Reconceptualising
skilled communication in
sport officiating

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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge and belief, understand that it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services, Charles Sturt University or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of thesis, subject to confidentiality provisions as approved by the University.

Name: Ian James Cunningham

Signature: [Signature]

Date: March 21, 2016
Dedication

To my selfless and inspiring mother, Gillian, and memory of my late father, Jim – a life-long horseman and dedicated baseball coach.

He would’ve had something say on the subject.
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Ethics Approval

Research conducted for this study received approval from Charles Sturt University’s Ethics in Human Research Committee under protocols:

112-2012-11
112-2012-13
List of Publications

Peer-reviewed journal articles


Book chapter


The research candidate was the sole author for publication [1], the primary author for publications [2], [3], and second-author for publication [4]. Publication [4] identified concepts that guided the remainder of this research project.
Oral presentations


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**Key Terms**

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<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>A type of adaptation or style of conflict resolution in social environments whereby a person gives in or accedes to the needs of others (Giles &amp; Ogay, 2007).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>The way an individual alters or adjusts his/her behaviour in relation to his/her environment and interactions with others (Burgoon, Stern, &amp; Dillman, 1995).</td>
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<td>Avoidance processes</td>
<td>Actions taken by an individual to avoid social situations in which his/her ‘face’ (see below) is likely to be threatened or wronged (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Back stage</td>
<td>A physical region where social ‘performers’ are present, but audience is not, and where ‘performers’ are able to step out of character to discuss, reflect, or refine their performance without revealing themselves (Goffman, 1959).</td>
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<td>Cognitive complexity</td>
<td>A psychological characteristic of communication that determines the way someone differentiates and integrates social situations and observes subtle differences in people and interpersonal situations (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Intentional and unintentional displays made by someone through verbal and non-verbal behaviours which are interpreted by another person (Pace &amp; Faules, 1994). Communication occurs within a dynamic and transactional process involving dialogic information and message exchange between people (Steinberg, 2007).</td>
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<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>A communication theory that seeks to explain individual differences in the ability to communicate skilfully (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Corrective processes</td>
<td>Attempts by an individual to correct a social offence and re-establish the expressive order (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Defensive face-work</td>
<td>Actions taken by an individual to circumvent losing ‘face’ (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Definition of the situation</td>
<td>A subjective way people frame personal meaning in social situations and assess the conditions of settings and context, prior to taking action (Goffman, 1959).</td>
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<td>Depth processing</td>
<td>A motivated, systematic, and mindful scrutiny of interpersonal messages, the source of the message, or a communicative situation (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Face</td>
<td>The positive social value a person effectively claims for him/herself by the line others assume he/she has taken during a social encounter (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Face-work</td>
<td>Actions taken by an individual to make his/her behaviour appear consistent with the image he/she desires to present (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Front</td>
<td>The part of an individual's social performance that regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance (Goffman, 1959).</td>
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<td>Front stage</td>
<td>A physical region where social actors behave and adhere to conventions that have meaning to a particular audience (e.g., society) (Goffman, 1959).</td>
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<td>Interaction</td>
<td>The reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Interpersonal construct</td>
<td>Cognitive schemes or mental templates that apply to the thoughts, behaviors, characteristics and qualities of people (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Line</td>
<td>A pattern of verbal and non-verbal conduct which expresses an individual’s views in a social interaction (Goffman, 1959).</td>
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<td>Message production</td>
<td>The process of generating verbal and non-verbal behaviours that are intended to obtain a desired response from those to whom they are directed (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Message reception</td>
<td>The process of interpreting the communicative behavior of others in the effort to understand the meaning and implications of that behavior (sometimes termed ‘decoding’) (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Procedural memories</td>
<td>Recollections about an action, outcomes of that action, and situations in which that action has been used in the past that are retrieved from long-term memory, when a person’s current goals and features of the current situation associate to those stored to memory (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Protective face-work</td>
<td>Actions taken by an individual to save the face of others in good faith that they will extend the same ritualistic courtesy (Goffman, 1967).</td>
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<td>Person-centered message</td>
<td>A quality of functional communication that takes into account and adapts to the subjective, emotional and relational aspects of communicative contexts and a communicative message that is tailored to the characteristics of an interactional partner and situation (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Social constructionism</td>
<td>A sociology and communication theory that explains how human reality is socially constructed through interaction rather than existing as a fixed objectivity (Berger &amp; Luckman, 1966).</td>
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<td>Social perception</td>
<td>The process through which people make sense of the human or social world, including our experiences of ourselves, other people, social relationships, and social institutions (Burleson, 2007).</td>
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<td>Working consensus</td>
<td>Implicit agreements among people to temporary avoid conflict in interactions while sustaining efforts to enforce and preserve one another’s desired definition of the situation and ‘lines’ of action (Goffman, 1959; 1967).</td>
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Abstract

Sport officials at all levels experience high expectations and scrutiny of their performance. There are many important officiating skills, but often mentioned at the root of good officiating is communication. Sport officials need to communicate and interact effectively under various and intense pressures. Sport officiating communication has frequently been conceptualised and trained as if interactions were one to one, and as one-way instruction and ‘selling’ a decision.

Much previous research has gathered data from elite officials, considered players as if they were homogeneous, and focused on one sport at a time. Such static approaches to communication tend to neglect interactive aspects of officiating and other contextual contingencies, such as multiple goals and motivations, personality and preferences, and match situation.

This project aimed to build on current conceptualisations of sports officiating communication and make recommendations to sport bodies on communication training and development. It conceptualised interactions as dynamic and context driven, and assumed that players and officials both bring motivations and influence strategies.

Using a constructivist theoretical lens, it explored generic dimensions of officiating communication and interaction across ‘interactor’ sports - team sports where officials are in frequent contact with players, and influence the flow of the game – basketball, hockey, soccer, netball, Australian rules
football, rugby union, rugby league. It used a series of interview studies with different officiating stakeholders – senior officials in peak bodies responsible for training programs, players, and officials themselves.

The first study with officiating development managers and performance coaches in peak Australian sport bodies found that situation monitoring - the ability to interpret players and game contexts – and skilled interaction – the ability to interact appropriately and effectively – are consistently viewed as the most important abilities, but are also the most difficult to train.

To focus the exploration on unspoken and contextual dimensions in officiating interactions, the project developed a framework of concepts from dramaturgical sociology and constructivism. It adapted ‘video elicitation’ interview technique as a means for uncovering player and official definitions of situation, motivations and influence strategies.

The project provides new concepts for understanding the ways that players and officials intentionally and unintentionally co-construct game interactions. Both recognise that players attempt to disrupt officials. Players use strategies such as argument, criticism, challenge, intimidation, questioning and praise to influence officials. Officials are motivated to build a working consensus with players to achieve multiple goals, and use defensive and protective interaction approaches to manage interactions. Officials manage face, saving and protecting face for themselves and players, within the constraints and conventions of games and officiating, and, importantly, within the depth and sophistication of their perception of players and situation.
The project recommends that sport bodies can improve the development of skilled communication in sport officiating by enhancing the current ‘toolbox’ of skills with an emphasis on understanding social and relational dimensions of officiating, and focus on adaptation and flexibility in officiating interactions.

To support the implementation of these principles, it recommends an increase in shared learning among officials across sports, establishment of holistic improvement frameworks and criteria to guide development, monitoring and assessment, and integration of communication development with the training of other officiating skills.
Sport officiating is a tough and sometimes thankless job. Known to the sporting community as ‘referees’, ‘umpires, or ‘judges’, there are millions of active sport officials globally who are responsible for leading and overseeing organised sport competitions. Responsibilities of sport officials include organising game activities, controlling game procedures, preserving social order and player welfare or safety, and applying the laws of the game in a fair and accurate manner. Officials represent a key societal figure in the production and maintenance of sport and its underlying values.

Officiating is a part-time role for many, personal passion for some, and full-time profession for a select few who advance to the elite level. In some parts of the world employment rates of officials are projected to increase up to 8% by 2022 (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2014) in order to fulfil a growing need for officials to address increasing sport participation and expansion of some sports into new countries. To meet this increased demand for officials, there is a parallel need for capable and competent officials able to manage the increasing number of organised games worldwide.
Officiating is a complex and dynamic task that is characterised by time pressures, multiple goals, and rapidly changing and challenging judgement situations in which players go in and out of view. Officials generally act alone in a noisy, emotionally charged environment where tempers and tensions frequently flare creating different psychological and social demands, particularly having to make difficult decisions that can bring about negative responses in players and others. Managing the demands of performing effectively in such a chaotic and stressful perceptual and social environment requires specialised skills, abilities and capacities.

Players, coaches, sport clubs and spectators have high expectations of the competence and performance of officials, which can sometimes create a disproportionate amount of pressure on officials and unrealistic beliefs about the officiating role. Officials who do not meet the expectations of various sport ‘interest groups’ can be subject to harassment and abuse (verbal or physical), demotion by governing sport bodies, and, at higher competitive levels, even public humiliation in the media. Performance demands on professional and elite officials have become more complex and challenging, especially with increased media involvement, integration of new technologies, frequent changes to rules and their interpretation, and improved player abilities from innovations in physical training. Sport journalists observe that an increasing cynicism towards officials and the rules of the game in modern sport has made the role of the official increasingly difficult in recent decades (Ryan & Martin, 2015).
A general lack of respect or recognition from others toward officials (Hancock, Dawson, & Auger, 2015) is further compounded by incidents of corruption and match fixing that are linked to the public image and perceived credibility of officials – a frequent subject of scrutiny and public discussion (Gill, 2013). Officials must deliver unpopular decisions that are frequently placed under a public microscope by those who seek accountability and consistency from officials. These dimensions of accountability and difficulty make officiating a dynamic performance role to study. Increasingly, scholars and officiating practitioners feel that communication is central to dealing effectively with constant accountability and the difficulty of being a sport official (Mellick, Bull, Laugharne, & Fleming, 2005).

Research to date on officiating is recognised as being multi-disciplinary and having significant gaps that need addressing (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015). In 2014, one goal of the first international conference for officiating academics and leaders of officiating associations and sport organisations was to establish stronger connections between scholars and practitioners. A main theme of the conference addressed the current visibility and interconnectivity of knowledge areas from empirical and applied research in officiating. Many researchers suggested that officiating is often used as a platform for examining human functioning, including visual perception and perceptual-cognitive factors, and that there has generally been a focus on negative impacts on officials, including stress and decision bias. Because the mental and physical requirements of officiating are diverse the role has
drawn attention from other fields interested in studying decision-making and physiological duress.

At that international officiating conference, communication and game management aspects of officiating were said to be important areas of officiating performance in which little research has been undertaken. It is asserted that while communication is a core organisational need for sporting bodies, it has received little attention in officiating circles (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015). This notion was further supported in a recent special issue on sport officials in Movement & Sport Sciences (Science & Motricité), where, partly in response to perceived need, three of the special issue’s ten research articles concentrated on the communication aspects of officiating. One of those three officiating communication papers emerged from the second study reported in this thesis.

At its root, sport officiating is a humanistic activity and, as such, is associated with societal attitudes or values that span institutional, moral and ethical ideologies. Some authors have likened the sport official’s role to that of an educator and emphasise social responsibility, with individuals acting in a manner ‘to preserve the intrinsic values of sport and its main component (competition) in front of youth and society’ (Isidori, Muller, & Kaya, 2012, p. 6). This hermeneutical and pedagogical perspective emphasises the influences officials have in helping players understand the impact of their actions on others and to help them develop more organised and socially desirable behaviours (Isidori et al., 2012; Russell, 1999). Other metaphors
frame the role of the sport official from an institutional understanding, or as

a member of the practice community who aims to encourage a moral order

that deters players from correcting moral conditions with aggressive action

(Jones & Fleming, 2010). These metaphors for the officiating role have

implications for the types of communication behaviours, goals or plans that

sport officials use in light of the philosophical, institutional, and

pedagogical relationships they fulfil.

Some officiating researchers suggest the central orientation of the sport

official is ‘game management’ (Mascarenhas, Collins, & Mortimer, 2002), a

term used by the officiating practice community to describe communication

and interactive aspects of officiating (MacMahon, Mascarenhas, Plessner,
Pizzera, Oudejans, & Raab, 2014; Mascarenhas, Collins, & Mortimer,
2005). The officiating role frequently involves situations requiring

communication, including giving instruction, reprimanding, negotiating,
collaborating, explaining, active listening or displaying empathy,
depersonalising abuse, and organising and directing players, coaches, and
others. Some officiating researchers have recommended pursuit of better
insight into how ineffective officiating communication actually influences
the game (Mascarenhas, O’Hare, Plessner, & Button, 2006).

There are some indications that officials can contribute to game atmosphere
through certain pro-social behavioural techniques to influence player
behaviours (Arthur-Banning, Paisley, & Wells, 2007) and manage player
transgressions (Ackerly, Tator, & Snider, 2012) and perceptions of justice
There is, however, little research that attempts to unpack the requisite skills or seek understanding of the ways in which other humanistic capacities such as communication contribute to effective officiating practice – a key training area for sport officiating bodies.

Young and developing officials are traditionally taught how to present themselves and how to use hand signals, flags and whistles to appear confident, composed, and self-assured to others. Formal conduct for sport officials implies a requirement to make immediate decisions and to appear confident in these judgements, while maintaining a particular self-image to support these behaviours (Goffman, 1959). Communication displays that attempt to influence the way players and others perceive officials has been of special interest to officiating researchers (Dosseville, Laborde, & Bernier, 2014; Simmons, 2011), as has the importance of officials to be able to ‘sell’ their decision as accurate (Mellick et al., 2005). These conceptualisations of officiating communication assume the official to be less a deliberate social agent who acts upon their environment, and more a passive experiencer, ‘receiving’ and ‘sending’ decision information. Such ‘one-way’ conceptualisations of sport official communication (sending decision information and social messages to players and others) tend to neglect other interactive dimensions of communication.

Interactive dimensions of officiating communication are less well-defined, particularly regarding ways interaction skills are best trained and improved.
in officials. Some sports, such as team sport environments where there are many decision cues and players involved (soccer, rugby, basketball, ice hockey), have a greater requirement for interaction with players. These are referred to as ‘interactor’ officiating type sports as opposed to ‘monitor’ (volleyball, gymnastics) and ‘reactor’ sports that have fewer decision cues to track, and involve fewer interaction and physical demands for judges or referees (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). Officials in interactor sports often remain in close proximity to players (Dosseville et al., 2014) and actively influence the continuity or ‘flow’ of game play and appear more favourable to players when they are unobtrusive (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Slack, Maynard, Butt, & Olusoga, 2013).

Some interactor sports also have greater officiating demands for communication and game management. Canadian ice hockey referees report involvement in games where aggressive player behaviour resulted in the official ‘losing control of the game’ (Ackery, Tator, & Snider, 2012), while French soccer referees use strategies to actively disrupt game activities to demonstrate control of conflict situations (Fruchart & Carton, 2012). In many interactor sports, officials are frequently required to use communication to explain decisions (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011) and mediate conflict between players and teams (Mascarenhas et al., 2006), which suggests one core motivation for these types of officials is to foster consensus and cooperation.
While this doctoral project recognised the complexity of officiating communication and the depth of the field of communication, it principally sought to establish new conceptualisations of sport official communication on which future research and training in officiating could be based, to address the diverse needs of different ‘interactor’ sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). Due to the interactive requirements of many sports, this is a feature of officiating that is common to many sports but not well understood, including ways players differ in their interactions with officials.

The dynamics of officiating environments demand communication skills and abilities to adjust and adapt to changing circumstances and different people. Better understanding of ways officials deal with sport participants in interactions is constrained by game conditions that require functional solutions to problems that emerge during sport matches (MacMahon et al., 2014). A holistic perspective accounts for ways officiating communication emerges in its natural context and, as a consequence, how officials adapt, accommodate, and manage communication needs of officiating. Some officiating scholars use ‘ecological dynamics’ metaphors that recognise the complex relationship between officials and their performance environment to explain officiating (Rix-Lièvre & Genebrier, 2011) while others debate whether officiating should be considered an art or craft, rather than a science, which has implications for research design and interpretation of study findings (Mascarenahas et al., 2002; Plessner & Betsch, 2002).
An ecological dynamics perspective says that human actions can be explained by the goals that govern and guide them, which for sport officials can include safety, fairness, or spectacle (Russell, Renshaw, & Davids, 2014). Previous officiating studies tend to isolate single variables concerning the official or the match situation (e.g., decision communication, impression cues), but do not explore interactions between the official and his/her performance environment. Officiating is diverse, complex and interactive in the manner of an ecology, which has implications for sport officials in regard to other complexities in communication and interaction. This research project purposefully explores ways officiating acts within interacting constraints of sport environments, and how players and officials co-construct their interactions to build on current conceptualisations of communication. This research project focuses on context, dynamic relations between officials and other sport participants, and contingencies of officiating and communication that influence more harmonious and cooperative interactions and game activities.

Improving the communication skills of officials is assumed to be an important goal for officiating and sports because good officiating has a positive influence on players, the officials themselves, and the quality of games more generally. A new understanding is needed about what experiences and practices help contribute to interactive and socio-emotional skills in sport officials and which give rise to skilled communication patterns and behaviours. The study of professional communication in other fields such as teaching, nursing, medicine, and policing can be helpful in
building understanding. Practitioners in these fields similarly struggle with ideas about best practices in improving and training communication, but have deeper and stronger histories of research than sport officiating.

Little is known about how we can help officials to become better communicators and people managers in their sporting environments. Officials are said to develop their communication ability through a ‘hidden curriculum’ involving personal experience and informal advice from officiating peers, assessors and mentors (Mellick et al., 2005). ‘Experience’ is considered a main, but unexplored and untheorised, contributor in effective officiating communication practice. Officials can also be expected to transfer certain qualities and skills, such as leadership, problem solving, resilience, and articulate speech, from their employment to officiating (Simmons, 2006). Less experienced officials may otherwise rely on match/game experience, and learning gained from various forms of formal and informal feedback they receive (Ollis, Macpherson, & Collins, 2006).

Peak officiating administration bodies find communication and interaction skills to be difficult areas in which to train officials, compared to physical fitness, mechanics and positioning (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Plessner & MacMahon, 2013). American basketball officials report an emphasis in their instruction on rule knowledge and enforcement, rather than helping in ‘equipping them to deal with the bigger problems they experienced in the role’ (Warner, Tingle, & Kellet, 2013, p. 18). Similarly, Australian sport officials identify that they receive little training or structured support in
communication, conflict management or in other strategies to mitigate psycho-social demands of officiating (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2004). It is fair to assume officiating bodies/associations have been good at training officials in the acquisition of rule knowledge, but have been less effective in designing and implementing informed programs to reflect the range of skills now recognised to be essential to officiating performance (Dickson, 2000; MacMahon & Plessner, 2008; Mascarenhas et al., 2005).

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) recognises the importance of this and feels there are similarities in officiating across sports that should be addressed as general principles. The ASC (2012) established a set of ‘Introductory General Officiating Principles’ aimed at reflecting basic elements of good officiating to support the instruction and accreditation of Australian officials. These elements include self-management, managing the competition environment, and people management (ASC, 2012). These principles are separate from the laws/rules and conventions of each sport (which are primarily taught to officials by sport bodies), and imply that there are common themes or competencies in standards of officiating that are applicable across different sports. Holistic learning and cross-pollination of sports have underpinned approaches to officiating development taken by the ASC’s officiating unit in developing high-performance officials.

The Australian Institute for Sport (AIS) National Officiating Scholarship Program is one example of an officiating development framework for high-performance officiating that centres participation on mentorship and
specialised training on the multi-dimensional needs of officiating at the highest level. Officials selected by their National Sport Organisations (NSOs) to participate are from different ‘interactor’ and other officiating sport types and are involved in a one-year, intensive professional development program. Training and support opportunities focus on psychology (e.g., emotional intelligence and personality profiling), vision, nutrition, physical fitness, recovery, professionalism and integrity, and dealing with media.

The ASC recognises the complexity and multi-dimensionality of high-performance officiating in developing a National Scholarship Program that acknowledges the importance of integrating communication aspects of officiating into their mentorship relationships, group workshops with fellow ‘scholars’ from different sports, and individualised training. This holistic approach to officiating development integrates communication with other general officiating skills through explicit and implicit learnings with topic experts and leaders in officiating coaching, and mentorship within each participant’s sport. These ideas suggest alternative ways of conceptualising communication improvement in officials across sports.

**Structure of the Thesis**

Three field research studies are presented and described within the boundaries of this project. The scope of the research was tailored carefully, with each field study building on the one preceding. The project involved three exploratory studies with stakeholders from different Australian
interactor sports, including officiating development managers and performance coaches, player captains, and officials. A series of field research studies was conducted that deliberately sought perspectives of ‘interest groups’ beyond but also including sport officials. It is useful to explore the views and attitudes of different interest groups and stakeholders in communication research, but previous research has tended to concentrate on officiating views. Communication is multi-perspective, multidirectional, and ‘constructed’; it was envisioned that this approach would provide a more robust understanding of officiating communication to help inform future training, evaluation and best practice. Players provide one important view point in officiating communication research that has been largely absent, although some exceptions can be found from Simmons (2010, 2011) and Dosseville et al. (2014). Research studies were purposefully sequenced with the aim of taking learnings from one stage of the research to the next stage.

This research project addresses important theory and practice dimensions of communication and sport official development. The first contribution of this study is new knowledge added to the limited research currently available on communication and sport officiating. In particular, this thesis seeks to generate new conceptualisations and principles for understanding and explaining communication and interaction in sport. I recognised and argue the need for an improved understanding about ways in which communication is conceptualised in officiating, and identification of better
ways to train and support interaction and behavioural management skills in officiating development pathways.

Second, the nature and role of ‘experience’ in communication improvement for officials is something of an unopened black box. One of the features of the project is that it generates new ways of thinking about officiating communication and communication improvement. Based on more complex conceptualisation of interaction and communication in sport officiating, the findings provide policy and practice recommendations for professional sport bodies/organisations, administrators, development managers and others who govern sport official instruction and training, talent identification, assessment or evaluation, and recruitment and retention. The second aim of this project was thus to offer principles and recommendations for communication improvement in officials, that can be applied across a range of ‘interactor’ officiating sport types.

A driver of the project was to make more explicit the integration of communication development and communication as a practice (Craig, 2006) in sport officiating pathways. There are important connections that can be established between research and policy-making in this area. Policy can inform what is happening in research and increase discussion between officiating researchers and practitioners (MacMahon et al., 2014). This can align research with governing sport body needs, and influence ways officials are assessed and instructed. The project also makes recommendations to researchers and governing bodies concerning fruitful future research.
directions for improving communication development experiences and training, monitoring, and evaluation standards.

Chapter 2 (*Literature review*) tracks developments in officiating research, and examines related aspects of communication theory and practice. It positions this study in the field of sport and sport officiating, examining trends and important concepts from scholarly and professional sources. This review includes discussions and explanations of communication as non-verbal behaviour, social skill, and skilled performance involving functional message exchange and other complex skills such as emotional intelligence. The review concludes with a summary of development models and conceptualisations of social and communication skills training, particularly with respect to the competent expression of communication in a variety of occupational and professional contexts. The review critically examines officiating training and development models and the place of communication improvement, training practices, and assessment and feedback standards in communication. Given the range of traditions involved in this enquiry, much attention is given to incorporating other fields and disciplines in discussing the nature of communication for officials in sport. The review of literature reveals a multidisciplinary basis for the project which opens the gate to the hybridised concept path it follows through the project that unfolds.

Chapter 3 (*Methodology*) positions the research within a constructivist and phenomenological research paradigm. It also argues that most officiating
communication research has used deterministic or individualistic social psychological approaches to frame studies. This chapter positions the current project’s methodology as a new way to build on previous methods through constructivism and interpersonal sociology. It accounts for communication improvement in sport officials through structural-development approaches (Burleson, 2007; Delia, 1977) and phenomenological understanding of human learning (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; 2004). A strength of this project is that the methodology inherently opens new ways of understanding officiating and officiating communication.

Chapter 4 (Entering the field: Sport bodies’ conceptualisations of communication and player management in officiating – Study 1), details an exploration of officiating development manager/officer and performance coach conceptualisations of sport officiating communication, their understanding about the best ways in which communication is improved in officials, and what sport bodies think their role is in facilitating improvement. The first study explicitly addresses conceptualisations of sport officiating communication by drawing on the subjective experiences and training agendas of those who lead and regularly engage with officials in an instructional or developmental role. The research generated concepts about officiating communication and improvement that sharpened the focus of the subsequent studies with players and sport officials (Chapters 6 & 7).
‘Interaction’ emerged from study 1 as a salient and central communication mystery and research gap to the extent that it became the focus for the remainder of the project. It was thus necessary to explore new literature.

Chapter 5 (Reconceptualising: supplementing the literature and methodology to focus on interaction) provides a revisiting of literature to fortify the conceptual background and narrow the interests and study scope for Study 2 (with players) and Study 3 (with sport officials). The second literature review determined the direction of the remaining studies of this doctoral project and was informed by studies and research from other disciplines and professions that have engaged with and explored interaction dimensions of communication. The main discussion initially focuses on the field of dramaturgical sociology, specifically the conceptual contributions of Erving Goffman (1959; 1967; 1969) about impression management in interactions. It then builds on the traditional interpretations of ‘face’ and ‘face-work’ concepts in interaction provided by Goffman and others (Brown & Levinson, 1988; Spencer-Oatey, 2007; Ting-Toomey, 1988), and conceptualises ‘face’ as a relational phenomenon that is co-constituted between players and officials.

There has been little scholarly attempt to understand player perspectives or ways in which players differ in interactions with sport officials. Yet clearly there are differences and patterns. Chapter 6 (Player communication in interaction: Insights into the ‘unspoken’ – Study 2) provides findings from a video elicitation study with player captains from different ‘interactor’ sports and competitive levels. The study looked at ways captains define situations
and interaction with officials, what motivations players bring to interactions, and ways that players attempt to influence officials. The chapter discusses players as active agents or ‘co-constructors’ in interactions with officials, who advocate for team and self-interests while adapting their interactions to officials based on personal and situational factors. Players engage in different ‘face’ and ‘face-work’ practices as ways of relating to officials, and as unconscious responses to ways they define the situation with particular officials.

Chapter 7 (Officiating ‘face-work’: Adapting for the ‘unspoken’ – Study 3) details a second video elicitation study, this time with sport officials. It explores ways that officials define situations with players and are motivated in interactions, including ways they adapt or modify their interaction behaviour with players. Officials define situations and interactions with players based on motivations to preserve important game outcomes, to protect against threat to their ‘face’ by players, and to construct effective relations with players that build a working relationship with, and acceptance of, officials. The chapter discusses different ways officials view interaction to players and adapt their interaction to support contextual and situational goals that are both new and similar to particular games.

Finally, in Chapter 8 (Conclusions) the project’s findings are critically discussed as a response to the two main aims of the project and contribution to the field. It reflects on the centrality of interaction and the ‘unspoken’ in interaction, and new ways of conceptualising communication that have been
contributed by the project. Based on findings arising from the project, recommendations are offered to peak and other sport officiating bodies concerning the development of skilled interaction and communication in officiating. Several limitations to the conduct and scope of the project are discussed before a final set of recommendations are made for future research into sport officiating communication.
The following literature review provides an overview of extant research on sport officiating, the study and theorisation of sport official communication, and theory used to conceptualise and explain professional communication and communication skills in different occupational fields and practice contexts. It examines traditional understanding about communication improvement, including a summary of findings on the effectiveness of communication skill training and the range of approaches used to address communication improvement in personal and work settings.

This review reflects on theoretical and conceptual contributions from scholarly fields of human communication, humanities and social science, including the sub-disciplines of sport and social psychology, sociology, organisational justice, law and ethics and cultural studies. An inter-disciplinary approach is used here to more fully account for the performance area of communication in officiating which recognises individual, social and environmental constraints on sport officials at different participation levels. It uses human learning models to contextualise and approximate communication improvement within development pathways of sport
officials that recognise experiences, level of competition, and other interpersonal and communication complexities of officiating.

A core issue outlined in this review concerns debates about the usefulness of ‘skill’ and ‘decision’ conceptualisations of officiating communication. To provide vocabulary for understanding skilled communication capacities and expression, this review addresses literature and research concerning other complex humanistic skills and abilities such as emotional intelligence (or social competence) and social perception processes. This research project addresses a current gap in the communication and officiating fields concerning processes that underpin and influence ways that officials acquire skilled communication capacities, competencies and behaviours. It recognises research gaps that align with similar challenges present in other occupations that struggle to understand the best ways to improve training and support for professional communication. The review introduces and explains phenomenological and constructivist perspectives of human learning and skill acquisition as the project’s selected lenses for theorising ways that officials improve their communication. Further, this literature review explains gaps in understanding of communication improvement in officiating practice that align with gaps in communication literature. At the conclusion of this literature review, project aims and questions will be stated.

2.1. Trends in officiating research

Studies of sport officiating are relatively few when compared to other dimensions of sport such as sociology; coaching leadership and pedagogy;
athletic performance; expertise and training; and group dynamics. While many officiating scholars agree there is little formal research conducted on sport officials or best practice of sport officiating (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015; MacMahon et al., 2014), there are positive indications of improvements in the depth and content of theoretical and applied officiating research. Reviews of research on sport officials identify that 58 peer-reviewed articles were published over a 20 year period prior to 2003 (Mascarenhas et al., 2005) and then increased over the following 10 years to approximately 115 scientific research articles (Hancock et al., 2015). An online repository of empirical and scientific research on sport officials (www.refwise.org), developed in part to inform this project’s literature review and now managed by the researcher, shows exponential growth in officiating research articles with five published in the 1970s, eight in the 1980s, 30 in the 1990s, 130 in the 2000s, and just over 100 articles within the last five years.

Scholarly research on sport officiating today has proliferated into a multidisciplinary body of empirical and practice knowledge. Disciplines and fields interested in investigating sport officiating span sport management (e.g., Cuskelley & Hoye, 2004); psychology (e.g., stress, decision making/judgment) (MacMahon & Strauss, 2014; Ste. Marie, 2003); sociology (e.g., Parsons & Bairner, 2015); physiology (e.g., Dixon, 2014); economics (e.g., Scoppa, 2014); and law, justice and ethics, particularly issues concerning sport official negligence and duty of care (Caldwell, Bischoff, & Karri, 2002; Morakinyo, 2008).
One sport management topic that is a reoccurring stream of officiating research is studying factors that contribute to recruitment and retention rates of sport officials. Motivations and barriers in sport officials’ intentions to commence, stay involved and cease participation in their role can include a perceived lack of respect or recognition (Hancock et al., 2015); abuse, harassment and other unfavourable social experiences (Cuskelley & Hoye, 2004; Kellett & Shilbury, 2007); psychological burnout (Rainey, 1995; Rainey & Hardy, 1999); incentive, evaluation, and game assignment (Titlebaum, Haberlin, & Titlebaum, 2009); and how well officials perceive they are supported by their sport organisation (Forbes & Livingston, 2013; Gray & Wilson, 2008). This merits further research to explore and understand the array of personal and occupational demands on officials at different levels of sport.

Early officiating research often presented a negative portrayal of the officiating role. Personality studies focused on ‘authoritative tendencies’ in officials and show that superior officials were more likely to be self-sufficient, self-assured, self-reliant and more responsive to the social demands of officiating (Fratzke, 1975). Other studies found no relationship between individual personality differences and officiating performance (Alker, Straub, & Leary, 1973). Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, officiating research shifted to understanding stressful experiences in officials, including sources of stress and coping responses (Anshel & Weinberg, 1995; 1999; Rainey & Hardy, 1999; Taylor, Daniel, Leith, & Burke, 1990) and types of individual and environmental biases that might negatively influence officials’ decisions in a fixed judgement task such as gymnastics judging.
(Ansorge & Scheer, 1988; Ste. Marie & Lee, 1991) or figure skating (Whissel, Lyons, Wilkinson, & Whissel, 1993) and in more complex officiating environments such as team sport or ‘invasion’ games (Frank & Gilovich, 1988; Mohr & Larsen, 1998; Nevill, Balmer, & Williams, 1999). Contemporary research takes a more positive approach to the officiating role, showing the officials actually report mild to moderate levels of stress (Gencay, 2009) and derive intrinsic motivation and passion from the officiating role (Auger et al., 2010; Johansen, 2015).

To legitimise sport officiating as a valid scientific field of study, it is important to establish and clarify knowledge structures and boundaries of focus that need to be adopted in the study of sport officials. Some topic areas and themes have been found to be more consistently studied in sport officiating research than others. A recent citation analysis on available officiating research was found to statistically identify three study topic groupings over time: officiating personality, stress in officials and officiating decision-making (Hancock, Rix-Lièvre, & Côté, 2015).

The analysis found little interconnectivity overall between officiating research topics, indicating mostly ‘one-off” research interests about sport officials. Some exceptions can be found where some research has explored relationships between performance areas in officiating, such as physiological indicators (i.e. heart-rate, activity workloads) and decision accuracy (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Helsen & Bultynck, 2004; Paradis, Larkin, & O’Conner, 2015). Understanding further associations between different performance factors of officiating (e.g., physical exertion or fatigue
and perceptual-cognitive or judgment patterns, decision making and communication actions) reflects one fruitful area of investigation whereby the holistic and integrated nature of officiating can be addressed in order to grasp implications for improving officiating performance and practice.

In recent years there has been much effort made by researchers to understand ways to improve decision-making aspects of sport officiating. Commendably, decision-making research has begun to explicitly address officiating performance and has led to the development of new training principles, modalities and activities. Among these are multiple-decision cue learning approaches (Plessner et al., 2009); 2D and 3D decision information in offside decisions in football (Put et al., 2014; Put et al., 2015); intuitive decision-making training (Schweizer, Plessner, & Kahlert, 2011); and ‘above-real-time’ training, involving exposure of officials to higher-speed video of game-play to inoculate them to perceptual-cognitive demands and improve information processing (MacMahon et al., 2014). The result of this line of research has been considerable knowledge gain towards improving the accuracy of officiating decisions.

In reality, in most officiating settings outside elite levels it may be the way officials ‘sell’ the decision that says more about their competence than the actual decisions made. Spectators, players, and coaches seek accuracy in decisions and fairness from officials. Officiating research generally recognises an appreciation of the communication demands of officiating – and communication used by officials to deliver decisions – to improve the acceptance and perceived accuracy of decisions.
Officiating research continues to develop as a field, with the topics and interests of researchers generally aimed at improving the experience, psychology and performance of officials. Some criticisms of the field have emerged. At the first world congress of sport officiating in Clermont Ferrand (2014) one leader in the field, Henning Plessner, cautioned officiating researchers to maintain a scientist’s neutral perspective, to avoid always using the viewpoint of and data collected from officials, especially elite level officials, to understand the field. Studies have often focused on single variables, which separates them from their context, or novice-expert differences have been used to examine manifestations of stress, personality, decision-making or other psychological issues. This tendency to study psychological variables of officiating amounts often to ‘researching psychology through refereeing’ (Mascarenhas et al., 2005, p. 365), as conditions of officiating environments are unique and can assist with understanding aspects of human functioning that may be transferable to other societal roles and occupational fields.

The unique complexity and nature of sport officiating makes it an interesting performance role for many fields and disciplines to study, especially other occupational roles with experiencing similar cognitive, judgement and social pressures (such as policing, military, teaching, and health practitioners). For the same reasons, officiating can learn from the study of occupational roles in other fields that recognise interactive and integrated elements of performance.
This section articulated some general themes in sport official research and its conduct. In summary, research on sport officials has often focused on discrete variables, seldom addressing the complexity of interactions and the inter-relationships of factors influencing performance, and often concentrating only on the elite level. Some early sport officiating literature tended to focus on negative assumptions about the role, while more recently and commendably, the focus has moved towards understanding performance-related aspects of officiating (decisions). There is considerable consensus among officiating scholars (e.g., Dosseville & Laborde, 2015; MacMahon et al., 2014; Weinberg & Richardson, 1999) and members of the officiating practice community (e.g., Cuskelly & Hoye, 2004; Dickson, 1999; Mellick et al., 2005) that the performance area of communication is central to officiating. However, it is arguable that communication has been largely absent from the research. The next section focuses on communication-related areas of officiating that are important to the task of officiating, but which have received limited research attention until recently. This project aimed to explore communication in officiating, with the intention of improving practice-based understanding of sport officiating.

2.2. Communication in officiating research

A foundational text published recently by international officiating researchers reviewing scientific and practice knowledge about sport officials states ‘there has been remarkably little research investigating the crucial area of communication within sport officials’ (MacMahon et al., 2014, p. 80). While recognised as a core attribute of effective officiating, communication has received surprisingly little formal research attention.
from officiating scholars, only emerging in officiating research over the last 10 years (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015). Some explanation for this may be found in comments from researchers that communication and game management dimensions of officiating are seen as difficult areas to study (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). Other have suggested a need for improved understanding of the influence ineffective officiating communication has on players and the game (Mascarenhas et al., 2006).

Some research findings show that player injury is influenced by officials’ response to perceived illegality of incidents (Fuller, Junge, & Dvorak, 2004) and that ‘unnecessary words or actions’ or a lack of clarity in expectations of players’ behaviour by officials can evoke a negative psychological and performance state in players (Bar-Eli et al., 1995). Other research shows that a perceived injustice in officiating decisions can influence players’ likelihood to transgress (Faccenda et al., 2009) and, where appropriate, officials can help to manage player aggression and encourage player safety (Ackerly et al., 2012). Arguably, communication and people-management aspects of officiating are central to the way officials’ interact with others and adapt to their performance environment to encourage important game outcomes such as safety and enjoyment. Communication remains an under-defined and under-studied performance area in officiating research.

Some underlying aims of official communication are linked closely with conflict management, including cooperation from players, coaches, and others, and increasing acceptance of officiating decisions. Conflict is often an unavoidable consequence of the social experiences of officials who
operate in a highly volatile and emotionally-charged environment where people compete for opposing goals and interests. Conflict management (otherwise termed ‘conflict resolution’) is one set of valuable interpersonal skills that can help mitigate situations of conflict often associated with officiating demands (e.g., MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Mascarenhas and colleagues (2006) provide an adapted version Thomas and Kilmann’s (1974) conflict management style grid (used in policing) for an officiating context (see Figure 2.1 on the next page). Officials can implement a range of conflict management styles to fit a given game situation and involve varying degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness with players and coaches (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). A high cooperative and high assertive officiating conflict style has a collaborative orientation, while a low cooperative and low assertive style involves avoiding encounters with players and others. These types of adaptive approaches in conflict management help highlight some of the complexity and dynamism that is involved in officiating communication.
Figure 2.1. Thomas and Kilmann’s (1974) Conflict Management Style Grid adapted for officiating (Mascarenhas et al., 2006).

Officiating literature frequently associates communication with the concept of game management (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Slack et al., 2013). The term, ‘game management’ can take on various meanings and interpretations, but is viewed as a central characteristic of officials’ skill set that incorporates communication and decision-making attributes. Game management is an essential real-world skill for officials that can be used to constrain or manage boundaries in behaviours of others, maintain social order, and facilitate game play (see Fruchart & Carton, 2012; Snyder & Purdy, 1987).

In ‘interactor’ sports (e.g., basketball, soccer, rugby), where many players
are involved, highly experienced officials will make decisions and communicate in ways that are appropriate for the nuances of a particular game, allowing the game to ‘flow’, and only use the whistle to interrupt the game when the consequences for not doing so may adversely affect the tempo or temper of the game (Fruchart & Carton, 2012; Simmons, 2006).

Game management is synonymous with the task of officiating and can involve officials using preventive techniques as a way to minimise player anger or deter future rule-infringing player behaviour (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Simmons, 2006). Game management studies in officiating explored sequential effects in basketball referees’ foul severity decisions (Brand et al., 2006), soccer referees’ judgement calibration to context (Unkelbach & Memmert, 2008), and discretionary application of the laws of the game (Carlsson, 2006). These studies tend to focus on judgment and decision-making elements of game management but neglect communication dimensions. What represents good communication practice in relation to game management objectives will be influenced by sport-specific norms (rule structure, number of players and officials involved) and social expectations of different sports, where the prerequisite for game management may vary in every officiating case. The function communication serves in game management has been addressed within some officiating performance frameworks.

Field research conducted with English rugby union referees indicated a set of four fundamental performance ‘pillars’ that includes personality and game management (others were physical fitness and mechanics, knowledge
and application of the rules, contextual judgement). Personality and game management is described as ‘the verbal and non-verbal interpersonal skills that allow referees to communicate appropriately with players’ (Mascarenhas et al., 2005, p. 368). In another study involving elite soccer officials, two communication-based themes of ‘effective game management’ were found to be identified by over 80 percent of the officials involved:

- ‘effective communication skills’, and
- ‘establishing player and manager respect’ (Slack et al., 2013).

These communication and interpersonal dimensions of game management were said to involve displays of positive body language, active listening and displays of empathy to players, building rapport and trust with players and managers (coaches), and having an awareness of player and manager (coach) behaviour (see Table 2.1 on the next page). Although from different sports, both of these definitions (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Slack et al., 2013) of game management from officiating research acknowledge communication goals and interests that are strategic, goal-driven, and skill-based in their nature.
Table 2.1. Most frequently cited characteristics of effective game management in elite soccer officiating (Slack et al., 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>PR(%)</th>
<th>Thematic property</th>
<th>PR(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication skills</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>Conveying positive body language</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Talk to players and managers</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to read players’ body language</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Actively listening to players</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use players’ and managers’ language</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing player and manager respect</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Building player trust</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Building rapport with players and managers</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Empathy for players</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of player and manager behaviour</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Having ‘banter’ with players</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Forming professional relationships</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘PR’ or percentage of respondents (%) represents portion of the participant sample that referred to raw-data and themes.

In officiating studies where communication is the primary focus, particular themes arise in the topic and scope of interests studied. Studies often draw on the accounts or perspectives of officials with high experience or elite/expert status to define and operationalise communication (Cunningham et al., 2012; Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2006; Slack et al., 2013). Communication is complex and often unique and individual to the people involved (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2006). Mellick et al. (2005) noted that elite officials often have their own style, which aligns with their individual personality, experiences and reputation as an official (a distinctive, emergent and, at times, spontaneous side of communication).
Other officiating communication findings show that it is not just the decision that matters, but also how it is communicated, and by whom (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2010; 2011). Officials use different communication styles to deliver decisions, which emphasises the importance of ‘selling’ decisions to players and other audiences (Cunningham, et al., 2012; Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2009; 2011). Some communication studies in officiating focus on impression management and players’ responses to injustice (Faccenda et al., 2009; Simmons, 2010) and accountability in officials (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011). Fairness theory and organisational justice are branches of social psychology that have been used to explain players’ responses and reactions to officials, and support preferred sport official communication attitudes and repertoires.

This general review of sport official communication research provides a background to understanding the role of communication in game management. Conflict management, preventive techniques and decision communication have been the main practice concepts discussed in officiating research. They provide a useful introduction to a theoretical framework used to position several studies of communication in officiating – organisational justice and fairness. The following section discusses and expands understanding of officiating communication through fairness.

2.2.1. Fairness and organisational justice approaches

Branches of organisational justice and fairness theory have frequently been used to account for communication in officiating (e.g., Dosseville et al., 2014; Mellick, et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010; 2011). These social psychology
approaches provide theoretical explanations for understanding ways that players react and respond to officials and their decisions. To start, players’ perceptions of injustice in officials and their decisions influence their likelihood to engage in anti-social, immoral (Faccenda et al., 2009) or uncooperative behaviour (Simmons, 2010). This is consistent with research in other fields outside officiating, where studies have shown that feelings of injustice are associated with deviant behaviours such as theft or absenteeism (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Moorthy, Seetharaman, & Jaffar, 2015), negative emotions in employees such as anger and dissatisfaction, or resentment in an organisational context, (Dörfel & Schmitt, 2004; Rupp & Spencer, 2006), and reduced motivation to continue employment or maintain commitment to organisations (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Other research shows that if children perceive they have been treated unjustly by authority figures that perception subsequently influences their sense of legitimacy and respect for authority figures (Pace & Hemmings, 2007) or may lead to the adoption and legitimisation of violent behaviours (Goutas, Girandola, & Minary, 2003). People who perceive injustice in social settings can sometimes legitimise aggressive behaviour as a means of restoring balance in the situation (e.g., De Greeff, 1935).

Faccenda et al. (2009) studied the influence of moral atmosphere on players’ perceptions of contextual injustice in officials and the propensity to engage in transgressive or anti-social behaviour. Perceptions of injustice and the moral atmosphere of sport games has been identified as one of the best predictors of transgressive behaviour in players, with their attitudes towards officiating errors being reasoned as a way to justify their behaviour (Reynes, Pantaleon, & Long, 2007). Further, some scholars suggest that players who
are assigned informal roles such as ‘enforcers’ on sport teams (to deter or respond to unjust or unruly play in opposing players) can take it upon themselves to instil moral order to ensure equitable conditions beyond the jurisdiction of officials (Jones & Fleming, 2010). Being seen to provide a fair, safe and predictable sporting experience minimises the extent to which players form feelings of injustice and perceptions of unfairness in officials. Fairness, therefore, becomes one important set of foundational principles that help us to understand attitudes and behaviours.

Officiating scholars have borrowed from different theoretical frameworks and organisational justice principles to explain officiating communication. Fairness theories help to account for player perceptions of spoken and unspoken, intended and unintended in official communication, and the way perceptions influence behaviours. Mellick et al. (2005) used the Fairness Theory Model of Accountability (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001) to understand ways players ascribe a frame of reference or causal accounts to decision events (or outcomes) that are counterfactual processes contrary to facts and formed by meaning that may not be intrinsic or accurate to actual events. Counterfactual thinking, what ‘could have, should have, would have’ or might have been, is said to be at the core of social judgements related to injustice (Mellick et al., 2005).

European professional soccer and rugby union referees (and referee coaches) differentiate more-or-less effective decision communication, referring to various verbal and non-verbal behavioural strategies and procedural skills (Mellick et al., 2005). Whistle use and style, hand signals,
voice tone, displays of confidence and composure, positive body language, giving an explanation, and field positioning are identified as common decision communication. Three characteristics of skilful decision communication proposed were; engaging the offender’s attention and instigating a ‘decision interaction episode’, projecting confidence in the decision made; and, promoting the perception of the decision as fair and just (Mellick et al., 2005). A later study supported these findings and showed that when officials deliver decisions in a calm tone and with a brief explanation, players rate the official’s decision as more fair and correct (Simmons, 2011). These findings illustrate that the impressions and procedural actions used by officials in delivering decisions have implications for the way players perceive the legitimacy of an official’s authority and competence to officiate.

Other officiating communication scholars use different fairness models to understand intended and unintended fairness displays in officials. Fairness heuristic theory posits that if an individual perceives that an authority figure is fair and legitimate in their actions and communicative displays, the individual is more likely to trust or accept decisions made by that person and to behave more pro-socially and cooperatively (Lind, 2005). Simmons (2010; 2011) studied officiating communication using fairness heuristic theory. Fairness heuristic theory proposes that people use their evaluations of process and outcome to decide whether a particular authority figure is fair, and initial judgements serve as proxies for trust in subsequent situations and interactions (Colquitt, Greenberg, & Zapata-Phelan, 2005; Conlon, Meyer, & Nowakowski, 2005). Communicative displays have been defined
as ‘verbal and non-verbal behaviours, policy, and process displays that are interpreted by another’ (Pace & Faules, 1994). The term ‘communicative displays’ is used here to describe the verbal and non-verbal actions and processes of officials that contribute to impressions formed by others.

The theoretical basis of heuristic research in fairness is *Uncertainty Management Theory* (Berger, 1988), which focuses on how human communication is used to gain knowledge and create interpersonal understanding in social relationships. Berger (1988) proposed that a fundamental need for people is to reduce uncertainty in interactions with others, especially in new relationships or novel situations (Berger, 1988). An increased knowledge or awareness about what kind of person another is helps to improve predictability about how future interactions might occur and how that person may act.

Players assign meaning to visible cues in officials, forming impressions about how competent they are, and how respectful and dependable they might be under pressure situations (Simmons, 2010). They use procedural officiating displays and interpersonal cues to mitigate uncertainty about an official’s ability and decision correctness (Simmons, 2011; see Figure 2.2). Players view officials more favourably, and are thus more likely to respond positively to them, if they are perceived as neutral, competent and well-positioned (Simmons, 2006). Players who view officials as more competent and respectful are more likely to act cooperatively with officials (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2010).
Elaborations of fairness heuristic work in officiating communication research examine types of impression cues that players use to form perceptions about the competence of officials (Dosseville et al., 2014). Self-confidence, self-control, honesty, politeness, respect and verbal communication are rated most highly by players, making these qualities important impressions officials can convey to communicate messages to others about their capability and capacity to officiate (Dosseville et al., 2014). This view concentrates on better understanding preferable and less-preferable behavioural and interpersonal cues in officials, which in turn can be helpful to instruct officials about ways they can purposefully influence attitudes in players and others.

Taken together, this research (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2010; 2011) found that players link particular behaviours, displays and appearances of officials to qualities such as accountability, consistency, respectfulness, and mental acuity. Fairness heuristic theory gives one explanation for understanding intrinsic goals that guide communication for sport officials, to reduce uncertainty in players and others about their ability, motivation, and integrity to officiate. It provides a foundation on which sport-specific, officiating decision communication skills training and research programs can be based and further developed. Providing a predictable performance environment for players is one way that officials can positively influence players’ attitudes towards them and their decisions. Extreme emotions and conflict can arise in an officiating environment. Communicators should be prepared for such situations: simply presenting oneself as calm and assertive may not be adequate for the complex task. More refined communication
skills and approaches are needed to control and facilitate games.

**Table 2.2.** Simmons’ (2011) tripartite model for communicating fairness in sport officiating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>Physicality</td>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Unfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>Oblivious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentality</td>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Inexperienced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Unintelligent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Assured</td>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Diffident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Unpredictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Uncaring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Resolute</td>
<td>Yielding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Answerable</td>
<td>Unanswerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discreet</td>
<td>Attention seeking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>Punitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>Disinterested</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affable</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section has highlighted fairness and organisational justice approaches, perhaps the most commonly used theoretical frameworks for studying officiating communication. Communicating fairness is one element of good officiating communication, but it has inevitably led to an understanding of sport official communication that emphasises the social psychological responses to officials’ communicative behaviour and displays. The next section argues that this, as a consequence, has reinforced ‘transmission’, sender-receiver conceptualisations of officiating communication. A case is made for exploring beyond current ‘transmission’ models, for more ‘dialogic’ (or two-way) approaches to communication that better address the complexities and dynamics that characterise sport officiating communication.
2.2.2. **Conceptualising communication as ‘transmission’ is limiting**

A central theme in officiating communication studies has traditionally been to use social psychological frameworks that use deterministic or behavioural approaches to understand communication. Officiating communication behaviours, actions, displays and styles are often a primary study variable and are interpreted based on the responses and perceptions or attitudes they evoke in players and others. Procedural communication dimensions in officiating decision communication have also been a main study focus in understanding what impressions such behaviours portray to others. Studies generally examine officiating communication variables in isolation through rating/survey tools that separate specific characteristics of communication from the dynamic manner in which it occurs (Faccenda et al., 2009; Simmons, 2010). Collectively, these approaches to communication configure the sport official as a ‘sender’ of decision information and impression cues, and players as the ‘receivers’ who decode communication content but do not participate in the communication process.

This has resulted in a conceptualisation of officiating communication as ‘one-way’, resembling a ‘transmission model’ of communication (e.g., Berlo, 1960; Shannon & Weaver, 1949). A sender and receiver model of communication implies one information source and channel through which a message is received by another, decoded for interpretation, while being influenced by ‘noise’ that can interfere in the way a message is received. Shannon and Weaver (1949; Figure 2.3) originally proposed the transmission model of communication as a mathematical interpretation of
communication. A ‘transmission’ conceptualisation assumes that officiating communication carries messages that have isolated and intended meaning and, as such, these semantic aspects of communication are linked to others according to some physical and conceptual ‘system’ in which messages are interpreted. Such ‘semantics’ of officiating communication and game interactions with others cannot be fully addressed using a research framework informed by this mathematical theory of communication. The Shannon and Weaver (1949) model is asemantic, acontextual and focused on individual to individual. Indeed, it was not intended to be applicable to human communication (Mehmet, Clarke, & Kautz, 2014).

**Figure 2.2.** Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) transmission model of communication.

While impression management and presentation of appropriate demeanour cues can help officials appear credible and become more accepted by players, it is limiting as a conceptualisation of actual communication and interpersonal experiences of players and sport officials. An over-emphasis on sending messages to players ignores the importance of player agency and contextual and relational influences on communication. In developing
strategies to help officials to better communicate it is important to consider the complexity and nuances in officiating and communication demands. As a consequence, the realistic demands and requirements for communication in officiating exceed what can be accounted for in models of communication that focus on transmission concepts, or ‘one-way’ displays. Novice officials are generally taught how to perform basic communication signalling and to use their whistle, but other aspects of communication with players at the novice and expert skill levels exist that are less defined, yet required in officiating. Ultimately, transmission conceptualisations limit how those who govern sport official development train and teach communication capacities and humanistic skills important to officiating.

Officiating communication is not a sterile, decontextualised process, but a complex and dynamic practice. As the communication that occurs in sports is also complex, new conceptualisations and theories beyond the limits of the sender-receiver and cause-and-effect models are warranted. Alternative conceptualisations might incorporate two-way (‘dialogic’) or transactional approaches for understanding sport official communication that would expand current transmission concepts towards the complexity of practice. A dialogic approach explains communication as a co-construction between interactants (Buber, 1997; Jans, 1999) that involves two or more ‘actors’ transmitting, interpreting, encoding and producing social information through rhetoric, logic, argumentation and self-preservation (Margaritoiu, 2009). Other communication theory, approaches and conceptualisations that may better account for an ‘interactor’ officiating environment should address the complexity and fluidity of interactions. Officials communicate
under intense scrutiny, are required to react instantaneously and sometimes in an antagonistic environment. There are multiple and competing goals, shifting and dynamic conditions, and uncertainty or high stakes that shape other communication demands for officials that extend a toolbox of impression management techniques.

Officials often have greater agency and flexibility in their actions with players and can use pro-social techniques (Arthur-Banning et al., 2007) or preventive communication (Mascarenhas et al., 2005). In professional settings such as medicine, social work and other human services roles, the dynamic needs of the communication work are said to involve a certain ‘emotional labour’ (Hoshchild, 1983) that requires a set of fine-tuned skills and capacities to deal with the complexities of communication.

For the purposes of this project, it was useful to reflect on how communication and communication improvement is regarded in other occupational and professional roles. The next section of this literature review attempts to expand on current transmission and fairness frameworks and reviews conceptualisations of communication skill, skilful communication practice and other complex humanistic skills relevant to officiating performance. Communication literature outside officiating was examined to help establish ways that communication would be approached and studied in this project.
2.3. **Concepts of communication practice**

This section provides a critical reflection on the ways in which communication has been conceptualised in different occupational fields and professional practice contexts. Gaining an understanding of theoretical frameworks and approaches to communication in other professional fields, where there has been greater research interest in understanding effective communication, can assist in addressing the general lack of knowledge about officiating communication.

This review shows a traditional emphasis on a ‘toolbox’ of communication skills approach in professional settings. It also discusses the means by which other important ‘communication skills’, such as non-verbal behaviour, social skill, skilled performance, and ways individuals differ in particular ‘acquired abilities’, have historically been operationalised and framed by different scholars (Hargie, 2011). This information provides a basis for understanding more complex characteristics of officiating communication, and situates definitions of skilled communication in discussions about practical concerns such as communication improvement and training in officiating.

2.3.1. **Professional communication in other contexts**

Officials occupy a unique place in sport society and social systems, where much of their role and social practice is constrained by particular goals, motivations, rules and social structures, identities and cultural norms (Dosseville et al., 2013). The tensions and expectations that underpin sport officiating have parallels with other occupations and societal roles involving similar interactive goals (e.g., communicating difficult decisions, conflict
resolution, maintaining social order) and power relationships between different stakeholders.

Lessons can be gained from the way in which communication is conceptualised in medicine and health (physicians, nurses), education (teachers), law enforcement (policing, security), social work (counselling), management (business leaders, managers) or hospitality and the service industry. These are all types of work where communication is influenced by a range of personal, social and institutional goals and interests.

In these various communication contexts, there are at least two individuals involved in the communication process (sometimes others can be present or involved). The communication context for sport officials can involve multiple audiences at a micro-level (with players, coaches or other officials); at a meso-level (spectators, officiating assessors); and at macro-level such as television audiences (MacMahon et al., 2014). A better conceptualisation of sport official communication should consider how officials establish and negotiate role identities and manage social representations to various audiences (Dosseville et al., 2013). Micro, meso and macro audience and other considerations add a further layer of complexity to sport officiating communication.

Debates about the way communication is used as language, expression, and narrative in different professional and practice contexts are related to the challenges people face in various occupations (Rollnick et al., 2005). There is much research evidence to show that in different professions and
occupations effective forms of interpersonal behaviour and communication are linked to a range of intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and organisational outcomes. Some examples include patients’ perception of nursing care quality and adherence to treatment regimen (Coeling & Cukr, 2000; McCabe, 2004), citizen satisfaction and acceptance of police procedure (Well, 2007) and student engagement and learning in classroom environments (Brekalmans, Wubbels, & Levy, 1993; Frymier & Houser, 2000). This is expanded in the following sections.

Classroom teaching provides a useful context for understanding aspects of officiating communication. It has similar requirements to maintain social order and a pedagogical metaphor is often used to compare the officiating role with educators, when describing relations between officials and players (Isabel et al., 2013). One early area of communication research in teaching aimed to understand student perceptions of physical or psychological closeness with teachers, known as immediacy behaviours (Gorham, 1988). Immediacy has been found to predict students’ perception of teacher credibility (Mazer & Stowe, 2015), instructional effectiveness (Hooker, 2015) and increased desire to commit to academic course content (Kelly, Rice, Wyatt, Duckling, & Denton, 2015). As a behavioural account of communication, immediacy is viewed as an affective (or emotional) concept that frames human communication as approach and avoidance (Mazer & Stowe, 2015).

A teacher’s level of awareness of students’ classroom behaviour was associated with student work involvement and deviancy, as it contributes to
better responses and communication with students (Kounin, 1970). Other education research shows the influence of interpersonal teaching style on a cooperative working climate in students (Tartwijk et al., 1998) and the way in which classroom management strategies have a positive influence on student behaviour and student discipline (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Training in classroom management skills is considered crucial for beginning teachers, to reduce symptoms of ‘reality shock’ and improve teacher wellbeing (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015). Such training can be assumed to be one option for improving novice sport officials’ social experiences and their ability to manage game activities and player behaviour.

The study of communication has garnered much attention in the education of nurses, medical physicians and health care practitioners.

Effective interpersonal behaviour is vital for caregivers in therapeutic relationships. Consequently, effective communication is viewed as a prerequisite for practitioner-patient relations and to ensure patient acceptance of treatment regimens (Tuckett, 2007). Some research situated patients as ‘consumers’ of health care, where the care relationship was conceived as a transaction (Price, 2013). Early interpersonal and communication research in nursing investigated labels nurses ascribed to patients. These labels included ‘difficult’ or ‘unpopular’ (Haas, Leiser, Magill, & Sanyer, 2005; Steinmetz & Tabenkin, 2001). One study found that labelling patients as cheerful or morose, grateful or grudging, optimistic or pessimistic, or interesting to care for, determined the quality of nurses’
communication with patients and the patients’ subsequent nursing care (Anderson, Cliff, & Morrison, 2013). Parallels can be made with sport officiating, where stereotypes among players, coaches, and officials could influence the tone and motivations of communication and interactions.

The exchange of personal and health information between doctors or nurses and patients has been studied extensively. Creating patient care narratives is said to be a vital capability for health practitioners in care settings (Nordby, 2007). Communication is a central aspect to the perceived quality of nursing care, primarily influencing patient well-being, satisfaction, and engagement with health treatments (Jones, 2003; Tuckett, 2005; Williams & Gossett, 2001). Feistinger et al. (2009) reviewed nursing communication studies and suggested communication is operationalised as a) dynamic, b) complex, c) contextual, and d) involving multiple, ongoing goal processes where the experiences of the participants are shared.

Understanding the ways communication is conceptualised in the health field can be helpful to sport officiating, as findings show particular practitioner skills have critical influences on the care experience and behavioural change in patients. Communication is recognised as instrumental, affective and a co-constructed narrative process between practitioner and patient.

Many studies focused on isolated communication ‘skills’ such as physicians’ delivery of ‘bad news’ to patients (Fallowfield & Jenkins, 2004), the importance of questioning and other information gathering techniques used to inform medical decision making (Van Zanten, Boulet, McKinley,
DeChamplain, & Jobe, 2007) and motivational interviewing, a method for facilitating and engaging intrinsic motivation in a patient or client (Miller & Rollnick, 2012).

Another occupational field that can inform conceptualisations of sport official communication is policing. There are strong similarities between policing and officiating, insofar as both are responsible for enforcing prescribed rules. As with police officers, the public communication and behaviour of sport officials is expected to embody preferred values and attitudes (Dosseville et al., 2014). The public image of police officers and perceived justice in policing procedure are related and important to police organisations (Ainsworth, 2002). Similarly, perceptions of injustice in officials have been linked to anti-social or uncooperative player behaviour (e.g., Faccenda et al., 2009; Simmons, 2010).

Blagden (2012) used social identity theory to account for stereotypes and discrimination between police and the public that can perpetuate hostility in relations. He suggested that members of the public have become less accepting of the police role and that understanding interpersonal perception is vital if the nature of police-public interactions is to be improved.

Police work often requires officers to deal with people from a range of cultural or ethnic backgrounds, socio-emotional statuses and personal needs. Much communication training in police education addresses skills to better deal with special populations, such as those with mental or intellectual disability who might be victims or witnesses of crime, and suspects or
defendants (McAfee & Musso, 1995; Murphy, 1989). The study of communication in policing recognises the importance of person perception, conflict management and intercultural communication in the methods and techniques used by police to adapt and manage relations with others.

Communication accommodation perspective has frequently been used to study policing procedure during traffic stops, specifically to assess the dynamics of intercultural communication in police-citizen interaction patterns (Giles, Willemyns, Gallois, & Anderson, 2007; Johnson, 2004; Lundman & Kaufman, 2003). Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Gilies, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) suggests that people adjust their speech patterns, style and communication content to achieve either congruency with others or to emphasise social difference. One way of thinking about how officials and players adapt themselves to one another in a sport environment can be through accommodation (MacMahon et al., 2014).

CAT is a behavioural theory of communication that explores language, relational and identity processes in human interaction (Coupland & Jaworski, 1997; Gilies & Ogay, 2007). It helps to understand communication behaviour based on the ‘motivational, strategic, behavioural, attributional and evaluative components that interactants impose on their own communication experiences’ (Gilies, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 11). CAT assists an understanding of how officials can use different communication strategies or conflict management styles in ways that are appropriate to certain game situations and people.
In a policing context, CAT addresses power relations and the ways in which police manage their communication to individuals of different cultural backgrounds. *Convergence* is defined as a strategy by which people adopt the verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours of others so that they more closely resemble another person. For a sport official, a convergent style with players may be used to help develop congruency, rapport or mutuality, and to appear more relatable to players. High performance soccer referees say they use player and coach language (e.g., phases, wording) and show a readiness to talk with players and coaches as part of their game management approach (Slack, et al., 2013).

*Divergence* refers to a communication strategy whereby verbal and non-verbal behaviour is used to accentuate individual or social difference. A divergent style of communication may be used by officials to gain or retain control in difficult situations by emphasising their authority, in order to make players increasingly aware of disciplinary actions they may take.

Research evidence outlined in this section of the literature review shows there are multiple goals, considerations and interests for communicators in different occupations and professions. The many nuances particular to different occupations and practice fields reveal researcher and practitioner interests concerning communication skills that can aid understanding of officiating. A traditional approach to identifying and training communication across occupations has been to teach a ‘toolbox’ of communication skills. Practitioners are conventionally taught component communication skills (e.g., classroom management skills in teachers;
delivering ‘bad news’ or information gathering skills in medical doctors; interviewing and procedural behaviours in police officers) as ways to respond to others and to address task-related goals in their occupational environment to fulfil particular fixed aims.

The next section of this literature review reflects on the idea of the ‘toolbox’ of communication skills approach in relation to officiating and examines some of the strengths and limitations of this approach.

2.3.2. The ‘toolbox’ of communication skills approach

If we scan the ‘communication’ area of training in different contexts we find that a ‘toolbox’ approach to communication skills has been a ‘dominant paradigm’ for practice and improvement.

A ‘toolbox’ approach to communication improvement has been utilised within communication education as a way to reduce the complexity of interpersonal aspects of work in different occupational settings. Communication research – and, as a consequence, communication training of individuals in different professional and practice contexts – tends to focus on isolated or rote skills that communicators are able to use to bring about desirable outcomes (e.g., delivering ‘bad news’, active listening). In communication studies generally, research concentrating on discrete skills has examined aspects of communication behaviour that are ‘relatively simple, non-interactive tasks’ (Greene, 2003, p. 70).

Non-verbal behaviour is identified as an essential aspect of the
communication ‘tool-box’ for sport officials (Dosseville et al., 2014; MacMahon et al., 2014; Mellick et al., 2005). This can include facial expressions, appearance, eye contact, proxemics (physical space), haptics (touch), gestures, body orientation, posture, and whistle use and signalling (MacMahon et al., 2014). Hargie (2011) noted that several communication theorists restrict definitions of communication to the behavioural domain, or repertoires of non-verbal behaviours. Other theorists have viewed non-verbal communication as personality and style (Allport, 1961). Non-verbal communication as personality and style supports consistency, holism and uniqueness in non-verbal actions. While body language and non-verbal communication is important in sending messages to players, it is important such communication aligns with sincerity and authenticity that validate the message’s source.

Over-reliance on non-verbal communication tools (whistle, hand signals, body language) with players may undermine the development of other important characteristics of communication, such as interpreting people and situations and constructing and sending ‘person-centred’ messages that are attached to functionally and contextually appropriate goals.

There is a range of social and interpersonal skills important to the ‘toolbox’ of communication skills for sport officials. Communication skills have largely focused emphasis on impression management techniques (Thatcher, 2005), decision communication – particularly giving explanations (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010) and conflict management (Mascarenhas et al., 2006).
Explaining is a decision communication skill in officiating that involves communicating accounts of situations or aspects of social events to another. Explaining is not just a cognitive communication act: it is also an affective act to influence changes in attitudes, cognition and behaviour (Hargie, 2006). As a ‘toolbox’ skill for officials, research finds that providing verbal explanations to players influences how competent officials are perceived to be by players (Dosseville et al., 2014) and how fair and correct decisions are perceived to be (Simmons, 2010).

Conflict management is another tool in the box of communication techniques or styles that officials are taught to respond more effectively to situations that arise in games. This involves various degrees of assertive or cooperative communication style that might include forcing, avoidance, accommodation or collaboration with players and others (Mascarenhas et al., 2006).

All the previously discussed, communication ‘skills’ are sometimes needed in officiating. However, the research undertaken for this research argues that the customary ‘skill’ approach used in conceptualising communication tends to isolate techniques and methods of officiating communication, and inevitably fragments the communication process. This can consequently do little to explain the adaptive, appropriate and timed use of such skills. Thus, a ‘skill’ or ‘decision’ approach to communication can limit our understanding of the interpersonal demands placed on sport officials and the richness of officiating practice.
The ‘toolbox’ approach for conceptualising sport official communication can be improved and expanded by incorporating other concepts that describe ways that officials skilfully use communication. The next section expands on this idea by exploring communication research about other skills approaches, specifically communication as *social skill*, in order to better conceptualise officiating communication practice.

### 2.3.3. Communication as social skill

A more complex language for describing sport official communication as social skill can help elaborate thinking about the range of communication demands present in officiating. Social skill areas currently familiar in officiating understanding are mostly limited to impression management and decision communication. This section attempts to build on current conceptualisations of sport officiating communication by reviewing other communication concepts to improve social skill accounts of communication.

Communication skill has been suggested as the ability to exchange social information in order to make changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviours (Hargie, 2011). The terms ‘communication skill’, ‘social skill’, and ‘interpersonal skill’ are commonly used to describe attributes of good communicators (Hargie, 2006). This interchangeable, unoperationalised terminology can limit our understanding of communication as it often describes broadly what these skills are used for, rather than what they actually are (Hargie & Dickson, 2002). A long tradition in the field of communication has been to define social competencies and the influence of communication skill in various social settings (see Greene, 2003; Hargie,
Early models used to explain communication skill liken it to a motor skill, or set of mechanistic component behaviours that align with some sequence (Argyle & Kendon, 1967). This interpretation originated from the idea that skilled social behaviour (such as interviewing or negotiating) could be comparable to motor skill behaviour (such as walking or playing tennis). The motor skill definition of social skill describes it as ‘an organised, coordinated activity, in relation to an object or a situation that involves a chain of sensory, central and motor mechanisms’ (Argyle & Kendon, 1967, p. 77). This rigid definition neglects to account for responses of others in social situations and the different types of feedback that are gleaned from interpersonal encounters. More contemporary communication theorists have recognised the usefulness of the motor skill analogy, but identify its limitations as an aid to understanding communication and social skill more fully (Greene, 2003; Hargie, 2011). Skilled communication behaviour is more complex than a set of organised actions or an integrated hierarchy of smaller component behaviours that all contribute to the overall act (Burleson, 2007). While there can be some procedural aspects to the officiating role the nature of officiating may not be compatible with this definition, considering the multiple-goals involved, and unpredictable circumstances of practice.

Communication and interpersonal behaviour has been compared to a type of skilled performance (Hargie, 2006). Proctor and Dutta (1995) emphasise the role of practice and the case of operation, fluency and appropriateness in
social skill as ‘goal-directed, well organized behaviour that is acquired through practice and performed with economy of effort’ (p. 18). The main argument for this proposition is the goal-directed nature of skilled behaviour, which is regarded as intentional, rather than chance or unintentional. Newer suggestions in social skill conceptualisations indicate the importance of communication skills, but also the importance of goal directed, inter-connected and situationally appropriate social behaviours (Salmon & Young, 2011).

Officiating environments are characterised by often complex, unexpected and changing circumstances that more closely resemble these more contemporary operationalisations of social skill (i.e. ‘interactor’ officiating sports; MacMahon et al., 2014). Interpersonal encounters and exchanges between players and officials can involve conflict, reprimanding, explaining, encouraging consensus and agreement, dispute, or negotiating behavioural change and expectations. Officials occupy an authority position in games with respect to players and communication is frequently influenced by heightened emotions and time constraints (Simmons, 2006), power discrepancies (Rix-Lièvre et al., 2014), and moral atmosphere (Faccenda et al., 2009; Jones & Fleming, 2010).

The occupational field that has had perhaps the greatest resources and research effort directed specifically at communication training is medicine. An over-reliance on skills and planned communication is sometimes said to lead to poor dialogue with patients and insensitivity to situations (Salmon & Young, 2011). Some authors have pointed out that when experienced nurses
and health practitioners were asked to reflect on their care practice they placed increased importance on intuitively driven communication with patients and departure from the rules, or ‘expert application of previously defined skills’ (Salmon & Young, 2011, p. 218).

Officiating decision communication has been said to reflect a personal, unique, emergent and sometimes improvised side of communication (Mellick et al., 2005). Medical education research has sometimes challenged the habit of conceptualising communication as a skill. Detractors argue that it reduces a complex, interactive phenomenon to a set of discrete and rigid component behaviours that fail to fully account for the development and practice of what would more appropriately be defined as skilful or functional goal-oriented communication (Salmon & Young, 2011).

The shift from a ‘communication skills’ to a ‘skilled communication’ view, highlights the importance of adaptation, flexibility and appropriateness in communication. This aligns more appropriately to the challenges of officiating communication, where the unpredictable is predicted.

This review section has attempted to articulate research on communication and social skills. It considered communication as non-verbal behaviour and interactive processes and strategies intended to meet functional, social or personal goals. It emphasised interpersonal communication as social, interpretive, and adaptive process and skill. Common requirements in officiating environments include spontaneous responses to unexpected situations and avoiding rigid responses to players and others. Given that
reading and interpreting people and situations is central to communication, it may be that a focus on tools fails to account adequately for the importance of context.

2.3.4. Emotional intelligence and other humanistic judgments

Previous sections discussed the nature of social skill and broad concepts of interpersonal communication. Now it is important to discuss more specialised humanistic judgement qualities and capacities that underlie and contribute to social skill. The following sections explore the role of emotional intelligence (or social competence) in social and relational skills of officials, which provides a language for framing constructive, contextually-bound, personally-involved and holistic aspects of sport official communication.

Sport officials work in highly passionate and emotionally-charged environments where they often encounter players and coaches who can become aggressive, angry or uncooperative. Superior officiating performance has been associated with higher-order humanistic qualities and capacities such as social competence (more generally referred to as emotional intelligence) (Carlsson, 2006; Nikbakhsh, Alam, & Moonzami, 2013). Thorndike (1920) originally coined the term ‘social competence’, referring to the ability to appraise others’ emotions in social situations, and which helps contribute to managing emotional responses in others. Particularly, this ability helps the individual become vigilant, calm, respectful, observant, attentive, responsive, illustrative and receptive in dealing with people and situations (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2012).
Elite Swedish soccer referees report the importance of a developed social competence and sensitivity to the ethos of the game as central qualities that contribute to their ability to officiate (Carlsson, 2006). Carlsson (2006) suggests that social competence and control benefits officials’ ability to deal with conflict and use discretionary powers flexibly and adaptively. It would be useful in officiating to better understand how social sensitivities and competence contributes to improving sport officials’ self-awareness of their communication and reading others’ behavioural responses, including situational needs and players’ emotional reactions to officials.

In officiating research, high-performance level officials identify the importance of emotional management in using active listening and empathy with players (Slack et al., 2013), depersonalising abuse (Simmons, 2006) and to appear calm, composed and confident when delivering decisions (Simmons, 2010; Mellick et al., 2005). There are some indications that sport officials can develop mental skills to help reduce stressful responses and learn how to cope with and adjust their emotional responses to difficult situations and psychological pressure and stress effectively (MacMahon et al., 2014).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is one of the most studied concepts in social sciences over the past 25 years and has been found to positively predict athletic performance (Zizzi, Deaner, & Hirschhorn, 2003), mental and physical health (Extremera & Fernandez-Berrocal, 2006) and self-efficacy (Chan, 2004). The ‘intelligence’ referred to in the term generally describes peoples’ ability to carry out abstract reasoning about emotions (Mayer &
Salovey, 1990; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002). Goleman (1995), who first introduced the term, contends that in addition to technical abilities, higher levels of performance require humanistic attributes, including deliberate control of one’s emotions and appropriate reaction to others’ emotions, persuasion, group work, ability to negotiate, transparency in communication and mediation. Other aspects of human functioning found to be linked to EI include well-being, assertiveness and more accurate self-perceptions of emotional abilities or actual abilities (Karimi & Rada, 2016).

Definitions of EI vary largely in their emphasis on different dimensions. Some operational definitions describe EI as ‘a chain of non-cognitive skills that influences a person’s ability to overcome environmental pressure’ (Martinez, 1997). Some other definitions of EI draw attention to monitoring and adapting to others:

‘the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action’

(Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189).

‘the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion, access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought, and understand emotion and emotional knowledge, and regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth’

(Mayer & Salovey, 1997, p. 35)

There are few studies that explore associations of EI to officiating performance and in what ways it contributes to officiating communication. One study of professional Iranian soccer referees shows the EI dimension of ‘emotional expression’ is strongly linked to self-reported strength of communication skills (Nikbakhsh, Alam, & Moonzami, 2013). The study
authors recommended that officials should aim to learn and develop emotional assessment, expression, and regulation that support their communication (Nikbakhsh et al., 2013). EI understandings and learnings might be helpful in managing many of the personal and social demands made of officials. Emotional intelligence can be assumed to assist officials in their self-awareness of their communication ability and sophistication to deal with upset and angry coaches, disgruntled or dissatisfied players and spectators, and even media. Managing emotional responses in self and others in various situations serves to help in facilitating the appropriate selection and use of emotions. Managing emotions is the ability to manage emotions in the context of individual goals, self-knowledge and social awareness (Bar-On et al., 2006).

Officiating research shows high self-reported EI in sport officials is related to lower rating of perceived burnout (Alam et al., 2012) and that less experienced referees have higher levels of burnout than more experienced ones (Al-Haliq et al., 2014).

‘People work’ (Mann, 2004) and ‘emotional labour’ (Hofscild, 1983) describe aspects of occupations where there is a focus on interactions with other people and where emotional tensions and exchange are frequent. Such occupations include the counselling and guidance professions, customer service, social work and firefighting.

Emotional labour is a type of psycho-social stressor known to be related to burnout and communication requirements in human service work, with
which sport officiating requirements can be paralleled.

Winter (2003) debates the ‘emotionality’ of police work that can be implicated in stress and burnout in police. Hofschild (1983) suggests concepts of ‘surface acting’ (conforming to display rules by simulating emotions that are not actually felt) and ‘deep acting’ a stronger affiliation to emotions and responding to the present. Surface acting focuses on outward behaviour, whereas deep acting focuses on inner feeling associated with the responsibility to frequently deal with the public (Hofschild, 1983). Physicians consider empathy a type of emotional labour, and find they are more effective and derive a professional satisfaction when they use deep acting as a way engage in empathy with patients (Larson & Yao, 2005).

Some communication researchers argue that the term ‘emotional intelligence’ is too vague (Russell & Barchard, 2002), used in an all-too inclusive manner (Landy, 2005; Matthew et al., 2004) and can infer some genetically-based ability (Zeider, Matthews, Roberts, & MacCann, 2002). Others criticise its conceptualisation, suggesting that previous research has focused on three main approaches to understanding the phenomenon of EI, including emotional traits (emotion-related self-perceptions measured through self-report), emotional abilities (emotion-related cognitive abilities measured through performance tests) and emotional competence (Bar-On et al., 2006).

These differentiations are important for understanding communication improvement in sport officiating, where some more recent interpretations
that have received increased attention is the view of EI as an ‘acquired ability’ (see Bar-On et al., 2006). EI as a set of abilities views the communication concept as a set of learnt capacities. Other scholars approach EI as a trait and a varied mixture of personal attributes such as happiness, self-esteem, and optimistic attitudes. Newer conceptualisations of the EI construct suggest hierarchical and conceptual developments, such as EI as perception/appraisal and expression, emotional facilitation of thinking, emotional regulation, and environmental influences on the way people think, feel, and behave (e.g., Wiegand, 2007; Ybarra et al., 2014). Evidence from other fields suggests that EI training for sport officials may help their communication contribute to less burnout and more effective performance.

For the purposes of this project, EI helps to describe abilities or a range of qualities that contribute to better sport officiating communication. Regulating one’s own emotional responses and responding appropriately to the emotions of others are important aspects of emotional management and effective interpersonal skills (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004). EI is a useful concept for understanding more or less skilful forms of sport official communication, but not known to have been applied or developed for officiating and the goals and interests of officiating communication.

EI involves humanistic abilities and capacities that are considered integral to abstract reasoning, self-regulation and interpreting social environments. These are concepts that have yet to be explored in depth in officiating.
communication or performance, and provide a useful language for approximating ways officials construct more accurate and complex understandings about player behaviour. They may lead to more contextually-relevant communication behaviour. The following section expands on these specialised human abilities by discussing constructivist views of communication skills.

2.3.5. **Constructivist view of communication skill**

This literature review recognises the range of definitions and vocabulary available for understanding communication and social skill to better explain the complex nature of officiating communication. Communication demands for ‘interactor’ sport officials can fluctuate game to game, requiring a new set of communicative goals in situations and games. International rugby referees say that officiating can be likened to a problem-solving exercise that involves ‘finding a set of solutions that work for you on that day’ (MacMahon et al., 2014, p.77). Improvisation and formulating functional solutions to deal with novel situations become central to the use of contextual judgement and communication to manage individual game needs (Mascarenhas et al., 2005). A constructivist view of communication skill generally emphasises characteristics of communication that align with the changing circumstances, uncertainty and unexpectedness (or spontaneity) of sport officiating environments.

Interpretive and perceptual processes of individuals are seen to play a main role in better communicative conduct from the view of constructivism (Burleson, 2007). It places importance on the role of interpretation and
construction of meaning in human interaction (Deila, 1977) which influence the use of more functional communication that serve contextual requirements of communicators (Burleson, 2007; Griffin, 2013).

Communication skill from a constructivist lens is viewed as ‘a practical art with social purposes’ (Burleson, 2007). Regardless of the function, communication is viewed as a vehicle through which such functions are realised (Burleson & Samter, 1990). Constructivism conceptualises communication skill as ‘acquired abilities’ on which people differ in the ways they think about social environments and tailor interpersonal messages (Burleson, 2007). These abilities are thought to be built and refined over time and transferred from other contexts (such as occupational settings and personal experiences). From a constructivist view, skilled communication is improved by learning and experience, rather than just good genetics. This perspective holds importance for sport officiating because it is suggestive of the ways officials develop skilled communication.

Burleson and Samter (1990) first suggested an approach to communication skills as functional ability that considers, ‘the management of another person’s affect or emotion... or managing the activity of communication itself’ (p. 166). This relies on communicators’ ability to ‘take’, capture or imaginatively construct the perspective of others. Burleson (2007) later suggested a constructivist view of communication skill explaining ways that people interpret others’ social cues or ‘messages’ and produce communicative messages in ways that facilitate goal achievement.

Based on research from different practice settings, Burleson (2007)
recommends three functional skills that good communicators maintain and refine, labelled social perception, message reception and message production. This provides a useful framework for describing communication constructs that contribute to efficient and impactful ways that sport officials formulate appropriate interaction goals, respond to players and matchplay situations, and produce effective communicative messages in more deliberate and fluid ways.

Figure 2.4 outlines a constructivist view of communication skill using a suggested model of goal formation and message production processes involved in skilled communication (Burleson, 2007). The model articulates different mental ‘structures’ involved in formulating accurate appraisals of social situations, constructing interaction goals, memory associations to similar communication situations and exchange of communication messages. While Burleson’s (2007) model depicts ‘one-way’ message use and skill conceptualisations, it helps to contribute to better understanding skilled and adaptive forms of communication in sport officials.

Figure 2.3. A model of the goal formation and message production process (Burleson, 2007).

Note: Boxes = structures; arrows = processes
The next three sections elaborate on the previous introductory discussion to what Burleson (2007) terms ‘functional communication competencies’, particularly cognitive complexity and interpersonal constructs; message reception and interpreting the ‘unspoken’ and; message production and ‘person-centered’ messages.

2.3.5.1. Social perception, cognitive complexity and interpersonal constructs

Social perception refers to an individual’s ability to acquire, retain, manipulate and use information about the social world (Burleson, 2007). A constructivist approach to communication skills emphasises a ‘person-centered’ approach that draws on personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955), explaining how personal and interpersonal processes are essentially functions of mental representations used to interpret and anticipate people and events.

The core assumption of a constructivist view of communication is that people make sense of the world through systems of personal constructs (Deila, 1982; Kelly, 1955) referred to by Burleson (2007) as ‘interpersonal constructs’. The more complex the interpersonal constructs we can draw on, the better we are able to generate mental representations about interpersonal behaviour, and in turn adapt our social conduct and communication to context and people. ‘Interpersonal constructs’ refer to mental schemes or templates that apply to the thoughts, behaviors, characteristics and qualities of people (Burleson, 2007, p. 111). Burleson (2007) says interpersonal constructs help to give people meaning to the world and others’ behaviour.
and contribute to formulating and producing more sophisticated ‘person-centered’ messages. Some can be more adept at communication than others because of the number and complexity of constructs.

Social perception processes and interpersonal constructs help to explain ways people see the world that occupy more ‘cognivist’ perspectives. In general, people with higher levels of interpersonal cognitive complexity possess more advanced social perception and communication skills, but the connections between cognitive complexity and various skills can be quite complicated. Cognitive complexity is said to be associated with more diverse interpersonal constructs related to form multiple communication goals and adaptations in their messages.

Burleson (2007) says that what is labelled as ‘social perception’ can be likened to ‘emotional intelligence’. He says there is an overuse of the term emotional intelligence and argues that it is a vague term which is often conceived as a genetic ability. Improving social perception results largely from learning and experience, rather than genetics. Burleson (2007) suggests adult skilled communication can be learnt, but recognises that development is influenced by childhood social-cognitive development and training approaches designed to improve cognitive complexity. Researchers have learned quite a bit about childhood socialisation factors that influence the development of cognitive complexity and associated communication skills. A communication ability that is important to the ways officials adapt or accommodate their interaction is depth processing – a deliberate, systematic and mindful assessment of communicative messages from others,
the people who are involved, and the interaction circumstances (Burleson, 2007). Unfortunately, much less is known about how adults can reliably improve their levels of cognitive complexity and skilled communication practice (Burleson, 2007).

2.3.5.2. **Message production and ‘person-centred’ messages**

Constructivist interpretations of communication skills emphasise the functional and goal-directed nature of communication messages. Skilled communication involves the way multiple goals of communicators are met and particular ways identities and relationships are presented and managed in interpersonal exchanges. An important element of this perspective of communicative messages is their goal structure for interaction, rather than a focus on one particular goal or communication skill, such as persuasion or informing another person.

One proposed concept to explain the ability to generate verbal and non-verbal messages that accomplish personal and social goals is labelled message production (Burleson, 2007). A constructivist approach to understanding communication skills moves away from rule-based, ‘position-centred’ communication to more ‘person-centred’ communication which is sensitive to context and characteristics of individuals. People who use more person-centered communication are perceived to be more attractive as partners in general, effective persuaders, more accepted by their peers, and more socially mobile in their career (Burleson, 2007). Tailoring ‘person-centered messages’ to interaction goals, context and people reflects a communicator’s ability to anticipate responses and adjust their communication behaviour accordingly. It recognises others as independent
reasoning agents, adapts to perspectives, gives weight to relational and identity issues in communication, is more multi-functional, focuses on negotiation, and is future-focused.

Person-centered messages come from more complex interpersonal constructs that are stored as developed human ‘procedural memories’ (Burleson, 2007). Procedural memories are recollections about how we do something and a result of experiential knowledge and previous experience (Burleson, 2007). It may be that this approximates the importance of ‘experiences’ to officials becoming better communicators (e.g., Ollis et al., 2006; Mellick et al., 2005) and to understanding how experiences contribute to more refined ‘interpersonal constructs’ and person-centered messages.

2.3.5.3. Message reception and interpreting the ‘unspoken’

Message reception is a special kind of social perception process which explains how people comprehend and contextualise communicative expressions of others. Message reception (what some call ‘decoding’) is the process of interpreting the communicative behavior of others in the effort to understand the meaning and implications of that behavior (Burleson, 2007, p. 118). It involves the capacity to comprehend meanings from others’ actions and messages and, when appropriate, go beyond those messages to understand others’ intentions and motives (Burleson, 2007). ‘Person perception’ (or the way we perceive, organise and integrate social information to form coherent situated impressions of others) is crucial for police officers to make accurate interactional and person judgments in interpersonal encounters with members of the public (Ainsworth, 2002).
Understanding the agenda behind player behaviour and implicit messages players are sending to officials in response to their communication are important in selecting appropriate communication responses in officiating.

A constructivist view of communication skill, especially message reception skill, recognises relational and identity issues in communication, something relatively un-studied in sport officiating. It enhances our understanding of how sport officials interpret people and situations and how they produce messages more skilfully to players and others. Explaining skilled officiating communication as a set of acquired abilities can be useful to the instruction and training of officials in game management skills.

Constructivism provides a way of conceptualising communication skill as acquired abilities that contribute to the effective interpretation of others’ messages and skilful production of communicative messages to players. Along with other communication skills, this helps us to understand ways that skills are used through humanistic expression of acquired abilities. Despite its many elaborations and extensions, at heart, constructivism remains a general theory of communication skill.

**Summary**

The previous section reviewed trends in professional communication research from a range of occupational roles and practice contexts that emphasise ‘skills’ approaches to communication and in conceptualising communication training. Limitations of a skills approach for explaining sport official communication were discussed and the lack of research
available that addresses adaptive, flexible and more holistic interpretations of skilful communication was noted.

The newer communication models reviewed take into account the influence of other human qualities and abilities, including emotional intelligence and sophisticated interaction goals or plans, and receptivity to others in producing appropriate communication messages tailored to individuals and context.

The final sections of this literature review articulate different ways of explaining and understanding communication improvement, and how sport officials become better communicators, that incorporate and extend a skills approach. It reflects on common research traditions in communication training and ways communication improvement is theorised or conceptualised that are applicable to sport officiating.

2.4. Improving communication practice in officiating

Communication exists as a core organisational challenge confronting sport and officiating governing bodies, but is under-studied in sport research (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015). Officiating bodies and sport organisations/associations would benefit from a better understanding of how officials improve their communication effectiveness with sport participants (such as players, coaches/managers) and other stakeholders or sport audiences. Explicit training support in ‘soft’ skills, such as communication and people management, for sport officials can improve capacities to deal with hostile interactions (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2004; Simmons, 2006). It can
also lead to better quality control and mediation of games (Fruchart & Carton, 2012; Mascarenhas et al., 2006). This can also reflect the types of organisational resources available to officials, the communication and game management demands characteristic of different sports, and fact that officiating is said to be not a very practice-rich environment (MacMahon et al., 2014).

Learning and support approaches that can help to improve skilled communication in officials should be tailored to participation levels (e.g., novice or grassroots, development, sub-elite, elite levels; MacMahon et al., 2014). Australian grassroots sport officials say they receive little to no training in communication and conflict management and feel they are generally, ‘expected to learn how to deal with conflict and abuse as they learn the complex task of how to officiate’ (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2004, p. 13). ‘Interactor’ officiating sports (the focus of this research) are frequently characterised by team sport environments where officials are in close proximity to players (Dosseville et al., 2014), many players are involved, and communication involves multiple goals, is complex and requires frequent interactions (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). This project seeks to better account for communication improvement in officials across a range of interactor sports where communication demands are generally similar.

Establishing better understanding of theory-practice relationships in sport officiating communication has implications in helping sport bodies develop strategies for improving communication by sport officials. Craig (1999; 2006) says in the communication field there has been an over-theorisation of
processes and skills, and neglect by researchers to embody communication theory in its practice. Communication as a ‘practice’ describes it as ‘a coherent set of activities that are commonly engaged in and meaningful in particular ways among people familiar with a certain culture’ (Craig, 2006, p. 34). Practices not only involve ways of engaging in a particular activity, but also thinking and creating a discourse about those activities (Craig, 2006; Kemmis et al., 2011).

Communication practice concepts that characterise different functions and purposes of officials in ‘interactor’ officiating settings often emerge in officiating literature (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). Some frequent terms used to operationalise officiating communication practice include conflict management (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2006), game management (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Slack et al., 2013), destabilising game activities (Fruchart & Carton, 2012), preventive refereeing (Mascarenhas et al., 2005), contextual judgement (Mascarenhas et al., 2005), and corporate theatre - or enacting the officiating role as a piece of theatre in elite sport settings (Cunningham et al., 2012; MacMahon et al., 2014). These practice-oriented ideas can be useful for understanding and further managing communication practice in officials.

Perspectives of ‘expert’ officials are primarily used in sport official communication research to understand best ways for communicating decisions (Cunningham et al., 2012; Mellick et al., 2005), impression management techniques (Simmons, 2006; Thatcher, 2005) and
characteristics of game management (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Slack et al., 2013). While lessons can be gained from understanding expert perspectives, it limits understanding about other perspectives and emergent aspects of communication involving improvisation and personal style in communication. Sport officials operating at the elite level often have their own individual style of communication that is a consequence of personality traits and officiating experiences and developed reputation (Mellick et al., 2005). There is little discussion about what characterises expertise in communication for sport officials or, more, how officials acquire communication expertise in officiating environments.

There are many personal and environmental factors that can influence ways officials become better communicators. Traditionally, it has been suggested, officials develop their communication through a ‘hidden curriculum’, involving personal experiences and informal advice from officiating peers, assessors and mentors (Mellick et al., 2005). This idea is shared in police training literature which says that there is almost a naïve assumption that effective communication will come naturally and does not need to be taught formally (Ainsworth, 2002; Blagden, 2012). Research tells us that the ability to judge game context and communicate in adaptive, functional, and situationally sensitive ways is often associated with, or assumed to improve, as a result of officiating experience (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Mellick et al., 2005; Ollis et al., 2006). In discussions about ‘experience’, conceptualisations resemble an unopened box. The contents are unknown.

Factors thought to influence how expert-level officials develop their
judgement and expertise include extensive game experience (Ollis et al., 2006), transfer of skill from other settings (Mellick et al., 2005; Ollis et al., 2006), intensive reflection and feedback on performance (MacMahon et al., 2014; Simmons, 2006), and other personal and officiating information processing experiences (MacMahon, Starkes, & Deakin, 2009; Ste. Marie, 2003).

Research on sport officiating expertise has mainly been motivated by psychological and social-information processing approaches (Plessner & MacMahon, 2013; Ste. Marie, 2003), and has tended to neglect understandings of how communication expertise is developed. Constructivist views of communication skills say that becoming a better communicator in a particular setting is not just a result of maturation and general experience but also the ‘kind’ of experiences you have, as those experiences reshape our social constructs (Burleson, 2007). A deeper understanding of what experience is and how it best serves communication improvement in officials would be a valuable next step in comprehending support and development to aid officials. Better conceptualisation of communication improvement in sport officiating is informed by other research on expertise and talent development in sport officials.

One concept from the educational field and literature on human expertise providing a useful starting point for framing communication improvement is ‘deliberate practice’. The theory of deliberate practice remains a popular framework for explaining how people acquire expertise in a given performance task. It suggests that people require upwards of 10 years or
10,000 hours of directed practice (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993) to become expert. Some scholars say that sport officiating is not a practice-rich environment compared to other practice and performance contexts (e.g., athletics) because there can be limited opportunity for sport officials to be able to engage in the appropriate amount of deliberate practice hours (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2005). Regular opportunities for officiating practice hours may be limited and they rely on game experience, thus not meeting the requirements of an expertise model interpretation (Ericsson et al., 1993). This presents a challenge to find innovative ways to train and support communication and meet this need for officials.

Some advances in officiating have seen the development of new technologies (e.g., web-based learning tools) and strategies for improving the amount of practice hours dedicated to judgment/decision tasks (MacMahon et al., 2007; Mascarenhas et al., 2005b; Put et al., 2015): these provide promise for advances in communication learning. Understanding of processes that influence communication development in sport officials can be improved by a clearer understanding of what characterises experts’ development.

Evidence from ethnographic work with experienced referees shows that a range and mixture of factors and influences are required for improvement (Ollis et al., 2006). Highly experienced rugby union referees recognise a range of motivational, environmental and cultural factors that combine to develop their expertise (Ollis et al., 2006). ‘Transfer of skills’ from other
sport experiences and occupations and ‘deliberate experiences’, or learning from performance experiences in purposeful ways help build higher-order cognitive and emotional regulative skills in officials (Ollis et al., 2006). Further, experienced officials note that an accumulation of social experiences and improved relations with other sport participants (i.e., players, coaches) and stakeholder groups (i.e., clubs, sport associations) contributed significantly to the development of their expertise. There is a spectrum of experiences within officiating cultures that emphasise implicit learning in being an official that contribute to improved communication.

To build a more accurate picture of how communication improvement occurs, care should be taken in considering the functioning needs and demands required at different participation levels for sport officials. Framing communication improvement in sport officials should be realistic about officiating development pathways and what we’d expect from communication improvement strategies at different levels. Officiating scholars recognise that there can be an assumption that the ‘expert’ official is someone always necessarily working at an elite level (MacMahon et al., 2014), while officiating at lower-levels may have different elements or requirements not necessarily associated with elite level ‘expertise’.

More recent perspectives on expertise in officiating consider characteristics, strengths and skills that are needed at different levels of participation and officiating role demands (i.e. ‘interactor’, ‘monitor’, or ‘reactor’ sports). This can lead to different skill requirements, motivations, barriers to retention, and training and support needs, such as communication
(MacMahon et al., 2015). For example, those officiating at community levels of sport are more likely to need to educate players on the rules of the game and foster sport engagement, whereas at advanced levels the need may be for more targeted definitions of dimensions of communication competence and an increased focus on managing players’ emotions, and the finer details of game organisation and management. These are important considerations when outlining theorisations and frameworks about what constitutes communication at different levels, which has implications for development pathways and areas of focus in communication improvement.

The remainder of this literature review focuses on human development concepts from communication, sociology and cultural studies that expand on expertise models and help to explain communication improvement in officiating. It discusses how communication improvement fits into current officiating development structures and pathways, particularly in terms of tailoring approaches to the functions and demands of officials at the particular level they perform.

2.4.1. Communication focus on training skills

The adoption and acceptance of communication skills training as an essential component of formal education practices has reflected a major shift in the philosophy underpinning the agenda of professional standards (Rollnick et al., 2005; Salmon & Young, 2011). There is a large body of applied research that reports on the effectiveness of communication training on trainees in policing (Krameddine & Silverstone, 2015), medical and health care professions (Bull, 2002; Gillis, Morris, & Ridgway, 2015).
teacher education (Chiang, 2009), organisational management (Grant, 2007) and mental health and social workers (Hargie, Saunders, & Dickson, 1995). Communication training in the health sector has been shown to be associated with improved ratings in clinical practice, communication performance and patient satisfaction (Dickson, 1997). Managers who receive communication training are found to receive higher performance ratings in interpersonal skills, problem-solving ability and productivity (Papa & Graham, 1991).

Police training often favours scenario-based approaches that are shown to increase officers’ ability to detect and deal more effectively with mentally ill members of the public. Those officers who receive communication skills training are more likely to receive higher ratings for the quality of their communication actions, empathy and strength in using ‘de-escalation techniques’ (Krameddine, Demarco, Hassel, & Silverstone, 2013).

There are some notable trainee reflections and process outcomes found as a result of people receiving training in communication skills in various occupational and institutional settings. Recognising ways this can be adapted to the sport officiating domain would be helpful in developing officials’ communication competence and behaviour in relation to particular skills useful to effective officiating (impression management, conflict resolution, explanation giving, active or empathetic listening).

Approaches to training communication often take a micro-skills training perspective (Hargie, 2011). This approach developed out of microtraining
skills in teaching that originated in teacher education in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Allen & Ryan, 1969; Allen, Ryan, Bush, & Cooper, 1969). It involves teachers instructing a small group of students for longer periods and in the design of a smaller, self-confined lesson units (Rigazio-DiGilio, Daniels, & Ivey, 1997). Microteaching ‘skills’ (e.g., verbal or non-verbal responses, fluency and ordering questions, reinforcement, use of examples) are identified and arranged into ‘skill clusters’ (e.g., teachers’ response repertoire, questioning skills, ability to foster student involvement, presentation skills) (Allen et al., 1969). This approach tends to concentrate on teacher-centered methods and ‘control of students and imparting information’ (Rigazio-DiGilio et al., 1997; p. 160). It emphasises simulated situations where skills are discussed and practised, rather than learning occurring in real-world teaching environments.

The early surge in interest to train teaching skills in isolation was initially used to address the complexity of the classroom teaching experience by using the philosophy of improving complex skills by breaking them down into simpler skill areas (Hargie & Maidment, 1979; McGarvey & Swallow, 1986). Hargie (2006) recognises that applied communication research generally examines the effects of ‘microtraining’ approaches which been shown to heighten self-awareness in trainees’ communication behaviour and nature of trainees’ communication setting. In some reviews on communication training research, training activities are found to be most effective when they are intensive, established and participated in over extended periods of time, give opportunities for practice and feedback, use role modelling, and are backed by institutional rewards that encourage the
intrinsic value of communication to work functions (Street, 2003).

Experimenting with various social techniques to generate more effective responses to others is often developed within particular narratives of the more common communication situations in a particular context.

Some concerns have been raised by communication scholars about the usefulness of a micro-component skills perspective for developing skilled communication alone. Some researchers call for a greater emphasis to be placed on reasons behind training and the meaning or purposes implied by such processes (Hulsman, 2011). One criticism of communications skills training from the business sector is that the implied training ‘support’ for staff can mask manipulative motives for increasing managerial control. Such professional development programs/workshops are said to create a ‘social drama’ around the training experience, whereby charismatic trainers deliver training principles that mystify what constitutes effective communication (Elmes & Costello, 1992).

Hargie (2006) recognises these critical claims about the usefulness of communication skills training, confirming that such criticisms fail to distinguish between the acquisition of skill and how it is exercised. In medical education, there is some debate about how communication skills and competencies are evaluated and assessed, including appropriateness and detailing validity in communication performance assessment instruments (Cegala & Broz, 2002). Some communication training is said to over-emphasise expert-derived principles as the source of training and criteria assessment where evaluative feedback on communication practice can
reduce it to a skeleton of itself and neglect other performance traits and processes deemed important (Hulsman, 2011). Such misrepresentations of ways professional communication is performed and how it is assessed can create a misalignment between the intentions of training and feedback and actual skilled communication conduct by professionals and practitioners (Salmon & Young, 2011).

Skilled communication requires more than just a mastery of discrete communication skills. Trends in applied communication research may give further clues to the most important gaps. In reviewing literature on communication theory and communication skills training across professional contexts and practice settings, it is clear that it is not just sport officiating that struggles to conceptualise and train for improved communication and professional interaction skills (Burleson, 2007). There are research gaps in the communication field that align with the gaps in sport officiating research about ways that officials become skilled communicators. In a review by Greene (2003) the four most common interests of communication training and development research are recognised as:

- **Communication instruction**, or effective types of pedagogical techniques, strategies and materials.
- **Social-skill training**, and skill training development and implementation.
- **The nature of skilled communication behaviour**, or behaviours that are more or less skillful, effective or appropriate.
A strong focus in communication training literature has been on a ‘skills’ approach (Hargie, 2011) while, importantly, there have been ‘relatively few attempts to develop theoretical accounts of the processes that underlie the acquisition of skilled communication’ (Greene, 2003, p. 56). Communication theorists have generally focused on identifying and isolating communication skills that are addressed through micro-skills training approaches, resulting in less critical understanding of processes that underlie the acquisition of skilled communication competencies and behaviour (Greene, 2003; Waoda & van de Wiel, 2013). Since Greene’s (2003) and Hargie’s (2011) comments on the communication skill development research, there have been limited attempts to introduce and test theories or accounts for describing the course of changes in performance quality over time or the nature of constraints and mechanisms that give rise to performance changes. Such approaches can help improve the identification, coherence and specification of communication skills (Waoda & van de Wiel, 2013).

Researchers outside the sport domain have contrasting approaches to communication training: there are those that aim to emphasise teaching a toolbox of ‘surface level’ component behaviours and those that aim to develop ‘skilled communicators’. Rollnick et al. (2002) state that everyday clinical experience is emphasised in the teaching of health professionals and
‘communication skills’ are repositioned from the foreground to the background.

Involving and integrating knowledge, beliefs and ethical considerations in combination with a ‘skills’ training approach is an example of newer recommendations for holistic approaches to communication training. Some researchers recommend newer conceptualisations of communication improvement and training that emphasise holistic approaches and focusing on deeper meaning in trainees’ action choices rather than evaluation of skills against isolated competencies (Anju, 2009). These contemporary viewpoints emphasise holistic approaches to developing ‘skilled communication’ to increase attention to individual style and creativity in communication and to develop the ability to deal with novel situations, rather than delivering communication systematically (Salmon & Young, 2011).

It has been suggested that communication training should emphasise an embodiment of rote skills, core communication attitudes and experiential learning (Hulsman, 2011). Hulsman (2011) recommends three important characteristics that should encompass assessment of medical students’ professional communication competence: they are skills, goals, and self-evaluation. General medical practitioners’ selection of communicative actions is situational and goal-driven and said to best develop communication that is tailored to the specific situation of each consultation (Veldhuijzen et al., 2013). Holistic learning approaches in medical education place increased weight on the selection of consultation goals, attitudes that underlie behaviour, context and matching communication strategies, along
with the training of specific communication skills (Veldhuijzen et al., 2013). They say that behavioural skills and recommended interpersonal skills do not often fit 1-to-1 practice situations and often are inconsistent ideals of how practice situations are treated (Veldhuijzen et al., 2013). Other training scholars suggest other nuances of communication, such as timed use of skills, as a way to help physicians improve the embodiment of component skills that help medical students develop capacities that more or less approximate the use of such skills (Cegala & Broz, 2002). This can include patterning ‘phases’ or stages of patient consultations when certain skills are more valuable or functionally effective.

Researchers say that social skills are stimulated by dialogue between people regarding others’ opinions and preferences and reading people that foster a more embodied perspective of the communication process (Burleson, 2007). Other holistic approaches to social skills training considers stress management and emotional regulation as related factors to the use of communication (Reichard & Riggio, 2008).

There has been emerging interest and increasing complexity in research into ‘acquisition processes’ for models of communication improvement, especially to align strategy and goals of the communicator. Recent ‘models’ for improving communication recommend other educational aims, including the ability to identify and interpret patient cues, belief systems about patients that support predication of their needs, preferences, and behaviour, and the ability to adapt goals and handle conflicting goals to fit different situations. Termed the ‘Reflective-Impulsive Model’, Wouda and van de
Wiel (2013) say learning new communication behaviour implies the acquisition of new skills, but also ‘the incorporation of mental representations of these skills in communication schemata and the formation of new links between these schemata and the mental representations of situations in which the use of the skills and schemata is appropriate’ (p. 48). One of the skills is the ability to adapt existing mental representations appropriately for new situations.

Some medical education researchers suggest new attempts are needed to conceptualise clinical communication that build on current pedagogy and practice by incorporating ideals that communication is inherently authentic, creative and holistic (Salmon & Young, 2011). More recent examples can be found where a communication skills approach is preserved, but where training incorporates assessments of patients’ individuality and the need for originality in health practitioners (Hatem, Mazor, Fischer, Philbin, & Quirk, 2008). Others included holistic approaches that involve immersing learners in patient narratives or roles, and performing emotional labour through ‘deep acting’ to engage in empathy with patients (Larson & Yao, 2005). These approaches to communication improvement provide some overarching considerations about best ways to conceptualise development that builds on traditional micro-skills training.

This section has reviewed empirical and contextual research on communication skills training, including common characteristics and purported effectiveness of communication training programs. It discussed some criticisms of an over-emphasis on a skills training approach, and
recent recommendations made by researchers to improve communication training by incorporating holistic approaches. A holistic approach emphasises an integrated and embodied perspective that considers the unexpected in communication and the individual and contextual nature of the communication processes that characterises different professional and practice settings. Such approaches can help to inform better ways to conceptualise the design and tailoring of communication support, and training that differs as a result of participation levels and other needs of sport officials. It builds on teaching of a ‘toolbox’ of skills in sport officiating. These newer frameworks for improving communication training will be further explored in the following section, which reflects on human learning models that are useful for elaborating on skills approaches to improving communication.

2.4.2. Acquisition processes under researched

Very little is known about processes that influence the ways sport officials improve their communication (for original discussion see Mellick et al., 2005) or what characterises developmental trajectories in officiating communication improvement (Dickson, 2000; Plessner & MacMahon, 2013). If we look to other scholarly fields for assistance to better conceptualise communication improvement in sport officiating, human learning frameworks can be useful in informing us about how people acquire knowledge and skills. Flyvbjerg (2001) says context is central to knowledge and practice and asks the question ‘under what conditions can we know what we know?’ This view places heightened importance on context and situated learning over universals that are a result of predictive
theories in social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Dosseville and Laborde (2013) said officiating is a skill that is built-up. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) addressed this centrally in their phenomenological approach to human learning, which emphasises the importance of associations between knowledge and context in acquiring skills. The Dreyfus brothers are recognised widely for their pioneering studies into ways that fighter pilots acquire and perceive the execution of flight skills. They discovered a general shift in perception and learning, from novices who rely on rule-based, propositional knowledge through to experts who increasingly draw on experiential judgement and intuitive processes.

Phenomenologists, such as Martin Heidegger (1977) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), heavily influenced Dreyfus and Dreyfus’ interpretation of skill development (1986; 2004). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2004) use arguments outlined in Merleau-Ponty’s (1945) *Phenomenology of Perception* to explain how intelligent behaviour, skilful action and learning are associated with the establishment of an *intentional arc* in learning that leads to a *maximum grip*. These concepts emphasise the close connection between the ‘agent’ (or individual) and the external world. Particular skills are not ordered for the ‘agent’ as stored representations in the mind, but ‘refined dispositions to respond to the solicitations of more and more refined perceptions of the current situation’ (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2004, p. 1). Maximum grip describes the body’s tendency to respond to these applications in a way that brings the current situation to the agent’s sense of an ideal gestalt (i.e. the ‘whole
nature’ of something). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2004) contend that cognitivists’ problem-solving models can help justify human performance in well-defined tasks or controlled conditions, but do not align with use of universals or rules for action and performance in less-defined tasks. In sport officiating, we can imagine that skilled, appropriate and timely communication with players and others involves responsiveness and communicative actions that are facilitated by particular intrinsic values and contextual attitudes in sport official communication.

The progressive stages of skill development described by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) were labelled novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert. Later adaptations (Dreyfus, 2001; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2004) to this model incorporate two further stages beyond expert level that are referred to as mastery and practical wisdom. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986; 2004) describe a continuum of levels or phases of skill learning and execution where there is an increasing importance placed on perception of context and ‘feel’ involving an enhanced personal involvement and intuitive enactment of skilled behaviour at the expert stage. Their model considered perceptual familiarity in skill execution and avoided ‘conclusions that perception and skills are based on law-like combination of elements’ (p. 16). Their influential model has been used in empirical studies in a range of professional practice contexts, including nursing (Benner, 1984; Benner, Tanner, & Chesla, 1996; Daley, 1999), management (Worthy, 1996), teaching (Lyon, 2014), sport coaching (Bell, 1997), and social work (Ryan, Fook, & Hawkins, 1996).
In the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model, *novice* level people act on the basis of rules, facts, universals and context-independent knowledge concerning the performance setting. They learn objective characteristics and criteria of the situation and rules for action that guide or govern performance. Rules and propositional knowledge quickly become a barrier for the novice in the learning process and are de-emphasised to allow the novice to advance their skill (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

*Advanced beginners* use situational features, which they become better at learning, to recognise and interpret on the basis of their own experience from similar situations. Achieving real-life experiences and recognition becomes the focus of performance, using relevant elements and similarities between such elements in different situations (Dreyfus, 2001). Advanced beginners become more dependent on context that is driven increasingly by situational behaviour and ‘knowing when to bend or ignore the rules’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Decision-making for sport officials occurs rapidly in action and there is a heightened need for tacit or situational knowledge that informs their behavioural responses (MacMahon et al., 2014; Ste. Marie, 2003). Trial-and-error in actions in context becomes more important to learning and personal experiences. A heightened competence is achieved based on the use of earlier component knowledge to achieve a more fluid and adaptive form of performance that is refined as the performer moves towards greater expertise.

With more experience, and information load about the performance setting, the individual finds it difficult to prioritise task information (Dreyfus &
Dreyfus, 2004). At competent level in the Dreyfus model, performers are said to rely increasingly on goals and plans as a basis for their actions. The use of goals and plans helps to manage, structure and integrate context-dependent and practice knowledge (a mental ‘short-cut’ to execute skills). Skilled behaviour is said to ‘flow’ and become increasingly adaptive to different situations and the performer develops an increased emotional attachment and personal involvement in the execution of the task (i.e. choices for action are less about building block knowledge and more about attention to context). Analytical rationality therefore begins to interfere with further improvement in human performance at ‘competent’ levels.

Proficient performers are able to identify problems, goals and plans intuitively from their own experience-based perspective. Intuitive choice becomes a more dominant mode of mental activity for proficient performers, as behaviour is more continuous and less sequential. Proficient performers become deeply involved in their actions and are able to refine them based on previous experiences.

Competent and proficient performers find learning and perception become more sensitive to context and the execution of skilled action, and the principles that govern its execution are integrated (Dreyfus, 2001). Dreyfus and Dreyfus’s (1986) suggested characteristics of the proficient performer align with the way communication theorist Burleson (2007) says skilled communication occurs. Skilled communicators increasingly draw on ‘procedural memories’, or recollections about action, consequences of actions and similar situations in which particular actions have been used in
the past. This is said to act as the basis for choosing interaction goals and producing functional ‘messages’ for others that align with the communicator’s goals and features of the situation (Burleson, 2007). These situational emphases on particular capacities and constructs of skilled communicators help to understand developed abilities in sport officials which make them become more ‘competent’ or ‘proficient’.

Skilled communication (and proficient forms of behaviour) is said to become an increasingly intuitive, holistic and fluid activity for experienced communicators (Salmon & Young, 2011). These are emphasised as characteristics of expertise because the expert has integrated fundamental knowledge about the task into a more sophisticated and high-order representation of action that is performed with increased automaticity and fluency. Educationalists emphasise creativity in holistic judgements of ‘rightness of fit’ rather than reductionist approaches. Experienced health practitioners reflect on their communication and emphasise the importance of intuition, and departure from the ‘rules’, over ‘expert application of previously defined skills’ (Salmon & Young, 2011, p. 218). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986; 2004) suggest expert and mastery levels in skill acquisition, where the learner/performer becomes more fundamentally response-based and reliant on nuances and situational contingencies of the practice environment to initiate action. The expert is said to be eventually able to ‘holistically discriminate among classes of situations and associate this with classes of appropriate responses’ (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 55).

The Dreyfus phenomenology model of human learning was later revised to
add two other levels of mastery and practical wisdom (Dreyfus, 2001). These high stages resemble the Aristotelian concept of ‘phronesis’, or ‘prudence’, an intellectual virtue that combines experiential knowledge and a deep understanding of the context in which behaviour occurs (Eikeland, 2006). Phronesis is an intellectual virtue that allows experts to discern the nuances of situations and then judge correctly in the moment (Halverson, 2004) and is embedded in the social display of character which guides us through an intended course of action that involves a degree of moral agency.

Phronesis is something that is not instructed: it is something that develops through experience as a capacity to manage the inevitable uncertainties of practice in a thoughtful and reflective way (Halverson, 2004).

Kemmis (2011) warns against phronesis being defined as a form of knowledge ‘in the heads’ and moral commitments of people. Rather, it is a set of practical reasonings and practical philosophies. Phronesis is useful for understanding how expert officials communicate and manage others’ behaviours in order to preserve the ‘ethos’ of the game (i.e. implicit conventions that underlie how formal rules are applied in concrete situations; D’Agostino, 1995). Swedish soccer officials state that social competence and a ‘feeling for the game’ are superior qualities in some officials (Carlsson, 2006) and officiating can be viewed as the embodiment of phronesis (McNamee, 2010). Phronesis provides a framework for describing ways that officials understand and apply previously derived principles and experience within their practice context.

Progressive levels in learning and engaging in communication evolve from
‘foundation’ to ‘skill mastery’ (Nicol et al., 1996, p. 178). These levels describe a shift from an early emphasis on students developing a rationale for communication skill use to experimentation with the appropriate skills and blend of communication skills in confined simulation situations to experimentation under direct supervision in the care setting. Students then progress to more natural and coordinated expression of skills through indirect supervision at mastery levels, which places increased importance on self-evaluation and reflection as central to practice.

The communication improvement approach suggested by Nicol et al., (1996) involves a perspective of an increasing integration of cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of communication. Novice nurses are found to primarily use ‘concept formation’, or de-contextualised learning, while at more advanced levels of development they increasingly use ‘constructivist approaches’ to learning, including integrating new environmental information into the execution of clinical judgement (Daley, 1999).

Learning concepts, such as concept formation and constructivist approaches, help to inform the design of level-appropriate ways to address communication improvement in sport officials.

Some comments about the propositions made by Dreyfus’ phenomenological model of human learning are worthy of discussion. Some researchers argue that the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model over-emphasises the centrality of intuitive processes (English, 1993). Others suggest that the
performer also engages in deliberate rationality in combination with more intuitive actions (Daley, 1999). Still other researchers say that while the Dreyfus model emphasises that experts only act intuitively, and analytical thinking plays a limited role in performance, there are findings in expertise research that experts often engage in slower, more deliberate problem solving strategies (e.g., anticipation, or ‘looking ahead’; Gabbett, Rubinoff, Thorburn, & Farrow, 2007).

The Dreyfus and Dreyfus model has been criticised for overly focusing on stages of development, dispelling more fundamental aspects of development and directing attention away from the skill being developed (Gobet & Chassey, 2008). In medical education, researchers question if mastery or expert levels in professional communication can be fully achieved during medical students’ formal instruction and training (Wouda & van de Weil, 2013). Similarly, paramedic instructors say that students rarely reach competent and proficient levels by the time their formal learning ends (Bowles, 2009). Despite these criticisms, the Dreyfus model holds promise as a useful framework for understanding skilled communication improvement and level-appropriate approaches to support and training in communication for sport officiating.

The Dreyfus and Dreyfus model of skill acquisition is applicable to ways that sport officials may develop communication competencies and capacities. The Dreyfus model provides a useful framework and language for understanding communication improvement in sport officiating. The framework distinguishes levels or phases for analysing, monitoring and
If we extrapolate from preceding literature reviewed, we can contemplate a Dreyfus modelled officiating communication framework. Early communication support might address useful impression displays (e.g., whistle use, hand signalling, confident and positive body language) and isolated, rote skills (e.g., decision explanations, conflict management style). Novice officials could receive sport-specific instruction in effective signalling and whistle use to develop an appropriate repertoire of impression management techniques. Examples of ‘concept formation’ in sport official communication include knowledge of more predictable communication tasks (decision communication) and display tools (whistle, hand signalling, flag use). This would be fundamental, context-independent knowledge about communication that would be foundational among officials’ communication tools. As officiating experience progresses, there is then increased emphasis on linking skill use to specifics of situation or an individual. In following stages, context-independent knowledge would be applied to the situation, other micro ‘skills’ might be considered (such as conflict management), and other emotional labour aspects applied to dealing with players and the public.

Officials then acquire more experience and link context-dependent knowledge with experience in the situational experience in which they are applied. As officials gain further game experience and experiential knowledge they become more involved in their actions. At competent levels,
communication becomes more automatic and is executed more in accordance with plans and goals for action. Competent levels of skilled communication may focus on exposure to more nuances of communication context, improving awareness of other specialised attitudes about communication, motivations and behaviour of players and others, accounting for ‘person-centred’ attributes of self, and others that are context-bound and which require adaptation of communication approach. At expert levels, learning and practice in communication involves developing deeper and more meaningful integration of propositional and experiential knowledge about self, others and context. At higher levels there are characteristics of communication that are unique, such as the intervention of technology (e.g., the use of microphones that expose in-game interactions to multiple audiences, including television audiences and those who assess officials).

There may be important questions to consider, such as in what ways can skill acquisition models be applied to communication development, and how do those models align with current developmental structures for officials in sport systems? The Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2004) model offers a framework for understanding different levels and stages in communication development for sport officials, and provides structure to inform policy making for sport administrators and officiating managers. This framework would consider participation level, as well as barriers and facilitators that are characteristic of officials at different participation levels, as articulated in current officiating development frameworks (MacMahon et al., 2014).
There are complementary features of phronesis and stages approaches to understanding skilled sport officiating. Phronesis, the Dreyfus model and constructivism are similar in so far as they attempt to account for and align performance that is appropriate to context. The next section addresses ‘embodiment’, ‘bodily performance’ and ‘mind-practice dualism’ as alternative ways to conceptualise inter-subjective practice and skill development.

2.4.3. Habitus and developing a ‘feel for the game’

Professional practice and cultural studies literature can aid understanding of communication improvement in officiating domains by giving a language for conceptualising development in line with the cultural practices in officiating settings. The nature of practice ‘functions like a self-regulating device programmed to redefine courses of action in accordance with information received on the reception of information transmitted and on the effects produced by that information’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 10-11). A growing tradition in the philosophical professional practice in education and other organisations places importance on researching practice from within practice traditions (Kemmis, 2011) that brings to the foreground the views and experiences of the practitioners.

Conceptual advances in the area of teacher education and educational practice/praxis suggest strategies for improving professional practice through the establishment of ‘practice architectures’. These advances could be useful to sport officiating. Grossman et al. (2009) suggest three key dimensions of such architectures of practice for understanding pedagogies
of practice, including ‘representations’ (different ways that practice is represented in professional context and what they make visible), ‘decomposition’ (breaking down practice into its constituent parts) and ‘approximations’ (opportunities to engage in practices that are proximal to actual practices). This understanding explicates conditions under which skilled communication may be learnt or ‘acquired’ and improves visibility about ‘practice architectures’ in sport officiating practice environments that emphasise the area of communication.

Ecological stances emphasise that a continuous construction and reconstruction of individuals and institutions occurs in educational institutions and involves a complex dynamic interaction of factors (Smith, 2003). Practice-based approaches include communities of practice and situated learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Wenger, 1998); activity theory (Engeström & Middleton, 1996; Engeström, Miettinen, & Punamäki, 1999); sociocultural theory (Billett, 2001; Cole, 1996); and cultural perspectives on organizational learning (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Yanow, 2003).

Concepts from the field of cultural studies can help to understand how sport officials become better communicators. Bourdieu (1990) developed field theory and gave foundational discussion about how our social and cultural arrangements influence the extent we acquire types of human ‘capital’ (including, social, cultural, or economical). One concept that Bourdieu (1990) introduced was ‘habitus’. Habitus provides a principle for constructing objects of knowledge or a ‘system (a set of interacting
elements) of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (p. 52). It is these habitual ‘practices’ and ‘representations’, which we accumulate through experience in a setting or context and integrate into our behaviour, that orientate our actions and internalise our social location (Noble & Watkins, 2003). It involves the reproduction of norms and dispositions that are supported by performativity, power-relations and embodiment, all of which are factors relevant to sport officiating. Practice and knowledge therefore become situated, and skill refinement and development becomes increasingly integrated and embodied in the practice field in which we act (Gustory & Hope, 2008). More recent elaborations of Bourdieu’s ideas suggest an ‘embodied’ conception of bodily practices, such as ‘bodily automatisms’ (Lizardo, 2007) and ‘bodily capital’ (Noble & Watkins, 2003). Habitus is a concept that can help structure appropriate communication practice and environmental conditions that can help foster communication improvement in sport officials.

It can be speculated that becoming a more skilled communicator in sport officiating involves similar processes of acquiring structural meaning and dispositions that follow phenomenological models of human learning and embodied practice. Noble and Watkins (2003) provide an account of how sport players train and develop skill mastery and develop an increased ‘feel for the game’ as a result of acquiring more refined ‘bodily capital’. They say that time and practice facilitate an increased ‘*feel*’ for various aspects of the sport environment, which involves a ‘*doing-practice* and theoretical practice’ that influences an accumulated bodily experience and sensory
feedback within the performer’s practice context (Noble & Watkins, 2003).

Little is known about how the accumulation of such ‘bodily capital’ occurs in relation to communication improvement in sport officiating. ‘Experience’ may mean that over time the official becomes increasingly response-based to others and situations that require action (e.g., Daley, 1999), and also becomes more fluent (both consciously and unconsciously) in the execution and expression of communication as a consequence of accumulating ‘capital’ from practice experiences. These concepts suggest new ways for understanding how sport officials can become more skilled in responding and adapting, communicatively. In sport officiating, where the study and theorisation of communication is under-defined and under-developed and where ‘experience’ is something of a misunderstood ‘black box’, the concept of bodily capital and ‘habitus’ may provide a conceptual vocabulary for better understanding and practical intervention.

This project situates sport officiating communication improvement within phenomenological approaches to human learning that incorporate a phronetic view of communication expertise, and holistic and embodied approaches for enhancing ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1990; Noble & Watkins, 2003) and improving ‘practice architectures’ (Kemmis & Mutton, 2012) in officiating environments. In developing new theoretical propositions to explain officiating communication improvement, future scholars should look to build on current models, without neglecting theory-practice relationships. The following section summarises this literature review and establishes the project’s general aims and research questions for improving
conceptualisations of officiating communication.

2.5. Aims and research questions

This literature review discussed and evaluated empirical research from sport officiating, across communication, social science and cultural studies fields, to explore and inform new conceptualisations of officiating communication and communication improvement in officiating development pathways. It reflected critically on the usefulness of pervasive ‘skill’ and ‘decision’ conceptualisations of officiating communication, and questioned the dominance of ‘transmission’ approaches to study officiating communication.

Other fields show greater advancement in the study and theorisation of communication, revealing an important research gap in the officiating domain concerning ways that communication is conceptualised. Research studies on professional communication skills from allied disciplines and occupational fields were examined for their usefulness in explaining complexities of communication. Conceptualisations of ‘social skill’ were reflected on and discussed in relation to other complexities of skilled communication, including ‘emotional intelligence’. The concept of communication skill as a set of ‘acquired abilities’ was also introduced and discussed as a useful way to interpret and develop understanding about communication training and improvement. The review has also revealed a gap concerning theoretical accounts of processes that underpin or characterise communication improvement, this is also very pertinent to sport officiating.

This literature review emphasises a need for further officiating research to
improve conceptualisations of communication and skilled communication practice, and to expand approaches to communication performance in officiating practice and assessment. Given the identified research gaps in the officiating domain and communication field, this project aims to use officiating as a setting for exploring and developing concepts about communication, its development and skilled practice.

The review has spanned empirical and other contributions from and applicable to a range of sports, but most individual contributions have focused on one or two sports at a time. This project will explore one category of the sports - ‘interactor’ sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). These are team sports where interactions with players occur frequently and judgement demands are more complex in terms of the number of decision cues officials process, and they will include rugby, soccer, field hockey, basketball, netball). This research focuses on that which is common to all, communication. Unlike most previous studies, the design of this project reflects the multiple goals and expectations of different stakeholders concerning sport officials and their communication. It includes those involved in improving officials’ performance (i.e., development managers, officiating coaches, officials), those who are influenced by officiating communication and behaviour (e.g., players), and officials themselves.

The ultimate aim of this project is to generate new conceptual and practice knowledge about skilled communication and communication improvement that can be usefully applied to help sport officials function more efficiently and effectively in their roles.
The aims of this research project are to:

- **Improve conceptualisations of sport official communication across different ‘interactor’ sports.**

- **Make recommendations to sport bodies about ways they can help sport officials improve in communication and interaction with team sport players.**

The project involves three related stakeholder studies. Specific research questions are developed for each of the three field studies, detailed in the following chapters.

The project draws on constructivist approaches for understanding communication skills (Burleson, 2007), phenomenological models of human learning (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; 2004) and cultural studies concepts (Noble & Watkins, 2003) about skill acquisition, to develop the research questions and guide the research towards the project aims. The project intended to help officials better address the needs of players, and to help peak sport bodies better address the needs of officials. Also intended was that each project would influence the design of subsequent projects.

*Study 1* explores ways in which those who govern officiating development conceptualise sport official communication and perceive how officials improve their communication. There is little research available in officiating or communication that explores the perspectives of officiating development managers, coaches and mentors. Views on officiating communication often use expert officials’ or players’ perspectives. This study explores the perspectives of those who administer (managers/coordinators/coaches) and are directly involved in the training of officials as an initial source of
information for establishing commonality in views of officiating performance, and development in ‘interactor’ sports.

High-performance coaches, mentors and assessors are generally used by officiating researchers for setting benchmarks for officiating performance measurement or comparison. There are few opportunities for sport bodies to share their perspectives in order to better understand and improve officiating training practices. The project intended to be relevant and to contribute to practice. It purposefully chose to draw on industry perspectives to better structure and inform the basis of investigation in the project’s subsequent studies with players and sport officials. It was important to understand the field and its perceptions, to influence the direction of project and to later communicate recommendations more effectively. I was committed to developing recommendations for practice, so the project began by gaining an understanding of what those with greatest policy influence over official development are thinking.

Study 2 gathers attitudes and perspectives about sport official communication from players in order to enhance understanding from the view of those who are in most frequent interaction with officials. It attempts to build on limited previous research on the views of players, the other participants in most sport officiating communication (Faccenda et al., 2009; Simmons, 2010). Players have been generally treated as ‘homogenous’ in officiating communication research: this study sought to understand differences in players’ attitudes to and perceptions of sport official communication.
Study 3 explores communication through the viewpoint of sport officials. As the final study of the project, Study 3 helps to triangulate the views of governing officiating bodies, and players. It explores the perspectives of officials from a range of ‘interactor’ sports and experience levels. Previous officiating communication research with officials as study participants has often used high-performance and elite officials. Study 3 draws from officials of different experience levels to explore characteristics of communication that are more common to different sports and participations levels. The results directly inform the project’s final recommendations for communication training and improvement strategies for sport officials.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter explains the methodological approach and philosophical assumptions of the research. The research design and analytical path of this project use methodological positions that align with the nature and interests of the research questions and general aims.

To generate new conceptualisations of skilled sport officiating communication and understandings about best ways officiating communication can be improved, it was envisioned the project would require a methodological worldview that built from and on previously dominant approaches. Project design and data collection techniques and strategies were informed by hermeneutic traditions and constructivist/interpretivist epistemological positions. I recognised early in the research process that exploration of sport official communication would be enhanced by a flexible, qualitative approach that involved continuous iteration and reflection on the study’s progressive findings. This chapter details the plans and procedures of the research and participant sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation.
3.1. Paradigmatic shift in communication sciences

Creswell (2003) suggests characteristics of social science inquiry through which, philosophically, the researcher makes claims concerning; ‘what is knowledge (ontology), how we know about it (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric) and the processes for studying it (methodology)’ (p. 6).

Paradigms represent the philosophical worldview or set of underlying beliefs that guide a particular style and method of research investigation (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). As this project’s literature review discussed, there has been a tendency to study officiating communication and interpersonal behaviour through deterministic and reductionist philosophies. Although officiating research has been multi-disciplinary (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015), a dominant methodological paradigm used in the study of communication in sport officials has been positivism (e.g., Dosseville et al., 2014; Nikbakhsh et al., 2013; Simmons, 2010). These approaches generally aim to isolate or capture officiating communication attributes and discrete behavioural displays, or characteristics, as ‘variables' of sensory and communication experiences of sport officials.

Decision communication behaviour of officials is sometimes separated into more and less effective characteristics (Mellick et al., 2005), while other studies attempt to measure communication concepts through survey (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2010) or other self-reports (Nikbakhsh et al., 2013; Snyder & Purdy, 1987). Such positivist views of communication phenomena focus on cause-and-effect relationships and tend to reduce the
study of communication to universals and behavioural patterns. While understanding characteristics of effective behavior can provide criteria for assessing skilled officiating communication, it contributes less to understanding communication experiences of study participants.

Recent conceptualisations of officiating are more likely to emphasise complexity and interactivity, and use descriptions such as ‘ecology’ to describe sport officials’ practice environment (Dosseville & Laborde, 2015; Rix-Lièvre et al., 2015). Traditional methodological design in some officiating studies often forfeited ecological validity and created fundamental errors in the attribution of causality (Mascarenhas, Collins, & Mortimer, 2002; Russell et al., 2014). Some of these studies rely solely on expert-perspectives and isolate variables in ways that neglect more naturalistic and interpretive ways in which their manifestation should be understood.

This project sought a new conceptual framework for understanding communication. It is clear from watching sport officials in action that they need to respond to context. Player differences, unpredictable incidents and match situations all influence the required communication. Many officiating researchers emphasise context as important (Mascarenhas et al., 2005; MacMahon et al., 2014), but it has been largely absent from the methodological stances chosen by researchers and from analyses of officiating communication. Research tends to neglect the investigation of players as co-participants in the communication process with different perspectives.
There has been a generally accepted philosophy of scientific knowledge for understanding human communication, referred to as nomological and deductive systems (Delia, 1977; Hargie, 2006). Early traditions in communication studies are said to draw on psychological science approaches and attempt to understand consistencies in patterns of humans’ social behaviour that can be predicted to occur across time (Hargie, 2011). Researchers tend to draw from social-psychological models that use an ‘individualistic' perspective (influences of external social factors on individual’s cognition and behaviour). This ‘psychologising' of interpersonal behavior can treat individuals (experimentally) in these studies as the unit of analysis. Variable-analytic designs and probability-based statistics no longer constitute the only means for doing credible research for communication scholars (Lindolf & Taylor, 2010). Such methodological approaches often neglect the complex influence of context and social location on social actors (Forgas, East, & Chan, 2007). We know interpersonal behavior for sport officials is more complex and this should be taken into account when reporting and interpreting communication.

There have been some common research traditions in communication theory that have been applied across different practice contexts and professions. Craig (1999) distinguishes seven general themes in the way communication has been studied that include (a) a practical art of discourse; (b) the experience of others; (c) information processing; (d) expression, interaction and influence; (e) the (re)production of social order; (f) inter-subjective mediation by signs; and (g) discursive reflection. Griffin (2012) arranges Craig’s (1999) original communication research categorisations along a
continuum from *objective* to *interpretive* approaches or study traditions. Objective views of communication are interested in examining cause-and-effect relationships and address communication factors that reflect a singular truth that can be accessed by unbiased sensory observations (i.e. measurement and surveys; Griffin, 2012). Such communication theories include uncertainty reduction theory (Berger, 1988), social information processing theory (Walther, 1992), and social judgment theory (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). Interpretive models aim to clarify value and assign meaning to communicative messages or text, and assume there are multiple meanings and truths (Griffin, 2012). Examples include semiotics (Cobley, 2009), cultural approaches (Carbaugh, 2013), critical theory of communication (Thompson, 2013), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934), and relational dialectics (Baxter, 1990). This project attempts to draw on interpretive formulations of communication to give a more subjectively rich theoretical understanding for the study of officiating communication. In recent years, a paradigmatic shift away from approaches related to quantitative data and techniques toward a more interpretive and descriptive approach has grown in communication studies (Hargie, 2011). Methodological traditions in the field of communication and social psychology have become increasingly interested in studying the individual in various social situations (e.g., Argyle & Kendon, 1967), which has involved an increased marrying of sociological perspectives (Forgas, Haselton, & von Hippel, 2007). This research project sought to utilise methodological approaches that would account for subjective experiences of sport officials and different sport interest groups.
Some social scientists say that, to understand human or social conduct, emphasis should be paid to meanings ascribed to situations and situated meanings as they are ‘phenomenologically experienced by the actors located within them’ (Ball, 1972, p. 62). This would emphasise the interplay of actions, discourses and attitudes people develop about themselves and each other (Burleson, 2007). Other perspectives and methods that consider more subjective and interdependent aspects of communication, interpersonal behavior and social psychology need to be addressed.

Phenomenological perspectives address the meaning, structure and essence of lived experience for a person or group of people (Denzin, 1997). Other perspectives worth considering include ethnomethodology, or how people make sense of their everyday activities so as to behave in socially acceptable ways, and narrative analysis, which explores what peoples’ stories reveal about the person and the world or culture that influences their expectations and experiences (Patton, 2002). For sport officiating communication, such methodology opens up the field to development of more flexible and inductive approaches that better capture individuals' experiences in their social and cultural settings.

This project was interested in exploring other complexities in officiating communication activity and to understand the interdependence and views of those involved in the communication process – players and officials. Such elaborations on current methodological approaches were seen to require an interpretivist approach that constructed and thematised experiential realities
of those involved in the communication process (mostly players and sport officials).

### 3.2. Methodological framework

Social constructionism and constructivist models provided the overarching research assumptions that guided the design and methods used here to understand sport official communication. This project uses exploratory, qualitative research approaches that draw from inductive strategies and an epistemological view of knowledge as generative and constructed by the research participants. Knowledge is not seen as ‘out there’ and independent of the ‘knower’, but rather knowledge is what we construct (Patton, 2002). Qualitative communication research takes an ontological position that prefers to develop understanding of phenomena through exploring the experiences of individuals. It views people as active, interpreting individuals who ‘construct worlds of meaning and act upon the world rather than allowing the world to act upon them (Morrison, Haley, Sheehan, & Taylor, 2002, p. 17).

The goal of qualitative research involves both understanding social life by accounting for meaning and interpretive processes of social actors and considers the cultural, social and situational contexts in which those processes occur (Maxwell, 2012). An interpretive approach puts emphasis on the production of meaning and learning about the special views of social actors (Patton, 2002).
Social constructionism and constructivism are central theoretical positions used in this research. They are closely connected, but different in their application to understanding sport officiating communication in this project.

_Social constructionism_ views knowledge as socially constructed through human interaction. Social constructionism is distinct from interpretivism, or more radical versions of constructionism, in its emphasis on language and interaction as mediators of meaning (Creswell, 2007). Social constructionism shares the view of interpretivism that meaning is created and negotiated by human actors, and it shares the same objective of understanding lived experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Social constructionism is associated with symbolic interactionism and a sociological perspective that has been used relatively little in sport official communication research. Symbolic interactionists emphasise that interpersonal behaviour should really be the focus of inquiry in social psychology (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934).

_Constructivism_ holds that people mentally construct their reality through cognitive processes in response to social experiences. A constructivist view explains communication theory as a tool for aligning one's culture, cognition and communication (Burleson, 2007). The ontological position of constructivism deals with being, and the local and specific co-constructed realities of humans. Epistemologically, it views knowledge as being built through symbols attached to reality. Constructivism explains how individuals build meanings and how we make sense of the world, which is developed and accommodated through new and adjusted mental

Sport officiating communication experiences are influenced by context in officiating, previous relationships with others in the sport community, and different game situations and incidents. Interpretivism is a qualitative research approach that accounts for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world, where the qualitative researcher is interested in subjective meaning and ways people make sense of their world and how they assign meaning to it (Morrison et al., 2002; Patton, 2002). The qualitative researcher explores and explains personal views and opinions, focusing on the ‘mode of production of social structures’ (Schwandt, 2003, p. 41). This methodological approach emphasises researcher interpretation of the participant's experience where the meaning ascribed to both one's own reality is seen as important. It was considered important for the research to develop better understanding of both meanings and interpretations of social actors in sport settings (i.e. players and officials) and context-influences on human communication (Creswell, 2007; Delia, 1977).

Social constructionism takes its origins from sociology and is linked to the post-modern era in qualitative research (Andrews, 2012). It is an anti-realist and relativist stance, where reality is captured in the subjective experience of individuals and how it is understood, as opposed to an objective reality in the natural world (Schwandt, 2003). This often arises through research
participants’ narrative and metaphors they use to explain and describe their subjective experience (Denzin, 1997). Where analysis of narrative involves collections of ‘stories’ that are subjected to paradigmatic analysis using concepts derived from pre-existing theory, narrative analysis focuses on the collection of ‘events and happenings’ that are synthesised into a plot or ‘story’ (Denzin, 1997).

Different officiating stakeholder groups’ (development managers, players, officials) experiential stories, metaphors and observations about officiating and official communication were central data for analysis. Following inductive interviews with officiating development managers and performance coaches, relevant communication theory was selected as an analytical frame for interpreting qualitative data from players and sports officials.

3.3. Methodological framework for communication improvement

The first research aim of this project concerned the (re)conceptualisation of sport officiating communication. The overarching methodology for the project reflects the approach used to address new conceptualisations by exploring the ecology and construction of communication in officiating. Implied in the second research aim is a concern for understanding ways that sport officials improve or develop their communication. It was thus considered important for the project to reflect on and develop ways of modeling the development of communication.
The selected methodological stance for positioning philosophical understanding for the project about communication improvement in sport officials chose to use a *structural-developmental* worldview (Burleson, 2007; Delia, 1977) and phenomenological perspectives of human learning (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, 2004; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). These methodological positions view the ‘learner’ as constructing their lived experience and knowledge from individual and socially constituted symbolic structures. The project draws on a constructivist paradigm that accounts for developmental changes in skilled communication acquisition, describing and interpreting their acquisition through inductive and qualitative strategies (e.g., Carraccio, Benson, Nixon, & Derstine, 2008; Benner, 2004).

There is much educational research that has applied constructivism to how people learn and the nature of knowledge across cognitive and social development. Communication theorist Delia (1977) recognises Piaget's child development research field and draws parallels with views on cognitive development as an interaction between the individual's structure at a given time and the demands of the world he/she is experiencing. This worldview is structural-developmental, where the root metaphor explains that the essence of an object is activity rather than mechanism. It emphasises knowledge as organisms within functioning systems that are presented experience in a range of forms (Delia, 1977). This ‘structural organisation' is said to change as development proceeds, but changes occur as a series of evolving stages, where the order may be invariant (Delia, 1977).
Social development is viewed as involving fundamentally subjective transformations of an individual’s cognitive structures, where each transformation stage represents some qualitatively different mode of thinking, and reflects the hierarchy and integration of the ‘whole structure’. Piaget (1964) refers to structure (cognitive) as ‘a mental system or totality whose principles of activity are different from those of the parts that make it up (p. 22). The individual is seen as an active agent who constructs and reconstructs a perception of their environment and who does not just simply respond to external forces directed at them (Burleson, 2007). This is consistent with Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1986; 2004), discussed in the previous literature review section, conceiving stages of development, and also with an ecological understanding of the complex and interpretive nature of officiating practice.

The methodological view used here for positioning communication improvement uses a social constructivist framework. It specifically draws on theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of symbolic interactionism and constructivist views of communication skills that conceive different acquired abilities that skilled communicators develop. As this program of study proposes research and learning in a relatively under-defined field, an inductive, exploratory and generative approach was initially proposed. The overarching methodological framework for this study used an interpretive approach rooted in a constructivist paradigm that focuses on the meaning about the topic of interest from the experience and viewpoint of the study participants.
3.4. Research planning and design

A flexible qualitative design, rather than a fixed one (focusing on a unidirectional research process from selection of topic to conclusions) was adopted for the project (Creswell, 2007). Flexible qualitative designs are developed in a general and non-specific way and allow researchers to construct further decisions for adjusting the project design based on initial observations and research data (Sarantakos, 2005). This allows for some freedom in steps of data collection and analysis that can use new information to refine concept, sampling and analysis.

The focus of this project was to use phenomenological research traditions that aim to draw on the experiences and understandings of study participants, where the researcher describes the lived experiences of people about a phenomenon as articulated by the participants (Creswell, 2007). Some officiating studies have used post-positivist paradigms to understand communication using focus groups to probe study participants’ experiences (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2011). Semi-structured interviewing approaches have also been used as a means to extrapolate perceptions about effective communication approaches and views about relationships with players (Cunningham et al., 2012; Simmons, 2006; Slack et al., 2013).

The current project explores new conceptualisations of sport official communication that draw on perspectives and practice knowledge of different sport stakeholders to develop recommendations for sport official development. Recommendations for policy and training in sport officiating
Flyvbjerg’s (2001) suggestion that value-rationality, bound in social problems and investigations, should be a true aim and main concern for social scientists.

This project purposefully sought to involve sport officials, players and officiating development managers/performance coaches, each of whom have different interests and priorities. Previous research had generally privileged just one or two officiating perspectives, mostly elite level referees. It was anticipated that understanding perspectives of different interest groups would provide insights that could be triangulated to give a richer account of communication concepts in officiating from those who influence and are influenced by sport officials.

The first stage of the research was designed to explore prevalent concepts of officiating communication among practitioners. It examined the ways that sport officiating communication is conceptualised by senior practitioners in positions of influence within peak interactor sport bodies. These are people who have responsibility within their sport bodies for development and training curricula, promotion and appointment of officials, and officiating academies. Interviews were used to explore ways that communication and player management is conceptualised and trained. Analysis of interviews focused on ways that the interactor sports shared or differed in their concepts of officiating communication and their perceptions of priorities and challenges.
As will be seen, the study of peak sport body conceptualisations was guided by MacMahon and Plessner’s (2008) focus on ‘interaction’ as a common feature to officiating in all of the ‘interactor’ sports. Further, this study of peak bodies revealed that interaction is perceived to be the greatest training challenge faced by officials in these sports. Although interaction and the complexity of inter-subjectivities were known to be important to officiating at the outset of this project, the findings of the first study (i.e. that interaction was at once the central requirement and the greatest officiating challenge) determined that the project needed to more deliberately focus on interaction in communication. It was this refocus that led to the exploration of communication and interaction presented in the second literature review and methodology (Chapter 5).

In the next stage of the research, ‘interactor’ sport team player captains were sought to provide attitudes and viewpoints on player communication in their interactions with sport officials. This perspective was then used to inform the research aims and interests for research stage 3, the final study of the project involving sport officials from different ‘interactor’ sports. These studies are detailed in Chapters 6 and 7.

This project sought to explore and identify commonalities in officiating communication across sports. By looking across sports, the project aimed to capture an essence of officiating in relationships and interactions. The research takes into account the parameters and goals of the research, including my participation in and influence on the research process. I had some experience as a sport official, player and coach, and as well, for the
duration of the project, occupied a role as communication researcher and
educator with a high-performance officiating group from different
‘interactor’ sports.

3.5. **Sampling officials and other stakeholders**

Qualitative researchers draw from sampling strategies that direct their
choices of what to observe, or the type of participant to interview (Lindlof
& Taylor, 2010). Three main sampling approaches were exercised in this
research. A non-probability sampling approach used a combination of
purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005)
of groups and individuals who maintain familiarity with the research topic,
i.e. officiating communication performance. Each group of study
participants was recruited using different selection strategies where required
(this is discussed in more detail in each study chapter), however there were
some overarching consistencies: a) the sample came from a range of
different interactor sports, b) included males and females, and c) included
representatives from all levels of play (from grassroots to elite).

The research explored different perspectives with the aim being to
triangulate themes in general viewpoints in order to understand ways sport
officiating communication emerges from the cultural and social settings they
occur and are sustained in (Patton, 2002). Hermeneutic (interpretive)
research approaches are often used to integrate different viewpoints. This
involves an ongoing process of iteration/analysis and reiteration/reanalysis
(contributing to an understanding and joint construction of a particular case;
Creswell, 2007). Hermeneutic research approaches emphasise the
importance of how people interact with one another to bring into existence the emergence, processes and institutions that predict and shape constraints or demands on officiating communication performance (Patton, 2002). The research project drew on multiple perspectives to build an understanding of ‘co-construction’ and different perspectives to explore congruence and discord.

The research focused on the lived experiences of different interest groups, or ‘stake holders’, who influence or are influenced by sport officials. Research has tended to conceptualise communication in officiating through sport officials’ views, with little integration of players’ or other viewpoints. Other studies have used experienced or elite officials to identify more effective behavioural and communication strategies (Simmons, 2006; Slack et al., 2013) or to act as ‘subject matter experts’ for defining effective delivery of officiating decisions (Mellick et al., 2005). This ‘official-centric’ perspective can neglect the perspective of those who have direct involvement in officials’ training and those who are involved in the communication process with sport officials. Sports officials were very important to this study, but the research explored the experiences of other officiating interest groups before studying sport officials.

A second sampling criterion for participant selection was to involve interest groups of sports where officiating environments are characterised by higher communication and player interaction demands. The best justification for exploring commonalities across sports perhaps comes from MacMahon and Plessner’s (2008) definition of ‘interactor’ sports. MacMahon and Plessner
(2008) provide a framework for classifying sport officials based on their perceptual-cognitive, movement and interactive demands (and where the official has a direct impact on the flow of the game, both through their interactions and their judgments; see Figure 3.1). These heightened interactive needs for sport officials were considered an important commonality in the sports being studied here and was the main criterion for sampling.

![Figure 3.1](image-url)

**Figure 3.1.** A classification system for sports officials (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008).

In sport settings where officials are categorised as ‘interactors’ (e.g., soccer, basketball, rugby, hockey) there are usually a greater number of players and decision cues to process and interpret, officials are often in close proximity to players (Dosseville et al., 2014), and expectations for interaction with players are greater (Plessner & MacMahon, 2013). In contrast, ‘monitors’ and ‘reactors’, such as tennis line judges and volleyball referees are
officiators who have fewer interactions with players and have fewer
decision cues to attend to. Interactor officials were used in this study as they
experience a more complex and uncertain perceptual environment that
presents relatively unpredictable and more frequent interaction with players.

There is little evidence gathered in previous research/studies to indicate the
extent to which officiating communication in different sports is similar.
Each sport develops its own conventions and institutions and cultures
around their officials, and most previous research has focused on just one or
two sports at a time (mostly at elite levels). However, many national bodies
responsible for sports are accustomed to bringing officials together from
different sports for training and other administration. For example, the
Australian Sports Commission maintains an officiating unit, a generic online
training course for sport officials (ASC, 2012) and a ‘scholarship’ program
for promising officials, across a range of sports.

In this study a variety of perspectives was used to understand officiating
communication and views were gathered from different competitive levels
and involved both male and female participants. This study did not seek to
compare officiating between genders or across sports and levels, rather it
assumed a commonality in the expectation of frequent and influential
interaction in the conduct of officiating at all levels and for both male and
female sport participants (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). I wanted to avoid
conceptualising communication from an isolated gender view and, instead,
recognise commonalities and differences in sporting environments as a
product of gender (Carey, 2008). A range of competitive levels in interactor
sports was also sampled. MacMahon and colleagues’ (2014) distinction of novice, development, sub-elite, and elite was used to categorise competitive levels of study participants.

3.6. Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviewing was the primary data collection method chosen for this project. Some studies that address communication in officiating have used semi-structured interviewing (Simmons, 2006; Slack et al., 2013), while others have used focus groups that use concept listing approaches (Dosseville et al., 2014) and research interpretation (Simmons, 2010). Qualitative interviewing relies extensively on verbal accounts of participants’ feelings, actions, attitudes, intentions and opinions (Herbert & Rubin, 1995; Patton, 2002).

Each study used some variation of semi-structured interviews with study participants, which were adapted to fit the nature of each study’s source of inquiry. I aimed to conduct a range of interviews across sports, but avoid data saturation (Patton, 2002). The number of interviews was made consistent across different project participants (players, officials, development persons) to allow for uniformity in the number of individual perspectives representing each officiating interest group involved in the data collection process. Although uniformity in sample numbers was generally attempted and achieved, in this exploratory study numerical consistency in sample and method symmetry across the stages is not considered important, relative to opportunity for inclusion of stakeholder viewpoint, and probing and exploration of concepts and ideas. The researcher, hereafter referred to
as the interviewer, presented the same series of pre-established discussion themes and similar open-ended questioning to each interviewee). The interviews were conducted in a flexible manner to allow the study participant to guide conversation around a set of discussion themes that provided a fundamental structure to the lines of questioning.

The first stage of this project used straight semi-structured interviews with officiating representatives of peak bodies. Detail of the method is provided in Chapter 4. Interviewing is a flexible and inexpensive method for exploring interviewees’ lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). However, I was very conscious of some of the limitations and potential weaknesses of interviewing, particularly the over-reliance on data that is ‘self-reported’. Self-reported data can be problematic because interviewees may be either unreliable or untruthful or otherwise fallible as sources of data concerning themselves (Patton, 2002). Steps were taken to reduce some of the problems associated with self-report.

This concern about self-reported data was strongest for the second stage of field research – interviews with players. The second study sought to explore ways that players attempt to influence officials in interactions. I was aware that players might be particularly resistant to honestly reporting any strategies that might involve socially undesirable behaviours, such as deception or intimidation. Consequently, I elected to interview team captains and ask them to speak as representatives of players about their experiences as much as they were asked to speak about themselves and their own strategies.
A second strategy aimed to draw on interviewees’ experience and insight but also to provide some distance between the behaviours they reported and themselves. Semi-structured interviews were combined with video elicitation techniques (Henry & Fetters, 2012) for Study 2 (with players) and Study 3 (with officials).

Video elicitation is a qualitative research approach that has origins in counselor training. A technique termed ‘Interpersonal Process Recall’ (the foundations for ‘stimulated recall’ method today) was first used as a strategy to prompt trainees to reflect and comment on video-recordings of their counselling sessions (Kagan, 1980). This type of focused reflection on trainees’ interactions with clients helped to stimulate recall of thoughts, beliefs, and emotions they experienced during clinical interactions. Video elicitation provided a way of investigating social or interactional elements of clinical interactions that might not be sufficiently understood using direct observation or interviews alone. Video elicitation holds promise as a method for exploring player-sport official interactions, as previous officiating research has used a similar approach (see Rix-Lièvre & Genebrier, 2011).

While traditional video elicitation studies often use video recordings of actual study participants, the current research attempted an adapted approach using recordings of player-sport official interactions from different sports. Video examples were selected based on concepts studied in previous officiating communication research (see Appendix 4). An interview schedule was developed based on recommendations by Henry and Fetters (2012) for conceptualising video elicitation interviews. Four progressive
question categories were established across all interviews. First, using video examples, interview questioning aimed to elicit participants’ definitions about communication and interaction; second, questioning aimed to elicit participants’ values and attitudes about interacting (with officials, or players); third, to allow participants’ to reflect on case examples; and finally, probing perceptions of context and behaviour based on video examples and relating to participants’ own experiences.

An adapted video elicitation technique was used for Study 2 and Study 3 by presenting recordings of player-official interactions across different sports as the source of stimulus for discussion in semi-structured interviews. It involved the use of video stimulus within semi-structured interviews as a way to elicit attitudes and opinions on player-sport official interaction and further inter-subjectivities in communication that could not otherwise be accessed by traditional methods of qualitative inquiry. More detail is provided in Chapter 6 and 7 with respect to selection criteria of interactions and video elicitation procedures. Interviews used a third person approach to reduce the effects of self-report.

The research project used qualitative tools and methods that are generative and interpretive in their nature with respect to data collection and analysis. It used open-ended interviewing as the primary data collection approach. A strength of qualitative approaches is that they help to give in-depth understanding of others’ lived experiences, so they are widely used in phenomenology studies. However, weaknesses of qualitative approaches are said to include possible research bias, non-replicability and that they are not
usually representative as they are smaller scale (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Foundationalists contend that research is research and the principle underpinning the research process should be systematically similar, quantitative or qualitative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All research should conform to a set of shared criteria (e.g., internal and external validity, credibility, transferability, confirmability, transparency, warrantability (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2003). Quasi-foundationalists contend that qualitative research should develop its own set of evaluative criteria, or guiding framework, unique to qualitative research (e.g., plausibility, credibility, relevance). The underlying assumption of this approach is that it is only by living an experience and then explicating what is significant about that lived experience that a qualitative researcher can bring a genuine report back to the reader (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This project involved research activities that relied largely on qualitative data sources and strategies to understand concepts of communication, interpersonal behavior and sport officiating interaction.

Summary
This chapter has explained the chosen research methodology and design for the research project. Constructivist and interpretivist research paradigms were chosen as the most appropriate ways to address the research aims. The philosophical assumptions that underpin constructivist and interpretivist approaches view knowledge as built or constructed by individuals, where
multiple ‘truths’ exist. The research aims included both improvement in current conceptualisations of sport official communication and insights into improvement in the communication itself.

A qualitative approach was used for data collection using thematic analysis described in the following sections. It involved semi-structured interviews and video elicitation methods as the means to capturing officiating development managers/performance coaches, players, and officials’ first-hand experiences and perspectives. The project progressively built on each study’s findings with different officiating interest groups. Chapter 4 details the conduct and findings of Study 1 with officiating development managers/performance coaches.
Chapter 4

Entering the field: Sport bodies’ conceptualisations of communication and player management in officiating

Study 1

4.1. Introduction

To begin to address the overarching aims of this project, I chose first to enter the officiating practice field and explore conceptualisations of sport official communication from the perspectives of those who influence and are responsible for the development of officials. This research choice was led by the goals to seek broad definitions of communication and training needs in this area for ‘interactor’ sport officials.

Study 1 aimed to explore the ways peak officiating bodies conceptualise officiating communication and player management, ways officials improve their communication, and the perceived role sport bodies occupy in helping facilitate improvement. The study chose to explicitly draw on the
experiences and managerial or coaching agendas of those who govern and regularly engage with officials in an education or training role.

Research on officiating communication tends to rely on the views of ‘expert’ or elite officials to understand best practice or less effective forms of communication (Simmons, 2006; Mellick et al., 2005; Slack et al., 2013; Thatcher, 2005). While valuable lessons can be gained from experienced officials, this research project aimed to generate concepts about officiating communication and improvement that would guide the scope and lines of inquiry in the studies concerning officiating communication with players and officials in later project chapters. The project was guided by theoretical interests about officiating communication, but largely driven by building development principles for communication improvement. For this reason, the perceptions and experiences of development practitioners for sport officials was deliberately chosen as the first study. Officiating development managers and performance coaches were therefore chosen over the actual communication co-participants (players and officials, themselves).

This chapter details an exploratory study with Australian state-level and national-level officiating development managers (or ‘officers’) and academy performance coaches. This chapter outlines who the study participants were, sampling criteria and ways they were recruited and, finally, how the research was conducted, including the data collection approach and analysis, general findings and their implications for the project aims.
The main research questions in this study were:

**RQ#1:** How do peak (state and national) sport bodies conceptualise officiating communication and player management?

**RQ#2:** How do peak (state and national) sport bodies believe officials become better communicators and player managers?

**RQ#3:** What role do peak sport bodies perceive they have in helping officials become better communicators and player managers?

### 4.2. Criteria

Selection criteria for participants were used to appropriately address the research questions. The research was interested in a range of views from the main individuals and authorities who govern officiating instruction, education and development. It was anticipated this would provide a rich practice community perspective of the phenomenon under direct interest (i.e., officiating communication) from co-participants and attentive observers of sport officials’ development.

The minimum selection criteria for participants were that:

- they were involved within an ‘interactor’ officiating sport;
- their current developmental role for officials positioned them as a primary decision-maker on educational design and instruction for officials;
- they had a minimum of 12 months experience in their current role; and
- they had not less than weekly engagement with sport officials.
All participants represented ‘interactor’ officiating sports, where communication demands are high for officials. Representatives of ‘reactor’ and ‘monitor’ type sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008) were deliberately not included in the sample.

Viewpoints from different officiating practice cultures were sought in order to generate a range of broad concepts, as the research looked to identify commonalities and dissimilarities in sport perspectives. Previous sport official communication research has tended to study one or two sport settings at a time (see Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011; Slack et al., 2013).

A range of competitive levels was preferred here, with a largely equal distribution of 5-6 representatives for each of state (novice and development levels) and national (sub-elite and elite/high-performance levels). MacMahon et al.’s (2014) distinction of novice, development, sub-elite and elite officiating levels were used as selection criteria for participants in this study and other studies within this project.

A mix of officiating development personnel was used, as some have had more ‘hands-on’ experiences with officials, while others provided perspectives on pragmatic aspects of training and resources across larger sub-sections of active sport officials. Participants were selected based on their familiarity and subjective experience with designing, arranging and implementing the instruction and training of sport officials. At any time they
might have been in the role of an observer, assessor, instructor, mentor or coach.

Prior to the involvement of any study participants, ethical clearance was first sought through the Ethics in Human Research Committee at the researcher’s home institution (Charles Sturt University). Once ethical clearance was given (under protocol 112-2012-11), the researcher began recruitment of study participants and provided information about ethical rights involved in participation (discussed in the following sections).

4.3. Recruitment

Initially, contact persons with the Australian Sports Commission’s national officiating unit provided a list of development managers and performance coaches (from a list of ‘interactor’ sports chosen for the project). This list included mostly national representatives for different sports and some state-level. Three state-level participants were recruited through a snowball sampling technique (i.e., existing participants helped the researcher make contact with other participants). Two participants were directly recruited through from contact information on their organisation and officiating department webpages.

Prospective participants were contacted by e-mail or telephone to request their participation in an interview as part of a doctoral project on sport officiating and officiating development. Once contact was made with willing participants, it was first ascertained whether they met the study’s selection criteria. Two development managers were unable to participate within the project’s timelines, but others all accepted. A mix of state and
national-level development managers and performance coaches from different regions of Australia (e.g., Victoria (n=2), South Australia (n=1), New South Wales (n=6), Queensland (n=2) were purposively recruited to represent a range of geographical areas.

An information letter and consent form were provided to participants before each interview to explain the purposes of the study and assure confidentiality (see Appendix 5). The information letter outlined the purposes of the study, extent of their participation and their ethical rights. All interviewees were advised that, in any public report or presentation of the findings, their identity would not be disclosed. This was considered important to promote openness in responses (Patton, 2002).

4.4. Sample

Eleven senior officiating development managers and performance coaches with Australian sport bodies were the participants for Study 1. The sample consisted of four national and four state-level (New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia) development managers (or ‘directors’, ‘officers’) and three high-performance officiating academy coaches. ‘Interactor’ sports (MacMahon et al., 2015) were the targeted sport settings for the project in understanding sport official communication. Study participants represented seven different ‘interactor’ officiating sports – soccer (football), rugby union, rugby league, Australian Rules Football, netball, basketball and field hockey.
Study participants had been in their current position for as little as 12 months and up to a maximum of six years, with an average of 3.5 years. A range of professional and occupational backgrounds within and outside their sport were represented. Most participants had been involved in sport at some level. This included retired high-performance referees/umpires with international experience (n=3), former athlete coaches (n=3) or those who had some playing experience within their sport (n=7). Nine participants were full-time in their role, while two were either part-time or occupied a concurrent role in their organisation. Four participants had previously occupied other management or administrative positions before being appointed to lead officiating education. All interviewees’ roles involved overseeing general educational activities for officials, which may manifest in a variety of ways.

Academy performance coaches were often in more frequent contact with sport officials or directly mentored and led instruction of officials. Other participants designed instruction and officiating standards for their sport and sometimes led bi-weekly and monthly workshops with officials and officiating coaches. The interview sample included nine males and two females. All but three of the study’s participants were responsible for sport officials in both male and female sports. One female development manager in her sport was responsible for both male and female sport officials, while one male performance coach was responsible only for male officials in his sport.
4.5. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher between June 2012 and September 2012. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to initiate general topic areas of discussion about officiating, and narrow interview questioning to communication and communication improvement aspects of officiating performance.

Eight interviews were conducted in person and three by telephone due to the geographical proximity to the researcher. The interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews were recorded and the recordings transcribed verbatim. Appendix 1 shows the interview schedule used to establish consistency across interviews with participants. Four broad themes for discussion underpinned the interview schedule. These included:

- a description of the organisational role fulfilled by the officiating development officer or academy coach;
- beliefs about traits of ideal officials and how people get better at officiating;
- beliefs about fundamental ways that officials improve in player and game management; and
- approaches and strategies used by the sporting organisation to improve and evaluate officials’ communication and player management skills.

These themes were used as they help guide participant-researcher discussion through which officiating communication practice and communication improvement were explored. It was anticipated this would foster discussion
about broader officiating and officiating development topics. The word ‘communication’ was purposely not used by the interviewer until participants used the term, to allow the study participants to bring their own language to concepts and lines of questioning, using familiar practice community terms. This gave participants the opportunity to respond openly and introduce what they felt was relevant (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I presented myself as an officiating researcher with some officiating experience as a way to introduce the interviewee to the interests and identity of the interviewer (Patton, 2002).

Three pilot interviews were conducted with officiating development officers local to the researcher’s university institution, in a range of sports. This helped develop my fluency through familiarity with question sequencing and typical interviewee responses in the interviewing process. Question probes were incorporated carefully within the framing of questions (Patton, 2002). Question probes have various uses in obtaining detail (e.g., ‘Could you give an example of a situation where you’ve previously seen that occur for an official?’), elaboration (e.g., ‘Could you expand on what you mean by ‘communication skills’), and clarification (e.g., ‘Are you saying that a strict approach works best for certain officials to create cooperation?’). After interviews, participants were asked if they had any questions and were given the opportunity to add any comments or corrections to their responses (Patton, 2002). The same interview guide was used with each participant.
4.6. Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Three main research questions were used as a structure for organising data. An inductive thematic analysis was used to generate category schemes that represented participants’ responses. The data analysis involved grouping similar meaning units/quotes into categories within a multi-phase data verification method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved, first, gaining familiarity with the data by transcribing, reading and re-reading each transcript. This stage allowed the researcher to familiarise himself with the participant’s responses and grasp emerging themes, while continually seeking to understand and derive meaning from the data (Patton, 2002). It also allowed me, as the researcher, to understand some of the similarities in question-response characteristics between interviewer and participant (Stankois, 2013).

The next stage of data analysis involved extracting actual words, phrases, descriptions and case examples used by participants relating to the main themes of the line of research questioning. This in vivo process of extracting actual words from the transcript was followed by an open-coding process. The research questions were used as a way of framing the coding and thematic analysis of the data. Data was extracted if it related to main themes of the research questions such as ‘communication, ‘player or game management’, ‘communication improvement’ and ‘officiating development’.
A spreadsheet was used that separated interview dialogue text, from a column for the first level of coding aimed to extract raw interview data (i.e., words, phrases, etc.), and a final column that was the first level of coding in which meaning units (a constellation of words or statements that relate to the a central meaning; Patton, 2003) were associated and counted. A second level of open coding involved making meaning of coded data and meaning unit groupings, as it related to answering each of the three research questions. Table 4.1 provides an example of the systematic coding process used in the data analysis phase of the research.
Table 4.1. Example of coded transcript (officiating development manager).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript (utterances)</th>
<th>In vivo (words used)</th>
<th>Open codes (meaning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I4. 7.1</strong> Q. How can you tell if someone is a good ‘player’ or ‘game manager’? What are they doing differently compared to other referees?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s being able to have a personality which allows you to react to situations in the way that is appropriate to that situation. We go through a little process on the level 2 referee course and level 2 referee coach course that is called DISC profiling.</td>
<td>personality*</td>
<td>Certain personality traits in some officials help them better respond to context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>react to situations*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate to that situation*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>profiling</td>
<td>Sport body experiments with strategies in official and officiating coach education that direct resources to profiling personality traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>think about what sort of person they [referee] are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dominant type*, influencer*, steady*, compliant*</td>
<td>Important to help official understand the expression of their personal qualities and attributes in an officiating context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how [...] different types of people react in a refereeing environment*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>get people to understand</td>
<td>Sport body wants officials to recognise that there are many traits they need to show that should be tailored to officiating situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to be a particular individual at a particular time in a particular scenario, there are times when you have to be dominant, there are times when you just have to sort of massage it along, there are times when your just steady and your standing back and letting them play because they are playing really good football, and there are times when you have to be really compliant because they are going outside the laws, making lots of silly errors and you’ve got to tidy it up. It is a matter of getting people to understand that they need to do all 4 of those things. All in the 1 game to suit the scenario that’s being played in front of them. That has to do with being a really good man manager.

I can give you an example. There is this one guy who reacts to players as a threat to him. So, his solution is penalty, penalty, penalty, yellow card, red card. Basically in that order until he gets someone either off the field, or whatever. Instead of finding ways to deflect it or find

have to be a particular individual at a particular time

scenario

dominant*

sort of massage it along

standing back and let them play

player really good football

compliant*

going outside the laws, making silly errors

got to tidy it up

getting people to understand

scenario [...] played in front of them

good player manager

reacts to players as a threat

penalty [...]
ways of dealing with it that are non-confrontational. He rather  
confronts. So we’re actually trying  
to work with him as an individual  
trying to solve those sort of  
problems.

order  
gets someone off the field  
finding ways to deflect it [..]  
dealing with it  
non-confrontational*  
confront*  
work with him,  
individual,  
solve those sort of problems

penalisation to manage player behavior. Some  
officials can try and re-direct the situation or use  
strategies that are negotiation-oriented and avoid  
direct conflict.

Sport body tries to work independently with some  
officials to improve their use of individual traits to  
influence ways they interact with players.

*Note: ‘*’ indicates terms or phrases that represented meaning units in the content coding stage of analysis and associated with higher-order open coding themes.
In the next stage of analysis, codes were grouped into established data themes and given meaningful labels to represent their thematic content. A content analysis of words and general properties of themes was done only for research question 1 (ways interviewees conceptualise officiating communication and player management) to assess the magnitude of each theme’s general properties (See Table 4.2). Meaning units identified in the interview data were applied to different sub-themes. Themes were reviewed and checked for their congruency with coded extracts and the full data set to generate a thematic ‘map’.

The final stage of analysis involved selecting the most appropriate extracts for discussion of analysis and relating back to research questions and previous literature for final reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I conducted the main data analysis; however, initial thematic labels given to emergent concepts were further reviewed by supervision team members for more explicit coding and classification to interview data.

4.7. Findings

RQ#1: How do peak national and state officiating bodies conceptualise sport official communication and player management?

The first research question directly aimed to explore conceptualisations of communication and interpersonal management aspects of officiating. Research question #1 aimed to identify a range and commonality in perceived dimensions of sport official communication. Themes were extracted from the interview data that addressed ways that interviewees
ascribed meaning to particular dimensions of communication or behaviour management of sport players.

Four core themes emerged from the interview data about how sport bodies conceptualise sport official communication and player management – personal qualities, one-way communication, situation monitoring and skilled interaction (see Table 4.2). To indicate prevalence of these concepts, frequencies were tabulated for the occurrence of meaning units in the response data through a second level of mix-methods analysis. Those interviewees who mentioned themes were noted.

Table 4.2. Concept and sub-concept summary of communication and player management in interactor sport officials (n=11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Sub-concept (meaning units)</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal qualities</td>
<td>Positive attributes &amp; traits (87)</td>
<td>All, I1-I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative attributes &amp; traits (71)</td>
<td>All, I1-I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘X-factor’ (14)</td>
<td>I2, I3, I6, I7, I8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-way communication</td>
<td>Display tools (37)</td>
<td>All, I1-I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decision communication (31)</td>
<td>All, I1-I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impression management (24)</td>
<td>I2, I4-I8, I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directive communication (17)</td>
<td>I1, I2, I5, I6, I8, I9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation monitoring</td>
<td>Observation skills (28)</td>
<td>I1, I3, I4, I6-I8, I10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretive skills (21)</td>
<td>I1-I4, I6-I8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Judging game context (17)</td>
<td>I2, I3, I6-I8, I10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled interaction</td>
<td>Adaptability (27)</td>
<td>I1, I3, I5-I8, I10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriateness (21)</td>
<td>I1-I5, I7, I9-I10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency of interaction (13)</td>
<td>I4, I7, I8, I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preventive communication (13)</td>
<td>I4, I5, I7-I9, I11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7.1. **Personal qualities**

One concept of sport official communication that was frequently raised by the interviewees was personality characteristics and attributes of sport officials. Personal qualities in officials were identified as more natural communication factors that can assist or detract from the goals and purposes of officiating. Some interviewees said that sport officials have personality types that are more beneficial in interpersonal dealings with players and coaches, while other officials have personal qualities that are seen as less productive or effective:

"The players perceive a good referee as somebody who they feel comfortable with. They’ve got a comfort zone with that referee and even when they make decisions they don’t like, they go ‘Mmm, alright, I don’t like the decision, but I’m happy with this guy running the match.’" (I3)

More frequent labels and descriptors provided by interviewees pertaining to preferable personal qualities in sport officials included being approachable, decisive, respectful, professional, empathetic with players, calm, confident, cooperative and resilient. Competence, dependability and respectfulness have previously been found to be favourable qualities and displays in officials that predict players’ perceptions of fairness (Simmons, 2011).

Some examples given by interviewees were that officials can express respect to players through a variety of actions and behaviours, including showing openness to discussing player frustrations or concerns, limiting unwarranted or excessive whistle use, and demonstrating accountability for decisions. Personal qualities that interviewees most perceived to be useful with players and others are an openness and willingness to interact:
It’s a personality kind of thing, I mean the good ones [officials] will often talk with the players and be a bit more approachable, relaxed, and not so domineering. (I6)

We talk about ‘presence.’ That includes being cooperative and professional, as opposed to overly familiar or over-officious. (I4)

It is important that officials be perceived as having the right balance between personable and authorititative qualities. When discussing personal qualities less useful to sport officials, most commonly mentioned traits referred to over-imposition in officials’ attitude and communication with others. Interviewees used descriptors of officials such as dictatorial, domineering, over-controlling or officious. These were attributes in sport officials that were viewed by interviewees as showing a lack of experience or awareness in officials regulating their emotions or managing their comportment.

Another cluster of interviewees’ responses focused around negative personal qualities in officials included a failure to establish authority, being submissive or over-friendly with players, or easily offended by players. Interviewees frequently emphasised that power tensions and indifferences between players and officials can often lead to a game atmosphere of frustration and agitation that translates to player aggression and resistance to officials and their decisions:

I think that a problem with some officials is that they can be not very personable people, and they should avoid coming across as over-authoritative, or that excess power because while you need to show it you’ll never get them [the players] on your side. (I2)

Interviewees frequently referred to an ‘X-factor’ communication trait in officials. ‘X-factor’ was described as favourable personal communication quality in officials that was an interpersonal attitude and presence that
helped them orientate and command social situations. It is something few officials were said to have. Previous officiating research has found that this practice community-derived ‘X-factor’ quality, or charisma, is characterised as common sense and interpersonal ease with others (Mascarenhas et al., 2005). It was considered an ideal performance characteristic, which reflected positively in officials’ performance evaluation and their game appointment or rate of upward advancement. Interviewees referred to this intangible trait as a personality type or communication style that is difficult to label and perhaps impossible to train:

He has that bloody X-factor, the way he can work with people under stress and be able to keep a nice lid on it, where everybody feels comfortable with him. Fitness, all the right faculties, and intelligence that you need to referee, he’s got those. A lot of people have got those. But then there is management technique, and he’s just a natural. (I7)

The natural ones, you’re much more liable to hear players speak about that referee in favorable terms than what they might about another referee. (I3)

Some interviewees felt it would be useful for officials to have a greater awareness of the way their personality influences their ability to officiate, and learn different strategies and skills to use an appropriate officiating style to fit the requirements of game situations or individuals they are dealing with:

Quite often there are people that don’t identify that their personality actually has an impact on the way that they referee. When players are consistently getting frustrated, then you have to look at the personality of the referee and say, ‘OK, is the individual driving those two ends of the spectrum?’ And, I think to a degree they are. The individual drives the management context that’s happening in the game, and it’s what they bring to the table. (I9)

At higher levels of sport, officials’ communication is said to involve an emergent style that aligns with their individual personality, experiences and reputation as an official – a personal and improvised side of communication
The communication concept of personal qualities emerged as a foundational dimension of officiating communication in interviewees’ conceptualisations. Most interviewees could easily identify various traits of officials and saw official’s personality as integral to their conceptualisations of communication. While some aspects of personality are ‘natural’ assets or liabilities, most said it is also important to be self-aware and to be able to control the display of personality with both purpose and restraint. From personality aspects of officiating, the second communication concept focused around impression management and ‘one-way’ communication demands of officiating.

4.7.2. One-way communication

A second officiating communication concept that emerged from interviewees’ conceptualisations focused on unidirectional message sending to players and communicative impression displays in officials. Most sports expect officials to learn and use an array of ‘one-way’ display tools and skills. Interviewees consistently noted the importance of officials’ ability to manage their self-presentation or image, through the use of particular body language, facial expressions and other verbal and non-verbal behaviours. One-way displays (posture, confidence, composure) and tools (whistle, hand signals, flagging) were viewed necessary in order to convey credibility and authority as an official:

Part of the communication begins in the way you actually blow your whistle and the sounds you’re making, and confidence with which you do that. Similarly, the signals you are making, how clear you are to both players and spectators, and the confidence with which you actually hold yourself when you’re doing this and the talk is really only the last aspect. (I2)
Many interviewees viewed officials’ ability to monitor and regulate their emotional displays as an important aspect of transmitting messages and interacting with players, especially in highly stressful or confrontational game situations. One factor associated with role distress in officials is impression management (Thatcher, 2005). Interviewees said that officials should be concise in the verbal messages they deliver to players, and that they value an official ‘who is calm, who doesn’t speak quickly, who can get a message out to the player in a succinct, clear fashion’ (I3). Interviewees frequently referred to the importance of directive communication that officials use to instruct players, encourage compliance, or deter a player response:

> If you want something to happen, you’ve actually got to be directive, you’ve got to direct traffic, you’ve got to tell someone to do something, if you want something to happen, don’t sort of give them some fluffy sentence which means they have to think about what they are doing, ‘Well maybe I should do this.’ (I9)

In most sports, there is often little time for discussion between officials and players or coaches, and in most instances communication is brief and one-way. Interviewees from hockey and netball especially felt that due to the customs in their sport, a reliance on one-way communication can offer limited opportunities for officials to directly interact with players and proactively influence the atmosphere of the play. Personal qualities and ‘one-way’ communication were concepts of communication that were viewed as more foundational factors in interviewees’ conceptualisation. Observational, sensory and interpretive dimensions of the communication process in officiating were emphasised in a third communication concept discussed in the following section.
4.7.3. **Situation monitoring**

Interviewees consistently described an aspect of officiating referred to here as situation monitoring. The third theme that emerged in interviewees’ conceptualisations concentrated on the importance of observing and interpreting players’ emotional and behavioural displays in order to select appropriate officiating responses. This was explained as an official’s ability to appraise players’ emotional states, underlying performance motivations and behavioural intentions accurately, particularly in relation to game and other contextual factors. The ability to detect players’ intentions is one of the fundamental requirements for good officiating in ball sports (Dosseville, Laborde, & Garncerzyk, 2013; Lex et al., 2015; Morris & Lewis, 2010).

Many interviewees said the ability to monitor and interpret and ‘deal with situations’ (I2, I4, I6, I7) is an essential communication competence and process for officials. It involves recognising changing patterns or trends in player behaviour and escalation of anger in moods and changing attitudes (including toward the official) that often lead to conflict, or ‘boil-over’ points:

> It’s reading and understanding people’s faces and expressions and being good at dealing with changes in others’ body language. (I4)

> Have an understanding from the players’ point of view about what they might be going through at the time, sometimes it is not always black and white, there might be something that has been building up for 10 or 15 minutes, that you may know a player has been copping a bit of stick from his opponent, but it is about having a bit of empathy. (I7)

Some officials were described by interviewees as having an increased ‘feel for the game’ or ‘game sense’ (I1, I3, I4, I7) compared to others, involving a heightened awareness of the match competition (score, time, competition...
context, tone, history, spectators, importance of match) and player characteristics (reputation, personality, interactions). It was described by interviewees as a highly developed capacity in some officials to recognise others’ interpretations of decisions and game events (I3, I10), performance stakes to players and teams (I3, I5) and recognise attempts by players to exploit the rules (I4, I8, I9), which helps those officials more deeply comprehend factors that may influence and predict player responses and actions (I3, I4, I8, I10). An underlying awareness and appreciation for what players and teams are trying to achieve, as well as contextual game factors, was viewed as an asset to officiating:

You need to recognise when someone is angry, recognise when someone has done something out of frustration, as opposed to some intentional act, someone who is on a bit of a downer because they aren’t playing well, not that that is your problem as a referee at the end of the day, but you have to recognise those things and how to then communicate. (I10)

Interviewees said referees need to be able to monitor player body language and emotional responses as if they were a barometer for game context. This heightened emotional intelligence in the officiating environment, as well as what other researchers refer to as a feel for game context (Mascarenhas et al., 2005), emerged as an important and highly valued capability in sport officiating. Other researchers note these important judgment skills in officials and ‘recognise patterns of play and find appropriate solutions, whilst showing empathy for the players and the context of the game’ (Melrose, 1998, p. 4).

The ‘interactor’ sport official spends much time during games observing and interpreting players and game activities. Previous research on behavioral patterns in sport officials show they can spend up to 45% of game play
monitoring players without interaction (Trudel & Cote, 1996). The ability to read and interpret situations is important largely because it enables officials to communicate and adjudicate more carefully and sensitively to the needs of each situation (Nikbakhsh, Alam, & Monazami, 2013). Insightful situation monitoring in officiating leads naturally to a fourth communication theme raised by interviewees – skilled interaction with players and others, according to the needs of the situation.

4.7.4. Skilled interaction

A final communication concept that emerged from interviewees’ conceptualisations referred to adaptive, contextual and appropriate types of encounters and interactions with players and others. The interaction environment for officials was consistently characterised by its inherent time pressures, unexpectedness and fluctuating requirements for different types of behaviour and communication:

It’s being able to have the ability which allows you to react to situations and talk with the player in the way that is appropriate and timely to that situation. (I9)

That all takes a lot of skill about how you work with people, but under stress, no time frame to decide. So, it is like ‘How will I deal with this situation?’ It is all very short fused, and short-timed decision making. What you’re going to say and how you’re going to say it. (I3)

Interviewees said that officials need to interact with players to explain decisions, discuss issues related to game procedure, direct players and manage interpersonal conflict (I2, I4, I5, I7). They need to establish mutual understanding concerning expectations and limits to player behaviour, ‘because they want to know where they are at and what they can or cannot do, and the good referee is telling them that all the time’ (I3). Interviewees
said that the frequency of interactions with players, coaches, and other
officials can vary and largely reflect the game situation. Some interviewees
felt that frequency of interaction with players was predicted by context,
game tenor, player and coach frustration (often as a result of reactions to
decisions or responses to poor individual and team performance) and use of
certain communication strategies to facilitate ‘game flow’:

> If you watch an international [hockey] game it is very rare that they
> actually blow their whistle. They talk. They’ll say ‘yeah, keep going’
or ‘play on’ or ‘go this way.’ Then obviously, now and again, they’ll
> blow the whistle. (I7)

A good way to diffuse a situation where the player might be getting
a bit aggressive is a gentle smile, and a bit of ‘I understand’ attitude
can go a long way and just being able to understand how to adjust
your body language to deal with those different situations. (I4)

One interviewee discussed a strategy where officials use periods of silence
to improve the impact of subsequent interactions with players:

> When they want an outcome, a referee has to be much more
directive and, at other times, when they don’t have to say anything,
shut up! Because we have a concept called ‘less is best’ where the
less you say the more effective you are because when you actually
say something, the players go ‘Oh he talked, I’d better do it.’ (I5)

One consistent finding in organisational justice research is the ‘voice effect’,
or tendency for people to judge procedures as more fair if they are given an
opportunity to express their feelings or ‘voice’ (Shapiro & Brett, 2005). One
interviewee identified a similar strategy that is used by officials in
encounters with players during challenges or disputes about the merit of
decisions:

> If you have a player being a nuisance, you give them the time, not
too much time because they’ll take an end out of you, but you give
them the time and you’ve got to let them know you’ve heard what
they said. You need to give them the feeling that they’ve been heard
and that gives you a better chance of getting that player on your side.
(I3)
Appropriateness in interactions with players and coaches was another aspect of interaction skills for officials. Interviewees frequently stated that appropriateness in interaction situations with players is predicted by displays of respectfulness (I1–I5, I7, I9, I10) toward others. This characteristic of communication and skilled interaction was said to contribute positively to resolving interpersonal conflict and managing reactions to decisions. Some interviewees emphasised that officials should aim to proactively earn player respect rather than expect it, while others identified the importance of officials’ creating an atmosphere of respect for their authority at early stages of a sport contest:

While the referee is not out there to win friends, it is important to engage with those players and build respect. For too long we just expected that you would get respect; now you have to earn it, it is a two-way street. It is an important tool to keep them on your side, because . . . they are more likely to understand if something does go completely wrong. (I2)

They [officials] need a high degree of acceptance in decisions and their authority from players, so they really get ‘buy-in’ from the players out on the field. How do they do that? They are communicating in a way that is acceptable to the players, they’re able to explain their decisions well, and they’re able to manage the interactions with the captains and coaches, it becomes a lot of things. (I7)

Interactions labelled by interviewees as inappropriate were characterised as antagonistic or where power difference develops between players and officials. These qualities in interaction with players were explained as having an adverse effect on the game:

Referees interacting in a poor way with the players that are frustrating them, then tension and animosity between the two teams builds up, and the referee is clueless to this actually taking place and all of a sudden it ends up in a brawl and that had nothing to do with whether or not the referee was technically correct. (I9)

This final theme in ways development managers and performance coaches conceptualise officiating communication and player management was
concerned with ways officials manage interactions with players. Of the four themes, there was a larger spectrum of strategies and approaches, reflecting the breadth and challenge of this important officiating communication concept. Preventive communication techniques and conflict resolution were the most frequently mentioned approaches, along with adapting officiating interpretation of rules and communication of decisions according to the requirements of the situation.

**Summary**

The development managers and performance coach sample used in this study were found to conceptualise communication and player management in sport officials in several distinct but complementary ways. Interviewees consistently referred to the importance of personal qualities and personality traits in officials as foundational communication concepts: ‘one-way’ communication and behavioural displays used to efficiently signal, direct play and send messages to players; monitoring and interpreting situations and players’ emotional responses in relation to game context; and use of skilled interaction that is adaptable and appropriate to situation and player.

Some communication concepts were found to be more complex. Situation monitoring was recognised by development managers as an important capacity associated with decision making that helps officials make useful appraisals about game events and antecedents, or identify reasons for players’ reactions and responses. The concept of skilled interaction evoked a range of contextual examples and analogies from interviewees and was thematised as a flexible and reflexive form of officiating communication.
involving more sophisticated behavioral repertoire and responses to players in ‘interactor’ sport settings.

Research questions #2 and #3 for study 1 shift from exploring concepts of sport official communication to communication improvement. However, research question #1 findings will be re-visited at the conclusion of this chapter.

4.8. Findings

RQ#2: How do peak officiating bodies believe officials become better communicators and player managers?

This research project aimed to gain a better understanding of processes perceived to underlie communication improvement in sport official development. The second research question for Study 1 explored the factors that contribute to facilitating communication improvement from the perspective of those involved in officiating development.

The discussion in this section is arranged around four key themes that emerged as abstractions of the interviewees’ responses about ways officials become better communicators and player managers:

- More experiences are better, variety and complexity
- Increased affiliation with the officiating collective
- Being a ‘self-directed’, reflective and committed learner
- Gaining preferred communication attitudes and skills through formal instruction
These themes reflect common beliefs and developmental experiences of interviewees that reveal perceptions about processes that contribute to officials’ communication improvement.

4.8.1. More experiences are better, variety and complexity

The first emergent theme explaining ways interviewees believe officials become better communicators was the importance of the types of experiences officials acquire. Interviewees tended to stress officiating, occupational and personal experiences as the most important contributors to improving communication. Match or game officiating experience was frequently cited as the most crucial contributor to refining and developing communication. Previous research suggests the benefit of officiating competitive game situations, as opposed to exhibition (or ‘friendly’) games, and more experience is better (MacMahon, Helsen, Starkes, & Weston, 2007). Match experience as an official, player and spectator has importance for types of bodily learning, where visual recognition is enhanced by previous bodily experience (MacMahon et al., 2009; Pizzera & Laborde, 2011).

Transfer of skills from other sport roles and occupations, and ‘deliberate experience’ and ‘deliberate practice’, are said to be crucial in developing officiating expertise (Ollis, Macpherson, & Collins, 2006). Interviewees in this study referred to the benefits of a variety of life experiences, such as being a former player, or experience in occupational roles outside sport that have high interpersonal demands, including medicine/health, teaching, and policing:
Learning how to manage a game comes with experience. It may not even be experience on the field. It could be learning how to speak to people off the field. It is obviously important they learn to speak effectively with different people and deal with them. But it will best come from them doing more games and getting feedback and coaching on how to do it. (I4)

Most interviewees acknowledged the importance of formal and informal types of feedback and reflection to maximise the learning value of officiating experiences. State-level interviewees who govern the dissemination of community officiating training say that, in their sport, there are often limited human resources to provide appropriate coaching or mentorship. This is seen to restrict opportunities for officials to participate in consistent, structured reflection on their officiating practice. Some interviewees said they were already trialling new recruitment strategies to transfer retired or active players into the officiating role (I2, I8, I9):

Some of the best umpires are former players. The last thing you want as a player is to have an umpire that is always blowing the whistle and always challenging. They want to let the play go on and we find with players that they understand when players are getting frustrated, and they are often a bit more lenient so it can flow for a better game. (I7)

Having previous experiences as a player was thought to contribute positively to officials’ ability to communicate effectively with players.

4.8.2 Increased affiliation with the officiating collective

A second reoccurring theme about influences on communication and player management improvement in officials focused on collaborative learning opportunities. Interviewees repeatedly described the importance of environments where officials are able to gather and interact with one another in structured and unstructured forms of discussion about their performance. These types of group forums for officials were viewed as
necessary and vital to allow officials to share and assimilate general experiences with others. Secondary benefits of these types of group experiences for officials were said to be that they provide a collegial atmosphere and assist in fostering self-worth as an official.

Some research reveals that a sense of community among referees is paramount to their retention and can help referees overcome experiences of abuse (Kellet et al., 2009). Social connectedness with other sport officials is said to allow individuals to reframe abuse and more likely influence their desire to stay in the role. This belief about communication improvement is consistent with ideas about how people with a common interest or engagement in a particular profession or practice can accelerate development of skills, attitudes and competencies through ‘situated learning’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998). The value of role models (such as experienced officials) for officiating development was frequently raised:

"It is important officials learn from other officials, ‘I’ve made it to this level’ or ‘This is the way I work’, ‘This is how I am’ or ‘This is my style.’ We all learn off other people. It is easy to look at a player and copy what they do, as well as for a coach. I think the same thing can go for officials. If you can watch good officials, see how they control and manage a game, I think that could be passed on. (I8)"

Interacting with other officials is a key process in ways officials become better communicators and acquire cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977) in conventions and dispositions of officiating.

4.8.3. Being a ‘self-directed’, reflective and committed learner

Interviewees frequently raised individual factors in officials, such as drive or motivation, that predict engagement in communication learning
opportunities and contribute to advancing knowledge or skills. Officials’ attitude to growth potential and reflection was viewed as a good predictor of the development of many officials.

At some levels, participation in education and training sessions (including group skills training and camps) was seen as a crucial, yet sometimes rare, training opportunity. However some interviewees felt that getting officials to attend is often challenging. Another term several interviewees used was the importance of getting officials to ‘buy in’ (I3, I5, I10) to their development:

    Every time you are out there umpiring, you’re trying to do things to stretch yourself a little bit and become a bit better. I think that is part of an individual motivation that I believe occurs in all sports, and all walks of life, where some people are ‘purposeful learners.’ Those are the ones that progress quickly. Some other people go through the learning motions and don’t go anywhere. (I6)

Some interviewees said officials who actively seek knowledge, techniques and strategies from inside and outside sport were much more likely to improve their communication, body language and conflict management skills/techniques:

    On the communication side of things. Officials need to really take a good look at themselves and want to go out get more knowledge about it. Go out, and learn about good body language and how to deal with people. We can only do so much. (I11)

Officials were said to need to be motivated to accept the need to self-analyse and reflect deliberately and critically on their performance.
4.8.4. **Gaining preferred communication attitudes and skills through formal instruction**

Knowledge about whistle use, proper signalling mechanics, game conventions and positioning are fundamental to official communication and taught early on in officials’ education. Interviewees frequently discussed the importance of formal officiating instruction in improving communication and player management. One-way communication techniques and strategies, such as whistle use and giving directions, and some aspects of impression management were said to be easier to train than monitoring situations and interacting appropriately:

That ‘feel for the game’ really only comes with experience. Not all the umpires have got it, and you will find that a lot of our top, really top umpires have that. They all have the ability to manage the game in the spirit of the game. It is just their feeling for what the players are trying to do and why they are reacting the way they are. It is really hard to pinpoint, but is such a great skill when you get it. That skill set is really difficult to teach in umpires through their regular training and accreditation. (I9)

National interviewees mentioned sport-body initiatives associated with the development of players and management, including the provision of special seminars and workshop training, the management of game appointments to ensure that game difficulty matched the official’s skill level, and providing less-experienced officials with different-coloured clothing to identify them as novice officials to players and spectators. The importance of mentoring programs was emphasised but, just as frequently, interviewees said that they struggled to find enough experienced officials to guide and implement broad mentorship.

The limit of formal instruction in some of the softer player and interaction management skills was a recurring theme across most of the sports.
Previous sport management research shows that Australian sport officials indicate a lack of general training in communication and conflict management (Cuskelly & Hoye, 2004). This trend across the interviews led naturally to exploring the perceived role of sport bodies in the improvement of communication and player management in officials.

Summary

Officiating development managers and performance coaches in this study believed officials improve their communication as a result of a spectrum of personal, social and environmental factors. They thought officials benefitted from a range of experiences both inside and outside sport, but similarly emphasised the importance of reflective experiences and deliberate learnings around officiating performance. Affiliation and frequent engagement with officiating peers in structured and unstructured forms of facilitated discussion were thought to greatly contribute to communication improvement. Mentorship and coaching was seen to have a critical place in developing refined interpersonal skills in officials, which was consistent from community to sub-elite representatives.
4.9. Findings

RQ#3: What role do peak sport bodies perceive they have in helping officials become better communicators and player managers?

The final research question in Study 1 aimed to explore officiating representatives’ perceptions of their sport organisation’s role in supporting officials’ communication improvement. Three core themes emerged from the interview data and are discussed in greater detail in the following sections:

- Improving standards in coach and mentor training
- Arranging group training in communication ‘soft skills’
- Encouraging the ‘self-learner’

These response themes from interviews are discussed and summarised below.

4.9.1. Improving standards in coach and mentor training

A general consensus among interviewees was that skilled communication and player management are difficult areas to teach and that communication is largely determined by an individual’s disposition or personal makeup. Some interviewees believed that they did not have the technical expertise or formal knowledge to structure and implement explicit communication and player management training. Representatives of one sport said they developed training material that outlines officiating types, or styles, to help officials become more self-aware of using a particular type in certain game situations. Previous officiating research recommends a clearer understanding about when officials might use a particular interpersonal style.
or approach to manage conflict (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008; Mascarenhas, O’Hare, & Plessner, 2006).

In several sports it is a current priority or management agenda to increase both the quantity and quality of qualified officiating coaches. Some interviewees had conducted an internal survey with officials in their sport organisation about their attitudes towards the quality of coaching they received. For one sport’s high-performance academy, a competency area believed by coaches to need improvement was their ability to help officials’ improve their ‘game interactions, communication skills, and body language’ (I8). A shift from assessment and observation of officials to a coaching paradigm was viewed as a more recent and developing philosophy about the support and training culture of officials:

> It is about having a whole coaching philosophy around referee coaching that we are working on right across the system. Referees have just been traditionally observed and relayed feedback. The focus is now on the quality of coaching, the knowledge, and abilities of coaches that will, to a great extent, predict the quality of the refereeing outcomes out there on the field. (I1)

Other interviewees stressed the importance of improving the match-day experience and environment for officials, including increased education of players, spectators, team coaches and influential others about the role and value of match officials.

Mentorship was seen to provide officials with important technical and social support to help them become better at managing or redirecting frustration and resistance from players and coaches:

> Mentoring has a big impact. I think the fact that someone knows you are there in case they need you. With a new umpire it is always the fact that sometimes something untoward might happen and because
they haven’t the experience to handle it, that throws them for the rest of the game. (I5)

Representatives of a number of sport bodies acknowledge the intrinsic value of mentors for officials and said they had begun to implement mentoring programs. However, they find it difficult to regularly provide quality mentors for officials and to establish standards for mentor training.

4.9.2. **Arranging group training in communication ‘soft-skills’**

A second theme concerning role in helping officials improve their communication was to arrange skills training opportunities. Some interviewees said they schedule multiday camps, 1-day seminars, sometimes just before important tournaments. Such forums were thought to be valuable because they enable officials to interact with their peers and upper level (or elite) officials, referee coaches and other performance experts about officiating performance. Integrated forms of education that combine general and more specialised officiating skills were seen as a benefit in improving visibility of communication and player management areas:

I would like to see more regular content education like how to better manage the game delivered in line with the physical training. In other words, where shorter periods of education can happen, dovetailed with the physical education, rather than you’ve got to come this particular one day. I don’t know how it would work, logistically, but I can see the value in combining both of those aspects on a more regular basis for referees. (I7)

I’d like to see us reinforce that and spend a bit of our training budget and time, and what I mean about budget is time, is on those sort of management skills, so that people can actually improve those range of skills much more quickly than they may through self-experience. (I11)

Policing educators remark that there can often be limited time and resources to allow for dedicated training in communication and public relations, where infrequent and brief sessions on these topics don’t have long lasting
influences on the development of these skills (Ainsworth, 2002; Blagden, 2012).

Some group training sessions where communication and player management topics are addressed were said to involve unstructured formats and increasing officials’ awareness about players, teams and their game interactions. Some interviewees said they use team coaches and video analysts to teach officials about game tactics and strategies and help them develop a better understanding of what players are trying to achieve in games and their performance roles as assigned by team coaches. This was viewed as essential higher order awareness about the game that helps officials better predict and anticipate player and team performance. At high-performance levels in rugby union and rugby league, psychological-skills training in coping, stress management and arousal regulation, as well as use of actors in role-play simulations, were viewed as effective types of experiential training used to assist and refine officials’ communication and player management.

4.9.3. **Encouraging the ‘self-learner’**

A final theme that emerged concerning interviewees’ beliefs about their organisational role in helping officials become better at communication and player management was to encourage and monitor self-directed learning strategies in sports officials. Interviewees explained that officiating coaches can initially assist officials in this process. However, they felt it was better to promote self-review or analysis strategies that officials can initiate themselves. These strategies included game-management planning and goal
setting, which are later reviewed post-match and refined over subsequent game appointments. Game review and planning exercises were often carried out by upper level officials, as it was viewed difficult to engage more novice officials in such processes:

They have to self-review and plan for their games, just as if a coach or someone might do. It is an essential piece to improve. Some will sit down with a referee coach and go through things like how their calls affected the game and how well they communicated with the players. They can still get feedback, but they have to take it on themselves at some point. Partly because we want them to take ownership of the process, and the fact that we don’t have enough resources [coaches] at the moment to track every single official at some levels. (I8)

This theme related closely to the first theme discussed, in that interviewees saw the effectiveness of putting in place review processes of officiating practices (decisions, interactions with players, communication management) as a marker of increased standards in coaching and mentorship processes.

Some interviewees also said that they could guide officials to seek outside knowledge and skills relevant to communication. Self-help opportunities were said to include information, training and expertise outside the sport on topics such as body language and interpersonal conflict. Some said they had established or were developing online learning modules in conflict management and body language to assist officials. The use of internet-based training was seen as an emerging tool that was useful to supporting and training sports officials.

**Summary**

Three main themes emerged about ways development managers and performance coaches saw their role in helping officials improve their
communication and player management. These focused on surrounding officials with knowledgeable and influential educators and non-technical support, arranging opportunities for learning sessions about communication and ‘soft-skills’, and encouraging officials to incorporate self-analysis and reflection strategies. Many interviewees at state-level felt they were sometimes constrained by budgets and human resources in seeking to provide consistent training and support in communication areas for officials. At a national-level and within high-performance academies, interviewees were seeking more innovative ways of training officials (which they were currently experimenting with) or felt they had a lack of knowledge to be able to engage officials in targeted areas (e.g., interaction management). Overall, across sport bodies, interviewees were attempting different approaches to help officials in their communication, but sometimes saw limited knowledge about the area and resources as challenges.

4.10. Summary of findings, discussion and implications

Study 1 sought to address conceptualisations of sport official communication and beliefs around how sport officials become better communicators and player managers. It purposefully drew on the experiences of those responsible for the instruction and training of sport officials. Figure 4.1 provides an illustration of concept foundations of communication and player management in sport officiating.
Many similarities were found across sports in their conceptualisation of officiating communication, as well as practice and training issues. Main findings highlight a mismatch between the communication skills perceived to be important and the training that is currently provided to officials. Sport bodies, while acknowledging the importance of situation monitoring and skilled interaction in officials, continue to focus their communication training and development on ‘one-way’ communication skills such as use of display tools (whistle or flag use and hand-signalling) and impression management. This study questions the dominance of transmission models of communication in officiating communication by highlighting the importance of higher order communication capacities and competencies (reading and interpreting player cues, and skilled, context appropriate interaction) necessary to officiating. The study’s findings support constructivist and dialogic conceptualisations of communication as more useful ways of understanding the richness of officiating practice. It
highlights the importance of abilities to observe and interpret players’ emotional and behavioural responses in relation to game and other contextual factors.

The findings here support Burleson’s (2007) general assertions about the lack of understanding about the best ways to teach interactive communication skills and, more specifically, Mascarenhas et al. (2005) and MacMahon and Plessner’s (2008) claims that sports find interactive communication skills difficult to train in officials. Players can frequently attempt to create uncertainty in officials’ decisions. They can undermine officials’ confidence and manipulate interactions with officials (Simmons, 2006). Officials need higher-order social information processing skills to understand and act appropriately within their practice setting.

The study challenges sports to re-examine some of their assumptions about the development of skilled officiating communication. Skilled communication is often separated from general officiating skills (especially decision making) in training. Interconnectivity between officiating areas in research literature is found to be limited, particularly between personality and decision making factors (Hancock et al., 2015).

This research supports holistic approaches to the development pathways of sport officials, placing an increased emphasis on experiential learnings, identity development through practice community relationships and integration of communication, integrating the officiating equivalent of clinical, which Rollnick et al. (2002) suggested in respect of health care,
with communication skills. This would place increased importance on linking communication learnings with other performance elements of officiating, including physical training and decision making (or law application). One example might be scenario-based training exercises that require officials to go beyond forming a judgment about an incident to practicing ways they would communicate and enact their decision.

Consistent reflection on practice can help officials develop more sophisticated capacities for reflexivity and thus learn from match experience in conscious ways. Training for skilled communication in sport officials is currently not well understood. Craig (2006) emphasises communication as a practice, or set of coherent activities that people engage in and are meaningful in a particular way. ‘Deliberate experiences’ (Ollis et al., 2006) or learnings could incorporate holistic strategies and approaches that help increase officials’ sensitivity to social cues in their officiating environment, acknowledge ‘unspoken’ characteristics and traits of people and interactions, and features of game context that help officials to more accurately predict players’ reactions and behaviours, and respond more appropriately.

This study suggests benefits from facilitating opportunities for officials to affiliate and exchange experience as an important element in support frameworks for officials. Formally and informally, there are many communities of officials across sports. Sports bodies can help officials develop, maintain and improve standards of communication by facilitating exchange and reflection on related personal and match experience. The
Australian Sport Commission’s approach to developing high-performance officials uses a ‘cross-pollination’ group strategy in which officiating scholarship holders from different ‘interactor’ and other sports engage in informal group discussion and formal learnings as a part of their workshops.

The findings also raise questions about what officials have control over in their own communication improvement, and defining what governing bodies have control over. One way sport bodies conceptualised their role in helping officials improve their communication is through support for self-directed learning and self-analysis. This was a common sentiment across levels of different sports, but largely without clear strategic direction. Commonalities have been revealed across sports, but numerous differences remain to be explored. Although not a central focus, this study was conscious of pioneering work across sports, and was alert to similarities and differences in conceptualisations of communication. Interaction goals and interests of officials were viewed differently according to the culture of some sports. Sports such as netball and field hockey have more limited interactions with players, whereas interaction is more central to the officiating demands in rugby union, rugby league, soccer and basketball. The findings also reveal other influences on interactive norms in sport, including gender, sport environment and cultural setting. There are implications for future research to explore differences between sports in communication and interaction.

This first study of the research project highlighted limits to transmission as a way of understanding officiating interactions, and that sports bodies should
recognise that transmission has limited value in developing skilled interactors. Observation, interpretation and interaction emerged as important and higher order concepts in officiating communication from the views of sport bodies, but were found to receive little attention in the training of sport officials. These aspects of officiating practice were frequently and fervently emphasised by interviewees, but were a dimension of sport official communication that is under-defined, under researched, and a challenge for sport bodies.

Reflecting on the centrality of situation monitoring and skilled interaction in the findings, the project adapted its focus and orientation with respect to communication. I chose to increase focus on interaction elements of officiating communication, and inter-subjectivities in player and sport official interactions. The researcher re-visited seminal literature on communication that focused on interaction, to focus the studies with players (Chapter 6) and sport officials (Chapter 7) on improving understanding of effective interaction and its antecedents in officiating communication.
 CHAPTER 5

Reconceptualising: supplementing literature and methodology to focus on interaction

The main aims of this research project were to improve on current conceptualisations of sport official communication and understand other complexities of officiating communication practice in order to make applied training and development recommendations for sport bodies.

Study 1 generated conceptualisations of officiating communication gathered from the perspective of those responsible and involved in the instruction or training of sport officials in Australia. The intention was to begin the project by probing the experiences of those from the practice community who are involved in officiating development in order to establish a basis of conceptualisation for officiating communication. Study 1 participants were senior development managers/officers and performance coaches for sport officials at various participation levels in several different ‘interactor’ officiating sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). Findings showed commonalities in interviewees’ conceptualisations of sport official communication, particularly in the crucial need for observational and
interpretive skills, and adaptive and appropriate officiating interaction patterns, labelled here respectively as, ‘situation monitoring’ and ‘skilled interaction’ (see Chapter 4). These communication areas were viewed as more difficult to train in officials, while other areas were thought to be more natural and less easily influenced aspects of officials’ communication (‘personal qualities’), or more easily taught, such as the use of communication ‘display tools’ (whistle, flags, hand signals) and self-presentation techniques (‘one-way communication’).

These initial findings led the project to an intentional focus on understanding interpretive and interaction elements as priorities for advancing officiating communication. This refocus of research direction would help build a more robust understanding of inter-subjectivities, including interactive complexities, goals and motivations in officiating communication. Scholarship on interaction dimensions of communication was sought to build conceptual understandings to enable further narrowing of the scope of the study, and refine the methodological approaches for Study 2 (with players) and Study 3 (with sport officials).

This chapter (a second literature review) is intended to provide a background and deeper understanding of interaction elements of officiating communication, an under-explored area in officiating research and a priority for the industry. This review assumed that there are patterns and complexities in communication and interpersonal dealings for officials that are similar to the nature of officiating in many interactor officiating sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008).
The review explicitly examines conceptual theories concerning human interaction and impression management in communication using the sociological writings of Erving Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967, 1969) and other scholarly readings and research that stems from Goffman’s original ethnographic work. Goffman’s scholarly concepts about interaction were align with and shaped the methodological approaches emphasised in this project (i.e. symbolic interactionism and interpretivism) and are recognised within social sciences. It discusses Goffman’s dramaturgical sociology, with particular focus on ‘face’ and ‘face-work’ in social interaction and their relevance to understanding interpersonal encounters and exchanges between players and officials in interactor officiating settings. Research aims for Study 2 with sport players and Study 3 with sport officials are stated at the conclusion of this chapter.

5.1. Interaction: a missing analytical frame

The study of communication skills in officiating has generally focused on self-presentation techniques and impression management (Dosseville et al., 2014; Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010, 2011; Thatcher, 2005), decision explanations (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011) and conflict management style (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). As discussed in the first literature review, sport officials can benefit from developing these targeted communication skills and abilities, however perhaps even more important are humanistic judgment skills in officials (Mascarenhas et al., 2005), which involve an increased ‘feel’ for players’ actions, temperaments and personalities, that are necessary to help officials deal with the interpersonal
complexities involved in officiating settings (Rix-Lièvre & Genebrier, 2011). This may contribute to more sophisticated and refined responses in the ‘person-centered’ and situation-appropriate ways officials interact, recognising different individual and social goals for communicators (Burleson, 2007). This is in contrast to more ‘position-focused’ approaches in traditional officiating communication studies (which explain communication from the view of the expert official; Mellick et al., 2005; Nikbakhsh et al., 2013; Simmons, 2006; Slack et al., 2013).

Various terms have been used by officiating researchers to describe the instances or contexts where officials and players communicate with one another. One frequently studied interaction context in officiating (sometimes known as a ‘decision interaction episode’; Mellick et al., 2005) is communicating decisions to players (Cunningham et al., 2012; Faccenda et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010; Snyder & Purdy, 1987). Conflict is another context of communication and interaction that involves officials having to regulate and negotiate tension and aggression that emerges in situations among themselves and players (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2006). These are commonly recognised interaction situations involving communication in officiating. The terms ‘communication’ and ‘interaction’ are often used interchangeably in officiating research (Bar-Eli et al., 1995; Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2006). This project will explore and discuss ways communication and interaction in officiating can be analytically separated in the attempts to understand how this differentiation in terminology contributes to new conceptualisations of officiating communication, and the best ways it can be supported and trained.
The synonymous use of communication and interaction is not uncommon in studies on interpersonal behaviour found in other research fields and disciplines that attempt to distinguish the concepts. In medical education research, interaction is sometimes defined as ‘observable behaviour’ during communication (Fleischer, Berg, Zimmermann, Wüste, & Behrens, 2009, p. 341). Elsewhere, communication is referred to as a promoter of interaction, suggesting communication as a tool for interaction (Usher & Monkley, 2001), and interaction is viewed as an interpersonal ‘transaction’ or joint economic activity involving an exchange of reward, while individuals attempt to minimise costs (Greene, 2003). Other references to interaction describe it as a mutual process of interpreting and constructing intersubjective meaning and stances in social situations, where quality of interaction is predicted by the subjective experience of people involved in the relationships (e.g., Metts & Grohskopf, 2003; Tuckett, 2007). It appears other practice fields differentiate communication and interaction to try to better inform the study of their relevance in social relationships and interpersonal behaviour.

Given contextual and cultural influences on communication and social interaction, Goffman’s (1959) perspective is that ‘all communication is seen as interaction’ (p. 8). This project prefers Goffman’s (1959; 1967) definition and use of the term ‘co-presence’ between interactors. It is broad enough to cover more occasions and it also refers to the potential to be strategic in one’s communication. Interaction involves a ‘co-presence’ of two or more people, where individuals acknowledge that others are close enough to them
that they should mobilise their actions or communication in a particular way (Goffman, 1967). Some researchers say sport officials are effectively an active co-participant in sport game activities (Fruchart & Carton, 2012) and co-create game play in their cooperative interactions with players (Rix-Lievre et al., 2014). Interactions between players and officials contribute to an alignment in behaviour, attitudes, and expectations that emerge from contextual and technical aspects of the game (Rix-Lievre et al., 2013).

An important consideration in understanding ways players and officials co-create interactions is how the rules of the game can position officials in a favourable hierarchal position with respect to players, emphasising power obligation concerns in the ways officials impose themselves on players (Rix-Lievre et al., 2014). Different communication dynamics influence interactions, or co-production processes, between players and officials that predict different sport official communication goals, motivations, and plans. The idea of co-construction in ways players and officials cooperatively interact with one another can help to understand the influence of ineffective officiating communication on players and the game (Mascarenhas et al., 2006) and problem-solving activities (contextual judgment, situation monitoring) involved in officiating communication and skilled interaction (see Chapter 4).

Interactionist approaches to communication have been used to explore professional relationships in other settings and may inform sport officiating. Interactionist views emphasise sociological perspectives for understanding human interaction and communication as the interpretation of symbols such
as words, gestures and context that have particular shared meaning and convention (Michaels, 2008; Allen, Peters, & Forsyth, 2010). Interactionism gained popularity in the 1960s in the field of criminology to understand ways crime and deviances are defined with respect to how police and other judiciary figures are perceived by the public. ‘Crime’ is defined by the opinions and preferences of those who hold social power or jurisdiction through an interactionist viewpoint, while conflict perspectives associate crime with economic and political motives (Jordan & Olsen, 2004; Siegel, 2011).

Interactionists suggest civil servants and government groups such as police, social workers and the judiciary are recognised as ‘agents of social control’ (Henry, 2009, p. 296) by the public, as defined by symbolic interpretations attached to their relationships with others perceived as less powerful. There are reoccurring examples of inappropriate conduct by those perceived as agents of social control, including infringing human rights and prisoner mistreatment (Hartle, 1989; Shapiro, 1988) and abuse of power by engaging in unlawful activities (Body-Gendrot, 2015). This raises questions about policies and standards that are established to regulate inappropriate conduct in those appointed responsibilities in social control, such as officials of organised sport competitions. Issues of officiating integrity include child protection, code of conduct and duty of care, and especially match fixing and its associated criminal implications (ASC, 2012). Sports officials meet some of the characteristics of what is described through an interactionist lens as social control agents, in that they are responsible for making difficult
decisions and impose themselves on players and sport games in various ways.

In sport officiating, the application of an interactionist approach helps to improve understanding about relational and identity features in interactions and officiating performance. Understanding ways that officials can learn to better negotiate statuses and authority with players has the potential to contribute to ways officials mitigate feelings of injustice that influence game atmosphere and players’ behavioural responses towards officials (Faccenda et al., 2009). Previous research has generally focused on behavioural aspects of communication and cause-effect conceptualisations in officiating communication research that emphasise positivist approaches (see Chapter 3).

The next section narrows the scope of discussion concerning interactionist frameworks by outlining sociological and social psychology underpinnings of communication in interaction. It presents an argument for the benefits of sociological-anthropological concepts about human interaction to help elucidate a language for understanding deeper complexities and dynamics involved in sport officiating communication and player-official interactions.

**5.2. Dramaturgical sociology**

The conceptual framework of *dramaturgical sociology*, developed by Erving Goffman (1959; 1963; 1967; 1969) provides a rich interpretive frame for exploring interaction in relations between players and sports officials. This section examines Goffman’s empirical work on the
presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) and micro-sociology of interaction and face-to-face behaviour (Goffman, 1967), while drawing on some of his other conceptual themes on strategic interaction (1969) and behaviour in public spaces (1963).

Reviews of Goffman’s dramaturgical sociology work identify that he used many metaphors to understand interpersonal behaviour that span ‘theatre’, ‘ritual’, and ‘game’ (Jacobsen, 2010). These are explored in this section and a theoretical focus here on dramaturgical sociology is further strengthened by evidence of the study of communication and interaction in different professional and practice settings, such as restorative justice conferences (Barton, 2004), medical ward discourse (Bruce, 2013) and sport coaching (Wilson, 2013). Goffman’s ideas have more recently been used to understand mobile/telecommunications and social media (Jacobsen, 2010) and interaction in ‘digitalised worlds’, such as social internet networks (Jenkins, 2010). Dramaturgical sociology concepts have not yet been explicitly applied to sport officiating.

Dramaturgical sociology was used for the rich interpretive frame it provides for building on conceptualisations of officiating communication by addressing interactional complexities in social relations and human behaviour. Goffman (1959) used a theatrical metaphor to describe the human communication and performance of self in social occasions that is guided by situationally-derived definitions. Performance of self is a metaphor that he uses often in his work where he sees that interactants present themselves in certain ways by acting out a particular role, but also
adjusting performance to fit the perceived ‘definition of the situation’ and ‘lines’ that others bring to interaction. Unlike traditional interactionists (e.g., Bulmer, 1963; Mead, 1934), Goffman was interested in where and when people engage in different behaviours, and he saw a set of stable patterns and conventions to most activity in public settings.

Other Goffmanian concepts suggest the existence of a distinctive ‘communication traffic order’ or ‘expressive order’ in face-to-face interaction, where there exists ‘co-presence’ between others, that is defined by particular situational properties. One type of co-presence that Goffman (1963) refers to is ‘social occasions’ (e.g., a birthday party, church service or sports match) that are defined by some boundaries of space and time and involve particular setting characteristics or ‘props’.

Police research uses Goffman’s (1963) distinction of social occasions to locate particular interaction contexts in police work (Saunders, 1979). This suggests different interaction contexts or occasions in encounters with the public that influence ways police mobilise their activities and discretionary behaviour, such as law enforcement (situations where application of criminal law is directly involved), order maintenance (when police moderation or intervention on social activities of others is needed, but not necessarily for administering the law), and service (policing responses to other public needs outside law enforcement). Sauber’s (1979) order maintenance resembles interactional terminology used to describe aspects of the officiating role, such as to maintain social order (Eitzen, 2000; Purdy & Snyder, 1987) or destabilise game activities (Fruchart & Carton, 2012).
Goffman views ‘self’ as a dramatic effect that arises within human encounters and social situations. He uses the term ‘dramatic realisation’ to explain how the presence of others motivates a ‘performer’ to mobilise their activity in such a way as to present an impression that the performer ought to convey (Goffman, 1959). ‘Identity’ is not seen as localised or true property of human beings, but rather a dynamic, open-ended, developing feature of human nature and interaction (Barton, 2004). Goffman suggested people present different sides of themselves under different circumstances and approaches identity as the performance of different roles in different situations and settings. The public self is something that is seen to be recreated and reevaluated, with reference to situation, context and interactional goals and the evaluation of others (Goffman, 1967).

Dramaturgical sociology understands ‘self-other’ relations by borrowing from Cooley’s ‘looking glass self” to explain ways our self-concept reflects our understanding of how others perceive us, and how we perceive our behaviour in relation to others (Goffman, 1967). While Goffman’s origins are attributed to Cooley-Mead’s pragmatic social psychology traditions, he later withdrew claims he was a symbolic interactionist and set out to establish a study field dedicated to the systematic analysis of interaction.

Goffman is today better recognised as a sociological-anthropologist as his influences are largely traced to Durkheim’s (1897) functionalism and Simmel’s (1922) structuralist sociology. His micro-sociological approach to social interaction and face-to-face behaviour has grown in popularity in
socio-linguistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics research, and provides insightful vocabulary and language about more subtle and latent aspects of officiating interactions. Officiating demands some degree of socially situated identity that is to be communicated and performed. ‘Self’ and ‘identity’ became critical concepts in Goffman’s work in investigating and analysing social interactions, particularly where people are ascribed social roles, position, or status, such as sport officials.

Goffman (1959) briefly discusses self-presentation and sport officiating in his first book. He emphasised a general expectation for ‘formal conduct’ in American baseball umpires and reflects on an apparent umpiring requirement to make immediate decisions and appear confident in their judgement (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) saw this as an intrinsic feature of the umpiring role and the importance of ‘sustaining a particular kind of reality for the fans’ (p. 61). It is due to this expectation for formal conduct that it becomes in a baseball umpire’s best interest ‘to desist from making improper ‘deals’, but also to desist from innocent action which might possibly give the (wrong) impressions that they are making deals’ (p. 44). Policing literature shares this thought, and it relates to the ideas of social control agents discussed earlier in this chapter, where public exposure to signs of neglect of the police role or misdeeds/falsehoods can reflect poorly on police themselves and the institutions they represent (Ainsworth, 2002; Blagden, 2012). Dramaturgical sociology can give a language for understanding these interactional and relational characteristics of officiating to better explain identity negotiation in communication with players and others.
Threads of Goffman’s work are found in some sport and officiating studies. It is suggested that basketball officials display a particular ‘court demeanour’ and present themselves in ways that show social control of sport situations (Snyder & Purdy, 1987). The authors use Goffman’s operationalisation of demeanour that considers ‘ceremonial behaviours’ displayed by officials through ‘deportment, dress, and bearing that convey desirable qualities to other interlocutors’ (Goffman, 1967, p. 21). Another application of Goffman’s work with sport officials describes the role of the referee in the spectacle or ‘moral drama’ of American professional wrestling (Hendricks, 1974). The referee’s role in the wrestling drama sustains an image of the ‘hero’s ambivalence toward legal authority’ and presents the referee in this morality play as the ‘fool’ (Hendricks, 1974). One wrestler conceals their intentions to an oblivious referee and uses illegal manoeuvres outside their awareness in order to gain an upper hand. The referee behaves in a manner that attempts to regulate a ‘moral struggle’ that involves a display of negotiated identities to the wrestling match audience (Hendricks, 1974). Apart from these examples of discussion about self-presentational and dramatic interpretations of officials’ interaction with sport participants, there are few documented applications of this micro-sociology of communication in interactions in officiating studies.

Some general criticisms of Goffman’s work are worth considering that will be addressed in this project. Some critics say Goffman’s work lacked scientific rigour and systematic nature (Schegloff, 1988) and that he was disinterested in power and hierarchy in social relationships (Goulder, 1970).
Kemper (2011) provides a relational reading of Goffman’s work suggesting he neglected power and more complex dimensions of status in social interactions. Ethnographic and naturalistic observation informed many of the data gathering approaches and strategies used by Goffman. In Goffman’s later work he addressed more systematic and objective study of interaction, such as in *Frame Analysis* (1974). Denzin and Keller (1981) suggests Goffman’s academic work is better interpreted by a ‘structuralist’ view, as he attempted to organise structural features of interaction (Goffman, 1974), while others suggest he failed to recognise the social location of people involved in interaction, including ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and socio-historical context (Ball, 1972).

Despite some of these criticisms, the strength of his ethnographic research has provided a language for understanding the performance of ‘self’ in social life (1959), ways we adapt ourselves in face-to-face behaviour (1967) and game-like characteristics in human relations (1969). In examining officiating interactions, these concepts can help provide a language for understanding goals, motivations and interactional interests and orientations of people in public spaces such as sport settings (Goffman, 1963). Three dramaturgical sociology concepts worth explicit discussion are: ’definition of the situation’ (Goffman, 1959), ‘working consensus’ (Goffman, 1959; 1967), and ‘front stage-back stage’ (Goffman, 1959). These concepts are discussed in the following sections.

5.2.1. *Defining the situation*
Goffman uses W.I. Thomas’s (1928) popular sociological phrase, ‘definition of the situation’, that implies that ‘if situations are defined as real, they are real in their consequences’ (p. 572). It suggests that we bring a sort of mutual understanding or comprehension about social situations and the people involved. Goffman elaborates on Thomas’s (1928) first translation by conceptualising the mechanisms that bring about such definition of situations. Goffman suggests there is one single definition of the situation, which is managed moment-to-moment among people through deliberate efforts to protect against breakdowns in interactions or the influence of opposing definitions (Goffman, 1959). It suggests that people don’t always respond to objective features of social situations, but rather gives increased weight to the importance of subjective meaning that situations create and maintain for each interactant:

When we allow that the individual projects a definition of the situation when he appears before others, we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition of the situation by virtue of their response to the individual and by virtue of any lines of action they initiate to him.

Goffman, 1959, p. 20

In one of Goffman’s final works, he attempted to objectify the combination of different definitions of the situations people bring to interaction in structural terms as a social ‘frame’:

I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events […] and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements

Goffman, 1974, p. 10-11

Generally, players and officials bring expectations and a ‘shared definition’ to sport games that officials make decisions on players’ behaviour in line
with the rules and players should perform within a certain set of rule boundaries. The definition of the situation is an individual’s broadest subjective response, while frames are a part of this subjective structure (Goffman, 1974). Social construction of ‘definitions’ of reality relies on interaction as a source of mutual efforts at construction, maintenance and transmission of knowledge, and the influence of social location of actors such as sex, ethnicity, and social class (Ball, 1972).

Stott and Reicher (1998) found that in crowd control situations police define the crowd itself as heterogeneous and that this was a view held collectively by the police that influenced the action they took in interactions with crowd members. Police as a whole are sometimes considered a large ‘team’ in Goffman’s (1959) terms that seek to define any situation as being ordered or controlled by them. The concept of the definition of the situation, as suggested by Goffman, provides a useful concept for exploring player-official interaction by explaining ways context, relational and individual characteristics influence game interactions and officiating communication.

5.2.2. Working consensus
Identity negotiation processes are inevitable features of routine everyday social interactions (Goffman, 1959). This assumes that, together, people contribute to an overall definition of the situation that involves not as much a real agreement about what objectively exists, but rather ‘a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured’ (Goffman, 1959, p. 134). A working consensus refers to a surface level agreement that is temporarily and implicitly accepted depending on the
context and expectations that define relationships in particular interaction situations.

All communication activity is therefore seen to derive from a sort of ‘shared code’ or ‘working consensus’ about meaning attached to the lines people bring to situations (Goffman, 1959). People ‘negotiate’ to establish a working consensus of ‘who is who’ in their social interactions and it is this implicit negotiation of meaning between an individual and their audience that influences the ‘self’ a social actor is likely to perform (Goffman, 1959). This symbolic negotiation of meaning is established through a working consensus about a temporary definition of the situation. The rules and values of the working consensus reflect status-power relations that are fundamental drivers in social interactions and interpersonal relations (Kemper, 2011).

Patient participation in medical encounters with health care provider have the potential to be disproportionate based on the distribution of roles and power. Developing a ‘working consensus’ in medical encounters can rely on whether patients are a ‘passive’ or ‘active’ actor in consultations that is essentially guided by the doctor with specialised medical knowledge (Barbot, 2006). This ‘consensus’ in Goffman terms, is not a real agreement per se, but claims to the situation which will be temporarily honoured to avoid any explicit conflict to the ‘line’ which all interactors in the situation wish to sustain (Goffman, 1959). Conflict is something inevitable in sport, but the working consensus proposes ways that officials might construct a
working consensus with players in order to avoid conflict and negotiate more cooperative game relations and interactions.

5.2.3. *Front stage-back stage*

Goffman (1959) highlights that public (or social) and private space are often clearly distinguished by discrete physical locations or ‘regions’ that sustain them. He uses the term ‘front’ to refer to ‘the part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance’ (Goffman, 1959, p. 13). Front is the term Goffman gives to information presented by an actor in the performance of ‘self’ that is given off through a variety of communication, all of which must be controlled to effectively convince the audience of the appropriateness of the behaviour the role assumes.

These ideas gave origin to Goffman’s concepts of the ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ selves, resulting from a ‘front’, or mask, we are compelled to wear on the front stage, where people deliver their performance. This dramaturgical analogy suggests that the ‘back stage’ is a place for privacy, where the image presented on the front stage may be contradicted and where the ‘performer’ can step out of character and drop their ‘front’ (Goffman, 1959). Goffman suggests, ‘events may occur within the interaction which contradict, discredit, or otherwise throw doubt upon this projection. When such disruptive events occur in social situations, Goffman says “interaction itself may come to a confused and embarrassed halt” (p. 12).
We can look for insight outside sport officiating where some of these concepts have been used to study professional interactions. Medical discourse in oncology encounters involves front stage discourses with patients and back stage discourse with medical colleagues with respect to aligning presentation of prognosis for patients (Barton, 2014). Rossner (2011) explains organised front stage impression work in youth restorative justice conferences relies on ‘back stage’ efforts by facilitators, including rehearsal and negotiations around agreements with clients. Facilitators of youth restorative justice conferences engage in front stage tasks (e.g., chairing, managing ‘crisis’, brokering and directing) and back stage tasks (allocating front stage roles for others, anticipating and negotiating agreements, preparing participants). Backstage has been suggested as a region where negotiated ‘stances’ are constructed between sport coaches in advance of front stage interactions with sport teams to perform effective dual-leadership discourse (Wilson, 2013).

Previous research has recognised some of the front-stage ‘theatre’ aspects of communicating decisions. Elite rugby union officials describe a construct termed ‘corporate theatre’ that involves the management of impressions in interactions with players and other officials in order to appear consistent, confident and accurate in their decision making and meet the expectations of multiple audiences interlinked to match proceedings (Cunningham et al., 2012). It would be helpful to identify further associations between some of Goffman’s conceptual language and the practice of officiating communication in interaction with players.
Dramaturgical sociology concepts can help differentiate officiating interaction situations and front-stage and back-stage work of sport officials, and varying communication patterns needed to meet the contextual and interpersonal complexities of officiating sports games. A sociological approach to social encounters opens up a unique conceptual language and perspective of the performance of ‘self’ that is useful for framing sport official communication. It can help give insights into ways officials self-regulate their behaviour and negotiate assumed identities with respect to players in interaction that contribute constructively and pro-actively to manage social order and game activities. As discussed previously, these ideas are of interest to officiating and ways in which officials construct their game authority and meet interaction demands to better co-foster game play with players (Rix-Lièvre, 2014) or deter altercations that occur during games (Rix-Lièvre & Genebrier, 2011).

Goffman’s concepts concerning interaction have not yet been applied to understanding communication aspects of sport officiating interactions. Current conceptualisations of officiating communication can benefit from incorporating a dramaturgical sociology approach to help more fully describe and offer a typology or set of classification concepts for explaining features of sport official interactions with other sport actors.

This section has introduced the field of dramaturgical sociology and discussed its usefulness as an interpretive frame for understanding officiating interactions. The next two sections focus on some core Goffmanian concepts that give a language to detail impression management.
in social interactions and ‘face’ exchanges relevant to player-sport official interaction.

5.3. **Impression management in interaction**

This chapter has introduced interaction concepts as a focus for investigation in sport officiating communication for the remainder of this research project. It has introduced interactional themes and terminology provided by the field of sociological dramaturgy that help to open up some of the ‘black boxes’ of communication for sport officials. This discussion continues by narrowing in on some of Goffman’s (1959, 1967) original concepts about *impression management in interaction*.

Goffman (1959) said a basic knowledge about those we interact with gives rise to ‘impression management’, a self-conscious monitoring and expression of information about oneself during interactions (Goffman, 1959). Impression management is a communication concept that has been of interest to many officiating researchers (e.g., Dosseville et al., 2014; Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010; Thatcher, 2005), but it has mostly been treated as ‘one-way’ self-presentational displays and techniques used by officials to shape how others see the official and their decisions.

Chapter 2 summarised the main officiating studies that previously focused on impression management. This chapter recognises the limited attention given in officiating studies to understanding properties of impression management in dynamic interactions that consider the realities of both interlocutors. A better understanding of interaction dynamics for officials,
and ways they adapt or accommodate impression management with players, may contribute to training and practice knowledge in game management, and ways humanistic judgement skills required for ‘skilled interaction’ can be improved (see Chapter 4).

One of Goffman’s (1959) main assertions was that in the presence of others we are actively ‘giving off’ and that we passively ‘give off’ impression cues to others. These cues are used to understand one another and anticipate expected or appropriate ways of acting. Impression management in interaction is therefore viewed by Goffman (1959) as deliberate behavioural adjustments and unconscious projections in social settings. We are generally motivated to project (or ‘mobilise’) positive images of self, which is said to arise from what Goffman describes as a ‘dramatic realisation’ central to human nature:

*While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure. For if the individual’s activity is to become significant to others, he must mobilize his activity so that it will express during the interaction what he wishes to convey.*

Goffman, 1959, p. 19

Goffman (1959) suggests that understanding how interactions can fail in face-to-face exchanges helps to teach us how they can succeed or best work, emphasising that ‘impressions fostered in everyday performances are subject to disruption’ (p. 43). Disruption is said to be avoided by individuals in interaction as it leads to social consequences such as embarrassment and shame (Goffman, 1959, 1967). Goffman saw these emotions as central to governing the everyday micro-organisation of interactions and influencing
impression management in interactions. This type of ‘working out’ of emotions in social interaction explains the manner in which the performance of ‘self’ responds and learns from social situations and contexts and the consequences connected to them. According to Goffman the mechanisms for this impression management in interaction are linked to our desire to preserve the social worth we claim for ourselves and the idealised images we present in interaction through our roles and social statuses (Goffman, 1959).

Sport officiating research shows that players rate officials as more respectful and fair in decision interactions when they provide verbal explanations (Simmons, 2009). While officials can influence interactions by more favourable impression management, Goffman (1967, 1969) recognises that once people learn the rules of interaction, symbolic information exchange can take different forms that derive from unconscious or deliberate manipulation of such information.

One of Goffman’s (1969) later interests was in strategic, game-like or calculative aspects of human encounters. He used a game metaphor as a way of describing information management in social interactions and suggests concepts of ‘game observation’ that help to explain ‘the individual’s capacity to acquire, reveal, and conceal information through social interaction’ (Goffman, 1969, p. 4). From this perspective, interaction is seen to exist as an ‘information game – a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery’ (Goffman, 1959, p.8). Impression management is considered by Goffman to be strategic
when it is informed by an assessment of others’ impressions, and such information is used to choose a particular course of action that involves intrinsic payoffs. Later elaborations on the strategic control of impression management are attributed to Schlenker and his colleagues (2009) and strategic communication of impressions by soccer officials is said to be a way of mitigating uncertainty in officiating decisions (Simmons, 2010).

5.4. ‘Face’ and face-work

This section shifts focus to an examination of concepts of ‘face’ and ‘face-work’ (Goffman, 1967) and their relevance in understanding officiating communication and impression management in player-official interactions. These Goffmanian concepts are reviewed in this section and include a discussion of theoretical advances in the study of face and face-work in the fields of communication, dialectics and linguistics, and pragmatics. Application of face and face-work concepts for investigating organisational and professional interactions is also discussed and proposed as an aid to understanding characteristics of skilled interactions in sport officiating.

According to Goffman (1967), face is ‘the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact’ (p. 5). Face is a negotiated social identity that reflects a normative right and to which feelings are attached to one’s sense of ‘self’ and one’s ‘self’ is expressed through face (Goffman, 1967).

Goffman (1967) explains that face is ‘something that is not lodged in or on [his] body, but rather something that is diffusely located in the flow of
events in the encounter and becomes manifest only when these events are read and interpreted for the appraisals expressed in them’ (p. 7). Spencer-Oatey (2004) suggests face is something intuitively meaningful to people, but difficult to define with accuracy and associated with expectations that underpin our social roles and self-concepts which preserve particular dignities and identities in interpersonal relationships. Face is a universal phenomenon in so far as everyone has some basic concern to maintain face in interactions. Some characteristics of face are valued, or held in higher esteem, depending on the cultural context, for example authority, individualism or collectivism (Hall & Hall, 1990; Hofstede, 2001; Merkin, 2006).

People are generally motivated to avoid face loss or threat to face, while also driven to maintain particular patterns of face in social interactions, whether personal or institutionalised (Goffman, 1967). Face threat is viewed as a personal attribute by Goffman and largely concerned with infringements of self-worth, dignity, self-identity and societal virtues such as respect, honour, status, reputation and competence. Little is known about the face concerns or needs of sport officials and players, or the usefulness of face concepts in understanding ways officials can develop a heightened sensitivity to more subtle features of situations and respond more effectively to players and game situations.

Outside the officiating domain, understandings of face in interpersonal communication have been used to explore dynamics in public and professional interactions that are useful for informing the study of player-
Sport official interactions. For example, flattery is said to be a ‘face-work’ strategy used by patients in interactions with nurses that serves a relational function in caring relationships. Patients are motivated to instil a positive impression with their care giver as a way to seek autonomy and personal self-esteem (Shattell, 2004). Satisfying the face needs of students through effective face-work strategies is classroom teaching is said to improve student vigilance and motivation towards learning and improved engagement with teachers (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003), and to facilitate more harmonious and cooperative classroom learning environments (Huang, 2014). Musicians enact certain face-saving methods as compensatory strategies to deal with potential threat to face and perform an identity that is contextually appropriate to avoid indicating a lack of experience to their audience (Scarborough, 2012). Strategies such as substituting (emphasising a different skill to replace one that is perceived to be lacking), underscoring (reasserting possession of a skill the musician already possesses) or neutralising (to challenge one’s intended presentation as harmless or ineffective) are used during music performances to manage and maintain particular impressions. Other face-work examples can be found in crisis negotiations (Rogan & Hammer, 1994), citizen-police exchanges (Peterson, 2008) and coercive interactions in police interrogations (Sheffer, 2009).

Evidence from a range of professional and practice contexts can be a useful starting point for appreciating some of the nuances and mobilisation of deliberate efforts of players and officials to adapt and present different face patterns in game interactions. This sociological approach to communication
in interaction brings a new set of concepts for explaining and analysing sport official communication as a way to more deeply contemplate associations between setting, context and interactional complexities of sport officiating. Social and cultural manifestations of face and face-work have been debated and elaborated within new theorisations of these concepts provided by socio-linguistics (Brown & Livingston, 1987), inter-cultural communication (Hofstede, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2003), rapport management (Spencer-Oatley, 2004) and relational readings of Goffman’s work (Arundale, 2010; Kemper, 2011).

The final sections of this literature review discuss three main frames through which face (and as a consequence ‘face-work’) is said to exist in social interactions – as a personal-attribute, as a cultural manifestation, and as a relational and dialectic product.

5.4.1. **Face as a personal-attribute**

Skilled communicators are often concerned to maintain the esteem and self-image of both self and others (Hargie, 2011). Face-work describes ways interactants interpret and act to maintain the face of oneself or another, which Goffman (1967) saw as personal and ritual aspect of interaction. This was viewed by Goffman as an important interaction tool for people, which we are socialised into across our lifespan and where ‘disenfranchisement in the face-work enterprise can have negative consequences for the individual in the situation and across situations’ (Goffman, 1963, p. 216). People employ these interpersonal strategies unconsciously and deliberately to
prevent face threat to self or other and make one’s actions appear consistent with face.

Goffman (1967) suggests two main types of personalised face-work that most often occur in face-to-face behaviour – defensive and protective. Defensive face-work involves actions by an individual to prevent loss of face, such as avoiding situations or social activities that might cause face-threat or potentially discredit the impression one is attempting to maintain. Sport officials could be motivated to avoid certain interactions with the aim of maintaining impressions of game control and authority, or avoid engaging with players and coaches who may question an official’s competence. Protective face-work refers to the attempt by an individual to save others’ face, based most often on the assumption that others will return the same ritualistic consideration (Goffman, 1967). In officiating, this could appear as displays of empathy or humour with players (Slack et al., 2013) or displays of respect, honesty or integrity (Dosseville et al., 2014). There are a variety of officiating examples that could be given for defensive and protective face-work and, even more, it gives opportunities to develop other face-work concepts that are specific to the conditions of officiating.

Socio-linguistic researchers have used the concept of face to understand common conversational acts and intentions in interpersonal relationships. Face as a personal-attribute is a core construct of Politeness Theory (Brown & Livingston, 1987). Understanding how people avoid or reduce face threats in interpersonal interactions through ‘face saving’ strategies is central to politeness research. Face is said to be a key motivating force for
displays of politeness in interpersonal relationships that are a result of face giving and face saving. Officiating research indicates that players’ rate politeness in officials’ communication as an important impression cue in how competent they view an official to officiate (Dosseville et al., 2014). Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest there are two distinct types of ‘face’; positive and negative face. They say that positive face is more connected to one’s self-esteem, while negative face is associated with a claim for the freedom to act and for territory, personal entitlements and rights. Face threatening acts are mitigated through politeness face-work strategies used to formulate messages in order to save another’s positive face.

Another socio-linguistic area of research is rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2000; 2007). This examines ways in which language is used to construct, maintain and/or threaten social relationships, including the negotiation of face and sociality rights of self and others. Building rapport with players is recognised as an important tool in communication and game management practices of superior officiating (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas et al., 2005; Slack et al., 2013). Rapport management theory extends politeness frameworks and has been used to study salesperson-customer relations (Campbell, Davis, & Skinner, 2006), business interactions (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2004) and behaviours of problem-based learning groups (Robinson, Harris & Burton, 2015).

Properties of rapport management concerned with face include quality face, or the basic desire to be evaluated positively in terms of personal traits that are associated with a sense of self-esteem (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Identity
face refers to the desire to maintain certain social roles or identities, and is something associated with public worth and which we claim as a function of our social or group role (for example, a sport official as the central figure to lead game activities and the primary decision-maker).

Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest there are two distinct types of ‘face’ we aim to protect or preserve in front of others; positive and negative face. They say that positive face is more connected to one’s self-esteem, while negative face is associated with a claim for the freedom to act and for territory, personal entitlements and rights.

Positive or negative face (Brown & Livingston, 1987) and quality or identity face (Spencer-Oatey, 2004) can help to explain adaptive types of face-work that sport officials can use to build rapport with players and respond to face interests of players.

5.4.2. Inter-cultural face

Cross-cultural communication and cultural conflict have become popular applications for the concept of face and face-work. Communication is strongly dependent on the culture, social and economic status, and reciprocation in interpersonal relationships, of the participants – relational and cultural characteristics that influence interactions. Face Negotiation Theory (Rahim, 1983; Ting-Toomey, 1988) provides understandings about communication in inter-cultural exchanges and cultural differences in the way people respond to and deal with conflict. Cultural values indicate
preferred types of behaviour in a given culture (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin & Blue, 2003).

Ting-Toomey (1988) suggests five distinguishable culturally-based responses to conflict in situations where there are incompatible needs, interests or goals between individuals: *avoiding* (withdrawing from interactions), *obliging* (giving-in), *compromising* (negotiating), *dominating* (competing) and *integrating* (problem solving). Individualist and collectivist cultures have different preferences. Asian cultures (more collectivist) have been found to prefer indirect communication because it is affirming, pleasant and agreeable, where a cooperative indirect statement can reduce tension others might feel in social situations (Cai & Fink, 2002).

Face-work in cross-cultural contexts has also drawn on the more culturally universal status representations suggested by Hofstede’s power-distance model (Merkin, 2006). Hofstede (2001) described face-work strategies as varying due to the degree to which authority figures are esteemed. High power-distance cultures tend to encourage conformity and submissiveness and it becomes more important to interact with peaceful, cooperative and obedient communication styles that seek to collaborate with others (Hofstede, 2001). Cooperative strategies mitigate face threatening events and are more considerate to others in displaying deference and respect. Face-work strategies can range in cultures from *cooperative strategies*, in which the actors accommodate their communication towards the other, *indirect strategies*, which are roundabout and diverge from a direct course, and *direct strategies*, which are straightforward and candid (Merkin, 2006).
Officiating researchers recommend that sport officials can use a range of communication styles in order to regulate or manage conflicts that develop with players and others, such as accommodating, compromising, collaborating, avoiding or forcing (See Figure 2.1; Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Face, and face-work concepts as personal attributes and intercultural manifestations, have more recently been expanded into relational explanations.

5.4.3. *Face as a conjoint-relational phenomenon*

Recent elaborations on Goffman’s original work conceptualise face as the achievement of meaning and action in interaction, and a relational phenomenon that recognises contextual influences on interaction. Kemper (2011) gives a relational reading of Goffman’s work that expands understanding of ‘status’ in interactions, saying that Goffman neglected to account adequately for status and power dimensions in social interactions. This relational view of face identifies status and power on which social relations are based that predict emotions and connect individuals within groups to deliver their culture in ways that preserve actions, beliefs, and ideas (Kemper, 2011). These new readings and interpretations of Goffman’s work can provide elaborations on face and face-work concepts that have relevance to sport official communication.

Another view recommends Goffman’s conceptualised face as a personal or individual possession that arises from pre-established patterns of action (Arundale, 2009; 2010). Face-Constituting Theory (FCT; Arundale, 2010)
suggests that humans create relationships as they use language in social interaction. Arundale argues that existing theories of face and face-work are pervasively based on encoding-decoding models of communication (i.e. ‘self’ and ‘other’), while newer conceptualisations consider face a relationally-built concept that has most relevance to the setting it is conversationally constituted in between people (e.g., business settings). For example, strategic embarrassment is said to occur in Taiwanese business interactions where one person attempts to discomfort another by topicalising unmet expectations disguised by a mild reproach or complainant (Chang & Haugh, 2011). Face threat is therefore seen as a relational construct where particular settings influence the emergence of face that favours achievement of an interactional goal being sought. The socialised self is achieved interactionally in relationships with others (Arundale, 2006; Haugh, 2010). This approach depersonalises face and points out that it can be viewed as being attached to the interactional context and relationship properties between people involved.

Face is an individual participant’s interpreting of a social phenomenon, a phenomenon that can only arise from the interaction between individuals (Arundale, 2010). There exists no concrete face apart from people being aware of it. Both the awareness and the interaction are necessary for face to exist, but neither by itself is sufficient for face to exist.

Relationships are characterised by openness/closeness, certainty/uncertainty, and what Arundale (2010) particularly emphasises is important to relational face, ‘separatedness’ and ‘connectedness’ between
people. Separateness and connectedness are viewed as a functional necessity for what traditional face theories describe as total autonomy of interaction parties (Arundale, 2010). FCT provides a more complex notion of face concepts than Goffman’s (1955) and Brown and Levinson’s treatment of face and face-work. It shifts away from an encoding/decoding model of communication, and recognises complexities of evaluating and interpreting of face as threat, stasis or support.

Face ‘gain’ and ‘loss’ are not seen as explicit theoretical concepts, but that gaining and losing face are complex emic conceptualisations (Haugh, 2007, p. 664) involving economic metaphors that equate face with money or goods. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) power and social distance interpretations of face and ‘politeness’ are not just external social factors used to assess threat. Relational perspectives of ‘face’ view power and social distance as ‘co-jointly co-constituted’ in certain relationships and involve contextual interpretations brought to interactions by each person (Arundale, 2010). This addresses the concept that there is an ‘our’ face that is constructed in interactions which are influenced by role, expectations and power dimensions. Courtroom exchanges between legal counsel and witnesses involve multiple goals related to the case, more than the mere exchange of information (Penman, 1990).

FCT stresses ‘interpreting’ as a verb to describe the dynamics of forming meanings and interactional goals, indicating that the outcomes of interpreting are not fixed but constantly evolving (Arundale, 2010). This conceptualisation of face and face-work avoids the use of the term
‘intersubjectivity’ that considers aspects of ‘same’ or ‘shared’ meaning between people. Rather, emphasis is placed on shifting affordances, constraints and a range of sense-making processes that influence the interactional achievement of meaning in communication (Arundale, 2010). Arundale (2010) conceptualises communication as a non-summative phenomenon involving two or more cognitively anonymous persons engaged in accommodating and constraining one another (p. 2079). A relational perspective can help account for some of the aspects of officials’ positions and role-related expectations and responsibilities that are built into preferred traits in officials.

Both personal and relational orientated perspectives of face and face-work hold promise for improving understanding of the complexity of communication and interactions between players and officials. An increased ‘feel’ for players and the game in sport officials can be contemplated as improvement with experience of exercising and refining face-work patterns in communication and interactions.

These ideas concerning personal, inter-cultural and relational face will be further detailed in the findings section for Study 2 and Study 3.

**Studies 2 and 3: Research aims and interests**

This review integrates and supports interactional approaches for understanding sport official communication. The review was conducted to deepen understanding of interactional research aspects of the first literature review (Chapter 2), and thus introduce a framework of ‘interaction’
dimensions in communication to inform the aims and analysis of Study 2 (with players) and Study 3 (with officials).

This review builds on traditional communication skill research by arguing for the usefulness of dramaturgical sociology approaches to understanding skilled interaction patterns (Chapter 4), particularly for gathering deeper insight into interpretive and interactive communication processes in sport officiating. The theoretical underpinnings for this project are therefore found in Goffman’s dramaturgical social interaction (1959; 1967; 1969), newer relational conceptualisations of face in interaction (Arundale, 2006, 2010) and a constructivist view of communication skill (Burleson, 2007) to help build on current ‘skill’ and ‘decision’ conceptualisations of officiating communication practice. These theoretical approaches combine to give a critical and unexplored frame for explaining and analysing communication demands and constraints, foundational attitudes, boundaries and rituals in player-sport official exchanges and encounters.

Studies 2 and 3 explore players’ and officials’ perspectives, across different ‘interactor’ sports and levels of sport. The aim is to analyse perceptions and attitudes of players and officials concerning motivations, goals and contingencies that influence interaction, while also understanding message exchange and production in more- or less-skilled officiating communication. The studies use social constructionist perspectives to build concepts of officiating interaction and provide a vocabulary for understanding face exchanges and face-work patterns in player-sport official encounters. Findings gathered from Study 2 with players will be used to inform
approaches used to study sport officials in Study 3. Each study chapter to follow independently states the particular research questions and description of selected methods to address these study aims.
CHAPTER 6

Player communication in interaction: Insights into the ‘unspoken’

Study 2

6.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines a video elicitation study with Australian ‘interactor’ (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008) team sport captains to explore interactional and relational complexities in player-sport official encounters and exchanges. Study 1 showed that sport bodies’ conceptualisations of officiating communication and player management emphasised the importance of higher-order communication capacities, particularly observation and monitoring of players and situations and use of adaptive and skilled interactions (Chapter 4). Study 1’s findings led to a re-examination of social science literature to provide a more explicit background of interaction concepts important to officiating communication. The ways players and sport officials define and are motivated in interactions (Goffman, 1959, 1967) became the core interests for Studies 2 and 3 to explore co-constructions of interpersonal exchange.
In most contexts communication training begins with improving understanding of those with whom we communicate, however we have little knowledge of player perspectives in their interactions with officials. Research to date (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons 2010, 2011) tends to generalise about the players’ views of sport officials, as if players were homogeneous, or that all players view officials similarly. Research on players’ perspectives often concentrates on more and less favourable ways officials present themselves (impression cues, decision communication displays or actions), rather than exploring ways that officials might become more responsive to different player behaviours and reactions. Players are known to differ in their intention to argue (Simmons, 2009) and sensitivity to injustice in officials (Faccenda et al., 2009). This study directly explores differences in player approaches to interacting with officials that is expected to provide useful information about different ways co-constructions of game interactions occur with officials (Rix-Lièvre et al., 2015).

This study uses dramaturgical sociology and related communication concepts as an interpretive frame for exploring players’ definitions of interaction situations, attitudes and motivations of players in interactions with officials, and ways players attempt to influence officials. It uses constructivist perspectives of communication (Burleson, 2007; Delia, 1977), symbolic interactionism and ‘face’ concepts of Goffman (1959, 1967), and Arundale’s (2010) face constituting framework.

The study uses video elicitation interviewing as a technique to stimulate discussion with players about their own experiences and their view of other
players’ motivations and behaviour in interactions with officials. The findings are expected to be useful for structuring officiating training to help officials become more aware of players’ responses, motivations and behaviours, and to suggest better ways officials can respond and manage ‘face’ concerns in officiating communication.

Three main research questions were posed here:

**RQ#1**

*How do players define situations and interactions with officials?*

**RQ#2**

*What are players’ motivations and intentions in interactions with officials?*

**RQ#3**

*How do players differ in the ways they attempt to influence officials?*

### 6.2. Criteria

Players occupying a captaincy role in interactor sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008) were purposefully chosen. Team captains are frequently required to engage with officials about rule interpretation, game procedures and other aspects of player behaviour. Captains are formally expected to help orientate other team members to group performance goals and collaborate with coaches to facilitate role information exchange among team members (Eys, Schinke & Jeffery, 2007). For these reasons, selecting team captains was thought to provide a player perspective from team leader in regular contact with officials during games.

Captains represent a *third person perspective* (Maxwell, 2012), as both a sport participant and as an active and observer of game interactions. A shortcoming of self-reported interview data is that respondents may
withhold or vary opinions and behaviours they perceive may show them in an unfavourable light. A third person perspective was used as a research strategy to mitigate this shortcoming of the method, as it helps to explore what people might not want to reveal about themselves and their own interactions, but as a co-participant/observer of such interactions are open to communicating about others.

The criteria this research used to select player captains included:

- a minimum of two years tenure in a captaincy role;
- have not previously been a sport official; and
- have been a player and player captain.

The criteria for two years experience as a captian was to ensure players had enough experience to be able to comment on other players, sport officials and game interactions. None of the study participants had formal experience as a sport official, although two participants had volunteered as an official. It may be said that those in a captaincy role adequately represent the ‘normal’ player view, however it was anticipated here that investigating ‘high interactors’, from ‘interactor’ sports would provide richer data (Patton, 2002). In addition, a final criteria was that players had some experience as a non-captain.

The project aimed to gather views from different sport backgrounds and competitive performance demands and incentives. Player captains were sampled from different competitive levels. I was aware of the limitations that might come from broad selection criteria, but the aim of the research
was to gather player insights into officiating interactions that could provide a variety of attitudes and definitions about interaction relevant to their sport.

Prior to the involvement of any study participants, ethical clearance was first sought through the Ethics in Human Research Committee at the researcher’s home institution (Charles Sturt University). Once ethical clearance was given (under protocol 112-2012-13), the researcher began recruitment of study participants and provided information about ethical rights involved in participation (discussed in the following sections).

6.3. Recruitment

Player captains were recruited through a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling strategies. Game and competition development managers for some interactor sports were directly contacted to assist in player captain recruitment by distributing participation requests to sport teams and clubs.

Administrators sent out a broad email to sport club’s with information about the researcher’s name and research project details. Five of the study’s participants were discovered through these recruitment strategies who directly contacted the researcher and said they were willing to participate.

A letter of information and informed consent was provided in advance to player captains to inform them of the extent of their participation and to ensure confidentiality for themselves and their affiliated sport club. During initial contacts with participants, I was aware to emphasise that their
participation would not effect their atanding with their current sport club and all comments would be anonymous.

Players were given opportunity to understand the aims of the research and interviews were arranged

Snowball sampling was also used that relied on participant referrals (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Some sub-elite, development and novice/grassroots player captains were recruited through existing participants who helped provide access to other player captains at their same level. Other player captains were recruited by direct contact through clubs, based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher’s home institution.

6.4. Sample

Study participants were eleven player captains of interactor sport teams. Player captains represented Australian elite (national representation, some international experience; n=3), sub-elite (professional club, higher competitive level than amateur and some financial compensation; n=2), development (amateur/state; n=3) and novice (community/grassroots; n=3) teams from soccer, rugby union, rugby league, hockey, basketball and netball sports. The sample included eight males and three females. The mean age of players who participated was 26.9 years and all participants had actively captained their current sport team for a minimum of two years/seasons (See Table 6.1). All players had a minimum of four years playing experience (with a maximum of 25 years) in their sport and mean of 11.5 years playing experience. The participant sample included a spectrum
of players across different competitive levels and sports to provide a range of practice experiences of respondents (Patton, 2002).

Table 6.1. Interviewees’ demographic profiles (Study 2) (n=11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Playing experience (year/seasons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3</td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I4</td>
<td>Rugby League</td>
<td>Sub-elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I6</td>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I8</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I9</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Sub-elite</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I10</td>
<td>Rugby League</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I11</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5. Interviews

A semi-structured interview approach was used to (a) explore players’ attitudes about player-official interaction and (b) to allow participants to reflect and recount on their own sport experience to expand and elaborate on these responses (Maxwell, 2012). Several issues about the interaction situations depicted in video vignettes were discussed with participants. Discussion topics included the nature of the interaction situation/occasion, interpersonal style or approaches used by players and officials, possible antecedents, consequences or alternative course of the encounter, and unspoken goals and motivations of players. Many of the later questions listed in the schedule were not asked because interviewees raised the issues without prompting before being asked. The interviews were carefully planned to draw concepts from scholarly research on communication and use them as the basis for questions asked of real officials. Table 6.2 shows
an alignment of the research questions (left hand column), the background
theoretical concepts from communication and interaction theory (centre
column), and the actual questions asked of the officials in interviews (right
hand column).
Table 6.2. Linking interview questioning with theory and research questions (Study 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Theme to explore (not in the interview)</th>
<th>Question to ask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How do players define situations and interactions with officials? | **Dramaturgical sociology concepts**  
  - definition of the situation (Goffman, 1959 through Thomas, 1927; Kemper, 2011)  
    See pg. 194  
  - front stage-back stage (Goffman, 1959)  
    See pg. 197 | What is going on here in this interaction between the player and official? (video) |
|                    | **Face’ concepts**  
  - positive and negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987)  
    See pg. 209  
  - quality & identity face (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2007)  
    See pg. 209  
  - connectedness & separateness relational face (Arundale, 2006; 2010)  
    See pg. 212 | What particular messages are the player and official trying to send each other in this situation? (video) |
|                    | **Constructivist view of communication skill**  
  - social perception & message reception (Burleson, 2007)  
    See pg. 70 | What is happening for the player in this situation? (video) |
<p>|                    |                                         | What are your impressions of the officials’ actions to this point? (video) |
|                    |                                         | What are likely future consequences of similar types of interaction for both the player and official? (video) |
|                    |                                         | What are different ways that other players might react or respond to officials in similar situations that you’ve seen in your sport? |
|                    |                                         | What are favourable and less-favourable personal traits in officials? |
|                    |                                         | As a captain, how do you try and present yourself to officials? |
|                    |                                         | What are different types of interaction situations that arise during games? |
|                    |                                         | What approaches or styles do you prefer in officials? |
|                    |                                         | From your experience, in what ways do players respond differently to different officiating styles? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are players’ motivations in interactions with officials?</th>
<th>Dramaturgical sociology concepts</th>
<th>Constructivist view of communication skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• depth processing (Burleson, 2007)</td>
<td>• working consensus (Goffman, 1959)</td>
<td>• social perception &amp; message production (Burleson, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See pg. 71</td>
<td>See pg. 195</td>
<td>See pg. 70 &amp; 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this player trying to accomplish in this interaction? (video)</td>
<td>What might be going on in the mind of the player here? (video)</td>
<td>What were you noticing about the approaches people were taking within interactions? (video)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are players seeking to achieve in interactions with officials?</td>
<td>What do players wish for from officials?</td>
<td>What ways can officials interact with players to better gain cooperation and acceptance in their decisions, or authority?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do players wish for from officials?</td>
<td>What types of impressions do players usually present to officials?</td>
<td>What are ways that players can act with officials to gain an advantage or influence them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What types of impressions do players usually present to officials?</td>
<td>How do players differ in their acceptance of authority in officials?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dramaturgical sociology concepts
- **impression management** (Goffman, 1959)
  - See pg. 199
- **front stage-back stage** (Goffman, 1959)
  - See pg. 197
- **face-work** (Goffman, 1967)
  - See pg. 203
• strategic interaction and ‘control moves’ (Goffman, 1969)
  See pg. 202-203

‘Face’ concepts
• positive and negative personal face
  (Brown & Levinson, 1987)
  See pg. 209
• quality & identity face
  (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2007)
  See pg. 209
• connectedness & separateness
  relational face
  (Arundale, 2006; 2010)
  See pg. 212

Constructivism view of communication skills
• message reception & message
  production (Burleson, 2007)
  See pg. 72 & 73
The research design used video elicitation within semi-structured interviews (e.g., Heath, Luff, & Svensson, 2007; Henry & Fetters, 2012) with player captains. Video elicitation is a technique used to train health practitioners, to stimulate thought and discussion about how trainees’ associated appraisals, beliefs, and emotions attach to their consultation experience with patients (Henry & Fetters, 2012). In these particular studies, interactions are presented to practitioners in training situations and an interviewer guides the participant through reflection on the interaction and considers patterns in their communication.

To interview player captains, the video elicitation technique was adapted by using examples of player-official interactions across different sports rather than video of the actual participant. The purpose of using this research method was to provide participants with rich stimulus concerning familiar or typical (and less familiar) video examples of sport and player-official interaction situations. Interviewees who were not familiar with some sports, were often able to give detailed commentary about the interactions. The videos were not a test of any kind, but a stimulus to prompt, allow and encourage the participants to discuss interactions. The video elicitation interviewing technique used this way allows participants to bring their own language and attitudes to explain and describe sporting experiences and player-official interactions and exchanges.

An interview guide was developed in a manner that it could be combined with the presentation of video stimulate, and to get participants talking about player-official interactions and to trigger discussion. An interview
schedule provided consistency across interviews and tailored the sequence of player captains’ exposure to video vignettes (See Appendix D). The presentation and introduction of video vignettes was designed to avoid leading participants in research questioning, and to give visual cues for discussing participants’ personal experiences and opinions.

After participants were first advised about the extent of their participation and consent, all participants signed an informed consent form. Interviews were between 45 and 75 minutes in length and were recorded using two Dictaphones. I conducted all interviews, two by telephone and nine in person. After each interview, I asked participants if they wished to change any of their responses. They were given contact information in case they had questions later. The researcher made recordings of interviews and later transcribed them verbatim.

The use of video examples in semi-structured interviews provided a ‘thin-slicing’ approach to exploring communicative exchanges between players and officials. Thin-slicing is thought to encourage study participants to evaluate visual stimuli in a more intuitive manner (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Video vignettes provide examples of game interactions that capture audio and video of verbal and non-verbal cues and dialogue in different players-official encounters and exchanges. Studies in others fields have used similar methods to explore police and public citizen interactions (Engel, Sobol, & Worden, 2000) and the effectiveness of health consultation between patients and medical specialists (Pappas & Seale, 2009).
Selection criteria for the interactions used as video stimuli were informed by previous research on officiating communication, and other fields that study interaction from the perspective of those who receive health (patient to nurse or doctor), educational (teacher to student) and professional services (e.g., citizen to police, customer to service provider). The examples of interpersonal encounters and exchanges between officials and players included initial encounters and impressions (clips showing players and officials shaking hands and other first meetings prior to the game; Simmons, 2011; Thatcher, 2005); displays of decision communication (clips showing officials delivering decisions, giving explanations or rule interpretations, showing calmness or anger; Mellick, et al., 2005; Simmons, 2008, 2010); more and less ‘competent’ officiating impressions (clips were shown of different types of officiating styles, displays of politeness or empathy with players and other verbal/non-verbal expression (sometimes without sound; Dosseville, et al., 2014; Simmons, 2011); and instances of conflict between players where officials intervene or towards officials (MacMahon et al., 2014; Mascarenhas, O’Hare & Plessner, 2006), or where players are arguing with officials (Faccenda et al., 2009; Simmons, 2008) or being ‘difficult’ (clips showed players infringing officials’ personal space, repeatedly questioning or complaining; Baker, Magnini, & Perdue, 2012); Shattell, 2004; Velázquez, Contrí, Saura, & Blasco, 2006). (**digital copies of video vignette stimulus are available on request to examiners).

A balance in types of interaction across video clips was ensured. The research intentionally avoided any bias in the presentation of ‘anti-social’ player behaviour by ensuring the clips showed positive and negative
interactions, and were informed by previous research in officiating on communication and understandings from other fields and industries (customer services, human services and civil services).

One set of recordings of interaction situations (or episodes) between officials and players was used with all participants. Participants were presented vignettes of their own sport and other ‘interactor’ sport types (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). Recordings of vignettes (soccer n=2, hockey n=2, netball n=1, basketball n=2, rugby union n=2, rugby league n=2), ranged in length from 3 to 15 seconds and were arranged so that all participants would watch the clips in the same order. All interviewees said they were mostly familiar with all sports used in vignettes, and mostly able to give commentary on interactions even in sports they were less familiar with.

Recordings were collected from an online public video forum (www.youtube.com) based on the particular study and interaction criteria discussed above. Video footage was collected to represent part of the participants’ own media consumption of sport (professional sports) and video clips of game interactions from other sports and development and community/novice levels. Video clips represented elite (e.g., Olympics, Rugby Union World Cup, FIFA World Cup), professional (e.g., European Hockey League, English Premiership Football) and Australian development and novice levels (e.g., club, state, district). The research used MacMahon and colleagues’ (2014) distinction of elite, sub-elite, development and novice officiating levels for separating video examples and categorising
player captains’ level of sport participation. I was conscious that the topic of
player-official encounters and interactions can manifest differently
depending on competitive level and sport based on rule structures, norms
and consequences of such interactions.

Other materials included a screen for presentation of video vignettes. Video
was mostly shown using a large projection screen (n=4) or laptop (n=5). For
those interviews conducted over the phone (n=2), study video was uploaded
to a private on-line link where myself and the participant could engage with
the video while on the phone. I advised the participant to start and stop the
video at particular running times to be consistent with interviews done in
person. All video was stored as .mpeg, or .wmv computing files.

I was mindful of issues of trustworthiness and credibility in the conduct of
this research. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness in
qualitative research were used. In terms of officiating research background,
I had previous experience in qualitative interviewing and analysis with sport
officials (Cunningham et al., 2012) and sport officiating administrators
(Chapter 4). Three pilot interviews were conducted with player captains
who lived close to the researcher’s home institution to help refine the
interview guide and gain familiarity with general participant responses.
Interview recordings were re-listened to and compared to transcription
accuracy. Care was taken to ensure that interviews were conducted and
analysed in systematically, while attending to the application of theoretical
concepts new to officiating research.
6.6. **Analysis**

The study’s research questions were used to structure the organisation and categorisation of data. The theoretical concepts of Goffman (1959, 1967) and Burleson (2007) were used as an analytical framework to interpret interview data. This was achieved with a multiple-phase data-verification process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involved myself first gaining familiarity with the data by reading and re-reading each interview transcript. Next, transcriptions were examined for words, phrases, descriptions and examples that indicated player ‘motivations’ and ‘intentions’ in interactions, and ways they influence interactions. These fragments were coded with a meaning label and then grouped and thematised manually using an Excel spreadsheet (See Coded Transcript example; Table 6.3). Consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006), themes that were identifiably consistent with previous research, and the focus of this inquiry, were organised as narrative responses to the research questions. Quotes and examples are used to help communicate the findings.
Table 6.3. Example of coded transcript (player captain).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript (utterances)</th>
<th>In vivo (words used)</th>
<th>Open codes (meaning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I6.14.2</strong> See the player there [referring to video vignette], he throws his hands up like ‘what the fuck’. It’s frustration to the ref.</td>
<td>player [...] throws his hands up frustration to the ref</td>
<td>Players show visible displays of frustration or unhappiness with officials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**16.15.1 Q. Do you see players do that often?**

| **I6.15.2** All the time. I do it myself sometimes, I’ll be stealing the ball and he goes ‘hands out’ so I’ll be like that means that I’ve had my chance to steal the ball. I’ve got to take my hands out when I still think, legitimately, he’s wrong, I’ll go ‘Hell, he’s wrong’ or ‘Come on Sir’ like I won’t get uppity. It’s just to show him I’m not happy. That, you just want that ball so bad, and don’t get it, and it just comes out. Some refs will penalise for it. Others use their discretion and go, ‘Alright, fair enough, just get on with it’. Sometimes it is done to influence the ref best way to influence a decision [...] is to put it in his head ‘can you watch this I think they are | I do it myself sometimes | Officials use short phrases to send messages to players about avoiding potential infringements |
| | When I still think, legitimately, he’s wrong | Players can believe that officials’ have made poor judgement or misinterpreted a decision situation, but not over react. Players use subtle responses to send messages or emotions to officials. |
| | I won’t get uppity show him I’m not happy | Players want to send messages to officials that they are trying to perform within the boundaries of the rules. |
| | Sometimes it is done to influence the ref best way to influence a decision [...] is to put it in his head ‘can you watch this I think they are | Sometimes players aim to influence officials’ decisions | |
| | Use their discretion | Officials are different in their flexibility with rule application in order to allow the game to continue. |
The best way to influence a decision in a referee is to put it in his head by saying, ‘Oh Sir can you watch this I think they are doing this’ or go up and ask a question. Now whenever I am on the ball trying to steal it and the refs going hands out, and I think, ‘I shouldn’t be told to get my hands out’, I think, ‘the tackler should be getting blamed for holding onto the ball’, I say to the ref ‘Do you want to see more of a let go?’ or ‘I thought I was going to see ‘this’, Sir’. Just putting something in his head that lets him know. You’re trying to influence his decision just by asking questions, not by telling him what to do but just say ‘is this ok?’, ‘Should I be doing this’ just putting these little things in his head so you say ‘Sir I think I’ve been pretty close on a few of those things, what do you want me to do?’

Players can influence by distracting officials or re-directing officials’ focus
Players can influence by questioning officials’ interpretation

Players can have a strong belief the official is wrong and respond by asking questions to align interpretation or exposing new information to officials.
Some players using questioning as a subtle way to gauge appropriateness or boundaries of their performance to officials.

Players can influence officials by introducing information that gets the official to re-evaluate players’ actions.

**Q. Those things you describe, what does that do, or achieve in the situation?**
16.16.2 It puts an idea in his head that you’re trying to work with him. That he is still the boss and that you just want the decisions going your way. You’re putting it into his head that, “Ah like he is trying here” or “Oh wait maybe he did let [the ball] go”. You know what I mean? Or, ‘maybe he still was on his feet’, ‘maybe he is entitled to that ball and maybe I should penalise that guy on the ground not the guy with the ball’. Important for players to show official that they are collaborative or cooperative.

Important to make officials feel they are the authority, but that players’ are trying to avoid the negative impact that comes with penalty. Getting officials to second guess their interpretation or feel the player is attempting to avoid being penalised.
Arundale (2010) suggests much research on face-work employs common objectivist approaches in social psychology of ‘observer coding’. Face constituting theory used to study relational aspects of face and face-work often uses conversational analysis to explore interactional achievement in conversations (Arundale, 2010). This research project sought to apply various concepts of face to interview data to identify responses where their explanation could draw from encoding/decoding models of communication and relational views (Arundale, 2010; Kemper, 2011).

A second level of coding was conducted to create better sense of the various player approaches to interaction and types of interaction that are constructed and developed between players and officials (see Table 6.4). Motivation, intentions and methods of influence were grouped more closely to display common themes in player attitudes and motivations to officials and interaction with officials. Groupings of specific terms and meaning units representing type properties (or interpersonal styles) were given a thematic label to represent their higher-order typology, as articulated by interviewees’ responses. Occurrence or mentioning of type properties across interviews was also recorded (see Table 6.4).

6.7. Findings

RQ#1: How do players define situations and interactions with officials?

The sociological concept ‘defining the situation’, as Goffman uses it (1959, p. 21), refers to human processes of appraising and comprehending social situations in ways cultural values and norms are relevant in guiding interactions. The first research question explored ways that players perceive
and frame social experiences with officials, including context, expectations and self-identities in interactions. People bring a definition to situations that give interactions a type of coherence, enabling others to predict what is expected of them and what they might expect of others to inform appropriate ways of acting to elicit desired responses from others (Goffman, 1959).

Players from this study were found to define situations and interactions with officials in two common ways:

- as opportunities to stereotype officials and to project impressions to officials;
- as occasions to enhance, maintain or diminish conjoint relational patterns of ‘face’ with officials.

These were the most consistent themes found among player captain interviewees’ responses concerning ways they ‘define’ situations and interactions with sport officials, and are discussed in greater detail below.

The findings from interviews are thematised and articulated using a range of concepts, but particularly Goffman’s (1959; 1967) interpretation of W.I. Thomas’s (1927) ‘definition of the situation’ and relational readings and re-conceptualisations of Goffman’s work on ‘defining situations’ (Kemper, 2011), and ‘face’ in interaction (Arundale, 2010; Spencer-Oatey, 2007).
6.7.1. **Players define situations and interactions as opportunities to stereotype officials and to project impressions to officials**

Player captains in this study showed a spectrum of attitudes about how they define situations and interactions with sport officials. Players apply different labels to personal characteristics in officials. Interviewees frequently used descriptors about officials such as ‘weak’ (I1-4, I9, I11) or ‘overly friendly’ (I4-5, I8, I11), and said these type of officials were seen to be more easily influenced, while ‘firm or authoritarian’ (I2, I4, I9-11) or ‘confident authoritarian’ (I5) officials required a different interaction approach. Players can notice subtle displays in officials that they use to develop ‘person perceptions’ (Ainsworth, 2002) and formulate impressions about a person’s capacity to officiate (Dosseville et al., 2014). Interviewees in this study were found to define situations largely based on varied preference for different types of personal qualities in sports officials within game situations and interactions:

> Authoritarian for me would be stronger than the friendly guy, because I don’t want the referee to be my friend. I want the referee to do a good job. I think the friendly referee loses their way sometimes and doesn’t have a full focus on the game. They are focusing on a relationship with the player that can help, but their full focus is not on the rules of the game or administering the rules. (I5)

> That’s the way I love to play the game. That you walk onto the pitch and I know they are the referee, and you don’t speak back to them and a lot of them were getting spoken back to. Some say ‘don’t do it again, don’t speak back to me’ where as you get other referees, the moment you say anything, no matter it is good or bad, then no it is straight away with the yellow card, or straight away their attitude will change towards you. (I2)

Many interviewees said that, as captains, they generally seek collaborative and friendly relations and interactions with officials. Player captains seek diplomatic interactions with officials and appear as the ‘good captain’ (I6),
or display leadership qualities and communicate interpretations about decisions with self-control. This was said to be achieved through showing listening skills with officials, such that the message conveyed is ‘I see why you did that’ ‘Now, this is what I saw’ (I8):

They are there to assist the game and do need to show authority, but there needs to be a compromise and sharing of that with the captains. (I6)

Many captains spoke about a particular desire to convey positive impressions to officials and be seen as respectful and cooperative. There are some impressions that captains generally wish to project to officials, such as appearing ‘reasonable’ (I2), ‘neutral’ (I1-I2, I5), ‘knowledgeable’ (I5, I9), ‘calm’ (I1, I5-6, I9) and ‘in-control’ of self and players (I2, I5, I9). One professional-level player captain captured a common sentiment when he said that he wished to be seen as a ‘communication channel’ (I2) between the official and other players. Goffman (1959; 1967) said people try to present themselves in favourable ways to others for various purposes. In care settings, hospital patients use flattery with nurses as a way to ‘save face’ in long-term care relationships to maintain some degree of personal autonomy and self-esteem (Shatell, 2004).

Some player captains said that other players can be passive or emotional responders to officials, however other players will join in confrontational interactions with teammates towards officials if they perceive a fellow player’s safety is jeopardised or there are clear and obvious officiating errors. Some interviewees described a general acceptance of officials and almost agreeableness to officials’ actions and decisions. They defer to
officials in sport situations and accept that officials’ decisions are final and
direct greater focus to their own or their team’s performance:

> In most cases they [the official] are going to call what they call. You
can't change it. Focusing on your performance and what you have to
do out there is a better way I find. If I have to speak to the official, it
is usually because I'm concerned about the safety of one of my
players. (I2)

Players are sensitive to the personal qualities of officials. They enter games
with preconceived stereotypes about officials that are either supported or
altered by their experience, and in turn influence their motivations in
situations and interactions.

### 6.7.2. Players define situations and interactions as occasions to
enhance, maintain or diminish conjoint relational patterns of ‘face’ with
officials.

Interviewees frequently identified conflicting ideals about status or power
that contribute to ways players define the interaction situations with officials
(Goffman, 1959; Kemper, 2011). Players’ propensity to defer to officials is
greatly influenced by expectations of deference, and behavioural acts are
used to convey appreciation or respect, and *demeanour*, or manner of self-
presentation in interactions. These concepts are ritually important in
official-player interactions because they embody status through roles that
imply social ‘rules of conduct’ (Goffman, 1967). In interactor sport
environments, differences in rules of conduct for players and officials (what
Goffman described for baseball umpires ‘to desist from making improper
‘deals’’ (p.44) that could possibly give present bad impressions) can
sometimes breed conflict due to inappropriate deference and demeanour
cues.
Players generally define situations with some expectation to defer to officials and protect the ‘face’ of officials. But, as Goffman (1967) emphasises, people can experience moments in interaction when they perceive impersonal or un-ceremonial treatment, punctuated by disproportionate acts of deference that ‘draw attention to their subordinate status’ (p. 85). Most interviewees agreed it was undesirable for players to be dismissed or disregarded by officials in interactions, especially if there are not adequate reasons for such treatment. Sport rules assume that players will generally defer to officials as part of the nature of sporting activities, however players look unfavourably on people in the officiating role who poorly negotiate the power that comes with such status:

I appreciate a more level ground with an umpire. That, they are not coming from a position as if on a pedestal, while I’m not on a pedestal, so that I am able to be like, ‘this is what I thought happened’ and them as well. Understanding where I am coming from and that is why sometimes many players prefer an explanation to why they made that decision. (17)

A good one [official] will stand there and talk to a player and he won’t be rude and abrupt to them. He won’t speak down to them or anything like that, like ‘I’m here and you’re here’. He’ll try to understand what they’re doing. He’s on their level. (12)

Officials are expected to impress some authority as a basic function of their role but some players have difficulty in managing imposition of power or social control on them. Many players prefer officials who are able to speak with them in an appropriate manner and thus preserve their ‘face’ or social worth in a way that doesn’t contradict their position or status. Power discrepancies that are associated with the perceived accuracy of officiating decisions can often develop between players and officials and lead to
resistance towards official’s decisions and aggression between players (Faccenda et al., 2009).

Chapter 4 found that officiating development managers recognise that power discrepancies can develop between players and officials and have influence on the game. More contemporary relational readings of Goffman’s work (i.e., Arundale, 2006, 2010; Kemper, 2011) say that while Goffman addressed ‘status’ concepts in interaction, he neglected to integrate power dimensions of relationships and social interactions into his conceptual explanations. These newer understandings about influencing factors in one’s definition of the situation can help account for some of the frequent conflict and discomfort or dissatisfaction that emerges in sports interactions.

There is some officiating evidence using the views of players that ‘respectfulness’ is a highly preferred characteristic in interactions within a range of sport participation cultures (e.g., Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2011). Interviewees said that players hold officials to a high level of accountability for their professionalism and judge officials based on how they interact with players, emphasising responsiveness and skilfulness in socially constructing their authority:

It is soon as you start to talk down to people. You don’t have any control of dealings with that person or the situation. Those are two different things: taking control of how you speak to people in situations and taking control of the game. (I7)

I always got along with a referee that had control. Not just control of the game, but control of the conversation you have with them. That ref’ that talks down to you is no good to me, or the game I think. (I3)
Goffman (1963) explores the idea of ‘role distance’, or gap, between peoples’ role obligation and role performance that involves abilities of certain societal figures to bring together other aspects of role that project a wider repertoire of internalised attitudes. One interviewee described how some officials can feel compelled to use explicit impression cues in interactions to over-compensate if they perceive their status as an authority figure has been compromised:

I’ve seen some situations when a number of decisions go wrong, and it just keeps building and building up and the way an official will deal with it will throw a lot of authority all at once. Where as someone who has control of this will see this happen over the course and have control of it. (I9)

Every situation is different for players and influenced by their personality and game context, but importantly, players define situations based on developed ‘face’ exchanges and previous experiences with officials.

6.8. Findings

RQ#2: What are players’ motivations and intentions in interactions with officials?

Motivations and intentions of people in social interactions can be influenced by a range of individual, group and environmental factors (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goffman, 1967). In Goffman’s (1959) terms, people’s motivations and intentions in interactions are strongly influenced by their perceived definition of the situation. It can be understood that players and officials have different motivations in situations and interactions based on their goals and participation interests.
Two general themes emerged from interviews with player captains about players’ motivation and intentions in situations and interactions with officials, including:

- Players are motivated to influence a range of important game outcomes such as safety, fairness and victory for their team.
- Players are motivated to either avoid or directly disrupt officials’ ‘face’.

6.8.1. *Players are motivated to influence a range of important game outcomes such as safety, fairness and victory for their team*

Player captains said that while players can be emotional and react to officials and their decisions irrationally, they are generally strategic in their interactions with officials. Even the least strategically minded players tend to avoid unnecessarily antagonising officials. Some player captains said that many players adjust their interpersonal style or communication approach to general personality traits in officials. Among player captains it was common to adapt motivations and intentions to the particular perception they form of officials they are interacting with. For some players who counteract officials and subtly manage their approach with officials, they manage their personality by increasing praise and rapport. Players in this study also reported that more friendly interaction with officials can be an opportunity to influence officials and their decisions through suggestion, repetition or challenge:

> Picking up on an official's personality is important and knowing how to adapt to that. Some like to be the boss, and you make sure you let them feel that way. Others who are seen to be more friendly can kind of be manipulated in a way. I mean, we all know someone like that, right? You're careful about when to approach them, give a bit of
praise here and there, because when something doesn't go your way and you do complain or question them, they'll usually be there for you and a call goes your way (I2)

Certainly players think they can take advantage of a friendly referee, as opposed to one that doesn’t cop anything and just makes a decision and moves on. If you try to complain about it and they penalise you, or give you time off the field, then you know where you stand and the game can progress. (I8)

If you’re going to be my friend, if you’re refereeing me and you’re calling me by my name, I’ll probably talk to you more and try to influence your decisions a bit more (I5)

Insensitivity from officials in their communication of decisions was also reported to be a trigger for players’ performance ‘crises’ during games (Bar-Eli et al., 1995) and to breed conflict between players and towards officials. Players can be compelled to correct a balance in unequitable conditions by dealing with other players themselves, recognised as ‘enforcers’, if they perceive the official has not addressed issues of safety or fairness (Jones & Fleming, 2010). One interviewee reported reluctance to influence officials unless she feels that it is necessary to correct an imbalance in the official’s decisions:

The umpire wasn’t calling it, and this was a terrible thing for me to do, but I sort of yelled out, not directly, but I spoke aloud on purpose to another player, ‘Look at that goal attack, she’s got a hold every time!’ and then it went down to the other end the umpire called that after I said it’. My intentions of her seeing me upset and hearing it would be to ’even up the game’ (I10).

Many interviewees said that players will direct genuine complainants to officials if they feel that there is unfair treatment or if they have a strong sense of preserving some moral legitimacy.
Players are motivated to directly disrupt or avoid disrupting officials’ ‘face’

Other subtle ways to influence were to direct officials’ attention to particular aspects of the game, without conveying the impression of criticism, and the intermittent or selective use of praise. Such attempts by players were thought to be successful in persuading and shifting the focus of the official (avoiding direct attacks to the official’s ‘face’) to give their team decisions in their favour:

They want to be told they are doing a good job. Unless you are thick skinned, no one wants to be criticised. You either learn from your mistake or you think that person is just trying to get into my head. If you criticise someone enough and they change the way they do something because they don’t want to be criticised again then you have influenced the outcome or you’ve influence the way someone referees (I7)

If you think about the psychology of any person, if you mention something enough they’ll look at it. So to get into the head of the ref, you don’t have to tell them what’s going wrong, you just have to tell him to look at something (I4)

Player and official interactions involve different personalities, a range of officiating types and previous interpersonal experiences with one another. Many team captains interviewed in this study said that players can alter the way they interact to fit the type of officiating style they perceive, using flattery or praise, intermittent criticism, complaint, intimidation, being overly respectful or polite and positive. Some interviewees from netball and hockey said that players can ‘get it in their head’ (I2, I6) that if an official doesn’t like them it can influence the quality of interactions. Interviewees from rugby union and rugby league said familiarity with officials outside
games can be benefit the quality of in-game encounters and interaction or boundaries.

Some interviewees who participated at higher levels of competitive sport said that officials can develop reputations that often provide information for players about how they should adapt their play and interaction to fit the official. More often in this study, captains from soccer, rugby union, rugby league, basketball and netball discussed visible official displays in interactions, especially displays of weakness or uncertainty, that would influence their intentions and motivations in subsequent interactions.

Players can employ more subtle interaction techniques that avoid direct challenges of officials’ ‘face’. Some interviewees said that players can develop an increased awareness of the personality traits of officials, which influences when or when not they choose to interact:

I think that the ref that doubts themselves or is hesitant when you’re playing, and you approach them about a decision and you see she is doubting herself, I’d think ‘If I keep working on her maybe I can break her down to change her decision’. (I11)

Several interviewees indicated an awareness of needing to be perceived as reasonable or respectful. They emphasised the importance of being selective about what issues to approach officials with, because a good relationship with officials is useful when managing decisions against their team:

You gotta sort of pick your battles about what to talk to the referee about. You want to avoid being seen as a nuisance to the referee about something that really isn’t important. You’ll never really get them on your side. If there is an area of the game you are getting penalised for repeatedly, that might be where you take the time to go to the referee (I3)

You have to be selective when you interact with the umpire: the times when you go up to them and ask what for? A lot of people just
Players in this study notice that other players are deliberately attempting to influence officials and decisions, and see little investment in doing so, as it is viewed as unproductive. Olson and Johnson (1991) suggest individual differences in self-presentation styles of people, including ‘flexible’ and ‘rigid’ impression manager orientations. Flexible types are said to be motivated to present socially desirable selves that might not be consistent with views of their ‘actual selves’, while rigid types have little interest in social desirability. Players in this study showed a variety of rigid and flexible interests in interaction with officials. Some are motivated to use continuous and explicit challenge with officials, with limited concern for referee face or how they are being perceived, while others are more selective and look to develop socially desirable impressions in the minds of officials.

The interactions between officials and players are complex, and influences and manifestations can be both distinct and subtle. Goffman’s (1959) notion of the ‘backstage’ as the space where individuals are not being evaluated by an audience, and free from the judgement and interpretations of others, is useful for understanding some of the complexity. The backstage enables one to prepare ‘face-work’ impressions for future encounters, to ensure a presentation of self remains intact, and that one’s identity does not become discredited or stigmatised (Goffman, 1959; 1967). Some interviewees described interpretations of officials in ‘front stage’ interactions that were influenced by ‘back stage’ dialogue between players:
You can tell it from the coin toss. It’s their body language and the way they speak to you. Like you just think to yourself, ‘Wow, what is this guy doing here today?’, and as a captain, I’ll go back to my teammates and say, ‘Look, be aware, I don’t think this guy is going to be real good today’. Usually, if my teammates take on the advice, they’ll change the way they play and how they speak with the guy over the game’ (17).

More recent adaptations of Goffman’s (1959) front stage-backstage study ways sport coaches develop a ‘leadership’ stance with players through identity shaping, face exchanges (Wilson, 2013). These ideas hold usefulness for understanding ways ‘stances’ are developed by officials with players and in interactions.

6.9. Findings

RQ#3: How do players differ in the ways they attempt to influence officials?

A final research question in understanding players’ perspectives of situations and interactions with sport officials addressed ways that players influence sport officials. The interviews revealed a spectrum of approaches that players use to influence officials through interactions and game encounters. However, two main themes emerged from player interviews about how players differ in the ways they attempt to influence officials that include:

- Players differ in ways and extent they attempt to influence officials, based on degrees of directness, subtlety, planning and spontaneity.
- Players differ in ways and extent they attempt to influence officials, based on characteristics of official and players, and game and other aspects of context.
6.9.1. **Players differ in their use of directness, subtlety, planning and spontaneity**

Interviewees said that players can influence officials through a range of deliberate, planned, opportunistic or unconscious emotional responses and interpersonal strategies. Some players and teams use subtle and indirect behaviours, while others use more confronting approaches, applying pressure by overwhelming or surrounding officials through infringing personal space. Players actively influence officials, and by implication their decisions, by openly challenging them as well as through less direct means, such as exhibiting socially desirable personality traits:

> I can influence referee decisions by being friendly with them and just praising at the right time, and give criticism when they sort of listen to you. Certainly I think I have influenced the way a referee handles the game at certain stages, not the whole game, but it is easily done, they are human beings really aren’t they? (I5)

> As a captain, I remember one referee in grand finals. He would come up to me because I gave him a lot of praise. Then, I gave him one criticism and said, ‘I think you need to work on this because you miss that call a lot’, and I found he was seeking my guidance after the game to find out how I thought he refereed different things like that. Then I could start putting more of an opinion across, and if he was listening to it, I don’t know how much, but why he would come across to me to ask how he did kind of meant I had his ear. (I9)

Officiating research finds players can influence officials’ perceptions and decision making through ‘simulation’ behaviours (Morris & Lewis, 2010) and ‘vocalisations’ (Lex, Pizzera, Kurtes, & Schack, 2015; Pizzera et al., 2014). Interviewees often shared examples of indirect methods players use to influence officials, such as redirecting attention, adapted interaction and through collaborative and friendly intention. A frequently described type of overt behaviour used by players was said to be complaining or questioning (I2, I4-I7, I9, I11). Questioning officials is a type of player behaviour that
has different self- and other interests, such as gaining clarity about interpretations, rattling or disrupting officials, seeking equitable treatment, or for more strategic motives. One interviewee said that when officials appear to be facilitating the continuity of game play by providing a ‘running commentary’ (I6), they lessen the amount of questioning from players. Challenging and questioning the official is sometimes used to gain advantage because it delays the game or ‘buys time’:

Sometimes just asking questions can allow your team to get set-up; it’s a tactical thing. While the official is busy explaining some law to you, your guys are already onside (I3)

Players can use complaints to pressure officials or attempt to get them to change decisions to a less severe infraction to their team. The complaining player can genuinely feel complaints, but they can also be manufactured to influence future decisions or reduce the punishment:

They probably know what the umpire has called is correct, but are trying to manipulate them [the referee] to doubt themself, to change their behaviour so it suits them better; a different type of penalty or something that may benefit them [the player/team]. (I5)

Goffman (1959) emphasised embarrassment and alienation in interactions as a motivator for impression management. Players can often make visible their attitude to refereeing decisions that can instil doubt in officials and make obvious their displeasure or frustration with officials and decisions. Some interviewees described ways players and other players react or respond to officials, in what Goffman describes as dramatic realisation when they are reprimanded by officials:

Players obviously think often that they have done nothing wrong. By acting bewildered and shocked to the referee, they are putting doubt in their mind. (I5)
Players can use intimidation or constant verbalisation to pressure officials. Many interviewees, particularly at lower amateur and grassroots levels, said players frequently attempt to ‘chip away’ (I3, I4, I9) at officials, and ‘if you say something enough they’ll notice it’ (I4). Interviewees mention some continuous and indirect strategies that players use to indirectly cause officials to doubt their abilities:

I think that the ref that appears to be doubting themselves, or is hesitant when you’re playing, and you approach them about a decision and you see she is doubting herself, I'd think ‘If I keep working on her maybe I can break her down to change her decision’. (I11)

A player can influence an official through intimidation and influence through being positive with the referee. But, I think the player that intimidates and doesn't get penalized for intimidating can have more of an effect on the official than someone who respects them and addresses them more positively.(I8)

This section has shown that players differ in the manner of their attempts to influence officials, relatedly, the next section shows that influence approach also changes according to context.

6.9.2. Players differ in the ways they attempt to influence officials based on characteristics of the official and players, and game and other aspects of context

As described earlier, being seen as overly friendly or excessively authoritarian can suggest clues to players that influence the approach they take in subsequent interactions with officials. Players can attempt to influence the impressions that referees form of them, and consequences of their decisions. Players perceive that they are being observed by officials
and manage impressions to represent themselves in certain ways to officials, and even involve other teammates in coordinated communication:

I’ll be standing here (points to himself) and you’re the ref, and my half back is here (points beside him), and he’ll go to me, ‘[Nickname], can you tell the ref ‘this and that’...’ you know what I mean?! It isn’t to me, it is really to him [the official]. You know. So, then I’ll go to the ref and he’ll go ‘yeah I heard him’ bla bla. I reckon a lot of the time refs just ignore those people, they don’t want to hear it, they’ve made a decision. They have to have a bit of a thick skin when they’re ref’ing. (I4)

Arundale’s (2010) advancements in understanding how people co-constitute face and face-work through relational aspects of interactions are relevant here. It considers the ways face is created in particular communication contexts as a consequence and manifestation of social relationships, building on traditional views of ‘face’ as a personal-attribute, ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967). Using relational explanations of ways face is co-constructed in interactions, strategic embarrassment is a feature of business interactions in which an individual attempts to discomfort another by topicalising unmet expectations, disguised by a mild reproach or complaint (Chang & Haugh, 2011). Players use strategic embarrassment in interactions and encounters with officials as a way to undermine or discredit their performance and competence to officiate:

I’ve seen some players try to embarrass an umpire. It is a real small thing, but they make it appear to other players that the umpire has been inconsistent in past game calls or try to catch them out for something they said. It is a bit underhanded I guess, but it works to mess with some umpires where they think twice the next time they have to decide on something. (I10)

People can have different reasons to complain, which are influenced by both personal and situational factors. A study of complaint behaviour in customer
service found the primary determinants of complaints were customers’ degree of dissatisfaction, attitudes towards complaining, importance of the situation and probability of success (Velázquez et al., 2006). Players differ in their intention to argue officiating decisions according to nationality, age and competitive level (Simmons, 2008). Interviewees in this study said some players are natural complainers and have a reputation for complaining, while others saw complaining as one means for players to intimidate and assert dominance over officials:

Players can influence officials through pressure, just continual pressure. If the referee doesn’t penalise a player for how you speak to them, or try to intimidate them, you got the referee bluffed. (I3)

A player can influence an official through intimidation and influence through being positive with the referee. But, I think the player that intimidates and doesn’t get penalised for intimidating can have more of an effect on the official than someone who respects them and addresses them more positively. (I8)

Officials can be unaware of (or oblivious to) the information that players draw about them (the officials), and ways players can use such information to influence officials’ decisions to gain an advantage. One of Goffman’s (1969) interests was strategic (game-like or calculative) aspects of human encounters. He used a game-analytic metaphor as a way of describing information management in social interactions and suggests concepts of ‘game observation’ that help explain ‘the individual’s capacity to acquire, reveal and conceal information through social interaction’ (Goffman, 1969, p. 4). Goffman (1969) saw ‘the game’ as not starting until the individual who impresses the ‘unwitting move’ (behaviour not intended for the assessment an ‘observer’ might be making of it; Goffman, 1969) comes to recognise or becomes aware of another’s use of such information. It assumes that information is unwittingly given off by someone, but
interpreted by another as information still concealed or yet to be revealed (Goffman, 1969). Officials can be unaware of the impressions they project and types of information that players develop of them.

Impression management is considered by Goffman to be strategic when it is informed by an assessment of others’ impressions and the use of such information to choose a particular course of action that involves intrinsic payoffs. Rather than a cynical outlook on human nature and ‘manipulative’ motives of people in interactions, Goffman was interested in drawing attention to trivial aspects of social relationships that differ depending on circumstances (and people involved) and explain how we sometimes act less as products of social systems than as individuals who often are ‘working the system’ to our own ends. This is a useful way to frame and interpret player-official interactions in a competitive sport environment, as players and officials have different invested interests and seek diverging personal, social and role-related goals or outcomes.

This camouflage or concealment in interactions can manifest covertly or through explicit expression. Players often react to game situations and officiating decisions in ways that draw attention or attempt to discredit an official’s performance. This can manifest in different verbal and non-verbal expression. Players also recognise other players’ strategic attempts to act in intimidating or threatening ways with officials. However players are also conscious of the advantage of not coming across to officials in these ways, as it can influence the outcomes they seek. Some interviewees preferred less interaction and more distance from officials. Some players can aim to
provoke officials to disrupt them, to create the impression of being difficult. The aim can be to irritate or cause annoyance in officials. This can be expressed indirectly or deliberately:

Sometimes I see players that walk away and say something indirect to officials, it isn’t aimed at them but it is aimed at them, you know what I mean? It is to ‘get a bite out of them. (I9)

Sometimes influence starts before the game and without the opponent’s knowledge. Some interviewees at higher performance levels said that players with big reputations, such as national representatives, can have a disproportionate influence on officials. Officials listen more carefully to, and often find it harder to resist the exhortations and demands of high status players. Interviewees who played at higher levels said that making officials aware of the reputation of a particular player or ‘style’ of team play can be an effective way to influence officiating.

Some officiating research categorises officiating across sports based on the degree of interaction with players and number of decision cues (Plessner & MacMahon, 2013) and proximity to players (Dosseville et al., 2014). Some interviewees from netball (I6, I7) and hockey (I2) sports felt that there is often less interaction with officials than in other sports that bring different expectations and motivations. It was also clear that there are many similarities in the nature of interactions across different sports. In most sports, players said interactions were an opportunity to manipulate or influence officials in their direction, especially if they perceive weakness in an official’s character or role work. Differences are in part due to the rules and conventions of different sports, and also in part to the preferences and beliefs of individual players and teams.
6.10. **Summary of findings, typology of players, discussion and implications**

This chapter reported a video elicitation study with Australian player captains from different interactor sports and levels of play. It particularly sought to understand players’ motivations and intentions in interactions and ways they attempt to influence officials. The study provides new insights into player differences in interactions with officials, building on previous research that has assumed players and often contexts to be homogeneous, and communication as ‘one-way’ (Dosseville et al., 2014; Simmons, 2010).

Dramaturgical sociology (Goffman, 1959, 1967) provides a useful framework of concepts and vocabulary for building understanding about players’ attitudes to communication and interaction with sport officials. The team captains interviewed all attend to what they perceive to be their preferences and common characteristics in officials, as part of what Goffman (1959) would describe as their ‘definition of the situation’. This influences, implicitly and in turn, the ‘line’ people bring and respond to in interaction. Players modify their approach according to their perceptions of the official they are interacting with and ‘social occasion’ (Goffman, 1963) or situation. Players show different preferences in the display of authority in officials, and in ways they formulate expectations and anticipate interactions from these developed impressions. This research found that players do behave irrationally in the heat of the moment, but mostly they are strategic in their interactions with officials, at least to the point of some degree of impression management. Even the least strategically minded players tend to avoid unnecessarily antagonising officials. This can better inform officials
about situational approaches that may be more useful with players and fit the interaction or encounter before them.

The ways player captains define situations and perceive how other players (and themselves) are motivated in interactions, or attempt to influence officials, were abstracted into common themes and presented as player interaction types (See Table 6.5). The propensity for this project to categorise and typologise is a departure from Goffman’s approach, and reflects more on the constructivist influences and researcher’s own preferences. In summarising themes arising from aspects of situation definition, motivation in interaction, and influence style, what emerged was themes that closely relate to player types. Along with main themes (player types) found, for each player type there were groupings of sub-themes (type properties or interpersonal style) that emerged, often related to a player type. The table is included somewhat reluctantly here because of the possibility of shifting officials’ attention from needs of situation in interaction onto the player. The intention is not to shift responsibility for interaction disproportionately into players, that would be unhelpful. The aim of the player types and interaction styles suggested in table 6.5 is not to shift responsibility, nor to account for all player behaviours, stereotypes and interpersonal communication, but rather to identify some common motivational and attitudinal attribute sets for players that may be recognisable and useful to officials in ‘interactor’ officiating sports.
The resultant motivations and methods of influence were conceived to be interconnected and flexible in their expression, illustrating that any player could exist and shift between such typologies. Each player type is first defined below:

- ‘**Acceptor**’ – abides by official decisions almost all the time and without question;
- ‘**Occasional challenger**’ – sometimes openly rejects or questions official decisions perceived as incorrect or unfair. More often occurs with significant decision, probability of challenge success, or perception of official misjudgement;
- ‘**Emotional responder**’ – sometimes reacts irrationally and with angered displays to decisions and incidents (sometimes leading to increased interaction with officials);
- ‘**Continuous opportunist**’ – frequently aims to obtain advantage for self or team through interactions that challenge or otherwise disrupt officials.

The following table shows each of these typologies along with their more common interpersonal properties of player communication style, based on the frequency it was raised or described by interviewees.
Table 6.5. Player types and interaction with officials (n=11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player type (higher-order theme)</th>
<th>Property or interpersonal style (lower-order theme)</th>
<th>Property definition</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptor</td>
<td>Game focused</td>
<td>More game focused than official focused.</td>
<td>I3, I5, I9, I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Driven to relate constructively and collaborate with officials.</td>
<td>I1, I3, I6, I9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resigned</td>
<td>Considers challenge unlikely to be successful, maybe counterproductive.</td>
<td>I2, I7, I11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional Challenger</td>
<td>Contextually strategic</td>
<td>Challenges based on perception of importance of situation, or likelihood of success.</td>
<td>I1, I2, I4, I6-I9, I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distracting</td>
<td>Attempts to divert official’s attention to other game events.</td>
<td>I3, I5, I7-I9, I11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-complimentary</td>
<td>Promotes positive impressions to seek favouritism, or make challenge appear as collaboration.</td>
<td>I2, I6, I9, I11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wastes time</td>
<td>Questions officials in order to disrupt game progression.</td>
<td>I5, I7, I8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Responder</td>
<td>Angry (or frustrated)</td>
<td>Reacts to decisions or incidents with negative emotional displays.</td>
<td>I1, I4-I6, I8, I9, I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrational</td>
<td>Unreasonable, or lacks attention to information provided, and is unable to make logical or feasible judgments.</td>
<td>I2, I4, I9, I11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disrupting</td>
<td>Creates disorder or interrupts game progress through emotional displays.</td>
<td>I4, I5, I8, I9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morally sensitive</td>
<td>Heightened sensitivity to fairness and equality of treatment provided by the official.</td>
<td>I3, I6, I10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Opportunistic</td>
<td>Argumentative</td>
<td>Routinely complains or expresses dissatisfaction.</td>
<td>I2-15, I7, I9-I11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonising</td>
<td>Driven to irritate officials through displays of contrariness or uncooperative behaviours.</td>
<td>I2, I4-I6, I8, I9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidating</td>
<td>Uses verbal or non-verbal tactics to induce fear or reduce confidence of officials.</td>
<td>I3, I4, I9, I11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejects authority</td>
<td>Does not accept or otherwise legitimise official’s authority and decisions.</td>
<td>I2-I4, I7, I9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Player types are found to range across acceptance of whatever the official decides, selective challenge and questioning of officials, emotional responses and angry reactions to decisions and incidents and, finally, players who are opportunists seeking to gain advantage by challenging or upsetting officials. It is important to remember that interaction is contextual. Players both deliberately and unconsciously use strategies such as argument or complaining, criticism, challenge, intimidation, questioning and flattery or praise to influence officials. Some players use their interactions with officials to influence those officials, others attempt to ensure that officials are ‘even-handed’, at least to the point of not favouring their opponents. While some do not attempt to influence officials’ decisions at all. Some interviewees referred to a sense of moral legitimacy concerning the equitability of conditions provided by officials.

This player-derived information can help officials to become more conscious of the types of people and interactions they might encounter in competitive interactor sport environments (and, similarly, other officiating environments). Selected works of Goffman’s ethnographic research help to reveal much about the micro-world of social interaction and provide an interpretive lens for understanding differences in players’ interaction with officials. Players and officials use face-work to enable each other to move through interactions and matches. Typically, players defer to officials in interactions, and both employ demeanour(s) they deem appropriate to their encounters. Goffman’s concepts are tools for typifying patterns in players’ behaviour and interaction with officials. Further, they provide a language for making more visible the subtle and less observable aspects of player-
official interactions, and some guidance for accommodating or managing ‘face’. The utility of such information, which helps to inform practitioner understandings of domain-specific interaction situations encountered in medical (Barton, 2004; Shattell, 2004), criminal justice (Bruce, 2013) and sport settings (Wilson, 2013) is emphasised elsewhere. Understanding such intentions and motives of others in interactions can help to inform adaptive and appropriate communicative expression to others.

Players’ unspoken beliefs and attitudes presented in this chapter provide considerably greater insight for interaction than previous studies, which have often presented players superficially and as if they are heterogeneous. Insights detailed above about player differences are useful for officiating communication and interaction education and training, specifically to help officials monitor, recognise, anticipate, interpret and manage the sport situations and interactions they encounter. Police training addresses officer attitudes and comprehension of criminal behaviour as *schema*, or the beliefs and mindset that guide interpretation and use of social information including goals and motivations in social settings (Blagden, 2012). Sport officials can develop more sophisticated ‘schema’ about player behaviour and interaction, as their communication relies on the ability to make sense of others’ actions and intentions to interact in more effective or impactful ways. Such training may focus on improving observation and interpretive skills for social cues, and reflexivity to different types of encounters with players in relation to game context. Burleson (2007) suggests that communication training should address the ‘unspoken’ in interactions. Situation monitoring and skilled interaction (see Chapter 4) involves
observing and interpreting emotional, behavioural and personality cues in players. This is integral to skilled communication in sport officiating.
CHAPTER 7

Officiating ‘face-work’: Adapting for the ‘unspoken’

Study 3

7.1. Introduction

This chapter details a video elicitation study conducted with Australian ‘interactor’ sport officials (see MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). The study explored relational and interactional complexities in player-sport official encounters and exchanges. In Study 1, I chose to first enter the practice field to understand officiating development stakeholders’ and performance coaches’ conceptualisations of sport official communication. Findings from Study 1 led the project to a concerted focus on communication aspects of officiating that involve:

- monitoring and interpreting players and sport situations;
- self-presentational communication in interaction; and
- skilful or adaptive types of communication (see Chapter 4).

Interaction elements of officiating communication therefore became the focus of Study 2, in which player captains across different interactor sports participated in video elicitation interviews to understand ways in which players define and are motivated in interaction situations with officials.
Players were found to define interaction situations with officials by a range of stereotyping and ‘self’ serving ways that involve different relational dynamics and interests, including the use of strategic interactions to influence officials. Players’ perspectives gathered in Study 2 gave insight into complexities in the ‘lines’ of interaction (Goffman, 1959; 1967) and relational patterns of ‘face’ (Arundale, 2010; Kemper, 2011) that contribute across player-official interactions.

For Study 3 the aim was to explore ways that officials, across the same interactor sports used in Study 2, define and are motivated in sport situations with players, including how officials adapt their communication in interactions with players. It was anticipated that this study of officials would help further increase understanding about ways interactions are co-constructed between players and officials.

These dimensions of officiating interactions were treated separately to isolate perceptual-judgement (defining the situation) and socio-emotional (motivation) aspects of officiating communication. However the ways officials define situations are effectively bound with motivations they develop and maintain in situations and interactions with players. The study aimed to provide insight into relational and interactional properties in officiating interactions, and ways officials construct attitudes of acceptance, cooperation and balance (or imbalance) in power relations with players.
With these research interests in mind, three research questions were posed for the study:

**RQ#1**  
*How do officials define situations and interactions with players?*

**RQ#2**  
*What are officials’ motivations in interactions with players?*

**RQ#3**  
*What are ways that officials adapt their communication to different situations and interactions with players?*

Research questions #1 and #2 were similar for both Study 2 and Study 3. Study 3 modified the questioning because it dealt with ways officials adapt themselves to players and situations.

Adaptation is defined here as both deliberate and unintentional ways officials modify or alter their communication and actions to situations and interactions. Adaptation considers deliberate adjustments to people and situations, while also considering more passive ways that officials might accommodate or collaborate with players in order to develop a working relationship. Goffman’s (1967) sociological perspective suggests ritual accommodation in face-to-face behaviour involves an empathy and introspection in interactions in order to preserve social order and systems of conduct. This definition presumes adaptation to be a passive process in interactions.

Communication accommodation theory suggests that officials’ accommodation includes regulation of their own speech, vocal patterns and gestures to accommodate to others (Giles et al., 1991; Slack et al., 2013).
One officiating model that defines accommodation refers to it as a cooperative and less-assertive communication style to manage conflict situations (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). The term ‘adapt’ was used as an overarching concept to account for a broad range of adaptive, accommodative and acclimation processes involved in officiating communication in situations and interactions.

7.2. Criteria

The nature of the study was an exploration across interactor sports and levels. It didn’t seek complete or equal representation or generalisation, but aimed to explore a cross-section sample by sport, gender and playing level. The criteria used to select officiating participants paralleled the criteria for selection of players in Study 2, insofar as the research sought officiating participants from the same range of interactor sports and from different levels of play.

Main selection criteria for including sport official study participants were:

- inclusion of officiating views from different ‘interactor’ sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008);
- a minimum of three years/seasons of officiating experience;
- a representation of both male and female sport officials.

Including a range of officials from different sports aimed to provide a greater breadth of insights into communication and interaction. Three was considered sufficient experience for participants to be able to give informed comments on player-sport official interactions, while to
would be expected that selection of officials involve participants with a different experience levels.

Prior to the involvement of any study participants, ethical clearance was first sought through the Ethics in Human Research Committee at the researcher’s home institution (Charles Sturt University). Once ethical clearance was given (under protocol 112-2012-13-revised), the researcher began recruitment of study participants and provided information about ethical rights involved in participation (discussed in the following sections).

7.3. Recruitment

Officials were recruited using a variety of strategies that were consistent with the recruitment of player participants in Study 2.

Some officials were recruited based on their accessibility to the researcher’s home institution as a convenience sampling approach. These officials were mostly community-level or amateur/state-level in soccer, rugby union and basketball.

As with the player study in this project, snowball sampling relied on participant referrals among people within a similar practice field (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). In some cases, direct contact was made with officials through their officiating associations, while in other cases, participants assisted researchers by facilitating contact with other officials, either within their sport or in a different sport.
50% of the participants (n=7) were recruited purposively from an officiating training group of advancing development, sub-elite, and elite levels. These officials were recruited through the National Officiating Scholarship Program (NOS), governed by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). The NOS is a high-performance officiating development academy that involves officials from interactor sports who adjudicate state/amateur and semi-professional levels across Australia, with some having international officiating experience. All measures were taken by the researcher to ensure confidentiality with a closely-engaged officiating group. Before interviews informed consent were distributed in advance to inform sport officials about the nature of their participation and to assure confidentiality for themselves, and their sport organisation. The NOS provided access to officials, but ultimately it was the choice of the officiating scholars to participate. The seven officials were chosen based on meeting the study’s criteria and interest to participate. Two ‘interactor’ officials were excluded based on poor interview recordings and number of officials representing their sport in the sample.

Participation was requested prior to their involvement in a program workshop at the Australian Institute for Sport (Canberra, New South Wales) in November 2014. Recruitment occurred at a training workshop when all the officials would be available. The researcher was introduced to the group by project advisors and a letter of information was distributed. Those interested setup block time to be involved in an interview with the researcher, and adjusted to the activities and education sessions over the training workshop. All participants were advised that they could chose
either to participate or not and this would not influence their current position in the NOS program.

The other 50% of officials involved in the study were recruited by availability to the researcher’s home institutions and mainly consisted of novice and development interactor officials. Sports and gender were chosen based on sample needs not met by the series of NOS interviews. Officials were contacted by email or telephone to request participation and were forward a letter of information on the details of the research, informed consent to protect anonymity.

7.4. Sample
Study participants were 14 currently active interactor sport officials. Officials represented various competitive levels and a range of interactor sport settings. Officials were from hockey (n=2), soccer (n=2), rugby union (n=2), netball (n=2), Australian rules football (n=2), rugby league (n=2) and basketball (n=2) sports. Half of the participants (n=7) were currently functioning at novice (community, club-level) and development (regional, state competition) levels (see MacMahon et al., 2014). The remaining study participants (n=7) were currently officiating at development to sub-elite (amateur, semi-professional) in Australia to elite fixtures world championships or international competitions.

The sample included male (n=8) and female officials (n=6) with a mean age of 29.4 years. All officials had a minimum of three years experience as a sport official, with a maximum of 21 years of officiating experience in their sport) with a mean of 8.5 years officiating experience. At their current,
active competitive level, officials had a minimum of two years experience (with a maximum of 10 years). Some had occupied other officiating roles before (i.e., assistant referee, technical staff) and others had some general playing experience in their sport. Four officials said they had entered officiating through a volunteer capacity.

Officials were spread across different geographical regions of Australia including New South Wales (n=4), Queensland (n=3), Victoria (n=2), South Australia (n=2), and Western Australia (n=1). Table 7.1 profiles all interviewees involved in this study.

Table 7.1. Interviewees’ demographic profiles (Study 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Official experience (year/seasons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I1</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Sub-elite</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I3</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I4</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5</td>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I6</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7</td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I8</td>
<td>Rugby League</td>
<td>Elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I9</td>
<td>Rugby Union</td>
<td>Sub-elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I10</td>
<td>Rugby League</td>
<td>Novice</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I11</td>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I12</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Sub-elite</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I13</td>
<td>Australian Rules Football</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I14</td>
<td>Australian Rules Football</td>
<td>Sub-Elite</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5. Interviews

The interview strategy used with sport officials was similar to that used with player captains in Study 2. Video elicitation within semi-structured interviews (e.g., Heath, Luff, & Svensson, 2007; Henry & Fetters, 2012)
was used: during the interviews sport officials were shown video vignettes of sport situations and interactions involving players and officials.

Video elicitation is a technique often used in training health practitioners to stimulate thought and discussion about practitioners’ appraisals, beliefs, and emotions attached to their consultation experience with patients (Henry & Fetters, 2012). For the purposes of interviewing sport officials, a video elicitation technique was adapted using sport examples of player-official interactions as stimulus, instead of actual video footage of the interviewee. The purpose of using this research method was to provide participants with video stimuli of familiar or typical examples of sport and player-official interaction situations.

The video interactions were sampled from different interactor sports including soccer, rugby union, rugby league, basketball, netball and hockey (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). All interviewees said they were generally familiar with all sports used in the vignettes. The set of video clips used with players in Study 2 was again used with officials in Study 3. More information on the selection criteria for video vignettes can be found in Appendix 3. Video clips were from different sports and levels including elite (e.g., Olympics, International Rugby Union, FIFA World Cup), professional sport (e.g., European Hockey League, English Football Premiership) and semi-professional or club/amateur levels (state, district, community). Recordings were collected from an online public video forum (www.youtube.com). 20 vignettes were used in all, with 15 shorter vignettes ranging from 3-15 seconds, and 5 vignettes ranging from 1-2 minutes (total
approximate running time = 7 minutes) and were arranged to progress interviews with a particular rationale. Appendix C illustrates how the video elicitation interviews were conducted, including lines of questioning, video vignette length and selection criteria (**digital versions of video vignettes are available on request to examiners).

I was cognisant to follow established procedures for enhancing the trustworthiness of the study and data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). First, I was involved in a series of meetings with supervisors which involved second-opinion, discussion and reaching a consensus on raw-data and general themes. Second, member-checking procedures were undertaken to ensure accuracy of the findings. Each participant received an outline of the findings by email and was asked to provide general feedback to the researcher (all but four officials were able to be reached). The amendments returned were generally minor, participants deemed that the findings accurately represented different ways the officials define and are motivated in interaction situations with players, and ways they adapt themselves to players and situations.
Table 7.2. Linking research questions with theory and interview questioning (Study 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Theme to explore (not in the interview)</th>
<th>Question to ask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **How do officials define situations and interactions with players?** | **Dramaturgical sociology concepts**  
  - definition of the situation  
  (Goffman, 1959 through Thomas, 1927; Kemper, 2011)  
  See pg. 194  
  - front stage-back stage  
  (Goffman, 1959)  
  See pg. 197 | What is going on here in this interaction? *(video)*  
What were you noticing about the approaches officials were taking within interactions? *(video)*  
What particular messages are the player and official trying to send each other in this situation? *(video)*  
What are likely future consequences of similar types of interaction for both the player and official? *(video)* |
**What are officials’ motivations in interactions with players?**

**Dramaturgical sociology concepts**
- working consensus (Goffman, 1959)
  
  See pg. 195

**‘Face’ concepts**
- positive and negative face
  
  (Brown & Levinson, 1987)
  
  See pg. 209

- quality & identity face
  
  (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2007)
  
  See pg. 509

- connectedness & separateness
  
  (Arundale, 2006; 2010)
  
  See pg. 212

**Constructivist view of communication skill**
- social perception & message production (Burleson, 2007)
  
  See pg. 70 & 73

**In what ways do players respond or react to different officiating types/styles?**

- What is the official trying to achieve in this interaction considering the situation? *(video)*

- What are your impressions of the officials’ actions to this point? *(video)*

- What might the official here being trying to accomplish in this situation *(video)*

- What prior events might have happened that drove the official to act in that way? *(video)*

- What do you think was going on in the mind of the official in that situation? *(video)*

- What overarching values mostly motivate your communication with players?

- What impressions do you want players to form of you?

- What are officials seeking to accomplish in most interactions with players?

- What particular ways can officials interact with players to encourage cooperation and acceptance in their decisions, or authority?
| What are ways that officials adapt their communication to different situations and interactions with players? | **Dramaturgical sociology concepts**  
- impression management  
  (Goffman, 1959)  
  See pg. 199  
- front stage-back stage  
  (Goffman, 1959)  
  See pg. 197  
- face-work (Goffman, 1967)  
  See pg. 203  
- strategic interaction and ‘control moves’ (Goffman, 1969)  
  See pg. 202  

| ‘Face’ concepts  
- positive and negative personal face  
  (Brown & Levinson, 1987)  
  See pg. 209  
- quality & identity face  
  (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2007)  
  See pg. 209  
- connectedness & separateness relational face  
  (Arundale, 2006; 2010)  
  See pg. 212  |

| Constructivist view of communication skill  
- message reception & message production (Burleson, 2007)  
  See pg. 73 & 72 |

| What are different ways that officials might react or respond to players in similar situations that you’ve seen in your sport? (video)  
How well do you think this official adapted to the situation? (video)  
How would you describe your interaction approach with players?  
What are ways you adapt your communication approach to players and situations? What cues or signs do you use to adjust your approach?  
What game context factors influence the approach you take with players?  
What are some common responses of players to different officiating styles?  
Are there certain types of communication you think are more or less effective with certain players? |
7.6. **Analysis**

The study’s research questions were used to provide overall structure for the organisation and categorisation of data. The theoretical concepts of Goffman (1959, 1967) and Burleson (2007) created an analytical framework to interpret and guide reporting of interview data. This was achieved with a multiple-phase data-verification process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It involved, first, gaining familiarity with the data by reading and rereading each interview transcript. Next, transcriptions were examined for words, phrases, descriptions and examples that indicated officials’ definition of situations, motivations and intentions in interactions, and ways officials adapt their communication in interactions. These fragments were coded with a meaning label and then grouped and thematised manually using an Excel spreadsheet (Table 7.3). Segmentation and charting of meaning units as answers to each research question were then organised and discussed as narrative responses (Patton, 2002) and supported by previous research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quotes and examples from interviews are used to help communicate the findings.
### Table 7.3. Example of coded transcript (sport official)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript (utterances)</th>
<th>In vivo (words used)</th>
<th>Open codes (meaning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q. In terms of when interactions with players occur, what do you find are ways positive and negative interactions are built?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of my approach, [pause] so during the game, obviously working on how accurate I can possibly be would be the first step. The second step is I try to be quite calm, sort of in my communication with players. I find that if I am aroused, in my communication, I find they come back, just even more where it sort of escalates. Yeah I guess sort of just trying to remain calm, and I guess try to be a little bit empathetic, listening to what they are actually trying to say. Listen to what they are trying to say and tell them why or why not they can do something. Then if it gets to a point where we can’t reach an agreement, we will just agree to disagree, and then move on. So we try together, “You say your bit, I’ll say my bit”, and if we don’t agree we will agree to disagree. We might talk about it later, but try to</td>
<td>Being accurate in decision making is a fundamental to building positive interactions with players</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approach working on how accurate I can possibly be</td>
<td>Controlling emotions and arousal levels – players respond with high emotion as a response to official’s emotional demeanour. Keeping calm is helpful to avoid escalation of emotional responses in players. <em>message production</em>, <em>fairness heuristics</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>calm [...] in my communication with players if I am aroused, in my communication, [...] they come back, even just more sort of escalates remain calm be a little bit empathetic listening to what they are actually trying to say tell them why or why not they can do something we can’t reach an agreement, we will just agree to disagree</td>
<td>Allowing players to feel they are given a voice, or heard. Listening and being empathetic with players, then responding and passing on officials view. ‘<em>voice</em>’ effect*, <em>connectedness (face)</em>, <em>protecting face</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we might talk about it later, but try to</td>
<td>If player acceptance can’t be reached official should move game activities on and plan a later interaction. Useful to give brief opportunities for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.11.1</td>
<td><em>Q.</em> You talked about empathy and de-escalating situations. What do those things look like and how do they help your officiating?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I8.11.1</strong></td>
<td>I think listening is the first step. I mean some situations I’ve sort of seen, I look upon negatively is when referees refuse to listen. They will automatically, in my opinion, cause the player to become more frustrated. Not only do they think you are wrong, but you are not listening. It builds on each other. I think listening is the first step and you don’t have to feel sorry for them. But, at least listen. I think it is at least within your role, within reason. Obviously if they are going to sit there and have a 5 minute conversation, you are unable to do that. But, listen to their concern. I think only if it is a legitimate concern and then move on. We’ll try to diffuse it and if we can’t diffuse it we have to say, “Listen we’ll have to push that aside and deal with it later because we have to let the game go on”. If you can’t reach a consensus quickly, either listening is the first step I look upon negatively is when referees refuse to listen. cause the player to become more frustrated they think you are wrong, but you are not listening. It builds on each other you don’t have to feel sorry for them listen [...] at least within your role, within reason have a 5 minute conversation, you are unable to do that, you are unable to do that. listen to their concern [...] only if it is a legitimate concern and then move on. If you can’t reach a consensus quickly [...] come to you at a timeout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **I8.11.2** | Players form poor impressions of officials who don’t actively listen to players (see 12)** defining the situation** 
A consequence of officials not listening is player frustration 
Listening needs to be used with discretion. Part of the requirements of the role but not allowing players to have long conversations. Important to keep boundaries but listen to their concern. **Adaptation**, **Accommodation**, **face concern**, **interaction goals (Burleson)** 
Not listening can compound player reactions to officials, particularly if they initial dispute what they think to be an incorrect judgment. Listening builds positive relations between players and officials. **Co-construction** |
| I’ll come to you at a timeout or at half time, or we’ll speak about it after the game if it is a really big rule issue they are having a problem with, or a real disagreement. | or at half time, or we’ll speak about it after the game a really big rule issue they are having a problem with […] or a real disagreement | Showing players you have a flexible attitude and give opportunities to voice concern. Need to manage image to players that they are attempting to allow the game to continue. Gauging the relevance of the player complaint **Public/identity face** *(Spencer-Oatey)*, **face-work*** |
7.7. Findings

RQ#1: How do officials define situations and interactions with players?

This section explores the ways officials define and characterise situations and encounters with players in interactor sport settings. The sociological construct of ‘defining the situation’ is a useful analytical tool for framing social situations to address ways people interact, based on knowledge about what is expected of them and what is perceived to be expected of others (Goffman, 1967).

Goffman (1974) asserts that W.I. Thomas’s (1927) original reference to ‘defining situation’ is correct in stating that situations have consequences to people and future ways of behaving, but he says this contributes very little to explaining the ways events and interactions actually progress. Goffman (1959) suggests that when people approach social situations, they do not ordinarily create an ‘absolute’ definition of the situation, but rather assess what the situation ought to be for them based on the ‘line’ others initiate in interactions in order to choose ways to act appropriately (Goffman, 1959).

For example, Study 2 showed that players adapt their interaction style according to their perceptions of officials’ personal characteristics, and ways officials negotiate with and respond to players (e.g., friendly, passive or lacking certainty, authoritarian, over-officious). In other words, players do not necessarily respond in consistent ways to officials, but rather as a function of how they define situations that are unique to different officials and games. The idea of ‘framing’ in social situations suggests people generally construct, present and maintain frames of social context, expectations and self or group identities in interaction (Goffman, 1967,
Goffman’s interpretation of W.I. Thomas’s (1927) original reference to defining the situation brings more subjective explanation of the concept that considers roles, expectations, and context, and is therefore used here as an interpretive frame to understand how officials subjectively construct definitions of situations across interactions with players in interactor sport settings (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008).

The perception of situational definitions is often acted upon directly and intuitively, as Meyrowitz (1990) aptly recognises ‘it is often difficult for researchers to identify, define, and study situational definitions as it is for the average citizen to navigate them’ (p. 67). In an attempt to initially understand the nature and analytical complexity of the concept of defining situations, as they relate to communication in interactions, this study was confined to identifying more general ways in which officials define situations and interactions with players. Officials from this study were found to define situations and interactions with players in three common ways:

- as opportunities to project impressions or influence players in ways that lead to favourable game outcomes (protection of player safety, an enjoyable spectacle played within the rules, perceptions of fair treatment);
- as occasions where players intentionally or unconsciously attempt to disrupt the official or their performance; and
- as occasions where officials enhance, maintain or negatively influence conjoint relational patterns of ‘face’ with players.
These were the most consistent themes found among officiating interviewees’ responses concerning ways they ‘define’ situations and interactions with players, and are discussed in greater detail below. The findings from interviews are thematised and articulated using a range of concepts, but particularly Goffman’s (1959; 1967) interpretation of W.I. Thomas’s (1927) ‘definition of the situation’ and relational readings and re-conceptualisations of Goffman’s work on ‘defining situations’ (Kemper, 2011), and ‘face’ in interaction (Arundale, 2010; Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

7.7.1. Officials define situations and interactions as opportunities to project impressions or influence players in ways that lead to favourable game outcomes

One way officials define situations and interactions with players is as opportunities to perform or construct impressions that influence players in ways that contribute to improved game outcomes. These outcomes include player safety, perceptions of fairness, and an enjoyable game played within the accepted rules and spirit of the game. Officials shared a range of personal attitudes and values they attempt to bring to interactions that align with establishing a shared definition with players that fosters a temporary acceptance or cooperation. Drawing on Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical sociology language, such agreement or ‘working consensus’ among people concerns ‘whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured’ (p.21). Some officials in this study defined situations and interactions with players that involved recognising and making use of opportunities to influence players’ attitudes and expectations (Goffman, 1959). Many officials said they were aware of the opportunity to actively
impose themselves on players in interactions, whether directly or subtly, through verbal or non-verbal communication in ways that avoid the use of penalty to manage game activities. This was reported as requiring officials to use techniques and tools available to them, such as rapport building, showing empathy, and using body language that projects confidence, understanding and command in interactions, to encourage pro-social behaviour or a positive moral atmosphere:

Just a little word, even if it is just to make a point and go like [nodding movement] with your head. Just little messages to let them know how they are playing and how they could, potentially cause an injury, because you want the game to play, not stop and start. You want that advantage and consistency, or fluency to the game and people are happy. (I9)

I have seen many referees that are like, ‘Card, card, card, card’, and they think they can referee the game with cards. So, I think using your cards wisely, your voice, and personality to ‘man manage’ is much better. (I2)

Officials shared many observations about the ways other officials interact with players and offered alternative or ‘better ways’ they thought situations could progress or be handled. Some officials emphasised the importance of officials being seen by players as ‘following through’ (I5, I7, I11) with their actions. Goffman (1959) suggests that the ways situations are defined by people is influenced by expectations about the ways social roles and self-identities are presented. Most officials in this study said that, as an official, you need to construct impressions in interactions with players that indicate you are in control of the situation and dealing with player behaviour in appropriate ways. Some officials distinguish front and back stage (Goffman, 1959) interaction situations, but some sports and situations allow for private interactions where officials may attempt to simulate a back-stage confidence while on stage. Officials gave many different examples of occasions
involving opportunities to present impressions and influence player attitudes in interactions that distinguish between front and back stage (Goffman, 1959) relations with players:

For me, as a referee, it is a good game when most of the spectators don’t know I am there. My job is not to be the centre of the attention, it is to facilitate the game and to be seen doing that. So, my job is to make sure, when we have a stoppage it is not dead time, it is purposeful with players and sets up what goes on in the game, ‘Okay we are stopping, this is what is going to happen, now we are going to play on’, ‘Here is the information you need to know, so the next time you know that it is going to be this way.’ (I7)

Sometimes you need to stop everything. Slow it all down, and make sure others see you are doing that. You might be just giving a regular yellow [card] out, but people see that the player was provoked. ‘Now, I know you didn’t cause the situation, but you’ve reacted to it and ruined it for yourself’, then give the card. Okay, I’ve dealt with you and now I am dealing with this guy. The crowd needs to see that and the players need to go, ‘Okay he didn’t just send our guy off because he punched him, he actually saw what happened and is stamping that by making a point here.’ (I1)

While some officials recognise they are in a position to get better outcomes through the ways they interact and respond to players, other officials did not articulate these views. Some officials have a heightened sensitivity to what players might be thinking and doing in relation to influencing the game.

Many officials said that some players can have distorted beliefs about officials and their intentions, including perceiving officials as ‘unaware’ (I3, I6, I10) or ‘oblivious’ (I8). Some officials said such pre-conceived player expectations and stereotypes about officials were difficult to influence or overcome sometimes, while other officials emphasised that they are in a position to mitigate inaccurate assumptions about officials through interacting with players and managing self-presentation:

Some referees just don’t communicate with players. Sometimes they don’t say anything, just blow their whistle, look at them [player] on the ground and move on. In the grand scheme, what has that just done? It’s done nothing positive for the game. (I6)
You have to take your time in situations. Your demeanour is everything. We talk about right from how well you are dressed, where your gear is right, and how well you blow the whistle, not just a little apologetic sort of blast. All those things come into the perception about how you are handling it, and dealing with it, and as a consequence how they therefore then respond to you when it is one-on-one. (I11)

Some officials also said that players can have an unrealistic expectation that officials should favor them or their team. These false expectations that officials should favor players or that officials are biased to the opposing team were thought to be unrealistic and fuel stereotypes that are carried forward across games:

Because they form a perception that this person doesn’t care about us or doesn’t like us, they carry that perceived bias against them into the next game. Then, they are more likely to question little things; things that they would never question. (I5)

They [players] sometimes see it as they have the referee on their side, which I just think is completely stupid and silly to even expect that we could do that if we wanted to. Even if a referee wanted to favor a particular team, you just can’t do it. It is too hard, ‘Ah, I am making a decision to help them out’. You just make the decisions as they come to you. But, it is that odd expectation some of them [players] have, I find. (I4)

Interaction contexts in police work include law enforcement, order maintenance and services that require officers to mobilise different interaction goals and interpersonal resources (Sanders, 1979). Sport officials define a range of interaction contexts involved in officiating their sport, including pre-game instructions and rapport building, in-game interactions with captains (a time for aligning expectation and shared definitions of a ‘working consensus’), explaining rules to players during decisions, situations requiring officials to resolve conflict between players or toward the official and ‘down-time’ interactions in breaks in play or regulation game time. Most officials said that ‘downtime’ interaction situations are
opportunities for officials to manage relations by allowing opportunities for players to vent frustration, share their interpretation of events or to make players aware that officials are conscious of ‘unspoken’ aspects of game activities:

> There are ‘down time’ interactions, where it is your opportunity to make it relevant, always focusing relevant communication, the stuff that is the bottom line and can help the game to keep moving along. (I7)

Sports differ in their rule structure and the frequency with which these ‘social occasions’ (Goffman, 1963) are available to officials. Officials often identified the inherent time pressures of officiating environments that are associated with the range of interaction occasions that arise with players. When interaction occurs it is often brief, requiring conscious awareness of the situation and appropriate reactivity to deliver functional messages to players (Burleson, 2007) that make effective use of such time limitations. Officials frequently defined interaction situations as opportunities to impress or influence as a function of perceptions of time, and managing the passage of time, in order to appear to others as being competent and in charge. Earlier in this project, players reported that they use ‘time wasting’ as an interaction method to slow down play and influence officials (Chapter 6).

Time is important in interactions. It includes not just the amount of time required to interact, but how perceptions of time were influenced by speeding up play or slowing down the game to emphasise authority and allow player emotions to lessen:

> If you haven’t made them feel early that, ‘This guy is watching us without making a big fuss’ and then when I need to stop things and talk to them for 20-30 seconds, they go back to others on their team
and are like, ‘Ah, this guy just stopped the game, why did he do that?’ You are allowing them to play, but still need to reel it in and show you’re in control. (I12)

We use certain key words like ‘Play’ or ‘Stick check’ or ‘Foot’ or ‘Push’ or whatever, so that all players understand that and we don’t try to give any long winded explanations. It is pretty short, sharp, ‘get on with the game’, not wasting time. (I9)

Time emerged as an important and previously unexplored interaction construct in the way officials define situations as opportunities to influence favorable game outcomes.

7.7.2. Officials define situations and interactions as occasions where players intentionally or unconsciously attempt to disrupt the official or their performance

A second fundamental way that officials define situations and interactions with players is as opportunities for players to disrupt officials’ performance (Goffman, 1959), or preservation of public ‘identity’ claims (Spencer-Oatey, 2007). Performance ‘disruption’ to people occurs in particular societal settings and interactions when ‘the reality sponsored by a performer is threatened’ (Goffman, 1959, p. 210). If this occurs, people become flustered, embarrassed and, if this is perceived by others, a performance can be potentially jeopardised and undermined (Goffman, 1959). Most officials said that players can disrupt officials through verbalisations, emotional displays, direct complaint behaviors, or by seeking unnecessary interactions. The face testing exchanges that occur between players and officials can sometimes involve challenges to officials’ authority and attempts to demean their competence in judgment or actions.
Officials said performance disruption can most often occur through direct challenge, questioning official’s interpretations and attempts to antagonise officials or test their confidence and resolve:

When players approach they mostly question the accuracy in which you have processed information. Most of the times quite aggressively, with no knowledge of the laws of the game, or perspective of what it might have looked like as a referee. (I5)

Goffman (1959) suggests that when people define situations they are effectively asking themselves ‘what is going on here’ (p. 16). Some officials said they aim to avoid displays of fluster and uncertainty because some players see these cues as opportunity to further challenge and manipulate.

Player disputes or disagreements with officials were said to require interaction efforts on the part of the official to deal with ‘difficult players’ (I4, I10, I12) or influence ‘behaviour change’ in players (I5, I7, I8). Most officials stated that players express disagreement or frustration and often ‘chip away’ (I2, I7, I10), ‘get under the skin’ (I1) or ‘rattle’ (I3, I5) officials by creating uncertainty in their decisions:

Sometimes you know they are trying to get into your head and rattle you. So, next time a decision comes up like that you’ll question it, so that you’ll let it go, or you’ll give it their way. Just so they think they have control of you, rather than you having control over the game. (I3)

You need to have a confidence that last right through out, so that they [players] can’t sense any sort of vulnerability, or inexperience. Because as soon as they sense that, I feel they know you maybe aren’t confident in yourself, and they can get in your head and sort of start controlling you. (I10)

Many officials said the players adapt to the personality of officials to influence them and disrupt them. Friendlier officials were seen by some officials to often be more easily influenced, while those perceived to be
more autocratic are usually obeyed, but are less liked. Officials seek to maintain control, and may have to do so at the expense of their own approval and admiration from players. Some less experienced officials may prioritise approval and admiration to such an extent that they forfeit control:

A good mate of mine is very much a nicer person than [another official], but the players don’t respond as well because he is a little too accommodating. It really defies logic. The players are accommodating to a guy that is not actually very nice, and they are not accommodating to a guy that is far nicer. Even when the other referee doesn’t give a damn about what anybody thinks. (J9)

The ‘front stage’ is a physical region (Goffman, 1959) where officials perform and negotiate identity, but it is also a place in which officials desire to prevent disruption and face threat. Some officials believed it was important for officials to establish relational boundaries with players early in games, so as to prevent opportunities for disruption to officials’ performance. Losing face can have snowballing consequences across later game encounters, which then require deliberate efforts by officials to re-establish face patterns and exchanges that serve officiating goals and preserve a ‘working consensus’ (Goffman, 1959; 1967). Goffman (1959) referred to this as the ‘line’ an individual might establish in interactions, or a ‘pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation, and through this, his evaluation of the participants, especially himself’ (p. 14).

Research on coaching leadership emphasises how sport coaches create and recreate social identities, and contextual ‘face’, which involves, ‘linking together communicative events and providing a means by which inter-subjective stances can build up an identity across interactions’ (Wilson, 2013, p. 182). More experienced officials in this study mentioned the
importance, in interactions with some players, of protecting against face threat that could otherwise discredit the professional image of the official (a perceived necessity to those who officiate on a full-time basis at the elite-level). Some players were seen by officials to actively try to diminish officials’ credibility and require corrective actions by the official to protect against this in certain situations:

Sometimes entering into a conversation is worse, then, you actually get yourself into trouble. You’ve made the right decision and given the right card or penalty, but you have entered into a conversation where the player has got one over you based on something you said. They put you in a position where you are now talking yourself down, or they are talking you out of a decision, where you might go. (I3)

According to Goffman (1967), face is ‘the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact’ (p. 5). Officials aim to preserve qualities of face that pertain to self-esteem and self-worth. Face is also linked with the social identities or roles officials seek to maintain (Spencer-Oatey, 2002; 2007). A sense of personal/social entitlement is another motivational force underpinning the presentation of identities that is also at stake for officials in interactions, along with face sensitivities. Spencer-Oatey (2002) refers to this as sociality rights management, or public worth attached to the dynamic management of personal relations in certain contexts where social roles are emphasised. Some officials cite tensions that arise between breaches of personal identity and protecting societal rights and entitlements of the officiating role in relations and interactions with players:

Probably the overriding message is, I’m not concerned if they like me, I am concerned with if they respect the role I play, the game we play, and everything to do with it. If they are showing disrespect to the game, I am far more aggravated about that than if they are showing disrespect to me. (I5)
Disrespect to me would not be flagrantly criticising my personality, rather disrespect to the role, or just not paying attention to the decisions. Not stopping when the whistle goes, kicking the ball away in frustration, and that type of stuff. I am far more concerned with that, than if they call me a ‘dickhead’. I’m not really worried. If they start flagrantly ignoring some of the decisions I am making, that is different. (I9)

Officials said players react to officials for various reasons, from perceived decision accuracy to unfairness in officials. Many officials said it is important for officials to differentiate player behaviour that is directed at them, personally, or the role, in order to best respond to each situation. Some said that taking players’ behaviour or actions ‘personally’ (I2, I5, I6, I12) is something that should be avoided by officials. Burleson (2007) suggests an important individual difference in skilled communicators is their ability to use more refined social perceptions and interpretations of interpersonal messages of others in social situations: it is a part of how they ‘define’ the situation that requires mindful and accurate appraisals about the attitudes and states of players and helps them respond more effectively).

This project found that players recognise that other players subtly and deliberately attempt to influence or disrupt officials, and also found that officials recognise these efforts by players. This provides evidence of shared situational definition between players and officials in interactions that holds promise for developing officiating communication training recommendations. In particular, if we begin with an assumption that interactions are occasions for adapting for expectations and disruptions, we can work towards improving observation, interpretation, and adaptation skills to make more effective and realistic appraisals of players’ intentions
and behavior, which can contribute to more skilled interaction responses for constructing more harmonious and cooperative sporting environments.

7.7.3. **Officials define situations and interactions as occasions to enhance, maintain or negatively influence conjoint relational patterns of ‘face’ with players**

Many officials had a heightened sensitivity to interactions with players, which was accompanied by an interest in protecting perceived face concerns of players, as well as the officials’ own face needs. Some officials define situations in terms of the face concerns of players, such as feeling respected through having their interpretations heard by officials (having a ‘voice’) (I5, I7, I11, I13), not feeling targeted by officials (I1, I4, I8), being given sufficient opportunity to perform skills for their team without disruption (I8, I10), and being treated politely by officials (I3, I5, I9).

Explanations of face as a personal attribute (Brown & Levinson, 1987) suggest two particular ways people can experience face threat: the first being connected to one’s self-esteem causing them to feel separated from others, and the second involving feelings that their freedom of action, personal entitlements or rights have been obstructed. These are referred to by Brown and Levinson (1987) as ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ face, respectively. Players in Study 2 said that being dismissed or disregarded by officials in interaction is unfavorable and indicates less-preferred personal qualities in officials (see Chapter 6). Few officials explicitly associated the importance of protecting the face interests of players with the influence it had on interactional processes to improve relations with officials:
The other players started to target him because they know he would go off. Now, I saw that very early on and blew a penalty in favor of the guy and I didn’t just let him go away. I needed to say something to him, ‘Look, I know you were provoked in that situation, but don’t react. I know who it was. I’ve spoken to him, if he does it again, he will be the one to go, don’t get involved, you’ve done nothing here. Don’t retaliate, don’t get involved, and you’re fine’, and he went ‘Ok, thanks’. He didn’t expect it. Somebody was suddenly looking out for his interests, he had always perceived we weren’t, and that he was being the target. (I1)

Some researchers acknowledge a key influencing feature of player-official relations and interactions is the favorable hierarchical position that officials occupy in relation to players, insofar as they administer game rules and make judgements on player behaviour (Rix-Lièvre et al., 2015). More recent relational interpretations of Goffman’s ‘defining the situation’ suggest power and status claims are central in social relationships in particular contexts (Kemper, 2011). Kemper (2011) suggests Goffman neglected status-power obligations in interactions that concern, ‘who owes what to whom and who deserves what from whom’ (p. 134). As part of the way some officials in this study define situations, they recognised that some players ‘prefer to not interact with officials’ (I10, I5), tend to avoid them and prefer to ‘focus on their performance’ (I6). Officials were divided on this issue: some saw it as an opportunity to build effective face relations with players while others saw it as fruitless to interact with these types of players:

…some you can usually tell during that pre-game captains meeting. Whether you have a player who is interested in being friendly, or someone who just wants to get the job done, so to speak. You can pick up fairly early whether they are interested in building a rapport with you or whether you are just another blank face in a striped shirt who they are interacting with for this game. It sometimes works better to avoid those ones. (I10)
Many officials recognised that other officials can create unproductive identities by acting overly stern and approaching officiating relations with players that over-emphasise their role. Some examples of description used include the ‘teacher’ (I10), ‘authoritarian’ (I2, I5, I9), and ‘police officer’ (I10). One interviewee said that ‘some officiating types can antagonise players, rather than give a positive presence’ (I2). This can arise from power differences and lead to interactional attempts used by players to establish power over officials. Interviewees frequently recognised power elements in face exchanges with players around decision situations:

They [players] are fundamentally saying they disagree. And some of them probably try to do it to influence, or some of them try to show their teammates that they have some kind of power over me. Although, players’ motivations are changing and probably different every time. (I7)

Officials frequently define interaction situations as occasions where unrealistic impressions about power difference between officials and players can be managed through rapport building or personalising interactions with players. This was thought to help align behavioural expectations, assist in managing behavioral reactions in players, and to create a collaborative atmosphere that can be achieved through different modes of interaction with players. Many officials believe players can view officials as self-righteous, self-centered or autocratic, unaware, biased, or unfair towards some players. Many officials said they strive to treat certain occasions as opportunities to construct favorable impressions in interactions with players:

Just have that rapport with them and have trust and faith in me and not think I am a cheat, or whatever. Or, ‘Oh no, her again! She did this last time, she did that, and she is overbearing and annoying’, because I think a lot of people think that the referees try to make it about them. (I2)
I’d want players to think, ‘He is tough and we won’t let you get away with things’, not saying ‘he is over-officious, but he will ping us for things, so if we do the wrong thing, he will pick us up’. But, we also know ‘He is reasonable and we can communicate with him. He won’t block us out’. (I1)

Officials also define situations with players based on the relational familiarity they have built through prior experiences with certain players. Those officiating at lower-levels typically said that they maintain some non-game contact with players, while at other levels interviewees said they can have limited prior relations, which demands more improvisation and more structured communication and self-presentation. Prior relationships can mitigate some of the negative reactions that come with unfamiliarity with officials, which were believed by some officials to arise from unrealistic stereotypes and expectations of officials:

I have developed some relationships with some of the players I referee regularly. They know who I am and we are actually more of less friends and you sort of diminish issues where you don’t know them and don’t have a relationship with them, there is not much rapport, just trying to manage them and know who they are, and I think it comes down to knowing the players. (I12)

It is not having that trust in you as a referee: how players feel about the referee. If they can’t trust the referee to restore the balance once they feel they have been disadvantaged and they haven’t got the advantage back then they start to think, ‘This referee doesn’t know what they are doing’, and that is when it starts to get heated. (I7)

Trust is intrinsically linked to face in social interaction. Trust in the recognition of face is essential because a person is never completely secure in social interaction, where the possibility exists that discrepancy between the projected ‘front’ and real self may be exposed (Goffman, 1967). ‘Mutual acceptance’ (Goffman, 1967) of positive social value claimed by individuals is defined as face, where this mutual acceptance of the projected self is important since our social selves depends on the good will and trust of
others. Further, the concept of trust is associated with increased cooperation, information sharing, and problem solving, which are crucial to conflict resolution, especially for negotiation and mediation (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). Such relational dimensions in interactions are said to have been neglected by Goffman as Arundale (2010) suggests people conjointly construct face patterns through interactions, whereas traditional conceptualisations use an encoding-decoding model of face and ‘self’ and ‘other’ distinctions (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967).

Relational dimensions of openness and closedness from others, certainty and uncertainty about the relationship, and separateness from and connectedness with people are developed in interactions through patterns of face exchange (Arundale, 2010). These relational dimensions don’t represent personal needs or wants, but through relational perspectives of face are ‘properties, conditions, or states’ (Arundale, 2010, p. 2086), exhibited in interpersonal relations that people produce and reproduce as they interact in certain situations and across interactions.

As part of officials’ definition of the situation, some recognise opportunities to manage impressions of impartiality, certainty and resilience to challenge. Certainty and uncertainty help people to predict the future behaviours of others (Berger, 1988) and is something continuously built up and reshaped across interactions (Arundale, 2010; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Some officials interviewed said that conflict breeds as a result of the way officials treat players, which can breed poor relations and helps players justify disputes with officials:
It is usually a ‘No you got hit’ or ‘No you didn’t get hit’ or ‘This is what I saw, and what I saw is correct’, that sort of aggressive approach by officials I think is portrayed quite negatively to players, and then when that person makes an error, it is almost ‘Good we caught you out’, rather than the person who is much more relaxed and composed, and they go, oh you made an error, and they went ‘Ok’. (I6)

I think a lot of officials that are loud and aggressive, such that they are always talking or quite demanding of players, or saying the wrong things, can kind of fuel the fire in players. Players are then automatically like, ‘Ah, what is he going to say now’, or ‘I am going to get the first word in this time’, or ‘What is that for’, or ‘No, come on!’. Then they [the official] turn around and give the other team the free hit anyways. But, because their personalities have clashed, kind of ‘butting at the bit’, butting heads to go for it, it has become quite difficult. (I12)

Various types of responses to players are required. These different interpersonal styles are based on the official’s experience with player personalities and the ‘lines’ of interaction (Goffman, 1959) that each have brought to previous game interactions and exchanges.

7.8. Findings

RQ#2: What are officials’ motivations in interactions with players?

Definitions of human motivation span a range of social science fields and disciplines including psychology, communication and sociology.

Motivational theories such as acquired needs theory (McClelland, 1988), cognitive theories such as expectancy (Vroom, 1964) and goal setting (Locke, 1968), opposite emotions theory (Solomon & Corbit, 1974), equity theory (Pritchard, 1969), among others, are usually based on principles for analysing the psychology behind a course of action involving a range of benefits, needs or wants. To narrow the scope of possible definitions of motivation, and in keeping with an interactionist view of communication used in this project, officiating motivations in interactions with players are
defined here using interactionist theory of motivation (e.g., Turner, 1987). This theory emphasises that motivations in interaction are based on inferences and conclusions people draw from social interaction and which influence people to act in a certain way to particular settings (i.e., the motivations of individuals are affected, changed, shaped or reinforced by their interactions with people and society).

Goffman did not explicitly place great emphasis on the interests and motivations that people bring to social interactions (Trevino, 2003): his concern was with the fundamental norms of everyday interactions and how they tend to stabilise certain social orders. In this study, whilst acknowledging the range of definitions for ‘motivations’, an interactionist view was used as a first step towards understanding the communication of officiating motivations that are influenced by expectations, context and role. Motivational aspects of communication in interaction are seldom addressed explicitly in research, apart from intentions of officials to prevent escalation and avoid use of penalty (Mascarenhas et al., 2005), manage conflict (Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Simmons, 2006) and building trust and rapport with players (Slack et al., 2013).

Although the research questions for Study 2 with players and Study 3 with sport officials separate ‘defining the situation’ and ‘motivations’ in aspects of interaction, they are essentially bound to one another. A social constructionist and interactionist perspective therefore suggests that what is most important is the meaning people create for themselves in situations, which in turn motivates their situational and interactional interpretations and
responses to others (Arundale, 2010; Goffman, 1967).

Officials in this study were found to be motivated in interactions with players in two common ways:

- to establish and maintain relations that contribute to a working consensus consistent with desired outcomes; and
- to protect the face of players and avoid face loss themselves.

These emergent themes are discussed in more detail below.

7.8.1. **Officials are motivated to establish and maintain relations that contribute to a working consensus consistent with desired outcomes**

Most officials in this study said they had an overarching motivation to maintain a safe and orderly competition environment, which involves building player acceptance and establishing a working cooperation with players. Goffman (1959) coined the term ‘working consensus’ to describe an implicit, temporary agreement that exists between interactors and shared definition of their situation ‘in order to get their business done’ (p. 112). This unspoken understanding between players and officials involves a surface agreement where both parties choose to temporarily avoid direct conflict or disruption to a general definition of the situation through created ‘lines of responsive action’ (Goffman, 1959, p. 9-10). A working consensus is absent of explicit conflict to a degree. The motivation for officials in interaction with players is to deter conflict, but support a definition of the situation which concerns players’ safety and performing within the spirit of the rules of the game.
Most officials in this study acknowledge a primary motivation to protect the welfare and safety of players and promote respect for the rules and general attitudes of fair play:

I think that is one of the main roles of officials, to protect not only the game and have a good game, but protect the players, so if you can protect the player and protect skill, we’re going to have a more attractive game as a whole. (I13)

I suppose their trust that you will protect them, instead of them thinking it is me against the umpire, or our team versus the two umpires versus the other team, let them have their game, but let them know that if something does happen, they are going to be protected. (I4)

Many officials said they are motivated to communicate perceptions of control and competence to players. Listening to players, showing empathy and understanding, and having strong judgment was said to help demonstrate to players that officials are motivated to influence the game by treating participants equally and sensitively.

The officiating environments of different competitive levels can shape the ways that officials define the needs of situations and, as a consequence, ways they are motivated in interactions with players. Some officials for younger sport participants at community and grass-root levels said one core motivation is to facilitate socialisation between participants and game enjoyment, and attempt to educate players more frequently to the rules of the game. Sub-elite and elite officials more often said they were motivated to interact with players in ways that encourage acceptance and understanding of the officials’ role or actions, manage player behaviour, and show that the official is allowing the game to ‘flow’ (I2, I4, I8, I9):
I think it is a lot of explaining in-between game play. Trying to get them to see why you have made certain decisions, because sometimes they just look at it like players. They don’t see it as a referee; how we have to operate, make decisions, and do all that. So, I think trying to get them to realise that has good outcomes for the game. (I9)

To achieve a working consensus officials are motivated to develop relations with players that foster cooperation, collaboration and compliance. A central feature of interaction situations is the nature of the relational stability among participants (Arundale, 2010), as it contributes to the ‘working consensus’ (Goffman, 1959) that officials seek to achieve. There are some important features of interpersonal relations for officials that they are motivated to achieve or maintain. Relating involves both openness and closedness from one’s partner, both stability and change in the relationships (e.g., certainty and uncertainty), as well as both connectedness and separateness (Arundale, 2010). Some officials said it is important to be motivated to promote certainty and maintain a unilateral openness in relating with players that builds effective ‘face’ patterns with players and contributes to a working consensus:

They are not going to get away with it. They know they are not going to get away with it because they know I am going to talk with them. Whether it is immediate or delayed feedback that I’ll get to them, I will talk to the captains and ask them, if they have problems, or need to talk to me about anything. Rather than me going up to them and saying you are doing this, this and this, and then during the game I will address those problems. (I7)

Building effective relations with players has productive implications on players’ responses to one another and towards officials. Some officials said it’s important to build relations with players to achieve a progressive attitude of acceptance toward officials in interactions that have substantial impact on later game activities:
If you sort of don’t build these relationships, and build that rapport and ‘chains of agreement’, then inevitably it is going to build up, the heat is going to build up, and once it starts building with one or two players it spreads so quickly, and everyone else is going to get heated and by that point there is not even much you can do. (I2)

Arundale’s (2010) re-conceptualisation of ‘face’ as a relational phenomenon, rather than personal attribute, suggests interpersonal factors such as closeness/openness and certainty/uncertainty can be adjusted for different individuals and situations. Some officials are motivated to interact differently with certain player captains, based on the desirability of closeness or openness:

Those three are the biggest ones. The impulsive ones, the ones that really plan it and think it through, and then there are those that are by their nature, their personality, probably people who shouldn’t be in a leadership role because they are very poor communicators. They don’t create tolerance. They create a very short fuse and I give captains a lot of time and space and listen carefully to their complaints or feedback. But, some very quickly lose that right because of the way that they start their conversations by, ‘You’re F’in joking’, so you give those types less explanation. (I5)

Study 2 found that some players are motivated to manipulate officials who are perceived to be overly-friendly (showing too much openness can cause players to perceive opportunity to manipulate). A balance of these qualities is important to individual interactions, where each situation and player motivation will contrast the interaction goals of different officials. Most officials in this study said they are motivated to lead an equitable and fair game, but recognise the importance of different types of responses to players, based on individuals and the context. This underpins one general motivation of officials in interactions with players, which is to establish and maintain relations that contribute to a working consensus consistent with desired game outcomes.
7.8.2. **Officials are motivated to protect the face of players and avoid face loss themselves**

‘Face’ has been found to be a useful concept for understanding interactions between players and officials. Some officials said they are motivated to enhance perceptions of order and impartiality, and this requires protection of their own face and the face needs of players. When a feature of the working consensus is disrupted by an unexpected situation, an erroneous decision, player transgression that creates perception of moral imbalance or threats to officiating authority, some officials said they are motivated to re-establish a working consensus through deliberate face protective or self-supporting actions:

I like to talk to the players and make sure they understand my decisions, so that we are both like, ‘Yep right, we are both on the same page now’ You may disagree with it, I’ve explained it to you, you’ve accepted that and it is fine. Now, we are moving away from that’. To me, that is building that respect. (I11)

Officials are motivated to avoid threat to face that might otherwise discredit the performance they are trying to maintain. Some officials said it is important to interpret players during situations where face threat can occur, to more deeply comprehend the validity of players’ responses and need for adaptive interactions:

He needs to leave the field and when he is refusing to, you’ve got to be pro-active. End the meeting yourself by walking away and then you let everyone else know, ‘Well the game is not going to continue. We won’t continue until he is off’. (I7)

If they are coming at you, you have to understand why, why are they coming at you. ‘Have I done the wrong thing?’ and then ‘How do I get out of it?’ Or, how are they thinking, that there is something else, are they just worked up? (I12)
Many officials expressed a need to understand or seek information about players’ circumstances and reactions – a concept similar to situation monitoring (Chapter 4) and the information seeking needs of ‘sense-making’ (Weick, 1995). Use of the face concept also makes salient the importance of respecting players in communication. In educational settings, teachers are motivated to protect students’ face needs to reinforce feelings of approval and admiration that predict student learning and performance (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2003). Many officials said they are motivated to manage and maintain preferred impressions in the minds’ of players, coaches and others, and desire to be perceived as approachable and respectful.

Some officials said they are motivated to avoid being seen in interactions as over-authoritative (I6, I11) or over-controlling (I1, I4, I10). They prefer to be seen as a facilitator of the game and to ‘avoid putting yourself before players’ (I9). This was said to help better adapt to players in ways that preserve an official’s own face to players and others, as one who is in control of the game and a ‘regulator’ (I10). Some emphasised that making players feel respected is a way that officials build ‘connectedness’ in interactions, and that this contributes to acceptance of officials across later game interactions:

When you [the official] have the respect of the players, it helps. You might be making small officiating errors during a game and after the game they [the players] might come up and say, ‘I think you are probably right, I [the player] did make a mistake’. (I12)

Officials are motivated in a variety of ways in interactions with players that stem from the responsibilities of their role. Demonstrating respect to players
was frequently emphasised as a motivator by officials, and important to managing relations and interactions:

    Trying to be polite with players goes a long way, at least I’ve found. Some players don’t expect it. Maybe because they’ve had an official who hasn’t been that way to them before and they think we are all the same. Like the basketball referee there [referring to video vignette example] who was talking over the player for example, when it seemed like all the guy wanted was a few quick words to understand why his teammate had the call against him. Hard to know what happened before the lead up to that, but I think either way it is important. (I8)

Respect and politeness in interactions with players was thought to build trust and credibility in officials’ communication and actions.

7.9. Findings

RQ#3: What are ways that officials adapt their communication to different situations and interactions?

Sport bodies’ conceptualisations of officiating communication (Chapter 4) emphasised the importance of interpretive and adaptive aspects of interactions with players, drawing attention to the situational needs of officiating. Study 2 found that players have a range of motivations in interactions with officials and can aim to deliberately influence officials. This raises questions about ways officials respond to different types of players and unconsciously and intentionally alter their communication. Research questions 1 and 2 in this third study with officials addressed perceptual-judgement (defining situations) and social-emotional features (motivations) of officiating interactions. Extending the findings from research questions 1 and 2, this section explores ways officials adapt themselves to interactions through various types of communication behavior (Giles et al., 1991) and face-work practices (Goffman, 1967). The terms
adaptation and accommodation are used here to describe ways officials mobilise interpersonal resources in interaction according to consciously and unconsciously perceived needs of players and officiating situations.

‘Adaptation’ is referred to as ways officials actively modify or adjust their actions to situations, while ‘accommodation’ is defined as a mixture of conflict prevention and passive ways officials adapt to the needs of others in situations.

Dramaturgical sociology provides a rich language to understand officiating responses to players and ways officials ritually accommodate situational needs of officiating in order to influence a working consensus. Burleson (2007) reminds us about interaction goals and multi-functionality of interpersonal messages in skilled communication, and that skilled communicators in complex environments (such as officiating interactor sports) don’t typically seek one instrumental goal (persuasion, informing, etc.). Some definitions of skilled communication emphasise actions on the part of communicators to help manage identities in a particular manner, as a contributor to managing social situations (Arundale, 2006; Burleson, 2007). Adaptation and accommodation are separated here to reflect their nature in interaction based on communication theory (Burgoon, Stern, & Dillman, 1995; Burleson, 2007; Giles et al., 1991) and sociological (Goffman, 1967) and socio-linguistic conceptualisations of face (Arundale, 2010); accommodation being a type of adaptation.

Officials in this study were found to adapt their communication in interactions in three common ways:
• by anticipating reactions and modifying presentation of self;
• by using defensive and protective types of face-work including corrective, avoidance and approach-oriented strategies; and
• by engaging in face exchanges with players that build contextually appropriate relations of connectedness or separateness.

Each of these emergent themes are discussed in more detail below.

7.9.1. Officials adapt their communication in interactions by anticipating reactions and modifying presentation of self

Burleson (2007) suggests that skilled communication requires that people try to understand particular emotional reactions and thought patterns in others that are associated with certain contexts and circumstances, to better predict emotional responses. Many officials said they try to watch and anticipate situations and interactions in order to understand requirements to adapt their presentation or approach. Some officials said that, depending on different situations, it is important to send ‘messages’ to players through certain gestures and body language to convey openness, respectfulness and consistency:

It is often a much more difficult job to keep a player in the game – to empathise and anticipate his complaint and show that you are on their side, not against them. (I3)

Officials manage the intensity of tone, body language and other displays of emotion in encounters with players to convey discreet messages tailored to situation (Burleson, 2007). Subtle body-language and non-verbal communication said to be useful to officiating included speed of gestures (e.g., slow hand movements; I2, I8); eye movements and squinting (I5; I9);
or expressions of feigned anger (I10), showing disappointment (I5, I10), familiarity or affiliation (I2, I9); as well as concern, authority, or alertness to players. Some officials said that it is important to be expressive in communication for certain situations to help to convey messages and emotions to players about warnings (I9, I10), breaching particular values/ethos of the game (I3, I5) and awareness and understanding (I13). Adaptation to situations involving conflict was often said to involve regulating one’s own emotional responses to players and speaking slowly (I4, I8), appearing calm (I2, I10) and in control (I2, I4) of self, and using concise and paced phrasing (I5). One official described the use of non-verbal messages or measured gestures as a way to communicate to players without verbalisation:

Don’t give a penalty, or a sanction as such, but you might let the next one go. I think players pick up on what you’re trying to do. It could even be that you make eye-contact with that player. That non-verbal communication through a facial expression, or just through your eyes, a little bit of rapport with them, they’ll pick that up. (I9)

Many officials indicated that officials need to employ a range of ‘front stage’ presentations in interactions to influence others’ perception of the official’s ability to manage game activities, provide a fair and safe spectacle, decide accurately and judge appropriately, and align messages with different types of ‘back-stage’ work with players and other officials. Some important front-stage work for officials included communication displays to players that show officials attempting to delay sanctioning and minimise trends in injurious player behaviours. Modifying front-stage presentation requires a spectrum of approaches or strategies in order to project impressions of honesty, integrity, and consistency and competence to ‘deal with situations’ (I2, I3, I8, I11) and progress game activities:
Might be a stern whistle and a ‘No, go to your bench. I’ll speak to you in a moment’, or it might be a situation of a player that might not be so animated, but just wants a communication. Very different situations that demand different tools you have to handle so you can move on with things. (I8)

An impression management construct referred to as ‘corporate theatre’ by elite rugby union referees suggests that officials perceive the need to enact their role as a sort of adaptive ‘front stage’ performance (Cunningham et al., 2012). Elite officiating environments provide unique demands, with the advent of microphones, and where officials’ conversations are linked to multiple audiences. Interactions with players and other officials are open to public scrutiny by commentators and television audiences, placing increased importance on officials’ performance in interactions and decision situations. Part of this enactment of front-stage interactions involves constructing a certain discourse or ‘stance’ (Wilson, 2013) that contributes to a working consensus. One basketball official with international experience said it is important to present a variety of communication styles in interactions:

I don’t think you can always just rely on one style to referee. There are so many different types of players and situations you have to deal with, it just doesn’t make sense. Some refs at our national competitions often have their ‘go-to’ way of refereeing that gets them through most games, but not every game where they can get into problems. Sometimes you have to be the firm police officer, the next the friendly and familiar guy, and in the next situation the teacher to help the players understand what they did wrong. It is different approaches for different situations. (I10)

These sentiments are similar to those made by international rugby union referee, Wayne Barnes, who makes an additional distinction about players’ knowledge of different officiating styles:

All the styles tie into each other. So I think I referee a mixture of different styles depending upon the situations, but I think the players are aware of referees’ different styles. It would be naïve to think they weren’t. They know the referees they can talk to and what to expect from each. (MacMahon et al., 2014, p. 90-91)
An official may routinely use a variety of different styles, each of which has been created through the repetition of a particular stance in similar situations.

7.9.2. **Officials adapt their communication in interactions by using defensive and protective types of face-work including corrective, avoidance and approach-oriented strategies**

The previous section highlighted ways officials anticipate reactions in players and modify their presentation of self. Anticipating reactions and modifying presentation of self was found to be an important theme in ways officials adapt and accommodate their communication in interactions with players.

Another way sport officials adapt or accommodate to players is through face-work practices that protect the official’s face and give face to players in interactions. Generally, officials are motivated to avoid face ‘loss’ and actively protect against compromising their authority. Players’ disagreement with officiating interpretations or decisions can sometimes breed increased conflict with or questioning of officials. Officials in this study said that face testing interactions frequently occur with players who are aggressive (I3, I7, I8) or emotional (I5, I10), while other players are said to be more persistent (I1, I5, I12) and planned (I9, I11) in their interactions with officials. Officials said they used many different types of approaches to manage players’ reactions and circumvent threats to the official’s face, including allowing players time to calm down and encourage acceptance in officials’
interpretations. Some officials said this was achieved through the use of certain behavioural strategies to avoid direct engagement with players who seek out unnecessary interactions with officials to challenge or question:

Not only do you have a short period of time, but you can get stuck there and have to explain yourself when you don’t need to. They’ll say, ‘I want to talk to you after the time out’. When we meet in the break in play, I’ll say, ‘Ah, I’ll be back in a second’. Go have a drink or talk to my other official. Often you can go away and have a chat. You might not even need to talk about that situation. Then, when you go back and say, ‘What did you want to talk about?’ they usually go, ‘Ah, no it is not a big deal don’t worry about it’. Just giving them a bit of time and space, they then go, ‘In the grand scheme of things it is not that bad’ or ‘I over reacted at the time’. (I3)

A tool I sometimes use is physically guiding players away from areas. Say you are in the middle of the court and a player approaches you. If you walk towards their bench, they’ll follow, because they want to talk to you. Almost without them even knowing, you can walk them back to the bench. Because they stand in the middle of the court and yell at you while everyone sees it or follow you around because they want to have a conversation. I find that a really useful tool. (I8)

Goffman (1967) identifies two types of face-work: defensive and protective. _Defensive-oriented_ face-work involves actions by an individual to mitigate the loss of face. This is said to consist of avoidance processes, such as avoiding situations in which a person’s face is likely to be threatened or wronged. This can include avoiding conversation topics, confrontation, conflict or other activities that might reveal information that is inconsistent with the identity that someone looks to preserve in interactions (Goffman, 1967). Indirectness and withdrawal are examples of ‘avoidance-based’ face-work strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) that are fundamental in moderating face threat. Officials should not avoid listening to players or addressing questions about obvious decision errors (MacMahon et al., 2014), but avoidance can be a useful, less-assertive communication style to
manage conflict with players (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). This defensive type of face-work was identified by officials in this study as a type of interaction management strategy that attempts to protect officials’ public ‘face’ or credibility, and more general officiating goals:

It is important to remove yourself from interactions. The first one there [referring to video vignette example of the end of a game], where the referee stood among the players to shake hands, generally speaking, that is something I have gotten out of my game. Although, it helps with reinforcing messages that you have all had a good game when the players come shake your hand, but it is also an opportunity for them to blow up at you, or open up a can of worms that you just don’t need. So just physically removing yourself from the area when there is any heat in the game, that is the biggest one I find. (I9)

Defensive face-work refers to actions used by a person to circumvent the loss of face that may potentially discredit the impression one is attempting to maintain (Goffman, 1967). Firmness and trustworthiness are central principles for negotiators who have high requirements for defending against face threatening acts. Bargaining negotiators who are said to appear ‘weak’ in interactions increase the likelihood for others to be motivated to make more aggressive requests (Pruitt & Smith, 1981) and risk others losing confidence in their abilities. This can result in less leeway to achieve collaborative agreements (Roloff & Campion, 1987). One official said that while it is important to be relaxed, flexible and composed in interactions, officials must also be able to use firmness with players to convey the message that ‘This stops now’ (I7). Some officials said that in officiating you need to sustain a particular identity to others that demonstrates dependability and authority in interactions. This was said to sometimes require an ‘approach’ motivation to action with players that enhances respect in relations and serves broader officiating goals:
There might be a player who is going off, or a player who is nattering just following you around in your ear, and you know eventually you have to say, ‘We need some distance here. I need you to go play the game and not keep engaging me’. Ultimately, if they continue, it starts to discredit what you are trying to do. (I1)

People also engage in approach-based face-work undertaken as a means of affirming and supporting social relationships (Rickheit & Strohner, 2008). Another type of face-work that Goffman (1967) explains is actions taken by an interactor to safeguard the identities of others through *protective* orientations. Protective face-work is motivated to attempt to prevent face loss of others (or to help someone to take up a more favourable presentation) in good belief that they will extend the same ritualistic social courtesy in return (Goffman, 1967). Corrective processes are central to protective face-work which are attempts made by an individual to maintain another’s sense of social worth and re-establish the expressive order (Goffman, 1967).

Officials described a range of identity and face-work management strategies that are used to adapt to players and fundamentally preserve the perceived face concerns of players (Goffman, 1967). To Goffman (1967), face-work is both necessary and complicated. Face-work ‘induces compensative effort’ (Goffman, 1967, p. 308) in interactions because it is integral to our identities and social worth. Face concerns of players were described by officials as unproductive interactions that trivialise relations with players (of not respecting their autonomy) and over-emphasise role positions, or make players feel subordinate or victimised by officials:

If I had not had confidence in him, or he had none in me, then he would have been like, ‘Ah ‘they’ are targeting me again’, but he knows if he does the right thing, he’s got enough confidence in me that I will deal even-handedly. If someone does something to him, I
won’t be victimising him, he’ll get the free kick. But, that is important; you’ve got to get the perception over all the little things. (I1)

Somebody was suddenly looking out for her [player] interests, while the whole game she perceived we weren’t, that I was ‘targeting’ her. Then when I spoke to her on the run and said I was watching how they were frustrating her, all of a sudden somebody had actually said to her, ‘I saw that, and I’m going to deal with it, or I am dealing with it’. (I4)

Goffman emphasises that emotions that are fundamentally embedded in interactions as a consequence of our social and cultural arrangements generally involve ‘emotion management’ of feelings of embarrassment, shame and pride (Goffman, 1959; 1967). These self-conscious emotions in interactions are fundamental in interpersonal relations, along with other human emotions, and Scheff (1988) emphasises ‘we are virtually always in a state of pride or shame’ (p. 399).

One protective face-work process that officials frequently use with corrective intention is showing accountability to players. Goffman (1967) suggests a type of face-work termed ‘accounting’. In situations where people are reproached, accounting involves excuses or attempts to explain their behavior (Goffman, 1967). Such face-work helps to get others to understand reasons for their behavior and avoid or reduce criticism that has an impact on the face of others in response to accounts (Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006). Displaying accountability in interactions was said to include admission of errors in less-impactful game decisions, admitting limited sight lines to make decisions, or lack of information to make accurate judgements.
Many officials said showing accountability positively served face-work exchanges with players, suggesting flexibility without compromising one’s presentation of control or authority. Officials across levels suggested the importance of knowing when to show accountability to players with respect to errors in observation or decisions, and how to send messages to players that you are ‘showing your cards’ (I1). It was seen as important to not cover up obvious errors as this can further compromise perceived authenticity of officials. Accountability can improve attitudes towards officials and build appropriate shared definitions, but should be used with sensitivity to the personal-attributes of particular players:

I find with those players if you did make a blunder and you did call it wrong. ‘I got it incorrect that time’, and some players are okay with that. Other players will then use and hold it over you the rest of the game. It just depends. I’m the sort of official that, if I do obviously make an error, I’m not going to try and bullshit my way through it, for want of a better word, nah I’ll be, ‘I stuffed it up’, I will say that, and I think that has helped in certain situations. (I8)

Another corrective process that officials identified as important for aligning expectations and game interpretations between players and officials was the act of giving explanations. Teachers use explaining as a way to attempt to resolve a conflict through compromising or integrating viewpoints of students (Wragg & Brown, 2001). Providing explanations was frequently recognised by officials as a situational and individual face giving act and communication skill used to adapt to encounters with players. Explanations were said to help in emotional management of players, but most importantly help to build a shared understanding about situations and increase officials’ credibility, and contribute to a working consensus (Goffman, 1959).
Officials said that being seen to provide explanations sends messages that convey accountability, transparency and a type of face-work that maintains face and builds consensus about the situation. Officials also identified that there should be boundaries around the use of explanations and types of explanations, such that some can be ‘explanations of the rules’ (I1, I5, I8, I14) and some ‘explanations about situations or the players’ actions’ (I10) that address technical or performance characteristics of players’ actions leading up to an event. One experienced basketball official said ‘explanations can be ineffective with players if officials have not built respect and trust early on with players’ (I4). The links between explanation and lines of respect align well with Arundale’s (2010) suggestions that openness, certainty and connectedness between interactants are central relational dimensions that predict how face is interactionally achieved. Explanatory communications are influenced by knowledge of individual player differences. They require a flexible style and can help in re-establishing a working consensus:

Again that is why I like to, if there is a player that is thinking, ‘Well why haven’t I got that advantage back’, just explaining to them what you saw, what you thought of it, why you are giving whatever sanction. It is to sort of help them understand and have more faith in you again. (I2)

I think explaining things to them, and explaining the way you saw an incident, can also help calm them down. It helps them understand why you’ve made that decision and why they can have faith in you the rest of the game. (I13)

Explanations are seen by interviewees as needing to be used selectively according to situation and person, and are found to be more effective with some player personalities than others.
7.9.3. *Officials adapt their communication in interactions by engaging in face exchanges with players that build contextually appropriate relations of connectedness or separateness*

There is a complex set of expectations placed on sport officials. Players can stereotype officials (Chapter 6), but on the other hand hold high expectations and quickly criticise officials when things don’t go their way (MacMahon et al., 2014). This tension between high expectations for officiating competence and stereotyping of different officials, consequently requires skills on the part of officials to encourage consensus and acceptance. Many officials in this study said they try to strategically build relationships and manage others’ interpretations of officials’ decisions and actions across encounters and exchanges with players. Arundale’s (2010) re-conceptualisation of face concepts as a relational phenomenon helps to explain how face patterns are interactionally achieved through language and symbolic exchange in communication. Arundale’s (2006) reconfiguration of face theory (emphasising persons-in-relationships as well as relationships in interaction) helps us to argue that face is more effectively conceptualised as players’ and officials’ construction of dynamic ‘interpretings’ across game interactions. This focuses on understanding ‘mutual manifestations’ of face (Arundale, 2010) and accommodative responses with players that influence a temporary agreement about conditions of the situation:

> In the interaction, I will allow him to maintain his agenda, if you like. So, they might say, ‘We are attacking the ball and feel they are not releasing us’. You understand that, and say ‘You need to roll away from the tackle’ and sort of, lead that interaction with a message back to him, so he can take something constructive back to them [other players]. It is a bit of push and pull so you can build that trust in the relationship. (I7)
Officials deliberately build game relationships to construct a working consensus, but some officials use such occasions to do so more than others. They improvise and respond to personality traits of players and interpretations of the needs of situations (Huang, 2014) that involve the strategic use of relational face patterns, involving varying degrees of openness, certainty and connectedness (Arundale, 2010). Officials view ‘face’ type exchanges with players as foundational in facilitating behavioral change in players: they foster respect, trust and acceptance of officials.

One interactional strategy officials said is important is showing awareness, through recognising and addressing player dissent (I7, I11) or other player behaviours that might hinder others’ performances (I1). Showing awareness to players can be considered a characteristic of relational face that contributes to certainty in the officiating relationship for players (Arundale, 2010), because it demonstrates affiliation, reliability, role commitment and focus. The communication approach officials use can directly influence how ‘face’ relations are built and influence degrees of connectedness and separateness that Arundale (2010) said were indicative of ‘interpretings’ about others:

‘If you do this, we can get on with it’, or ‘If you can sort this out, I’m sure the game will open up’, just that gentle message, as opposed to ‘If you don’t do this the next bloke goes to the bin’. They are the same message, fix problem ‘A’, but firstly by delivering the positive outcome if you do, or secondly reinforcing a negative outcome if you don’t. I think it works better with players across the game, to keep the calm demeanour and being a ‘voice of reason’. (I9)
Certainty/uncertainty and openness/closedness are dimensions that help to influence and describe relationships and the way people form and sustain them (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Face, in terms of relational separation and connection, explains how criticism is performed, handled and depersonalised as co-interactants attend to each other’s face while maintaining their own (Mohd Don & Izadi, 2013). In the example of criticism, face exchange is depersonalized in ways that focus on institutional goals and objectives that people are expected to cooperate with and follow (Chang & Haugh, 2011). Some officials recognise that players can become increasingly frustrated and need to allow players to ‘get it off their chest’ (I2, I14). Officials will listen to players (up to a point and where it seems reasonable to do so), believing that players benefit from being heard and need opportunities for cathartic responses. This type of accommodation of players’ needs and relational ‘face’ giving to players in interactions helps to make players feel respected and understood by officials. The ‘voice effect’ is a well-studied phenomenon in organisational justice research that says that when people are given an opportunity to share their perspective in decision-making, they feel more satisfied and are more likely to increase the quality of their job performance (Van den Bos, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1996). Officials balance the use of voice with their need to retain ‘authority’.

Officials also said they use previous experience with players to anticipate and guide the ways they accommodate and adapt to players’ behaviour in situations. Sport officials who have developed previous relations with players can therefore influence the types of face exchanges that occur, and patterns of face that are co-constituted (Arundale, 2006). More experienced
officials said greater familiarity with some players improved a shared understanding about boundaries in interactions, and freedom to experiment with a greater range of emotions in exchanges, including humor, sarcasm and feigned anger. Familiarity with players reduces the need to use impression management in interaction, so that less familiarity requires more procedural communication and other ‘tool-box’ skills:

There is the player you totally react to, you’ve never seen in your life, and you use the tools available to you. It might be a calm demeanour. Use a talk on the run, a word here or there to break the ice. I will definitely try and say some things here or there that often get an interaction that breaks the ice really well, so to get their confidence in you. (I1)

Officials emphasised that one type of rapport management strategy useful with players and coaches is humor or repartee in interactions. Humor was said to convey favorable personal qualities and build rapport with players, which can help in circumventing negative emotional responses in situations of conflict. Professional European football referees use humor as a personal characteristic that is said to suggest approachability (Slack et al., 2013). Some officials in this study said that humor should be selectively used and be used based on the extent of previous encounters with particular players:

I find that a small joke actually works with some players, but doesn’t work with others, but it just depends on what sort of personality type of player they are. (I8)

Building relationships with captains, coaches and other influential players in sport teams was frequently identified by officials as important in helping to manage reactions and game interpretations of players. In some sports there is an emphasis on formality in captain-official interactions (e.g., rugby union, hockey), but officials who can build relational patterns of face with captains help to persuade perceptions of decision accuracy (I6) and
acceptance of officiating actions and reasoning (I4, I11, I12). Officials said it is preferable that captains show leadership that helps to create collaborative discourse and tempers other players’ reactions. Some captains were said to contribute low tolerance and disruption to game interactions. In the following example, one official emphasises the importance of interactants communicating constructively with each other:

A lot of communication should be channeled through the player captains. The captain might approach to just get a particular point across. It is sort of respecting that relationship. I am always making a point to be receptive to what the player is trying to say because often it will be valid. (I5)

It is important for officials to pro-actively adapt and directly approach situations by making explicit efforts to collaborate with players to enhance relations. However, officials also said that there should be a set of overarching interaction goals officials maintain in order to manage expectations about role identities or align interpretations through interactions:

Letting them know, like there was a few good situations there [referring to video vignettes] like the message was, ‘We’ve seen this, this is what you’ve done, this is what we are not happy with’. You need to directly acknowledge they have done the wrong thing. (I2)

If they come at you hard, you going back at them hard is not going to work. But, with some players you just have to go in hard. Sometimes you have to go in and know, ‘No, you’re [the player] wrong’. (I12)

Differences in situation and between officials ensure an almost infinite range of interaction permutations and intersubjectivities. Broad dimensions provided by (Arundale, 2010) such as openness/closedness, certainty/uncertainty, connectedness/separateness help to account for the approaches that officials use in interactions with players to achieve their multiple goals within the contexts that arise.
7.10. **Summary of findings, discussion and implications**

The aim of this study was to explore sport officials’ perceptions of situations and interactions with players and improve understanding of co-constructive communication processes between players and officials. The research questions address different dimensions of interactions - ways officials ‘define’ situations with players, ways officials are motivated in interactions, and ways they adapt to situations and accommodate players through different types of relational face-work. Chapter 6 detailed a study with player captains across the same interactor sports (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008) which asked similar questions, including ways players define situations, are motivated in interactions, and ways they attempt to influence officials in interactions. Video elicitation interviews were used in both studies as a method to stimulate recall and probe the experiences and perceptions of game interactions that might otherwise be difficult to tap into or attain. Sport officials shared many insights into ways they ascribe meanings to their own experience and personal, relational and cultural influences on interactions with players.

The questions and analysis were heavily influenced by Goffman’s seminal works (1959; 1967) and subsequent adaptations and refinements of his ideas (Arundale, 2010; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kemper, 2011; Spencer-Oatey, 2007), and by constructionist concepts of communication exemplified by Burleson (2007). Goffman himself was not one for bullet point lists of extrapolated points or summaries: his greatest contributions are concepts and accounts presented in extended passages of prose. This project and analysis attempt to reduce and communicate these ideas.
From the many discussions with experienced sport officials some important patterns and insights emerge that help us to conceptualise and reconceptualise interactions between officials and players. Officials have some overarching goals for their performance that help to define the situation for them. These goals include safe and fair play, games that reach the end in relative harmony and in line with rules, conventions and expectations. Interactions with players are simultaneously opportunities to contribute towards, and potential threats to, these multiple goal ends. Whether interactions contribute to or detract from the overarching goals is determined to an extent by the relational patterns of ‘face’ established with players.

Findings here show that the officials interviewed generally recognise the need to be flexible and to be able to adapt to situations with players. They rarely use the term ‘face’, but their accounts of approaches to situations demonstrate that they employ a range of face-work behaviours, and manage relational face-work patterns with players in interactions. Officials have a desire to protect against face threat to themselves and disruptions to their performance that might jeopardise their credibility. They aim to establish shared behavioural expectations with players that constitute a ‘working consensus’ (Goffman, 1959) and involve an awareness for face sensitivities of players. They aim to manage their role (or public) identity in situations by displaying impressions in interaction in ways that demonstrate authority, awareness, empathy and understanding.
This study revealed conventions in player-official interactions consistent with concepts of ‘front-stage’ work of officials used to manage perceptions of fairness, authority and control. This fosters respect for their role and limits opportunities for players to undermine their front-stage performance (Goffman, 1959). Face-work processes by sport officials range in their deliberateness, unconscious responses to others and subtlety to achieve a work consensus that brings continuity to game activities. There was also evidence of official constraint in interactions that is consistent with Goffman’s (1959) concept of the ‘back stage’. The front-stage is a place where officials avoid direct displays of favouritism or inappropriate dealings with players and where coaches can discredit a preferable ‘front’ that officials want to display. Officials aim to lift their credibility to players and others, with an overarching aim to progress game activities.

The construct of ‘time’ emerged as an important aspect of the way officials define situations and interactions with players. Officials saw interactions as a way to manage perceptions of time with players and others that carried implications about ways officials are viewed as competent to lead game activities. Officials perform identity work that is contextually and player appropriate and related to passages of time that are managed through rapid or paced interactions. In some sports, officials try to speed up play through brief interactions with players and use ‘toolbox’ phrases that help to direct players’ attention and facilitate game progress. In contrast, officials also attempt to use interactions to slow down the perception of time, particularly in situations that require officials’ intervention to manage player behaviour or mitigate ‘flashpoints’ where emotions can become heightened.
‘Time’ contributes to a working consensus by helping to create preferred ‘lines’ (Goffman, 1959) of control and command for officials with players, that lead to desired game outcomes.

Officials adapt to the needs of situations by using certain approaches and communication styles in interaction that help manage conflict, protect against face threat, and accommodate needs of players. Many officials recognised that players can attempt to establish control over officials by using intimidation, questioning or complaining. Officials attempt to avoid giving control away to players.

When incompatible communication behaviour or types of face exchanges occur, officials use different corrective face-work strategies to re-establish appropriate statuses of face to themselves and other players. It is important to not appear overreactive or flustered in front of players, as some players can use such information to choose interpersonal approaches and face-work strategies intended to influence officials. Some officials perceive players have certain face concerns, including not feeling unnecessarily targeted by officials, being respected in interactions with officials, and given opportunity to perform skills without being unjustifiably punished or penalised. Some officials actively use rapport building techniques (while others prefer to say less to players), humour, displays of accountability or politeness, and explanations and manipulations of time to relationally and interactionally build definitions of situations that support a ‘working consensus’.
The findings highlight the complexity and multi-functionality of officiating interactions and communication messages that are needed to meet the nuanced and changing objectives of officiating work in interactor sports. Face-work strategies are a set of integrative and adaptive interaction capacities that are fundamental to the communication ‘toolbox’ for sport officials. For many officials these were developed through much game experience. Face-work describes face-to-face behaviour responses that allow people to maintain identities and have valued personal characteristics and attributes validated by others (Dippold, 2011). It is verbal and non-verbal actions and self-presentation acts people use to diffuse, manage, enhance or downgrade self or others’ face (Huang, 2011).

Officials, both deliberately and unconsciously, mobilise impression management resources in interactions with players based on their interpretations and appraisal of their utility in situations and face exchanges. This helps officials to preserve face for others, where threats to face can create conflict and imbalances in relations, specifically to attitudes of respect, status-power obligations and control. This can involve the use of corrective processes by officials to make players feel their frustrations are understood and to build a situationally-based, surface agreement by showing they are conscientious and accountable (Simmons, 2011).

Game interactions can be opportunities for relational ‘mishaps’, where interactions come with risk. However, officials have the opportunity to influence individuals and game outcomes for the better. Some officials use these opportunities to their advantage to negotiate situations or navigate
interactions, while others can be more introverted or avoid them. The capacity for officials to adapt to situations and others’ perspectives gives increased weight to the relational, identity and instrumental issues in interactions (Goffman, 1967; Burleson, 2007).

The findings provide some important insights for communication training and development, especially when considered alongside the players’ perspectives of the same interactions detailed in Chapter 6, and when considered in terms of constructivist notions of interpersonal communication skills. The discussion and conclusions in Chapter 8 will more closely examine the implications of the different perspectives articulated in Chapters 6 and 7 before making recommendations for future development strategies.

A constructivist approach to communication skills emphasises the importance of adaptive processes that use ‘person-centered’ messages and acknowledge others as reasoning agents (Burleson, 2007). A communication ability that is important to the ways officials adapt or accommodate their interaction is depth processing – a deliberate, systematic and mindful assessment of communicative messages from others, the people who are involved, and the interaction circumstances (Burleson, 2007). The findings of this study, in combination with findings from Study 1 (with officiating development stakeholders) and Study 2 (with players), emphasise the importance of depth processing abilities in skilled officiating communication that helps officials make more sophisticated assessments of players’ motivations, interaction goals and face sensitivities.
Advanced training and assessment for officials in skilled interaction might consider improving officials’ understandings about face concepts and differences between players and officials in their attitudes to interactions. To cultivate face-work competencies and consciousness, communication skills and capacities such as depth processing (Burleson, 2007), mindful reframing, mutual face validation, de-centering or dialogue bridging skills (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009) may be valuable, in combination with conflict management styles (Mascarenhas et al., 2006), explanation giving (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2006) and preventive communication techniques (Mascarenhas et al., 2005). Ting-Toomey (1999) emphasises the importance of ‘mindfulness’ in interactions that involves attending to one’s internal assumptions, emotions and cognitions, while becoming attuned to other’s assumptions, emotions and cognitions.

Littlejohn and Foss (2009) suggest that competent face-work management requires that people increase their awareness concerning ‘self’s and other’s cultural and individual face-work conditioning process’ (p. 373). Study 2 (Chapter 6) found that players differ in their perspective of officials based on perceived personal qualities of officials, and bring different attitudes to interactions with officials (i.e., fatalistic acceptance, selective challenge, continuous opportunism). Mindful reflection on players’ reactions and responses, and stressing the importance of building relational face, has implications for ways officials develop constructive conflict skills and competent interaction capacities using a holistic view of factors that frame the face negotiation process (Arundale, 2010; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Mindful reflection on dynamic relations and what is co-constructed by players and
officials can help give officials greater insight into and influence over the impact of their decisions and communication on players and the game.

This study provided numerous insights into the ways officials define situations and interactions with players, the ways they are motivated and how they adapt their communication to different situations and interactions
CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

The aims of this research project were to build on current conceptualisations of sports officiating interpersonal communication and to make recommendations to governing sport bodies on communication skills training and development. This chapter concludes the project with a detailed response to these aims, reflection on limitations of the scope and implementation of the project with, and some of the many opportunities for future research that arise from this study.

The first chapter explained a growing need for sport officials, high expectations and scrutiny of officiating performance at all levels, and the multidimensional challenges inherent in the role of officiating. It explained the centrality of the ability to communicate and interact effectively under various and intense pressures. It also explained that communication has often been conceptualised and trained as if interactions were one to one, and as one-way instruction and ‘selling’ a decision. Further, much previous research had gathered data from elite officials, considered players as if they were homogeneous, and focused on one sport at a time.
This research contributed in several ways to the officiating field. It has explored generic dimensions of officiating communication and interaction, conceptualised interaction as dynamic and context driven, and assumed players bring motivations and strategies for influencing interaction.

The project identifies and names the important but unexplored in officiating interactions – the unspoken. It provides a language and concepts for player and official motivations, stereotypes and strategies for influencing interaction. Officials would benefit from training aimed at increasing their awareness and understanding of player behavior and communication. More explicit consideration of player perspectives, and their differences, will help officials understand and better manage interactions, and adapt their communication to officiating goals and situations.

The research engaged critically with cultural paradigms and constructivist frameworks to better understand the ways officials improve their communication practice. A model of human learning with phenomenological origins (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; 2004) provides a useful framework to describe phases or levels in communication performance improvement that can assist in training design, monitoring and assessment. This model assumes and accommodates the embodied and holistic approaches to communication improvement in officials recommended on the basis of the findings of this research project. The adoption of such approaches will promote the integration of skills-based learning with experiential approaches to improve interaction and adaptation for the spoken and the ‘unspoken’ in officiating communication.
8.1. General summary of the research

Three studies were conducted within this research project. The research purposefully sought a variety of voices and perspectives on officiating, beginning with development managers and performance coaches, followed by a study of players’ views, before interviews with officials in the final stage.

Study 1 aimed to explore peak officiating bodies’ conceptualisations of officiating communication and player management, ways officials improve their communication and the perceived role sport bodies occupy in helping facilitate improvement. As a starting point for this research project, it reflected on the experiences and opinions of those who govern the training, monitoring and evaluation of sport officials in Australia.

Four salient, related themes emerged:

- personal qualities of the official;
- ‘one-way’ communication (e.g., giving explanations, direction giving, instructing) and impression management;
- situation monitoring (interpreting player and context); and
- skilled interaction (adapting communication appropriately to context).

The findings of Study 1 highlighted interpretive and interactive communication skills that are perceived to be most essential, however, importantly, this project shows current training curricula fail to address or adequately account for these aspects of officiating communication.
The interpretive and interactive dimensions of officiating communication that emerged as salient issues from Study 1 led to a second review of communication literature focused on ‘interaction’, which helped to guide and focus the next two studies.

Study 2 explored the views of sport team player captains about players’ approaches and motivations in their communication with officials. The study participants were drawn from different levels, from novice to elite, in a range of ‘interactor’ sports. (Interactor sports are those where many decision cues are present and there are frequent player-official interactions; see MacMahon & Plessner, 2008).

Critical examination, from new scholarly perspectives, revealed a spectrum of player interactions with officials, player motivations and the methods players use to influence officials.

Some players are more accepting of officials and their decisions, others are more emotional, reactive or irrational in response to decisions and incidents, others occasionally challenge and question officials, and some display a continuous opportunism. Officials who recognise and distinguish player types and behaviours may feel a greater sense of understanding and may more effectively and appropriately respond to situational needs of interactions.

Study 3 explored sport officials’ perceptions of interaction with players and the ways in which they adapt their communication. The officials were
drawn from the same ‘interactor’ sports surveyed in Studies 1 and 2 and, as in Study 2, were drawn from different levels of play and experience.

Officials have several overarching important game outcomes (player safety and safe conduct, fairness, spectacle and socialisation/enjoyment) and a range of attitudes and motivations in interactions with players. This study revealed that managing relational interests is an important game outcome for officiating. This management involves a variety of behavioural strategies and face exchanges used by officials when interacting with players, which not only protect against face threat to officials, but also preserve face concerns of players, such as player autonomy and feelings of subordination. Some officials more than others recognise ways face management helps in behavioural change with players and contributes to a temporary agreement, or ‘working consensus’ (Goffman, 1959). Officials adapt or accommodate their interactions based on anticipation of reactions; a quality of emotional intelligence that allows for accurate appraisals of players’ emotions and situational responses.

Two practice models emerged from this project. Both have since been published in peer-reviewed communication and sport science scholarly journals. The first was a four-part conceptual model of communication and player management in the development of sport officials (see Chapter 4). The second was a table of broad descriptors of player differences in their communication and approaches to interactions with sport officials (see Chapter 6). These models provide valuable conceptual frameworks that can be used to guide the development of training packages and experiences for
sport official communication and interaction training, introducing or enhancing explicit understandings of self, player and face and strategies such as experience-based reflection and feedback.

8.2. Limitations of study and reflexive narrative

There are several limitations related to scope and implementation of this project that deserve discussion and reflection before detailing how the project’s findings contributed to the main aims.

I had worked previously with basketball and rugby officials (Cunningham et al. 2012) and was challenged by a limited scholarly literature on what seemed to be so central to officiating – communication and player management. My initial proposals were heavily influenced by the works of Mellick et al (2005) and Simmons (2010; 2011) and their focus on the communication of and player perception of fairness. My personal background is as a post-graduate academic in Wales and Australia, with experience mostly as a recreational and amateur athlete with some officiating experience. In some ways the research was driven by a ‘pro’ officiating researcher view, but remaining cognisant to maintain a theoretically sensitised, scientist’s neutral perspective.

My assumptions and interpretations of the research findings will have been influenced by this background. A lifetime of sport participation has given me considerable sensitisation to the field, but my particular experiences and background influenced the research questions, lines of inquiry, and interpretations across the three project studies. My supervisory committee
brought expertise spanning psychology, communication and cultural studies, this has undoubtedly influenced me and the multidisciplinary and conceptual orientation the research.

Initially my orientation was somewhat reductionist: I was asking what factors or variables might be isolated as super factors that could be trained or selected in officials? For much of my first few months I focused on seeking clues to a magic bullet or bullet that could be trialled and evaluated. However, by the time of my project proposal confirmation and entering the field for the first field study, my critical approach to officiating and communication had evolved to an understanding of the limits of the field in practice and scholarship, and to seek understanding of ‘conceptualisations’ in that first study.

This evolution is reflected in the structure of this thesis, and the inclusion of two literature review chapters. In hindsight, the social/communication ideas and literature that drove a focus on ‘interaction’ in Studies 2 and 3 were already well established and available at the outset of the project. But I needed to make a journey and transition in my approach to understanding communication that was thoroughly endorsed by the findings of the first study, the attitudes of peak bodies.

Given this project explored a relatively unknown area, a qualitative approach allowed for flexibility to explore unknown concepts that hadn’t been previously unconsidered. Other officiating communication studies used quantitative methods (Simmons, 2010) or mixed-methods that
incorporate both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Dosseville et al., 2014). It also allowed for a richness in the data that could otherwise be attained through quantitative approaches (and likely not work for the proposed research questions). It relied heavily on the researcher’s interpretation of data gathered from relatively small samples of participants, but did allow for a broad and varied sample of officiating stakeholders to be explored. It explored perspectives of different officiating stakeholders separately, but included a range of interactor sports largely without differentiation. Thus the research design assumed that different stakeholder views and understandings are important variables in sport officiating. It also assumed that there are important elements in officiating communication that are common to different sports.

Communicators in most fields well understand the importance and influence of different stakeholder positions. However the evidence basis for assuming common elements to officiating across interactor sports is limited. Inclusion of different sports without differentiation is largely based on the frequently mentioned work of MacMahon and Plessner (2008) and the significant cross-sport officiating program operated for many years by the Australian Institute of Sport. This assumption, and treatment, of different sports as equals is a limitation that deserves further exploration and testing in the future. There are likely to be nuanced differences between communication cultures among sports.

The majority of the data used in this study was obtained by one-to-one in-depth interviews with several format and stimulus variations. There are
recognised drawbacks to using interviewing as a data gathering techniques. Participants can potentially tell the interviewer what they might want to hear and there can be unintended interpersonal influences and dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee (such as personalities and mood) (Patton, 2002). Interviewing methods were used in this thesis project to explore face and face-work concepts. Other studies that explore face concepts generally draw on linguistic approaches that use dialogue analysis to understand how face is interactionally achieved in conversation (Chang & Haugh, 2011; Haugh, 2011). This was outside the scope of this exploratory research, where the aim was to acknowledge the occurrence of face exchanges in player-official interactions. Further exploring complexities of face and face-work using linguistic approaches may have a place in future officiating communication research.

Part of my research time was spent with officials and officiating coaches within a specialised community of practice for advancing officiating talent in Australia (ASC’s National Officiating Scholarship Program). Half of the participant members for Study 3 were in the scholarship program. This experience and the affiliation of the research with a high-performance officiating group could be considered confounding to the results and a potential limitation. Response bias could have arisen and been exasperated due to the researcher’s relationship with some participants alongside his professional relationship. My educator role in training workshops allowed me to develop prior relationships with some study participants. Consequently this could have influenced ways participants approach to answering some questions (i.e., response bias), perhaps to be more guarded
or open, or to position themselves in a more favourable light (Patton, 2002). However, importantly on reflection, my proximity to a cross-sport cohort sample of officials helped to theoretically sensitise me to the ‘interactor’ officiating field.

A potential final limitation was that the research probed aspects of player behaviour that might be considered to have anti-social or strategic motivations in interactions with sport officials. There may be a reason that player motivations and influence strategies are a major gap in our knowledge – players simply don’t want to share their propensity to manipulation. In Study 2 careful steps were taken to reduce this limitation by choosing a video elicitation approach that allowed player captains to comment as a third-party observers. Any possible response bias that might have emerged from using interviews was potentially mitigated through using a video elicitation approach that gave opportunity for participants to see what other players do and ways officials interact (third-person observer) and then reflect and comment on their own personal experience (first-person perspective). The approach provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on stimuli of different player interactions (some of which included conflict or confrontation). Other researchers have used similar approaches to allow players’ to comment on their own lived experiences in interactions with officials, in order to understand how altercations develop or don’t develop in soccer games (Rix-Lièvre & Genebrier, 2011).
The remaining sections of this conclusion discuss how the findings of this research contributed to the project’s aims and future research and training opportunities in communication and interaction in officiating.

8.3. **Research aim #1: Improve understanding of conceptualisations of sport official communication across different ‘interactor’ sports**

The first research aim was to improve current conceptualisations of sport officiating communication across different ‘interactor’ sport settings (MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). The next two sections discuss how this research has improved conceptualisations of sport official communication through its conceptual and methodological contributions.

8.3.1. **Conceptual contributions – officiating communication**

Previous conceptualisations of officiating communication have advanced the importance of impression management (especially ‘appearing confident, self-assured, and composed’) and decision communication, but have not generally considered protecting the face of others, especially players, in interactions. This project makes this important conceptual advance.

Co-construction of interactions between players and officials became a central focus through which this project contributes to understanding officiating communication practice. The project introduced established theoretical concepts about human interaction to the study of officiating communication. Concepts such as ‘defining the situation’, ‘working consensus’, ‘front stage-back stage’ (Goffman, 1959) and ‘face’ (Arundale,
2010; Goffman, 1967) provide analytical tools and a new lexicon for framing and describing commonalities of interaction in officiating contexts.

Officials consciously and unconsciously manage face, saving and protecting face for themselves and players, within the constraints and conventions of games and officiating. Face and face-work concepts articulate micro-organising features of interaction between players and officials such as attitudes, expectations, interaction goals and inherent values that are subtly accepted among people (Goffman, 1967). In this research project role expectations, power status and relational exchanges between players and officials became central themes for understanding the hidden or less explicit in-game interactions. Officials will obviously have different interaction goals game-to-game, but the project innovatively used concepts of face to give a language for understanding players’ expectations of and responses to officials generally, and within interactions.

This research project separated and used different theories of face within the context of officiating. Politeness and respectfulness are favourable interpersonal attributes in officials that reflect Goffmanian concepts of face (a desire for appropriate treatment, ‘saving face’). Face as a conjointly and collaboratively constructed concept of interpersonal communication (Arundale, 2010) places importance on ways officials build certainty and connectedness with players. This provides new concepts for understanding the ways that players and officials co-construct game interactions (and, by implication, game-play; Rix-Lièvre et al., 2015) and the unique ways this
occurs through game interactions (e.g., rapport building, player-official ‘banter’ in soccer, Slack et al., 2013).

Frequently people talk of the need for officials to achieve a balance between authority and accountability, and rigid rule enforcement and what is fair. This research project improves conceptualisations of officiating communication practice by integrating constructivist ideas that account for individual differences in perceiving social situations accurately, interpreting others’ interpersonal messages and producing appropriate interpersonal messages.

A constructivist view of communication skills is new to the officiating field and can provide valuable concepts for improving skilled interaction by officials with players. It focuses on the way people think about social situations and individual differences in the ‘interpersonal constructs’ people bring to social environments. This is necessary in more complex and demanding communication environments such as sport officiating, there are time pressures and multiple goals. This suggests and helps to account for the importance of ‘balance’ and feel for context in officiating communication – a sensitivity to surroundings and, even more importantly, appropriate selection of behaviors.

This research project has contributed to understanding officiating communication by blending two well-established theoretical traditions. The alignment of constructivist communication principles (Burleson, 2007) with dramaturgical sociology and face concepts (Goffman, 1967; Arundale,
2010) aids our understanding of practice concepts of situation monitoring and appropriate communication responses that were made salient by Study 1. Social perception processes (Burleson, 2007) important to a communicator’s ability to formulate effective interpersonal messages can effectively underpin ways that officials define and orientate their communication and responses to perceived face patterns (Arundale, 2010; Goffman, 1967) and situations. Combining both constructivist communication principles and dramaturgical sociology give a vocabulary and a way to frame these important aspects of officiating communication.

Although ‘improvement’ was not a direct focus for the research reported here, the project does provide insight into processes that constitute the black box of ‘experience’ and its contribution to practice community epistemology and pedagogy enhancement. Conceptualisations of sport official communication practice models are generally unknown. Mellick et al.’s (2005) reference to the ‘hidden curriculum’ seems particularly apt. This phrase was used to describe the ways in which officials improve their communication as a result of game experience and informal advice from officiating peers, mentors and assessors. There is a common assumption within the officiating practice community that communication skills can be taught only up to a point, and that there exists also a ‘natural’ quality expressed by some individuals (sometimes referred to as the ‘X-factor’).

‘Experience’ is commonly associated with explaining aspects of improvement and is assumed to account substantially for the development of interaction skills in officials. But the term ‘experience’ has been used
rather generally to describe unnamed processes or chemistries. Accelerating the benefits of experience might involve greater opportunities for officials to participate in more structured experiences and implicit learnings.

Which experiences help? Which are most helpful?

This project helps to articulate the role of social and interpersonal processes that contribute to improved communication performance – thus it starts to unveil the ‘black box’ of experience.

The accumulation of experiences for officials (whether game experience or outside the officiating environment) aids communication improvement and is largely refined, shaped and made more advantageous through reflection on practice and other structured experiences and implicit learnings (e.g., Ollis et al., 2006). Bourdieu’s (1979) concept of ‘habitus’ helps explain how people accumulate and reproduce embodied social structures and dispositions that are constituted by practice. Noble and Watkins (2003) said that getting a feel for the game required both bodily learning and cognitive, purposeful reflection. Study 1 interviewees emphasised the importance of mentorship and coach relationships for officials (where sport bodies believed standards could be improved) and opportunities for officials to discuss non-technical aspects of officiating with one another under the guidance of experienced officials and other experts. This finding accords with an understanding that experience is most advantageous when it is bodily, and purposefully and contextually reflected upon.
This project has appropriated Dreyfus and Dreyfus’s (1986; 2004) modelling of skill acquisition to communication improvement in officiating. It reminds us that learners go through certain changes in their perception of context and ability to cope with the complexity of situations. This research project contributes to conceptualising ‘experience’ in officiating communication improvement by, first, placing importance on explicit learnings and supervised experiences in interaction (and about player differences) and, second, emphasising opportunity for self-reflection experiences and situated learning with other officials (to build an enhanced ‘social capital’).

8.3.2. Methodological contributions

This research project makes several contributions to the field of officiating and officiating communication research through its methods and methodology. Perspectives of different officiating ‘interest groups’ not usually heard from were purposefully included in the research (i.e., development managers and performance coaches, players and officials from different sports). The project introduces new approaches for officiating research by exploring communication dimensions of officiating across different sports and, uniquely, used a qualitative method new to officiating communication studies to explore interaction between players and officials.

Prior to this research there were few officiating studies that used players’ views at all, and no known officiating communication studies that drew on the opinions and experiences of those who oversee and govern officiating development. Previous research on players in officiating communication
studies generally treated them and their views as if they were homogeneous (e.g., reporting single response rating scores or percentages for favourability or satisfaction). The qualitative methods used in this project helped to uncover individual differences and categories of difference in ways that players respond and interact with officials. The use of video vignettes assumed that responses would be influenced by game contexts and individual officials’ attitudes.

Previous officiating communication research generally focused on one or two sports at a time. This research makes a unique contribution to the field by using different sports to explore communication concepts that are more common to officiating. This methodological consideration was maintained across the three project studies and helped to reveal a broader scope of interaction and communication complexities. Many of the social interaction principles and learnings from the studies were found to apply across the sports. For example, the cross-sport sample used for this research yielded a new four dimensional model of officiating communication and player management that helps to account for sport official communication at different levels in different sports.

This research project used an interpretive approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of study participants. The project contributes in several ways to the field of officiating communication by blending qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews with video elicitation techniques) to explore interaction in officiating communication. Video elicitation was used as a qualitative method that combined interviewing
techniques with exposure to visual stimuli to facilitate discussion and reflection about player-official interaction. Importantly, vignettes did not just deal with visual and auditory cues: they were also used to discuss the unspoken (beliefs, preconceptions, motivations, stereotypes) and the influences of the unspoken in interactions.

The video elicitation approach was adapted from other fields to probe beliefs about the unspoken in interaction and thus elicit ‘richness’ in interviewees’ accounts of their perceptions. Interview questioning focused directly on the motivations and ways that people define situations (Goffman, 1959) and face exchanges in interactions (Arundale, 2010; Goffman, 1967). This contributes a new and insightful method to qualitative inquiry in the officiating field, and to interaction in other sport studies (e.g., coaching sciences, athlete performance analysis).

In articulating dimensions of interaction and interactants and context, this research project provides a framework of concepts and understandings for the management and development of officiating communication. A primary contribution of this project arises from its focus on interaction, a central feature of officiating communication that to date has been underexplored and, indeed, is without a vocabulary for exploration. Using dramaturgical sociology and constructivism, this project has identified, explored and labelled the importance of face, complex definition of situations and co-construction of officiating communication. Up to now officials have been encouraged to present themselves in certain ways, but in large part without concepts and language for interaction, the unspoken in interaction,
characteristics of situations and motivations of other interactants. Some of the opportunities and possibilities arising from this new knowledge are discussed in the following sections.

An explanation of ways this research has contributed methodological innovations in technique and research strategy was also discussed in this section. The project drew on a literature that was largely quantitative, had mostly gathered data from expert officials, used unidirectional concepts of communication, and tended to study one sport at a time. With a view to understanding principles common to officiating across sports, this project focused consistently on a range of sports where officials frequently interact with players (i.e., ‘interactor sports’; MacMahon & Plessner, 2008). In addition to officials, it drew on interview data gathered from peak body representatives and player captains from a range of levels of play. It used qualitative interpretive techniques and concepts developed from a hybrid of dramaturgical sociology and constructivism to explore what had previously not been explored – the unspoken, ritualistic, co-constructed nature of interaction in sport officiating. Sport officials face communication and interactional challenges similar to practitioners in many other professional fields and occupations (e.g., health care, policing, teaching). Theories and models of communication developed in other professional practice and occupational fields were useful and influential in the design and conduct of this project.
8.4.  

**Research aim #2:** Make recommendations to sport bodies about ways they can help sport officials improve in communication and interaction with team sport players

This second research aim was answered in large part through developing a better conceptualisation of sports official communication (research aim #1). Most sport bodies need to recruit, train and provide some form of ongoing development for their officials. This project’s first study indicated that many of the challenges concerning development generally, and communication specifically, are similar. Yet there is a history of sports operating in isolation, with limited sharing of knowledge, efforts and resources. This section of the report draws from the literature reviewed and the research project’s three field studies to provide a range of recommendations in two main areas – principles and structures for improving communication practice in sport officials. This research acknowledges the realities of officiating development pathways and the imperative for tailoring training and improvement to available resources, motivations and barriers related to officiating participation and retention (MacMahon et al., 2014).

8.4.1. **Principles for improving communication practice in sport officials**

Officiating bodies could greatly benefit from identifying universal principles that underpin communication improvement in officials. This section advances three main general principles for officiating communication improvement that derive from the project’s findings:

- retain and develop the ‘toolbox’ of skills;
- emphasise the social and relational; and
• emphasise adaptivity and flexibility for complex interpersonal constructs.

8.4.1.1. Retain and develop the ‘toolbox’ of skills

Early teachings and training in officiating communication should focus on improving a ‘toolbox’ of ‘one-way’ communication skills (e.g., flag and whistle use, hand signaling mechanics, body language, positioning). There was considerable consensus among development managers and performance coaches in this research that showing positive body language, calmness, confidence and self-assurance are fundamental communication skills for officials. This aligns with previous research (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010) and leading readings in officiating science and practice (MacMahon et al., 2014).

Sports should continue to help officials build their ‘one-way’ toolbox of verbal and non-verbal communication skills, but the ‘toolbox’ can be expanded to include explicit teaching about skilled interaction. This includes new tools, impression management, delivering decisions, explanation giving, conflict management styles, conversational management, perspective taking and active listening. It emerged from this research that the ability to manage interpersonal encounters and face-to-face conversations is an essential part of officiating. Progressively, more complex skills can be incorporated into developing the communication ‘toolbox’ and further integrated with other aspects of development (see more on integration below).
Based on the research project’s findings, the first principle recommended here for improving officiating communication practice is to retain and enhance a ‘toolbox’ of skills approach. The second principle focuses on common findings across the project’s studies – increasing an emphasis on the social and relational in officiating communication.

8.4.1.2.  *Emphasise the social and relational in officiating*

This research project found widespread acknowledgement among officials and their trainers and developers that interaction is a vitally important dimension in officiating but is perceived to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to train. The findings indicate that communication improvement demands increased emphasis on social and relational dimensions of officiating, especially making explicit the ‘unspoken’ in interactions, self-awareness and developing deeper and more wide-ranging sensitivities to people and context influences on interaction.

An important dimension of sport official communication highlighted by this research was the ability to assess players and sport situations and select and adapt for appropriate interaction responses. Study 2 in this research project developed 15 categories of motivation and approaches by players within a four-part typology that can be applied across sports. These categorisations are intended to help officials become more aware of, and to expect and perceive different attitudes and agendas in interactions. This, in turn, is intended to help officials develop more refined perception when monitoring situations and produce more precisely crafted responses to the needs of situations arising when they encounter different interpersonal styles. This
concept of refinement is consistent with Burleson’s (2007) depth processing
and Goffman (1967) and Arundale’s (2010) focus on relational dimensions
of face and interaction.

Program design needs to address ways officials can be helped to become
more attuned to players’ and game needs, sometimes referred to in this
research project as having a ‘feel for the game’. Officials should be given
opportunities to appraise their own beliefs about interactions, and be guided
to discuss less visible, invisible or unspoken aspects of interaction and
context. Some sensitivities to the unspoken are developed with time and
experience, but evidence (Burleson & Kunkel, 1996; Dunn, 1998) suggests
that officials need to be deliberately and explicitly encouraged to engage
with the unspoken and required to reflect on motivations and strategies used
in interactions. Officials need to develop sensitivity and capacity to perceive
and respond through experience of, and articulation and reflection on, the
unspoken. It remains to be tested, but training that requires officials to focus
and reflect on unspoken characteristics of game context and interactions
(Burleson, 2007) should help officials develop the capacity to interpret
players and communicate more sensitively to the requirements of situations.
This project used video elicitation to engage participants in the unspoken in
interactions, similar principles can be applied to official training and
development.

Programs for communication improvement should also be geared to making
officials aware of themselves – about personal qualities they express and
how to better manage communication of those qualities to players.
Impression management is important, but how aware are officials of the impressions they generate? Profiling tools can help make officials aware of behavioural styles and perhaps increase their ability to modify appropriately. Thatcher (2005) and Simmons (2010: 2011) recognised the importance of player perceptions of officials to some extent. This project supports the general proposition that players respond differently to different characteristics and behaviours of officials.

Depth processing (a systematic and mindful scrutiny of interpersonal messages and the source of the message or communicative situation) is recognised as an important attribute of more effective communicators (Burleson, 2007). Training principles might consider innovative strategies that provide opportunities for officials to strengthen non-verbal judgments to improve accuracy at detecting bodily and affect cues (Puccinelli, Andrzejewski, Markos, Noga, & Motyka, 2013) and signs of deception (Morris & Lewis, 2010). Scenario building approaches, or ‘scripting’ common social interactions and situations, may help officials accelerate their ability to recognise and interpret situations and develop ‘procedural memories’ central to skilled communication (Burleson, 2007). Study 1 showed that reflection exercises with officials are used by some development managers to expose officials to different decision scenarios (termed ‘war-gaming’ by one interviewee). It would be useful to design exercises that help officials to reflect on the antecedents and consequences of social and relational circumstances in order to build more refined depth processing skills.
People enter officiating with different experiences and abilities to interact effectively with others. They respond differently to different development experiences. Some officials will benefit from concepts used for the first time in respect of officiating in this research project. These include ‘defining situations’, ‘front and back stage’ communication and impression work and ways to create a ‘working consensus’ through competent ‘face-work’ practices. Improving face-work practices in officials’ interaction depends to an extent on understanding fundamental values and attitudes such as fairness (Dosseville et al., 2014; Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011) and ‘face’ (Arundale, 2010; Goffman, 1967). This in turn influences perceptions of justice, respect and equal treatment. A challenge for future applied researchers in this area will be to develop ways to integrate ‘face’ and ‘face-work’ in officiating development plans and programs.

8.4.1.3. Emphasise adaptivity and flexibility in interaction

This research project suggests there is an inherent ecology and interactivity to officiating that should be acknowledged in conceptualisations of communication and its improvement. The findings from this project indicate the importance of helping officials to better adapt to novel situations and uncertainties of officiating, rather than emphasising formulaic communication through predetermined skills that neglect interaction. Judging context and adjusting communication based on situational needs are conditions unique to ‘interactor’ officiating settings (the focus of this research; MacMahon & Plessner, 2008) that should be at the heart of any principles aimed at improving communication. Improvement would focus on finding ways to build officials’ capacity to adapt and make discretionary
communication judgements, and use different interaction styles tailored to situations and officials’ traits. Officials in Study 3 reported the value of different face-work practices such as avoidance, approach and correcting ‘face loss’ to deal with situation needs and different types of players.

This research project drew on human learning and communication improvement frameworks that foreground the spontaneous, individual and intuitive in a learner’s communication (see Dreyfus, 1988; Salmon & Young, 2011). A review of literature suggests that developing a ‘feel for the game’ is important and best achieved in ways that include bodily experience (Noble & Watkins, 2003; Simmons & Cunningham, 2013). This project’s focus on interaction, and the need to respond appropriately in the moment of situations, lends support to training and development that is holistic and includes ‘bodily’ experiences of learning. It is important to have opportunity to experiment with actions in context and establish stronger links between perception-interpretation-action (Noble & Watkins, 2003). The learner must have opportunities for trialing behaviours, relating and fixing habitual responses in a given task. This strengthens embodied responses to situations that build more intuitive response chains to communication situations, resembling an enhanced ‘feel’ for game situations and types of interaction with players. Study 1 in this research project found that official development managers struggle to provide such training for interaction: this is consistent with studies of other practice settings, such as policing. It also showed that at higher levels of sport, officiating training is more likely to experiment with embodied strategies for developing officiating skills, such as role play.
An important set of questions for program design concerns the best approaches for improving adaptive and flexible skilled interaction in sport officials, and identifying communication performance areas we are trying to improve. Burleson (2007) suggests a set of processes or ‘acquired abilities’ involved in skilled communication on which people differ that considers this question. Burleson (2007) contributes social perception, message reception and message production as a useful map for considering learning activity focuses in program design. Training approaches might target officials’ complexity and depth of ‘interpersonal constructs’, capacity to ‘take’ the perspective of others involving ‘receptivity’ for others’ messages, and capacities for functional message formation and application. Reflection on practice and targeted feedback on interaction, players’ behaviour and attitudes and consequences of communication on the game are key ways that officials can build more complex interpersonal constructs and adaptive responses (Burleson, 2007). Deliberate, goal-directed and effortful practice experiences should be deconstructed, shared, discussed and critically reflected on.

This section highlighted several principles to guide and increase social and relational dimensions in sport officiating - retention and expansion of the ‘toolbox’ of skills, emphasis on the unspoken in interaction, and emphasis on complex interpersonal constructs to aid adaptation for appropriate interaction. The next section explores and recommends structural innovations to support the introduction of the principles recommended above.
8.4.2. **Structures for communication practice improvement**

This research project makes recommendations for structures concerning approaches to training and development, both within and across sports.

The main aim is to embed support for strategies that improve interaction in officiating communication, skill-based learning and help officials and officiating coaches understand players’ perceptions and attitudes concerning officials. This section identifies three main areas that address different dimensions of structure:

- establish improvement criteria for monitoring and assessment;
- share learning and resources across sports; and
- integrate communication with other core officiating areas.

8.4.2.1. **Establish holistic improvement framework and criteria to guide development, monitoring and assessment**

The first structural innovation recommended concerns the development of criteria for monitoring and assessing improvement in sport official communication and interaction.

A holistic development approach has a number of implications for informing learning and assessment structures of communication improvement in officiating. Communication needs to be taught and evaluated holistically because it is rare to attribute the impact of skill-based training to general improvements in skilled communication (see Hulsman, 2011; Salmon & Young, 2011). In medical education there have been calls
for more holistic conceptualisations of patient interaction, recently suggested approaches assert that ‘communication is fundamentally a moral enterprise’ (Salmon & Young, 2011). Just teaching a set of discrete communication skills neglects inherent values that underpin communication, making them appear superficial: instead, officials should be encouraged to be ‘imaginative in using their skills’ (Salmon & Young, 2011, p. 220). Using a holistic lens, communication assessment areas in sport officials might consider skills, communication goals and tasks, interaction effectiveness and self-evaluation (e.g., Hulsman, 2011). Holistic learning requires self-reflection, experience and direct feedback and integration of communication with other officiating skills.

The first literature review (Chapter 2) identified human learning frameworks that can be applied to officiating communication improvement generally and specifically for officials. Dreyfus’ phenomenological model of skill acquisition (1986; 2001) articulates phases (or stages) in communication perception, learning and performance for sport officiating. The model helps map the design, planning and monitoring of training and practice experiences that account for the technical and intellectual in officiating communication expertise. The model expects that time, experience and training lead to greater fluidity, ease and appropriately strategic adaptation to the requirements of interaction situations. Some of these dimensions are already articulated for other professional contexts such as nursing education (Nicol et al., 1996).
At ‘beginner’ and ‘advanced beginner’ stages (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1988; 2001) a focus of monitoring would be officials’ use of basic communication tools in line with rule application. This research project showed that development managers have a good grasp of ‘one-way’ communication needs in early instruction (i.e., whistle use, signaling, positioning), but have less understanding about other key skills novices should be learning to elevate official assessment and training. Often for people who begin officiating and for a large official population of officials, will first work in youth sport. This can define the goals and motivations for communication for officials to facilitate game enjoyment and socialisation, and educate players to the rules of the game.

Early monitoring and assessment of skilled communication improvement should firstly focus on context-independent learnings (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; 2004) and then progressively evaluate aspects of an official’s personal involvement and autonomy in the use of communication and interaction. At the ‘advanced beginner’ stage, as articulated by the Dreyfus’ model, an increased importance for the sport official should be placed on contextual and situational learnings. Officials should become increasingly evaluated and encouraged in context to integrate skills and efficiency in the use of discrete communication skills (e.g., delivering decisions, rule explanations, conflict management).

In this research project mentorship emerged as an important part of the way development managers and performance coaches conceptualised officiating communication. Some sports at community and grassroots levels provide
opportunities for shadowing or in-game mentorship to provide technical and emotional support to younger, inexperienced officials. However, many officiating development managers find it difficult to implement broad mentoring programs to provide officials opportunity to appropriate support mechanisms. While at some levels availability of mentors can be limited, definitions, guidelines and standards for mentorship should be more carefully considered.

Also important is that, if applied to officiating, those responsible for development would expect, intend and plan for the majority of officials achieving the third of five levels – ‘competent’. Realistically, this is the level that most officials achieve: only a very select few are able to acquire the experience necessary to become ‘expert’. ‘Competent’ performers develop from considerable experience and after learning how to ‘solve inverse problems and see different consequences to the performer’s choices and actions’ (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 31). At competent officiating communication levels there should, therefore, be demonstration of monitoring, flexibility and appropriate use of discretion and skills.

In Chapter 4, Officiating development managers and performance coaches in this project saw more advanced officiating communication as involving increasing autonomy, adaptation and reflexivity. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) explains competent performance is characterised by a personal autonomy and use of contextual knowledge to perform skills. Often more skilled communication use involves intuitive and creative choices, which has been suggested to contribute to better improvement in medical
education. Conversational management skills and heightened awareness of face and face-work practices would also characterise development signposts and assessment areas for competent officiating communication.

Using Dreyfus’ criteria for ‘proficient levels’, officiating at higher levels of sport competition, or experienced officials officiating at lower-levels, might express proficient communication abilities. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986; 2004) suggests that superior levels in perception and skill execution, labelled ‘mastery’ or ‘expert’, are defined by a deep experiential expertise. ‘X-factor’ was the term used by some development managers and performance coaches interviewed in this research project to describe a particular presence, interpersonal ease, and communication ability seen in only relatively few officials. Communication choices are more intuitive and fluid, but rationally reflected on and ‘constructed to situations in ways where solutions emerge for the performer based on similar experience’ (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1988). Monitoring of officials’ communication at the highest stages of ‘skill acquisition’, as per a phenomenological model of human learning, would aim to maintain and refine intuitive responses and mental representations of action to interaction situations and player difference.

8.4.2.2. Share learning and resources across sports

While some aspects of communication cultures and convention can be considered unique to individual sports, this research project recognises opportunity for shared learnings based on commonalities in officiating. There is great merit in supporting novice officials’ training across sports, in
part because the common feature of officiating in interactor sports – interpersonal interaction – will drive a focus on interaction and relational characteristics of officiating. At the least, there are likely to be scale and cost advantages from sharing the development, design and delivery of training experiences that underpin interaction skills for officials across sports.

This research project encourages sports to work together, sharing resources to identify commonalities and to research, plan and implement collaborations and programs. The synergies in communication/interaction development may lead advantageously to more effective cooperation and advancement of officiating within and across sport bodies. Involving officials’ perspectives into broader sport and stakeholder conversations would help better grow individual and collective awareness of governing bodies’ and other stakeholders’ expectations.

For much of this project the researcher was involved in a national high-performance officiating training group that embraced a holistic and multidimensional strategy for developing and mentoring rising Australian officiating talent. Since 2003 the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) has pioneered a project that continues to meet the expectations of a range of stakeholders across sports. Workshop activities have been designed to create opportunities for cross-pollination of experiences, knowledge and learning among officiating ‘scholars’ from different sports. There is great potential value in getting officials from different sports to affiliate and share experiences that might re-frame ways officials view the use of
communication in their officiating. Such experiences, conducted away from the technical distractions of one’s own sport, can help to focus attention on the interaction. Social connectedness with other sport officials is said to help them better understand their officiating experiences, particularly for reframing abuse and interactions with players (Kellet et al., 2009).

Group exercises and approaches can be designed to allow officials to share their sport experiences and critically discuss non-technical aspects, or the ‘unspoken’, in officiating. ‘Communities of practice’ and ‘situated learning’ (see Chapter 4) are group learning concepts that can be applied to officiating to allow for opportunity to engage in unstructured and structured dialogue about the unspoken in games and interactions. With skilled facilitation and cross-sport commitment to collaboration, sports will benefit economically from higher quality officiating and be better placed to meet the increasingly higher expectations of a range of stakeholders.

8.4.2.3. Integrate communication with other officiating development areas

Communication is clearly integral to effective officiating, yet it is often considered and trained as if separate from other parts of officiating, such as decision making. If communication is to be conceptualised and framed more holistically, communication improvement structures for officials will benefit from integrating communication with other officiating performance skill areas (e.g., decision making, physical positioning). Study 1 of this research project showed that some development managers recognise the importance
of greater incorporation of communication learnings into officiating instruction, but are uncertain about ways this could be achieved.

During this research project, the researcher observed and participated in many development programs. In one mentoring program for soccer referees at grassroots level referee coordinators guided an exercise where small groups of referees observed DVDs of infractions. For each infraction incident observed by the referees there were two tasks they needed to complete. First, they were asked to judge the level of infraction and the appropriate sanction according to the rule book. Second, they were asked to record what they would say to the player they were sanctioning. Interestingly, referees’ focus was mainly on the first part of the task, the judgment. The decision is crucial, but forming the judgment is just the first part of the official’s task and should be integrated with the communication in a simulated context.

An important future challenge for sport bodies is to identify ways to integrate communication into officiating improvement, such that resulting changes in officials’ communication behaviour are long-term. Good communication practice is connected to attitudes, feedback and based on endorsed values of sport organisations. Future scholars should partner with skilled officiating trainers and facilitators to integrate communication with the holistic approaches to training.
8.5. Future research for officiating communication and interaction

This project has provided a new vocabulary and set of concepts for developing our understanding of communication and interaction in sport officiating interaction, and opens a range of research possibilities. Recommendations in this section discuss opportunities for future sport officiating communication research that explores perspectives of other sport stakeholders and cultural context, methodological approaches, measurement, training and interaction concepts.

Future research should explore other ways players differ in their motivation and behaviour with officials, including both individual and contextual influences. Ultimately there will be great value in officiating training that reveals and examines, and helps officials to prepare for a range of player differences. One important aspect of situations that officials should learn to monitor is player-player behaviour (especially conflict and latent conflict). Identifying personality and behavioural conflict among players would help officials to more effectively prevent escalation and intervene in crisis moments.

There should be increased attention given to understanding ways in which officials can effectively intervene during critical game events and influence players’ behavioural choices or the game atmosphere (Faccenda et al., 2009), especially in highly aggressive team sports. ‘Bracketed morality’ (Bredemeier & Shields, 1986; Kavussanu, Boardley, Sagar, & Ring, 2013) is a term used to describe an individual’s temporary suspension of moral belief in certain social settings (such as the sporting arena). Developing better
situation monitoring skills in officials should address types of anti-social behaviour that players might not ordinarily engage in within a public context.

Coaches are other important social actors within ‘interactor’ sport settings who have influence on officials and bring different interests to interactions. Exploring face-work exchanges between coaches and officials can assist officiating communication training by informing principles for dealing with coaches. Coaches are shown to use different verbal communication and persuasion strategies, both during and outside game play to influence officials (Debanne et al., 2015). Planned criticism or argument about officials’ decision interpretation is more often used by basketball coaches at halftime breaks in play, while direct speech without argument is used by coaches during game play in order to influence officials’ decisions (Debanne et al., 2015). Exploring other nuances in official-coach interaction remains a fruitful area for examination that can lead future research to understand game interactions.

This project raises questions about the possibility of over-complicating the natural, unreflected and taken for granted phenomenon of interpersonal communication (a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing). An emphasis of this project has been to develop a deeper and more sensitive appreciation of interaction demands in officiating. Future research should evaluate perceived and actual utility, and ways that officials respond to acquiring an increased awareness and understanding of the subtle and sensitive in communication and interactions. As the Dreyfus’ (1986; 2004) model
suggests, increasing such knowledge may require time, active mentoring and purposeful or goal-directed reflection before more sophisticated mental representations can be achieved and communication is used more appropriately and fluently. Future research might address these questions and evaluate the consequences of training or exposure to knowledge and the ‘invisible’ (Burleson, 2007) and ‘unspoken’ in officiating interactions.

A challenge lies ahead for future research to measure and evaluate some of the concepts and ideas introduced to officiating through this thesis. One of the reasons that officiating communication research has been dominated by reductionist approaches is that we tend to measure what we are able to measure. The ‘unspoken’ and the implied, ‘face’ and unsocial motivations defy conventional instruments. Dreyfus (1986; 2004) provides a holistic framework for evaluation that is compatible with component measures.

One future direction can be to find ways to interrogate and measure cognitive complexity and interpersonal constructs (Burleson, 2007). Burleson (2007) recommends the Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ; Crockett, 1965), a tool used to assess interpersonal constructs and ways people form impressions of others in interpersonal relationships and social situations. In human communication studies outside officiating, people who score higher on the RCQ give more detailed impressions of others, remember impressions of others, resolve inconsistencies in information about others, use more sophisticated judgment in making social evaluations and are able to take the perspective of others (Burleson, 2007; Burleson & Caplan, 1988). Scoring criteria for the RCQ are based on differentiation,
abstractness and organization of interpersonal constructs. A study might use the RCQ to compare officials of varying experience levels or sport type, or use it as a baseline testing tool to evaluate the efficacy of different evidence-based training interventions in communication and interaction. Future researchers using psycho-metrically valid steps with the RCQ can develop similar, but officiating-specific, tools.

This research project brought new vocabulary and concepts about interaction in officiating that deserve further exploration. Notions of the ‘backstage’ and ‘restraint’ in communication suggest skills that value communication as a performance and a mechanism for managing working relationships with players. Future research should ascertain the desire for varied types of face in particular cultures. This may lead to understandings about certain cultural competencies important to officiating situations where players for varying cultures are involved. Eastern and Western cultures are known to have different expectations of authority and preferences concerning harmony and individualism (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).

Power distance is a term used to describe ways different cultures view power and authority relationships among people, where different face-work strategies are used to deal with face threat (Merkin, 2006). Soccer players have been shown to have different preferences for explanations from officials: in some countries players prefer what is said, while in others countries play preference is for how it is said (Simmons, 2010).
This research project was conducted in Australia by a Canadian researcher. It is a distinctly ‘Western’ project. Further research should explore claims of cultural face and how this can help officiating communication training.

Future research should attempt to support the design of evidence-based training and feedback/assessment tools for developing officiating interaction management skills. The video elicitation approach used in this project has promise for gathering stakeholder perceptions about game interactions from larger populations of players, coaches and officials. In this project strict research criteria were applied to selecting interaction situations for video vignettes and were based on previous research that had used a ‘thin-slicing approach’ (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). This enabled use of vignettes across sports and was efficient relative to the use of personalised data of individual subjects. The video elicitation interview technique adapted for the purposes of this research uses actual health practitioners’ consultation video footage, which is critically deconstructed and discussed with trainers (Henry & Fetters, 2012). Future projects might be enhanced by the use of video footage featuring the individual official who are undergoing performance development.

Officiating, like warfare and policing, has long been one of the practices that is difficult to simulate in training because the pressure of the reality of practice, while central to the challenge of practice, complicates the ethics and feasibility of data capture. This has been a barrier to capturing authentic officiating interaction and communication data. Multimedia tools and new technologies may serve as useful channels for advancing training of
officiating communication and interaction responses. In the first instance, new and portable recording devices may make it much easier to capture ‘real’ data at training and in match play. Training might make use of new technologies such as ‘Ref Cams’ that capture audio and video images, combined with systematic review strategies involving video elicitation techniques (Henry & Fetters, 2012) and later microanalysis (Mellick et al., 2005).

Co-constructions of player-official interactions became a focus of this research project, but they remain an elusive aspect of officiating communication. This research took a step towards co-creation – where the interaction is something that is different to, but created by, the interactants – by exploring players’ and officials’ perspectives of interaction, but it explored interactants’ perspectives separately. Future research should find ways to explore co-construction in officiating interactions through innovative methods that allow for interactor experiences to be explored within and across actual situations. One example is that some ‘face’ research uses linguistic and discourse analysis approaches to examine how face and face-work is discursively constructed (Geyer, 2010; Haugh, 2010).

Video elicitation may prove to be a valuable method for exploring co-construction of interactions. This project used video examples (not involving the study participants) within a video elicitation approach to stimulate discussion. Future research can use video recordings of the actual sport participants involved and allow them to reflect and comment on interactions, to reveal ways situational definitions are formed and how
interactions are co-constructed. Such a method may provide a very strong stimulus for exploring the unspoken in interactions. A convention in medical education studies has been to use video elicitation to gather comments about interaction from both patients and health practitioners involved in the interaction (e.g., Henry, Forman, & Fetters, 2011).

Officiating communication research needs to further triangulate other approaches with those used to explore the concepts introduced by this project. Behavioural analysis of officiating communication practices rather than interview data might be an important next step to overcome potential response bias. More information is needed to further build on the findings of this research and to triangulate perspectives to build a more reliable and rigorous examination of interaction concepts for officiating (especially for innovations in training and development for officials at various levels of sport).

**Final statements**

Communication is recognised often as something at the root of good officiating. This project contributes new knowledge to the limited scope of research and scholarship available on sport officials. It specifically focused its exploration on concepts of skilled interaction and communication practice in sport officials, and its development. Improving social and technical training support for sport officials would benefit from further pursuits made by researchers to use systematic approaches to explore other issues that officiating populations and communities face. Officiating
researchers and practitioners should work more closely together to advance theory and practice knowledge in the officiating field.
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LIST OF APPENDICIES

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## APPENDIX 1

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (STUDY 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion theme</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Probe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Role**         | Could you give me an overview of what you do as a referee development manager/coach? | • Aims and objectives  
• Tasks  
• Current issues  
• Association with Officials | What do you do?  
What are your main responsibilities?  
What are your priorities and why?  
How does your role interact with others within your organisation? |
| **Ideal official** | Can you describe ideal and less ideal officiating? | • Knowledge  
• Attitudes  
• Skills  
• Behaviours | What knowledge and attitude should they have and why?  
What skills should they maintain?  
What are ideal and less ideal behaviours officials’ should demonstrate to players?  
How should players and coaches perceive the official? |
|                  | What factors do you think best predict someone who has the potential to become the ideal official? | • Motivation  
• Interest  
• Personality  
• Psychological skills  
• Performance  
• Physical characteristic | Who is the ideal official (background, experience, profile)?  
What type of person are they?  
What are the essential psychological traits or skills they should have?  
What are their performance and physical characteristics?  
How do they behave? |
|                  | How is officiating skills and abilities best acquired? | • Game experience  
• Practice  
• Coaching advice  
• Peer collaboration  
• Experience from other occupations | How does game experience contribute to improvement of officiating skills?  
How does practice influence the development of officiating skills and what are types of better practice?  
How do other key persons contribute to refereeing education and feedback? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation and training</th>
<th>How is the training and accreditation of sport officials currently structured and evaluated in your sport?</th>
<th>Who manages sport officials at other levels within your sport?</th>
<th>What is the accreditation pathway that officials advance?</th>
<th>What is the particular training emphasis(s)?</th>
<th>How does training change based on level of accreditation?</th>
<th>What is the overarching strategy to accreditation and training of officials?</th>
<th>How has this changed in recent years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is sport officials’ performance evaluated?</td>
<td>What performance areas are evaluated?</td>
<td>What do officials receive feedback about their performance?</td>
<td>How is the process of evaluation carried out?</td>
<td>How frequently are officials evaluated?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the goals of player and game management skills training and how are they taught?</td>
<td>Aims and objectives</td>
<td>What are the training goals and learning outcomes?</td>
<td>What types of information are presented in written materials (i.e., manuals, documentation)?</td>
<td>What type of learning activities, outside game experience, do officials engage in?</td>
<td>Who directs training in this area at various levels?</td>
<td>What would you change?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you think are the characteristics of an official that demonstrates skillful player and game management?</td>
<td>Competencies</td>
<td>What are key attitudes and skills?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>What are the key competencies?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Behaviours</td>
<td>What are the behavioural characteristics?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>What knowledge should they have about players and why?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge about players</td>
<td>What relationship should they maintain with players?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship with players</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the role of mentorship and referee coaching in the development of player and game management skills in officials?</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
<th>How does the importance of each change as an official advances through accreditation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>How do they teach or influence the development of such skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>What are the different benefits or values of each to develop such skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues/concerns</td>
<td>What, if any, challenges or issues/concerns are there currently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accreditation level difference</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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</thead>
</table>
## APPENDIX 2

**Video elicitation interview schedule:**
*Question categories and reasoning, video vignette length and selection criteria (Study 2)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question category</th>
<th>Aims and reasoning for questions</th>
<th>Vignette progression</th>
<th>Clip content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Perception/Definition** | - Introduce enquiry topic.  
- Elicit definitions of how communication and interpersonal relations contribute to player-official interactions and game outcomes in the interviewee’s own terminology.  
- Start interviewee thinking about how they conceptualise ways players and officials relate and interact with one another (Arundale, 2010; Goffman, 1967). | 15 vignettes X 3-15 secs | - First impressions/encounters (Simmons, 2008; Thatcher, 2005)  
- Examples of officials giving decisions (Mellick et al., 2005)  
- Interactions where officials are explaining decisions (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011)  
- Interactions where players are questioning decisions (Simmons, 2006; Slack et al., 2013) |
| **Attitude/Value** | - Ask interviewees to describe their attitudes and values about having to interact with officials.  
- Ask what they think has been important in shaping their beliefs about how they interact and deal with officials.  
- To understand interviewee’s general attitudes | | |
about what players and officials are trying to achieve in interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case examples</th>
<th>Context and behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • To allow for interviewee to report on case examples of player-official in-game dialogue or interactions.  
• To allow the researcher and interviewees to reflect on real scenarios and allow interviewee opportunity to assimilate with own experiences. | • To understand ways interviewees thought officials and players in the video vignettes adapted their behaviour to one another.  
• To understand ways officiating interviewees think about message exchange between players and officials (Burleson, 2007). |
| 5 vignettes X 1-3 mins |  |
| • Officials having verbal interactions with team captains.  
• Officials managing conflict between players (MacMahon et al., 2014, Mascarenhas et al., 2006).  
• Friendly interactions between players and officials (Slack et al., 2013).  
• Officials explaining decisions or aspects of player actions that caused decisions (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011).  
• Players being difficult, complaining or questioning officials (Baker et al., 2012). |
• To elicit descriptions of particular approaches or ‘lines’ (Goffman, 1959) that the interviewee may take in similar situations.

• To elicit thoughts about ways officiating interviewees adapt to different types of players and interaction in their sport.
APPENDIX 3

Video elicitation interview schedule – Question categories and reasoning, video vignette length and selection criteria (Study 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question category</th>
<th>Aims and reasoning for questions</th>
<th>Vignette progression</th>
<th>Clip content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception/Definition</td>
<td>• Introduce enquiry topic.</td>
<td>15 vignettes</td>
<td>• First impressions/encounters  (Simmons, 2008; Thatcher, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• To elicit definitions of what communication and interaction contribute to officiating in the interviewee’s own terminology.</td>
<td>X 3-15 secs</td>
<td>• Examples of officials delivering decisions  (Mellick et al., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Start interviewee thinking about how they conceptualise officiating communication and ways relational face (Arundale, 2010) and personal face (Goffman, 1967) are built and managed between players and officials.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Interactions where officials are explaining decisions  (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Preventive communication (Mascarenhas et al., 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Examples of officiating communication in different sports including body language, hand-signalling, and other ‘one way’ displays  (Dosseville et al., 2014; Mellick et al., 2005) or message exchange with players (Burleson, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude/Value</td>
<td>Case examples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Ask interviewees to describe their attitudes and values about having to interact with players.  
  • What they think has been important in shaping their beliefs about interacting and dealing with players.  
  • To understand what general attitudes about what players and officials are trying to achieve in interactions. | • To allow for interviewee to report on case examples of player-official in-game dialogue and interactions.  
  • To allow interviewee (with the researcher) to reflect on real scenarios and allow interviewee opportunity to assimilate with own experiences.  
  • Friendly interactions between players and officials (e.g., ‘banter’, Slack et al., 2013; Study 2).  
  • Officials managing conflict between players or towards the official (MacMahon et al., 2014, Mascarenhas et al., 2006).  
  • Officials having verbal interactions with team captains (Study 2).  
  • Officials explaining decisions or aspects of player actions that caused decisions (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2011). |

5 vignettes X 1-3 mins
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context and behaviour</th>
<th>Players being difficult, complaining or questioning officials (Baker et al., 2012; Study 2).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- To understand ways interviewees thought officials and players in the video vignette adapted their behaviour to one another.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To understand ways officiating interviewees think about message exchange between players and officials (Burleson, 2007).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To elicit descriptions of particular approaches or ‘lines’ (Goffman, 1959) that the interviewee may take in similar situations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To elicit thoughts about ways officiating interviewees adapt to different types of players and interaction in their sport.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4
Screen capture examples of video vignettes used as video elicitation stimulus (Study 2 & Study 3)

Initial meetings and first impressions between players and officials (Simmons, 2006; Thatcher, 2005)
Officials delivering decisions (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010)
Officials giving rule explanations (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010)
Officials giving rule explanations (Mellick et al., 2005; Simmons, 2010) (continued)
Conflict or confrontation in player-official exchanges (MacMahon et al., 2014, Mascarenhas et al., 2006)
Conflict or confrontation in player-official exchanges (MacMahon et al., 2014, Mascarenhas et al., 2006) (continued)
Displays of empathy by officials and friendly player-official exchanges (Slack et al., 2013)
Displays of empathy by officials and friendly player-official exchanges (Slack et al., 2013) (continued)
APPENDIX 5
Example of transcribed interview (Study 2 – Video elicitation)

Interviewee #5
Soccer Team Captain, Novice, 28 years old, 9 year experience

IR: Like we discussed, would you be comfortable with watching some video of some game situations from different sports. We’ll first have a look at a few different officiating styles. Sound good?
I5: Yep. (video played for interviewee)

He is a very respected official isn’t he? (09:34)

IC: Who is that?
I5: That referee in the video. I recognise him. Yeah, like his refereeing style was good, the players got on with him. He stopped things when they needed to be stopped. You know, ‘pulled it up’ when it needed to be ‘pulled up’, I guess for me that’s the ultimate official. That person is usually respected amoung players because of his decisions and respected because of the person he is.

IC: Okay. So the type of person he is important?
I5: Yeah. He will stand there and talk to a player and he won’t be rude and abrupt to them. He won’t speak down to them or anything like that. Like, ‘I’m here and you’re here’ [interviewee uses hands to indicate low and high positions]. He’ll understand what they’re doing out there. He’s on their level.

IC: You mentioned ‘levels’. What are ‘levels’ between players and officials?
I5: Like some officials will walk onto the field and they think they are here [interviewee holds hand high in the air again], and the players are down here, and they will be so condescending to them all the time and everything. It is where, and even in young referees you can see it today. With young referees, they walk onto the field to young kids and they’ll speak down to them poorly to them. They might think that they are.. and straight away there is no rapport between the players and the officials, and the game can degenerate quickly. If some poor officiating happens, which generally tends to happen with referees and officials like that, they try to make it up with authority, I believe. They try to make up with their inadequacies with the way they present themselves and they speak to people, it’s just a perception. I mean ultimately, same with players and officials, officials on the field, officials off the field, you know whatever personality they have they bring to the game, you can see players that free playing and going and that’s the type of person they are, you know they are very inventive type thinking, officials are the same.

IC: We watched a few examples of different sport situations I hockey, soccer and rugby. What were other types of officiating approaches were you noticing in the interactions?
I5: Yeah, the first one, you know he has sort of, he said ‘this is my decision, just walk away’, whereas the other couple guys were like, ‘Look, this is the way we thought that we’ve seen it’, they were happy to speak with them, and the interaction they had with the players, even though the game appeared to be flowing, was better than the first one, that was my perception of it, that’s the way I love to play the game you know, you walk onto the pitch and I know they are the referee and you don’t speak back to them and a lot of them were getting spoken back to and he just said ‘don’t do it again, don’t speak back to me’ where as you get other referees, the moment you say anything, no matter it is good or bad, then no it is straight away with the yellow card, or straight away their attitude will change towards you, and it makes the game, whether it is an elite level, or a generalised local level, it makes the game either better to play in or worse to play in, you probably know yourself, games that are good to play in the referee is inconspicuous on the pitch, it is not about him, it is about the two teams, and ultimately that is what it is about, it is not about the officials, it is about what is going on the pitch.

IC: Ok. So is one thing you’re saying that sometimes the referee can put themselves in the spotlight, rather than the game and players?

I5: Big time, yeah, big time, you see it all too often, you see it in the Premier Leaue, you see it a whole lot, and I don’t know it is just perception of sport.

IC: What type of styles in officials do you prefer?

I5: Yeah, look, you want to be able, it is a passionate game, whether it is soccer or any other sport, you know everyone is involved once they are on the pitch, it’s a very passionate thing, they wouldn’t be out there if they weren’t passionate about it I suppose, and a good official will let you be a little bit outspoken, but then know when to draw the line like, ‘Look, that’s enough, listen I understand where you are coming from but we are here to play the game, let’s make sure we keep playing’, you know you should be passionate about the game, but then when you go too far over the top, he lets the game flow, good advantages, pulls it up where it needs to be pulled up, and, once again you get a referee thats stop start stiop start stop start stop, it doesn’t infuriate you, it just slows the game down and you know there is no flow to the game, you don’t feel there is a real ebb and flow to the game, you can just sense right away, good and bad officials. (15:10)

IC: You said ‘sense’. What do you usually sense about them?

I5: Yeah, sometimes you can sense it from the coin toss, like you just think to yourself, ‘wow what is this dickhead doing here today’, and you go back to all your teammates and say, ‘Look just be aware, I don’t think this guy is going to be real good today’, and you know, there is yellow cards, red cards, there is, you know start stop games, there are fouls that are let go that should be pulled up, and others pulled up that should be let go.
Study title: Attitudes and strategies concerning the development and training of sport officials.

Letter of Information

We invite you to participate in an exploratory study that will help us understand current attitudes and strategies about training practices in sport officiating. If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in a 60 minute interview aimed to gather information about your perceptions of current issues, themes, and challenges involved in the delivery and training of sport officials.

All results will be kept confidential. The information disclosed during interviews is only for the use of the investigator(s) listed at the bottom of the page and only for the purposes of the present study. If the results of this study are published, your name or employer’s organisation name will not be linked or used. The term “ball sport” will be used when referring to any information provided through your participation. Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question(s), or withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks associated with this research.

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact:

Edward Spence  
Research Ethics  
Charles Sturt University  
Telephone: (02) 6338 4520  
Email: espence@csu.edu.au

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the informed consent. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to address them to the investigators listed below.

Ian Cunningham, PhD Candidate  
Charles Sturt University, +61 2 63384288 or via e-mail at icunningham@csu.edu.au

Dr. Peter Simmons (Supervisor), Associate Head of School and Senior Lecturer  
Charles Sturt University, +61 2 63384521 or via e-mail at psimmons@csu.edu.au
Study Title: Attitudes and strategies concerning the development and training of sport officials.

Investigator: Ian Cunningham (Supervisor: Peter Simmons)

The purpose of the present study is to understand your perceptions of current issues, demands and challenges involved in the delivery and training of sport officials. There are no known risks associated with this research. Also, all responses you provide will be kept confidential to the listed investigators. The interview will take no more than 60 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or about being a participant, please feel free to call Dr. Peter Simmons, Charles Sturt University, at +61 2 6338 4521 for more information. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

I agree to participate in this study, and I have received a copy of the letter of information.

________________________________________
Signature of participant Date

Name of participant

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