Negotiating rugby with Bloemfontein club rugby men in post-apartheid South Africa

CJJ Dreyer

 **orcid.org/0000-0002-3134-3300**

Dissertation accepted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts in Social Anthropology* at the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr J Auerbach

Graduation: July 2023

Student number: 27535444

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks my supervisor, Associate Professor Jess Auerbach, Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, who made this thesis possible. Her continuous guidance and supervision made me revisit writing-hurdles with confidence, while her words of encouragement enabled me to pragmatically focus on every step towards completion. I would also like to thank my Scientific- and Ethical committee, who enabled me to continue working with Professor Auerbach, even in her transition from the North-West University to the University of Cape Town, during my thesis.

I would also like to thank Dr Andre Goodrich, School Director of Humanities, North-West University, and Ms Pia Bombardella, Head of Department in Social Anthropology, North-West University, who both, respectively, continuously inspired me to dream bigger. Without their encouragement and guidance as an Undergraduate student in Social Anthropology, 2016-2019, I would not have been able to submit this thesis.

I would like to thank Professor Jörn Ahrens, Professor of Cultural Sociology, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, who helped shape my critical thoughts and inquiries in this thesis. In addition, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to every other Lecturer at Justus Liebig University, with whom I had the privilege to learn and think with during my ISAP exchange. Even though my exchange occurred during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Professor Ahrens and every other staff member at Justus Liebig University, ensured that I never had any shortcomings during my stay abroad.

I would also like to thank Professor Joshua Rubin, Anthropology Department, Bates College, USA, who graciously replied to my inquiry about his work on South African rugby and supplied me with a copy of his second Chapter in *Animated by Uncertainty: Rugby and the Performance of History in South Africa* (2021). My second Chapter in this thesis would not have been possible to take shape without this valuable piece of literature. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Tarminder Kaur, Anthropology and Development Studies, University of Johannesburg, who enabled me to think more about how I could also, like herself as a former professional tennis player, think about using my previous experience as a rugby player to add value to the research done in Sport Anthropology.

I would like to thank my parents, Hester and Tom Dreyer, who supported me throughout the process. Without their love and care, I would have been able to undertake this research project. In addition, I would like to extend my thanks to my other Dreyer, Snyman, Greyvenstein,

Adriaanse, and Kruger families, who continuously carried my best interest at heart. Without the members, of each family, I would not have been able to give my undivided attention to this project.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to every single member of Grey Beards Rugby Club, who always ensured that I felt welcome and had everything I needed to complete this project. This is our thesis and I hope that my writing reflects a glimpse of how ‘Sleg is Goed’ (Bad is Good).

ABSTRACT

This dissertation critically explores the nuances of South African amateur club rugby. It considers how the participation of amateur club men actively informed the value of participation in an imagined community, in post-apartheid South Africa. In contrast to the conventional social history of South African rugby union, which has focussed on the Springboks and apartheid, this thesis engages with the participation of 'ordinary' men on- and off the rugby field. Building on the theory of distinction formulated Pierre Bourdieu (1979), this dissertation argues that rugby is an intersection for multiple meaningful interactions. In addition to the professional fields of South African rugby, where social mobility is often longed for and achieved, participation on the amateur field is mostly concerned with the relationships that are forged, through rugby. In the process of being an amateur rugby player, an individual learned how to participate with 'injuries' on- and off the rugby field. In a similar fashion to how Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock theorised on the mindful body (1987), however, this dissertation further elaborates how the individual body, the body social, and the body politic could embody empathy for 'others', through sharing an experience of injury. The amateur rugby club in post-apartheid South Africa, therefore, is a space for men to empathetically (re)imagine their participation in a community, care, and interdependence in daily life. Drawing on the work of Benedict Anderson (2006), and his imagined communities, this dissertation then ultimately ventures into the ability of amateur rugby players to enact various positions, and roles, on- and off the rugby field. Inspired by the way in which Wahbie Long (2021) moved beyond a 'damage hypothesis' in his approach to the shortcomings of daily life in South Africa, this dissertation then also shifts the focus from the impasse of rugby in post-apartheid South Africa. It looks towards the opportunities that are available for ordinary citizens, to enact upon a better tomorrow with multiple 'other' men.

Keywords: Rugby, transformation, amateur sport, gender, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

South African rugby; an entangled juncture.

A brief outline from a backline playmaker

As a former flyhalf in rugby union[1], I was often the second smallest man on the team and regularly the least likely to make massive physical tackles on opponents[2]. Even though I was not a physically imposing flyhalf, the position was crucial for rugby insofar as a flyhalf spots the gaps in defensive structures, directs the line of play, and scores the points with accurate kicking. Often heralded as the playmaker, flyhalves would then form the links between forward-/back-line players, offensive/defensive structures, and running/kicking patterns, all of which informed my outlook on the game. Having been an interlinking flyhalf for more than sixteen years on the rugby field, I therefore became curious to know how other players used rugby to navigate their own belonging in-between multiple players, structures, and patterns, in everyday life.

After a thorough literature review, I noted that accounts on South African rugby and sport fell short of elaborating on, informing, or adding depth to the meaning-making practices of *amateur* players (Grundlingh, 1994; Höglund & Sundberg, 2008; Rubin, 2021). Despite the complex history of South African rugby and sport across the nation, current available literature has rarely engaged with the participation of 'ordinary players' in Rugby Union, specifically. Amateur players, who were

---

[1] While there are multiple forms of rugby, I refer to the most popular form, that is Rugby Union, and which is also known as the fifteens game (World Rugby, 2014). According to the historical work of Baker (1981:117-118), the nineteenth-century Englishmen, who seemingly invented rugby from football, were what he called ''inveterate mythmakers''. Herein, Baker (1981) convincingly juxtaposed the discovery of fifteens rugby, through the exploits of William Webb Ellis in 1823, with reference to the headmaster of the Rugby School in Warwickshire England, in the late 1830's and early 1840's, Thomas Arnold. In sharp contrast to the stone in Warwickshire, England, that commemorates the 'exploits' of Ellis, who ran with the (foot)ball and instantly invented (fifteens)rugby, Baker's historical inquiry (1981:118) found that the terminology of Ellis' exploits was, in fact, the creation of Arnold. In short, importantly, from this point onward I do not intend to (re)define (fifteens)rugby, insofar as to (re)create fixed boundaries. Herewith, I shift the traditional focus of (fifteens)rugby, from a mere 'rejection to rules' (on- and off- the field), to a resistance that informed a negotiation with rugby, which showcased how participants understood something more about daily life, through rugby and with other participants.

[2] Scrumhalf is the position often played by the smallest player on the team. Along with fast wings, who are inserted into teams to offer mobility in-between big forwards, these three positions offer an alternative to the traditional style of play in South Africa, which is direct and physically imposing. Scrum-halves, flyhalves, and wings are light-footed players, who are always on the lookout for gaps to navigate play into. Massive hits are also measured by the ability to drive opponents behind the advantage line, from where they start a phase of play. A flyhalf like myself, therefore, was never a physical enforcer, as I did not have the weight, length, or strength to tackle my opponents three times my physical proportions. After an attempt to make a 'big hit', I in effect ended my playing career with a detached bicep and concussion.

not professional, have been professional, or had the ambition to become professional.[3] I have 16 years of personal amateur experience on the rugby field. However, it was only after eight months of participation and observation within an amateur rugby club for the purposes of this MA in Social Anthropology that I revisited and noted these gaps in existing literature. To then build on existing literature, this ethnographic[4] study adds value to the discourse on rugby[5] and its perceived role in forming national identity, masculinity, and/or belonging, in post-apartheid South Africa (Dart, 2015; Grundlingh, 2015; Van der Westhuizen, 2016). Importantly though, this dissertation does not elaborate on the 1995 Rugby World Cup, or former-President Nelson Mandela's role therein (Evans, 2010). This is a departure that enables a passer-by, spectator, or player, to not only see the colonial pitfalls of rugby but also how, within the 'friction' that these pitfalls (re)create (Tsing, 2011), participants are both negotiating a game and further attempting to understand/position themselves in their roles as rugby players and 'men' in everyday life.

In accordance with the historical reflection of Robert Morrell (2017:3), rugby was used to strengthen 'hegemonic masculinity' within the colonies of Britain. Hegemonic masculinity, Raewyn Connell (1983:183) pointed out; 'legitimized unequal gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities'. In line with the British colonial Empire of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, this entailed that rugby was a vehicle for racism, misogyny, and homophobic acts and views (Morrell, 2017:3). Despite the central focus on the relational and legitimation features of hegemonic masculinity, however, Connell (1983) also pointed out that hegemonic masculinities came into existence under specific circumstances that were contingent upon change throughout history. With a fine disregard for the imperial, colonial, and apartheid game of rugby that valued violent contact, therefore, Morrell (2017:2) highlighted the rugby matches played by a group of men in 1985, who protested the

---

[3] While the idea of amateur/professional rugby participation has been debated since the arrival of the British in South Africa, 'professional' is used here to indicate the participation in economically renumerated sport. Professional players are contracted to play rugby or receive study/work opportunities to play rugby for a particular Institution. Importantly, even though I am aware that South African rugby is not simply divided into amateur or professional categories, this divide was made clear to me from the first day I arrived at my field site in Bloemfontein, at Grey Beards Rugby Club (see *'an ethnographic avenue into amateur club rugby*). In addition, even though there are multiple fields of rugby from school to university, to provincial and national, to name but a few, all these different fields fall under the banner of an amateur, semi-professional, or professional club in rugby union. I also added the different rugby experiences that players brought to the field, or expected to gain from the club, however, all players at the club are amateur players. In other words, no player at the club received any remuneration for their participation, other than the plaster that was sometimes sponsored by club president Peter.

[4] Ethnography is a method of participation and observation, during research, yet Ingold (2014) convincingly elaborates why this method should not be confused with being an Anthropologist or a student in Anthropology. This entails that an ethnographic study is not limited to the field of Anthropology and, even while Anthropologists often write convincing ethnographies, the value of this analytical tool is captured in its open-ended conclusions and ability to capture fleeting moments of reciprocated knowledge.

hegemony of rugby union through a game of 'touch' rugby. While playing rugby was still a 'national obsession' in the latter stages of apartheid, Morrell (2017:2) argued that the informal game of touch rugby enabled a space to examine 'the flux of gender, race, and other intersectional relations'. Even though 'reproductionist approaches' then indicate that sport entrenches social and gender inequalities, Morrell (2017:6) is conscious that sport involves a set of tensions and contradictions which also open the door for participants to question their own values, along with others, in a way that could potentially challenge traditional hegemonic interpretations of a specific sport. Here Morrell (2017:7) further elaborates that 'boys and men do not have one mode of performing masculinity', which further linked with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1979; 1990) and the 'distinction' of choices. In similar fashion to how Bourdieu (1979) argued that social interaction was contingent upon the perceptions of structures in daily life, where subjective views did not necessarily overthrow these structures, the touch rugby of Morrell (2017:7) showed that both boys and men did not have one mode of performing masculinity. For Morrell (2017:7) the co-existence of different individuals was possible on a rugby field, which does not disregard analytical models of rugby union that outline power imbalances but places emphasis on the 'opportunity to do masculinity' differently. Along with Morrell (2017) and multiple other authors, who continue to work on understanding how rugby/sports shape gender relations in hegemonic and inclusive ways, therefore, this dissertation puts forth that rugby union can also be an intersection for meaningful relationships amongst different men (see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ratele, 2013; Sonnekus, 2013; Muir *et al.,* 2020; Rothmann *et al.,* 2022).

A socio-historical backdrop of sport and rugby in South Africa

In 1837, the British education system was not only used as a model or 'civilisation' but also deemed as a 'superior necessity' by the colonisers within the various British colonies around the world and in South Africa (Du Plessis, 2017:74; Morrell, 2017:2; Winch, 2022:3). Within colonial enclaves, including South Africa, schoolboys[6] were taught to govern and rule, not only themselves but 'others', whom they deemed had a lesser standing than themselves in society (Holt, 1990:76). While schoolmasters of the 19th century believed that formal education taught boys to 'think like men', however, boys were also required to embody a hegemonic masculinity, desired at the time (Du Plessis, 2017:56). This meant that the 'education' of boys needed to extend beyond the classics of Greek, Latin and Greco-Roman Literature. As a consequence, sport was practised as an 'informal education', to physically instil discipline, morality, and superiority in young Englishmen (Du Plessis, 2017:94). But even though sport served the purpose(s) of assimilation

[6] At no point is 'schoolboys' used to infantilize any racial group. The term, throughout this dissertation, is used to refer to young adolescent men that are in primary- or high school, between the ages of 6-18 years of age.

and dominance, Besnier *et al*., (2018a:45) elaborate that sport, within colonial contexts, was much more complex. It was not only the colonisers who experienced it but was also often used as a tool to help resist imperial/colonial rule. As my focus on sport further narrowed down to rugby, resistance, therefore, became a main theme to think with, and further informed my outlook on rugby as a field for negotiation today in 21st century South Africa.

In the historical accounts of South African Rugby Union, the resistance and negotiations of players have often been linked with the history of apartheid and the Springboks, the national rugby team of South Africa. Drawing on the extensive record of Springbok history, historians noted every tour that the Springboks played in, from 1903 right through World War One and Two and commentated on the significance of each match (Grundlingh, 1994:408). However, it was with a victory in 1906 in the British Isles, that Paul Roos led a team and a nation to celebrate not only the victory but the vigour of the new 'white' nation that the pre-apartheid state was trying to create (Niehaus, 2014:70). This victory further led to stories about South African and New Zealand soldiers in World War One and Two, where the two previous colonies' players seemingly used the sport to overcome the conditions they were fighting in and improve morale (Niehaus, 2014:70). Soon after the end of the Second World War, the National Party (NP) came to power in South Africa. The NP explicitly used rugby as an important site for the enactment of apartheid policies and Afrikaner nationalist politics (Rubin, 2014:699). From 1948 onwards then, apartheid administrators enforced strict racial segregation on all sport fields.

Under South African apartheid, every part of society was racially segregated, including sports. Teams had to play in separate leagues, and no foreign touring parties with non-white players were allowed to enter South Africa. Rugby participation against South African teams was, therefore, perceived by the international community to be one of the markers that indicated a commitment to the apartheid ideology and a concomitant ability, and willingness, to perpetuate the Afrikaner patriarchy (Paton cited by Reef, 2010:71). With the focus then vested on Afrikaner nationalism, ever since the South African War,[7] rugby seemingly provided white men with 'a sense of worth, of significance, security, safety, happiness, tranquillity, peace, freedom and hope for the future' (Kotze cited by Allen, 2001:466). The Springboks further solidified the latter outlook on rugby, as the 'national' team did not allow non-white participation and excluded any records about non-white rugby players (Niehaus, 2014:70). However, in 1960, international rugby opponents of the Springboks used rugby to put pressure on the apartheid Government regarding their treatment of the non-whites. Predictably, considering the nature of the apartheid Government, as Rubin

[7] In the aftermath of the 'bitter war', Niehaus (2014:69) elaborated that, rugby was used to forge unity between the Afrikaners and the British.

(2014:699-700) elaborates, the apartheid regime responded to the global pressure on South Africa by increasing their military presence in the country.

Along with the increase in their military presence, the apartheid regime further bolstered 'amateur' sport with the promotion of interprovincial 'derbies', which laid the foundation for the rivalries that still exist in professional sport today (Greenway, 2022). To ease the pressure coming from anti-apartheid activists who threatened extensive protest action, thus focussing more international attention on the country, after the death of Hendrik Verwoerd in 1966, the former rugby administrator who turned Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster, allowed non-white players to tour in South Africa. Thereafter, P.W. Botha took a page out of Vorster's book and allowed local non-white school players to participate in the national Craven week[8] in 1980 (Niehaus, 2014:70). The addition of coloured and black rugby players in Craven week, soon led to Errol Tobias becoming the first non-white Springbok in 1981. In his book *Pure Gold*, Tobias (2015:28) noted that this was a bittersweet moment, as the Springboks were again excluded from international rugby from 1986-1992.

Fortunately for Tobias and all players that were excluded under apartheid law, however, the release of Mandela from prison, in 1990, brought about the start of South African Democracy and an opportunity for non-white individuals to at least start competing with white sport participants, for the local professional teams[9]. Through a negotiation process between the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Rugby Union, furthermore, players of all racial categories were then able to share the rugby field and contest for the same positions in the Springbok team (Niehaus, 2014:70). But despite the opportunities for inter-racial participation on the same rugby field, Chester Williams was the only non-white participant who went on to represent the Springboks in their 1995 Rugby World Cup (RWC) victory. In the subsequent 20 years, moreover, even though the Springboks added two more RWC victories and had a team that reflected a greater demographically diverse team than in 1995, rugby has remained a contested and complicated domain of South African public discourse.

With the observation that the history of non-white rugby participation coincided with the history of their white counterparts and the Springboks, Snyders (2010:4) argued that little effort has been made to elaborate on a more inclusive rugby history. Speaking at the *International Conference on the History of Sport and Sport Studies in South Africa*, held at Stellenbosch University from

[8] To commemorate the work that Danie Craven had done for South African rugby, which is still being debated, the national u/18 tournament for provincial teams is called the Craven Week. At this weeklong rugby tournament, young boys often receive their first professional contracts for their rugby endeavours after school.

[9] Importantly, even though neither rugby nor sport was professional at this stage, the amateur scene was the foundation for the professional scene that was formalised in 1995.

the 29th of June to the 3rd of July 2008, Snyders (2010:2) moreover elaborated that the continuous omission of non-white rugby in historical accounts, perpetuated the denial of the black and coloured communities' contribution to rugby and national identity. Because the Springbok had epitomized South African Rugby for over 100 years, the *National Order of Ikhamanga* was awarded to non-white individuals who did not get the chance to represent the country under apartheid (Snyders, 2010:1). Individuals who received the *National Order of Ikhamanga* were deemed to have made significant contributions in the fields of arts, culture, literature, music, journalism, and sport, worthy of national colours and recognition (Snyders, 2010:15). The problem with the *National Order of Ikhamanga,* however, was that recipients were rarely acknowledged or mentioned in the rugby mainstream, a fact made further evident by the lack of formal records, as Snyders (2010:3) also pointed out. Snyders (2010:1) is adamant that in-between Springbok exclusion and issues surrounding the *National Order of Ikhamanga,* a great history of struggle and sacrifice is being obscured by the passing of time. In a similar fashion to Snyders (2010), who recorded the previously untold history of non-white rugby players, I aim to shift the focus from professional to amateur rugby throughout this dissertation.

If the Springboks historically afforded white men a pathway to social mobility (see Besnier & Brownell, 2019), amateur rugby today, I discovered, was a melting pot that consolidated differences and constructed a shift in perspective. In his book 'World Champions', Jonty Winch (2022:4) aptly outlines the different roadmaps in South African Rugby for all racial groups. Herein, the work of John Honey (cited by Winch, 2022:4) lays bare how rugby was used to overcome historic differences between Afrikaner and English men in the 1880's. Insofar as rugby in Britain was a socially divisive game that identified with the 'middle and upper classes', however, Honey (cited by Winch, 2022:4) elaborated that in South Africa 'this classification never caught on'. Honey (cited by Winch, 2022:4) points out that rugby served to '…unite the white nation, to bridge differences…' between Afrikaner and English. Importantly, one needs to remember that even though rugby only became a professional sport in 1995, the amateur game in the late 19th and 20th century was still a platform for working class men to gain employment off the field (Du Plessis, 2017:98). With the pressure of British imperial and colonial forces on the Afrikaners, in the late 19th and 20th century, therefore, scepticism about the unification between Afrikaners and British would be valid. But beyond their questionable transactional relationships, through 'rugby' white Afrikaner boys were afforded opportunities to use their education from British public schools, or their jobs from British mining companies, to enact social mobility.

In contrast to the white fields of rugby, which the Afrikaner and English South Africans played on, Winch (2022:4) elaborates that rugby was played 'just as enthusiastically' by the black communities, albeit with the knowledge that the even though rugby might not enable social

mobility, the sport would offer the platform for black men to protest against inequality. One might argue that by 'using the masters' tools, one might not be able to overthrow the master' and in effect play into the hands of the oppressor (see Lorde 2018). However, after reading the passage of Sipho M. Siwisa[10] (cited by Winch, 2022:216) on the eve of the first match between the coloured and black Springboks, I realised that participation was not so much focussed on overthrowing the overt power of the oppressors. Through participation in the colonialist sport of rugby, black individuals saw the opportunity to (re)instil hope and fight the covert forces of power. By constantly facing up to the challenges that were laid before individuals of colour, therefore, Siwisa (cited by Winch, 2022:206) enabled both persons of colour, and not, to understand the value 'genuine sportmanship'. Rather than merely accepting differences and assimilating within social interaction, to serve the example of the Empire, Siwisa (cited by Winch, 2022:206) stated that:

'*Genuine sportsmanship calls each nation like each individual to its highest destine, breaks down the barriers of fear and greed, of suspicion and hatres. It can transcend conflicting political systems, and reconcileorder and freedom, can rekindle true patriotism, can unite all citizens in the nation and all nations in the service of mankind*'.

Through eight months of ethnographic research undertaken at an amateur club in Bloemfontein, from March to October 2021, I noted how rugby participation created an area of 'intersection' for men, which enabled them to empathetically understand and care for their interdependence in daily life (see Davis, 2008; Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Collins, 2015; Degnen & Tyler, 2017). Without participating in rugby for financial gain, therefore, I observed and participated in the life of an amateur rugby club, where my interlocutors exemplified interdependent belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Through this amateur rugby club, then, I discuss how men share their experiences of daily life and foster hope for a better tomorrow. The shift in focus from professional (Springbok) to amateur club rugby not only revealed to me a way to think with the complex of issues associated with rugby, but further added value to perceptions regarding the historical significance of rugby, participation, and belonging in South Africa today.

An ethnographic avenue into amateur club rugby

Upon my arrival at an amateur rugby club in Bloemfontein, I was perplexed to see multiple expensive cars with '*Toyota Free State Cheetahs*' branding, as I had been informed by the club president that the players were amateur and did not receive any economic compensation to participate in rugby. However, just as I made my way around three attached dressing rooms, in-between two rugby fields and the parking lot, I met up with the club president and I saw the

[10] Mr Sipho M. Siwisa was the President of the SA Bantu Rugby Board in 1950.

professional players from the Cheetahs on the field. Baffled by the sight, I asked club president Peter,[11] why the Cheetahs were on the club's ground, and if this was to promote the potential of amateur players to become professional players? The suited Peter untied his collar and informed me that the latter has not been a reality since '*die ou dae*'[12], yet with the changes in the club Peter firmly believed that the club could enable players to become professional again, should they want to. These changes included, amongst others, a whole new club council and the addition of a '*very talented*' rugby coach for this season, Peter informed me. Ironically though, Peter remarked, with regards to my first question, that the fields were in fact the property of the professional team, and the expensive stadium, overlooking the club, did not actually have another practice pitch. There was a moment of silence, and Peter saw the opportunity to rather introduce me to Justin, who had just walked over from the clubhouse.

'Hey Justin!', Peter shouted, to a white man[13] with a manbun haircut, a long red and patched grey beard, wearing a torn green electrical company shirt, working overall pants with dirty hands, and safety shoes. Unimpressed by the greeting, Justin asked Peter why he was formal with him and looked over to me and said, '*Halo, ek is Justin; werk jy vir Peter*?'[14]. Having a chuckle, Peter dodged the formal question and informed Justin that I was the Masters student in Social Anthropology, who contacted the club with my questions about rugby. Peter continued, *'Let Cassie inform you further about his degree and why he will be with us for the next six to eight months*[15]*'*, and he asked Justin for a cigarette. While the two lit their cigarettes, I told both that I was interested to understand why rugby was of possible social importance, and how rugby could perhaps help inform us on what it means to be a rugby player and/or even a 'man' in post-apartheid South Africa.

Nodding their heads, Peter started to chuckle again, as he puffed a grey cloud of smoke, yet I could see that Justin was unsure about something. I then asked Justin, what he thought about my idea to venture into amateur club rugby, after which he said that he needed a moment to think about my focus. Justin then proceeded to ask me to first elaborate a bit more, on how anthropology and rugby linked with one another. Anthropology, I started, borrowing from anthropologist Tim Ingold (2008:69), was best described through its objective, which was seeking 'a generous, comparative, yet critical understanding of a co-inhabited world'. Seeing that

---

[11] Writing this dissertation with the best interests of my interlocutors in mind, please note that all names I've provided from here on will be pseudonyms.

[12] Translation: the old days.

[13] Throughout my dissertation the racial categorisation of my participants aligns with how each individual referred to himself.

[14] Translation: 'Hi, I am Justin; do you work for Peter?'

[15] The amateur club rugby season, in the Free State, only ended in October 2021 and, as an act of reciprocity, the club wanted me to finish the whole rugby season with the team. Throughout the essay my role as player-researcher-coach will become clear

anthropology was open to basically any field of inquiry that pertained to daily life, I decided to focus on sport, and specifically on rugby. Sport, to look beyond an academic elaboration of what it is, is an entangled juncture, in between multiple matters of concern to both players and scholars, from which an individual can gain insight on the complexity of daily life. Therefore, rather than asking what sport is, this research project would be concerned with what the sport of rugby *did* in Bloemfontein and amongst amateur club rugby players. Players who were also then entangled with issues surrounding the social construct of masculinity. Without dwelling too long on his thoughts about my research project then, Justin scratched his beard and said:

'*Al weet ek nou nie veel van jou rigting nie, dink ek wel jy sal goeie inligting by hierdie club kan kry. Maar weet net, 'for what it's worth', ek sê altyd, rugby is nie moeilik nie, tog om in Suid Afrika te bly is; jy moet dit op jou CV kan sit'*[16].

After my brief conversation with Peter and Justin, Peter stepped on his half-smoked cigarette and said that we should walk around the field, and two rusted red pavilions, to where the rest of the amateur club players were getting ready for practice on the steps of the clubhouse. Had Peter not introduced me to the players, and had I not seen their rugby boots, I would have thought that these men were only spectators of the Cheetah rugby team's training session. Three of the five males, of whom two were black and three white, were puffing on some cigarettes, swopping safety shoes for rugby boots and joining the other two men in white practice shorts with rugby shirts. While only greeting the men with a nod, as to adhere to Covid-19 protocols, I asked the players if they were ready for practice, to which one of the men smoking started laughing. Killian, a stocky man looked down to his boots and softly said, '*Well yes*, *that is why we smoke, to relieve the stress and to open the lungs'*. The five players, all in their late 20's and early 30's, started to laugh, as this was only the second week since amateur club rugby had started, with fitness being an issue, due to rugby being cancelled in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic (see Stiegler & Bouchard, 2020). The men had also not done any training on their own since the first cancelation of rugby in 2020; as Chris also said with a nervous laugh, '*Sjo, this Covid was tough*'.

Burning to get onto the field, Justin then asked the two smoking players to hurry up and also get onto the field. However, the other two men sitting down swiftly reminded Justin that the Cheetahs were not done practising, and that they would get scolded again if they were too close to the fields while the professional team was busy with their practice. Unsure about the comment, Peter asked Chris to inform him what his comment was all about, to which Chris informed Peter that the head coach of the Cheetahs already chased the amateur players away, when they sat on the red

[16] Translation: 'Although, I do not know much about your degree, I do believe that you will be able to find your required information at this club. But just know, for what it is worth, I always say that rugby is not hard, living in South Africa is hard and that is something you ought to put on a CV'.

pavilions. With a sigh and a shaking head, Peter, I noticed, was angry, but he decided to focus on something else and said, '*Well, at least we have a moment to catch up then'*.

Seeing mixed emotions on everyone present's faces, and after a moment of silence, Justin said: *'Ja wat, sleg is goed, neh?*[17]', and the players went on to talk about the prospect of entering a new season complete with rugby matches. Initially, this 'bad is good' motto of the club did not make sense to me, and I thought that the players were merely supressing their feelings. However, reflecting on that first day, when the players were visibly upset, I learned that, as with Justin's earlier comment, the motto was invoked to shift one's focus. While rugby remained hard, as the players admitted that they struggled with fitness, and 'bad is good' merely indicated two opposites, the focus point shifted from unattainability towards an opportunity. But while the latter was not a clear option for all players, the players used the club rugby fields to support one another on their respective journeys. Moreover, despite there being a diverse group of players, the amateur club rugby field provided a space for participants to co-create a better tomorrow, even if this was only for a brief moment and through a shift in focus. From sitting next to the field before practice and talking about busy days of work, to going into the clubhouse for a cold beverage and discussing game plans, politics or life after practice, the rugby field allowed for a co-production of ideas around the immediate problems of daily life. Together with other experiences and people, rugby offered a middle ground for a practical and philosophical negotiation, which helped my interlocutors engage with daily life.

Theoretical underpinnings and chapter outline

With an emphasis on the writings of Bourdieu, anthropologists Niko Besnier and Susan Brownell (2019:6) have argued that sport is deeply entangled in the politics of everyday life and offers a field for a systematic analysis thereof. Besnier and Brownell (2019:6-7) elaborate that the occupants of the same social strata tend to gravitate towards the same kind of sport, while having little interest in the sporting activities of other social classes, in a process linked to what Bourdieu (1979) called the making of 'distinction'. Through distinction, according to Bourdieu (1979), social differences are created and maintained in ways that make sense, in a given particular context. However, with a foot in both ponds of academics and sports, from which I interchangeably used my position(s) to make sense of the world, as I will unpack later, I realised that there was a gap between existing literature and the lived realities of sports players. Although Besnier and Brownell (2019:6) made a compelling argument about the social distinctions of sport choices, their work did not account for sports that connected different participants and multiple social strata, on the same field. Here the work of Besnier and Brownell (2019) could not elaborate on how sport could

[17] Translation: 'Bad is good, right?'

be based on uncertain outcomes, or further elaborate on how different participants made an active decision to participate in amateur club rugby with one another. Along with the observation that sports tended to attract and accommodate specific participants, therefore, the inverse from Besnier and Brownell (2019) became my point of departure, to further understand how different participants could negotiate their belonging to a specific sport and society.[18]

Having pursued a professional rugby career for 16 years, I decided to use my positionality to further delve into the nuances of being a rugby player in post-apartheid South Africa. Throughout my attempt 'to make it onto the big stage' of rugby and play for a professional team, where one gets paid to play, I learned a lot about the sport. From missing class in order to train, recovering from injuries, to training with no off days and rather 'actively resting',[19] I used to think that playing rugby for the North-West University would propel me into a provincial rugby team and professional rugby, like my older brother and cousin. Unfortunately, due to multiple injuries and the presence of a lot of better players than myself, I soon realised that I should pay more attention to university studies. Fortunately though, having played in the university's third rugby team in my final year of undergraduate studies, and having played against multiple other rugby clubs, I began to realise that I could channel my passion for rugby in another way. At most of our games that we played against amateur rugby clubs, our opponents lost convincingly. Ironically, though, despite multiple losses, the amateur players never seemed to be bothered by the results, and annually returned to compete in the same league, with the same results. On the professional side of rugby, however, my team members regularly felt that the games were a waste of time and merely opened one to the risk of being injured. Entangled within the amateur and professional rugby scene, therefore, I became curious to know how rugby could become more than a professional pursuit and further shift the academic focus of sports, towards the relationships that formed through amateur club rugby. To then think with the aid of amateur club rugby in post-apartheid South Africa, as a player and researcher, I decided to steer clear of the fields that were too familiar to me, and looked for an unfamiliar space, where I could observe and participate in amateur club rugby.

With a limited student budget to move out of Potchefstroom, I decided to move to Bloemfontein, where rugby was synonymous with the '*Springbok factory*' of Grey College[20] and the Cheetahs

---

[18] The work of Cleveland *et al*., (2020) was a useful guide for me to see where the discourse of South African sport was situated in anthropology, and further enabled me to understand how my dissertation contributes to a slight shift in focus, from the professional to the amateur fields of rugby and sport.

[19] The Sports Scientists at the North-West University, who worked with the teams I played in, regularly encouraged the rugby players to not completely 'switch off' on rest days. Thus, 'active resting' refers to a low-intensity workout, such as swimming or jogging, to save the muscles 'actively' recovering from strenuous workouts.

[20] Grey College is one of the rugby schools that have produced the most Springboks in the history of South African rugby (Breakfast, 2019). Grey College was named after Sir George Grey, the High Commissioner of the Cape Colony in 1854, a fact which Du Plessis (2017:88) noted to have served

(Breakfast, 2019), and where I could also live with family. I grew up in Potchefstroom, but my cousins lived in Bloemfontein, and I was familiar with the city. Even though my focus was not on professional rugby in Bloemfontein, I initially thought that the amateur teams would be filled with Grey alumni, or at least aspire to build on or shift towards the same reputation in the amateur circles, like Grey College. The professional teams, however, were important for my research endeavours, as they represented the conventional wisdom of rugby, on the pathway to becoming a Springbok, against which I could further compare and highlight the contribution of my chosen amateur rugby club in post-apartheid South Africa. Importantly, despite Bahl's same focus on the negotiation of rugby and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa, whose problems women's rugby might help solve (see Bahl, 2019), this dissertation focusses on *how rugby informed contemporary South African masculinity and created an intersection for men to embody caring relationships.* In addition, while masculinity and South African rugby have often been linked in existing literature, there has not yet been a focus on amateur club rugby. While the latter seems like a minor omittance, the fact of the matter is that 99% of rugby players will never move beyond amateur club rugby to a professional club (EPG, 2020:175). As World Rugby (2018) indicated, there was in excess of 600 000 registered rugby players in South Africa during the 2017/2018 season,[21] but only a meagre 700 of these were contracted by professional Rugby Unions.[22] This further strengthened my resolve to direct my inquiry into the amateur scene, as the 'distinction' of a 'hegemonic' masculinity that was linked with the 'choice' to participate in South African rugby, in existing literature, neglected to focus on the participation of 'ordinary', amateur rugby players (Allen, 2001; Light, 2007; Reef, 2010; Niehaus, 2014).

---

as a testament to the ascendency of British cultural life during the mid-nineteenth century in the Orange Free State.

[21] In a meeting I had with representatives from the South African Rugby Union (SARU), I was made aware that this figure was more or less accurate, with the proviso that this figure included all rugby players from primary school up to the amateur and professional clubs levels. This entailed the fact that, even though theoretically 600 000 players were eligible to contest for a professional contract, in fact, more than 400 000 players came from primary and high schools, which, of course, barred Springbok participation up until these players reached 18 years of age. With all things considered, this did not have an impact on the 700 professional contracts that still stood in relation to about 100 000 amateur players, which still amounted to 0.7% compared with professional players.

[22] With the additional financial support of universities or semi-professional clubs, who were able to pay their players a matchday fee or return some economic reward, one might argue that there were in fact more than 700 professional contracts. However, one has to then consider that these semi-professional players were primarily employed outside of rugby, while rugby merely served to provide a bonus/top-up to their primary income. The 700 contracts that I refer to, therefore, are indicative of the players who will feature in the topflight of South African rugby, on the road, at least, to becoming a Springbok. In addition, only a small percentage of players will ever play for the Springboks without having to first go through a professional team in the topflight, which supports my observation regarding the 700 professional contracts.

Through the examples of amateur[23] club rugby in Fiji (Besnier *et al*., 2018a:69) and Argentina (Besnier *et al*., 2018b:109), Besnier *et al*. found that rugby was used as a means of social mobility. The players that Besnier *et al.*, (2018b) spent time with, came from working class backgrounds and had the ambition to play rugby as a fulltime job, to potentially earn better money. However, despite acknowledging the fact that only a few players were able to move beyond their working-class situations and occupations, Besnier *et al*. (2018b) fell short of informing readers why some players participated in rugby, outside the need for an economic stimulus. During a 8-month period of participant observation, in which I practised, observed, coached, played, and spent time with about 30 self-identified working class and middle-class[24] rugby players, at an amateur club for rugby in Bloemfontein, I found that only three players wanted to become professional and paid rugby players. The rest of the men, ranging from 18 years of age through to the 37, were just playing rugby for '*the love of rugby'*. During semi structured interviews, I noted that players referred to their 'love' for rugby, to account for the relationships that rugby afforded them, which will be elaborated on in Chapter 2. Therefore, while the work of Besnier *et al.,* (2018a) and Besnier and Brownell (2019) form the foundation of my research project, I part ways with them in two significant ways, insofar as: 1) an amateur rugby club showed that a particular sport was not necessarily reflective of the specific social class of players, and 2) that rugby could also be used as a tool for negotiation, to make sense of a player's particular social position in relation to 'other' participants. This means that, rather than being a means to elevate an individual from their current social stratum, rugby also revealed how different social classes were interacting with one another, co-creating senses of identity and belonging.

Throughout my years of participation, I have always been curious about the ability of rugby, and sport in general, to open a 'conversation' between multiple matters of concern. According to anthropologists Besnier, Brownell, and Carter (2018a:38), 'sport showcased qualities of play, liminality, and storytelling between the body, multiplex identities, and multi-layered governance structures from local to global scales'. This means that sport is enmeshed in acts of daily life, and

[23] For clarity, in reference to amateur club rugby, I am referring to non-paid and optional participatory rugby. Although seldom, some amateur clubs do pay their players a small fee per game, which makes these clubs semi-professional. To be sure, this did not happen at my field site. Also, even when players were at semi-professional rugby clubs, some individuals did not receive money outside of an academic scholarship to spend on something other than university fees. This means that these players had to first focus on their studies, before rugby, and should they not pass their subjects, the university could end their contracts.

[24] In this regard, apart from the economic position that 'class' points towards in an economic sense, class should also be understood as an indicator to signify which job a participant occupied, where working-class individuals predominately did not have degrees or diplomas, though some had done some college courses. The working-class mostly worked in manual labour. Middle-class participants mostly had degrees and worked within university offices and held managerial positions from which they delegated work. Within the middle-class there were the petty bourgeoisie, both with and without degrees, who owned companies; while there were a few such participants, I refer to them as a part of the middle-class, albeit upper-middle class.

further opens the opportunity for participants to negotiate their belonging therein. In addition, Rubin (2014:700) argued that the sport of rugby, along with daily life, 'was marked less by certainty and deliberative action than by unpredictability and the spontaneous responses to rapidly changing circumstances'. Without a reduction of the anthropological debate between structure and agency, to simplify a negotiation of everyday life, therefore, Chapter 1 focusses on the construction of an amateur rugby club in post-apartheid South Africa. With this particular focus, I further map out the (in)significance of amateur club rugby and discus how rugby is both informed and shaped by matters on and off the rugby field. Through this interaction on and off the field, I then further think-with the work of Bourdieu (1979), to outline the constructed space or stage, in which amateur rugby takes place, within post-apartheid South Africa.

In Chapter 2, I build on the theoretical contribution of the mindful body formulated by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987), to indicate how my interlocutors used the amateur rugby stage to navigate their individual, social, and political rugby 'bodies', when dealing with 'injuries'. Here, my intention was to focus on the interaction that my interlocutors had with one another in the face of socio-historic adversity or physical injuries. Even though this interaction between different men did not cancel the reality of such adversity, on or off the rugby field, the amateur rugby field did enable a shift in focus from the shortcomings of injuries towards the pragmatic opportunity that having them entailed. In tandem with the side-lining that physical injuries entailed, insofar as players could not step onto the rugby field unassisted, these injuries also obliged all other men to be versatile and be able to slot into a different position, from one weekend to the next. Within this active shuffle that disallowed the team to establish continuity, I realised how my interlocutors were being actively enabled to think-with one another's roles in the team. I then further observed that by sharing one another's positions on the field, men were also more open to reciprocate in conversations off the field. These interactive encounters, on and off the rugby field with one another, then further established a sense of empathy, which connected the three bodies proposed by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987). Seeing that empathy bridged the gap to make sense of the injuries manifested in the individual, the social and the political body of an amateur rugby player, I further used the work of Wahbie Long (2021) to elaborate on how ordinary men approached the precarity of everyday interaction with others, by participating in amateur club rugby.

In Chapter 3, I bring together the stage and the performance of amateur club rugby participants, as elaborated in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively, to further explore how amateur rugby is an intersection to observe and partake in the construction of national identity and belonging (Anderson, 2006). In revisiting the socio-historical entanglements of rugby in everyday life, I draw on the work of Benedict Anderson (2006) and his theory of 'Imagined Communities', to then

indicate how rugby and participation are contingent on one another. In this case, neither rugby nor participation can be mutually exclusive, which means that the history of rugby was contingent upon the co-production of different players. Because there has been a limited focus on amateur rugby in research, I further used my positionality as player-coach-researcher at an amateur rugby club to outline the multiple ways in which ordinary rugby players and men are able to (re)imagine the structure and agency of rugby and life in post-apartheid South Africa. Even though amateur rugby occurs on a micro level, I observed and participated in a rugby community where participants did not only acknowledge that tension was inevitable when different men shared a field, but also welcomed different views to actively infiltrate and (re)shape the boundaries of what it meant to be a rugby player and man.

To consider rugby participation in post-apartheid South Africa, this dissertation aims to (re)enter the conversations on race, transformation, and masculinity, that have conventionally been linked with the participation of the Springboks (Black & Nauright, 1998; Anderson *et al*., 2004; Evans, 2010). In the act of revisiting the socio-historical significance of rugby, actively observing and participating in amateur club rugby with various interlocutors in Bloemfontein during the post-apartheid era, however, I found that participation did not necessarily involve the ambition or lead to the actuality of becoming a Springbok. Subsequently, as I spent more time with multiple amateur club rugby players on the field practising, coaching, playing, and attending social events off the field, I realised how outside the realm of Springbok rugby[25] there were ordinary men, participating in the same sport, albeit not on television and for money, who actively informed a different focus on rugby value(s).

While existing literature had linked the latter with white Afrikaner masculinity, as rugby was believed to be an exclusive field, this was regularly used to create a smokescreen for racial tensions during apartheid (Niehaus, 2014:70) that, in turn, threw a shadow on participation in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the amateur rugby club in the post-apartheid era has been a site of contestation amongst various men. In addition to the thoughts of Danie Craven, who informed Errol Tobias (2015) that rugby would always accomplish change, even when politics could not, I argue that the amateur rugby club showed how ordinary men could pragmatically (re)imagine living with one another through rugby. In addition, even though rugby was not detached from any socio-historic significance, amateur rugby participants were both concerned with the acknowledgment of the past and (re)creating the boundaries of the club. In this case the amateur club did not only accommodate more players, but participants were also given the

[25] While there were no former Springbok rugby players at Grey Beard club, there was a former Springbok women's coach and about 5 players that have played provincial or semi-professional rugby, as mentioned earlier.

opportunity to become aware of one another in the imagined community of post-apartheid South Africa (Anderson, 2006). Being conscious of one another, amateur club rugby participants in Bloemfontein during the post-apartheid era negotiated rugby and daily life with one another, as this dissertation proceeds to show.

CHAPTER 1

1 Amateur Club Rugby is a 'Magical' space

1.1 Utility role-players

At the end of my first week at the Grey Beards Rugby Club, I was invited to attend the annual 'welcoming braai', where the team management, a few players and the coach had the chance to share a few stories about rugby and to think about the then upcoming rugby season. Despite the convergence of all stakeholders at the club, my position at the club was still in question. Although everyone at the club was now fully aware of my research project, as I also further elaborated on any questions during the braai, the players and coach wanted me to play an active role in the club, as player, coach, or player-coach. Ironically though, apart from acknowledging the fact that a player-coach was a recurring theme in sports, I did not initially plan to be a coach at the club. I had only planned to play a match or two, in the event of the need for a player replacement. The latter was due to an ethical obligation towards all participants; only in the event of my not keeping any participant from the field, would I offer to fill such a gap (ASA, 2005). Before the end of the evening, however, the oldest player, and self-proclaimed 'future' team manager, informed me that the club needed a backline coach and that I would perfectly fit this vacant position. Shying away from making an immediate verbal commitment to Jordan, the rest of my conversations felt like an interview, to coach at the club. I was unsure about how to respond to the generous invitation; luckily Peter called for a point of order and asked everyone to sit down for a moment.

Peter cleared his throat and welcomed everyone to their first meeting in almost a year, since the Covid-19 pandemic had prematurely ended the 2020 rugby season. It was with great pleasure, Peter started, that he could invite everyone to a meeting in person, and to finally talk about playing rugby again. This year, however, Peter mentioned that the season would be extremely difficult to navigate, with the ongoing pandemic, but he wanted to remind everyone present that 'Bad was still Good'. Without hesitation, Peter elaborated on the main problem of funding, which was already a problem before Covid and ever since rugby was made a professional sport in South Africa, in 1995 (Rubin, 2014:704). Without a big budget, and he referenced his own salary cuts, Peter said that he would fight hard to at least secure funding for the playing kits, and matchday officials, and at best for the floodlights of the field. This was his promise, to give his best effort for the club, on matters that Peter felt related to off the field politics, where he was a member of the Free State Rugby Committee. Further discussion on the two dimensions, on and off the field, will follow later.

Linking with the way Justin referenced '*Bad is Good'* earlier, one could see how Peter's eyes were glistening with tears, as he cracked a smile and nodded his head, while he momentarily paused and took a deep breath. '*In particular this year'*, he noted, '*in addition to every other 'normal' year, we (the club management) will have to ensure that every player who comes to Grey Beards feels welcome*'. Peter elaborated that:

> *'Rugby moet nie 'n ekstra las wees nie, as jy hier by hierdie veld kom moet jy vir 'n oomblik kan vergeet oor die wêreld daar buite, terwyl jy nuwe moed skep. Ons almal het ons verskillende redes hoekom ons hier is maar by hierdie klub is ons almal een familie'*[26]*.*

Looking around, one could see that these words were meaningful and resonated within the group. Some of the guests grabbed each other around the shoulder, some pushed other members with an elbow, some patted others on the back, and everyone nodded in agreement with Peter. Along with the apparent surface level differences in race, class, and gender, as there were a few women as well,[27] one could see that there was a deeper connection between all these role-players and affiliates. With regard to the notion of 'one family', these gestures pointed towards a connection that reflected on a 'more than affective-ethical state of care' (De la Bellacasa, 2012:198). Through this moment of contact, these players seemingly reminded one another of the inescapable troubles of interdependent existence, yet without having to say a word (De la Bellacasa, 2012:199). Expressed differently, through these various gestures, each participant at the club seemingly acknowledged that 'friction' would be inevitable during this season and that playing together might become difficult (Tsing, 2011). But through this contact, it appeared as if the players also accepted the opportunity to learn more about rugby with one another and the 'stage' it afforded, with various 'roles' on and off the field (Goffman, 2009). Herewith, amateur club rugby appeared to have shrugged off the exclusive nature of the professional sport, as elaborated on in the socio-historical context of rugby in South Africa. The amateur club rugby players at Grey Beards Rugby Club appeared to have a deeper understanding of care. Rather than being exclusively based on race, class, or gender, this club was already situated within the diversity of contemporary South Africa.

---

[26] Translation: 'Rugby should not be an extra burden, when you arrive at this field you should be able to forget about the world outside (of the club's borders), while you gather new courage. We all have our different reasons for being here but at this club we are all one family.'.

[27] At the Grey Beards Rugby Club, the women that were sometimes present were wives, partners, and daughters of players who were often present during the practice sessions or match days, as supporters. The women also contributed by searching for sponsors and made an attempt to establish a women's supporter group, who would walk together around the field while the men trained. This group only had a few participants, who regularly returned, while the rest of the women only joined the club on matchdays.

This welcoming braai revealed an opportunity to think-with the precarity of being both an amateur club rugby player and man, in post-apartheid South Africa. Building on the art in this state of uncertainty (Rubin, 2014), this chapter further departs from the professional field and elaborates on the structural hurdles that 'ordinary' rugby players face on the field. Although not all similar, these roadblocks further enabled my interlocutors to make sense of similar situations off the field, and to act on choosing the best road around their obstructions. In this connection, this chapter is not concerned with redefining uncertainty, as a structural principle of rugby, but rather with showing how men participated in rugby despite uncertainty. Regardless of the high stakes, where, as a consequence of on-field injuries, lawyers could not practise in court with black eyes, day labourers could not work with broken femurs, and electricians could not fix machines with broken fingers, these men willingly partook in rugby and looked forward to every practise, match, or rugby related event. Without any renumeration, and actually with the likelihood of losing income due to injury, for these men rugby revealed how a layering of unpredictable instances were moments of 'magic' and were congested with political significance (Rubin, 2014:700). I discuss injuries further in Chapter 2. Throughout the present chapter, I will connect the on- and off-field dimensions of rugby, seen from the rugby field, the bleachers, and the clubhouse. Through connecting these different perspectives, informed by conversations with my interlocutors, I then argue that amateur club rugby is a stage. This is a twofold argument, which serves, firstly, to outline a stage that affords various role-players the opportunity to learn more about and with one another. This is a process that could, even if only momentarily, be pointing towards a social masterpiece of co-production in democratic South Africa. Secondly, my interlocutors' roles were not merely contingent upon structuralist views, derived from Saussurean or Levi-Straussian armchairs, that linked South African rugby and apartheid. I rather interpret participation through the 'constructivist structuralism' angle of Bourdieu (1990) and elaborate on the (un)certain nature of the distinct choice to actively participate.

With no experience at an amateur rugby club, I was unsure how team membership worked and if your position as staff member or player was also contingent upon results, like in professional rugby. This was why I initially intended to only play the assistive role of 'duties player', who was usually someone with an injury that helped with the team admin, collected team forms, or set out drills on the coach's demand. Through my assistive role, I also believed that I could maintain my ethical commitment to my participants and further steer clear of being an adversary. As I prepared to leave the welcoming braai, however, Peter asked to quickly have a word with me. In our conversation, Peter welcomed me again to the club but also asked if I would have any objection to help with the coaching, should the opportunity arise. With only being able to afford one coach, who was a forwards coach, the club was worried about a big player turnout, seeing that no rugby had been played in over a year. As an act of reciprocity and further showing willingness to play

an assistive role, as required by my interlocutors, I then informed Peter that I would happily assist, albeit having (at that time) limited experience in the role. '*Fantastic*', Peter said, as we shook hands, and my outsider status was displaced by that of a rookie insider with a lot to learn. If this was my quite intimidating rite of passage, it offered me two different angles, as player and coach, from which the following sections will now be informed.

1.2 A 'breakdown': amateur club rugby off the field

Although one could easily play rugby in the rain, the problem came when there was lightning or when a team shared a pitch with a professional club. After being verbally recruited by the club to be a player-coach, I was bemused by the fact that the latter made rugby difficult, again. On a rainy day, shortly after I had been informed that there would be no practice, I decided that I would make my way to the fields, to see if there was perhaps someone to talk with about rugby.

Underneath the overhang of the changerooms, I spotted a group of players, whom I joined and informed of my disappointment. I looked forward to experiencing rugby at Grey Beards, but with lighting and pouring rain this would be unsafe for any participant. *'Welkom by amateur klub rugby my bra'*[28], Wouter said without the bat of an eye. They were nervously laughing, grinning, and looking at one another in an almost sly manner; I could see that this situation was not ideal. Adam, a white receptionist, then said, '*Ag nee wat man, dis nou nie so erg nie*'[29]*,* as he tried to downplay the extent to which it seemed that amateur club rugby was sometimes struck by less desirable situations.

Wouter, a white IT specialist, then elaborated, using a comparison from his former high school, as he tried to put amateur club rugby into perspective, and to explain to what extent he believed amateur club rugby players to be 'alienated'. '*If this was Bloemfontein High School, the team would have most likely have had to blow up inflatable safety tubes and endure a contact session'*, Wouter jokingly said. With this specific reference to his high school rugby days, Wouter, I noted, indicated two important 'distinctions' in his satire (Bourdieu, 1979). Firstly, although a nuanced observation, Wouter situated amateur rugby at the bottom end of the rugby hierarchy in Bloemfontein, and perhaps similarly within the South African structure. With an ironic emphasis, Wouter pointed out that boys in school had more agency in the Grand South African rugby spectacle than the amateur club rugby men, who had already left school and willingly participated in rugby. To further strengthen this ironic positioning of the amateur club rugby, however, one needed to understand the 'dynamic' of the schoolboy rugby field in Bloemfontein (Bourdieu, 1979:23). Although any high school in Bloemfontein and South Africa could deliver Springbok or

[28] Translation: 'Welcome to club rugby my *bra* (slang for 'friend').
[29] Translation: 'No man, it is not that bad'.

professional rugby players, a high school by the name of Grey College 'produced' the second most Springboks and continued to outperform other schools on the professional market (see Breakfast, 2019).[30] In short, a schoolboy rugby player from a 'rugby school' like Grey College would easily enter the professional rugby scene before a non-rugby school participant. This even if the latter had multiple years of 'senior' men's rugby experience, albeit predominately on the amateur scene, as opposed to the former only being exposed to 'junior' rugby at school. But without dwelling on statistics, the second point that Wouter brought across was that even though his former school was not a 'Springbok factory' (Gwilliam and Jones, 2018), this did not prevent his high school from participating in rugby. By implication, Wouter did not expect the rain to stop for rugby, but for the amateur club to train despite the rain and offer all men the opportunity to play rugby.

A moment of silence briefly interrupted the conversation and even silenced the storm, as it seemed as if everyone mulled over Wouter's words. I became curious about why Wouter, and any of the other players present, would continuously return to the amateur club? Within a group of five demographically diverse men, no-one initially knew how to respond, or add, to Wouter's comparison. Both black and white, young and old, middle-class and working-class men acknowledged that amateur club rugby did not necessarily matter to individuals who did not visit the amateur field. Even as I was in the process of formulating a follow-up question to everyone present, however, the answer was staring both me and my interlocutors in the face; I only fully realised this after I reflected on my field notes. The men were there for each other and the support network that this amateur rugby club afforded them.

In a paper that Bourdieu (1990:156) presented to a Physical life and games study group in November 1980, and in an opening lecture to the Eight Symposium of the ICSS, 'sport, social classes, and sub-culture' group, Paris, July 1983, he held firmly to the idea that it was impossible to analyse a particular sport independently of a set of sporting practices. This meant that one had to imagine the space of a particular sport that was practiced; as a system from which every element derived its distinctive value. Bourdieu (1990:156-157) elaborated that in order to understand any sport, one had to recognize the position of a particular sport in relation to the 'space' of sports.[31] Thus, Bourdieu (1990:157) tried to show that the work of a sociologist or

[30] An argument that was regularly made by alumni of this high school, of which there was one player and a coach that sometimes visited the field, was that Grey College simply had more talent than the rest of the country. Although this might be true, the school also has a handsome budget to lure in players from across the country, along with multiple gatekeepers on the professional rugby circuit that eagerly follow the progress of their alumni through the age groups.

[31] For Bourdieu, according to Reed-Danahay (2019:1), social space expressed an articulation between physical space, embodied habitus, and sociality, which implies that spatiality is linked with sociality. Reed-Danahay (2019:2) believes that Bourdieu (1990) is less explicit about social space than he is

anthropologist in sport needed to reveal the 'socially pertinent properties of sport', which he believes shares in the interests, tastes and preferences of a determinate social category. It was also from this position that the likes of Besnier and Brownell (2019:6-7) believe that particular sports are linked to particular social classes. Following my argument in this chapter, on the use of a 'constructivist structuralist' approach to amateur club rugby, I elaborate on my usage of Bourdieu (1990).

With his usage of structuralism or structuralist thinking, Bourdieu (1990:126) was adamant that 'there existed, in the social world itself, and not merely through symbolic systems, language, or myth, what he called 'objective structures'. These structures for Bourdieu (1990:126) were independent of consciousness and desires of agents, which in turn were capable of leading or constraining practices of representations. Expressed differently, within objective structures Bourdieu pointed out that subjective experiences did little to overthrow the structure, in as much as the structure gave rise to the individual agency. With his focus on constructivism, Bourdieu (1990:126) believed that there was a social genesis on the other side of 'patterns of perception', thought and action, which were constitutive of what he called the habitus.[32] With structure and construction taken together as informing a constructivist structuralism/structuralist constructivism outlook then, Bourdieu (1990:127) attempted to steer clear of a mere structuralist critique and to placed his thoughts within the objectivism and subjectivism debate of the social sciences. On the one side of the dichotomy, social phenomena were treated as 'things' in accordance with the old Durkheimian maxim (Bourdieu, 1990:127). In using this means of approaching social life, Bourdieu (1990:124) noted that one left out the very thing that made these objects of 'cognition'/'misrecognition' in social existence. On the other side, there was a risk of reducing the social world to the representations that agents made of it. At this point, however, Bourdieu (1990:124) placed emphasis on the interstices, in-between an objective and subjective position, as he stated that it was the work of a social scientist to produce 'an account of accounts'.

From this interplay between views, Bourdieu (1990:125) cites the work of Schütz and notes that the field/social reality in question, of a social scientist, has a specific sense of structure and 'pertinence', for the human beings who 'lived, acted, and thought in it.' This, Bourdieu (1990:125) believes, enables a social scientist to note a series of 'common sense' constructions, which participants had preselected and (pre)interpreted, in the process of apprehending the reality of

about habitus, so anthropologists who recognise the work of Bourdieu, therefore, should do so with an understanding that his emphasis is more on positionings in an abstract space than a physical space.

[32] 'Habitus' is the term Bourdieu (1979:21) uses to describe the link between socialization and the actions of any individual. The habitus, therefore, is indicative of 'dispositions', patterns of action or perception, that the individual acquires through his social experience. 'Through socialisation, an individual slowly incorporates a set of ways of thinking, feeling and acting, which inform future decisions' (Bourdieu, 1979:21).

their everyday life. These ‘common sense’ interpretations, Bourdieu (1990:125) views as the objects of thought that determine behaviour, which although informative, are only observable as second-degree constructions; constructions that social scientists view as: ‘…constructions of constructions made by actors on the social stage’. This theoretical elaboration sketches the backdrop required to understand how my argument does not merely break away from ‘primary representations’, ‘pre-notions’ or the ‘ideology’ of rugby (Bourdieu, 1990:126). Also, my dissertation does not merely aim to employ ‘scientific knowledge’, from my position as a student in social anthropology, to simply show how knowledge gained on the amateur club rugby field is necessarily continuous with common-sense knowledge. In similar fashion to Bourdieu (1990), who elaborated on the objective and subjective ‘moments’ in daily life, my interlocutor Wouter then pointed towards how I understood a shift in focus, from a predetermined position towards a negotiated ‘sense of belonging’ (Goffman cited by Bourdieu, 1990:128). Thus, derived from social, economic, or cultural capital perception, Bourdieu (1990:132) indicated that there was not only one important factor in social life but an entanglement thereof.

Perception of the social world, Bourdieu (1990:132) argued, is ‘the product of a double structuring on the objective and subjective levels’. The former is socially structured because of ‘the properties that are attributed to agents or institutions that present themselves in combinations with (un)equal probabilities’ (Bourdieu, 1990:132). The latter is structured, Bourdieu (1990:132) pointed out because ‘the models of perception and evaluation, especially expressed through written language, express a state of symbolic power’. Together, these two mechanisms, Bourdieu (1990:132) insists, ‘co-act to produce a common world, a world of common sense, or a minimum consensus about the social world’. The interstices of social space for Bourdieu (1979:155-156), however, are still an open and indeterminant set of relationships, which co-produce daily everyday life. To be sure, not to be confused, this entails that even though Bourdieu (1979) argues that social interaction has structuralist patterns, the social space (re)creates a contingency of perceptions and structures in daily life. In a similar fashion to how Tim Ingold (2008:77) defended the processual observation of daily life, that Radcliffe-Brown promoted, Bourdieu’s construction of the social world was not meant to be viewed as a static reproduction in a factory-like manner (see Reed-Danahay, 2019).[33] Importantly, moreover, Bourdieu (1990:158) also cautioned against the establishment of a direct relation between sport and a social position, as sporting practices resided in what he called ‘a nominal unity’, which masked a dispersal of the various ways of play. With his thought that one could perhaps ‘sense’ a more privileged relation between wrestling and members of the working-class than aikido and the petty bourgeoisie, Bourdieu (1990:155) did not

[33] With regards to this dissertation, this also means that the amateur rugby club did not merely reproduce docile participants through participation.

reduce sport to the question of taste. In this regard, albeit unintentionally, the book by C.L.R. James, *Beyond the Boundary* (2013:25), further strengthens the thought of Bourdieu (1990), insofar as James believes that sport created the room to both embody and imagine 'change', an idea that will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. In what I read as the crux of James' argument (2013:25), he mentions that: '*As soon as we stepped on to the cricket or football field, more particularly the cricket field, all was changed*…'. As he juxtaposed cricket on and off the field, insofar as these interactions did not coincide in meaning during the 20th century, James outlined how sport could be a catalyst to (re)negotiate the stigmas of race, class, and gender, in everyday life (Goffman, 2009:115).

In relation to South Africa, Mandela (cited by Laureus, 2020) might have also sided with James, insofar as the late president recognised in sport the ability to cross boundaries and change the world. Even though Mandela did not limit change to a specific micro, meso or macro world, within which sport was played, the possibility of change was emphasized. With play in mind, moreover, Edgar (cited by Rubin, 2021:84) argues that for sport itself to exist, players have to recognize their situation as a 'playful' one. This means, Rubin elaborates (2021:84), that if a group of players, on the field, attempt to perform some sporting tasks and their notional opposition want to do something entirely different, the game could not proceed. Both teams have to accept the rules, the goals, and the consequences that follow when rules are broken and goals are not achieved (Rubin, 2021:84). In this regard, common-sense at the Grey Beards Rugby Club was generated through rugby, however muddled with an account of accounts that warranted further curiosity and a 'thicker description' (Geertz, 1973; Bourdieu, 1990:60).

Chris, a black man and apprentice electrician, thought it appropriate to extend Wouter's satire and suggested that he never swam without inflatables, while he clutched onto his stomach. As everyone had a laugh, Justin reiterated the reality that there was no possibility for any training and, therefore, suggested that everyone go sit and drink something cool in the clubhouse. Otto, a black man and another electrician apprentice, jokingly then said, '*Net as dit met ys kom, ja*'[34]. As everyone laughed at Otto's reference to a brandy advert of 2005 (Mitchell, 2021),[35] Wouter and Adam then decided that they would rather go home to their wives and children. *'It is up to you, maar ek is lus vir 'n bier nou*[36], Justin said, as the three electrical specialists and myself made our way to the clubhouse.

[34] Translation: 'Only if it came with ice, (then) yes'.
[35] In contrast to the brandy advert in 2005, where a black couple and a white farmer did not understand one another, Otto assured Justin that he understood the reference and that he wanted to have an alcohol drink.
[36] Translation: 'but I am keen for a beer now'.

In the company of the three colleagues, we entered the clubhouse, to which Justin shouted some IsiXhosa, to which a short black man behind the bar replied '*Sho-sho. 'n Grote of 'n kleintjie?*[37]' Briefly hesitating, Justin responded, *'Sommer maar 'n groot enetjie; dit sal dan mos nou nie skade doen nie; dit was 'n lang dag en ek is 'n volwassene.*[38]'. The barman walked to the fridge to get a 750ml Castle Light beer. There were also three other white men in the room, directly opposite the fridge, yet no-one seemed to stray from their conversation as Justin talked with the barman. Just as the barman closed the fridge, Chris responded in some IsiXhosa, to which the barman laughed and jokingly said, '*Die groot manne*.[39]'. The barman walked over from the freezer, with a flatscreen tv on top of it showing *SuperSport* rugby highlights, and Justin asked me what I wanted to drink, as he introduced me to Liam and thanked him in IsiXhosa. I replied that I'd like a *Windhoek Light*, which caused Liam to note with a questioning look in my direction that the bar only had 'small' ones. I said that, 'this was perfect, thanks'. Without being too opposed to my particular view of quality over quantity, Justin started to talk about his excitement for the season, and Liam again said, '*Sho-sho*[40]*'*. Liam walked off to a separate fridge, and as I turned over to Justin, Chris and Otto, the three were discussing the various phases of rugby and how they hoped that the new coach had a good drill or two for them to each perfect their scrummaging, rucking and tackling. But before I could further enter the conversation, Liam said, *'Here you go'*, as he handed me an open 330ml bottle and another closed one, '*for later'*, he added. It seemed like Liam knew that one beer would not stretch over the course of a few hours, as the four of us at the table started to talk rugby. Soon we were the only customers in the bar.

As I opened my second beer, about an hour later, Justin said that he needed to go home soon, as his wife and children were waiting for him. Justin then shouted aloud in IsiXhosa, to which Liam brought out another 'big one' and looked over to the other three of us. Otto and I replied that we did not want another drink, after which Chris said that he and Justin would share the big one. '*Sho-sho*[41]', Liam said, as he laughed and switched the tv channels from sport to his IsiXhosa soaps, while handing Justin and Chris the 750ml beer. I had a laugh, as I never imagined that I would be sitting in a sports bar/rugby clubhouse, watching *Isidingo.*[42] Justin then made a comment on the acting of one of the actors, as if he could see that the enacted role was done incorrectly, to which Liam laughed and shook his head. In his acknowledgement that Justin was only teasing,

---

[37] Translation: 'Sho-sho' (a slang term for 'Sure thing'). A big one or a small one?'.
[38] Translation: 'Make it a big one, as this will surely not do any damage; it was a long day and I'm an adult'.
[39] Translation: 'the big men' (where big was used as a pun for large and adult).
[40] Translation: See footnote 33.
[41] Translation: See footnote 33.
[42] To be sure, Liam and other staff members in the bar were not allowed to watch soaps on the televisions in the bar. When there was no live sport, Liam was told by the manager of the bar to tune in on sport highlights, this was why I did not expect Liam to watch soaps.

Liam then returned to watching the drama unfold. Justin then took a gulp of beer, looked Chris, Otto, and me firmly in the eyes and said:

> *Maar op 'n ernstige noot hoop ek dat julle reg is vir my die jaar want as ek oor die bal gaan kom gaan julle my nie afkry nie. Ek gym nou my vriend*[43]*.*

Although Justin was a bit older and lacked the stamina of a younger player, he continued to say that he was a smarter player, as, though he was perhaps not as fit as the rest of the table, he knew how to get around the park. '*Jy moet maar net pasop vir my ou Skippy, ek gaan dit nie maklik vat op jou by die rucks (breakdown) nie*[44]*'*. Otto chuckled and informed Justin that he was going to make the game difficult for him. '*Dis reg*', Justin acknowledged, '*weet net dat ek reg is honger vir rugby*[45]'. The four of us at the table started to laugh, as Chris confirmed that he knew Justin was fit and was excited to start playing, and he said, '*I know Skippy'*. However, Chris continued, he just wanted to have good match officials this year, who could see the difference between a legal steal and an illegal steal at the breakdown. At this point, having sat through a masterclass comparison between Blue Bulls rugby and Cheetah rugby, I was curious to know how the three at this table participated on the rugby field. From what I gathered, at this table, the 'breakdowns' were going to be hard and the rugby on the field was going to be brutal.

Later, reflecting on this off-field matter, I felt that this scene, in similar fashion to my conversation with Wouter earlier, and the sense of camaraderie at the welcoming braai, aptly captured the 'other side' of play and elaborated on the dynamics of club rugby off the field (Hamayon, 2016). Through this type of 'sub-space', Wouter was afforded the room to talk about matters outside the field, or the amateur club boundaries. But although this conversation did not necessarily make a difference to the positioning of club rugby or the amount of capital that the individual had in relation to the greater structure of everyday life, this amateur rugby club which allowed such conversations was a space to think in within the interstices of social life. Though a sub-space that did not necessarily reveal the manner in which to overcome the uncertainty of everyday life, this amateur rugby club afforded a variety of men the opportunity to have a laugh, and to focus on the small things in social life that had a big impact on their relation to life in general.

---

[43] Translation: 'But on a serious note, I hope that you are ready for me this year because when I am over the ball, no-one will get me off the ball. I now gym my friend'.

[44] Translation: 'You will have to be careful of me old Skippy (that is, Captain), I am not taking it easy on you at the rucks (breakdown)'.

[45] Translation: 'That's alright, just know that I am hungry for rugby'.

1.3 A 'breakdown': amateur club rugby on the field

As I eventually made my way to the rugby field for my first practice as player-coach at Grey Beards, albeit with an emphasis on the latter for the first while, I wanted to understand the workings of club rugby. As I parked my car, in the same spot where I did the first day, there were fewer cars and no *Cheetah* branded vehicles. Thus, I knew that there would only be amateur players on the field that day, as I made my way through the fading sunlight to the patchy green grass of the field. With the vivid knowledge that there had been rain for the past two weeks, one would imagine that the field would look better, yet with the number of times the professional team practised on the fields, the field was patchy, muddy, and had a few wet spots. As I stood between the bleachers and the overhang of the roof where I took shelter a few days ago, I saw that Wouter sat with two other individuals on the red pavilion. I asked where the rest of the team were, to which Wouter informed me that they were a bit early and that the rest would most likely only arrive about five minutes before or after the training started.

Wouter introduced me to Killian, another IT specialist, telling me he was the flyhalf, which was also my position. Killian was a white man with patchy grey hair, who was a school friend of Justin. The other white man, Wouter then said, was John, 'but everyone calls him Churro, our hooker', as the man in his mid-thirties untied his collar from his salesman uniform. With a ball and a kicking tee in his hand, Killian then went onto the field, which barely had visible lines, to practise his kicking. Entrusted with the duties of Covid-19 register and alcohol hand sanitiser, Wouter then asked everyone to fill in the Covid-19 register. In an effort to ensure that no-one trained with any symptoms, and to stop the spread of the virus before it cancelled another rugby season, the club took their protocol seriously. Wouter and Churro then continued to talk about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, as Killian warmed up his body and kicked the ball. Time went by and just a few minutes before 6pm Justin, Otto, Chris, Adam, Peter and the coach made their way to the field. As we greeted one another, I stood alongside Peter and Justin, while the rest of the players that came to practice sat on the bleachers, tied their boots and started passing the rugby ball to one another. The only other participant was the coach, who laid out his practice sessions on the field with neon practice cones.

'*Dit lyk nie goed nie Justin*[46], Peter, worried, told Justin; he was not pleased to see that there were only about 12 players at the practice. '*Ek het nou klaar die games gereel vir die naweek, ek het dit by die unie bevestig, ek het met coach gepraat en dis reg, ons return to match fitness is reg*[47]*'.*

[46] Translation: 'it doesn't look good Justin'.
[47] Translation: '*I* already organised the games, I confirmed with the Union, I spoke with coach and our return to match fitness is in order'.

'*Moenie worry nie Peter, jy weet dan mos, as die ouens eers hoor ons speel games dan sal ons 4 spanne volmaak vir Saterdag'*[48]*,* Justin informed Peter.

Coach, a grey bearded white man wearing a Lions tracksuit, then blew his whistle and asked everyone to listen up. Coach then elaborated that the teams would play a round of trials over the weekend to determine how many teams the club would have in the league, if Covid allowed it, and for him to see what he needed to work on. The coach then continued to tell the men about his style of rugby, which was a wide and expansive game, albeit with the forwards who worked in-between the backline players. It followed that the backline players would have to work hard in the breakdown, as the forwards would also be in the backline, to somehow dominate the opponents with their physical power. For the coach, the breakdown was seemingly the most important component of rugby, as everything revolved around the rucks, yet this was no simple task to overcome and play an expansive game. Beyond the difficulty of competing in rucks[49], this was one facet of play, and I did not know how the coach would make a team play rugby through one focus area. My position of player-coach also seemed blurry as I was supposed to be there to help the backline players with moves, passing or kicking, yet there I was trying to make sense of the breakdown on the field.

For psychologists, who made the attempt to understand why someone would participate in rugby, on-field participation was defined as the 'output' of each individual player during a rugby match, which was typically characterised by the number of tries and conversions, or points, scored by and against a team (Gerber & Terblanche cited by Du Plessis, 2019:1). In turn, the on-field dimension of rugby further enabled psychologists to observe certain behaviour, which was evaluated and compared against the backdrop of 'normativity', off the field. In this regard, Du Plessis (2019) further used the on- and off-field dimensions of professional rugby to elaborate on the 'normative identity' of individual players, and the group of 'rugby players'. Despite her focus on women's rugby, however, Du Plessis (2019:83) concluded that the integration of 'typical masculine characteristics' was required to be a 'rugby player'. The 'environment of rugby', Du Plessis added, was not typically associated with the female gender.

With this 'typical rugby' figure in mind, Rubin (2014:700) noted that rugby quickly became the preferred space to express what he called: 'white, male, Afrikaner identity', a sense of identity

---

[48] Translation: 'Don't worry Peter, you know that if the men hear there is a game on Saturday, we will have 4 complete teams for Saturday'

[49] Placed into perspective, of how difficult a breakdown is to understand, through the number of technical aspects there are required to successfully compete at one during a rugby match, one only has to type in 'the breakdown' and find that there is a site for what is called 'ruck science' (Mouton, 2016). Another word for a breakdown is also a ruck, which is a rugby term to describe a short period of play after a tackle has been made, from a defensive player on an attacking player, and where another teammate of the former and the latter has touched one another over the ball.

characteristic of the apartheid regime. Rubin (2014:700) continued to note that: 'there were multiple social institutions reproduced and confirmed this association; the educational system, its military, police, and correctional services, and the Dutch Reformed Church' (Rubin, 2014:700). Against this socio-historic backdrop, Rubin (2014:699) then built on the work of historian Herman Giliomee and rugby player Tommy Bedford, which helped inform him on *'the ideological similarities between South Africa's predominant rugby style and the political style of the ruling National Party'* (NP). Faced with international isolation, Giliomee and Bedford (cited by Rubin, 2014:699) argued that the apartheid State responded with increasingly conservative positions, which translated into aspects of rugby. For example, in response to a crisis on the field as much as in the political arena, no chances were taken, and everyone had to be disciplined, in line with the authority figure, as Giliomee and Bedford (cited by Rubin, 2014:699) noted. Importantly though, despite the brilliant parallels that both Rubin (2014) and Du Plessis (2019) drew regarding South African rugby, these reflected the past of professional players; it would seem short-sighted not to consider amateur club and ask why the gap between amateur and professional rugby continuously grew in the post-apartheid era. In short, the reason why I believe that this addition is crucial, is because most of the rugby in South Africa is not played on the professional stage, yet the professional stage is critiqued for its shortcomings and perpetuations of the past in the name of rugby (EPG, 2020:188). Although rugby on-the-amateur-field is spoken about, the conversation is situated on the outside of the side-lines, where amateur rugby players have become spectators to academic brawls on the value of South African 'rugby'.

Fixated with the basics of the breakdown, even in the build-up to the trials, the coach continued to drill the players within the patterns he said created the room for '*one team and one trophy*[50]'. With constant demands to split[51] and a remarkable turnout of players to fill three teams, however, I was finally asked by the coach to step in and to give the players an opportunity to run through a few moves. Apart from being overwhelmed by the majority of players that were at the club for the trials over the weekend, it was also difficult for me to know what one could learn within 30 minutes that could make you a more capable backline player, three days before a match. Over the course of my rugby journey, I have never felt so underprepared, and overwhelmed, as when having to first share patterns with players, who did not have time to learn the moves, and yet it was remarkable to see how players took their own initiative to help one another with moves. As I then

[50] Conventionally, before trials, players at a club are not too focussed on a specific pattern of play or 'structure'. In the week before trials, players are encouraged to skim through all phases of play, not only rucks, as players still contest for a place on a team. In other words, the trial teams will inevitably change, where some players that are opponents on the trial field will become partners in combinations, during the season.

[51] To split was to divide the forwards and the backs, from 1-8 and 9-15, to train on their specific roles on the field.

explained moves, the players continued with their own adaption. From the little time the players spent together on the field, to the little they knew of one another, I did not foresee a highly structured trials weekend, although I thought that at least there would be a space for the players to express themselves and to make the most of their opportunities. Perhaps this was behind the basic premise of '*sleg is goed/bad is good'* and the means through which amateur club rugby becomes an art of magic. As matchday approached, I became excited.

With a cool breeze that accompanied a sunny and clear sky, trials day was set and one could almost feel a change in the atmosphere, as I made my way to the fields. Trials day felt like a normal day at practice, as Wouter was the first person at the field and Churro shortly made his appearance from the parking area. While the three of us were standing in front of the bleachers, passing around a rugby ball, however, I could feel how Wouter passed the ball harder and how Churro went to a line-out throw pass. The bleachers that were normally filled with jokes, between a few serious discussions, were now awfully quite, as a lot of the players listened to music over headphones or sat in deep thought behind their sunglasses, after their arrival. I then decided to sit down and draw an outline of the field, at which two of my backline players I met the previous evening came to talk about rugby with me. Duncan, a coloured man and a primary school teacher, and Jaco, a coloured man and teacher, came to sit next to me. *'Kyk hier neh, ek wil nou nie jok nie maar vandag gaan ek skade maak*[52]*',* said Jaco, telling me of his ability to play an attacking game from behind, as fullback, without missing any tackles. Duncan then started to laugh and said that Jaco first had to catch him, and I noted a friendly rivalry between two friends, again.

Upon his arrival, Peter came over to me and asked me how well I knew the rules of the game. With a light chuckle, as I was unsure what this meant, I replied that I believed I could manage a referee's test well, why? '*Great, want ons kort asseblief vandag 'n skeidsregter en ek is hopeloos te onfiks*[53]*'*, Jaco added, as I went to fetch my rugby boots from my car. As I walked back to the bleachers, I bumped into the coach and he asked me if I was ready to ref, as Peter had informed him that I would be the referee. I informed the coach that I had never officiated a match but that I would gladly help out, seeing that there was no-one else that could. '*Great, maak net seker jy kyk mooi na die breakdown area, dat ouens wegrol, nie op die grond speel en nie vuil speel nie*[54]*'*, coach added. With all of these instructions in mind, I then stepped onto the rugby field and told myself that I would do my best to at least just be consistent in my ruling.

---

[52] Translation: 'Look here, right, I do not want to lie but today I am going to cause damage'.
[53] Translation: 'Great, because we need a referee today and I am too unfit.*'* 'At least you will now be on the field with us*'.*
[54] Translation:' Great, just ensure that you carefully look at the breakdown area, to make sure that players roll away, do not play on the ground, and also do not play dirty there'.

As the matches started, consistency seemed impossible, as within every instance where I had to blow my whistle, a player would casually come up to me and inform me of something I missed. Without the assistance of ‘lines’ men/assistant referees, my privileged position on the field as a spectator took a backseat to the officiating part of my role as referee . Unfortunately, for the likes of Justin, Chris, Otto, and coach, I also struggled to regulate the breakdown and to look for players diving each other off the ball, while still being vigilant about the players next to the ruck with injuries. At the amateur trials, however, I noted how rugby on-field did not only concern men scoring points to boost typical masculine characteristics off-field (Du Plessis, 2017:83). At Grey Beards Rugby Club, time on the field meant that players were able learn more about their interactions with other players and to take the initiative from the uncertain bounce of the ball or the missed calls from the referee.

During a normal day at the club, apart from the handful of players, who diligently made up the majority of the two teams, there were always multiple new faces and stories that showed up at practice sessions and matches. This offered a good reason for the head coach to focus on his ‘basics’; however, this prevented the men from ever reaching a consensus as to know how to play the best rugby on the field. In a similar fashion, rugby off the field in the post-apartheid era is not consistent with one chain of thought, where all men come together in the clubhouse to talk about a revolution or a return to the days of apartheid. In observation and participation of rugby on- and off-field, therefore, a literal or figurative breakdown aptly describes how multiple positions converge over a ball, as teammates and opponents, to secure a chance to attack rather than defend. In a literal sense, players robustly dove into the breakdown to secure possession of the ball, or to reclaim possession, and further used the loosely structured pile-up of bodies to (re)act in offensive or defensive play. The figurative side of the breakdown, moreover, I relate to the work of Bourdieu (1987:155) and his social space, where multiple forces collide to make a case for the interaction of race, class, and gender in daily life. Thus, amateur club rugby at Grey Beards, I understood, was an active breakdown in-between social space and social interaction, where different rugby players, artists, and men, actively discover their versatility in everyday life.

CHAPTER 2

2 Caught in the *act*ion of amateur club rugby

2.1 Rugby participation: a re*act*ive decision that buffers contact, and directs meaningful relationships, in everyday life.

Most of my interlocutors participated in rugby without medical aid to cover any event of injury. For them, plaster was a crucial aid to prepare the body for any contact and to hold the body together after contact. While amateur club rugby players did not receive any financial compensation for rugby participation, 'the Grey Beards management team' often bought 'a few rolls of plaster' for the players on match days. At Grey Beards, plaster was normally used to 'strap' around certain body parts like the head, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, knees, or ankles, and believed to offer a form of 'support' for previous injuries, current injuries, or the prevention of future injuries.[55] Through self-diagnosed injuries and self-administered 'strapping', or no follow-up biomedical input to save funds on a medical aid investment, however, the two rugby teams of Grey Beards spent more money on plaster, per game, than on the actual matchday fees. This also led to a near-equal annual expenditure on plaster, similar to the total amount used by a university club in Bloemfontein, with 8 teams. But even as more plaster did not necessarily indicate a greater prevalence of biomedically diagnosed 'injury' (Langley & Brenner, 2004), the heavily strapped bodies did make me think more about injury and the risk thereof.

Thinking with the theoretical lens of the mindful body of Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987), I set forth to learn how the individual physical body, the body social, and the body politic of an amateur rugby player were 'strapped together'.[56] While only a few players strapped the same body part, shared the same strapping technique, or were in need of the same 'support', almost every player shared a piece of the provided plaster rolls and discussed an experience of injury. Throughout my time at Grey Beards Rugby Club, I noted that an injury was never a straightforward experience, informed through a clear symptomatic review of cause and effect. Along with the continuous supply of plaster, this further entailed that coaches and staff members

[55] In the biomedical world, the efficacy of strapping is often debated (see Poon *et al.,* 2015), as the techniques and types of plaster play a role alongside the type of activity, which also produce different outcomes.

[56] In summary of the individual body, the body social, and the body politic (see Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987:7). The individual body should be understood in the phenomenological sense as that through which an individual experiences something. The social body inversely refers to the representational use of a body, as a natural symbol to think with nature, society, and 'culture'. Lastly, the body politic refers to the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies, for both individual and the collective, in the reproduction of human differences.

had to carefully listen to how various players spoke about their 'social injuries[57]', to be able to offer the necessary assistance to both an individual and the team, on and off the field. Within the act of buying plaster, strapping a fellow player, or being strapped by another member of the club, therefore, I noticed how an amateur rugby player reciprocated a sense of belonging and valued the co-existence of another player.

In contrast, a professional rugby setup had multiple medical doctors that recommended a 'safe return to play' or not,[58] for any player who experienced discomfort. As the injury of one player opened the door for another player and match results meant that you had a job or not, however, Rubin (2014:701-702) found that professional rugby players did not always inform medical staff, or even any other players, about their injuries. In turn, the inability to talk about injuries has had a significant impact on professional rugby and even sport as a whole, insofar as the line between fit to play and free from injury has become a blurry topic. While one could then further argue that professional rugby players have become a lot like commodities, who feed the hunger of spectators and big corporate companies alike, while their professional bodies neglect the well-being of the players, my main concern with professional sport has been the body politic that it has influenced and historically shaped. In short, while I acknowledge that some amateur rugby players aspire to become professional, the focus on the latter in South Africa has often overemphasised the monetary value of rugby and, by default, linked adult participation in the sport with exclusivity. With a limited focus on reciprocal relationships in rugby, therefore, the individual body, the body social, and the body politic of a rugby player have been enmeshed with a desire to be socially mobile, which has neglected multiple other forms of capital that players contest for. As I was then forced to think-with the latter, in the absence of salaries at my amateur rugby club, I decided to focus on the injuries of my interlocutors and figure out how these injuries were phenomenological, symbolical, and political (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987).

At the amateur rugby club of Grey Beards, an injury was never mutually exclusive to problems of another player, and both a little bit of strap and the attentive ear of a fellow club member could equally address the problem. In other words, a lot of players dealt with the same problems at home or at work. To then steer clear of a Cartesian dualism debate over the definition of injury, that has been dominated by the field of biomedicine, I draw on the work of Wahbie Long (2021:26) and interpret an injury as a need to situate 'ourselves-in-the-world'. In this regard, my intention is

[57] Importantly, in relation to Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), who outline how the body social is the representational use of a body, to think with nature, society, and 'culture', social injuries refer to the shared embodiment of certain structural predispositions in a particular society, which an individual is born into.

[58] The South African Rugby Union (SARU) has a local program called Boksmart, that specifically outline certain guidelines for rugby teams, to ensure that the welfare of players is safeguarded, as stipulated by the governing body of rugby in the world, World Rugby.

to theorise on what an injury did for my interlocutors, for rugby, and how these injuries maintained the boundaries between who played rugby or not. In line with the argument put forward by medical anthropologists Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:6), I intentionally steer clear of the above-mentioned Cartesian dualism debates that locate the injury of an individual either within the body or the mind, that separated spirit from matter, and real from unreal, and further looked for the connection between these dualist points. Here, my decision was based on a long-standing debate of anthropology, to further abolish the separation of body and mind, in order to see the body simultaneously as a physical and symbolic artifact, that has been naturally and culturally produced, along with being anchored in a particular historical moment (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987:7). Despite the relevance of the mindful body that Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) had outlined, however, I further delved into the psychoanalytical work of Wahbie Long (2021), as already mentioned. As stated above, my intention is to discuss the ability of an injury to reveal the complex of issues among rugby players, but I also want to add more depth to how anthropologists theorise on the basis of the emotions of their interlocutors.

In response to the historical debate regarding Cartesian dualism, Long (2021:26) insisted that scholars had to refrain from separating the individual from the social, the inside from the outside, or the psychological from the material, as this split undermined the reality of daily life. Instead, Long (2021:32-33) argued for a ‘mutualist’ approach to concepts, like injury in this case, that brought into view the interconnectedness of social structures and individual experiences. Linking with the ‘three bodies’ concept of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:7), albeit unintentionally, Long (2021:33) then also made it clear that beyond the multiple experiences of injuries, there was an opportunity to connect the emotions with which these ‘brushes with nature’ were embodied and co-lived (Scheper-Hughes and Long, 1987:31). For Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:28-29) emotions form the missing link between mind and body, individual, society and body political, whereas Long (2021:180) writes about how emotions pragmatically inform the interactions that South Africans have in daily life. I then make a parallel between an amateur club rugby player and what Long (2021: 182) calls a ‘’conscious citizen’’, who consistently shows up to confront the perpetual historical distribution of inequality; I argue that the injuries of an amateur club rugby player help inform a complex mesh that generates a sense of hopeful belonging in post-apartheid South Africa.

In the following sections, I unpack how the embodiment of injuries form an integral part of amateur club rugby and everyday life, through which my interlocutors were able to learn more about themselves and their teammates. Throughout Chapter 1, the main idea was to envision how the amateur club stage was set for the performance of rugby playing males, on and off the field. I discussed how the amateur club rugby scene in South Africa was structured, which further served

to outline the space for participants to be versatile in the face of uncertainty. Subsequently, in Chapter 2 I will discuss how, through injuries, my interlocutors embody what I call the practicalities of empathy in post-apartheid South Africa. Here I am guided by Long (2021:79), who suggests that empathy is an imaginative effort to walk in the shoes of another, through a view of the world that practically implicates the enactment of the discovery, as this relates to recognition and dignity. For Long (2021:180), empathy further amounts to a moment in which one always has to be ready to be asked for something, insofar as this request can encompass a part of ourselves or the willingness to accept a part of another individual. In sum, therefore, empathy is a 'noble suffering' for Long (2021:180), in which the only way around the experience is through it, where 'character' is 'etched, marked and carved' on the individual body.

Read alongside *The Mindful Body* of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), this chapter then further adds depth to how injuries shape an empathetic 'character'/role of an amateur rugby player, as a visual 'habitus' of social interaction or rugby participation (Bourdieu, 1979:21). In similar fashion to how an injury can destroy, disassemble, deconstruct, and 'unmake' the world of an individual, Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:29) states that injury, alongside illness, disability, pain and death can also 'remake' a world in healing. Here, Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:31) points towards the multiple ways in which 'sickness', or injury in this case, was not merely an isolated event, but rather, *'…a form of communication— the language of organs— through which nature, society and culture' spoke together'*. This entailed, Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:31) concluded, that the individual body is the most 'immediate' and 'proximate' space to observe and partake in social truths and contradictions, while also being a site for 'personal and social, resistance, creativity, and struggle'. Working from the prolegomenon of Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), therefore, I propose that an injured rugby body does not necessarily 'imitate' the shortcoming(s) of an 'ideal rugby player', vested in colonial or apartheid interests (Niehaus, 2014; Van der Westhuizen, 2016; Rubin, 2021), but rather reveals a desire to (re)negotiate and inform a performance of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa.

2.2 Foregrounding amateur club rugby participation in belonging

In a country marred with a history of masters and slaves (Long, 2021:43), where more than three centuries of European settlers succeeded to subdue the local populations, the post-apartheid turn puzzled South Africans over the question of belonging. Cast from the colonial encounter in South Africa, material domination, as Long (2021:44) outlines, worked alongside ideological domination, where local residents' cultural forms were obliterated by a pejorative judgement. Racial discernment was taken for conventional wisdom, insofar as black individuals were not recognised as humans and where the white colonisers of South Africa deemed black individuals to be nothing more than incidental objects (Long, 2021:44). The affirmation of the white subject, furthermore,

depended on the negation of a black individual, and any resistance to the colonial rule was met with deadly force. Despite a clear social hierarchy of belonging that was dictated along racial lines, however, the colonisers themselves, Long (2021:37) elaborates, never felt recognised as human, insofar as the act of recognition by a slave was deemed worthless. The interaction between the colonisers and slaves, characterised by incommensurability, therefore embedded a feeling of alienation in the national psyche of South Africans (Long, 2021: 35).

Based on 'a relation of relationlessness', alienation did not only point towards an absence of relation, but manifested itself as a relation, albeit a deficient one. For Long (2021:11), this further entailed the fact that individuals were unable to foster meaningful connections with other humans, social institutions, and the fundamental institution, oneself. Unable to connect with others, South Africans, Long (2021:64) maintains, obtained a plethora of 'social injuries' during social contact, which often deepened the wounds from imperial, colonial, and apartheid South Africa. As Long then metaphorically sat the *Nation on the* (psychiatric) *'couch'* (2021), he found that all role-players needed more than a bandage of acknowledgement, to overcome the impasses of everyday life. For Long (2021:33) South Africans required a pragmatic form of empathy to answer the question, 'Where do I belong?'. Long (2021) does not shy away from the fact that black citizens are still statistically at an economic disadvantage to their white counterparts (see Alexander, 2002), which hinders the acquisition of other forms of social capital, yet also, for Long (2021:33), inequality was underpinned by a lack of empathy. Within the act of empathy, according to Long (2021:33), South Africans committed themselves to 'an unfolding process of searching for moments of meeting, where recognition of our shared humanity becomes possible'. Although empathy does not necessarily eliminate societal injuries, or sew together a Marxist revolution, yet it forms a nexus between individual(s) and society. Through the act of empathy an individual can, therefore, foster a relation and hope, within which everyday life offers an opportunity to thrive, despite adversity, with others.

During the first three decades of post-apartheid South Africa, the rate of violent deaths was five times the global average as recorded in 2021; the murder rate of women was six times the global average, and a woman was killed every six hours by her intimate partner (Long, 2021:48). South Africa also ranked second globally for the highest Gini coefficient for income inequality, along with alcohol and drug misuse, which narrowed down to the fourth highest rate of offences (Long, 2021:50). However, while South African society today is deemed to be still broken apart into unequal racial categories, Long (2021:49) steered clear of a 'damage-hypothesis' and focussed on the undeniable strengths of South Africans. Informed by a historical vignette of imperial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid protest actions, South Africans, as Long notes (2021:185),

have always found a way to establish a form of hope and a way to move beyond the impasse of alienation, even if only temporarily.

Despite his awareness that South Africa is the capital for global protests and a landmark of global inequality, Long (2021:51) shifts the focus of protest. From a hopeless strike of opinion towards a pragmatic act of empathy, to co-create an equal tomorrow. To then talk about hope, Long (2021:182) points out that South Africans recognise and respond to the psychological and material needs of other fellow South Africans. This further indicates that hope is a directive for pragmatic belonging, which informs an empathetic consciousness of interdependence and nurtures a willingness to stand with others. Firmly vested in a collective body of 'conscious' protestors in post-apartheid South Africa, who actively attempt to bridge the inequalities of the past through empathy, Long (2021) thus inspired me to think about the ability of the amateur rugby field, to elicit the same hope for my interlocutors.

In a conversation with Leon, an unemployed black man in his twenties, before the second last rugby session of the year, I wanted to know why he took three taxis every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday to make practice sessions. After all, Leon had no prospect of running onto the field during a match, as he broke his right femur in the first friendly match against the Military, at the start of the year, and he had to stand on the side of the field next to me during most contact sessions. Smiling, as he always had a joke to tell or a story to share, Leon informed me that rugby gave him a sense of hope. As a convicted criminal, Leon elaborated that during his time in prison, he had found a renewed love for rugby, as this was one of the few activities which kept him fit, out of trouble and taught him a few lessons about how to re-enter the 'real world', outside of prison. I then asked him how rugby enabled him to learn so much; his answer was simple, insofar as he felt that rugby could knock you down onto the ground but that there were always other players around you, your teammates, to pick you back up on your feet. To then take a few taxis did cost a lot of money; however, Leon said, the few hours before practice enabled him to walk around town to look for jobs, which he has found extremely difficult after being convicted of assault. To be an active member of this rugby club, therefore, Leon informed me, gave him a space where he could forget about the world for a moment, while also actively working on his anger problems, where he could focus on not making silly mistakes on the field that cost the team, or off the field, that would take away his freedom.

Hopeful about the prospects of becoming a butcher or a maths teacher one day, Leon informed me that rugby gave him a valuable second chance, as the sport taught him how to prioritize his time and better interact with other individuals. I then asked Leon how his relationship was with the other players on the team, he did not have a bad word to say about any other player, and informed me that:

'When you do (participate in) rugby, there is a change in your life. You learn techniques about the game and of life. Rugby guides you to see how people live life and how you can live a better life'.

As I then wrapped up my conversation with Leon, who eagerly wanted to go play touch rugby before the start of the training session, I also wanted to know how he was going to run with his evident limp in his walk. Leon then laughed and he said that he needed to give the other players a chance. However, as soon as we stopped laughing Leon said:

'*No, you know what? In prison I got used to injury but rugby gave me a reason to think beyond pain. So this was a bad time but I told myself that I cannot stop playing rugby, I needed to persevere and that is why I continue to love rugby'*.

As Leon then strapped on his boots and walked onto the field, while he summarised his last few points, he added that rugby taught him how to be strong and positive, with other like-minded people, whom he felt wanted to see another individual succeed. Rugby created opportunities, Leon said. Without any knowledge prior to the sport, he believed that you could easily learn and discover your true potential. Leon then concluded:

'Like without any knowledge about rugby, you can still learn something about life and this is why rugby changes you. Through rugby, I could reintegrate into society and so can anyone'.

Here, in a similar fashion to Long (2021:49), who did not focus on a 'damage-hypothesis', Leon made me realise that amateur rugby club in post-apartheid South Africa was a melting pot for differences, where men could enact and embody their insecurities and injuries with other like-minded individuals. Without their participating to gain an economic advantage from rugby, or to elevate other forms of capital, therefore, rugby for them informed an avenue of interdependent belonging. Through rugby, men shared their experiences of daily life and fostered hope for a better tomorrow, through understanding how their emotions were at stake in relation to one another.

2.3 'Injuries are a part of the game' and daily life.

In a semi-structured interview with Justin, the first team rugby captain informed me that life was too short for '*what if*?' questions and he felt that, with the ability to be alive, one had to '*live in the moment*'. For Justin, 'what if' questions related to hesitancy and a process of doubt that prevented an individual from acting when opportunities arose in daily life. To live in the moment, therefore, entails that an individual both acknowledge the shortcomings of any decision and the need to act

on a matter in daily life, as the moment arose. In this regard, Justin argued that '*one should cross a bridge when one got there'*, and further elaborated on this metaphor with a rugby analogy. Without much time to think in a fast-paced rugby match, a rugby player had to block out the fear of injury, in the completion of a tackle, handoff, or ruck, from one moment to the next. Even though no individual could foresee the following moment, Justin believed that the individual body could learn from every encounter and eliminate the hesitation to act on the next encounter. Despite (or because of) a lack of fear, however, Justin sat with two broken shoulders, a broken ankle, and a swollen hand; noting this, I realised that even though Justin referred to a shift in focus to potentially mitigate injury, his reference also pointed to the inevitability of living with injury.

Justin felt that one sometimes needed to forget about injuries, and train through the experience, as this was a part of rugby and daily life. In acknowledgment that his approach to injuries was not sufficient, however, Justin argued that tomorrow was not guaranteed and that he would play rugby until he could not get out of bed in the morning. In this, Justin did not advocate a mind-over-matter approach to injury but rather he suggested that with an opportunity to share in a form of success, one had reason to put one's individual body on the line. To consider a phenomenological perspective regarding injury (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1986:6), I note that Justin then mentioned how he survived a car accident in which his sister passed away. Through his participation in amateur club rugby, therefore, Justin felt that he was able to honour the life of his sister and set an example for his wife, his sons, and his teammates to not take any shared moment(s) for granted. For as long as he could still walk onto the rugby field then, and contribute to the team, Justin would merely 'strap' his shoulders, ankle, and hand with plaster before subsequent contact, in both practices and matches.

Here, although the issue of injury was initially focussed on the rugby field, Justin readily linked rugby with daily life and gave his insight on the ability of the rugby field to further reveal an opportunity, to think-with the 'injuries' of daily life in post-apartheid South Africa. Along with the inevitability of injuries on the rugby field, that everybody was exposed to and/or actively lived-within/after participation, Justin felt that the inequalities of daily life in post-apartheid South Africa offered an opportunity to learn-with one another. '*On the rugby field you tackled an opponent*, *who also reciprocated; however, when you stepped off that field,* Justin insisted that, *all players had to drink a beer together as friends*. From this position, Justin enabled me to see how injury was not only a mere individually experienced phenomenon but also how the individual body and the social body, theorised by Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987:8), linked with one another on and off the amateur club rugby fields.

For Justin, to 'rub shoulders' with someone was taken literally, and, despite the danger of getting injured on the rugby field, or worsen current injuries in the process, one needed to understand

that all players were mutually involved with each other, as ‘friends’, even when they were opponents. On the field, this meant that Justin did not see other players in terms of their race, class, or gender and the only goal in mind is to overcome the tactics of the opponents. With his specific relationship with friends off the field, however, I noted that Justin did not only acknowledge the different realities of daily life, which various players brought to the rugby field and with their own injuries, but he also showed a willingness to invest in a friendship whatever these differences might be.

To further situate how this friendship amongst various role-players was fostered, on and off the amateur field, Justin then informed me about his dissatisfaction with what he called the ‘politics’ in South Africa. Unlike South Africa outside the amateur club, the amateur rugby field, Justin felt, was a space where an individual could momentarily escape the ‘surface level’ acts of care regarding black empowerment or minority rights, and ‘fairly’ contest for a spot on a team. For Justin, as the vice president and team captain, this meant that the club would not hand out free passes for white players to fill team sheets and that any black player would be able to contest for selection. With a clear disdain for what he called inequality, Justin held firmly to the view that the amateur rugby club had successfully kept ‘politics’ from entering the field, as this related to the unfair practice of providing a pre-determined position on a team sheet. Only without an artificially dictated reserved position for certain players on a team sheet for a rugby match, Justin believed, could curious rugby players learn more about one another and actively reciprocate in meaningful conversations. In other words, Justin found it unfair for players to be preselected, in accordance with the prejudices associated with a school, race, occupation or kinship lineage. Here, despite his narrow approach to the term ‘politics’, Justin enabled me to understand the body politic of a rugby player in South Africa (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987:7).

A rugby body in South Africa has historically been linked to apartheid (see introduction), and an inability to share a field of rugby or daily life with other men outside of the club or a specific demographic group. At Grey Beards Rugby Club, however, I noted that the workings of rugby were different from the professional fields, where the latter served as a basis for comparison but not for emulation. In brief, in professional and amateur rugby the technical aspects of rugby that relate to the 80 minutes on the field can easily be compared to one another; but off the field, the same tackles, rucks, hand-offs, bumps, or tries are not discussed and relived to the same ends. As a player-coach at an amateur rugby club, in post-apartheid South Africa, I could therefore observe how rugby injuries (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987) further informed the ways through which a rugby body located a desire to enact, with others, a better tomorrow.

CHAPTER 3

3 A snapshot of an envisaged community.

3.1 An inter*act*ion of nationalism

On a normal day at the Grey Beards amateur rugby club, prior to any matches or training sessions, there were always a few participants who gathered on the rugby field. They would throw around a rugby ball and engage in a discussion. Within these discussions, the ball acted as an object of reciprocity, which gave the participant in possession of the ball a chance to share his thoughts, while the other participants had to listen and wait for the ball, before they replied. These discussions were never structured in accordance with a specific matter and the topics were fluid, ranging from rugby to current affairs. My interlocutors did not always agree on every matter, yet there was always the chance to be heard, which in turn made some players leave their day jobs early, just to have a few conversations before practice. In the event that players could not leave their day jobs early, which happened to the majority of players that were always 5 minutes late at practice, these discussions occurred during practice sessions, to the anger of the head coach. In turn, rather than providing an hour of teaching rigorous rugby manoeuvres for matches, the coach would then use half of the session to express his disappointment at the lack of concentration and the 'basic skills' of players. To make matters worse for the coach, participation fluctuated in accordance with injuries and work commitments. In tandem with the 'basics' of amateur club rugby, therefore, I came to expect the unexpected – social encounters or explorations that had little to do with sport itself. I no longer expected a beer after rugby to link with alcoholism and violence, an injury to be a symbol reminiscent of war, or a rugby pass to be a generational transfer and commitment to exclusivity. Rather, to participate in amateur club rugby was to imagine a part in a community (Anderson, 2006), which did not neglect the socio-historical imbalances of participation but focussed on the ability to (re)imagine such unequal relationships.

In both the previous chapters I have touched on the construction of identity and the negotiation through rugby, as players sought to belong to a community. Initially, from the perspective of a bystander, I noted that despite his previous experience as coach of the Women's Springbok team, the coach seemed to misinterpret the needs of the players. In turn, the players did not always appreciate the logic of a 'professional' coach, for example, running through the same drill every single day, and then complaining when it yielded predictable results. This resulted in frustration and a need to create more opportunities to participate in amateur club rugby, as outlined in

Chapter 1, which prompted my appointment.[59] As a coach, I was tasked to lessen the workload of the coach and to offer more players the opportunity to participate in the various facets of rugby. I took an open approach, sharing my experience and the game plan of the coach with players. However, despite the five pages of rigorous rugby manoeuvres I was given by the head coach to complement his game plan and tactics, I found it difficult to convince the team. The pre-planned 'moves' were seldom performed by my interlocutors, or simply overruled by the players in a match. Even though the players knew how to run every single manoeuvre that the coach expected of them, these moves never materialised. I then wanted to understand how I could better form a line of communication from the players to the head coach, to also adapt training sessions and the game plan at hand; I thus became a middleman of sorts. On the one hand, I used my position as player-researcher-coach to enable the coach to understand the grievances of the players. Players felt comfortable knowing that they could openly discuss any problem with me, without risking being left out of a team.[60] On the other hand, the coach could openly talk to me about his thoughts and ideas about the team, practice sessions and game plans, where he knew that I could further pass this on during training sessions, as his assistant. My position at the club, therefore, went from a random bystander to a crucial member and coach, interlinking various role-players.

With my role established as a player-researcher-coach, I then had a clear understanding of how the amateur club was structured, which enabled me to have more in-depth conversations with my research participants. Within these discussions, I was further able to connect the value(s) of amateur club rugby, in relation to professional rugby, and how different experiences could add value to how men approached adversity in post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard, I was able to understand how my interlocutors interdependently overcame their (social) injuries, as discussed in Chapter 2, and further embodied empathy for 'others'. However, despite a clear line of communication and reciprocal relationships, the rugby team kept losing more matches. In tandem with every loss, I further noted that the relationships among all players seemed to gradually weaken, up until a point where Justin even mentioned that he would not have been surprised if the club closed its doors.

With a lot of financial pressure on the club even before Covid, or basically just on Jannie, Justin and a few other players who could afford their own memberships fees,[61] the losses further tipped

---

[59] To be sure, my appointment did not entail any financial incentive.

[60] As an assistant coach to the head coach, I was given the task to inform the coach of who trained or how trainings went along, but I did not make team selections. On the one occasion that I had to select a team, as the head coach had Covid-19, I had asked the Club President and Vice President to relieve me of that task. The team that 'I' selected, therefore, was selected by Justin and Peter, with my encouragement.

[61] In terms of the club finances, Peter and Justin ensured that the club was able to participate in rugby. Paying for the rent of the fields, lights, bathrooms, the playing kit, plaster, chalk on the fields, the salary of the head coach, match officials, and medical teams, Peter and Justin covered the membership fees

the scales in causing all players to question their personal investment during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Grey Beards Rugby Club also rapidly lost a lot of their players, and while a few claimed to have 'hung up their boots' and retired from rugby, others merely went to go play for rival teams who were winning. Ironically though, despite the frustration that every player had at some point, the majority always remained hopeful that the next game would turn into a win, as did the retired and departed players, who never stayed away for more than a game or two. In view of the fact that my interlocutors were willing to place their bodies on the line for their fellow club members, inasmuch as departed members even felt the need to return with retired players, I began to think-with the imagined communities of Benedict Anderson (2006:36) and how he observed how modern state-making practices (re)created powerful cultural identities.

Following the rise of printed materials like newspapers in the imperial and colonial eras, print-capitalism, Anderson (2006) indicates, led to the rise of national consciousness. In tandem with the colonial expansion through military invasion, the print machine served to record information about the colonized and neatly outlined census documents that provided data on race, religion, and tradition. From here on forward, the colonisers could map out the patterns of the different groups within the colonies, which further allowed the colonisers to balance their approach to hard and soft power. On the other hand, however, as the printed media served to remind the colonised about their domination, printed material also served to form a sense of community and identity. Print-capitalism from the nineteenth century, therefore, was indicative of how nation-states became institutionalised through the production, distribution, and utilisation (Bergholz, 2018:523) of printed material. To then build on the legacy of print-capitalism, albeit in the twenty-first century, Appadurai (1998) theorised on the role of electronic-capitalism, which had replaced the medium of print-capitalism. Appadurai (1998), in this regard, outlined how television, radio, and computers have drastically changed the output speed of print media, in conjunction with the internet, which further nullified the specific languages that were required to read printed material. From language requirements to internet access, digital media created a 'global village', as Marshal McLuhan pointed out (see McLuhan & Powers, 1989), where individuals could learn more about 'other' groups and further imagine their own belonging.

For Anderson (2006:6), in short, an imagined community was defined as a political community, which was imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. Although he labelled it as a 'novelty', Anderson (2006:188) did not imply that an imagined nation was false or distinguished

---

for all players. Even though one-half of the players could afford membership fees, to help with the expenses, the other half could not, and this resulted in the decision, by Justin and Peter, to pay on behalf of everyone. While Peter and Justin then paid all the club's expenses, they asked all players to network for sponsors in town. A few other players, therefore, sometimes helped Peter and Justin with some of the expenses, out of their own pockets or via sponsors.

from unimagined communities. In support of Tom Nairn (cited by Anderson, 2006:155-156), who believed that nationalist movements in Britain could be progressive, Anderson pointed out that the Scottish nationalist offered a useful critique of classical Marxism. What caught the attention of Anderson (2006:208), was the way Nairn dissected what he called classical Marxism's 'shallow or evasive' treatment of the historical-political importance of nationalism. Following Nairn, Anderson (2006:6-7) wanted to reopen the discussion about nationalism, but extending beyond comparisons to religious constructions of identity and community. Anderson (2006:7) suggested that the construction of identity could also be traced through 'print-capitalism', as much as through political ideology. This implied that the imaginative belonging of individuals, from various groups, though entrenched within the socio-historical past, was not merely dependant thereon for future interaction.

In a similar fashion to Anderson (2006), albeit with different points of reference, I decided to revisit the socio-historical rugby debates in South Africa. I wanted to offer a different perspective on amateur club rugby that, while it did not neglect the influence of imperial, colonial, and apartheid regimes, focussed rather on how rugby players imagined their 'belonging' in the postcolonial rugby communities of South Africa. I argue, therefore, that the imagined rugby community of Grey Beards was entangled with points of socio-historical relevance, and actively engaged within these multiple matters of concern, which enabled men to straddle the impasses of the past and present. This implied that my interlocutors were conscious of the club's history and its past members; however, along with the acknowledgment that the club was once exclusive, these men were concerned with actively (re)shaping the boundaries of the club and addressing the concerns of members.

On the walls of the rugby meeting room, which was a small room in the corner of the clubhouse, there were multiple photos of past teams that overlooked proceedings during meetings. These old photos were from when the club started in the colonial era, up until when Peter and Justin joined the amateur rugby club in 2016. Importantly, rather than serving as a reminder of exclusivity, these pictures reminded my interlocutors that change was possible, even amid stern opposition, and inevitable, as the boundaries of the club remained contestable.[62] In addition to the large amount of literature that dealt with South African rugby, I wanted to show how the amateur rugby field obliged men to engage in thorough discussions about race, transformation, and

[62] Club president Peter, a practising lawyer, conducted his meetings like a day in court. This often led to club meetings that seemed unnecessarily 'strict and stiff' for some of the players; however, this approach enabled Peter to keep himself and others accountable. Also, these meetings then served to keep members conscious of the fact that, even if plans came up short of their intended purpose, there was an opportunity to reflect and revisit the drawing board, with everyone interdependently sharing their thoughts at the table.

masculinity, as these topics were ever-present – for example, at the pre-game ball-throwing sessions described above.[63] While a professional club had multiple players who were 'always knocking on the door', to take the place of an underperforming or an injured player, the amateur club had to make the most of the players that they had at a given point in time. This often resulted in a situation where my interlocutors had to abandon their preferred positions, to fill the gaps in the team before matches, and to further stand a chance of turning the tide in the face of previous results. Even though the results did not change at my amateur club, despite the rotation of players and positions, I noted that the players had a better relationship with one another and that they could further rethink their prejudices regarding other positions.

To further think-with the amateur club as an imagined community (Anderson, 2006), one could argue that not all players were prepared to leave their preferred positions on or off the field. This meant that even though the club was fairly small, in comparison to other clubs in Bloemfontein, not all players knew each other off the field. I acknowledge, therefore, that the limitations of an imagined rugby community can still be vested in the footprints of imperial, colonial and apartheid regimes. However, at my amateur rugby club, I found that my interlocutors did not merely follow these fault lines, to (re)create an exclusive club with set positions. At Grey Beards Rugby Club participants were open to being challenged in word and deed, as accountability further cemented the relationships of my interlocutors. To briefly elaborate, as my interlocutors were obliged to learn multiple positions and roles in the team, in the likely event of an injury or an absent player, these players were able to imagine a different approach to rugby and community in daily life.

In the sections that follow, I revisit the socio-history of rugby but with a specific focus on the amateur rugby club. Thereafter, I further map out how my amateur rugby club has added value to current rugby conversations on race, transformation, and masculinity, insofar as to show how my interlocutors at an amateur rugby club have (re)imagined the rugby fraternity, to see what they describe as '*sleg is goed/*bad is good'. To then connect the theory and data of this chapter, I conclude with an ethnographic vignette of two-spotlights that enabled my participants to practise

[63] Importantly, even though one could argue that rugby further encouraged misogyny, as women were regularly present in discussions off but not also on the field, I found that my interlocutors were mostly concerned with the physical violence against women. Here, none of my participants were willing to entertain the thought of tackling a woman, and beyond the literal take, I noted how discussions between players, their partners, and staff members were also shaped to keep men in check with their treatment of women. With regard to the ever-growing tendency of domestic violence against women and children, therefore, a future study might look into how the participation of men, in an amateur club rugby community, could positively impact the relationships between men, women, and children. Here, the emphasis should be firmly placed on the various currents of the community that forms through rugby, of which the amateur clubs in the Western Cape are prime examples.

at 6 pm on a Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and also highlighted my understanding of amateur club rugby in post-apartheid South Africa.

3.2 A (re)visit to the club and rugby, with a view from the amateur scene in post-apartheid South Africa

At the inception of rugby in South Africa in the late 1870's and early 1880's, there existed multiple amateur clubs (Du Plessis, 2017). At these clubs, those we would today call 'imperialists' would enjoy the 'company of their equals'. Du Plessis (2017:91) noted that these clubs were enclaves of power and privilege. In tandem with the establishment of the club, race and class divisions were solidified and rugby spaces served to display a certain sense of British exclusivity, along with social and political dominance outside of the Empire (Du Plessis, 2017:91). From soldiers to students, missionaries and fortune seekers, to colonial school graduates, all participants enjoyed the exclusive social events and sports of the club. However, from imperial to post-colonial South Africa, the general approach towards sports, I was puzzled to find, could be detached from rigorous forces of 'civilisation' and, regarding the consensus on sport in Africa, according to Cleveland *et al*., (2020:2) it was that:

> '*modern sports in Africa have reflected cultural, social, political, economic, generational, and gendered relations on the continent but have also precipitated significant change in this array of interconnected facets of everyday life'*.

To be sure, although many scholarly authors have elaborated on the historical ties that sport had with imperialism, colonialism or apartheid in South Africa, sport in Africa was believed to bring about 'significant change', inasmuch as sports enabled an interconnection between multiple 'facets of everyday life'. Notwithstanding the intentions of the colonial powers, Cleveland *et al*., (2020:4) argue that multiple sports historians in Africa have found that even though Colonialists enforced sports within their colonies, participants were not passively accepting. Participants in sports, Cleveland *et al*. (2020:4) maintain, could contest various aspects, beliefs and meanings of sports. However, as I read further into *Sports in Africa: Past and Present* (Cleveland *et al*., 2020), the imagined community, where sport brought multiple differences together, seemed not to apply in the case of rugby – at least in the pre-apartheid era where segregation was so rigorously enforced.

Derek Catsam argued (2020:234) that South African rugby had a long history of alibis, usually of the 'excuse' variety, that justified what he called a 'lack of transformation' across the board. Here,

rather than take a postcolonial[64] approach to rugby, however, Catsam (2020:233), like many others, inevitably followed the socio-history of the Springboks in post-apartheid South Africa[65] (Allen, 2001; Light, 2007; Reef, 2010; Niehaus, 2014). Unsurprisingly, Catsam (2020:233) found that there was: *'…a lack of inclusion of black, coloured, and indian rugby players'*. Ironically though, as pointed out by Snyders (2010) in the introduction to this dissertation (see Adhikari, 2005; Snyders, 2010; Cleophas, 2018), amateur rugby in post-apartheid South Africa is *predominately* played by players of colour and has always co-existed beyond the confinements of the Springboks and British public schools. The media and popular history have paid little attention to these 'other' spaces; however, that gap is in part what this dissertation addresses. This means that outside the popular and political focus on the Springboks to 'transform', rugby has already been a platform for men to (re)imagine a community beyond the confinements of race, class, and ethnicity in many parts of the country and at many levels. Noting that Anderson (2006:13) was further curious about how nationalism worked as a matter of symbol,[66] I then contemplated how amateur rugby could co-exist with professional rugby, as a symbol for 'transformation' and empathetic relationships.

For Anderson (2006:9), nationalism is a way of imagining and creating a community, insofar as the actual inequality and exploitation that persisted did not distort the deep, horizontal comradeship. To then think about the value of an imagined community, like my amateur rugby club, Anderson (2006:7) argues that 'over the past two centuries' the imagined fraternity prompted in 'many millions of people' 'not so much' the desire 'to kill', as to be 'willing to die for such limited imaginings'. Using the example of the World War 'tomb of the unknown soldier', Anderson (2006:9) then further points out that the name and identity of his fellows and nation, often came before the name of the individual. Anderson (2006:9) focusses here on the different styles and forms that nationhood projects, along with the material and practical conditions, that lead to the production of national imagining. To be sure this means that Anderson (2006:9) is adamant that 'nationalism and national identity have underpinnings in real material conditions'. From here on his thoughts on print-capitalism take shape and show how 'capitalist enterprise supports the development of national languages and communication within them' (Anderson, 2006:9). With regard to rugby in South Africa, therefore, the Springbok brand has historically been shaped by and fuelled the narrative, language, and communication of colonial South Africa. This further led the likes of Catsam (2020:246) to argue that the recent Rugby World Cup (RWC) victories have

[64] Postcolonialism, without the hyphen, is a critical approach to the analysis of colonialism, Joanne Sharp (2009:4) points out, which seeks to offer alternative accounts of the world.

[65] Sharp (2009:4) points out that the hyphen is used when the term refers to a 'common-sensical definition' that follows the period after independence from colonial, or in this case apartheid powers.

[66] For Anderson (2006:13) a symbol was interpreted as a social relationship, which further alluded to his question about how this symbol invoked consciousness.

done little to 'absolve' the socio-historic issues of rugby, as he cautiously concluded that Siya Kolisi (Fordyce, 2019) – the black South African captain of the winning 2019 team – was but one player who defied the 'sins of the past'. However, even though the Springboks brand was potentially unable to shake its conventional/'sinful' pathway[67] to RWC success, some amateur fields were already acting on the socio-historic inheritance of rugby.

In opposition to the competitive contact in rugby union and the policies of the apartheid regime, Morrell (2017:1-2) found that there were a group of men during 1985, who expressed their 'marginal, oppositional, community, through 'touch' rugby. Here Morrell (2017:2) learned that these men used a rugby field to (re)create a space for an individual to momentarily be freed 'from the fetters of apartheid', to ultimately strengthen bonds of friendship with the pass of the rugby ball.

Even though the amateur club was a space for colonial elites to spend their free time, within the post-apartheid era, the amateur rugby club has brought about significant changes. Changes insofar as ex-convicts can participate with lawyers, jobless individuals can connect with thriving businessmen, young men can disagree with old men, and participants from all races can share a

[67] The conventional road to becoming a Springbok entails that along with the limited amount of players that can contest for a position, these positions are also fairly limited to a small number of 'rugby schools'. With respect, even though the latter is often vehemently denied by rugby administrators in South Africa, as Siya Kolisi is often heralded as the young black man that defied the odds (Fordyce, 2019), emerging from Zwide to become the first black Springbok Captain, no one mentions the fact that he also attended the prestigious Grey High School in Gqeberha, a school that has often been associated with the 'rugby school' ethos, and which is an English alternative to its namesake in Bloemfontein. I mean no disrespect to the players who have passed through the 'rugby schools', and my aim is not to discredit their participation in the Springbok teams of the past or present; however, more should be said about the vast number of schoolboys who have to leave their homes in rural areas to attend these prestigious schools. Not only are these schoolboys leaving their support structures at home, but these children often have to support their households financially with their rugby talent. In the event that a schoolboy then gets injured or struggles to fit into the plans of the coach, that child can easily lose his financial aid, which also disallows him from completing school. In addition, there are still multiple problems that face amateur players who move to the professional scene from high school to universities or clubs, where neither the former nor the latter have contingency plans to safeguard the majority of players who will not play senior professional rugby. In this regard, to argue that players are aware of the capacity constraints when they attempt to make it into the professional scene is short-sighted and needs more attention. While the universities, in partnership with the private sector, have attempted to bridge the gap between amateur and professional rugby, through Varsity Cup opportunities that have commercialised the sport and enabled students to study, players are still struggling to make professional teams or to set themselves up with a degree, to earn a living. As the top South African rugby teams are now playing rugby almost the whole year around, largely thanks to the Northern Hemisphere competitions, this has allowed the most semi-professional players to take the spots of the professional players at the 'smaller' Unions. With less money than the bigger rugby Unions in the United Rugby Championship, smaller clubs then form the main road to the bigger Unions, giving them a shot at the Springboks. However, smaller Union players do not necessarily come from universities, where rugby- and non-rugby school participants often play together; and regularly rugby school participants directly move to 'smaller' Unions, as a fast track to compensate for not being in the bigger Unions. This further shows that the main pathway to becoming a Springbok is still entrenched within 'rugby schools', and this issue is in need of a critical analysis.

field. However, rather than being a sport that sows dissent regarding the common rules of life, rugby, my interlocutors have shown me, reveals how '*sleg is goed*[68] on and off the rugby field, when the focus of critique about a situation is linked with a pragmatic effort to overcome adversity through association with others. Expressed differently, even though rugby was not structured to make daily life easier, insofar as the sport was traditionally structured to 'discipline and civilise' (Du Plessis, 2017:74), participants were able to forge relationships with multiple other individuals and reimagine a community to deal with the realities of everyday life.

At the start of my research period at Grey Beards, as elaborated on in Chapter 1, the amateur club looked like a stepping-stone to professional rugby, as the Cheetahs practised on the same fields that the club was scheduled to practise on. I soon learned that this was an incorrect assumption, as the rugby fields were owned by the Cheetahs and all maintenance was paid for by the professional club. This meant that the amateur club was an independent tenant and could access the rugby fields at any time, after the Cheetahs' practice sessions. Literally playing in the shadows of the Cheetah stadium, however, the Grey Beards team could never practice on more than a third of the field, while the Cheetahs had multiple other options at their disposal. In tandem with the heavy load that the practice sessions created on the field, which destroyed the grass, the professional team required the fields during the evening, which in turn meant that there was no need to maintain the spotlights of the field. If the Cheetahs had to practice in the evenings, they would simply use their stadium or one of the universities' fields,[69] to mimic a professional match day. This was a further reason why Peter mentioned that, as noted in Chapter 1, he would make a point to fix the lights before the league started, to help the Cheetahs but also to meet the standard he believed the amateur team deserved. Ironically though, Justin informed me, even if the funds were gathered by Peter to buy multiple breakers and bulbs, the club did not have enough funds to keep the fences closed around the fields. This resulted in a lot of cable theft at the club and further kept the team from being able to practice on the whole field with adequate light. As my interlocutors would then regularly drop rugby balls during practice sessions, when they could not see the ball up until it was in and out of their hands, an automated response would normally follow from one player to another to '*switch on'*. Herewith, my admiration was firmly vested in the ability of amateur men to perform 'the basics' of rugby with limited support, including the continuous effort from fellow team members to pick one another up, literally and figuratively.

---

[68] Translation: Bad is good.

[69] As the Cheetahs had fallen out of favour with the South African Rugby Union, where the latter barred the former from high-earning spectacles in the Northern Hemisphere rugby scene; the professional team had to cut their costs dramatically. The team did not receive any extra revenue from matches to pay salaries. Also, Cheetah practice sessions would often occur at facilities that did not cost about R4000 to switch on the lights for practice, and at schools or university fields that had partnerships with the professional side.

With an interest in the relationships between Southeast Asian communist societies, from the late 1950's to the 1980's, Anderson (2006:163) pointed out how imagined communities were never homogenous. This enabled me to (re)think about how the amateur field was further removed from the professional field, and further opened the space to observe, partake, imagine and write with multiple different experiences of community. In this respect, Anderson (2006:163) contradicted his first edition of *Imagined Communities*, where he stated that:

> '*…nation building policies of new states (that formed through colonial conquest) had a genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm, and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth'*.

However, rather than further support his initial argument, Anderson (2006:163) pointed out that this linear approach to nationalism was short-sighted. Anderson (2006:159) had initially believed that 'nationalism in the colonised worlds of Asia and Africa was modelled directly on the dynastic states of nineteenth-century Europe', but he subsequently noted that this view lacked an alternative view to the dominance of Eurocentrism. Through his focus on the Asian war that ensnared dominant Marxist theory, Anderson (2006:156) then used the second edition of *Imagined Communities* to re-establish his approach to the modularity and adaptation of national boundaries. In this respect, Anderson (2006:172-173) noted that an imagined community had permeable boundaries, which resulted in the spread of the imagined community to every conceivable society. Here Anderson (2006:173) wanted to show how his area-study scholarship and Southeast Asian studies were not merely a narrow particularism, and actually connected different parts of the world. Anderson (2006:176) placed a lot of emphasis on innovation in-between multiple individuals, moreover, as he examined the material conditions and production of national thinking. The material underpinnings of imagination, Anderson (2006:156) found, shaped fluid relationships that were not bound to geographical space and in fact were interconnected to multiple integral spaces, which gave countries a comparable source of solidity.

Insofar as national borders could be reproduced on stamps, maps, posters, census groups, and museum artifacts, Anderson (2006:163) noted that these were merely devices for making the nation recognizable, as museums then affixed a census count to the map of a particular nation to shape 'the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion, the nature of ruled individuals, and the legitimacy of its ancestry'. In the face of these devices, Anderson (2006:193) thoughtfully cautioned against the act of forgetting. In other words, Anderson (2006:191) was adamant that there were multiple ways through which the nation could be (re)imagined and further (re)produced, as his reference to the war amongst Eastern communist nations alluded to the fact that although nations could look the same in theory, there still existed a bewildering variety of

differences among them. By shifting the focus from the dominant narrative of a nation, towards the contingencies of a particular imagination, therefore, Anderson (2006:199) revealed how the nation and nationalism could further be contested.

Rather than offering a cyclical argument about a good or bad nation, or nationalism, Anderson (2006:176) was curious about the way in which identity and belonging worked to navigate social interaction, relationships, and the trajectory of history within a community. To build on the work of Anderson (2006), I then noted how the amateur rugby scene forged a space of co-creation, where men were able to (re)envision differences and (re)create a sense community. Herein my interlocutors were able to continuously (re)adjust their approach to daily life, as rugby was not only an abstract thought but an act within the world. Interaction on and off the rugby field, therefore, was not viewed as an impasse to change (as in the professional arena) but as an intersection point to observe and partake in continuous transformation. Within this intersection space of amateur club rugby, I then found that participation involved a contingency of different inputs, which also led to various outputs. This entailed the presence of multiple pathways to becoming a rugby player and man in post-apartheid South Africa. As my interlocutors consciously made the decision to participate in rugby, on and off the field, I then noted how amateur club rugby revealed a glimpse of a postcolonial community, in post-apartheid South Africa. In tandem with a theoretical glimpse, as it related to the way Foucault (cited by Gordon, 1980:7) theorised about fragments,[70] however, the majority of time that I spent with my interlocutors was underneath the light of two spotlight lightbulbs, which revealed to me the significance of the imagined community.

3.3 A hole in the fence, two spotlights, and a worn-out rugby field for amateur participation

Spaced on the corners of the A-field, four overarching structures stood tall on the field, with multiple fixed and boxed lightbulbs. Unfortunately, only two lightbulbs worked, and Justin often had to replace various parts in the electrical box, that were faulty or stolen. Initially, during the start of the season in the summer, the lighting issue did not seem to be a problem, as normally the sun gave the team enough fading light to complete an hour and a half of practice. As the days went by and the training sessions became darker, however, two spotlights next to the clubhouse could only dimly light up the corner of the field, for practice. Along with making it difficult for participants to regularly catch the rugby ball and to maintain possession during drills, the lighting

[70] Fragments, according to Foucault (cited by Gordon, 1980:78), were merely markers of time insofar as these fragments were 'repetitive and disconnected'; a fragment 'advance*s* nowhere. Since indeed it never ceases to say the same thing, it perhaps says nothing. It is tangled up into an indecipherable, disorganised muddle. In a nutshell, it is inconclusive' (Foucault cited by Gordon, 1990:78).

problem further exacerbated the shortcomings that my interlocutors had, which the head coach called 'basic' skills (see Chapter 1). As the basic skills of players and the lighting problem then walked hand in hand with one another to provide a regular theme at the club, I intended to track the progress of players up until everyone could catch, kick, tackle, run, and ruck. Initially, I thought that if I could keep track of the progress that players made towards perfecting the basics, I might also see the team win a match and create narratives of success that talk about the hard work through adversity, like the Springboks in *Chasing the Sun.*[71] Surprisingly though, even when the matches were played in the light of day, my interlocutors had the same difficulties with the same basics, which also cost the players and the team multiple injuries and lost matches. Despite adverse personal issues and team results, however, my interlocutors kept on coming back week in and week out, working harder every session. I am not romanticising the facts here; directly after lost games the club members would be livid, and most blamed everything and everyone. But when the next training session started, my interlocutors took the field with renewed energy and focus. As I then struggled to track the basic skills of my participants over the course of the season, noting that their effort in practices did not spill over into matches, I realised that I had overvalued a need to win rugby matches and a pattern to achieve this.

With a focus on winning rugby matches, I had overlooked the basics of amateur rugby, where participants had placed an equal value on the interaction with one another. In this case, my previous experience as a rugby player was to my detriment, as I had understood participation to involve a search to gain membership in bigger leagues, better teams and so become professional. My ideas coincided with the work of Besnier (2018b), and so I then spent my evenings after practice sessions having more board sessions in the clubhouse,[72] studying the coach's patterns thoroughly, and watching match reviews on *YouTube* with uninterrupted attention. Thereafter I returned to each practice session with new ideas to share with the group, and to find a 'winning formula' on matchdays, up until one evening in the week that built-up to the biggest match of the year. Insofar as there was no bigger reward than the bragging rights to win against the Police rugby club, and in a season where there were no wins, I decided to create an impenetrable set of moves to overcome the arch-rivals from the Police rugby club. Ironically though, while this fixture was believed to be the biggest match of the season for my interlocutors, the Police members did not share the sentiment beyond the casual banter between friends, as the Police team had not lost a game. This I learned after I went to watch a Police match with Justin and Jordan, who were

[71] After the Springbok Rugby World Cup success in 2019*, DSTV* made a series to show the 'human' side of rugby, Sibembe argued (2020).

[72] Board sessions are formal rugby review sessions at professional clubs, where the coaches sit with their teams through video footage of practice sessions and matches, to point out good and bad points. Along with the good and the bad points, this was in addition a planning session for following practice sessions and match days.

always tracking the results of their previous club and exchanging conversations. As I then saw the Police team thrash other teams that defeated Grey Beards, I started with a plan to stop the momentum of the Police with quick play on both the offence and defence.

While the Police rugby teams had bigger players and a lot of retired players who had played professionally, I felt that this match was right up my street of expertise and I placed more emphasis on training specific patterns during my coaching session, emphasising that the only way to win was to employ my tweaks to the patterns and playbook of the coach. However, as any other practice session went where the coach had a lot of plans without moving beyond the basics, the coach felt that within the week before the Police game, players had to receive extra motivation from him. This meant that the coach spent more time than usual making the team run through practising 'the basics', with his motivational speeches, before the teams went into their set piece session splits, between forwards and backs, for the last 15 minutes.[73] As a consequence, the team was uncertain about how to approach different phases in the game within certain territories,[74] as this varied from team to team that the players came from. Expressed differently, even though my interlocutors now had the tools to participate in rugby, after half of a season learning the basics from the head coach, the team did not regularly work on any plan to co-construct a win.

On Monday and Tuesday, the team had a fitness and a contact session, all of which seemed redundant considering that the club was three sessions away from the biggest match of their season. As Thursday then approached and the teams were announced, all participants believed that they would effectively use the last session to verbally cojoin the week and the rest of the season. Unsurprisingly though, the coach wanted to have another contact session and as the last 15 minutes of the session approached, team members already seemed defeated. Smiles turned into frowns and the excitement with which the week started seemed to be non-existent. To make matters worse, as soon as the coach then asked me to take the backs, while he worked on the scrums and lineouts, the two lights lost power and the only remaining light was an orange streetlight at the local bus stop, across the B-field. As Justin then ran to see what the problem was, he noted that there were no remaining credits on their electricity metre, which he could fix

[73] Set pieces are the rucks and lineouts where the team members are divided into the forwards and the backs. Even though I was an assistant coach, I only worked with the backs or reinforced the coach's patterns with the whole team. While the split between forwards and backs might seem unnecessary, and one could argue that as long as the basics are covered one can play rugby, the amateur club approach without any structure and cohesion between forwards and backs showed how when everyone followed their own ideas on the field they almost played against one another, albeit on the same team. Set pieces were, therefore, equally important to the basics and a part of the basics, even though this did not always get acknowledged.

[74] Rugby tactics revolve around the ability of a team to maintain possession of the rugby ball and to defuse any opposition attempt to spend time with the ball. In this regard, territory on the field is also important, as this dictates how aggressive or conservative your approach to a specific style of play needs to be, in order to keep possession and ultimately stand a better chance to score points and win the game.

instantly with a payment, though the two lights needed another 30 minutes to cool down before they could turn on again. Just when I thought practice was over, however, the players ran over to me and told me that they would train underneath the light of the bus-stop. From this I could hear how desperately the players wanted to keep training, to which I then agreed and told the coach that I would join the backs, while he had the forwards scrum a machine.

Even when there was less light on the B-field than the A-field, less grass, and no visible lines, the backline players hardly dropped any balls. Ironically though, as I then asked the players why they first needed to be upset with the lights and the limited amount of time during split, before they started catching the balls and running brilliant lines, Jaco jokingly replied that everyone felt more comfortable being on the B-field. As a consequence, even though this was meant as a joke, Jaco enabled me to see how easily I promoted my own ideas about success at the expense of the imagination thereof for my participants. While I constantly worked harder to see my interlocutors 'progress' in their basics, the B-field run without any significant lights made me realise that I did not give my interlocutors enough room to run together, make mistakes and to also coach me in how to be a better player-coach-researcher. Insofar as I interpreted the amateur rugby club as an imagined community, where multiple matters of concern intersected, therefore, my amateur rugby club offered an example of the need to make a case for more critical discussions about rugby in post-apartheid South Africa. In a similar fashion to how my interlocutors enabled me to reflect on my own assumptions about rugby, as a player-coach-researcher, subsequent rugby discussions about rugby also ought not to overemphasize the contribution of the Springboks to account for the shortcomings in post-apartheid South Africa. More research on the Springboks could not generate a better understanding on more fields of rugby, than that understanding generated on the amateur fields, where there were men who actively participated in the shadows of the legacies of their professional counterparts, to show that any community can be (re)imagined through a change in perspective and a willingness to learn more from each other.

CONCLUSION

’Bad is good’: A negotiation between rugby and daily life

Throughout a socio-historical reflection on South Africa, from colonialism to post-apartheid South Africa, rugby has predominately been linked with the practice of education or as an adversary to formal education as a secondary embodiment of the specific era in which the sport took place. Initially, the colonialists used sport within the British public schools to separate the ‘boys’ from the men, as the participation in sports was perceived to be a rite of passage into the military and in service of the Empire. In this context, as South Africa then became a colony of Britain, colonised South Africans had to learn how to be submissive both to the rules of the crown and, on the rugby field, to the rules of the referee.

In a similar fashion to that of the myth of rugby’s origins (Baker, 1981:118), the colonised were then given a way to ‘overcome’ the rules of the colonisers ‘by beating them at their own game’. Ironically though, while no victory on the field could overthrow the colonial rule off the field, one could see how victory was perceived to be a symbolic achievement, to draw away any attention from the lack of material realisation. In an effort to then further solidify this symbol of rigour and masculinity, despite being overpowered on the battlefield during the South African War, the likes of Paul Roos went on to create the symbol of the Springbok. From within the colony, Afrikaans, English and Dutch Settlers then embarked on a journey to instil the lesson of how to ‘fight’ any ‘other’ individuals for sovereignty and supremacy. In a similar fashion to how the Boer Republics and the British at the time denied the role of black individuals during the South African War, rugby was considered as exclusively white in the socio-historic accounts of researchers. Just as more research has subsequently indicated how involved black individuals were in the South African War, researchers like Snyders (2010; 2015) have also found evidence to suggest that rugby has had multiple black, coloured and indian players, who had also participated in rugby at the time of the start of the Springboks. Rather than attaining Springbok recognition, however, non-white players have had to settle for *National Merit Orders of Ikhamanga*, to compensate for their exclusion from socio-historical records, and, further, to receive a modicum of recognition for being pioneers of sport and rugby, even if only posthumously. But even if the *Ikhamanga* merit award is a useful steppingstone to help look beyond the powerful symbolism inherent in the idea of the Springboks, from colonial to post-apartheid times, there has been a shortage of literature that elaborates on rugby and its participants on fields that did not produce Springboks.

To be sure, even though another angle on rugby does not overshadow, or even begin to challenge, the socio-historic symbolism or material legacy of the Springboks, the shift in focus

does enable future participants to imagine belonging to a community. In addition, importantly, while I do not suggest that more literature will enable more rugby communities to realise that there is something significant about them in comparison with the Springboks, in this dissertation I have argued that amateur club rugby communities, in post-apartheid South Africa, have always been sites of meaningful relationships. In the absence of any financial incentive, the amateur rugby club was dependant on the ability of participants to get along and to work through any altercation, in order for the club to stay in existence. To then understand how amateur club rugby and participation could inform a sense of belonging to an imagined community, where men could be vulnerable about their emotions and collectively map out a plan of action to curb adversity, I decided to enter an unknown field in Bloemfontein.

I spent eight months with an amateur rugby club in post-apartheid South Africa to engage in ethnographic research for this dissertation. I learned how men were able to negotiate the problems of rugby and everyday life. In addition to my experience as a former semi-professional rugby player, however, I started out my research journey as a bystander, who had to learn how the amateur field was constructed (see Chapter 1). As I had to jump quickly from bystander to a player-coach, in the absence of enough coaches, I then realised how participants were focussed on versatility. Subsequently, as I spent more time with my interlocutors, I further found how this versatility was demonstrated in the case of injuries. In tandem with the heavy hits during rugby matches that left players with concussions, broken ankles or hands, the injuries of players also had a symbolic aspect, insofar as men were able to think-with the embodiment of their injuries and or socio-historic dispositions (see Chapter 2). Within the actions of amateur club rugby, which had a repertoire of injuries, I then understood how my interlocutors embodied empathy and realised how the participation of each individual was intimately bound up with that of the others. However, even though participants could not think themselves into the injuries of all players, the amateur rugby club enabled my interlocutors to imagine belonging to a community (see Chapter 3). I then understood how my interlocutors were able to see how sharing the amateur rugby fields provided the means to further (re)imagine rugby, contest belonging, and interaction with another in everyday life.

In conclusion, we recall how my interlocutors held firmly to the belief that *bad is good*; there will be readers who interpret my findings in both good and bad terms; hopefully, critical readers, like my interlocuters, will also see some ‘good’ in the ‘bad’. Regardless of either bad or good impressions, however, my hope is that this dissertation encourages future researchers of rugby to also be surprised by the community that they interact with, and learn from the experience. A community should be understood as an accumulation of multiple different individuals, thoughts, and interactions, that are imagined through a particular structure that is continuously changing.

Thus, as this dissertation provides a glimpse of an amateur club rugby negotiation, between structure and agency, the stage is set to (re)imagine rugby participation and its interdependent relationships, which offer a shift in focus; from the impasses of the post-apartheid era towards the pragmatic opportunities that exist in the democratic state.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adhikari, M. 2005. *Not white enough, not black enough: Racial identity in the South African coloured community*. Ohio: University Press.

Allen, D.C. 2001. ''Volksmoeder': mother of a rugby playing nation. *Suid-Afrikaanse Tydskrif vir Navorsing in Sport, Liggaamlike Opvoedkunde en Ontspanning*, *23*(2):1-6.

Alexander, N. 2002. *An ordinary country. Issues in the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Anderson, C.M., Bielert, T.A. & Jones, R.P. 2004. One country, one sport, endless knowledge: The anthropological study of sports in South Africa. *Anthropologica*, pp.47-55.

Anderson, B. 2006. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso books.

Appadurai, A. 1998. Dead certainty: Ethnic violence in the era of globalization. *Development and Change*, *29*(4):905-925.

ASA (Anthropology Southern Africa). 2005. Ethical guidelines and principles of conduct for anthropologists. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, *28*(3and4):142-143.

Bahl, S. 2019. Rugby and the Female Form. *Cape Chameleon*, 30 Jul. https://capechameleon.co.za/rugby-and-the-female-form/ Date of access: 28 Oct. 2020.

Baker, W.J. 1981. William Webb Ellis and the origins of Rugby Football: The life and death of a Victorian myth. *Albion, 13*(2):117-130.

Bergholz, M. 2018. Thinking the nation: imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism, by Benedict Anderson. *The American Historical Review*, *123*(2):518-528.

Besnier, N., Brownell, S., & Carter, T.F. 2018a. *The anthropology of sport: bodies, borders, biopolitics*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Besnier, N., Guinness, D., Hann, M. & Kovac, U. 2018b. Rethinking masculinity in the Neoliberal order: Cameroonian footballers, Fijian rugby players, and Senegalese wrestlers . *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *60*(4):839-872. doi:10.1017/S0010417518000312.

Besnier, N. & Brownell, S. 2019. Sport. In: *the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology Value and Values in Global Sport*. https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/sport Date of access: 10 Mar. 2022.

Black, D.R. & Nauright, J. 1998. *Rugby and the South African nation: sport, cultures, politics, and power in the old and new South Africas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1979. *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* [The Distinction. Social criticism of judgment]. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. 1990. *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. California: Stanford University Press.

Breakfast, S. 2019. South African schools with the most Springboks. *The South African*, 26 Sept. https://www.thesouthafrican.com/sport/most-springboks-by-school/ Date of access: 15 Aug. 2020.

Brownell, S. ed., 2008. *The 1904 anthropology days and Olympic games: sport, race, and American imperialism*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Carbado, D.W. & Gulati, M. 2013. The intersectional fifth black woman. *Du Bois Review*, *10*(2):527.

Catsam, D. C. 2020. Rugby Transformation as Alibi: Thoughts on Craven and Coetzee. In: Cleveland, T., Kaur, T. & Akindes, G., eds. *Sports in Africa, past and present*. Athens: Ohio University Press. pp. 233-248.

Cleophas, F.J. 2018. Shaping a decolonised sport history curriculum through the national question. *Yesterday and Today*, *20*:148-164.

Cleveland, T., Kaur, T. & Akindes, G. eds. 2020. *Sports in Africa, past and present*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Collins, P. H. 2015. Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology, 41*:1-20. doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112142.

Connell, R., W. 1983. *Which way is up? Essays on sex, class, and culture*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R., W. 1987. Gender and power. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Connell, R., W. 1990. An iron man: The body and some contradictions of hegemonic masculinity: In *Sport, men and the gender order,* edited by M. Messner and D. Sabo. Champaign: Human Kinetics Books.

Connell, R.W. and Messerschmidt, J.W. 2005. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, *19*(6):829-859.

Dart, J. 2015. Representations of sport in the revolutionary socialist press in Britain, 1988–2012. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *50*(8):993-1015. https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690213497352

Davis, K. 2008. Intersectionality as buzzword: a sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist theory*, *9*(1):67-85.

Degnen, C. &Tyler, K. 2017. Amongst the disciplines: anthropology, sociology, intersection and intersectionality. *The Sociological Review*, *65*(1):35-53. doi.org/10.1177/0081176917693508

De La Bellacasa, M.P. 2012. 'Nothing comes without its world': thinking with care. *The Sociological Review*, *60*(2):197-216.

Du Plessis, C. 2017. *Divided we stand: the origins of separation in South African rugby 1861-1899.* Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (Thesis – MHCS).

Du Plessis, A., 2019. *The experiences of Springbok Women's Sevens rugby players regarding identity and perceived on-field performance.* Potchefstroom: North-West University. (Thesis – PhD).

Evans, M. 2010. Mandela and the televised birth of the rainbow nation. *National Identities*, *12*(3):309-326.

EPG (Eminent Persons Group). 2020. *EPG: Individual Federation Barometer and Sport Transformation Charter Scorecards 2018/19*.

http://www.dac.gov.za/sites/default/files/Part%201%20SRSA%20EPG%20Individual%20%20Federation%20Barometer%20and%20Sport%20Transformation%20Charter%20Scorecards_LR.pdf Date of access: 4 Oct. 2020.

Fordyce, T. 2019. Rugby World Cup Final: Siya Kolisi, South Africa's first black captain & legacy of 1995. *BBC Sport*, 2 Nov. https://www.bbc.com/sport/rugby-union/50233481 Date of access: 15 Aug. 2021.

Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books.

Goffman, E. 2009. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster Inc.

Gordon, C. 1980. *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge – selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon.

Greenway, M. 2022. Stalwarts reunite to celebrate the day Natal humbled Naas Botha's Northern Transvaal. *IOL*, 15 Oct. https://www.iol.co.za/sport/rugby/currie-cup/stalwarts-reunite-to-celebrate-the-day-natal-humbled-naas-bothas-northern-transvaal-8a88e339-7669-45e8-9340-87b89de2f296 Date of access: 16 Oct. 2022.

Grundlingh, A. 1994. Playing for power? Rugby, Afrikaner nationalism and masculinity in South Africa, c. 1900-70. *International Journal of the History of Sport, 11*:408-430.

Grundlingh, M. 2015. Showcasing the Springboks: the commercialisation of South African rugby heritage. *South African Review of Sociology, 46*:106-128.

Gwilliam, L. & Jones, C. 2018. Inside the Springbok Factory: How one school has produced 46 South Africa internationals. *BBC Sport*, 16 June. https://www.bbc.com/sport/rugby-union/44495420 Date of access: 18 Mar. 2021.

Hamayon, R. 2016. *Why we play: an anthropological study*. Chicago: Hau Books.

Höglund, K. & Sundberg, R. 2008. Reconciliation through Sports? The case of South Africa. *Third World Quarterly, 29*:805-818.

Holt, R. 1990. *Sport and the British: a modern history*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Ingold, T. 2008. Anthropology is not ethnography. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, *154*:69-92.

Ingold, T. 2014. Tha"s enough about ethnography! *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *4*(1):383-395.

James, C. L. R. 2013. *Beyond a boundary: 50th Anniversary Edition*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Langley, J. and Brenner, R. 2004. What is an injury? *Injury Prevention*, *10*(2):69-71.

Laureus. 2020. *20 years of Laureus–- Sports stars and Laureus family reflect on Mandela's legacy and look to future*. https://www.laureus.com/news/20-years-of-laureus-sports-stars-and-laureus-family-reflect-on-mandelas-legacy-and-look-to-future Date of access: 6 Aug. 2020.

Light, R. 2007. Re-examining hegemonic masculinity in high school rugby: The body, compliance and resistance. *Quest*, *59*(3):323-338.

Long. W. 2021. *Nation on the ouch: inside South Africa's mind*. Cape Town: Melinda Ferguson Books.

Lorde, A. 2018. *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. London: Penguin.

McLuhan, M. & Powers, B.R. 1989. The global village: transformations in world life and media in the 21st century. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mitchell, K. 2021. Remembering South Africa's favourite commercials. *Cape Town etc*, 11 Mar. https://www.capetownetc.com/entertainment/looking-back-at-some-of-south-africas-favourite-commercials/ Date of access: 01 Mar. 2022.

Morrell, R. 2017. Touch rugby, masculinity and progressive politics in Durban, South Africa, 1985–1990. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, *34*(7-8):619-638.

Muir, K., Parry, K.D., Anderson, E. 2020. Masculinity and Inclusive Rugby in the United Kingdom. In: Magrath, R., Cleland, J., Anderson, E., eds. *The Palgrave Handbook of Masculinity and Sport*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. pp. 323-340. Available from Springer eBook Collection: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-19799-5_18#citeas Date of access: 10 Feb. 2023.

Niehaus, I. 2014. Warriors of the rainbow nation? South African rugby after apartheid. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, *37*(1-2):68-80.

Poon, K.Y., Li, S.M., Roper, M.G., Wong, M.K.M., Wong, O. and Cheung, R.T.H. 2015. Kinesiology tape does not facilitate muscle performance: A deceptive controlled trial. *Manual therapy*, *20*(1):130-133.

Ratele, K. 2013. Of what value is feminism to black men?. *Communicatio*, *39*(2):256-270.

Reed-Danahay, D. 2020. *Bourdieu and Social Space: Mobilities, Trajectories, Emplacements*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Reef, A. 2010. Try these: tackling representations of rugby in recent South African novels. *English Academy Review*, *27*(2):71-80.

Rothmann, J., Antonie, K., Nell, W. and Ellis, S. 2022. Students' perceptions about inclusive and orthodox masculinities in contact sports at a South African University. *Journal of Homosexuality*, pp.1-21.

Rubin, J. D. 2014. Making art from uncertainty: magic and its politics in South African rugby. *Cultural Anthropology, 29*:699-719.

Rubin, J. D. 2021. *Animated by uncertainty: rugby and the performance of history in South Africa*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Scheper-Hughes, N. & Lock, M.M. 1987. The mindful body: a prolegomenon to future work in medical anthropology. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly, 1*(1):6-41.

Sibembe, Y. 2020. Chasing the sun: a human story told through. *Daily Maverick*, 21 Oct. https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-10-21-chasing-the-sun-a-human-story-told-through-a-rugby-lens/ Date of access: 10 Aug. 2021.

Snyders, H. 2010. Between the Springbok and Ikhamanga: the untold stories of South Africa's Black rugby exiles. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235855200_Between_the_Springbok_and_Ikhamanga_The_untold_story_of_South_Africa%27s_Black_rugby_Exiles Date of access: 12 Aug. 2020.

Snyders, H. 2015. Rugby, national pride and the struggle of Black South Africans for international recognition, 1897-1992. *Sporting Traditions, 32*:97-122.

Sonnekus, T. 2013. 'We're not Faggots!': Masculinity, homosexuality and the Representation of Afrikaner Men Who have Sex with Men in the Film Skoonheid and online. *South African Review of Sociology*, *44*(1):22-39.

Stiegler, N. & Bouchard, J.P. 2020. South Africa: challenges and successes of the COVID-19 lockdown. *Annales Médico-Psychologiques, Revue Psychiatrique*, *178*(7):695-698.

Tobias, E. 2015. *Errol Tobias: Pure Gold*. Cape Town: NB Publishers.

Tsing, A.L. 2011. *Friction: An ethnography of global connection*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Van der Westhuizen, C. 2016. Afrikaners in post-apartheid South Africa: inward migration and enclave nationalism. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies, 72*:1-9.

Winch. J. 2022. *World Champions: The Story about South African Rugby*. Cape Town: Best Read.

World Rugby. 2014. What is rugby? https://www.world.rugby/welcome-to-rugby/what-is-rugby Date of access: 10 Nov. 2020.

World Rugby. 2018. Year in review. https://resources.world.rugby/worldrugby/document/2020/07/28/212ed9cf-cd61-4fa3-b9d4-9f0d5fb61116/P56-57-Participation-Map_v3.pdf Date of access: 14 Nov. 2020.

World Rugby. 2022. Laws of the game. https://www.world.rugby/the-game/laws/law/ 15 Date of access: 13 Mar. 2022.