) This tug of war between multiple group identities causes an individual to make conscious and unconscious decisions regarding the primacy of role demands on a daily basis. In general, we tend to regard a person who can smoothly transition from one role identity to another as mature and well balanced. Fine discussed the struggle faced by young boys in this regard when he said,

By preadolescence, the boy is a part of several social worlds: same-sex groups, cross-sex interaction, school, and family life. Each of these settings requires a different standard of behavior. Because there is not a total segregation of the child's life with friends from that with parents, parents tend to be aware of boy's awfulness, even if they are unaware of the details. (Fine 1986, p. 63)

The conflict derives from the fact that the preadolescent has neither the right nor the ability to keep these two spheres of social life separate. (Fine 1986, p. 63)

Such conflicts, while differing in content are present in the everyday lives of all people. As Fine suggested, our most difficult moments are those in which we find ourselves attempting to reconcile two contradictory sets of social demands. The women on a college soccer team are torn between the diverse poles of coaches, athletic peers, non-athletic peers, family, academic personnel, and, in the case of graduates, employers. (Figure 2:1) When these groups differ in their expectations, the players must choose who to follow and who to disappoint. I feel that this decision will be made using the factors of group salience, and group proximity. For instance, the college student who is cohabitating with a significant other may decide to temporarily rearrange her living conditions if her conservative parents come to visit. Although the salience of her parental
normative structure is low, the proximity of her mother and father may cause her to adhere to their value system until they depart.

All groups seek to ensure their viability and establish some sort of punitive measures to control the behavior of their members. Such measures promote group cohesion. (Kellerman 1981 pp. 3-11) These measures range from official sanctions such as suspension or dismissal to unofficial sanctions such as ostracization or group ridicule. My research will attempt to see how the various social groups interacting with the players attempt to exert influence. Each of these authority structures will determine a set of standards and "label" any transgression as deviance. In this sense, deviance can be seen as a socially constructed condition. (Jorgensen pp. 232-242) Becker says,

Deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (Becker 1963, p. 9)
Such a definition makes no attempt to qualify any particular behavior as having an intrinsic degree of morality or immorality. In essence, it is a value free system which observes the action of a group to determine deviance. It is particularly interesting to see how individuals deal with conflicting normative systems.

Some interesting research has been done concerning the effect of a label on an individual. There is evidence to support the position that people will tend to respond in accordance with the label which has been applied to them. (Palamara, Cullen, & Gersten 1986, pp. 90-92) This study demonstrated a positive correlation between the application of a deviant label by authority figures and further deviant behavior among juveniles. Apparently, people are so eager to define who they are that they will accept even a negative label if it will assist them in identity development. Sometimes such labels are even self-attached if an individual feels that they are not meeting the expectations of their peers or the generalized other. (Thotis 1985, pp.221-222)

**Procedural Methodology**

The preceding discussions of deviance, self, and symbolic interaction provide a structural foundation for the research segment of this project. It will attempt to determine if and how such theoretical principles apply to actual members of a small group as they attempt to assimilate and balance the normative structures imposed by competing authority structures. It will also explore the role of maturation in a group on this decision making process.

My research was conducted with the women's soccer team at a large division I university in the eastern United States during two consecutive seasons. I was a participant observer in the role of an assistant coach. During this time period, I have spent an average of fifty-hours each week involved with my subjects. My research was comprised of direct observation of thirty-two players, one manager, four athletic trainers, and four coaches.

My responsibilities have included the planning and implementation of practices, the assessment and recruitment of players, coaching in games, advising players academically, and performing day to day administrative duties. I refer to these activities to demonstrate that I have experienced extensive involvement with the players and staff.
on multiple interactional levels for a significant period of time. During my tenure at the university, I have also participated in multiple in depth intellectual dialogs concerning behavioral motivation with players, managers, assistant coaches, and of course the head coach. Throughout the duration of the project he has proven to be both supportive and insightful. Collaborative dialog with players and coaches from other division I universities in the eastern United States has tended to support the generalizability of my findings. Although they have not participated in formal research studies, their perceptions of individual and group behavior seem to be consistent with my observations.

As the academic advisor for the team, I conducted weekly individual meetings with all freshmen and any other student who experienced scholastic difficulty. During these meetings we evaluated their academic progress and the factors which helped or hindered them in the pursuit of a degree and a high QCA. Of course such verbal interactions often developed into critiques of issues such as social life, family pressure, financial concerns, and athletic success. Notes taken during these interviews recording the player's concerns and commitments will provide a significant number of the basic structural components necessary to construct a longitudinal description of the group's self reported behavior.

As a field coach, I spent a great deal of time with each of the players both in large group and individual settings. As I assisted in the implementation of the head coach's game strategies, I was privileged to gain an insider's perspective concerning each athlete's response to a variety of social, athletic, and academic situations. It was of interest to note that while all of the players were compliant with the coach's wishes most of the time, there was a significant amount of passive resistance when his plans called for some sort of perceived sacrifice in other facets of their lives. Regular meetings were held with each player during which the women were evaluated and asked to describe their personal experiences as athletes, students, and members of the academic community. These meetings were held at the conclusion of each fall and spring season. Records are kept on file in the soccer office concerning the content of these meetings and will be a valuable source of information as I develop an analysis concerning the changing patterns of thought, action, and emotional conflict faced by the players over a two year period.
Participation in these meetings often elevated my understanding of behavioral motivation and precipitated theoretical evolution.

In addition to the notes and insights collected during these meetings, this research will take advantage of annual self-descriptive essays written by each member of my subject pool. Each player was asked to write short voluntary essays which would assess their self-perceived role on the team and the factors which have influenced the formation of that role. Players responded to a series of questions about their experiences on the team. (Figure 2:2) The answers given shed light on the socio/emotional struggles and priorities faced by the players on a day to day basis. Since these questions are administered each fall, they have served as a valuable tool for observing longitudinal development within the team.

**Figure 2:2**

**Player Self Analysis Questions**

The following questions are intended to help us understand you better and to provide a point of focus for you to better understand yourself as a student-athlete. Please answer the questions thoroughness and honesty. Use as much space on separate pages as you need to deal with each question.

1. What are your goals as a soccer player?
2. How would you define the term "risk"? How does it relate to you as a student and a soccer player?
3. What does the term "responsibility" mean to you as a student and an athlete?
4. What is meant by "reward" and how does it affect you?
5. What does the word "challenge" mean and how does it make you feel?
6. Define the word "attitude" as it relates to you.
7. What does the word "purpose" mean to you as a student-athlete?
8. How does the term "balance" apply to your life at school?
9. What is meant by "giving back" and how do you deal with this concept?
10. What is required for you to have "peace within yourself"?
11. Do you feel that you are able to give an honest appraisal of yourself? Explain.
12. Choose an animal that you feel best represents you and explain why.
In addition to notes gathered from academic counseling, individual player meetings, and player self-evaluation essays, I have prepared multiple academic documents and presentations for various courses summarizing my observations in a regular fashion. These projects will serve as valuable data in the compilation of my findings.

As a participant observer, I witnessed the maturation of the team from both an individual and a group perspective. The nature and duration of my position has allowed me to develop a personal relationship with each of the players which would not be possible for an outside observer. Unfortunately, along with this close relationship comes the possibility of developed bias and unintentional interference with the socialization of my subjects. However, even factoring in these limitations, I feel that the research performed and the findings reached in this project could be instrumental in furthering the body of knowledge concerning the mechanisms employed by small groups as they socialize their members and deal with the competitive and sometimes adversarial effects of other small groups.

The nature of my position has precluded me from taking immediate and detailed field notes during many of my interactional contacts, so much of my work will rely upon the notes mentioned above, notes taken during or after coaching staff meetings, and personal reflection to add color to some significant events. Frequent reiteration and analysis of my observations and developing theories with other graduate students, professors, and coaches has sharpened and reified these reflections.

In order to obtain a higher degree of reliability, I have completed my data collection by administering a series of loosely structured in depth interviews with most of the members of the 1997-1998 soccer team. All of the members of this group were invited to participate. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and were conducted in a loose, open-ended manner which allowed the participants to elaborate on their experiences. (Figure 2:3) After conducting each interview and taking notes, I immediately summarized the answers in a brief report in order to guard against memory loss or distortion. After collecting these closing summaries, I evaluated the results in relation to my other sources.
Figure 2:3
Closing Interview

The following questions will serve as a loose guide for a series of closing interviews which I will conduct with all willing members of the 1997-1998 Women's Soccer team. Results will be kept confidential and names will be changed if any of the players are quoted in my findings. I will take notes of the player's responses during the interviews.

1. What year are you in school?

2. What are the major activities or groups that take up most of your time on a regular basis?

3. Describe a time in which you felt conflict between these groups.

4. How did you resolve it?

5. What do you think a typical high school senior expects from their freshman year of college?

6. How will this differ from what they will encounter when they actually become freshmen?

7. What is the hardest part of being a freshman?

8. What are the major challenges and goals faced by sophomores?

9. What are the major challenges and goals faced by juniors?

10. What are the major challenges and goals faced by seniors?

11. What are the major challenges and goals faced by graduates?

12. Describe any special challenges faced by female athletes?

Each member of the team has been made aware of my role as a researcher and a coach. They were informed that that while every effort will be made to protect their anonymity, it is conceivable that one of their teammates, coaches, parents, or friends may recognize them from the context of the final paper. Each of them understood these conditions and demonstrated their willingness to participate in the study by signing
agreements of informed consent. (Figure 2:4) Pseudonyms are used in all reported findings.

**Figure 2:4**

**Agreement of Voluntary Participation & Confidentiality**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study of players on a division I female college soccer team. Your input will be very valuable in the completion of my thesis. Please remember that your participation is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or terminate your participation at any time without any penalty or pressure. Your privacy will be protected at all times and your name will not be used in any presentation (written or oral) of my findings. Once again, thank you for your help in this project.

Sincerely,

Andy Rice
Department of Sociology
__________________________University

I ____________________________ have read the above agreement of voluntary participation and confidentiality and agree to participate under these conditions.

____________________________
Signature

____________________________
Date
If I were to begin this project again or engage in further research in a related area, I would attempt to enrich the above sources of data collection with daily journal entries. Such a journal would assist in the observation of consistent behavioral patterns which I may otherwise miss. Further research should also include introductory interviews designed to formulate a base line description of the subjects. Such information would later be compared to the content of their closing interviews to see what, if any, significant changes had occurred.
Chapter III  
Dynamics of Negotiated Role Construction

The preceding chapter provides a broad theoretical discussion of the self, deviance, the social role of group interaction, and the procedural methodology employed in this study. This chapter will attempt to explore the role of these constructs in the development of negotiated orders and behavioral patterns. It will discuss negotiation between groups, deviant conformity, issues faced by female athletes, and adaptation across time.

Negotiation Between Groups

All members of a complex society interact within multiple normative systems and attempt to minimize the inherent cognitive dissidence by prioritizing the demands of each group. This process represents an ongoing evaluation of the individual's role within the group and the salience of that group in relation to others. Factors which greatly influence this process are proximity, duration of membership, and perceived influence within the group. As stated in the preceding chapter, the primary normative authority sources in the life of a division I female college soccer player are: coach, parents/family, professors, friends, and, in the case of graduates, employers. This chapter will deal with specific negotiational issues and situations affecting the lives of the players in my study.

Deviant Conformity

The study of deviant behavior in social organizations is one of the primary concentrations of study in the field of Sociology. Perhaps this is because an understanding of deviance is the best way to understand collective norms. We often define the rule by understanding the exceptions. Unfortunately, this becomes somewhat difficult when social groups overlap. This occurs when individuals are required to meet multiple, sometimes contradictory, sets of expectations at the same time. Such conflicts force them to prioritize their roles and choose between competing sets of norms.

Studies of normative group behavior often presuppose that deviant behavior is nothing more than the transgression of some arbitrary rule which can change from time to time or from situation to situation. In other words, there is no hard definition of right or wrong. It is merely a construction maintained by a social group for a given period of time. Deviant behavior is nothing more than participation in an action which is defined as
deviant. Such definitions or normative structures can be derived from a variety of formal and informal authority sources. When normative definitions change, an individual may gain or lose deviant status without changing her behavior. Individuals have the ability to negotiate their status as deviants. For example, a person who holds deviant status under one normative system may prioritize a second social structure where their actions are viewed as normal. In some cases it may be necessary for them to disassociate themselves from the original group. In other cases they may be able to maintain their membership in both systems by accepting the fact that they must sometimes bear the consequences of being classified as a deviant by one or both of their social groups.

Structural-Functionalism offers some understanding of how labels can change over time. Proponents of this theory hold that each social group will establish norms which coincide with the norms of society in general. These norms will be passed on to new members in order to facilitate positive action within the group. These norms will be replicated until they are no longer effective or until a member devises something better. New ideas will be considered deviant at first, but if they are adopted by the majority of the group they will come to represent the new consensus norm. This provides an almost bioevolutionary type of adaptation mechanism for cultural survival. In short, groups will adopt and maintain labels which they feel demonstrate pragmatic value until such time that those labels no longer seem to be effective in obtaining their goals.

A large cause of stress in modern society is the cognitive dissonance experienced by individuals attempting to integrate two or more sets of competing normative systems into their lives. We live in a complex network of cultural norms and value hierarchies in which we must constantly evaluate the relative authority of each in order to select appropriate or inappropriate behavior. This dilemma of reconciling various sets of expectations is part of the every day life of a division I female college soccer player. They are torn between the following five primary authority groups: their coach, their professors, their teammates, their families, and their non-soccer friends. Each of these actors exerts force in a certain direction consistent with their overriding objective(s). Unfortunately, these objectives may be quite different in many situations. This forces players not only to learn five normative paradigms, but also to synthesize or attempt to
rank order them. The inevitable result is the experience of internal and external conflict on a frequent basis.

As an applied problem, this compels coaches to find a way to prioritize their objectives in the eyes of the athletes. They must sell their program to their players and minimize the influence of other actors in order to produce a stable training and playing environment. Such concerns are magnified in the female game due to the relative value of peer reinforcement. Although male players are also responsive to peer pressure, they generally derive a larger portion of their identity from their athletic achievement than from the opinions of their teammates. How then can a coach convince his players to make his instructions their primary source of social guidance?

As mentioned above, players must make decisions when normative structures conflict. They must negotiate their status within each of these groups in order to minimize conflict and avoid prolonged status as a deviant. In order to understand these decisions, we must understand the demands placed on the players by official and unofficial sources.

As with any social group, the players will establish their own definition of "normal" and deviant behavior. This definition will be formulated by an amalgam of official and unofficial norms. The official norms will be defined by the coaches, the professors, and the university administrators. The unofficial norms will be formulated by the collective values of teammates, family members, and non-soccer friends. In order for a player to evaluate the priority of these norms, she must first define her role on the team. The players must adapt themselves to various situations by dividing their whole selves into multiple selves which will be called upon according to social necessity.(Mead 1934, pp. 142-143) These selves can be called roles.

Coach's Norms (Official)

The primary responsibility of a head coach is to produce winning teams and successful students for the university. Toward this end, the NCAA allows a division I women's program a maximum of twelve full scholarships and up to twenty hours per week of practice time during season. Such restrictions compel coaches to maximize the contribution of every player in their program. Since the achievement and maintenance of
a winning record is a coach's only real means of achieving a measure of job security, it is imperative that he or she convince the players to prioritize their roles as athletes. The expectations of the coach comprise the "official" norms and deviance labels which apply to the players on the team.

One of the first things that a coach must instill in the team is an attitude of self-sacrifice for the good of the group. Her most difficult task may be the establishment of a common role identity. The salience of this group identity is a strong predictor of eventual team success. We have all heard the famous saying, "There is no "I" in "Team". By this the coach means that each individual must elevate the team's success above her own personal success. It should be stressed that the coach is referring to team success as any action which would increase the team's chances of achieving victory on the playing field both in an immediate and in a long term perspective. This implies that the players are expected to place athletic and academic goals above such things as social and financial goals. Such expectations create a set of norms complete with specific definitions of deviant and non-deviant behavior.

In addition to the prioritization of team success over individual desires, the coach also demands that each player contribute maximum effort to all soccer related activities. For instance, each player is expected to devote a great deal of time and effort to maximizing their personal strength and conditioning. The university I observed and many other division I programs make use of full time strength and conditioning coaches. The players are required to spend a certain amount of time with these coaches each week. It is expected that the players not only work with this coach, but that they give maximum effort each time that they work out. Of course it is easier to monitor attendance than it is to measure effort. In addition to official work done with the conditioning staff, the players are required to maintain and improve their fitness during the summer. They are each given programs to follow which include weight lifting, running, plyometrics, and ball work. They are responsible for following this program with maximum effort and in order to maximize their contribution to the team.

Division I players are also expected to compete to their fullest ability in practice and in games. Given the limited recruiting budget, the coach relies on his players to live up to their potential and to push their teammates to perform. Players are expected to fight
for positions and be prepared to play any position when the coach sends them into a game.

All of the girls are furthermore expected to follow tactical plans even if they think that their own plans are better than those of the coaching staff. While it is recognized that each of the players brings with them a successful playing resume and a varied coaching background, they must each be willing to subjugate personal views for the good of the team. The players must trust the coach to use her great experience to build a successful team. I observed the head coach spending many hours reviewing tape, devising lineups, and making plans for upcoming games. It is natural that he should expect the players to follow his instructions closely.

During one match, I observed a severe conflict in this area. One of the starting players was injured and unable to play. After a great deal of consideration and film analysis, the coach adjusted the line-up in preparation for a crucial conference game. The conflict arose when two players decided to override the coach’s decision and switch positions. At the end of the game, their decision contributed to a 4-1 loss. The coach was quite upset and voiced this displeasure to the staff and the players. The offending players were severely reprimanded and made to understand the gravity of their transgression in front of the entire team. The public nature of this reprimand was intended to punish the players and to instill respect for coaching decisions among other team members. This is a clear example of individuals who attempt to reconcile differences by intentionally relegating one normative structure in preference of another.

Academic Norms (Official)

Since the players are all student athletes, they must also spend considerable time engaged in academic pursuits. The NCAA demands that they be enrolled in a minimum of twelve hours of classes and maintain a minimum QCA correspondent to their educational status in order to practice, compete, or receive scholarship money. In addition to meeting eligibility requirements, most of the players are good students with a strong desire to graduate with a marketable degree from the university. These objectives can only be met if the players are willing to place the demands of their professors above their own desires. For instance, students are often forced to postpone recreational activities in
order to complete assignments or to prepare for tests. Although most professors are very sympathetic to the time and travel responsibilities faced by varsity athletes, they are also expected to cover a specific curriculum with equitable grading standards. This means that the student athletes must often keep long hours and study in less than ideal conditions in order to meet the demands of their professors.

The coach at this particular university works closely with the academic officials and supports all efforts to help his players succeed in the classroom as well as on the field. He requires everyone to report their grades to the soccer office as they are received. All first semester freshmen as well as any player who is having academic difficulty must participate in a support program which includes ten hours per week of supervised study hall, weekly counseling sessions, completion of daily study logs, weekly meetings with all professors, and mandatory tutors in all difficult classes. All of these measures are in place to help players integrate academic norms into their lives.

Jennifer is a player on the team with a strong dedication to excellence in the classroom. This has sometimes led to conflicts with the team over scheduling priorities. She complained to me after one of the games this fall due to a perceived lack of playing time. When I told her that she needed to improve her individual technical skills through increased individual training she replied, "Then I guess I can't improve." When I asked her to explain this statement, she said that her academic demands left no time for individual practice outside the team. She was torn between what she perceived to be incommensurable differences. During the spring season Jennifer demonstrated her commitment to academic excellence by electing to withdraw from the soccer team for eighteen weeks in order to bolster her QCA and to concentrate on some very difficult classes. She intends to return to the team in the fall. Although she is a talented player, she has made a long term commitment to academic and professional goals over athletic and social goals.

Other players elevate their athletic pursuits above their academic responsibilities. This is most prevalent during the freshman year as the player attempts to integrate her obligations into a demanding schedule. For this reason, the soccer office and the academic advising center pay particular attention to the first year students. They are considered high risk students. Recognizing the potential for academic difficulty, many
universities now provide these students the option to "freshman rule" or remove up to six hours of unsatisfactory grades earned during the freshman year from their QCA. Although freshmen experience the greatest amount of academic difficulty, it is not uncommon for older students to neglect their studies when they are confronted with complex interactional decisions. One of the older players recently allowed her grades to drop significantly during one semester due to social involvements. She was placed on the academic support program and has subsequently elevated her semester QCA to above a 3.5.

Player Norms (Unofficial)

Upon entering college, the freshmen must alter her role identity from that of a very successful high school recruit to that of an untried social newcomer. Consistent with expectation, most freshmen and transfer students tend to avoid social embarrassment by quietly following the example of the upperclassmen. Most younger athletes look to their older counterparts in order to set an example for them to follow through their formative years. (Whitaker & Molstad 1988, p. 556) In this manner, group mores are passed on from one class to the next. The first of these mores, and the primary ingredient in the continuance of the social system, is a respect for seniority. One of the more interesting examples of this occurred during the first five weeks of one season.

Mary was a very talented freshman goalkeeper who arrived in preseason with the ability to gain a starting position. Susan, a senior and Jill, a junior were her competition. Neither of them had performed well enough during the preceding season to ensure a starting spot in the goal. During preseason, Mary established that she was the number one keeper within a few days. She was working hard and playing consistently against strong competition. The coach was quite pleased with her play. Although there were rough edges in her game, we felt that she would overcome these with training and would develop into an outstanding keeper. Unfortunately however, about three weeks into season we noticed a sharp decrease in Mary's confidence and performance level. Recognizing that she was a young player subject to inconsistency and slumps, we were not alarmed at first. It was not until the season was half way completed that we brought Mary into the office to discuss her situation. During our meeting Mary confessed that
some of the older players had come to her and "suggested" that she back down a little bit and allow Susan to enjoy her senior year. When given the choice between group acceptance and self actualization, Mary chose group acceptance. Of course by the time we discovered this, Susan and Jill had both gained momentum and taken the position away from the freshman. Mary has since admitted that her attitude was not acceptable and understands the damage that she has done to her status on the team. This situation has forced the coach to recruit another keeper for next year. Needless to say, the coach will attempt to inoculate this new keeper against such tactics before she arrives in the fall.

In addition to issues of seniority, players also define trends in such areas as dress, vocabulary, and even food preferences. While these may seem like minor issues, they can develop into serious concerns. One of the collective concerns among the players at this university is the fat content of various foods. One player named Laura said very bluntly, "Fat is the enemy". She expressed great concern about her diet. She reported feeling that dietary concerns are the greatest challenge faced by female athletes. In a general sense, this concern is shared by the coaching staff. There is however a problem when this concern for a healthy diet grows into potential eating disorders. We must be vigilant observers of any player who seems to be loosing an inappropriate amount of weight. The prevalence of anorexia is a concern to all coaches in the women's game. This is not to imply that it is a team norm to adopt eating disorders, but merely that a demand for fat free living can lead to a dangerous misunderstanding.

Parents and Relatives (Unofficial)

A second source of unofficial pressure comes from parents and relatives. They often attempt to influence players toward goals which are contrary to the goals of the coaching staff. The most common interference is in the form of subtle maneuvering for scholarship dollars, playing time, or positional changes. They typically compare their daughter's play to that of her teammates and convince her that the coach is trying to take advantage of her by paying or playing her less than she is worth. After a prolonged period of such negative input, the player may come to believe that she is being mistreated and develop a bad attitude. This happened with one of our star players. Her name is Angela. In spite of the fact that she is receiving significant scholarship, her parents continually
complained and pressured her to confront the coach. When these tactics failed, she went to the players and tried to build support for a complaint to the athletic director. The athletic director supported the coach by promptly offered to sign Angela's release papers if she was unhappy. Needless to say, Angela's play suffered while she was going through this period of time. She has since attempted to distance herself from such coercive efforts and has regained her former standard of play.

Another player, Rhonda is a very skillful forward. In the fall of 1996, we were playing a two game road series. On Saturday, she found herself in a one on one situation with the opposing goalkeeper. She acted like she was going to shoot, but when the keeper committed she calmly changed directions and dribbled into the goal. On Sunday a similar situation developed. This time however, instead of scoring the easy goal, Rhonda blasted the ball into the keeper for a wasted opportunity. We were all puzzled about why she decided to take such a low percentage shot when she had so effectively solved the situation previously. When we later asked her to explain her thought process, she said that her sister had spoken to her after Saturday's game and had criticized her for making the keeper look stupid. She said that such behavior was unbecoming. Rhonda's confusion was the result of her attempt to reconcile her family's norms with the expectations of the coach. When players refuse to score goals because they are afraid of making their opponents look foolish, there is a problem in their perception of deviant behavior.

Peers (Unofficial)

The final major actors in the equation are the player's non-soccer friends. This is a particularly difficult force to counteract. They have little to no interest in the true well being of the girls as athletes. Their primary objective is social accomplishment. Parties, vacations, dating, and social functions occupy a significant part of their time. According to their perspective, athletes are deviant if they do not participate fully in such "typical" college activities. One of our starting players quit the team at the end of the due to a desire to spend more time in pursuit of social rewards. Others, while remaining members of the team, have opted to neglect academic pursuits or to minimize their athletic commitment in such pursuits. Just as they struggle balancing academics and soccer, freshmen have a difficult time reconciling the demands of coaches and professors with
the natural desire to establish new friends and social networks. Since they have not firmly established their role identities at this point, they report sometimes feeling helpless to resist peer pressure even if they would rather not participate in a given activity. Unfortunately, many of these friends demonstrate minimal interest in academic or athletic excellence, so the team members must evaluate opportunities and act in the presence of conflicting normative structures.

These friends may place pressure on the girls to act more "feminine" and less like a jock. One of the players, Carolyn, has demonstrated a consistent pattern of minimal performance in the weight room out of a fear that she would become muscular and unattractive. Although she would lift on her scheduled days, she would minimize her effort and lift as little as the coaches would permit. Such behavior has lead to her being pushed off the ball in games. This limits her playing time and her effectiveness in games. Melody, a senior reported that she and many other players had felt the same way when they initiated their training in the weight room. Of particular concern was the perception that people who lifted hard would develop large muscular legs. Melody says that she is just now coming to realize that these fears are groundless.

Older players have usually resolved much of this dissidence by selecting friends who are supportive or at the least sympathetic to the demands of the athletic and academic programs. This, to a large degree, explains the natural tendency of individuals to surround themselves with others of like interest. As we homogenize the dictates of the normative structures within which we interact, we will minimize the cognitive dissidence with which we must contend.

Female Athletes

Conventional wisdom implies that women are more social in nature and therefore more malleable to the influence of social pressure than are their male counterparts. This section of my thesis will examine the unique contextual environment in which the female athlete exists. In the final analysis, I suspect that the differences in the socialization of men and women will be more a matter of degree than process. Having said this, we will examine female athletes in reference to their teammates, their peers, and society in general.
My subject pool is comprised entirely of female athletes seeking to establish equilibrium between competing social forces. Although I would predict similar results in multi-gendered or male only groups, this composition should simultaneously eliminate some potential extraneous factors and isolate the behavioral characteristics of a population believed to place a particularly high value on social inclusion. Further study and analysis of multiple diverse groups is required to determine the validity of this supposition.

Title IX gender equity rulings have made the issue of female participation in collegiate sports a priority on university campuses across America. Where once women were expected to be spectators or in the extreme cases to participate in "non-masculine" sports, (Hoferek & Hanick 1985, p. 688) they are now enjoying the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sporting activities. This opening of a new frontier has thrown many young women into an environment of excitement, adventure, fear, frustration, and even scorn. The causes of these negative feelings may be due in large part to society's inability to quickly change its labels and expectations. For many years, sport was seen as a tool for the development of masculinity. (Whitson 1990 pp. 19-23) As such, such "masculine" qualities such as courage, strength, aggression, and teamwork were emphasized. Now that women are participating in these sports, they are sometimes perceived as being less than feminine. Gloria Westrain and Maureen Weiss discussed this problem in the following words:

The predominant view in our society defines the roles of female and athlete as incompatible. Not only has sport long been considered a male domain, it is also male defined by the masculine sex-typed traits and behaviors that are deemed appropriate. Girls or women who participate in sport have the opportunity to develop or maintain stereotypically masculine qualities such as competitiveness, independence, and assertiveness. In fact, sport demands that females address certain issues and behaviors that are not a focus of female gender role appropriateness. Thus, the female athlete must step out of her stereotyped gender role,
if only temporarily, in order to experience success in sport.

(Destrain & Weiss 1988, p. 568)

A second reason is the resistance on the part of some men to let this great bastion of testosterone be opened to women and girls. Whether this possessiveness results from resource greed or from simple territoriality, male response to the expansion of opportunity has often been less than enthusiastic. (Kidd, 1990 pp. 31-33) Many athletic departments have balked at the mandate to provide programs for women. Budget crunches and space limitations dominate their arguments. Some schools have even gone so far as to drop non-revenue male sports rather than to add female sports. Many of these schools seem to respond only to the threat of litigation. It seems very unfair to expect 18-24 year old women to endure such political adversity in their desire to simply participate in activities which have been offered to men for years.

Many of the athletes participating in my study report feeling that they do not enjoy the same status as their male colleagues in the Athletic Department. Symptomatic of this situation is a lack of media coverage, facility access, and match attendance. It is unclear whether this problem is caused by the non-revenue status of their sport or the gender of its participants, but the perception remains amongst the players that although the NCCAA and the University have taken significant steps in compliance with Federal mandates, women in college athletics have not yet reached real equality.

Of course one of the primary concerns among female athletes in western countries is appearance. Our society has conditioned us to believe that physical attractiveness is a good indicator of personality, intelligence, and even political persuasion. (Johnson & MacEachern 1984, pp.221-223) Recognition of this fact helps to explain why women may be reluctant to participate in activities which would distract from their perception of personal beauty. Some athletes attempt to overcompensate in the area of appearance by using extra cosmetic equipment such as jewelry or makeup. (Destrain & Weiss 1988, pp. 569-570) This concern is particularly evident when the athletes interact with non-athletic peers and in dating environments.

Related to the fear of developing a "non-feminine" physique is the fear among some female athletes of being labeled as lesbians by their peer group. Due to the mixed public opinion regarding women who participate in sports traditionally reserved for men,
some of these athletes receive confusing societal input regarding their participation in these sports. The actual presence or absence of admitted lesbians on a given team may have little effect on the image of the team overall. In a homophobic culture, such a label, even if it is untrue, could have disastrous impact on the social life and emotional well-being of these young women.

A second related fear that influences the behavior of female athletes is the fear of intimidating their male classmates. Gove, Hughes, and Geerken observed the tendency of female students to "play dumb" in the classroom in order to let the male students feel better about themselves and more comfortable with the girls. Many of the female students admitted to pretending not to know an answer in order to fit in socially at least once during their college careers. (Gove, Hughes, & Geerken 1980, pp.89-92) Presumably, female athletes feel the same pressure to conceal their abilities in the sporting arena lest they make their male peers uncomfortable. I have observed this in the weight room where a girl who lifts more than a man is branded as some sort of a freak. Much of this conflict can be dealt with by an athlete who redefines the masculine/feminine stereotype of sport participation (Desertrain & Weiss 1988, pp.579-580) or limits her social interaction to athletic idiocultures, but true resolution can only be reached when society as a whole adopts more humane views.

Adaptation Across Time: Stages of Development

As a sociologist, I am intrigued by the interplay of various cultural units and the transitory sense of self which they engender in the players. An improved understanding of this phenomenon should help us to understand complex social interactions in society at large. I submit that Mead's stages of development reflect the struggle to formulate a consistent pattern of response to these forces. The formation of the self is nothing more than a response to the demands of various groups and individuals.

The career of a college soccer player at the division I level can be broken into six basic stages defined by her academic status and relationship to the team. These stages are: (a) recruit- beginning when a high school senior signs a letter of intent or makes a verbal commitment with a college coach to play at a certain university and ends when the player arrives for her first term at that university; (b) Freshman- first year of
participation; (c) Sophomore- second year of participation; (d) Junior- third year of participation; (e) Senior- fourth year of participation; (f) Graduate- begins upon completion of the final playing season and ends when the player replaces the team with a new significant social group. In the following pages, I will discuss each of these groups in the light of Meadian thought. It should be noted that these breakdowns by year are not rigid. Some individuals may move through a particular stage faster or slower than other individuals.

1. Recruit

This group is typified by a very high sense of achievement and a positive self image. They have enjoyed successful youth careers and have received the ultimate form of confirmation in the form of an offer to play at the division I level. This will probably result in increased status in her social group. Therefore, when associating with her high school peers, her sense of self will be strong and stable. This sense of security, however, will be jeopardized by the coming life change which she will experience. Her comfortable life is threatened by a new and unknown generalized other. As in the early play stages, the recruit will spend significant time engaged in fantasy and anxiety. She may develop an imaginary construct of herself, or a "double" through whom she will try to prepare herself for college.

It is fair to say that the beginning of the self as an object, so far as we can see, is to be found in the experiences of people that leads to the conception of a "double". (Mead 1934, p. 140)

The recruit whose imaginations are based on real information or similar experiences will be better prepared to make the actual adjustment to college life when she arrives at school. Prager would probably classify these recruits in the foreclosure stage since they have made strong commitments but as yet have not experienced the testing crisis. (Prager 1982, pp.177-178)

In a sense, the recruit is in the final stage of her high school cycle and the initial stage of her college cycle. From a Meadian perspective, she is in the game stage with a clearly defined role of who she is and what she expects. This is a time of dreaming where
the major goal is achievement and the major challenge is preparation for imminent change. Several of the players interviewed expressed recollections from this period of their lives which included anxiety, excitement, and an expectation of continued success. Most of these individuals have found athletic, academic, and social success throughout their lives. It is natural that they should expect such success to continue when they encounter new environmental settings. Such expectations are further accentuated by home town media reports of athletes selected to play at the division I level.

As Figure 3:1 demonstrates, the challenges and goals typified by this developmental stage combined with the impending separation from friends and family will cause the recruit to elevate the values of these two groups. She will tend to internalize these normative structures since the expectations of coaches and professors are largely unknown. Her role parameter will tend to be stretched across the horizontal axis.

![Figure 3:1 Group Interactional Model](image_url)
2. Freshman

Upon arrival at preseason camp, the freshman must begin to reconcile her imagination and previous sense of self with an entirely new environment. Her greatest challenge is dealing with separation from family, high school friends, and former athletic teams. She must learn a new set of norms encoded in language and significant gestures. For this reason, she would be classified in the Meadian stage of language. Later in the year she may progress into the play stage as she becomes more active with the team. Her primary goal will be to achieve membership in a new group. In a very real sense, she must substitute the team for her estranged family. Many players report feelings of homesickness and loneliness for their high school friends. The freshman will be characterized by the language and play stages of development. She will be very sensitive to positive or negative feedback from coaches and peers in the development of her self esteem. (Kamal et al 1992, pp. 955-959)

One of the players who transferred from another university reported that this program did a much better job of actively integrating its new members into the social fabric of the group quickly than did her former institution. This is due largely to the positive approach modeled by the coach and the inclusive attitude engendered by the upperclassmen. Another player reiterated this sentiment saying that the athletes have a social advantage over other members of the university community in that they have membership in a preestablished social group before they even arrive on campus. I would submit that while such membership does indeed exist in a technical sense, true membership cannot be experienced until the neophyte has internalized the gestures, symbols, and normative structure of their group. Figure 3:2 illustrates the tendency of the freshman role parameter to shift to the right on the horizontal axis toward the friend locus as well as an expansion toward the perceived demands of the coach. As the diagram illustrates, most players in this stage have not yet successfully incorporated the demands of the academic faculty into their lives. They have distanced themselves somewhat from parental values and are attempting to establish new identities on the university campus.
3. Sophomore

The sophomore player also faces significant yet somewhat different obstacles than those faced by the freshman. She has a fairly good understanding of expected group norms and acceptable roles on the team. Her greatest challenge is in finding a way to make a contribution to the team as a whole. This contribution can not be exclusive to the field of play, but must overlap into the social structure of the group. If she can make such contributions, then she will have achieved team significance. This significance separates her from the uncertainty of her freshman year and provides her with some measure of security. Although the development is more advanced, she is still in the play stage with hints of the game stage beginning to emerge. Her fluctuation from one role to the next will be less frequent and less extreme, but her role is still very transient. The difference will be a matter of degree rather than real substance.

Several members of the team described the sophomore year as a time of decision making. Such decisions include selection of a major, career orientation, and elective participation in outside social groups. Most members of the freshman group who failed to establish a strong sense of belonging, reinforced by the players and staff, elected to
remove themselves from the team in order to pursue more accessible avenues of significant affiliation before reaching the sophomore stage. Those who persist tend to elevate the priorities of her coach, her professors, and a small group of peers comprised to a large extent of fellow athletes. The selection of an athletic peer circle lowers the perception of conflict and resulting discomfort.

It is also a time of correction for freshman mistakes. As the chart seen in Figure 3:3 illustrates, there is a reduction of the horizontal axis to allow the vertical axis to incorporate more academic priorities. Several players characterize the sophomore year as one of academic redemption. It is recognized that significant time must be devoted to course work in order to find success.

![Figure 3:3 Group Interactional Model](image)

Sophomore

Coach

Parents/Family

Individual

Friends

Professors
4. Junior

The junior year should be marked by a stabilization of role identity and an involvement in the game stage which was not characterized by the previous three stages. The junior's greatest challenge will be to overcome inconsistency and achieve leadership on the team. She will be fairly comfortable and secure in her role identity. This may involve a reevaluation of her goals to bring them into line with her abilities and those of her teammates. It should be noted that this evaluation is not exclusively the product of the player's self perception. It must correspond with the opinion of the staff and even the other players in order to constitute a realistic understanding of her role or team status. I observed several players who refused to align their athletic goals and assessment of potential with those of the staff. Such players were unable to progress beyond the play stage and the related search for significance. The typical junior should also be more secure in her academic and social identity. Since the junior has been through a period of crisis and has emerged with strong commitments, she could be placed in Prager's achievement category. (Prager 1982, pp. 177-178) This is probably the most enjoyable year from a socio/psychological standpoint since the player has established a firm identity yet is not exposed to imminent change as we will see with the next two stages. Perhaps this is why many players are athletically and academically most successful during their junior year.

Upon establishment of a firm role identity on the team, the player strives to develop and maintain consistency. One individual expressed that this is the time for a player to begin influencing the behavior of younger team members. Another player said that it was at the beginning of her junior year that she realized that her playing career would soon be coming to an end. Perhaps it is this premonition of finality which inspires juniors to elevate their expectations and to expect the same of their fellow players. The ultimate goal of a junior is to become a leader on the team. During this stage, many players report their coach to be the most influential member of their social matrix.

Figure 3:4 shows the junior's role parameter to be dominated by the vertical axis. This is a period of high achievement and balance. The normative structures of coach and professor will be paramount. There is also some attention to the concerns of a relatively
close group of friends. These friends will often tend to be athletes or classmates with similar achievement oriented objectives.

Figure 3:4
Group Interactional Model
Junior

5. Senior

The greatest challenge facing a senior is resolution. They are suddenly brought face to face with the termination of their collegiate athletic career. Just as people experiencing a mid-life crisis, this drives them to achieve goals which will distinguish their work after they leave. Their objective is to leave a legacy. At the same time, they are dealing with the completion of their course work and the coming separation from friends. As with the recruit, they are moving into a period of preparation for the unknown. They should definitely be in the game stage.

My observation indicates that seniors respond to the impending end to their identity as players by assuming attitudes of immersion or withdrawal. The former commit
all of their energy toward accomplishment of unachieved goals. Their behavior is characterized by hard work, admonition to teammates, elation in victory, and despondency in defeat. It is not uncommon to see seniors collapse in tears after losing to an opponent. The same person may have walked away demonstrating little emotional distress following a similar loss during her junior year. One senior expressed herself well when she said, "Every game I play will be the last time I see that team. There is no next year for me. I can't make excuses and look forward to a rematch. I have to win today ".

The second response, withdrawal, is evidenced by a player who feels that she is not capable of achieving further goals during this final season. This attitude may arise in response to negative feedback from coaches or players or may be a product of unresolved internal doubt. The second source is often seen when a high level recruit is brought in who plays the same position as the senior. A common form of discreet withdrawal is the tendency to “develop” injuries or illness which sideline the affected player. It is much more socially and emotionally acceptable to miss games due to health related reasons than it is to be displaced by a younger player. During my tenure with the team, the athletic physician once came to me to report that one of the players on the injured reserve list was physically capable of participation but emotionally unwilling to return. Her hesitancy seemed to arise from the fact that the player who replaced her when she went down had been playing quite well. There appeared to be great resistance to confronting the challenge. She later carried this hesitancy to its logical conclusion by officially withdrawing herself from the roster.

The role parameter of the senior (Figure 3:5) will still be dominated by the vertical axis, but will see an expansion of the horizontal axis toward the right. This ability to incorporate more social activities into an otherwise achievement oriented developmental stage may be attributed in part to improved time management skills. It may also be attributed to reduced course loads or a sense that the impending conclusion of her athletic career may indicate a lessened need to train outside of team practices.
6. Graduate

The final stage that a player must pass through is that of the graduate. Ironically, the graduate stage is almost identical to that of the freshman. Their greatest challenge is dealing with separation and their greatest goal is to obtain membership in a new social structure. This can be partially delayed if the student pursues a graduate degree and works with the team as an assistant, but she must eventually begin the cycle again with the language and play stages in relation to a new generalized other. This stage often sees the emergence of the employer and the minimization of the coach as authority figures. The impending departure from friends may lead to a withdrawal from all but the closest of her peers. However, these close peers will tend to command great influence in the player's value system. It is a difficult and exciting time where the player will again make use of the imaginary double to begin exploration of her new life structure.

Figure 3:6 illustrates the similarity between the graduate and the recruit. Both are dominated by the horizontal axis. The graduate will tend to be skewed slightly to the right
due to the proximity of her friends in relation to her family and she will begin to assimilate the imagined values of her expected employer.

Figure 3:6
Group Interactional Model
Graduate

Parents/Family  
Individual  
Professors  
Friends  
Employer
Chapter IV
Conclusions

As the first three chapters demonstrate, people live within multiple normative systems and must negotiate means of dealing with such complex environments. We all subscribe to various normative systems and will maintain somewhat of a deviant status whenever these systems conflict. It may manifest itself in overt contradiction of one normative construct or in a less observable compromise where we secretly violate the spirit of multiple norms. Such actions may occur when we try to balance any group of social actors and the forces that they exert on our behavior. Our society forces us to exist as students, employees, friends, spouses, athletes, family members, and public citizens. Each of these roles carries with it very different demands and we must continually find a way to prioritize our authority structures.

Division I female soccer players are not unique in this regard, but they do provide a useful research group. They must balance formal and informal normative structures ranging from coaches and teachers to friends, relatives, and teammates. Their ability to balance these demands is measurable in playing ability and academic performance. Interaction and observation of these players and caches has proven to be enlightening and thought provoking. As I have formulated my theoretical models and distilled them in this text, I feel that I have elevated my conceptual understanding of group interaction, socialization, and interpersonal relationships. From a coaching perspective, I have come to realize the importance of developing leaders within the team who reflect the values of the coaching staff. If such leaders are placed and supported properly, it is possible to minimize the differences between normative groups and to aid in the socialization of new members. Although there will never be complete synchronisity, minimizing differences will maximize unity and performance.

I am intrigued by the interplay of various cultural units and the transitory sense of self which they engender in the players. An improved understanding of this phenomenon should help us to understand complex social interactions in society at large. I submit that Mead's stages of development reflect the struggle to formulate a consistent pattern of response to these forces. Each of the above mentioned stages of development carries with it inherent goals and challenges. An individual's response to these goals and challenges
will contribute significantly to her patterns of response to the diverse normative structures presented by the multiple social actors in her life. The formation of the self is nothing more than a response to the demands of various groups and individuals.

(Th)e structure of the complete self is thus a reflection of the complete social process. The organization and unification of a social group is identical with the organization and unification of any one of the selves arising within the social process in which the group is engaged, or which it is carrying on. (Mead 1934, p. 144)

I feel that these patterns of behavior and methods of socialization can be applied to any individual who seeks to gain entrance into a new significant social group. Modern culture maintains both continuity and diversity through the forces employed by such organizations. Individuals will be molded into functional units within a broad social structure by adherence to the demands of priorital groups, yet will maintain the ability to adapt to new environments by utilizing normative values learned in non-priorital groups. It would be interesting to expand this research to other settings, age groups, and locations. Further research should focus first on other soccer teams, then other sports, and finally on diverse work settings.
### Appendix I

#### Developmental Matrix

(As perceived by the researcher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Significance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language/Play</td>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Play</td>
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References


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EDUCATION

  1996-1998  Master of Science, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
  1989-1991  Tennessee Secondary Teacher’s Certification, Maryville College
  1986-1989  Bachelor of Arts, University of Tennessee
  1983-1986  William Jennings Bryan College

EMPLOYMENT

  1992-1993  Biology/Life Science Teacher, Providence Day School
             My responsibilities included classroom instruction, laboratory
             instruction and demonstration, project facilitation, student assessment,
             and other associated administrative duties.

  1993-1996  Director of Coaching, East Tennessee Soccer Federation
             As the Director of Coaching, I recruited, instructed, placed, and
             supported the club’s coaching staff. I also trained teams and players on
             a regular basis. During this period of time, the club won 5 state
             championships with 3 teams.

  1996-1998  Assistant Coach, (University omitted to protect anonymity of subjects)
             While working as an assistant coach, I trained players, organized
             practices, recruited players, served as an academic advisor, and
             performed a broad range of administrative duties.

  1998-present  Key Specialty Representative, Schering Pharmaceuticals
             I am responsible for the promotion of Proventil HFA, Vanceril, and
             Vanceril Double Strength in the Greenville South Carolina Area.