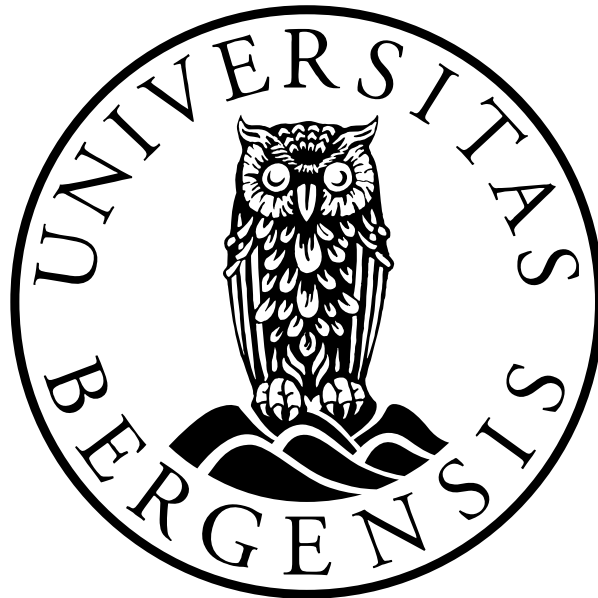


A Tale of an Officer and a Gentleman:
Ambiguous Masculinities Among Young Rugby Players



Mina Sofie Svendsen

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Department of Social Anthropology

University of Bergen

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Foto/ill: Mina Sofie Svendsen

Abstract

Sports have a great influence on how we as human beings organise us. Many of us take part in club sports when we are younger, or some bring their football out to the park as light amusement. It is not often, however, that we ponder on how sport came to be, or how it influences our very selves. This thesis seeks to examine how the sport of rugby union shapes our own notions of gender. By looking closer the sport's evolution from a British folk game, we can see how it has unfolded through elite establishments within Great Britain and then throughout the British Empire, where it was introduced to the colonies by the colonial officers. What I will argue, is that we can still see traces of the twinning masculine figurations of 'the officer' and 'the gentleman', in the performed gender identities at university rugby club in East Valley. I will illustrate how the sport of rugby reflects the two roles, and the very structure of it is built upon the ambiguity of 'the rough' and 'the gentle'.

Furthermore, in this thesis we will examine the many different elements through which the rugby players self-present. One significant topic is how we as human beings use our bodies to perform gender identities. With a focus on the physical body, we will examine how elements such as speech act and violence plays part in constructing identities. Moreover, the topic of aesthetic preferences and idolised bodies shows to be a rather ambiguous element of the players' gender performance. We will look closer at the, arguably, androgynous mullet haircut that is fairly popular within the rugby community.

Lastly, we will analyse the topic of alcohol consumption. Alcohol has proven to be a significant part of the lives of young athletes. Initiation rituals is a heated topic in university rugby. Although many university rugby clubs arrange these rituals, the players in East Valley have chosen to pass on the infamous activities. We will see how alcohol serves as a medium that social identification and categorisation is shaped through.

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Introduction

We arrived at the ANZ Stadium at the outset of Suva about 1:45pm. The past few hours, we had been on a trip to a Fijian village, drank kava, ate cassava cake, and walked a beautiful beach on the Pacific Harbour. Yet, we were still waiting to experience one last mandatory part of Fijian culture. In fact, this one seemed to be the most important one as we had left the beach in a rush to not miss a second of this great spectacle. The stadium was packed with people sharing the same hope. A hope that the Fijian national team, “The Flying Fijians”, would in fact manage to beat the great New Zealand “All Blacks”. Not a massive sport follower myself, I was probably the only one who wanted to get out of the burning sun, back to my home, grab an ice-cold bottle of water and put my feet up. However, the situation I found myself in was completely opposite, and I figured that my only option was to sacrifice the two following hours of my life and simply do my best to enjoy watching my very first rugby match. At about 1:53pm, the two teams came walking out on the grass pitch and stood upright on one straight line. The audience all cheered before the national anthems of both teams were performed. At about 1:58pm, the two teams walked to each side of the grass and got ready to perform the traditional Haka and Cibi. Having heard about the Haka before, this moment piqued my interest, but I was honestly thinking that this would be the highlight of the game for me. At exactly 2pm, the whistle blew and it was time for kick-off. The two groups stormed towards each other, as the audience cheered in pure excitement. To my surprise, it was when the first two bodies collided that my interest was yet again woken. “Are they okay?”, I thought to myself. Then two more bodies collided, and other players tossed their own bodies on top of the two bodies that were already on the ground, creating a big stack of massive bodies. “Madness”, I thought. Yet, the more bodies collided, the louder the excited cheers from the audience became. Before I knew it, I had forgotten about the burning sun I wanted to escape from and the ice-cold water bottle that I so much desired and I was eagerly seated, cheering equally as loud as my fellow surrounding spectators (even though I did not quite understand what I was cheering for yet). The fact that “The Flying Fijians” actually won this match, made the experience feel like it was ‘meant to be’, and I found myself sitting in the same stadium, watching the same team perform over and over again during my 6 months in Fiji.

The scene described above is what served as the catalyst for my main motivation to write this thesis on the topics of *masculinities* and *rugby*. As I had never watched (and barely heard of) rugby before, the whole event felt rather chaotic. Thankfully, I had friends who were patient enough to walk me through the different sets of rules and player positions until I could finally enjoy 80 minutes of the testosterone-driven spectacle. The sport was unlike any other sport that I had seen before. At that time, I sensed a strong celebration of violence and

aggression and I found myself constantly worried about the players well-being after every single physical encounter. In contrast to my concerns, however, the audience surrounding me seemed to cheer louder and express greater excitement the more brutal a tackle would be. The sport of rugby has branched into two separate versions of the game, and I want to clarify that my focus will be on the version named *rugby union* in this thesis. As one of my main interests in the field of anthropology is gender, but more precisely, *masculinities*, I saw my opportunity to combine the interesting topic of *masculinities* with the newly experienced and intriguing sport of rugby.

Gender, sex, and the social body

Anthropologists have long studied the body in different settings, such as the social body, body politic, embodiment and praxis, and so on. In light of the social body, Mary Douglas viewed the body as both a natural and a social entity. For her, the body is a physical being, and also a representation (Douglas, 1978). The body, as Douglas notes, is a mediator for personal expression, but what is expressed is in return curbed by the given social system that the person lives in. It is through this lens of which she views the social body, that I will be resting my own analysis. We, as human beings, interact with the world around us through our physical bodies. It is the means through which we sense and make sense of what our surroundings offer us. Without the body, or more specifically, our senses, we lose an important mediator that allow us to be a part of the social world. For Turner (1994: 28), the body is described as a dialectic relationship. It is both objective and subjective, material and symbolic, and so on. Bodiliness, in other words, is not merely the body as a physical being; it is also the mind with its own agency. It is the subject (the mind) together with its body (the object). In my analysis, I will draw on Turner's notion and not speak of the mind and the body as two separate entities, but rather as the relationship between the physical body and the subjective mind.

“Just as we think our society with our bodies so, too, we think our bodies with society” (O’Neill, 1985). Society is reflected on our bodies, for example, through regulations and restrictions on clothing and hair, consumption of food and substances, body modifications, and so on. Expression of gender identity is deeply embedded into the reflections of body and

society, as it is through the body that we perform our cultural notions of gender. Gender has been perceived and studied in a variety of ways throughout history. Laqueur, for instance, illustrates how sex and gender was defined in premodern western societies based on the penis. He argues that there were two genders; male and female, but only one sex that represented the gender depending on the penis. The female body had an inverted penis, or in other words, the female body was the inverted male body. In *Herculine Barbine's memoire*, Foucault argues that gender is reduced to a discourse around sex. Barbine, who was a 'hermaphrodite' in 18th century France, was forced to adopt to the male gender, although they lived their life as female. The decision was made based on the exterior of Barbine's body. Their gender was then reduced to what the body looked like. Put differently; gender was reduced to sex (Morris, 1995, pp. 568-569). The fact that Barbine was legally obliged to submit to one gender only supports Foucault's argument that one of the motives of the state power is to restrict what we see as 'the free choice' of intermediate humans. The state, or the society, and the human body is reflected by each other through the expression of gender.

"Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender." (Butler in Salih, 2003, pp. 55-56).

In this thesis, we will look at the different topics through the theoretical framework of performance theory. Judith Butler states in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) that gender is not something one *is*, but something one *does*. According to performance theory, people self-present based on the social context in which they find themselves. Some ways to self-present, for instance, might be through linguistic choices, choice of clothes and accessories, bodily movements, and preferred choice of foods and drinks. Gendered restrictions are to be found in all of these categories, and it is precisely this that we will be examining closer in my following chapters. In the first chapter, we will look at rugby's evolution in the British Empire, and how men have been taught to behave in elite establishments in Great Britain. The second chapter offers a few analytical points on how masculinities are being reproduced through the sport itself, followed by an analysis of aesthetic preferences among the rugby

players in chapter three. Lastly, we will examine attitudes towards drinking and drunk comportment among the young athletes, before wrapping up with a conclusive chapter.

Method

This fieldwork was conducted in a town on the Scottish East coast. In my thesis, this town will be named East Valley. East Valley has a population of about 20 000 people where many of them are students at the local university. In addition to my data from Scotland, I will draw upon my own experiences from my time in Fiji in 2019. To conduct this research, I have applied the methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth interviews. As a woman, conducting a fieldwork in an exclusively male group made me think about how my gender would influence the relations that I was going to build during my time in Scotland. I was worried that our gender differences would be an issue for my ability to build relationships with my informants. However, my gender did not seem to cause any issues, and the players were eager to teach me the rules of rugby, techniques on how to pass the ball, and what the different lines on the field meant, despite my inability to actually play with them. Nonetheless, humorous comments were made about me being a woman. One time, for instance, a player was practicing *conversion kicking* (kicking the ball between the poles of the goal post) and managed to do a perfect kick right after my arrival. His teammate was quick to note that “the girl should come more often”. The players also expressed what I experienced as gentlemanly behaviour that I am not used to in my home country. While going for walks, the players would insist on occupying the outer side of the pavement or guide me to walk ahead of them whenever the path got narrower. In addition, they insisted on buying my coffees, and even drive 40 minutes so that I would not have to get on the bus.

When I arrived in Scotland, the country was in lockdown due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, all amateur sports were on hold until further notice. This led to a long wait before I could get access to training sessions, matches, and other significant arenas. In the meantime, I decided to start off the fieldwork by conducting introductory semi-structured interviews. My main intention conducting these interviews was to introduce myself, and get an overview of the players’ nationalities, names, ages, and so on. Most of them were Scottish or English, but there was one group of five South African players, as well

as one Canadian and one from Wales. Their age ranged from 19 years old to 25 years old. They all started playing rugby at a very young age, some as early as 4 years old, and at the latest at 7 years old. Most of them stated that a male family member had influenced their choice of practicing the sport of rugby when they were children. The players from England and Scotland had all attended private schools, whereas the rest, including the Welsh player, had received their education through public schools. These interviews helped me get a good overview of the intersectionality of the group, as well as spotting a few key informants. I later met with a few players on different occasions so that I could conduct in-depth interviews. Through these interviews, I got to know more about the players' backgrounds, family situations, political views, and other significant parts of their lives. Something that was important for me to remember, was that these rugby players were not full-time athletes. I had to remind myself that their everyday lives were filled with things that mattered more, such as academics, family relations, girlfriends, and their social lives.

Chapter 1: A Sport that Disciplined the Gentleman and Entertained the Officer

The sound of indistinct chatter closed in on me as the training session would begin in about a ten-minute time. Although the chilly wind grabbed me around my shoulders, I could still feel the heat from the exposed sun at any given opportunity. Before I knew it, the little grass spot that I alone occupied, was filled up with young men preparing for another session of rugby. They were all dressed in tops and shorts well suited for workouts. Some were wearing t-shirts with their favourite team's logo, yet the majority chose to not front a logo at all. A couple of players sitting next to me eagerly tried to get their shoelaces tied. Shortly after, one of them managed to complete the simple task, then immediately grabbed the nearest ball and passed it on to his friend, who barely had any time to let go of his own laces. They moved over to the great grass pitch about ten meters away, still throwing the ball back and forth. The chit chat continued through the whole process, and it all seemed slightly robot-like. Eventually, more and more players moved over to the field to start their warmup session. After a few minutes had passed, the sound of a whistle filled the air, and simultaneously they all turned and walked towards the high-pitched noise. Training had now begun.

From familiar grass to unknown lands

What I witnessed in Scotland in the spring of 2021, however, expand much further than to the try line. The sport of rugby travelled along with the establishment of British colonies to all corners of the world and thus got embedded into a wider political and economic process that have transformed the game into more than merely a medium of amusement. When the Empire contracted, the game saw its way back to familiar grounds in Great Britain while still making great impact within the Commonwealth nations. In this chapter, I will take you through these processes and show how local medieval folk games transitioned into sophisticated games that later became a substantial tool used within the British Empire. Let me take you back to where it all began with focus on the technical aspects of the sport.

Rugby, along with football, are both rooted in pre-industrial folk games. From there, the two games have developed to become the two most ‘sophisticated’ modern sports. In the book *Barbarians, Gentlemen, and Players* (2005), Dunning and Sheard have recognised five stages in the development of the two games. The authors contend that by highlighting these phases, they may pinpoint elements that have influenced how the game has changed through time and finally been recognised as professional sports. The first stage that the authors identified, lasted from the 13th to the 19th centuries. During this period, early variations of the games were played throughout Great Britain. These games are today recognised as the fountainheads of both rugby and football. Although a set of fixed rules for these games were practically non-existent, the variety of games fell under the term *football*. The second stage lasted for approximately 100 years from the mid-18th century. At this time, the games were adapted into establishments and became one of the main forms of social organization among boys and young men. Each establishment had their own version of the games, and the conduct of handling the ball is essentially where the split of rugby and football started. In rugby, handling the ball with one’s hands was accepted, in contrast to football where the use of hands was against the rules. The third stage that the authors have recognised, lasted for the thirty years between 1830 to 1860. During these three decades, the rules of both codes of football developed rapidly. For the first time in the history of the sport, they were being documented on paper (Dunning and Sheard, 2005, p.1- 2).

Despite the more reasonable explanation of rugby and football’s split, there are other more popular statements as to how the sports suddenly branched. It is said that during a football match at Rugby school in 1823, student William Webb Ellis, a boy known to neglect rules, decided to pick up the ball and run across the field with the ball firmly secured in his arms (Smith, 2009). This is a popular story that illustrates how rugby was finally distinguished from football, and thus the two games developed separately. However, this story is labelled false by the general public, and authors such as Tony Collins have stated in the prologue of his book *Social History of English Rugby Union* (2009) that Webb Ellis “did not invent the game of rugby football” (pp. vii). In the journal *Sport in History*, Collins challenges Dunning and Sheard’s explanation on how the two games separated. According to him, it was not the regulations of the sport in schools that determined the split, but rather the overall *social importance* of football:

“Fundamentally this was determined by the growing social importance of football in the 1870’s, as reflected in, and stimulated by, the emergence of cup competitions. Football started to become the means by which young men could represent their city, town, village, parish, factory or street. And for that to happen in an organized and regular way, a common set of rules with which to play against one’s local rivals was required.” (Collins, 2005, pp. 295)

While Dunning and Sheard have put their focus on the *differences* of rugby and football, Collins finds it more fruitful to look at the *similarities*. As stated, Dunning and Sheard argue that it was the difference between the variety of school conducts that led to the two games’ separation. On the contrary, Collins provides us with examples of how a selection of establishments such as Eton, Rugby, and Cambridge, have their own personalised set of rules on how to handle the ball. He highlights that the use of hands was accepted in a *wider selection* of codes and not just the Rugby code (Collins, 2005, pp. 293), thereby taking the focus away from school sports and putting it onto the actual *societal importance* of sport, particularly football. This is important because it emphasises the sports impact on a community, allowing us to investigate and recognise just how much rugby has shaped its environments, both in the homeland and throughout the British Empire.

Moving back to identifying the five stages, recognised by Dunning and Sheard, that led to the development of rugby and football as professional sports. The second half of the 19th century is when the fourth stage unfolded. After the sports were well introduced in the British elite establishments, amateur clubs started to appear in the surrounding areas. The *Rugby Football Union* and the *Football Association* were also established on a national level. Due to the public's willingness to pay for tickets to see live games, professional sports were able to flourish, and athletes were able to receive financial compensation. At this point, rugby and football were fully recognised as two separate sports. By the end of this stage, however, rugby alone branched into two separate versions of itself: rugby union, and rugby league. Rugby was originally valued for its position as an amateur game and took pride in not falling for the influence of money. In other words, good sportsmanship came with love for the game, not the desire for money. However, a few Northern rugby clubs got suspended by the Rugby Football Union after it was revealed that they paid players and continued to do so even after receiving warnings on the matter. Rugby was, in fact, not a sport suitable working-class men because the players were not offered insurance to compensate for injuries sustained while

playing the game. This unfairness is what the northern clubs wanted to fight against. Moreover, to keep affording to financially support their members, the suspended clubs got rid of two players, thereby decreasing the number from fifteen to thirteen players on the field (Hold Ye Front Page, 2016). Essentially, this is how rugby league split from rugby union. The financial aspects of the new branch meant that rugby league was recognised as professional even though it failed, at the time, to spread much further than the North of England, whereas rugby union despite its increasing popularity, remained an amateur game.

The final stage is a continuum of this split, which is still going on in the present days. *Rugby league* was indeed recognised as a professional sport, but because it failed to spread further than to the borders of Yorkshire, it was unable to provide players with job prospects. With several international sporting tours being arranged in the nineteen-hundreds and its consistent increase in popularity, *rugby union* was more similar to a professional sport in terms of rules, player success and money making, than rugby league, but it did not get recognised as a professional sport until 1995 (World Rugby, 1995). Today, both codes have gained massive popularity around the world as two separate sports. Furthermore, as sports grew to become a bigger part of the British curriculum, young men and boys were told to participate in their school teams due to the belief that this would contribute to a closer and more connected community within the country. Sports, especially rugby, were tightly connected to good morality, courage, and honesty (Glassock, 2016, p. 352), qualities often associated with being a proper man, or a so-called ‘muscular Christian’¹. Following the history of rugby, with a focus on the branching between rugby union and rugby league, one can fundamentally see its close connection between the sport and social class.

‘It’s a class sport, but not a *class* sport’

“Rugby is a tory sport. Fuck those cunts.”. Whenever I tried bringing up rugby in a conversation, Maxwell would make these specific words an immediate response. Maxwell, one of the men that I met during my time in Scotland, had greater interests with football rather than rugby, and his opinions

¹ The movement of ‘Muscular Christianity’ emerged in England during the 18 hundreds. Men based their behaviour on self-discipline and masculinity, and it was the muscular body that was idolised.

regarding the sports were usually based on a rivalry between the two. "It's only tory people that play rugby. It's not an accessible sport, you need tons of stuff if you just want to go out and play rugby. If you want to play football, you only need a ball and your mates. Maybe not even your mates, you can just go out and kick the ball or do tricks alone in the park". "But do you need much equipment to play rugby? You can just throw or kick a rugby ball to each other?", I asked. "No, you need stuff like tackle bags and everything. Plus, the stuff you need is more expensive. That's why football is better! Football is absolute class. And Mina, there are many things here in the UK that shouldn't be politicised but are politicised. Rugby is one of them." Maxwell's opinion on rugby being an upper-class sport contrasted with what I had witnessed in Fiji, where children of all ages would play 'touch rugby' (rugby with an extremely low tolerance for physical contact) at the beach with anything but a ball, and a line in the sand substituting for the white try line. One night, a taxi driver in Suva told me eagerly and proud about Fiji's success and devotion to rugby. One thing that he marked was how rugby served as a social glue for people to come together and play: "You can see the children on the beach, they will play rugby with sandal instead of a ball. There are always ways to play, even if you don't have money to buy a ball or anything. Some will even play with rocks, but I don't recommend that", he added jokingly.

Conversations like the ones I had with Maxwell and the Fijian taxi driver convinced me that elite university sports development has resulted in distinct discourses that are still apparent today. It started, as I have shown you, with its origin as a folk game that later became a part of elite college curriculum. From there on, the sport was being gatekept by the British upper-class. The media and sports journalists played a big role on the class segregation of sports within Great Britain, opening up for debates on the British sportsman, his social position, physical being, and their ongoing failure in international sporting tournaments (Chandler and Nauright, 1996). Simultaneously, selected students at elite universities were being trained to become colonial administrators who later brought the sport with them to all corners of the British Empire. Let us look a little closer at how this has unfolded.

After rugby had become a well-established part of the English societies at the beginning of the 1900's, well-known sports journalists would use media to gatekeep rugby from the working class. These journalists believed that it was the lack of proper education that made working men not suitable for selected sports. In other words, the working-class men were not deemed to have the gentlemanly behaviour that was crucial in becoming a good sportsman, in contrast to the upper-class men, who had received their education and discipline

in elite colleges. This was a common attitude held by metropolitan journalists who would clearly state their opinions on rugby through the means of public media. Explicit phrases such as: “I for one frankly confess that I do not consider RU eminently suited for the working man” (Phillip William Trevor, in Levett, 2018, pp. 57) were used to prove their resistance on ‘mixed class sports’. As a reaction to this, there was an emerging of an ‘anti-metropolitan’ rugby culture in the West Country during the nineteen-hundreds. This rugby society aimed to create spaces for working men who could not get access to rugby clubs. By doing so, they attempted to highlight how the class system was tendentious to favour middle- and upper-class rugby players and exclude those of the lower classes. This debate escalated after the 1905 and 1906 international rugby tours, when England lost to both New Zealand and South Africa, and journalists would speculate in why the English sporting prowess was lacking.

England’s losses in 1905 and 1906 had an impact on the public’s impression of English rugby players as well as how the media portrayed British athletes in general. Journalist Phillip William Trevor, who was particularly invested in club cricket, pointed out that the sport of cricket is taught in the ‘big schools of England’, referring to elite establishments, and is thereby not a sport for the working man. This debate was followed by attempts to understand the cause of the English fatal performance during the 1905 and 1906 rugby tours. Analysing the common way of life of the British sportsmen was one way of looking at it. Journalists P. A. Vaile and C. B. Fry took notice of the ‘monotonous’ lives of the urban settlers. They argued that their lives, living in grey houses, experiencing grey weather, and wandering grey streets, affected the moods of the British athletes. Thus, Fry argued that a life like this was polluting the minds of the English rugby players. In contrast, the New Zealanders, who lived with a closer connectedness to nature, would become naturally stronger and better than the people who chose to settle down within the urban frames. After experiencing great losses in sports such as rowing and golfing in addition to rugby and cricket, the discussion about the ongoing failure expanded. It was now a necessity to include the overall ‘luxury’ that British athletes received during training. They would train with proper sports equipment and suitable pitches, in contrast to their colonial counterparts. An example of this was the South African cricket player Percy Sherwell who substituted bats with paraffine tins, as well as the pitch with the common road (Levett, 2018, pp. 54-56). All in all, New Zealand and South Africa gained great admiration from Britain for their manhood that, in contrast to the British ideals of manhood, derived from a close contact with nature itself (Vincent, 2005).

Although rugby was well upheld as a game for the upper class, a selected few members of the working class would in fact manage to prove themselves ‘worthy’, despite their social position. For some, especially dark-skinned players, an opportunity to play for the national team was unthinkable as the colour of their skin would forever determine their position on the ‘social ladder’. However, this turned out differently for James Peters, the son of a white mother and an Indian father who was born in the late 1800’s. At a very young age, he was abandoned by his parents after an accident and thereafter left in the care of an orphanage in London (Blackhistorymonth, 2015). After years of successful rugby training at the orphanage, he got the opportunity to join a club in West Country. After proving his skills here, he got to play for England in a match against Scotland. However, the fact that a coloured player joined the team did not go unnoticed. It was followed by resignations in the rugby committee, as well as dissatisfaction in the press (Collins, 2004). At a later point, Peters was to play alongside his teammates in Devonshire in a match against the South African Springboks. Yet again, his skin colour provoked a major controversy as the South Africans refused to compete in the match when they first took notice of him. This is important because the narrative of the Englishman as a ‘proper gentleman’ had to be strictly displayed, also in terms of racial images, meaning that the white man had to be presented as superior to black and coloured people. Any flaws on this narrative could strengthen the colonial teams’ already outstanding sovereignty.

Whether it is institutionalised through establishments, the media, or even on a basis of skin colour, rugby is determined to be a sport for the upper class. Within the Great Britain, the sport has become a companion of the upper-class men despite attempts to invite working men into the rugby community. During my fieldwork, it became clearer to me that this is still prominent today. All, except my Welsh, Canadian, and South African informants, told me that they had attended private schools when they were younger. One even told me that he had attended two different elite boarding schools during his upbringing. Although the South Africans did not necessarily attend private schools, rugby does have a history with racial division within the country. In several conversations, Maxwell stated very clearly to me that rugby is taught as a part of physical education in the Scottish private schools, whereas football belongs in the public schools. Let us now start moving outside the British borders and see how rugby found its place in the British Empire.

An officer and a Gentleman

Meera stumbled her way across the crowded bar with a tray of four ice cold schooners. Almost accidentally pouring the beers over my friend Tim, she manages to safely secure them on the rounded table between us. We had all gathered at the local bar right on the outside of Suva city centre to catch the finale of the Rugby World Cup 2019. This time, it was England and South Africa that had managed to fight their way up, and now having to endure one last battle to secure the golden trophy. “Who do you think will win?” I asked Meera during the second half of the match. “I don’t know, but I think South Africa”, she said hesitantly. “That’s just because they are winning!”, Tim added accusatory. “No, it’s not!”, Meera was quick to respond. “It is because England used to rule over them, so now it’s time for them to rule over England.”.

Certainly, Meera was referring to the time when the British Empire had seized control over several countries in all parts of the world, and South Africa was one of them. Amongst other things, rugby was brought over with the colonies and was then deeply integrated into many of the local cultures. So far, we have had a look at how rugby has developed in and influenced British societies. However, as I have mentioned the sport has been a part of a wider social process that stretches much further than to the English borders. In this section, we will dive even deeper and look at how the sport travelled from England and was later utilised in the British colonies as both innocent leisure activities, and as a means in the civilising process. It started with the disciplining of gentlemen who later would occupy the positions as colonial officers.

It is important to remember that it was the boys of the English *upper class* that would receive their education in boarding schools such Rugby school, and elite universities like Oxford and Cambridge. The amenities in the boarding institutions were made rough for the boys. Food would be limited, and the hallways would be devoid of the warm comforts of home. However, these sparse conditions were not caused by a lack of funding or careless teachers, but they were in fact intentional. The idea was that the boys, from a very young age, should be taught to endure harsh conditions like these as a part of their upbringing. This prepared the boys for a much harder outside world, as some of them would later move out to different parts of the British Empire and become colonial officers. However, it was not merely a hard exterior that the boys needed to achieve. In contrast, the boys needed to behave

cultivated and well-mannered. To phrase movie director Taylor Hackford, the men were being shaped to becoming ‘*An officer and a gentleman*’ (1982). After completing their enrolment in boarding schools, the young scholars would continue their education in elite colleges and universities and later be recruited for service overseas. It was questioned whether only intellectual men of "undistinguished social origin" were suited for this kind of responsibility, thus the international recruitment procedure was devised to favour Oxford and Cambridge educated researchers.

“Various measures significantly boosted the ICS’s contingent of ‘gentlemen’, including the weighting of Oxbridge-taught subjects in the exam, increased marks for interview performance, a very low age limit, a horse-riding test, and the amalgamation of the exam with that for the Home Civil Service, although those who passed highest almost always chose the Home over the Indian service.” (Misra, 2008, pp. 151).

As Misra lists in her article, measures such as horse-riding tests and favouring Oxbridge-taught subjects were made to increase the recruitment of ‘gentlemen’ to colonies. The tests that the recruits were completing resulted in a significantly homogenous group of officers who all had a ‘self-consciously gentlemanly identity’ (Misra, 2008, pp. 150). When the young men finished the recruitment process and were moved to the colonies, they brought with them elements of home which they used to create a microcosmos that imitated their previous residence in the motherland. Among these elements was the sport of rugby. Initially, the sport was used as leisure for the colonial officers.

As illustrated in the documentary *South Africa: Sport and Apartheid* (1984), The sport generally found ground in schools and military camps within the colonised areas. In the colonies, particularly in places such as New Zealand, Fiji, and other Pacific Island states, the sport served as a meeting point between the colonised and the colonisers. The sport was predominately welcomed in most cultures and became popular among the inhabitants. In fact, it was popular enough to be announced the national sport in New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, as well as other states outside that Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, sport has been significant in building and strengthening the relationships between the colonised areas and the motherland. The development of technology allowed for steamboats to be built, and thus international sporting tours to be arranged. The tours were meant to better the connections

between England and other areas of the British Empire, particularly New Zealand and South Africa (Mangan, 1998). However, New Zealand and South Africa's physical sovereignty, particularly in rugby, affected their relationship with Great Britain in a paradoxical manner, as the countries were both praised and criticised for their sportsmanship and sport prowess. Furthermore, the fact that British teams were losing to their colonial opponents made the impact on British manhood much worse.

The 1905 and 1906 rugby tours

In 1905 and 1906, New Zealand's rugby team, then called "The Original All Blacks", and the South African 'Springboks', went on tour to play against Britain. In neither of the tours could Britain manage to prove themselves. These tours led to the two countries gaining huge popularity in terms of sporting prowess. Though Britain lost against both teams, South Africa and New Zealand were met with contradicting responses. Where South Africa was met with praise for a gentlemanly approach to the game, "The All Blacks" were criticised for playing the game in a way too brutal manner (Glassock, 2016, p. 353). Rugby had a different significance in the colonies than it did in England, where it was seen as a leisure activity. Here, a desire to win by the means of strength and strategy was appearing, thereby leading to an acceptance for rougher play (Ryan, 2011, pp. 1411). The narrative of the British sportsman stood in great contrast to the character created in the colonies, and it was proven difficult for the British to accept this. Paradoxically, it is also claimed that the tour led to New Zealand gaining an admired position in the British Empire due to their physical approach to masculinity, something that was admired as a notion of the 'muscular Christian' (Nauright, 2007).

Although "The All Blacks" (in addition to other Australasian teams such as Tonga, Fiji and Samoa) managed to fulfil the requirement of physical strength, they often seemed to lack the preferred morality that Britain desired, thereby leading them to face great resistance regarding the sport. For Britain, the 1908 tour proved that the Australasian team was not suitable to play rugby in the manner of 'fair game' that they themselves preferred. For the New Zealanders, the game was an opportunity to show strength and skills, training each

position in the team to gain the right amount of durability and force, and then win over another country. This focus on discipline and body is what made the Anglo-Welsh team come to reconsidering which nations were suitable for rugby and which nations were not (Glassock, 2016, pp. 534-356).

Apartheid sports

Blonde wavy hair, a big smile, dark sunglasses, and a waving hand; it was Francis approaching me from the distance. Francis was born and raised in a religious, white middle-class family in South Africa. He had now come to Scotland on a rugby scholarship, but the coronavirus had put a stop to most sport activities, so unfortunately his stay had not been enriched with as much of physical activity that he was hoping for. Attending an elite university on Scotland's east [MSS3] coast had now gotten a new meaning: "The rugby, if I can say it, is definitely not on my South African team's level. But the university... Oh my God, I have to work so much harder!". Me and Francis met on several occasions, and he always seemed eager to chat with me about rugby. One day, on the side-line of the university's rugby field, I joined Francis to show support as the 3rd team (the team two levels below the 1st team, in which Francis played) was going up against Aberdeen. The match got closer to its end, but our chat had just started. I asked Francis how the notion of race affected rugby in South Africa. "It used to be very divided", he said. "But how it is now is different. I think it's unfair.". This seemed to be a slightly sensitive topic for him, but he continued: "So, rugby in South Africa is very serious. Even university rugby is taken, basically, as serious as professional rugby. I was joining the team for my previous university, and I was good enough to get my spot. However, because of the history with apartheid and everything, they have to make sure that there are enough black people in the team. So, because of that, I lost my spot to a black player. I think it's unfair, because I showed that my skills were better than his, and it shouldn't have anything to do with skin colour, just who can do the job best.".

As it is implied by Francis, race and sport has long been a controversy in South Africa, even before the beginning of apartheid. Apartheid clearly affected sports everywhere in the world. This section will examine more closely at how apartheid influenced sport within South Africa and how protesters from around the world responded to the stringent rules. The

National Party of South Africa came to power on 4th of June 1948 and promptly implemented the Group Areas Act (GAA) and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (RSAA). The GAA would serve as a cornerstone for apartheid policies, by legally securing separation of black, coloured, and white citizens. Moreover, the RSAA secured the segregation of physical space and services so that black, coloured, and white citizens were forced to access separate venues (Merrett, 2005, pp. 2). This was also effective in the realm of sports. Black South Africans were removed from training facilities that was reserved for the whites. As shown in *South Africa: Sport and Apartheid* (1984), black individuals had their own training facilities, but they paled in comparison to those designated for white citizens. Up until the early 1980s, all South African athletes who competed internationally were white. As a response to this, black South African athletes started organising associations as early as in the 50's with the intention to connect with international organisations. However, as South Africa already had made connections for their white associations, they failed to get recognition by the international federation.

On December 20th, 1969, England made history by beating South Africa on the rugby pitch for the very first time. Prior to the match, however, demonstrators took action to voice their disagreement regarding apartheid and attempted to disrupt the South African squad by locking players in their hotel rooms (Collins, 2009, pp. 157). In other corners of the world, protestors would also voice their opinions. For instance, New Zealand was accused of 'importing apartheid' because they consciously decided not to send Māori athletes to tour in South Africa as Māori athletes were not allowed to play in that area. The protestors shouted "No Māoris, No tour!" (McLean, 2007, pp. 256). These are only two out of a number of reactions caused by the exclusion of black South African players from global sports. What followed, was a global boycott of South African teams. Apartheid caused many significant changes in the world of sports during the 1960s. This occurred as several African countries gained independence, allowing them to vote in international sports federations on an equal footing. Furthermore, when politics became more 'radicalised', many apartheid opponents turned their attention to sports and became more aware of the country's severe laws. South Africa was then boycotted from the 1964 and 1968 Olympics, as well as other international sporting events, due to its exclusion of black competitors. In the 70's it was decided that they were expelled from the Olympic movement (Nixon, 1992).

Rugby in South Africa was something that white people, particularly Afrikaans speaking descendants, would identify with (Booth, 1996, pp. 460). One can then say that the

boycott was met with great dissatisfaction from one third of the population. Their relationship with New Zealand was put to the test on several occasions as arranged sporting tours were promptly cancelled in the 1970's in fear of the possibility to disrupt the Commonwealth Games that New Zealand participated in. In 1981, South Africa finally managed to send a team over to New Zealand, which resulted in something as close to a civil war as New Zealand has ever recorded (McDougall, 2018). During the game, there were police riots in the streets, and a plane was threatening to crash into the stadium where the game was being played. As a result of this, the hosts saw no other opportunity than to cancel the game. However, simultaneously as the stadium was filled up with white protestors, it was being aired on live television in South Africa. That was the first time black South Africans experienced support from white foreign people. On the contrary, white South African citizens saw this as merely a disruption of their beloved rugby.

In the 1980's, the planning of the first Rugby World Cup started. The cup was, at the time, hosted by both Australia and New Zealand together. Sixteen countries participated. Amongst them were bigger countries such as England, USA, Japan, and Canada. In addition, they invited smaller countries such as Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga to play with them. South Africa was still boycotted from international sports and thus excluded from the event. Attempts were made to restore rugby in South Africa, but there were domestic struggles as black South Africans wished for the boycott to continue until they would gain equal rights between black, white, and coloured citizens. The normalisation of sports started to occur as Mandela was released in 1990, which led to South Africa gaining the right to host the world cup in 1995. Mandela did in fact use rugby as a way of reconciliation with the white population. As we see, the sport in South Africa did mimic the sport of Great Britain. With the British colonies, the new settlers brought with them rugby, which was further adapted, particularly, by the white citizens who belonged to the upper classes. As a former part of the British Empire and the Commonwealth nations, it is not unexpected that the sport would find a similar position in the South African society. There are, however, as Francis implied, still symptoms caused by the tensions during apartheid and affirmative action is being taken to work towards a non-racial sports community.

Fiji

During my time in Fiji, I got to know a man named Joji. Joji is a 30-year-old Fijian, who has been playing rugby on both amateur and professional level. He grew up in a small village in Viti Levu, where he in his free time volunteered as a ball-boy at local football games. One day, a football coach approached him after a match and asked whether or not he had ever practised rugby: “It is very easy”, he said. “You just pick up the ball and run forwards”. Joji is a very large man and has been so ever since he was a child. The football coach saw Joji’s physique and knew that he had potential, in which he was right. During the months I spent in Fiji, the society was charging up for the rugby world cup of 2019. Joji had just been playing an exhibition game (a friendly game played by professional teams, that takes place during a preseason) against Canada, and asked if I wanted to join for a drink the day after. Me and my peers quite enjoyed attending these exhibition games, as rugby proved to be a significant part of Fijian culture. The Fijians had won the game the day before, though the referee had given them a hard time for being too aggressive on the pitch. “Did you see the ref?!” Joji asked excitedly yet frustrated. “We should not have gotten that yellow card. Did you see we got it?”. “Yes, I saw”, I answered. “It doesn’t matter, they always do this. It is because they don’t like how we play rugby. They think we play too rough for them!”. This line did not particularly strike me as something significant at first, at least not in any other sense than that the teams might have slightly different approaches to the game. However, it was not the first and last time this was pointed out to me. A month later, a Fijian friend of mine referred to the same thing as we were watching Fiji play against Wales in the rugby world cup.

What Joji reacted to in this instance was how their approach to rugby was being perceived by the western referee. According to him and other Fijians that I got in touch with, it was a common reception of Fijian sport conduct, especially when it came to rugby. At first, I saw this as merely a typical complaint: one will never be happy with a referee’s decision when it sanctions your preferred team. Thinking back at it however, the pacific island states were historically met with resentment for their particularly rough play. My Fijian friends were all very consumed by rugby. It was, as stated in my introduction chapter, on Viti Levu that I first experienced watching rugby, and it did not take me long to understand how well embedded the sport is in the Fijian everyday life. It seemed to me that no matter where I went, there would always be posters or commercials for the next rugby game, chats about yesterday’s results, and people wearing “The Flying Fijians” rugby jerseys. The sport was, in similarity with the other former colonies, brought to the islands by the British settlers, and it

did not take long before it was embraced by the native Fijian population. Along with the sport, the colonisers also brought Christianity. In this section, I will illustrate how Christianity, when it was introduced in Fiji, played a big role in the production of manhood. I will then show how rugby, with a focus on strength and the physical body, is used to further build a closer relationship with God.

“That’s a lie”. Those words were the immediate response when I told Joji about a group of scientists who had discovered an 18-thousand-year-old puppy frozen down in the Siberian permafrost. “God created Adam first, and then Eve, six million years ago. That’s when it all began. And then he created animals”. I knew that Joji was highly devoted to Christianity. Everywhere he went, he would wear a necklace with a selection of pearls on each side of a bronze cross. Prior to every meal, he would make sure to say a prayer before taking his first bite. Sometimes, I would even notice that he was carrying his bible with him. Although I noticed these things, he tended to be rather quiet about his relationship with God. Due to this, it kept surprising me the few times he would be vocal about it.

Joji was not the only religious person I met in Fiji. In fact, Christianity was brought to Fiji, and has then been embraced by the native population. The meeting between pre-colonial Fiji and Christianity affected great aspects of social practice and hierarchy. Presterudstuen (2016) argues convincingly how Wesleyanism has been accepted, mimicked, and adapted by the Fijian population. The British colonists arrived in Fiji at a time where the islands were facing local and domestic power struggles. With a common goal in mind, the high chief on the island of Bau decided to accept the religion presented by the colonisers. Together, both parties shared the interest of establishing a hierarchy of power that places a certain type of man above women and alternative masculinities. Instead of submitting to the colonisers, the Fijian population accepted the religion, adapted to it, and shaped it into a variety of Christianity that resonates with their own social praxis. What is central to the adaptation of Christianity, is the way it was used to reinforce and legitimise traditional Fijian manhood. The adaptation led to a change in Fijian customs where their patriarchal traditions have been legitimised and strengthened.

“When I was young and decided I wanted to become a professional rugby player, no one in my family believed in me. But I still went out running every single day just to get faster. And I prayed to God to give me the strength so that I could get better and stronger. I wanted to be able to give back to my family in Fiji... give back to my mum. So, every day I trained until I was good enough. God gave me strength because I spoke to him every day. That’s why all the professional, really good, athletes are Christian. Because God gave them the strength to become the best.”

This is what Joji told me when he explained how God had helped him on his way to become a professional rugby player. God played a crucial part in his journey to become qualified in his sport. His everyday conversations with God gave him the means to become stronger. His physical achievements would reciprocate what was provided for him, and thus create a closer relationship between himself and God. When analysing the relationship between masculine performances and religion in Fiji, Presterudstuen shows how masculine and religious praxis are deeply intertwined with each other: “Indeed, Christianity was consistently understood in a way where contemporary constructions of masculinity found justification, encouragement and guidelines in the religious ethos.” (pp. 123). Religious writings, such as psalm 18:2, legitimises the understanding of physical strength as one of the most important ways to show devotion to God. The psalm, referred to in the article, goes as follows: “the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (pp. 123). One of his respondents who were studying to become a Methodist preacher, would play rugby on the side to get more in touch with his physical body, and hence develop a closer relationship to his religion (pp. 122-123). I will suggest that this is also the case with Joji. He is stating that all professional athletes have succeeded due to their faith in God. In contrast, less successful athletes will not, or have not yet, reached their potential due to their lack of religious closeness. In Fijian culture, to achieve your full potential, you must accept and believe in God. Your physical strength and sense of body are the embodied proofs of personal devotion. It is, then, not surprising that a sport such as rugby, with its great emphasis on the physical body and strength, has become such a substantial part of Fijian everyday life.

This chapter has had a double purpose. Firstly, I provided a section that took us back to where the game originated. From there, I illustrated how rugby spread within the British societies. By doing so, I have illustrated the sport’s close connection to class structures and how this has been reinforced by the media and elite institutions. Although the sport is

accessible through clubs for everyone these days, there are still divisions such as public and private establishments that reinforce preferences, particularly between rugby and football. As rugby was, and still is, taught in elite establishments where the disciplining of ‘gentlemen’ were taking place, the sport found its way to the colonies and was embraced by the native populations. The second purpose was to illustrate how the sport, by travelling and establishing in cultures around the world, has played a big role in the production of different masculinities. In Britain, as well as New Zealand, South Africa, and Fiji, rugby has created men that has been admired for their gentlemanly behaviour, strength, sporting prowess, and/or even skin colour. However, with admiration comes abhor. Where the sport has created respected men, it has also created masculinities that have challenged popular ideals and created controversy, which can be illustrated with the meeting between the British and the New Zealand rugby players. This sets the task for the rest of my thesis, where I will draw upon the twinned notions of ‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’ and show how these metaphors for an ambiguous performance of masculinities are being reproduced and reinforced through the sport of rugby.

Chapter 2: Performing Ambiguity

Most sports were put on pause due to the ongoing corona virus, and for the sport that was still going, only a selected few people were allowed to be present during practice and games. After some time, I got good news in my inbox, and I could finally come observe my very first training session. It was a bit too early to feel the heat from the sun, but I was thankful for the rare but dry weather. I felt rather small standing on the short side of the bright green pitch. With distinctive white outlines, the grass stretched from one goalpost to another. The guys were currently completing a gym session in the training facilities next to the pitch while I was waiting on a wooden bench next to the gym venue. Shortly after finishing their gym sessions, the team gathered in a circle for a debrief with Greg, the head coach. A crowd of heads turned towards me as he explained my presence.

In this chapter, we will visit the green grass pitch where several rugby practices and matches took place throughout my time on field. Here, we will have a closer look at the players in action, as they complete training sessions and show off their skills when they go head to head with a rivalling team in the annual Gullhammer Game. With a specific focus on performativity, the use of performance theory, and practice theory, this section will illustrate how aspects of rugby such as training sessions and matches allow for the construction of masculinities to take place. What I experienced observing the players perform, was something that reminded of the same ambiguity that unfolded throughout the game's history. In other words, what I find interesting is how deeply embedded the twinned trope of 'the officer', and 'the gentleman' are in the overall structure of the sport. This chapter will be divided into two main parts, and the first half seeks to examine exactly this. I will illustrate how the players and coaches reproduce these characters through performance and speech acts. To do this, we will go back to a training session that highly emphasised the divided structure of a rugby union team. Further I will attempt to approach my examples by viewing them through theories of practice and performance. When we move on to the second half of the chapter, we will make a closer examination of a rugby match. In this half, we look closer at the audience's role during a game, as well as the ritualistic tendencies during matches. In the very end, we will examine how the players position themselves against the use of violence and aggression both on and off pitch. Now, let us travel back to one specific training session. This session was the last one before The Gullhammer Game, and it was important that the players practiced strategic game and given responsibilities.

Practice

On a sunny, but slightly windy day, I sat down on a bench next to the pitch where the team was warming up. This session was one of the last training sessions before the annual Gullhammer Game - which meant that it was going to be a tough one. The team got divided into two separate groups, consisting of the 'forwards' and the 'backs'. The two groups would be given drills customised to their own specific tasks in a game, giving them room to improve exact skills that are crucial for the team to succeed. The exercises they received were taken out as small components of an actual game. The backs' exercises were based on running, kicking, passing, and quick decision making. These drills were executed with a great amount of confidence. I could see them catch and pass on the ball with no second thought. With the amount of practice that I knew they all had received throughout their upbringing, the process of decision making in a game had most likely been developed for years, making them all able to think quickly and make decisions confidently within seconds. The 'forwards' are the players who, among other tasks, participate in the scrum. Their drills were based on more head-to-head encounters such as tackling, receiving tackles, and re-enacting of the scrum. It was mentioned for me that the forwards are the ones who are responsible for most of the physical confrontations.

As shown in the example above, a rugby union team is composed by two main categories, the forwards, and the backs. These two groups are divided on basis of their given responsibilities in a game, where the forwards are those who participate in the scrum. To further elaborate in this, let us begin with a brief review of the player's given and specific responsibilities. Blair was patient enough to walk me through this over a cup of coffee, and I will attempt to give a worthy review of the descriptions in the following section.



Figure 1: View over the rugby pitch where the team practiced several times a week.

The Forwards

In order to execute a fruitful analysis of the team's construction, I want to provide you with a short explanation of the different positions in a rugby union team. As mentioned, Blair was kind enough to give me a detailed description of the player's different responsibilities. Let me start by explaining the specific tasks of the forward players. The forwards consist of player number 1 to 8. These players occupy the eight positions in the scrum. Player number 1 (*loosehead prop*), 2 (*hooker*), and 3 (*tighthead prop*) find themselves in the front row. The loosehead and tighthead prop will prevent the scrum from moving backwards, as well as supporting the hooker when he is attempting to hook the ball and lead it backwards in the scrum. These three players are expected to be physically strong and take most of the head-to-head physical encounters. Behind them are number 4 and 5 (*locks*) who make up the second

row of the scrum. As the name implies, their task is to lock the power in the scrum by strongly connect their arms to each other and the props. The back row consists of the last three players, number 6 and 7 (*flankers*) and number 8 (conveniently called *number 8*). The two flankers must be excellent all-round players, as they don't have as many fixed responsibilities as the rest of the scrum. Lastly is number 8, who's main task is to get possession of the ball when it finally makes its way to the back of the scrum. In addition to having responsibilities in the scrum, these players will have other specific tasks in the lineout which includes throwing the ball, lifting the jumper, and jumping and grabbing the ball. However, it is clear that their tasks and responsibilities rely on a physically strong body that is capable to endure collisions and high-pressure game.

The Backs

Number 9 (*scrum half*) is the player that connects the forwards with the backs. When the ball finds its way through the scrum, the scrum half is the one who picks it up and passes it on to the other backs. The scrum half is often small compared to his fellow teammates, which is an advantage when it comes to picking up the ball quicker. Player number 10 (*fly-half*) is responsible for a lot of the decision-making in a game, deciding what kind of attacks and moves will come next. When the team has scored a try, he is also usually responsible for the conversion that follows. On each side of the pitch are number 11 and 14 (*wing*). Their main advantage is to be fast, as they are often responsible to complete attacks. Following the wings are number 12 and 13 (*inside and outside centre*). The centres must be strategic and dynamic as their main goal is to break the opposition's defence or create space for their teammates to pass through. Lastly is number 15 (*full back*). Being another good all-round player, this position will receive high balls, as well as being responsible for sweeping up the ball for his fellow teammates. Maintaining a cool head, a key word for the backs is strategy. In contrast to the forwards, their success is not relying on physical strength, but rather on precise and confident play.

The brute and the gent

This structure is particularly intriguing since the two groups share the same kind of ambiguity (the ambiguity of "the officer" and "the gentleman" that was discussed in the previous chapter) that has influenced, sustained, and been reinforced by rugby throughout its development. In other words, the backs are a reflection of 'the gentleman', whereas the forwards reflect 'the officer'. The figures of 'the officer' and 'the gentleman' are showing themselves through more than merely physical bodies but is also reflected in the team as one entity. Together, the forwards and the backs are constructed from two main components whose responsibilities are each resting on the gentle or the brutal. The gentle in this sense is the strategic game, whereas the brutal is the physical. I am not suggesting that a back player is in no need of physical strength, nor that the forwards will not need to rely on strategies or quick decision making. In fact, their tasks will be mixed both in the physical game, as the players are in need of understanding each other's positions to perform better during a match. What I will argue, is that the overall structure reflects this exact ambiguity, and this ambiguity again reinforces the different masculinities that are so well embedded in the sport of rugby. Being involved with rugby on a daily basis, the players are put into a sphere of ambiguous roles, or ambiguous masculinities. Being assigned a position in the team, whether that position is in the forwards or the backs, the player is allowed a closer identification with the figuration of either 'the officer' or 'the gentleman', and at the same time position himself against the other character. For the player, this emphasises the ambiguous notions of masculinities that he is living amongst. Yet, as I mentioned, the use of strategy and physical force is prominent in both groups, which means that there will always be traces of both sides in either group. What the division does, is that it creates some sort of an awareness – conscious or unconscious – of the characteristics held by 'the brute' and 'the gent'.

Juxtaposing the rugby player with the notions of 'the officer' and 'the gentleman', we can see clearer how 'the officer' and 'the gentleman' is reflected in the rugby player. In both cases, we can see similar masculinities performed through the physical body in terms of strength and discipline. Both the officer and the player must be prepared to endure any kind of obstacle that directly affects their physical bodies and inflict pain. At the same time, they need to be disciplined and well-behaved when the referee, commanders, or other participants requires so. I witnessed one example of this when I watched a live streamed rugby match

between Scotland and Italy. Let me take you back to a grey spring day in my temporary home on the Scottish east coast.

With no desire to walk much further than to my own kitchen, I decided to stay indoors rather than facing the dreadful Scottish rainfall. Due to Covid-19, amateur sport had been cancelled until further notice, but luckily for me professional sports were still on. I sat down comfortably on my sofa right before the whistle blew, marking the beginning of the first game between Scotland and Italy. This was a game in the Six Nations tournament, a tournament where England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, and Italy would compete for the winning spot. About half an hour into the game, a loud whistle was heard as the referee spotted a foul. All the players immediately stopped what they were doing. As the referee proceeded to make a decision on the foul, the Scottish team captain Stewart Hogg calmly walked towards him to ask for a conversation. He proceeded to apologise to the referee before kindly explaining why the given decision was not fair to his team and that they were not given a proper chance to play the game.

Even though the players are occupied by a physically demanding situation on the rugby field, they still find room for discipline when it is required. Similarly, throughout my fieldwork, I frequently observed the rugby players acting in a gentlemanly manner. To elaborate on how the masculinities affect, and is being reproduced by, the player, I want to analyse it in the light of gender performance theory.

Judith Butler (1988) writes that: "...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*". She proceeds to explain how everyday acts together create an illusion that forms a static gender (Butler, 1988, pp. 519). I will now continue my analysis by leaning highly on this way of approaching the topic. In other words, Butler's take on gender is that it is constituted and reinforced through time by everyday performances. Gender is something we do, rather than something we are. Gazing back at the institutions in which rugby has been formed, carried forward by colonial officers, and further established in colonies around the world we can see that the masculinities that unfolded through rugby are created by exactly this process. With this process through time, a repetition of acts is being formed and taught to the next generation of officers. This way, the subject lives within a vacuum in which he cannot escape. These acts are being taught to later generations and thereby reincorporated and reinforced through time. Given that the sport was,

and still is, a part of curriculum in elite establishments in Great Britain, already sets the subject up for a day-to-day encounter with rugby. In addition, some (or most) players will meet the sport domestically. All my informants had male family members who played, or are still playing, rugby. Only one of them had a female family member (his mother), who was involved with the sport. The divide between male and female family members who are or were affiliated with rugby is important to notice, but before elaborating on this subject, I want us to quickly have a look at the term '*habitus*'. Although *habitus* is a term connected to practice theory, rather than performance theory, I believe it serves a purpose in understanding why an everyday performance does not necessarily feel like a performance. In contrary, it feels real and natural.

When diving into the topic of sport in the general light of social sciences, it is a necessity to consult the work of Pierre Bourdieu. His focus was mainly on sport in relation to social class and cultural capital. Bourdieu applied the term '*habitus*' to further elaborate on his practice theory (Bourdieu, 1978). *Habitus*, first developed by Marcel Mauss, is a term that describes how habits are inscribed to the body through time, providing the subject with a habitual way of living that 'just makes sense'. The term was by Bourdieu applied to understanding social class, and hence sport in relation to social class. As for him, it is useful to view sport in the light of how social class is constructed through cultural capital. By doing so, we can see how classes reflect themselves in sport by excluding certain types of behaviours and preferences. For him, rugby among other sports, indicate "instrumental relation to the body itself which the working classes express in all the practices centred on the body" (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 438). According to Bourdieu, the *habitus* of the working class is seen reflected in the rugby player as they both share an active and working body.

However, this is contrasting to my own findings, where rugby has been, and still is being, reproduced among the upper-middle and upper classes within Great Britain. Take for instance the many conversations I had with Maxwell who could not come to terms with the sport of rugby, claiming it belonged to the 'fucking Tories' (a term meant derogatorily that refers to the upper class), or the number of informants who shared a common upbringing within boarding schools or private establishments where rugby was systemically taught in physical education, and now found themselves studying at an elite university in 'the most English town in Scotland' (quote by Maxwell, also referring to the English as the ruling class). Also seen in the light of the split with rugby union and rugby league, where the matter was, all up until 1995, money. In addition, Bourdieu's studies showed that the upper classes

were tendentious to favour a ‘civilised’ type of strength and masculinity, for instance body building. Body building is a sport that disciplines and tames the body by gaining muscles primarily for aesthetic reasons. Rugby, with its brutal nature, was on the contrary seen to be built on uncontrollable aggression and uncivilised violence, in comparison to sport like fitness and body building (Stempel, 2005, pp. 414). Yet, despite the brutal nature of the game, the sport has proven to be a favourite for upper-class Britain. It seems unlikely that sport preference is reflected in the habitus and cultural capital of different social classes, as Bourdieu suggests. However, it seems to be passed on, like tradition, from one generation to the next.

Nonetheless, the term ‘habitus’ might still be of good use. “We acquire habitus based on conditions in which we live from childhood, and which predetermine what sets of patterns of distinctive practices, activities, perception, and evaluation we acquire” (Soukup and Dvořáková, 2016, pp. 215). Most of my informants first encountered rugby when they started primary school. Yet some had their first encounters as early as four-year-olds. Those who started earlier had fathers who played rugby and wished for their sons to take up the same sport as early in life as possible. I was told by one who used to play rugby when he was younger but later decided that it was not for him, that he was met with resistance from his dad when he quit. Him quitting the sport was followed by a long and complicated relationship to his dad, who played rugby for a long time during his younger age. Their father-and-son relationship met many complications, and my informant felt a need to constantly prove himself for example by constantly trying out other sports, performing in school, and choosing the ‘right’ profession. This illustrates that rugby is something that in many cases is established in, and on can even say forced onto, the subject’s life from an age where the subject is encountering and making sense of the world around them. The sport, as it is institutionalised into establishments, is a significant part the subject’s everyday life and upbringing. In a sense, the subject is being squeezed into it from any angle, either in school, domestically, by friends, or through a combination of all. This early exposure and interaction with the sport is taking part in shaping their habitus. If the player is early introduced to rugby, which seems to be the case with most players, it is very likely that he will develop a certain praxis, preferences, attitudes, and so on, throughout his upbringing, that will rest on this significant part of his life. In the light of masculinities, he is also conditioned to live with the ambiguity of ‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’, whether it is conscious or unconscious. Habitus then serves well in understanding how patterns of behaviours are shaped through time by our surroundings, and

how our acts seem nothing but natural. Furthermore, when we perform, say, our gender identity, habitus is what makes the performance seem natural.

Horowitz (2013) conducted a fieldwork among drag queens and drag kings where she argued against the discursive assumption that drag kings and queens serve as each other's counterparts, meaning that they share a common ontological existence (pp. 306). Drag kings are typically gay female artists who perform as men, whereas drag queens are typically gay male artists who perform as women. Although the two performance groups are discursively related to one another, she argues convincingly that the kings and queens are closer to opposites and that they should not be studied through the same lens. By leaning on performance theory, she states that drag performance tends to be mistaken to be based on political agendas. It is often assumed that drag queens and drag kings use the stage to protest against the status quo. However, Horowitz sees performance as a "real-life phenomena", rather than a "metaphor for real-life phenomena" (pp. 310). Drag is about performing existing identities, not necessarily with an agenda, but only to open up, test, and display one's personal gender experience. By playing on stereotypes, built on class, race, sexuality, and so on, the artist is taking on real-life roles and playing out an actual social existence. It is, in other words, not a performed reality, it is performed because it is a reality. Performance of gender identity is not theatre; it is real life. My intention here is to show how the term 'performance' is not superficial. The gender that is performed, in this instance by the rugby players, is a reflection of reality that we live in. Masculinities that exist, exist in relation to something else, say, in relation to other masculinities, femininities, androgyny, class, race, sexualities, and the list goes on. They are dynamic, and changes through social progression. It is not another layer of existence in which people take on, it is rather something that people exist with, or as Horowitz puts it, a "real-life phenomena". Or, in Butler's terms, gender is something we do, not something we are. Using stage performance, like drag, as an analogy for identity performance is not a new thought, but it is an effective one. Throughout this analysis, I will rest my arguments on the analogy between the rugby pitch and the theatre stage. Now, in the following paragraph, we will dig deeper into the topic and examine this analogy even closer.

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956), written by Erving Goffman, is one of the most influential books on performance theory. In the book he argues that life can be seen as a theatre stage where people perform their roles in a frontstage or backstage area. People put on different masks regarding which setting they find themselves in. You might act differently around your friends than you do with around your parents. In sport, for instance,

the players perform one role on the pitch and another one off the pitch. In this book, performance can be seen as something that we put on and off. It is seen more like a theatre performance. Seeing performances as masks imply some sort of illegitimacy, something that one can cover the authentic self in. However, masks do not necessarily mean that something is untrue. It is, in fact, a good analogy, people perform different roles in different settings, even when alone. Sport, in contrast to the theatre, where the actors perform pre-written roles, the players on the pitch play out an unwritten script. They perform the ‘roles’ as the ‘heroes’ who fight for their community. In addition, the athlete might perform a different form of masculinity among his teammates or on pitch, than he would around his father or grandmother. These roles are all created through time, by different settings. For example, one’s family, rugby practice, school, and so on.

Throughout life, the body is not only being shaped by external means, but it is being taught to shape itself. For instance, consumption of food and drink that are supposed to contribute to the development of bigger and stronger muscles are a taught way of using one’s body as self-presentation. By consuming specific foods, one shapes their body to create a particular physique that is idolised in the community in question. One way an individual decides to ‘dress up’ one’s ‘character’ is decided by the type of gender identity that is reproduced by the group in which one belongs to. In rugby, or amongst athletes in general, having visible muscles is important. Less visible muscles might contribute to a less legitimate masculine role for the ‘actor’. However, this is a subject that I will return to in one of my following chapters. The aim of this section has been to show how bodily praxis are part in shaping people’s own gender identity. As mentioned, a rugby team consists of two main components, the forwards (‘the officers’) and the backs (‘the gentlemen’). The subject either plays as ‘the officer’, ‘the gentleman’, or perhaps both. This contributes to shape how they view themselves, how they view others, and how others view them. Furthermore, these views contribute to the way they perform their (gender) identity, similar to the outwardly expression of gender performed by the drag artists. In the following section, we will switch our focus over to act of speaking. My argument will essentially remain the same, actions mould reality.

“Alright, gentlemen”

As the coach blew the whistle, the players immediately stopped whatever they were doing, turned around, and started walking towards him. As they were all neatly lined up in a circle around him, he began sharing his message. Occasionally it was difficult for me to make a clear interpretation through the thick Scottish accent. However, something that stood out was the repeating use of the word 'gentlemen': "Alright, gentlemen", he started most of his commands.

We have all been told that if we repeat something enough times, it will eventually become the reality we find ourselves in. To put it in other words, language forms reality. If this is the case, what does the coach's choice of words do to the player's understanding of themselves, their roles, and their gender identities? In this section, I want to draw further on performance theory to analyse the way in which the coaches and players refer and speak to each other, and how their discourse around gender reproduces masculinities. A part of Butler's performance theory is built upon the speech act theory that was first created by J. L. Austin. Gender is in this sense something that is constructed not merely through bodily movements, but also through discourse around sex. Butler (2011) argues that the body, through identificatory practices, create discourse around sex that reproduces a normative notion of sex in which a subject will position themselves in relation to. The normative sex is being mirrored by subjective performances and thus justified as the norm. Anyone who chooses to go against this norm, is, paradoxically, acting from those norms that are already set. The norms enable the opportunity to resist them (pp. 12-15). These seminal words by Malinowski sum up this position in a succinct way:

“Arguing that the linguists of his day thought of language as simply and solely a communication device, he went to the opposite extreme and asserted that by far the most important quality of language is that it is a pragmatic tool. It is not that words simply say something about the state of affairs; in nine cases out of ten, they have consequences, they alter the state of affairs.” (Malinowski, 1932, in Leach, 1957, pp. 147).

Drawing on the example described in the beginning of this section where the coach uses the term *gentlemen*. The coach, when signalling to the player that he is a *gentleman*, a social reality is being constructed. The coach has an authoritarian position within the team, he is hierarchically above the players, and they must obey his commands. His speech is not

merely words, they are also commands. The players are in position to receive these commands, act upon them, and thus become them. When using the term *command*, I am not simply referring to explicit commands where, for instance, a recruit in a military camp is told by a sergeant how to position himself next. I am, on the other hand, using the term to describe a sense of *implicit* command. As in, the term might create an understanding of oneself. In other words, you become who you are told that you are. This sort of empowering speech act takes the players back in time where they metaphorically connect with ‘the gentleman’, bringing them closer to the ideals that they are acting out on the pitch or other places. ‘The gentleman’ is not merely a character, but also an idea of a specific set of behaviours together symbolises a certain type of masculinity. The players are being referred to as this idea/character, and thus told to become them. Their words do, like Malinowski suggested, have consequences.

“Talk is itself a kind of act, and speech acts can have powerful social consequences”. (Quinn and Holland, 1987, pp. 9). Quinn and Holland argue that the way in which people speak about each other will have direct effect on people’s behaviour. In the light of gender, they apply their example of the American view of success. The example was first presented by D’Andrade (1965) who illustrates how discourse around success provide inner meaning and motivation in men and women in America. For the women, marriage is seen as the goal for success, however, it is only the goal when it is *applied by others*. The women who grow up being taught that their success depends on their marital status, will find inner motivation through this kind of discourse, and then fulfil the requirements put on them by others (Quinn and Holland, 1987, pp. 12-13). This motivation is not merely an inner drive; it is a force created by others through speech acts. Let us see this in the light of my own example.

On my way home from the training session, my good friend Graham invited me out for a pint. With my mind still stuck on what I had heard on the pitch, I asked Graham if it is common to refer to each other as gentlemen, particularly among guys. “Not really”, he answered rather carelessly. I proceeded my question: “What about in sports?”. “That’s more of a rugby thing. There’s a respect element of it.”, he said. “What do you mean by respect element?”, I asked curiously, eager to know more. It was clear that this conversation was of greater entertainment to me than to him: “An element of respect”, he replied as he started laughing before changing the topic.

Graham used to play rugby at a younger age but decided to quit when he acquired a greater interest for music and DJ-ing. In addition to rugby, he had also tried out sports such as water polo and basketball, but the term ‘gentlemen’ had only appeared on the rugby pitch. So, what is it about this term that creates the element of respect that Graham was referring to? The rugby pitch is a place in which aggression and rough play is going unsanctioned, at least for most of the time. Aggressive behaviour is allowed, and even encouraged. There is a paradox of what is happening on the pitch and the words that are being spoken. “Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names.” (Butler, 2011, pp. 13). What I am essentially trying to say, is that the act of speaking about, or the act of referring to the players, as *gentlemen*, provide an inner *motivation* to actually *becoming* a gentleman. In other words, discourse create inner meaning.

The very last part of this chapter seeks to examine aggression and aggressivity, however, I want to address the topic before ending this section. On one hand, the act of referring to each other as gentlemen create an understanding of oneself as a gentleman. Yet, I cannot finish this section without speaking of the paradox that is so visible in this sport. Rugby is not a soft sport; it has on the contrary a very brutal nature. As John, one of the players, said to me: “Football is a gentle sport for thugs; rugby is a thug sport for gentlemen.”. The brutality of the sport contradicts the way the players and coaches refer to each other. In chapter one, I provided an example of the current Scottish national team captain Stewart Hogg’s interference with a referee during a Six Nations game. The linguistic choices made during that conversation rested on a form of respect, in comparison to the high level aggressivity that is often seen on a football pitch or during an ice hockey match. In a heated climate, the players still manage to constrain themselves. As shown, words create understanding of one’s own character and identity. By being referred to or referring to oneself as something, the words serve as the mediator between the subject and the social reality, and thus this social reality is formed.

The Gullhammer Game

Every year, two rugby teams will face each other in a massive event witnessed by thousands of people.

The team has been preparing for this match for quite some time. However, due to the ongoing

situation with Covid-19, the game had to be played in more small-scale circumstances with fewer people in the audience and on a different field. I got off the bus about 10 minutes away and as I started to walk, clear yelling and shouting was detectable from what I assumed would be the rugby field. This was clearly a bigger event than what I was under the impression of. People were crowding towards the event. Most of them were walking in bigger groups, carrying cans and cardboard boxes of beer and other alcoholic beverages. To my surprise, this was an event many people had decided to dress up for. There were big groups of guys in shirts, suits, and ties, as well as girls in summery skirts and dresses, despite the cloudy weather. I could not help feeling a little too casual in my baggy chinos and graphic t-shirt. Greg, the head coach, had left a ticket in the sports centre for me to pick up. On my way, a group of young men who were walking a couple of meters ahead of me were chatting about how much alcohol they had drunk so far. "I'm already fuckin' steamin'!" one of them shouted. "Seriously, I've had more than you" another one of them replied as he finished off a glass bottle and threw it on the ground. This group consisted of four guys and one girl. As the guys were shouting and cheering, the girl was quietly following a few steps behind them.

In this section, I want to take you with me to watch The Gullhammer Game. This is an annual match held between the two rivalling universities East Valley and Heather Town. Matches allow for a player's skills and commitment to be put to the test, setting two teams up against each other in an opportunity to prove their sovereignty. In both Scotland and Fiji, I got to watch rugby matches on both professional and amateur level. Moving on from rugby practice, we will have a closer look at what unfolded during these matches. In Scotland, The Gullhammer Game surprised me on many levels, from the professional-like play to the behaviour of the audience. I will primarily apply my own examples from The Gullhammer Game. This particular game showcased what I witnessed during smaller-scaled games, just on a greater and more visible level.

The field was rectangular, with two team benches located in the middle section of the wider edge. These benches were where the players, coaches, and other people who were connected to the game were stationed. On the opposite side of the team benches, there was a small tribune filled with people I later learned were the players' partners and family members. Securing the area around the team benches was a fence keeping people from getting too close to the players. The audience was finding their preferred spot around the pitch, excited for the kick-off to finally happen. At the opposite side of the entrance, there were placed two food trucks serving hamburgers, chips, fizzy juice, coffees, and cakes. I found myself drawn to the coffee truck within minutes of crossing the entrance gate.

The set-up of the field is not coincidental. It is constructed in a way that gives legitimacy to the spectacle. Let us create another hypothetical format: The field is placed in front of the audience, and the spectators are sitting on rounded tables facing each other rather than the athletes. It is likely that the concentration would be on conversations and mingling between the audience instead of the athletes. Surrounding the pitch with seats facing towards the grass signals that what is important is what is right in front of you. In addition, the audience also sees that the remaining audience is facing in a direction towards the centre, which implies that everyone is there to witness the same spectacle. The audience is one of the most important aspects of sport. They are the ones that generate popularity, economic growth, and most significantly, legitimacy. Let us now have a closer look at exactly that.

The Audience

During a fifteen-minute break between the two halves, people got a chance to start mingling with each other. Beiges and burgundies were chatting with each other despite their unmatching colours. Beside me, a group of men were shouting to each other, clearly drunk: "Ross! Ross! Take a photo of us!". They were dressed in dark beige suits and had cigars in their mouths, obvious members of the rugby club. Three of them lined up next to each other and began posing for the camera. With a smug grin on his face and the cigar tightly secured between his teeth, the biggest one of them rapidly placed his hand a few centimetres away from his mate's crotch. As the photo was taken, they all bursted out laughing.

The intermission is the time when the audience is being incorporated into the script and given a legitimate role. In the example above, I drew attention to the supporters of the two rivalling teams interacted with each other, how they were all dressed up in suits and matching ties and using props such as cigars. By using these props, the actors' roles are becoming more persuasive for the audience, and it is the audience that must believe in the spectacle for the narrative to 'come to life'. Let me elaborate on this. Schechner (1988, pp. 196) points out the importance of audience during a performance act. He illustrates his thesis by drawing parallels between a sporting event, a movie theatre, and his own assemble of 'The

Performance Group'², saying, "A tale is being played for you, all around you, and needs your active support" (Schechner, 1988 pp. 196). In other words, the on-stage performance needs the audience's presence for their story to be legitimate. In this section, I will argue that the intermissions in a sporting match serve the same purpose. I will apply my own experience attending The Gullhammer Game to illustrate exactly how the intermission serves as a gateway between the audience and the performers, but first we will take a brief look at the set-up of the older theatre halls with a specific focus on the lighting.

In the old Greek theatres, the whole venue was lit, not merely the stage. The light captured and embraced both the audience and the performers on stage, at the same time. It highlighted the fact that the audience was equally important for the story as the on-stage performers. When the light changed its focus to only capture the stage, Schechner explains, intermissions were introduced. It is important for the audience to see each other, to see that there is a 'gathering' of people similar to oneself that has come to witness the same event. The intermissions, when introduced, were used to continue the story, however on a different setting. The audience could now speak to each other and the performers. They would see performers change costumes and walk on the backdrop and the stage where the story is set (pp. 195-196), all to incorporate the spectators into the story and provide legitimacy to the act.

My experience attending The Gullhammer Game was that the event contained many of the same elements as one would experience in these theatres. As said, it is the times between the acts that realises the story and incorporates it into the audiences' lives. When I entered the field where The Gullhammer Game was being held, I was greeted by a ticketer at the gate. I walked further where I could see the audience mingling, chatting with each other, getting refreshments, and scanning the pitch in excitement. On the pitch, I could see the players warming up, executing drills, and simulating games. In other words, the audience got to see the players 'change costumes', and we got to walk the backdrop. This was the case prior to kick-off and during the intermission. In contrast to the sporting field, the movie theatre has no intermissions, no one to greet you as a guest when you enter the hall, and only on a rare occasion someone will introduce the movie to the audience. On a sporting event, in contrary, the audience is greeted by guards or other staff when they enter the stadium and there are commentators communicating with the audience over the speakers, before the game, during the intermissions, and after the match.

² Richard Schechner established the experimental theatre group named The Performance Group in 1967.

As mentioned in my examples above, there were supporters among the audience dressed in suits. These supporters were members of the rugby clubs belonging to the two rivalling universities. I suggest that these members serve as mediators between the audience and the players. They are neither here nor there; they are ‘betwixt and between’ the two groups. They are players who are not playing, and at the same time, they are the audience who are not just the audience. While the audience might not have full access to speak to the players on field, they have access to speak to the member of the rugby club, who further have greater access to the players on field, coaches, and others who are involved. These club members signalled to the remaining audience that they were part of the rugby teams by wearing suits in matching colours and same-looking ties. It is important to take note of the suit as a symbol of group identity. Suits and formal dressing symbolise respect and status, something that we can trace back to the evolution of rugby when the sport was an upper-class game. The suit is a gentleman’s garment and is what the players must wear when they are not ‘in combat’ on the pitch. During a match, this is another layer of the ambiguous acts of a rugby player. I will examine this further in my next chapter.

You can be a spectator at a sports game from many different places. You can buy your ticket and watch it in person, or you can sit comfortably in your sofa at home and watch it live on the TV screen. Perhaps you can do what my brother did a few weekends ago at our cousin’s confirmation; watch it on a tiny mobile phone screen, supported upright by a glass of water, well hidden behind table ornaments in a brave attempt to hide the fact that you wish you were somewhere else. When I was on a short trip to Auckland, New Zealand, my friend Catherine and I went out to watch a rugby match between New Zealand and Fiji in a sports bar just around the corner from our hotel. The place was packed with “All Blacks” supporters on their tip toes, desperately waiting for the *haka* ritual to begin. In the meantime, commentators kept the audience entertained by hyping up the upcoming spectacle. The commentators who are addressing what is happening on the pitch, are linking the near and the remote. In other words, they connect the viewers in the pub with the event at the stadium. “In the theatre... realism does not just imitate reality; it produces it by asking spectators to recognise and verify its truths. Yet it does so by mystifying the process of theatrical signification and by naturalising the relation between character and actor.” (Morris, 1995, pp. 586). Watching rugby from a remote place, it is not uncommon to hear the commentators addressing different players’ physiques, emphasising their strength, muscle tones, and

previous victories. By doing so, they naturalise the relationship between actor and role, making the role recognised and, arguably, accepted.



Figure 2: After winning the match, the team gathered in front of the tribune from where partners and family members watched the game.

The Gullhammer Game as a ritual

The game was a suspenseful one. For a long time, it seemed like this match offered more challenges than what our team was capable of handling. Thankfully, the clock had not passed the first 40 minutes, but on an occasion like this, an advantageous start is crucial for a desired ending. After the opponents had scored their second try with successful conversions, and was already in the lead by 10-0, there was a sense of disappointment lingering behind the sound of excited cheering. The energy seemed to be on a steady incline and the team were desperate for a bit of magic to save themselves. And a bit of magic was exactly what they got. Their beige-dressed supporters, all simultaneously, started chanting. Their song drowned out any cheer or celebration that came from the burgundy-dressed opponents. And just like that, it was as if the team managed to reach for that little bit of strength they had been longing for. The ball was in their possession now.

This moment felt magical to me, but it was not the only time that I had felt like this while watching a sports game. In Fiji, the national teams “The Flying Fijians” and “The All Blacks” were opening the match with their traditional *cibi* and *haka* rituals. After games, the Fijian players would gather in a circle and sing religious hymns. The audience at the football match I watched with my friend Maxwell delivered several different chants to boost the team spirit. Sport is full of small rituals that happen continuously from before the match has started, and long after it has ended. Sport games in the light of rituals have been contested by many authors, and it’s still being discussed whether or not it falls under a definition of ritual. Essentially, what it boils down to is how we choose to view the two concepts, and whether or not they complement each other. In this section, I want to look at the sporting event in the light of ritual. While doing this, I seek to uncover the ritualistic tendencies that happens in the scenery of a rugby match and look at how they take part in the construction of masculinities. Drawing on Schechner’s performance theory, we will look closer at how the players, the audience, and the pitch all work together to form a plot that brings to life the figures of ‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’. By applying my own empirical examples, I will discuss rugby matches in the light of ritual practice. Many authors claim that a sports match does not fulfil the requirements to being termed a ritual, yet it does welcome ritualistic behaviour. However,

I want to argue that a sporting event in fact serves as a rite of passage. To begin, we need to have a closer look at the definitions of sport and ritual.

Blanchard and Cheska (1985, pp. 60) define sport as “a physically exertive activity that is aggressively competitive within constraints imposed by definitions and rules”. Although this definition is correct in its claim that sports are competitive and imposed by definitions of rules, and was probably very applicable at the time it was written, it fails to cover sports that require a minimum amount of physical activity and those that lack an aggressive competitiveness such as chess and e-sports, arguably also golf, table tennis, etc. I prefer to draw on a definition that catches a broader spectrum of sporting activities. In The Cambridge Dictionary, sport is defined simply as “a game, competition, or activity needing physical effort and skill that is played or done according to rules, for enjoyment and/or as a job”. I deem this definition to be more applicable as it captures a wider spectrum of active *and* inactive sports. In addition, it captures smaller components of training sessions, such as drills, that aren’t necessarily ‘aggressively competitive’ but are still part of the sport that is being played. This definition, however, is also very broad. It allows for activities that are not recognised sports to bear the same status. I do not see this is an issue, since sports are activities that are available for anyone to access, whether it is played with ‘proper’ equipment by the professional rugby players in ANZ arena, by the amateur university team in East Valley, or by the young children on the beach in Fiji with a sandal designated as the ball. Moving on, we will look at some of the different definitions of ritual, so that we can see the two concepts in the light of each other.

Turner (1967, pp. 19) identifies ritual as “formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers. The symbol is the smallest unit of ritual”. This definition is too restrictive, as it requires a ritual to be performed in relation to religion and in absence of material wants. However, the definition is right by emphasising the significance of symbols in a ritual act. A ritual does not have to be religious, and participants in a ritual do not have to be religious in order to participate in religious rituals, but no matter who participates and on what basis the ritual is performed, it does serve a purpose. One of the purposes of a rugby match, or any sports match, is to win, and with the win comes transition. Despite the disagreements on whether or not a sports game is a ritual, we do witness a transition of status. At the end of the match, one team will be the winner, and the other team will be the loser. The winning team is either climbing the ladder or they are maintaining their status, as well as the losing team is either dropping on the ladder or

maintaining their status. The problem occurs when the match ends with a draw, but even then, a team can be crowned the winner. If the team that is viewed as the underdog wins, a change will happen between the two teams. A draw will prove that the underdogs fought better than usual, and the usually winning team fought worse than usual. It can even be an embarrassment to end a match without a goal against a weaker team. I can recall watching a football match against Scotland and England. Given England's sovereignty over Scotland in the sporting field, it was expected for the English team to take the win. However, the Scotsmen held on to the slightest bit of hope they had and ended up with a draw against their rivals. Despite Scotland's lost chance of qualifying for the World Championship, the population was ecstatic. In the street where I lived, Scotsmen were singing, shouting, and drinking openly. In England, on the other hand, the atmosphere was on the contrary. An equal result was not synonymous with an equal outcome. It was in this instance as if Scotland was the winner of the match despite the even numbers on the score board.

Guttmann (1978) argues that sport is not ritual by recognising premodern sport's development to modern sports by a set of characteristics: equality of opportunity to compete, specialisation of roles, rationalisation, bureaucratisation, quantification, *the quest for records*, and *secularisation*. It is the two latter that are of greater importance. First, he argues that the quest of records is what differentiates modern sports from the premodern ones, those that are said to have more visible ritualistic tendencies (Diem, 1971). However, *secularisation* is something that both modern and premodern sports share, and if *ritual* is to be defined under the name of religion, sport cannot be ritual. Yet, this claim needs to be contested, as there are many clear links between the two concepts that cannot be ignored. Although sport in general is not explicitly related to religion, classifying it as secular is something that I find problematic. There are still many instances in which sports can be proven to have visible correlations to religion. One classic example to illustrate this is the correlation between football and Christianity in Scotland. More specifically, the two football clubs, Celtic, and Rangers. The religious divide between Catholicism and Protestantism is embedded into the very *foundations* of the two Glasgow football clubs. Another example is Hibernian football club and Hearts football club, both based in Edinburgh, who share the same division as the former mentioned. Traditionally, Rangers and Hearts supporters are Protestants, whereas Celtic and Hibernian are Catholics. To stretch it a bit further, I want to go back to my example on the connection between Christianity and masculinities in Fiji, which I presented in my first chapter. As previously mentioned, Christianity in Fiji is deeply connected with

masculine practice which further is practiced through sports, particularly rugby. Here, a main motivation to participate in sports, is religion. As Joji said to me, playing rugby significantly improved his relationship to God. Although there are sports clubs or supporters with no base in religion, it is highly problematic to see sport universally in absence of religion.

As shown above, it is possible to classify sport as ritual. Sport is clearly non-secular. Teams may have symbols such as chants or in the form of colours, emblems, or even significant hero-like players, which is a central and necessary part of a ritual. As winning is the *raison d'être* of sports, some authors argue that it cannot be a ritual since winning is not a motive in rituals (Blanchard, 1988, pp. 50). “All games are defined by a by a set of rules which in practice allow the playing of any number of matches. Ritual, which is also ‘played’, is on the other hand, like a favoured instance of a game, remembered from among the possible ones because it is the only one which results a particular type of equilibrium between the two sides.” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, pp. 30). The big question seems to be how the concept of winning and losing fits into ritual. As we can see however, it is not only about winning or losing. As I stated in my example of the football match between England and Scotland, a transition in range and status is present in cases where there is no winner. Despite an equal outcome, a transition happened, and the match was a rite de passage.

Aggression on and off pitch

The team eagerly approached their opponent's side of the pitch. They finally managed to cross the line, place the ball on the grass and earn their very deserved try. Every single player in the team began celebrating with the chants coming from the crowd. My eyes scanned both squads and landed on two players that seemed to not share the same reactions of the audience and their fellow teammates. They were standing face to face with only a few centimetres in between them, intensely staring into each other's eyes. Within a second, the yellow-dressed player grabbed onto his rival's jersey and pushed him backwards as he kept a firm grip around the t-shirt. Their eye contact did not even breach for a moment. Shortly after, another yellow-dressed player seemed to notice what was happening and immediately ran over. He tried pushing both players away from each other as he was verbally attempting to calm the situation. Promptly, the player let go of the other player's shirt, and they all walked away from each other. The whole situation lasted only a few seconds and was averted

before anyone was able to give it significant attention. The referee did not seem to take notice of it at all, and the game proceeded as if nothing had happened.

It is not a secret that sports in general is an arena in which tolerance for violence and aggression is constantly being tested and regulated. Yet, among the great variety of sports and games, rugby stands out as one of the more brutal ones. Incidents like the one described above is not uncommon to witness in amateur and professional level rugby, as the game is based on a high amount of both physical force and bodily contact. The players must be *willing* to endure tackling and other forceful encounters. In this section I will discuss the nature of violence in the sport, in terms of physical aggression on the pitch, and discourse regarding violence off the pitch. I will look at how aggression is accepted and not accepted, tested, regulated, used, and performed. To do this, we will look back at incidents where players have executed aggression during practice, and how it has unfolded in matches. In addition, we will have a look at some of the ways in which the players speak about aggression and aggressive encounters. Finishing up, we will tie the performance of aggression with the construction of masculinities.

In an attempt to understand the acceptance of aggression, we will have a look at it through the light of the ‘civilising process’. The civilising process is a theory developed by Norbert Elias, that sheds light on the social process that took place in Western Europe, where societies were being shaped into ‘civilised’ communities. It is important to note that this theory does not regard societies as developing from ‘uncivilised’ to ‘civilised’, but rather societies where social norms and internal control develops to a higher and more intricate level. The process is defined by three stages that all interweave with each other (Dunning and Heard, 2005). Dunning and Sheard review this process with three main components:

“...an elaboration and refinement of social standards regarding the control of ‘natural’ functions and the conduct of social relations generally; a concomitant increase in the social pressure on people to exercise self-control; and, at the level of personality, an increase in the importance of ‘conscience’ as a regulator of behaviour” (Dunning and Sheard, 2005, p. 5-6).

In sum, during the ‘civilising process’, the human body was subject to a significant change where humans (the people and the government) became more and more dependent on

each other with the development and monopolisation and the use of physical force. This is what led to the greater need of internal and external discipline (Elias, 1939). On a societal level, people were expected to act out of a greater level of self-control, which led to higher awareness regarding one's own behaviour. Rugby is a prime arena in where social norms concerning violence can be detected and studied, due to the natural brutality of the sport. In the same manner as looking at how the sport has developed through time; I believe it is also important to analyse contemporary sport conducts as it has been shaped and reshaped with contemporary societal norms. Pringle (2004) states that rugby has previously been associated with violence, excessive alcohol consumption, and sexism. In New Zealand, measures were being taken to wipe off this kind of stigma to the sport. New rules on use of violence in the sport were applied to make the events more family friendly. Today, the use of violence is strictly regulated, and players are only allowed to aim their tackles under shoulder height. Any use of tackling over the shoulder is restricted, and there is a zero-tolerance for any aggressive behaviour that is not called for. This section will be the last of this chapter. As stated earlier, my aim is simply to examine how aggression and violence is tested, regulated, accepted, and performed with rugby and the body as the main mediator. Let us first have a look at a conversation I had with Francis just a few days after seeing him play against their rivalling team.

Tamed violence, celebrated aggression

A few days after The Gullhammer Game, I asked Francis about the aggressive incidents that I witnessed during the game. I told him about one specific scenario where one player had grabbed and pulled the shirt of an opposing player. "Where on the field was it?", he asked. "It was on the same side as the coffee stand, if you know where I mean?", I answered. "Oh, then it must have been me", he immediately said, followed by a laugh and a satisfied grin. However, I knew that it was not Francis that I had seen lashing out on his opponent. Francis is the player that I was lucky enough to get to know the most, and I was sure I would have recognised him. Though I only noticed two of these incidents, him telling me about his own encounter only proved to me that this is something that happens more often than what I saw during this game. "Is that something that happens a lot?", I could not help but ask. "Yes, absolutely. All the time", Francis said as he chuckled. "Does it happen during training too? Is it, like, very competitive?". "Yes, it can happen. But everything that happens

on the field, stays on the field. One time, when I was training with my old team in South Africa, two of my mates got into a fight. So, after practice, we all stood around them in a circle and forced them to dance a silly dance. Just to force them to leave it before going home, you know.”.

There are two things to unpack from this conversation. Firstly, I want to focus on what I experienced as a brag. Francis was eager to let me know that it was *him* that got into the fight with the other player. He was in fact proud to let me know it was him. He never entertained the idea that it could have been someone else, even when I asked if this is something that happens more often. Secondly, the story Francis told me conveyed restriction. In other words, aggression and violence are allowed on the pitch, but only to a certain extent. After training, it is Similar attitudes were shown to me earlier on field. When conducting my interviews in the beginning of this study, the informants who I spoke about aggression with, unanimously had a ‘what happens on the pitch, stays on the pitch’- attitude, which meant that any aggressive incident should not be carried on after the match or training session. In other words, the game of rugby creates a space where violence and aggression is more acceptable than in other social arenas of life. We restrict and punish violence in every society, but the extent to which this happens is constantly changing. However, I want to emphasise that the violence and aggression we see in rugby and other sports is also subject to celebration, which brings us over to my next example:

It was a new day and another early morning rugby practice. The forwards and the backs were split into two groups with specified drills to enhance their necessary skill levels. As the forwards are positioned in the scrum and are thereby responsible for most of the physical endurance, such as tackling, their drills were constructed in a way that would prepare them for these types of encounters in a real-life setting. As part of their drills, they would use tackling pads that one or more players would hold, allowing another player to tackle them with a minimised chance of getting injured. This is a drill that is designed to simulate performing and receiving tackles in a match. The players were all lined up in the corner of the pitch, facing each other. One person was holding a tackling pad and in front of them a group of three or four players were preparing to tackle, one after another. The drill kept going, seemingly automatically. Every now and then I could hear the men cheer when their teammates were hit slightly rougher than usual. As the session approached its end, the coach signalled with a loud whistle that the exercise was about to end. Many of the players started yelling, communicating that they were unhappy with the drill being over. “Just one more! We need to see Ross!”. The coach was laughing as he agreed to one last attempt. Everyone started cheering. The last

tackle of the day was to be made by a group of players, as one of the smaller players, Ross, in the team would hold the tackling pad. With great force, the three tacklers collided with Ross causing him to fly backwards and hit the grass with his back first. Every single one of the players, as well as the coach, were laughing, cheering, and clapping loudly.

Everyone involved in this scenario wanted to see more aggression. I would like to clarify that the kind of *aggression* that I will be discussing in the following section is not based on *anger*, although *anger* is linked to the common perception of the term. Neither am I suggesting that there is no anger-based aggression in the sport, as I have witnessed players release their anger through both legal and illegal actions. In the field of psychology, aggression has been defined as “...any behaviour directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm. In addition, the perpetrator must believe that the behaviour will harm the target and that the target is motivated to avoid the behaviour.” (Bushman and Anderson in Maxwell and Visek, 2009, p. 237). This definition does not mention anger, which makes it highly applicable in this analysis. A player might intend to harm, but that is not necessarily due to anger, such as shown in the example above.

What caught my attention during this drill however was the *celebration* of aggression expressed by the team. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the exercises being practiced by the team were chosen as they reflected components of an actual game. In this scenario, we have three separate components. First, there are the players executing the tackle (component A). In this example, represented by the three attacking players. The second component (component B) is the player who is receiving the tackle with the tackle pad. *Component A* wants to execute the tackle in the same manner they would do if they were playing a match. Likewise, *component B*, also wants to undergo the tackle, as it would happen in a game. Both components must, in order to complete the task properly, base their actions and emotions on a real-life situation. The final component is any observer of the spectacle (*Component C*). They are the ones who *consume* the aggression. These observers experience it although they are not taking direct part in it themselves. They urge for aggression, but they do not act it. Just like in a ritual, the audience are the ones who legitimise the spectacle. In this instance, the observers legitimise the acceptance of aggression. During a match, the surrounding audience play the role that *component C* did in this scenario.

In the introduction of the book *Violence and Belonging: The Quest for Identity in Post-Colonial Africa* (2004), Broch-Due emphasises that the violence must be seen as more

than merely destructive and a dreaded topic. We must recognise the part that it plays in the creation of identity. Violence is embedded into rituals in every culture; people mark their own flesh with piercings, tattoos, and other body modifications, and some will avoid food to shape their bodies to one that they desire more, and gender is carved into boys' and girls' bodies in a variety of religions. These are all ways in which violence form cultural identity. A rugby match, as a rite of passage, is a phase in which symbolic violence is permitted. This violence used in the liminal phase, tears down the subject before then reshaping and replacing them back into the social structure. Broch-Due applies Bloch's analysis of the Dinka sacrifice to show how violence have regenerative properties. The sacrifice starts when the performers symbolically place their own vitality in other objects, for example an animal. The animal is killed, and the ritual is followed by a feast. In this feast, the animal is consumed and becomes part of the human. This feast is important, because it is at this time energy is restored after the destructive ritual (pp, 22). Similarly, after a rugby match, the game is almost always followed by a 'feast', a gathering, or a party where drinks are consumed. At this gathering, the players are reincorporated back into a structured sociality. This has the same regenerative forces as the post sacrifice feast. The players have endured violence that has been permitted to be used by and against them, and this violence has taken part in constructing the athletes' identities.

Tomasi is a Fijian rugby player who came to Scotland after initiating a relationship with a Scottish woman. After coming to Scotland, he started playing rugby professionally for a well-known team in a big city. I spoke with Tomasi about his experience with aggression in rugby. He explained that aggressive situations happen on the pitch quite frequently, and many times it goes unnoticed by the referee. "Sometimes, if you know someone on the other team and you don't really like him, you can try to take him down a little harder than the others. Just to get it out, you know?", he said as he laughed. What Tomasi explained is that he uses the situation of being in a game, where aggression is already prominent, to intentionally act out aggression on players in which he has a personal conflict with. His intentional acts will be hidden in the already visible and accepted aggression of the game, allowing him to get away with acts that he would not get away with in a different setting.

What Tomasi explains, is a case of what is termed unsanctioned aggression. Sanctioned aggression falls under aggressive acts that are expected and approved by the rules of a game. In rugby union, an example of this is tackling that hits the player below the line of the shoulders. A tackle above this line is critical and falls outside of the laws of the game, and

thereby is considered to be unsanctioned aggression. Intentional aggressive acts, though hidden under what is accepted by the rules of rugby, could be both sanctioned and unsanctioned, as you should not tackle a player in a way where the violence that is used exceeds what is deemed necessary. However, as long as the tackle does not break the rules of what is a legal tackle, the tackler is still within the lines of what is accepted, which makes this particular act fall under the latter category. In Maxwell and Visek's study on aggression in a Hong Kong rugby union team, they argue for the positive links between professional attitudes, aggressiveness, and the use of unsanctioned aggression in the sport. Professional attitudes were exemplified as masculine, tough, and aggressive (Maxwell and Visek, 2009, p. 237-238). Tomasi's case substantiates Maxwell and Visek's findings. Tomasi is a professional rugby union player, unlike the players in the university team, and, according to this study, is more likely to then act on aggression both on and off the pitch.

My main interest in this example is that the pitch is being actively used as an outlet for personal aggression against other players. What would normally be sanctioned in a different scenario can go unnoticed during a rugby match. The athlete can quite literally *hide* his personal anger behind the natural aggression of the game. Two ontological existences are blended when this happens. On the pitch, the players are in a liminal phase where greater use of violence is accepted. The players then take components from another social state, what one could call his 'everyday life', into this current phase. On the pitch, or the stage if you will, violence is allowed to be performed, but it is a restricted violence. Aggression that comes from outside of this phase is uncalled for, as it serves no purpose to the game. The violence that the athletes perform, has to be based on the rules of the good of the game, and one should restrict any actions that signifies bad sportsmanship.

Applying the theory of hegemonic masculinity, one can suggest that there is a link between the hierarchy of masculinities and the 'amateur/professional hierarchy', meaning that a professional player is higher ranked than the amateur. Aggressivity is perceived as a masculine trait, and as mentioned above, also widely connected to the level of professional attitudes. As seen in the previous examples, Tomasi who is a professional player, shows a tendency to act more frequently on aggressivity both on and off the pitch. The university athletes showed less tendencies to get aggressive, specifically off-pitch aggression. It is also important to take into account that there might be more tendencies of aggression within the university team than what I have witnessed. My informants tended to show a more disapproval attitude toward the use of violence whenever I asked about potential incidents off-pitch.

However, the empirical examples that I have provided above, are not enough data to prove or disprove this suggestion. Yet, it might be worthy to switch the focus from the notion of a hierarchy and look at the contemporary change of male norms. The university players are roughly ten years younger than Tomasi and have therefore grown up in a slightly different socio-cultural setting. The young men have been subject to a different masculine standard during their upbringing. This resonates with Anderson's (2009) theory of inclusive masculinity. This theory suggests that men in the younger generation is more likely to be accepting of alternative, 'softer', and more feminine masculinities. Putting it differently, aggression might not be a significant trait that the players chose when performing their gender identity.

On the other hand, studies have shown that high school athletes are far more likely to execute violence, particularly against women (Burstyn, 1999). There is a fear so strong of being feminine, or being associated with anything feminine, that physical measures like violence and verbal abuse are taken in order to disassociate oneself from it. Sport, being a male dominated area, can serve as an echo chamber for the development of personal desire. It is a competitive arena naturally it is then other men that one has to prove oneself for. When femininity is culturally associated with the opposite of masculinity one o, a need to strongly disassociate from it might appear. It is not only players that use violence; supporters and audience tend to use violence against each other and women. According to data by UK's National Centre for Domestic Violence, violence against women increased by 38% when the English national football team would lose. Even just the fact that they play, means that the cases increase by 26% (Juyal, 2021). This is a disturbing statistic, and it is hard to wrap my head around the cause and effect here.

“The first of these is that the good athlete, the symbolic warrior, our champion, is supposed to turn his trained violence against our ‘enemies’. He is not supposed to use that violence against ‘us’.” (Burstyn, 1999, pp. 165).

The athlete is a symbolic ‘hero’. He is the one who will fight and win for his community. He is someone that the people have chosen to be their representative in a battle against their ‘enemies’. They expect him to give everything that he has got to win, even the use of violence can be tolerated. There are often disagreements between two team's

supporters on whether a foul is actually a foul. Was the use of violence justified, or did the opponent simply just dive? The quote above is taken from the context where an athlete used violence against a woman in a non-sport related scenario. These actions led to major reactions and disapproval because the athlete, or the community 'hero', had turned on 'one of his own'. On the other hand, letting down one's own supporters can have fatal consequences. 'The Gentleman', a Colombian football player, was murdered after the 1994 FIFA World Cup as he allegedly had contributed to get his own team eliminated from the competition by scoring an own goal. Sport triggers severe violent outbursts, there is no doubt in that.

Maxwell had invited me to a football game with him and a few friends. This was a very important match as the two teams playing were the cities two rivalling teams. Although I found it to be a rather boring game with a lack of goals and few memorable highlights, there was one thing that stood in great contrast to my experiences being among the audience on a rugby match. A much more aggressive atmosphere was filling the stadium. "Pedo! Pedo! Pedo!", the supporters around me would shout whenever a player with a suspected history of approaching younger women found himself on our side of the stadium. During the second half of the match, supporters were throwing their plastic cup (some were still containing beer) onto the field along with coloured smoke bombs. I was thankful that our team won the match, as I was dreading whatever behaviours a loss could trigger.

This is another example where athletes are being sanctioned for their own use of violence. The audience are using verbal aggression to disturb him from performing well during the match. This was at a football game, and not a rugby match, and in my experience, there is a difference in how the audience behave while watching the two different sports, which is why I will not go too deep into this example. My intention in this section has been to show how athletes position themselves towards violence and how violence is being performed and used during matches, for example as personal outlet. Violence is also being used against athletes, as I have shown, to sanction violence and aggressivity consequently construct or destroy character.

Chapter 3: Aesthetic Preferences and Masculine Symbols

On an early April Thursday, I met with Blair. This was a particularly warm day, so we decided to sit outside and enjoy the heat we had both been longing for. Since I had yet to familiarise myself with the area I was living in, Blair had politely offered to drive to my location, despite the long distance. Blair told me that his parents have always been involved in sports, but his father more than his mother.

When he was a child, his parents encouraged him to try out several different sports, such as swimming, football, and golf. However, rugby took most of his time growing up, making it the sport that he decided to focus on. “There must be a lot of physical determination being a part of a rugby team. You need to be so big and strong. Like, I could never play rugby. I’ve just barely passed 5 feet.”, I commented. “To be honest, this is what I like about rugby. There’s room for everyone. It doesn’t matter if you’re short or tall, or fat or lean. Because of the variety of positions that you can play, who all benefit from different body types, there’s always a spot for you. Well, you obviously need to be fit, but that’s given in any sport. In many sports, there is one body type that is the one you need to have to play, like you need to be lean and fit, but in rugby you can be both short and fat and they’ll have good use of you in the front row!”.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re short or tall, or fat or lean... there’s always a spot for you”. What Blair is saying, is that your physical body, your height, or your weight, does not determine whether or not you are welcome to join a rugby team. Yet, although there are suitable positions for any body type, I am still pondering on other aspects of beauty, such as what the players admire, and what their aesthetic preferences are. This chapter seeks to examine the ways in which the body is being sculpted into a more aesthetically admired and desired version of itself. Although any body type is welcome, it would be naïve to ignore the presence of idolised bodies. Bodies are not merely functional; they are visual as well. What I will emphasise before digging further into this subject of admired aesthetics, is that the way I will be viewing *beauty* in this context is not conventional beauty. I am not referring to the type of body that is being reproduced in mass media (although the athletes might still aspire to acquire traits seen here as well). What I want to define beauty as here, however, is any visual part of the body, both modified and untouched, that is admired and desired by the surrounding group or community. In this context, visible injuries, a muscular physique, and even the mullet haircut have shown to be attractive traits within the rugby team. Drawing upon my main argument, I am seeking to reveal the ambiguous traits of masculinities, again, figures of

‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’, that are embedded within the norms of rugby. I will show how these ‘characters’ come to life through the way the players dress and shape their bodies. Firstly, we will examine closer the way that the body is sculpted, and the perception by others on the importance of the ‘correctly’ sculpted body. Secondly, I will take us to have a closer look at the finer expressions of beauty, such as the way in which the players dress and groom themselves, before moving over to the more unconventional beauty standards that were shown to me. These aesthetic standards fall under the section of ‘bruises, blood, and broken bones’, which is as spot on a descriptive as I can get.

Beauty and the body

As Blair and I continued our conversation about body positivity in the rugby community, I got curious if there were any stereotypes connected to the different positions in the team: “Are there any stereotypes within the rugby team?”, I carefully asked Blair. He immediately started laughing before correcting his sunglasses and clearing his throat. “Yes, there are many. The backs are often thought of as the fat and ugly ones. They’re kind of also seen as ‘stupid meatheads’”. He said while still laughing. “But I mean, they have to be heavy and strong, because of their position in the scrum.” he added quickly to justify the comment on their weight. “Us backs, we’re often leaner than the forwards’, but we’re seen as flamboyant ‘pretty-boys’ who don’t want to get dirty. We’ll just pass on the ball before anyone can tackle us.”.

By the end of this conversation, Blair had emphasised that those are just ideas that are there for fun, and not something that necessarily represents specific players. However, there is some truth to these corporeal stereotypes, solely based on the functionality of the different bodies. As mentioned in my description of the different positions, there are bodies that are in fact preferred for the variety of roles one can have in a rugby team. However, as I stated in the beginning of this chapter; specific body builds aren’t just functional, they are visual too. What we as people find desirable cannot always be justified with functionality.

“We’re getting players over from South Africa, which I think will help us a lot in the matches. Especially in The Varisty since we lost so bad last year. They take rugby a lot more seriously down

there, especially compared to us. Most of us just joined because we wanted something to do, and rugby was fun and familiar. Also because of the social events, having someone to drink with and everything. Before the South African guys came over, we all had a look at their Instagram accounts. They all just look super fit and strong, and they're all posting about their fitness and workout plans. We all just felt so lazy compared to them. They're definitely going to feel like they're moving a step down by coming here", Blair said. "It's not something we take seriously though, just something that we can laugh at together", he added while chuckling

When having a conversation with Francis about his rugby team in South Africa, I got it confirmed that they in fact did feel like moving to Scotland was a step down in terms of skill level. I was explained that in South Africa, university sports are taken very seriously. While conducting my interviews, most of the British players emphasised that they joined the squad with the intention of gaining a social network when first attending university, although many players also expressed that they also took the game fairly seriously. The South African players, on the other hand, were used to the university sport being treated like professional level sport, with more attention directed towards university tournaments.

In her book *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell (2005) explains that men's ability to perform physically is central to their own masculine identification. While there is a lot to unpack about the actual ability to perform, I want to put a specific focus on the ability *to prove* that you can perform. Social media platforms have gained massive popularity and are effective ways of sharing information about oneself to other people on the internet and creating the image of a person that we wish to be perceived as. When we perform our identities, our performance does not stop at the gate to the digital world. In fact, it becomes stronger on the virtual arena. It is easier to choose how we are being perceived through social media, due to the lag in time that happens from the moment when a photo is taken and until it is posted. In this time span, the subject can choose a preferred photo, edit it, add a caption, and so on. The subject is also in charge of who is viewing their profile, meaning they can deliberately choose their preferred role to a preferred audience. In the example provided above, Blair stated that the South African players posted photos of their bodies where visible muscles and rich muscle/building foods were on display. Edmund Leach once wrote his paper on 'Magical Hair' (1958), (a paper I will return to later in my section about hair) where he put the symbolism of hair between the two subjects of anthropology and psychoanalysis. His argument is that a symbol can be interpreted according to public/social meaning, or a

private/personal one. The anthropologist can analyse the public/social meaning, whereas the psychoanalysts can dwell into the private/personal. However, neither profession has the tools to analyse the symbol when it falls outside of their own domain. Drawing on the analysis by Malinowski on head shaving among the Trobriand islanders, Leach states that from an anthropological point of view, a symbol is never accidental or unintentional; the symbol is there because a person wants to signify something to someone else (pp. 152). Through social media, the subject can prove his physicality to the audience and provide evidence of his own masculine identity by exposing a well-trained body with an added proof of hard work, such as a photo of a bowl of steamed rice topped with tender pieces of protein-rich, low fat, chicken. The muscular body is a symbol of masculinity. It is intentionally posted on social media, accompanied by props that prove that the body is real and shaped through hard work and disciplined practices such as strict diets and work-out plans.

Thomas Gerschick and Adam Miller (1995) argue that the loss of physical abilities caused by injuries or diseases impact American men's view of themselves as a masculine being. Their study finds that there is a close link between American men's ability to perform physically, and their own notion of masculinity. In three points, the authors summarise how men with disabilities cope with their difficulties with physical performance: firstly, by overcoming physical limitations; secondly, by redefining masculinity to fit their current physical body; and lastly, by disregarding the hegemonic notions of masculinity in their given society. Similarly, Emily Wentzell and Marcia Inhorn (2011) finds that Mexican men and Middle Eastern men tie their ability to reproduce and partake in penetrative intercourse to be a particularly significant part of their self-identification with masculinity and manhood. Both studies suggest that the healthy, physical body has close correlations with the subject's feeling of 'being a man'. When the body is subject to diseases or injuries that further leads to disabilities, either his body must overcome the limitations, or his personal notion of masculinity must change.

A healthy-looking body is the proof we need in order to believe that the body we are seeing is actually physically healthy and functioning. As the studies above suggest, there is a close link between the healthy body and notions of masculinities. When the players display their bodies with an intended focus on their muscles on their social media accounts, the audience are more likely to see them as masculine beings. Blair emphasised this when him and his teammates assumed that the South African players would perform well during physical activities, an assumption solely based on photos of a muscular body type. When

assuming that the South Africans would perform well in rugby, he also degraded his own and his British teammates' ability to perform. Although the comments were made in a humorous and self-ironic manner, the comparison of the bodies did take place. The picture of the bodies on social media, created a perception of a reality that might or might not be true, yet this perception was still treated as conclusive.

A gentleman's garment

Among the audience, there were crowds of young men dressed in matching suits and ties. In one crowd, the men were wearing dark beige colours, whereas the other crowd had burgundy and plaid outfits. On my way to the coffee truck, I saw Blair. He told me that he, unfortunately enough, could not participate in the game due to a recent knee injury. I took notice that Blair was wearing one of the dark beige suits and asked him about the nicely dressed crowds. "It is the guys from the rugby clubs. We're all wearing the rugby ties today to show support to the team. So, the guys from Heather Town are wearing burgundy because that's their colours, and we're wearing beige because that's us." It made sense now why they seemed to be the more eager groups among the audience.

My previous chapter showed that the rugby pitch, particularly when hosting a rugby match, is where the narrative comes to life. In this section, I want to show how the 'actors' wear 'costumes' to legitimise this narrative. With 'costume', I am simply referring to the subject's clothes, whether he is a player, a club member, or a member of the audience. The athlete's roles become clear when you look at his 'costume'. On pitch, they are dressed in kits with matching colours, a team symbol, and perhaps a name or number on the back. This kit is made from materials that allows for comfort during physical activity. It is also a garment that one can allow oneself to get dirty in. It is low material value, although it perhaps has a high symbolic value. The player who is not on the pitch and is not supposed to be on the pitch, is showing up in a formal suit. The suit is the complete opposite of the rugby kit. It is made from expensive materials (although there are suits that are made from cheaper materials) that does not allow for free movement and restricts physical activity. It is a piece of garment that you should control yourself in that symbolises money and status. The player and the rugby club

member are representatives of two different masculinities. The composed ‘gentleman’ and the fighting ‘officer’.



Figure 3: A group of club supporters lined up to greet the players as they enter the pitch. We can see that they are all wearing suits for the occasion.

“...the secret of...custom tailoring.... Practically all the most powerful men in New York... are fanatical about the marginal differences that go into custom tailoring. They are a secret club insignia for them. And yet it is a taboo subject. ...They don’t want it known they even care about it.” (Wolf in Schwarz, 1979, pp. 23).

In his book, Schwarz questions why anthropologists have not yet given clothing the kind of attention that it deserves. This book was written more than 40 years ago, and the topic of clothing and adornment has grown in popularity by now, yet it is still a subject that is far more interesting than it appears. Clothing is practical in the performance of gender identity. In contrast to a tattoo, it is convenient. Clothing is not permanent; one can change several times a day. You change your clothes depending on who you want to represent or depending on who it is expected that you represent. When going to work, you might put on nice, subtle, and professional clothes, or perhaps a given uniform. At home you might wear comfortable sweatpants, and when you go out with your friends you might wear brighter colours that match who you want to represent at a personal level. My point being, very inspired by Goffman's notion of 'impression management', dressing is the most effective way to adapt to your social milieu and perform your preferred identity on the specific stage in question.

Business in the forwards, party in the backs

Watching rugby on the screen, a very unusual and unexpected haircut had made its appearance several times. The mullet seemed to be a popular choice among rugby players. When conducting my interviews with the team, I took noticed that one of the players had the same haircut, but I was even more surprised showing up to practice for the first time. It turned out that as many as four players (not included the interviewee who had to quit as he graduated) were present with the so-called 'business in the front, party in the back'-hairdo. Growing up in a time of despise directed towards the infamous mullet, I got excited when I could count four of them together on one shared grass pitch.

As a well-known fashion statement, the mullet is a hairdo in which the hair on the sides is cut short, and the back is left long. It is often cut in layers to highlight one's natural curls, or get styled with permanent curls, hair dye, or highlights. Drawing on its ambiguous appearance, the comedy movie *Joe Dirt* (2001), directed by Dennie Gordon, gave the mullet its popular description of "business in the front, party in the back". Despite its comeback in the 2020's (with a modern take), the mullet has had a hard time getting a foot back into the fashion scene since the 80's. On contrary, it was often to be see it as part of humour shows on TV, and as a characteristic trait for people in alternative communities such as the punk-rock

community or among the so-called ‘hillbillies’ in North America. It was, therefore, something that caught my immediate attention when I arrived at the rugby pitch the first time. Doing a brief online search on the mullet and the rugby community, and I was met with numerous pictures and articles about professional rugby players who wore the hairdo. There are online rugby forums where questions are raised about which player pulls off the best mullet, and players who claim the hairdo improves his physical performance. Professional rugby player Jack Goodhue has claimed that his mullet, due to aerodynamics, makes him faster. Whether or not this is actually the case, is outside my field of expertise to judge. However, it seems clear to me that the hairdo carries symbolic meaning for players around the world. The hair style itself was primarily worn by men in the 1980’s but has become a trend for all genders in the 2020’s. Rugby players, however, seem to have taken on this style prior to its comeback, and are still bearers of it today, despite the ‘genderless’ connotations. In this section, we will examine the hair as a symbol of group identity among rugby players.

Hair has been analysed as one of the most significant body parts for human praxis. In the article, Leach draws upon Berg’s analysis of hair as a symbol of repressed urges but is quick to explain how this is false. He argues that hair expresses conscious desires, whether it is used in ritual practices or in other instances. Using the head shaving practice of Trobriand islanders as an example, Berg argues that the people shave their heads as a way of expressing mourning over the deceased. Leach draws on Malinowski who argues that they shave their heads as an action of showing that they loved the deceased, and they “didn’t kill him through sorcery.” (pp. 152). In other words, the head shaving is intentional and conscious, it is a means to express ‘something’. The article continues to provide evidence of the connection between hair and sex, or hair and the penis, stating that the symbolism of hair is complex, yet shaved hair is often associated with constrained sexuality, and long/untreated hair symbolises unrestrained sexuality. The mullet is an ‘untamed’ hairstyle. It’s association with cultures that falls outside of societal norms provides the bearer with an affiliation to a place outside the restricted. In other words, it is a conscious act that is done to symbolise to others that you belong to a group that is not ‘tamed’. We can, however, look at it from a different perspective.

“Why do so many of you wear the mullet?”, I asked team captain Peter. “I don’t know...”, he answered and chuckled. “...I think some of the guys did it for ‘Movember’. They said if the manage to get so-so much money donated, they’ll get cut a mullet. And then they managed it, so they said if they

get even more money, they'll keep it for a week, and so on. I don't think it looks any good, though. I wouldn't do it to my hair."

It is clearly not everyone who is equally excited for the haircut. Anthony Synnott (1987) provides us with an analysis of hair in contemporary British and North American societies. He draws his analysis on three opposites: "opposite sexes have opposite hair; head hair and body hair are opposite; and opposite ideologies have opposite hair (pp. 382). As Synnott's analysis was conducted in the late 1980's, it is important to take note on the fact that our understanding of the term 'gender' has developed to become quite different in the past 20 years. His analysis is based on the distinction between male and female; however, our understanding and acceptance of the 'gender spectre' is not as dichotomous as it used to be. It is getting increasingly more accepted for women to have short head hair and body hair, as well as guys are getting increasingly more comfortable with removal of body hair, growing out head hair, and even use styling products. This is an effect of the awareness surrounding gendered norms and expectations. I am not suggesting that we are living in an exclusively androgynous society. 'Male' and 'female' are still biologically regarded as binary sexes in western societies and expected gender behaviour is conventionally still built on this dichotomy. What I am wanting to emphasise in this context, however, is the ambiguity of what we deem feminine and masculine. The lines between the dichotomies are being blurred. As for the previously masculine hairstyle, the mullet is now being worn by every gender, and at the same time serves as a symbol for a very masculine sport.

"In sharp contrast to this position, the social anthropologist ordinarily has little interest in the individual as such; his major concern is with individuals acting as members of groups. His unit of observation is not one human being in isolation but rather a 'relationship' linking one individual to another within a wider social field." (Leach, 1958, pp. 151)

As Synnott suggests, the conventional hair cut is also symbolic for a shared masculine identity. The hairdo, or in this more specific case, the mullet, could be a symbol of a group identity, but given that only a minority of rugby players actually wear their hair in this style, it might seem inconsistent to argue this point. We need to look at the question of the mullet being a shared symbol from two angles: the 'outside' and the 'inside' of the group. The

‘outside’ perspective represents the conventional norm saying that men should have a subtle, clean, and short cut, which signifies masculinity. Yet, the mullet possesses more feminine traits. It is long, although it has shorter parts, it is styled, and often even coloured or treated in other ways such as with permanent curls. So, how come a haircut that resonates more with feminine, contemporary norms than male contemporary norms, has found its way to become a symbol in such a well-established masculine community? With the popularisation, modernisation, and feminisation of the mullet, chances are very slim that a ‘mullet-wearing’ rugby player will suspect that another random ‘mullet-wearer’ in the streets is a fellow sportsman. Seeing it as a symbol of group identity can therefore be problematic, but how about viewing it from a pure aesthetic angle. The answer might lay on the ‘inside’.

‘Peacocking’ is a term I recently learned. In the Cambridge dictionary, ‘peacocking’ is defined as: “behaviour by men that shows they are very proud of their appearance, for example wearing clothes that make people notice them” (Cambridge Dictionary). Wearing the mullet is a way to stand out among other players who follow the standard male norms for socially accepted hairstyles. The players who wear the mullet self-present in a way that they know will gain attention. Attention to the notable haircut is followed by a general attention to the player in question, making him stand out in the group. The motivation to wear it, comes from within the subject and it is driven by an idea to contradict the expectation of one type of masculine appearance. Along with the definition found in the Cambridge dictionary are a few examples, and one of them goes as followed: “I also played a lot of hurling and football, so I think my peacocking was tolerant”. The example implies that ‘peacocking’ is not considered masculine behaviour, yet it is tolerant when the action is outweighed by masculine behaviour for example by playing sports. Or in this instance, the mullet is accepted because it is outweighed by other masculine activities (i.e., rugby) and by a certain type of masculine appearance that contradicts a conventional feminine appearance (i.e., a muscular physique). As stated in my former paragraph, the mullet is a masculine hairdo constructed by techniques that are deemed appropriate on a woman’s hair. The haircut is no longer a symbol of masculine identity, but rather a signifier of androgyny. Furthermore, it is not the mullet itself that gains attention, but rather the disruption of a stricter masculine norm. “Why do *they* wear *that*?!” was a general response when I told my peers about the players’ fashion choice. The reaction was not centred around the hair itself, but the *they* and *that*, as in, the hair itself did not spark controversy, but the relationship between what was *expected* and what was *acted*.

As shown, hair is significant in the act of self-representation. Hair, like clothes, tend to be highly gender associated, although clothing is arguably more specific than hair. A dear friend of mine, who is a trans woman (MTF), refused to cut her hair short the time before she came out as trans, despite being pushed to cut it by her family and friends. It was the only identifying feature she could change to reflect the gender she felt like without being overtly expressive. In a highly masculine community where a muscular body is the idolised one, it does not seem unlikely that hair can be an effective way to ventilate a more flexible gender identity. Or perhaps it is an effective way to draw attention to the body one already has that fits into the image of the given gender role (peacocking). In the next section, we will have a closer examination of another way of self-presentation. Visible injuries are usually a more involuntary body modification, but it can still play a big part in the performance of gender identity. Let us have a closer look at this.

Bruises, blood, and broken bones

A couple of days after The Gullhammer Game, I met up with some the players to show support to the third team as they were up against a team from a nearby city. The third team is a lower ranged team in the same rugby club. They had showed good support for the first team during The Gullhammer Game, and the players wanted to reciprocate the act. The players were waiting for me at the side of the pitch, and I could immediately spot Francis' golden locks in the crowd. "Hi there!" I said, and as he turned around, he revealed a black eye on the right side of his face. As I pointed it out to him, he only brushed it off as if it was nothing but explained that he got it during The Gullhammer Game. Yet, whenever anyone else, particularly other players or other men, would make comments on it, I got the feeling that he was bearing it with some sort of pride, like a battle scar. His response was that "someone had to do the job". When speaking about it to a male friend of mine later, it was pointed out that that is "typical masculine behaviour". My friend said: "If I squeezed my finger while getting underwear from my bedroom drawer, I would never tell anyone. But, if I broke my finger while battering a dude, I'd tell all my mates about it!"

There is some sort of beauty with visible injuries in the rugby sphere. It is something that seems to be carried and showed off with pride, and something that one can gain admiration from. Francis carried his black eye with pride, and evidently so, it was spoken

about with admiration from his teammates in the time after the match. Just like my friend in the example above so well emphasised, it is a matter of context. “One should suffer for beauty”, and that is what this section will examine closer.

Bohannan (1956) did his fieldwork among the Tiv tribe in Nigeria. Among the Tiv, it is not abnormal to find means to improve one’s beauty. People among the Tiv, especially women, use different oils to make their skin smooth, or to make it ‘glow’. To decorate their glowing skin, they also need to ‘dress up’ their bodies. They ‘dress up’ their faces with face paint, as well as their hands and nail with henna. In addition, they also dress their bodies with scars. Scarification is “one of the most important requisites for beauty” (pp. 118). Both men and women wear scars, but the preferred placements and patterns may vary. Scars like these are known to have connections to different tribes, however, among the Tiv it is generational. Women are known to have an interest in men with newer designs as it is symbolising the man’s younger age. Proof that your body modifications are successful, is when people look at you. However, what is most interesting, is the connection between beauty and pain:

“I once asked a group of Tiv with whom I was discussing scarification whether it was not exceedingly painful. They turned on me as if I had missed the entire point – as, indeed, I had. ‘Of course,’ one of them said, ‘of course it is painful. What girl would look at a man if his scars had not cost him pain?’ The effort to ‘glow’ must be obvious; the effort to be dressed up must involve expense and trouble; scarification, one of the finest of decorations, is paid for in pain.” (Bohannan, 1956, pp. 121)

The scars are, in other words, without value or legitimacy, if it has been acquired without pain. Without the pain, there is nothing to value. Although the players do not practice scarification, wounds, bruises, and other visible injuries work in the same manner. They are, in contrary to scars, temporary, yet they serve the same purpose. They have been acquired through physical hardship and pain. A scar symbolises pain that has been endured. We admire a person for the hardship he has gone through, and the statement “What girls would look at a man if his scars had not cost him pain?” proves this. Research has, in fact, argued that minor facial scars increase the attractiveness of a man, for a short-term relationship (Burriss, et al, 2008). A desire to show off scars might come from the desire to attract other women. However, most of the comments they received were in fact from other men, and they seemed to be equally, if not more, proud when showing them off to other men, than to me or other

women. Sport is a man's arena. Men gather with other men, train with other men, receive critique by other men, compete against other men, etc. The list goes on. In sport, they also receive admiration from other men, and this admiration is important because it is approval. It is showing, in a sense, that the admiration received from men then becomes more important than admiration received by women. Attractiveness is not necessarily only about sexuality, but also about having people looking at you and thinking highly of you. Showing off scars are one way that people undertake impression management to increase their own attractiveness. On one hand, the scars are admirable and desirable for the players because they attract more of the opposite gender which makes them feel more attractive. On the other hand, the scars are attractive because they attract other men's admiration and approval, something that is important to have in a men's arena, like sports.

The question becomes more pertinent when we look at it in the light of homosexuality. Homosexual desires might play a part in the latter point, where it is the attraction between men that is in question. As far as I am aware, the team consisted of exclusively heterosexual men, and no homophobic comments were ever made in my presence. Although rugby has had a reputation for prominent homophobia, more and more professional rugby players have decided to come out since the beginning of the 20th century, such as former Welsh player Gareth Thomas³. The closest I got to a story involving LGBTQIA+ was a former male player who transitioned from woman to man (FTM). This player was not in the team anymore as he had ended his study a little while before my arrival. The players I spoke to about the topic of LGBTQIA+ seemed open and 'not-caring' about the subject, but I have to take into account that his experience might differ from the outsider perspectives than it did from the subject himself. In my previous chapter, I briefly mentioned the theory of 'inclusive masculinity'. This theory was a response to Connell's theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' and aimed to show that the hierarchical view that Connell applied to masculinities does not work in modern day societies. The term 'homohysteria' is central to the theory and means "the awareness that anyone can be gay, and the level of cultural homophobia" (McCormack, 2012, p. 44). In other words, homohysteria exist in cultures where homosexuality is present and, but not necessarily, visible. In addition, heterosexuality must be considered desirable over homosexuality in the given culture. When homosexuality is unwanted, and there is a choice to stay 'in the closet', meaning that the sexuality can be concealed, people can start accentuating behaviour that is

³ Gareth Thomas played professionally for the Welsh Rugby Union and came out as gay in 2009. Approximately ten years later, he announced in an emotional video on Twitter that he was also HIV-positive.

not typically connected to 'being gay'. Doing this, they can prove their sexuality to their friends and family. Anderson (reference) saw this in a different light and argued that people now hold attitudes that could be seen as 'gay' to prove that their masculinity is not, so called, 'fragile'. Whether the players hold a seemingly inclusive attitude in fear of their own sexuality to be mistaken, or if the inclusive attitudes comes from a place of no withheld homophobia, is neither a question I can nor will answer. On one hand, if attention from other men is desirable but only to a certain point before it turns 'sexual' and unwanted, scars can be an effective way of achieving this attention. The wish for male attention can be hidden under the name of approval, and thereby accepted by the group as a whole. On the other hand, if male attention is accepted blatantly as it is, showing off scars are again a good way of getting it.

In addition to increasing attractiveness and admiration, the scars tell the viewer a story. A narrative about a battle is being conveyed through the visual injuries. A protagonist has fought a battle and received pain which he now is marked with. One thing that is noticeable when watching popular TV and movies, is that there is a frequent display of male characters with scars. Female characters, on the other hand, is almost never shown with visible scars on TV. This can be seen even in popular children's cartoons, such as the Disney classic 'Kim Possible'. In the cartoon, there are two villains. The evil mastermind 'Dr Drakken', who is a man, is drawn with a scar starting at the corner of his inner eye that stretches across his cheekbone. His 'sidekick', a woman, who takes on all the fighting and is put more frequently in situations that would lead to injuries and wounds, are drawn with no scars or any other marks on her body or face. Scarification and tattooing are human praxises seen in many cultures across the world. A tattoo is a permanent mark on a person's body, often in the form of an image, a symbol, or a text. For many people, their tattoos have a meaning, or they tell a story, but it can also be an expression of personal taste. In some cultures, such as different Polynesian cultures, tattooing can even be mandatory and part life. The tattoos inscribed on the body is a reflection of social and hierarchical status (Gell, 1996). In *The Marked and the Unremarked: Tattoo and Gender in Theory and Narrative* (2011), Mascia-Lees and Sharpe argue that the female human body is reflected in natural untattooed body, whereas the male body is reflected in the inscribed cultural body. Culture is socially deemed more powerful than nature, and it is the male body that is being inscribed by these cultural symbols (tattoos), which further places men hierarchically above women. Both studies show how tattoos reflect social structures. Scars, like tattoos, symbolises, and tells something about the person wearing

them. A scar is a man's means of beauty. A woman with scars is undesirable, sort of like damaged goods, whereas a man with scars tells the story of a hero who has been through battle. It is this 'battle' that is central in the context of sport. For there is a battle. A match can be seen as a symbolic 'war'. The players play the roles as 'heroes' or 'fighters' of this 'war', and it does not really matter whether they win or lose, because the 'war' will find place over and over again, and it is the act of showing up and fighting over and over again that forms this narrative. Scars, wounds, bruises, and even broken bones are living proof of this heroic deed. They are proof carved into flesh that the narrative is real. This is the purpose, or one of the several purposes, that the scars serve in the performance of masculinities. They bring the story to life by legitimising the narrative, and they serve to create admiration.

After finishing his degree, Francis had managed to get a job interview for a position in an English big city. The day prior to his move, we went on a walk around town. His eye was still black, or perhaps even blacker, from the day before. "What are you going to do about your eye on the job interview?", I asked. "Oh, shit! I didn't think about that!", he answered, genuinely concerned. "I need to find a way to cover it up". "Or... maybe you can just tell them you got it playing rugby?", I suggested. "I don't know, I might have to cover it up...", he answered.

Although the scars serve a purpose in the community where they tell and legitimise a narrative, it does not necessarily have the same significance in other areas of life. The story of the heroic man who went to battle and came back wounded after successfully or unsuccessfully (the outcome does not matter as he paid with pain, recalling Bohannon's quote), only works when the 'people he fought for' are there, positioned to look up to him. In the example above, Francis got immediately insecure about the one thing that had made him so proud, when I imaginatively put him in a position where the bruise does not serve the same purpose. Research on scars and attractiveness suggest that men with facial scarring can also be subject to prejudice (Hartung, et al, 2019). In other words, scars suggest bad or evil character. In a community where the scarred man served as the hero, his role can suddenly turn upside down. His theatrical 'make-up' does not belong in a different scene, and his role loses status, meaning, or legitimacy.

The main task of this chapter has been to examine the ways in which the players undertake 'impression management' to adapt to their social milieu. Through clothing and

adornment, changing hairstyles, and displaying bruises, blood, and broken bones, the players legitimise a narrative. They serve as theatre make-up that makes the story believable. In this context, the narrative is a heroic, masculine man, who has suffered and endured pain when he fought for his people. As in a theatre, where makeup and costumes are means to bring the actors closer to a realistic performance, the scars are used in the same matter. It is, in a sense, theatrical makeup. The skin is what separates the subject from an outside world. The body fully belongs to the subject it surrounds. Despite discussions about bodily autonomy, for instance the ongoing abortion debate in The United States of America, the body is still the material proof of oneself. It is a tool where the subject can tell their story, or perhaps the materiality of which a story is being forced onto. We have now examined modifications to the external body. In the following chapter, we will have a closer look at the substances that the players take into their bodies, with a main focus on how they position themselves in relation to the intake of alcoholic beverages.

Chapter 4: ‘Cheers lads!’

“Can you please like/comment on this post if you’re going to be coming to the social, I just need a better indication of numbers to make sure we have enough chairs and more importantly don’t run out of booze this week. Love and champagne, “Willie” x.”

This post was found on a social media page where the team had created a virtual group that they could use to easily communicate with each other. The group consisted of coaches and players, and I was granted access for convenient reasons. Posts were usually regarding training schedule and information about scheduled matches, however it was also a group where they could plan social gatherings, just like I have showed in the example above. Although in a humoristic tone, the post seems to imply the importance of alcohol within the rugby team. Historically, rugby has a reputation for carrying out extreme drinking behaviour, something that rugby federations around the world has tried to put a stop to (Pringle, 2004). An infamous example is the execution of initiation rituals that new players, particularly in university rugby, must participate in to earn a spot in the team. To be clear, a player will get the spot no matter if they participate in the ritual or not, however, the rituals are centred towards the social status within the team. It is *expected* that the candidate engages in these ritualistic acts. These rituals are often cantered around *hazing*, the act of humiliating the participants, and excessive alcohol consumption. It was revealed to me, however, that these rituals do not take place among the rugby team where I conducted my fieldwork. They expressed a disapproving attitude towards the activities. Part of this chapter seeks to examine exactly these rituals and the attitudes reflected towards them. In the last part of this chapter, we will have a closer look at some of the activities that take place among the rugby players, where alcohol is a central theme. As we will look closer at how a notion of camaraderie is formed within the rugby community, we will see that alcohol serves as a meeting point in which ‘homosocial’ relationships are being formed. In this chapter, I want to argue that the consumption of alcohol is gateway through which the players establish relationships between the men within the group. Consequently, alcohol plays a significant role in the construction of identity and social categorisation. When we examine my examples closer, we can see that what is deemed accepted drunken behaviour among the players, is relying on restrictive alcohol consumption.



Figure 4: A bottle of sparkling wine left on the training pitch before a big match.

Alcohol and drunken behaviour

I was delighted to be invited to an evening around the bonfire with Francis and the other South African rugby players. Prior to the evening, I had been told to bring whatever I wanted to drink 'and a little extra', to our scheduled meeting spot. With a few glass bottles clinking against each other in my backpack, I was on my way to the wooden bench at the corner where I had been told to meet up. Here, I was welcomed by a few welcoming hugs and bright smiles. Among the group were other students and friends of the athletes from the university. On our way towards the beach, the sun was setting in the distance, and a dark wave of blue filled the evening sky. Unfortunately, living on the East Coast robbed us from the warming orange glow of the sunset, which this time was replaced by a bonfire placed perfectly in the middle of our circle of friends. As the night proceeded, Francis was unimpressed by the patience I showed each bottle of beer and repeatedly asked me to hurry up. He was, in fact, halfway through his third bottle by the time I could see the bottom of my first one. After allowing myself to be persuaded by Francis' hastiness, the fire started dying, signalling that it's time to move. "I know someone who's having people over tonight", one of the guys said. "Let's go there!". It was decided, the night was not seeing it's end yet. Although few of us fell through and decided to go home, a smaller group made its way to a stone house, through a hallway, up the stairs, and through another hallway. The host offered music, disco lights, and more beverages, however, my longing for a comfortable sleep was starting to take over. I sat down in the sofa and chatted to a couple of randomers as I, again, displayed my patience. Suddenly, the music was turned up, and cheerful tones filled the room. Out of nowhere, I was grabbed by my wrist, and pulled up from the sofa. Francis and Tjaart had decided to take action and turn the decreasing energy level that was starting to conjure the room. With no pre-knowledge, I was suddenly taking part in an Afrikaans traditional dance. The girl who sat next to me, probably sharing my surprise, were being spun around and tossed in every direction throughout the whole song. Although neither of me and the other girl were familiar with the steps, the dance was already so familiar to Francis and Tjaart, there was no risk of us falling or stumbling. A bit flustered and confused, I tried finding back to my balance, but my energy level was certainly back on top.

In their book *Drunken Comportment: A social explanation* (2003), McAndrew and Edgerton illustrate how drunken behaviour - behaviour that often seems uncontrolled and unpredictable - is actually culturally constructed. In other words, people's drunken behaviour differs from one culture to another. Fjær and Pedersen (2015) draws on McAndrew and Edgerton's work and argue that such differences are also prominent within cultures. If alcohol intake had a fixed effect on everyone, could we not expect everyone to act the same after

consumption? According to these authors, comportment differs regarding who the subject is accompanied by. For instance, a subject's behaviour at a family party, a funeral, a nightclub, or alone in their own home, is expected to be different from each other. The subject might be free from certain social norms while under the influence, yet there are still expectations to how they *should* behave in the situation they find themselves in.

In the example above, I illustrate how Tjaart and Francis are both put in situations where they need to alter their behaviour accordingly. The two scenes are taking place at the beach, and at the house party. At the beach, Francis feels comfortable enough to make a remark about my drinking, with an underlying suggestion for me to drink more quickly. In my interpretation, the comments that Francis made consisted of implicit drinking pressure. I will emphasise, however, that I did not experience this situation as negative, and that Francis came off as jokingly and friendly. That was, nevertheless, the state of the situation we were in at the time. From both parts, the atmosphere was experienced as light and easy, and we were all sharing a good mood. Later that night at the house party where my energy was visibly declining, similar comments with implied drinking pressure would most likely not be welcomed in the same manner as it did earlier that day. Inviting to a dance, on the other hand, is a softer attempt to keep the energy up. Couple dances between a man and a woman in western societies are expected to be led by the man, whereas the woman will follow. In other words, I had to follow not only his movements, but also his energy. The consumption of alcohol is more common among men than women (Lemle and Mishkind, 1989) and has thereby strong connotations to the notions of masculinities. In both cases, Francis was trying to keep my mood and energy up, but the social situations differed, and thereby required different methods to do so. Pushing on faster alcohol and initiating to dance are also two very polarised ways of achieving the same result. The former method leans on a rougher attitude that urges for a higher alcohol intake, which further leads to a less restricted general behaviour. The latter method is a gentler and more sensitive way of approaching the situation. This method, on the contrary, urges for a lower alcohol intake and thus a more restricted pattern of behaviour.

What is important to note, however, is that alcohol is a cultural food. In other words, it is a type of food that has a different meaning in every culture you find it. Alcohol cannot be reduced to one substance, as it is created through different methods and by different ingredients throughout the world. In some cultures, what westerners would consider alcohol, is not considered that by the natives. For instance, Strunin (2001) discovered that two popular

rum-based cocktails, *kremas* and *likay*, were not regarded as alcoholic beverages by younger Haitians. In some culture, other psychoactive substances can be defined in position to alcohol. For example, in Fiji, I was told that driving while influenced by alcohol was illegal yet driving while under the influence of *kava* was permitted because “*kava* is not alcohol”. The question whether or not a subject actually drinks alcohol, or the reputation of substituting substances, can be determined by the cultural notions of alcohol itself. Douglas (1972) have even recognised alcohol in Great Britain as an ‘antifood’.

Only one player, Owen, had intentionally decided to stay sober. Owen is the only player in the team from Wales. He had grown up in a middle-class family where rugby was a central part of his upbringing. Rugby had now become something that he is taking very seriously as an addition to his academics. When the Covid-19 pandemic started and all amateur sports were put on hold, being forced to stay away from rugby significantly affected Owen’s mood. At the time when we met, the lockdown was over and the restrictions were increasingly fading away, meaning that both rugby and partying were back on the agenda. At so-called ‘socials’, parties arranged by the university rugby club, Owen had been kind enough to take on the task to walk overly intoxicated freshers’ home after the party, making sure they got there safely. I did ask him how his choice of staying sober had been received by the rest of the club, and he answered that he felt accepted by everyone, and no one were ever pressuring him to consume alcohol. When speaking about Owen’s choice to stay away from alcoholic beverages to other players who chose to drink, they told me that he was a good example for new members of the club who wished to make the same choice of not drinking. I was told that new members had a tendency of wanting to prove themselves by drinking excessively, and that having Owen there would balance out this drinking behaviour, something that they all seemed thankful for.

Owen never opened up to me about why he had decided to stay away from alcohol. As mentioned, alcohol is as a means through which social relations are made, although that does not imply that one must drink it. Owen still managed to find a comfortable spot within the rugby team, and sometimes it seemed as if the other players were admiring him for his choice. Seeing alcohol as an antifood, like Douglas suggests, the choice of not drinking, I will suggest, impacts a subject’s social status, and in this case, on a positive level. Higher alcohol intake is associated with a less athletic body, in terms of the aesthetic and the healthy body. An athletic body is desired and admired within the rugby community, as I argued in my previous chapter, and the choice of not consuming alcohol might contribute to achieve that.

However, I do not wish to reduce Owen's choice to the matter of a desired body, as there are many other reasons to why a person chooses to be absent from alcohol, and in this case it is not my place to speculate on. Matters such as family relations, personal well-being, and illness also plays a part. Owen was not seen as any less masculine, nor did he gain disapproval from his group. Consequently, alcohol serves as a means where social categories are created *through* and not *by*.

"I never drank alcohol in Fiji, I would never. It was only after I moved here a year ago that I tasted it for the first time, and now I'm drinking all the time. I get pissed every weekend! There was one time when me and my mates went out. My wife was there too and after we went to the clubs, we were hungry and decided to go for some pizza at the pizza shop over there. She was sitting at the table waiting for me and when I came with the pizza, this guy walked past her and called her a 'slut'! I got so angry... I knocked him right in his face. I don't like it when people treat my wife, or any woman at all, like that! It gets me really angry."

Tomasi tasted alcohol for the first time after he had moved to Scotland. In Fiji, rugby players often gather to drink *kava* after matches, and Tomasi replaced this substance with alcohol after his move. Just a few weeks after arriving in Great Britain, he was notified by an aunt in Fiji that he had a cousin living in the same Scottish city as he did. After being introduced to his cousin who is a self-proclaimed 'party girl', his drinking habits developed rapidly, and his alcohol consumption increased significantly. When he joined a professional Scottish rugby union team, he started having an occasional drink with his teammates as well. He was eager to tell me stories where he had gotten heavily intoxicated, and his friends would help him get home or take care of himself. The incident described above is a clear example of the masculine narrative of a man whose job is to protect his kin. Violence and aggressive behaviour are typically restricted in almost every society, yet his situation affected what was *morally* right to do in the moment. As Fjær and Pedersen suggests, reasons for drunken comportment can be studied through different value practices in different communities. In this instance, it was exactly the narrative formerly mentioned that formed the moral values for Tomasi in this specific situation.

Given that alcohol consumption is essentially *social* (Heath, 2000), we cannot overlook how social situations impact human intoxicated behaviour. All of the examples that I have

applied in this section signifies how different sets of drunken comportment are in fact situational. In the first example, we see how two different sets of ‘masculine behaviour’ unfolds. The way Francis acted at the beach points more towards a morally unrestricted behaviour type, whilst the way in which he behaved at the house party indicates a more gentle and restricted behaviour type. Both types of behaviours can be traced back to the repertoire of the gentle and the rough, or how I prefer to view it in this thesis; the twinned configuration of ‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’. Similarly, in the example where Tomasi is expressing pure aggressive behaviour, the aggressivity is based on a will to protect his wife. This urge to protect reflects the narrative of stereotypical masculine behaviour in western societies where a man must protect the women and children in his life. In other words, the situation called for aggressive behaviour. Although violence and aggressivity are typically sanctioned in Great Britain, his choice to act on it can be circumstantially accepted in Scotland, precisely because of the narrative of the protecting man/husband/father. Alcohol, as I have shown, also serves as a gate through how subjects categorise the people in their lives. This categorisation depends on how people place themselves regarding alcohol, and how society restricts alcohol for certain categories of people. In sum, we see how alcohol affects the behaviour of people, and how social behaviour that rests on different notions of masculinities unfolds in scenarios where alcohol is consumed. In the following section, we will examine the initiation rituals that are arranged when some university rugby clubs welcome new members.

Initiation rituals

“Have you read about the initiation rituals that’s been going on around the UK?”, Peter asked me. “No, I haven’t. Initiation rituals? What’s that?”, I asked curiously. The look on Peter’s face told me everything I needed to know. He immediately put his hand behind his neck and hesitated for a bit. It was apparent that he had given out a bit of information that he might regretted. Hesitantly, he continued: “Well, rugby teams in different universities arrange initiation rituals for the new members, and well, they can be pretty horrible.”, he said. “How come?”, I answered eagerly to hear a story. “Well, there is a lot of drinking. And new members get challenges that they have to complete, and, in some cases, it’s gotten completely out of hand. In one university, they mixed beer and other human fluids in a dead pig’s head and the guys had to drink it. It’s so horrible. You can google it and you’ll find many stories about it. It has happened that people have died, so they’re trying to forbid initiation

rituals now.” I was shocked. This was not the kind of story I was eager to tell. After a few seconds where I was lost of words, I managed to pull myself together. “Do you guys do that in your team?”. I asked carefully. “Oh, no, absolutely not, that’s more in the big cities in the UK. We don’t do any initiation rituals here.”, he rushed to reassure me.

Initiation rites are very common among university athletics in Great Britain. It is, in fact, within a selected few sports communities that the more extreme rituals are arranged, and the rugby community is listed as one of these. They are known to consist of activities involving a high alcohol consumption, and *hazing*. What I find more interesting than the extreme rituals themselves, however, is the disdain that Peter expressed when speaking about them. In this section, I want to focus specifically on the attitudes and resistance expressed by the athletes in question, that was aimed toward these kinds of initiation rites.

The purpose of an initiation ritual, or a *rite de passage*, is for the candidate to transform from their current state and thus enter a new one. In this instance, the candidate is going from a non-member to a member of the given rugby club. First recognised by Van Gennep (1961), the three stages of a rite of passage includes the *separation* phase, the *transition* phase, and lastly the *incorporation* phase. As the names imply, the first stage is where the candidate is separated from his former group, from there he will enter the second stage. The second stage is the stage of liminality. This is a stage where the candidate leaves a place of structure and enter into a phase influenced of anti-structure. “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.” (Turner and Abrahams, 1969, pp. 95). In this stage, the candidate is exempt from the regular set of rules, structures, and norms, as stated in the quote by Turner and Abrahams. The last stage is the aggregation stage where the candidate is being reincorporated into a structured and stable state. Now they must act according to those obligations and norms that are expected by them in the new state of being. In a rugby initiation ritual, the candidate is often being degraded and humiliated. He might be dressed naked and asked to complete tasks that are normally sanctioned for if they were completed outside a liminal phase. In other words, the candidate is free from long-term judgement. The viewers accept that he is in a different state, and is now exempt from regular norms. After completing the initiation ritual, the candidate is a recognised member of the rugby club.

In the context of collegiate athletics, an initiation ritual is a procedure that new team members must complete when becoming a member of the sports club in question. The rituals are not fixed. They are, on the contrary, constructed with new challenges every year.

However, these challenges are highly inspired by earlier rituals, often with the intention of being more 'extreme' than their predecessors. A common element of initiation rituals in the context of university athletics is the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Almost every challenge the participants must complete involves drinking. While the consumption of alcohol is the most central part, the rituals are also arranged with the perfect mix of physical activity, humiliation, and degradation (Clayton, 2012). Team captain Peter told me that these initiation rituals are unwelcomed by the players in his rugby club. Although he took rugby very seriously and needed his body to be in good shape, occasional drinking and partying was accepted by him and among his teammates. In fact, when I asked what made the players sign up for the rugby club in the first place, most of them replied that they 'wanted someone to drink with'.

Corsaro and Johannesen (2013) analyse the Norwegian transition ritual known as '*russefeiring*' (*russ celebration*) and argue that the *russ* contribute to the civic society through activities that play part in the formation of mutual identity. In addition, they argue that these activities that the *russ* participate in, positions, and repositions them in the order of intergenerational relations. *Russefeiring* is a celebration that was started in the 1770s by Norwegian and Danish students when they started their first week in the university in Copenhagen. It has since then been associated with alcohol and excessive drinking. Today, the celebration typically lasts from the beginning of May until May 18th, the day after the Norwegian constitution day, yet the time span of the celebration seems to be stretch out with time. In the beginning of the *russ celebrations*, it is stated by the authors, the *russ* will participate in a baptism. This baptism marks the very beginning of the monthlong celebration. Generally, this baptism consists of activities where alcohol consumption is expected. An example of this is that the subject must drink one unit of beer or cider in less than 10 seconds. If the subject fails to do so, they will have to pour the rest of the unit over themselves. This activity alone is an example in which excessive intoxication and humiliation are both present. As stated in the beginning of the paragraph, the *russ* partake in activities designed as small challenges where they will earn a *token* that they can tie to their uniform hats as a symbol that they have completed the mission. These challenges are designed by the *russ board* and are implemented on a national level (with slight regional differences). The challenges in question consist of partaking in pranks, handing out customised call cards, and charity work. Although most of these challenges are humorous in nature, some of them are based on activities where the *russ* must intentionally humiliate themselves. Other can also be centred around excessive

alcohol consumption or sexual acts and nudity. It is voluntary which challenges a *russ* wants to take part in or not, but a large number of *tokens* tied to the subject's hat will lead to admiration among their peers.

The *russ celebration* and the type of initiation rite in rugby has a lot in common. They both rest heavily on the expectation that the subjects must participate in activities influenced by excessive alcohol consumption, humiliation, and nudity. When the *russ* hands their call cards to young children, who will hand out their own call cards when they become *russ* themselves, they position themselves in intergenerational relation. Through this ritual, actions are being repeated from generation to generation. Another way of doing this, is by speaking about earlier and next generations of *russ*, for example by comparing challenges, parties, and so on (Corsaro and Johannesen, 2013, pp. 343-347). Similarly, when initiation rites in collegiate athletics are arranged and planned with the intention on being more extreme than the rites that took place the time prior, the players also situate themselves in intergenerational relations – but in contrary to the *russ*, the athletes' actions have to surpass the earlier generations. In typical masculine fashion, the rites must compete in being the more extreme than the ones before. Intoxication from alcohol has long been associated with and more accepted by men. The act of drinking and becoming excessively drunk contributes to an even stronger masculine image (Guttman, 1996). By arranging more extreme rituals than the one's held the years before, the athletes also form and perform a certain masculine behaviour. Peter showing resentment towards initiation rituals, contradicts the expectation that the team should be celebrating them. Initiation rituals are usually planned by the team captain, and it is therefore important to note that Peter, who is team captain, have great influence on how the team as a whole position themselves in relation to initiation rites. It came clear that the players enjoyed drinking as they arranged party events every week. Yet, arranging initiation rites seemed to be taking the drinking too far. Peter told me that initiation rites are usually arranged in rugby clubs in the bigger cities such as Newcastle and Glasgow. These two cities are both marginalised cities in Great Britain, which can suggest that the different preferences in drinking habits between athletes in the deprived cities and the athletes in wealthy cities may stem from class differences. To make it clear, I am not suggesting that less money leads to more drinking. Studies have in fact found the opposite; the more money people earn, the more alcohol they drink (Alcoholchange, 2021). What I am illustrating, is the attitudes and behaviours displayed when alcohol is in question. The athletes in East Valley show softer masculine behaviour. Alcohol is permitted, but it is restricted when the situation involving

alcohol is calling for undesired behaviour. The two examples differ in the way that the rugby players enter a more gender specific social status when completing the ritual. By ‘gender specific’, I am not referring to rugby being gendered specific as a whole (women are welcome to play rugby), but they will enter a team where two binary sexes are segregated. In addition, the role that they are taking on as athletes, is one with strong masculine connotations that I have illustrated in my former chapters. The *russ* on the other hand, will complete the ritual and then continue their lives in the direction that they desire, whether that is with academics, taking on a profession, or any other direction they wish to follow. In other words, initiation rites conducted by male university athletes, contribute to the formation of masculine identities.

“A guy I used to live with in my former student accommodation went and did these initiation rituals. As I understood, it was just a reason to get drinks and have fun. But they also do things that are humiliating, like hazing, and it’s to build trust. Like, if you’ve gotten so drunk, like, black out drunk, you kind of have to trust these guys.”

In this statement, Graham suggested that the rituals open for building trust between one another. However, the statement ending with “...you kind of have to trust these guys” suggests that the subject has no choice but to submit to the group. My following section will examine exactly this; the ways in which alcohol plays part in the establishments of homosocial relationships and contributes to the establishment of friendships.

Camaraderie and homosocial relationships

“In my younger days, I used to play rugby. When me and my team were playing games, we’d all get on the same bus and travel together to wherever that match was being held. Then, after the match we’d all get back on the bus and start drinking. I remember we would do all these weird kinds of challenges. One, I remember quite well... We stopped at a shop and some of my teammates bought tons of beer and a boiled egg. Then, they would come back on the bus, and we’d pass the egg from the front of the bus to the back, but it had to be passed from mouth to mouth. So, obviously, you don’t want to be last. As it was being passed further, people were chewing it and making it all mushy. So, if

you were in the front of the bus, you were the lucky one.”, Gary said. “Why did you do that?”, I asked while laughing. “I don’t know.”, was the reply.

I was told by Gary that activities like to this would often take place after rugby matches. Unlike the initiation rituals, taking part in this apparently absurd activity will not provide you with a spot in the team. One can argue, however, that you might acquire status. Or, if you do not take part the activity, the player can lose his status, and become subject to humiliation. Yet, I want to look at the symbolic actions in this specific incident and then see it in the light of what has been termed ‘homosociality’. ‘Homosociality’ is simply defined as “...social bonds between persons of the same sex.” (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014, pp. 1). In the above example, there is a prominent feeling of intimacy, and perhaps even an underlying sexual intimacy. When the egg gets passed on from one person to another, an intimate moment is shared between the two subjects. There seems to be a kiss concealed behind the act of passing on the egg. A kiss, whether it’s shared between lovers, a parent and a child, or between friends, is a symbol of love. What distinguishes the kiss between a parent and a child, from a kiss between two lovers, is that the kiss between the lovers is based on a different state of intimacy due to the amount of bodily fluids that are exchanged during the act. As the players touch lips, and the egg is passed on, a player is also passing on his saliva to the next player, who is again passing it further, and so it continues to the end. However, the body fluids that are exchanged, is also concealed in the remains of the egg. Furthermore, it is not merely a concealed symbolic kiss that is exchanged between two parts; it is a symbolic kiss shared within a group of same-sex people.

In many cultures, love and care are deemed feminine traits. In many societies including Scotland, women have been in charge of taking care of children, elders, and sick member of groups. By applying the concept of *hegemonic masculinity*, in which it is claimed that men who perform feminine behaviour are hierarchically placed lower down on the ‘social ladder’ than men who perform masculine behaviour, I want to suggest that the players are finding other ways of showing love and care for each other. This concept of *hegemonic masculinity* was developed by Raewyn Connell in the 1980’s, and later presented in her book *Masculinities*, which was first published in 1995. In her book, the author argues for the reality of *multiple masculinities*, and not merely the existence of one. The concept has been used in a number of studies in order to document a structure of masculinities that allow the reproduction of power and the predomination of men over other men, as well as women, to

exist. The hegemonic notion of masculinity in a society can vary on local and global levels and are quite rarely actually seen or acted out by the men around us. Nevertheless, the dominant male is constructed as an 'ideal man' representing the social ordering of patriarchy of a particular society, community, nation, and so on. Incorporated in the notion of the 'alpha male', is everything from how a man acts, speaks, dresses, provides, works, and so on, and this gendered repertoire is often presented in the shape of high-status men through media, such as famous athletes or businessmen. The notion of hegemonic masculinities are not hinging on the application of force, it is rather produced by the collective work of institutionalised consent (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, s. 846). An example of collective institutionalised consent is when all the players in a rugby team consent to certain types of behaviours whether that behaviour is leaning towards femininity or masculinity. Thus, they can conceal feminine behaviour in activities that are shielded in masculine notions. Alcohol consumption is more connected to masculine behaviour, which further opens up a window where players are allowed to act out of character, such as in the example above. In other words, the players, through culturally deemed masculine behaviour (i.e., excessive drinking), find ways to perform culturally deemed feminine behaviour (i.e., showing care).

As the players found their designated positions, bent down, and grabbed each other around their thighs and backs to form the scrum, Ludmila bursted out: "How is this NOT gay?!". Maxwell and I immediately started laughing, but although it was an innocent comment made with a humorous intention, we all understood where the question came from.

Rugby union requires a lot of physical contact. If you are in the scrum, you must expect to be touched by, and touch, other men in the team. Are you not in the scrum, you must still expect to be tackled and held down by other players. Piles of male bodies lying on top of each other is not an unusual sight on the rugby pitch. It is a contact sport where your body will feel intimacy from other bodies. As Ludmila suggested, one can wonder how men from a community that is known for homophobia can allow themselves to repeatedly be in close contact with each other's bodies. In sports, men create spaces for men, where they are trained by other men, develop skills with other men, are told the difference between right and wrong by other men. Sport is a man's arena. Men and women are usually segregated, and whereas men have exclusive male spaces, women rarely share exclusive female spaces, as their

coaches and others involved are often men. Rugby was institutionalised into establishments that only men attended, and the need for physical contact could not be fulfilled by women. Consequently, rugby served as an arena where physical intimacy was provided. To be clear, physical intimacy is not synonymous with sexual intimacy, and people search for physical intimacy with friends or family, through holding hands, hugging, touching, and so on. Physical intimacy is a way of showing people solidarity and care. Rugby serves as an arena when development of solidarity and physical intimacy is justified through heavy contact sport.

'Homosociality' is a term that was invented by Sedgwick and is appears in the book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). The term is used to describe the connections between persons of the same sex. The term is closely related to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Sport provides for the participants an opportunity to develop friendships through the experiences of "hardship, adversity, failure, and success" (Robertson and Anderson, 2022, pp. 39). A collective goal is formed by going through such hardships together with their respective group. The goal in question can be to win matches, tournaments, or break records. This goal is something that brings a great advantage to friendships that are formed within sport, as the group is working together to achieve the goal, as well as overcoming obstacles, and continue after failure. Rugby is a prime arena for homosocial relationships to be established and unfold. Alcohol and intoxication behaviour serves to reinforce and affirm masculinity. In addition, alcohol serves to strengthen relationships between men and even increase the feeling of solidarity within the group (Bales, 1962). In sum, the arena provides room where physical contact is accepted. Drinking activities that happen after matches or at other social gatherings increases 'male 'bonding' and a feeling of camaraderie, a word that my informants unanimously used to describe the feeling of being a part of the rugby team.

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the ways alcohol is perceived, used, and embedded into the rugby community. There is a common assumption that alcohol abstain is unwelcomed among rugby players, but my findings show that abstain is welcomed, although not pushed onto new members. Alcohol seems to serve as the meeting point through which social identification is formed. By casual drinking, initiation rites, and social gatherings, alcoholic beverages play part in the formation of masculinities, and the players perceived identities. It serves as a central meeting point through which players will establish friendships and form solidarity with one another.

Conclusion

What I have addressed in this thesis is how different masculinities are being culturally shaped and reproduced through time. In the first chapter, we travelled back in time to the green grass pitch where the sport was institutionalised into the curriculum of British boarding schools and elite establishments, such as Oxford and Cambridge university. Moreover, the students who attended these elite establishments came from families of the upper class, where certain etiquettes were preferred. Consequently, the schools taught the young men to ‘behave like gentlemen’. The sport of rugby was introduced and applied to teach self-discipline in addition to being a means where the boys and men could let out excess energy. Some of the young men who attended these schools were later to become colonial officers as the British Empire expanded throughout the world. The familiar character of the gentleman was then disrupted by a new and harsher character, the colonial officer. With strict disciplining, the young men eventually managed to adjust and thereby perform their role consisting of ambiguous masculinities. I further illustrated how the sport was embraced throughout the British colonies, and the effects that rugby had on the different culture’s notions of manhood, such as in Fiji where the relationship with God is enhanced through the strengthening of one’s body. The sport’s close association with social class was as visible in South Africa as it was in Great Britain, displayed through the notion of race and skin colour.

In the following chapter, my first aim was to illustrate how gender performance is conducted through the way people behave and speak. Firstly, I showed how rugby itself is an area that is reflected by the very ambiguous notions of the rough and the gentle. This further opens for the players to live in a sphere of ambiguity by assigning roles where they must mainly practice physical game (the rough) or strategic game (the gentle). By applying Judith Butler’s performance theory, I put an emphasis on how the figures of ‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’ are being reproduced through rugby. The players, perform masculinities on and off pitch, however, these masculinities are embedded into the history of rugby and into the sport itself. The players are being trained and disciplined to act out these specific roles while they are on the pitch through, for example, speech. Moreover, the term *habitus* explains how preferences and etiquette is passed down the family line from father to son or through institutions. The work of Butler, Horowitz, Goffman, and Schechner inspired me to draw on the analogy between the rugby pitch and the theatre stage, an analogy that was highly useful in my analysis of the rugby match as a ritual and in other aspects of my thesis. When athletes

finish a match, despite the outcome on the score board, they have gone through transformation. For, a match is not merely about winning or losing; it plays a bigger role in which social status is on the line, and as the opponents are never equal, a draw will mean a loss for the sovereign but a win for the underdog. Violence is one of the most prominent elements of many sports. In rugby, violence serves as a means through which identity is formed. As the match is a rite of passage, violence is used to break down the subject before he is placed back into structure and regenerated through a post-match feast.

Chapter three aimed to illustrate how the athletes self-present through the means of what I have termed ‘theatre make-up’. Just like on the theatre stage, the actors will use costumes, props, and make-up to mediate their character to the audience. The way they sculpt their bodies, cut their hair, change their clothes, and display scars and wounds, the players further produce the plot of ‘the officer’ and ‘the gentleman’. Aesthetic preferences seem to be shared within the rugby community, such as the mullet haircut or the athletic body. What is interesting in this instance is the ambiguous elements of what is preferred. For instance, if you belong to the rugby club, you must wear the designated suit when you attend matches. At the same time, you must also display your injuries. The injuries serve as ‘proof’ that the metaphoric ‘officer’ and ‘gentleman’ have been to battle’ These elements (the suit, the injuries, and other ‘props’ that I mentioned in my analysis) carry forward the masculinities that were being ‘produced’ many years ago during the time of the British Empire.

In the final chapter, I attempted to examine the ways in which alcohol plays a formative role in the formation of group identity and social boundaries. What was very clear to me, was that alcohol held value among the teammates. However, there was a permeated attitude of disdain directed toward ‘extreme drinking behaviour’. I find this attitude interesting because of the connotations that masculinity has with alcohol consumption, or more specifically, the amount of alcohol the subject can drink. It has been argued that men prove their masculinity through the consumption of large amounts of alcohol, however, the athletes seemed to perform a different notion of masculinity by restricting their own alcohol consumption.

By applying historical examples from Fiji, New Zealand, and South Africa, I have attempted to show how the colonies affected the notion of masculinities, not merely within Great Britain, but also throughout the British Empire. Furthermore, I have drawn on my own experiences from my time in Fiji, as well as conversations that I have had with Fijians and South Africans in Scotland, to underline how the effects of the Empire are still visible today.

We can see one of these effects through the connection between the Fijian muscular body that is, for example, being trained through the sport of rugby, and the subject's relationship with God. Moreover, what is so visible, is that there is not only one shape or form of masculinity. The players in East Valley perform their masculinities, which is very ambiguous in nature, despite having connections to what can be named a 'hegemonic masculinity'. Rugby is a perfect example to use while illustrating how notions of gender are reproduced and reinforced by social institutions through time. Consequently, we can still see traces of the twinned figures of 'the officer' and 'the gentleman', who have their roots all the way back to a bunk bed in cold room at a British boarding school.

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