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**Exploring Players' Perceptions About Alcohol: The
Impact of Alcohol on the Rugby Team Culture.**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements

of

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at

The University of Waikato

by

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Dedication

To my grandfather David Arbuckle
you will always be an inspiration of mine.

Abstract

New Zealand club rugby has had a strong tradition of alcohol consumption. Research internationally and within New Zealand has presented rugby as a sport where alcohol consumption is prolific and hazardous. This investigation takes on a phenomenological approach in order to explore rugby player's perceptions about alcohol and the impact that alcohol has on rugby team culture. The research data has been collected using one-off face to face interviews with participants. Participant information established that rugby players consume alcohol frequently throughout the rugby season after matches and trainings. These events serve as antecedents for binge drinking to occur. As a result, rugby player's behaviour does fluctuate depending on the attitudes and types of people they associate with when drinking alcohol. Finally, the study reveals that rugby players acknowledge the detrimental impact alcohol has on performance but this is often disregarded as players seek to create meaningful friendships and a sense of unity within the team culture.

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Thank you to my parents, your awesome dedication and perseverance has helped me to achieve so much in life including this massive piece of work. I love you both.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1: The Researcher:

Rugby is the sport where my passion lies. Like many New Zealand boys I began playing rugby when I was five years old, although kicking and passing the ball in the backyard would have begun as soon as I could walk. My dream like many others was to play for the New Zealand All Blacks side. My grandfather, my father, and my brother all had a tremendous passion for the sport and were very influential in moulding my passion for the game at a younger age. At such a young age, I was not aware that rugby had a strong connection with alcohol. All I knew was that if you trained hard and practiced your skills you could become an All Black.

Having now played and coached senior grade rugby, it has grown upon me through my experiences that, consuming alcohol has become somewhat of an accepted part of the social side of rugby. Over the years, I had come to the realisation that there was more to rugby than striving for the All Blacks. There were friends to have conversations with and fun times to be had. So much in fact, that my friends and I would drink very heavily trying to prove to one another how 'disciplined' we were at drinking. As a result, there were times when such hazardous drinking lead to disastrous situations and poor decisions being made.

Attending university, I am sure there was not a week that went by where I did not drink heavily with my team mates during the rugby season. In saying this, I do feel that through such experiences I have formed friendships that I will keep for the rest of my life. Throughout my experiences in rugby and certainly with many of my travels to other rugby clubs I have noticed that the same type of drinking environment is present.

The drinking environment I have experienced at various rugby clubs has provoked me to question the perceptions rugby players have about their own drinking and the impact it has on the team culture.

1.2: The Research:

Team gatherings in sport are accompanied by consuming large amounts of alcohol (Crow, & Rosner, 2002; Kirby, & Wintrup, 2002). In particular, amateur club level athletes form the majority of those who consume alcohol whilst involved in sport (Martens, Watson, & Beck, 2006). Thomas (2003) maintains that rugby is a sport where excessive consumption occurs too frequently. Each of these factors helps to endorse the purpose of this study which will focus on senior club level rugby union players who are of legal age to consume alcohol. More specifically, the study will explore the male perceptions towards alcohol consumption and the effects alcohol consumption has on the culture of the team environment.

The following basic research questions help to underpin the study: ‘What are the key perceptions rugby players hold about the consumption of alcohol?’; ‘What are the emerging impacts of alcohol consumption on the team culture of rugby?’

1.3 The Structure:

The following thesis is split into six chapters the first being this introduction. The second chapter will be a review of literature. The literature draws predominantly on the areas of sports sociology and sports psychology. The review begins by examining the alcohol culture within New Zealand society and then moves towards exploring the damaging effects and health risks that alcohol causes to New Zealanders. Then a review of the historical foundations of rugby is explored leading the reader to the present day and the importance rugby holds to New Zealand as a nation. The literature review will conclude by examining

the dynamic of team culture and what part it plays in the detrimental normalisation of alcohol.

What will not be covered in the review are the alcohol issues related addiction, mental illness, and physical impairment. These aspects are beyond the scope of this investigation and are inclined to focus on the clinical conditions associated with alcohol consumption and less on the dynamics of alcohol affecting the nature of a team in terms of unity, sense of belonging, pressures, connectedness, relationships, and interactions between players and the team. More specifically, this literature review aims to focus more on the social conditions by which alcohol is consumed and its impact on how the team functions with each other and the sport. Essentially, research on understanding how players interact with each other when participating in alcohol consumption and the effect alcohol has on team culture will be reviewed.

The third chapter, methodology and methods, looks at the theoretical background helping to underpin this study. The study considers an interpretive view adopting a phenomenology approach. As a means of collecting data five semi-structured interviews were conducted with amateur club rugby players.

Chapter four is a comprehensive display of the results that were gathered from each of the participants. Each question is also highlighted using a table that helps to show the participants' responses. The results chapter is broken into four sections. The first section displays data collected from introductory questions. The second section shows results detailing the participants own perceptions of alcohol. In the third section examples that describe the experiences occurring as an outcome of consuming alcohol in the rugby environment are delivered. Finally a presentation of interpretations explaining why participants believe the connection between rugby and alcohol occurs is shown.

The fifth chapter is a discussion section. Throughout this section results gathered are compared and contrasted against one another in order to highlight the key findings. The final chapter is a recapitulation of the study and presents a number of key messages that may well be of interest to key rugby officials, coaches, managers, players, trainers, and New Zealand club rugby officials.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction:

Leichliter, Meilman, Presely, and Cashin, (1998) contend that alcohol historically has had a profound impact on the culture of sport. Similarly, many after-match sporting fixtures are accustomed to including alcohol as a means to bring about a sense of team unity and inclusiveness. Indeed, spectators of sport often congregate at bars where alcohol is copious and readily available to watch various sporting events. If supporters are lucky enough to witness a game live, it is highly likely that some form of alcohol advertising or consumption of alcohol will be viewed. More often than not, many top sporting teams align themselves with any number of local breweries and liquor companies in return for major endorsements or some form of monetary gain (Wyllie, Gilmore, Casswell, & Burns, 1989; O'Brien, & Kypri, 2008). Given these examples, alcohol seems to be an essential part of how individuals and teams connect to and with sport. However, what do these kinds of interactions mean and why is alcohol so pervasive in determining the nature of a team?

O'Brien and Lyons (2000) assert that individual sports like darts and pool have become promoters of beer consumption during sport. Team sports including American football, ice hockey, Australian rules, basketball, and soccer are readily identified as sports where alcohol consumption is prevalent, helping to maintain the link between alcohol and sport (Braun, & Vliegthart, 2008; Curry, 1991; Dart, 2008; Grano, 2007; Heming, 2009; Mewett, & Toffoletti, 2008; Zamboanga, Rodriguez, & Horton, 2008). The reaches of alcohol, therefore can be far and wide ranging and not limited to any one sport.

More recently, a number of elite athletes have been at the forefront of a number of scandals where the excess of alcohol consumption has resulted in individuals committing acts of violence, sexual abuse and other such misdemeanours (Lyon, 2004; Mewett, & Toffoletti,

2008; Munro, 2000; O'Brien, Blackie, & Hunter, 2005; Peretti-Wattel, Guagiardo, Verger, Pruvost, Mignon, & Obadia 2003; Vande Berg, 1998; Watson, 2004; Welch, 1997). Given the high profile status of various sporting personalities, the media often appear fixated on magnifying such encounters to represent a particular image of the person, their sporting code, and even their ethnicity. Black, Lawson, and Flieshman (1999), however, state that elite athletes tend to form a minor part of the greater 'alcohol in sport' problem. There are certainly greater quantities of amateur athletes or other sporting participants behaving more inappropriately than some of the highlighted professionals (Black, et al., 1999; Muthen & Muthen, 2000; Thomas, 2003; Werch, Moore, DiClemente, Owen, Jobli, & Bledsoe, 2009).

Of concern is that the growing number of sportspeople and/or fans of sport are more likely to over consume alcohol than non-sportspeople (Hutchins, 2009; Leichter, Meilman, Presely, & Cashin, 1998; Lorente, Peretti-Wattel, Griffet, & Grelot, 2003; Nelson and Wechsler, 2003; O'Brien, Ali, Cotter, O'Shea, & Stannard, 2007). Numerous drink drivers, violent brawls and details of sexual offending have been associated with occasions of alcohol consumption by individuals who belong to a sports team. The fondness of athletes or other sporting participants to continue to consume alcohol remains ever present, and perhaps even more so, within various team cultures. Moreover, alcohol has become a key presence within the sporting environment and has been well recorded as a means of promoting individual's health and wellbeing.

In New Zealand approximately seventy-six percent of adults aged sixteen years or older partake in organised sport annually (SPARC, 2008). When considering Lorente et al's., (2003) assertion of athlete consumption versus non athlete consumption, and taking into account that a majority of SPARC's (2008) seventy-six percent can legally buy alcohol, the likelihood that New Zealand's adult athlete population hazardously consume alcohol is

particularly worrying. What research has failed to highlight is the perceptions New Zealand athletes hold about alcohol consumption when participating in sport.

In New Zealand, the drinking culture among many male rugby union players is noticeably skewed whereby individuals continually drink alcohol excessively during after-match functions which has led to such gatherings becoming socially recognised and indeed normalised as binge drinking events (Thomas, 2003). From a more masculine perspective, the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol by males has been built upon an underlying premise that males who drink alcohol are considered more masculine than those who do not (De Visser, & Smith, 2006). It is important that the team environment of rugby be explored in an attempt to find out why 'males' drinking in rugby has become such commonplace-based social practice.

Given that alcohol consumption is so prevalent in other sports, it is perhaps surprising that little attention has been afforded to researching the culture of alcohol in rugby. The purpose of this study is to fill a void in the literature pertaining to the social influences of alcohol and its more immediate response on or within the team culture. In the same vein, the current insights of the wider New Zealand society towards alcohol has perceived alcohol as a socially damaging drug (Cameron, Cochrane, McNeill, Melbourne, Morrison, & Robertson, 2010; Hutchins, 2009; Ministry of Health, 2010; New Zealand Law Commission, 2010; Roberts, Beckwith, & Watts, 2010;). However, what is not common knowledge, is whether the players themselves believe this to be true.

2.2: Alcohol culture in New Zealand society:

The World Health Organisation (2007) suggests, that on any one occasion, any male who consumes six or more glasses of alcohol, or a female who consumes four or more glasses, is in effect, taking part in a binge drinking session. The Ministry of Health (2007) as well as

Sellman, Connor, and Joyce (2010) both argue that binge drinking of alcohol has become harmful to many New Zealanders who on the whole regularly engage in drinking as a leisure time activity. In a survey of New Zealand residents it was found that alcohol had been consumed by eighty-one percent of individuals aged twelve and above at least once during 2004 (Ministry of Health, 2007). The young age at which New Zealand children are beginning to drink alcohol is particularly concerning especially when alcohol has been proven to lead to serious health consequences and the engagement of other at-risk behaviours, such as, conduct disorder, crime, sexual promiscuity, and smoking (Ministry of Health, 2007). Of the eighty-one percent of participants who had consumed alcohol during 2004, twenty-five percent took part in a heavy drinking session more than once a week. In essence one in four New Zealanders are at risk of doing considerable harm to themselves every week.

The most popular days for consumption of alcohol by New Zealanders are the weekend days of Friday and Saturday (Ministry of Health, 2007). Based on these figures, it may be plausible to suggest that alcohol plays an integral part in the leisure time of many New Zealanders. Similarly, the work of Hutchins (2009) concluded that some groups purposely consider alcohol as a drug to be consumed in large doses. These sorts of societal perceptions have led to alcohol remaining the most popular form of drug induced by New Zealanders each year (Hutchins, 2009). To date there is a paucity of research exploring the historical significance of alcohol consumption in New Zealand and its rise to popularity within the sporting arena.

In the beginning, what started out as New Zealanders' consuming alcohol in limited amounts whilst participating in leisure events has now become a drug, that unrestricted, has led to levels of overindulgence, addictive behaviours, and other social and physical illnesses (Hutchins, 2009). Hutchins (2009) describes how historically early alehouses were the central gathering places within many villages and how this past time feature potentially led to the

alcohol problem New Zealand currently experiences today. Publicans often organised leisure activities and family events in order to keep community spirits high. But there is a suggestion that publicans had ulterior motives whereby, events were formed in order to get patrons spending their money over the bar. This possible hidden agenda in creating revenue through ‘family-ised events’ may actually have created the history of social problems, leading to poverty, illness, and family break-ups that are experienced in New Zealand today (Hutchins, 2009).

The historical premise idea is further strengthened by the traditional characterisation of how we define the New Zealand male. In the past, when males dominated the working class, an accepted behaviour was to work hard all week and to then consume as much beer as possible within the time the bars were open for business (Collins, 2002). A majority of these same males also involved themselves with rugby. Collins (2002) argues that had alcohol not been an integral part to early New Zealand, alcohol would not feature as prominently as it does today in sport. To this date there has been little investigation on how alcohol has become such a regular past time in sport and even less evidence of why alcohol has become so popular in rugby? Through gaining perspectives from rugby players the opportunity there exists to begin to understand the numerous views and understandings associated with why alcohol over-consumption in rugby occurs. Perhaps New Zealander’s present infatuation with alcohol is not only historically based but also due to the levels of excessive and closer access of liquor outlets that has manifested in New Zealand communities.

Livingston, Chikritzhs, and Room (2007) along with McCreanor, Barnes, Gregory, Kaiwai, and Borell (2005) argue that gradually more outlets selling alcohol in close proximity leads to an increased level of alcohol consumption within the local area. A recent investigation by Connor, Kypri, Bell, and Cousins (2010) found that an intensification in off licence premises has meant that individuals living within a proximal distance of alcohol

outlets were much more likely to be harmed as a result of alcohol. Connor et al., (2010) went on to find that an intensification of liquor outlets is present throughout much of New Zealand. With a growth in liquor outlet density it is possible to suggest that rugby players have easy access to alcohol and do not need to travel too far to purchase alcohol. It is uncertain whether rugby players in New Zealand make use of or are susceptible to the convenience that alcohol outlet vicinity has become. I will now detail groups most likely to consume alcohol hazardously in New Zealand.

Those who are most likely to receive national media attention as a result of hazardous drinking are aged eighteen to twenty-four years followed closely by those aged twenty-five to thirty-one years (Ministry of Health, 2007). This claim highlights in particular university students (i.e., between the ages of eighteen and thirty-one) as ‘problematic’ and ‘troublesome’ when intoxicated (Andersson, Johnsson, Berglund, & Ojehagen, 2007; Curry, 1991; Flack, Daubman, Caron, Asadorian, D’Aureli, Hall, Kiser, & Stine, 2007; Kypri, Bell, Hay, & Baxter, 2008; Muir, & Seitz, 2004; Nattiv, Puffer, & Green 1997; Paschall, Kypros, & Saltz, 2006). Within New Zealand, younger adults tend to be highlighted more so as having a negative connotation when it comes to hazardous drinking. The normalisation of alcohol in sport in this context may well lie within the general perceptions younger adults hold about alcohol and how they choose to drink. Together with New Zealand’s overall relaxed view of alcohol, its heavy consumption reputation, and the ease of access to alcohol, the younger adults of New Zealand perhaps perceive that sport has become part of an attractive medium where consumption of alcohol is regarded as being routine (Wells, Graham, Speechley, & Koval, 2005).

Baer, Kivlahan, and Marlatt, (2006), argue that alcohol consumed by eighteen to twenty-four year olds helps limit individual’s inhibitions and stimulate interaction between individuals. Similarly, Baer et al., (2006) state, that as younger adults move away from home

for the first time the consumption of alcohol is regularly necessary in order to establish new social links with unfamiliar people. This idea could well apply in New Zealand contexts as the university student population regularly features as being one of the susceptible at-risk groups deemed as being irresponsible users of alcohol.

Olds and Thombs (2009) promote a secondary cause for this group's drinking problem which relates to the overall perceptions by younger adults. This belief considers that by drinking alcohol the individual is acting in accordance with the social norms held by their peers (Olds, & Thombs, 2009). After all, if the creation of a new culture and generational belief is widely held, those 'others' within the generation who are yet to have the belief will in all likelihood adopt the common perception. This is done in an effort to maintain and/or establish a particular status within the group of youths (Fleming, Thorson, & Atkin, 2004). If Olds and Thombs (2009) are correct then there needs to be an investigation into what is being offered in New Zealand secondary schools to promote young teens' understanding about the risk factors associated with the use of alcohol and more importantly its affect on the lives of young people. This idea, although interesting in terms of how individuals become exposed to alcohol or how a culture of drinking is created, does fall outside the scope of this study so therefore will not be examined in any great detail.

When approaching individuals about the alcohol problem present in New Zealand many health professionals, educators, and practitioners would agree that alcohol is not only hazardous to one's health, it is also costly (Ministry of Health, 2010). It would appear that in some ways the alcohol problem has become so entrenched that many individuals are simply reinforcing what they see in their community and are somewhat oblivious to what it actually costs (Olds, & Thombs, 2009). This raises an interesting research question as to whether the perception of alcohol by New Zealanders at the actual consumption phase extends to the over-consumption phase. The nature of drinking is relatively well documented yet individuals

monitoring the seriousness of drinking in various contexts such as sport offers new ground to explore various social and personal associations, interactions, relationships and behaviours.

2.3: Physical and social ramifications of alcohol consumption:

Due to the nature of alcohol offending police now actively patrol major city centres in search of incidences of public drinking and intoxicated individuals. Managing inebriated people is critical to adequately monitor large social crowds as well as reducing levels of incidental or group violence (Eldridge, & Roberts, 2008). In addition, the seriousness of individuals engaging in drink driving has also been heavily promoted by many different health and media forums. From more recent statistics, drink drivers have caused thirty-three percent of all fatal crashes (NZ Transport Agency, 2010). Initiatives such as improved education at the secondary school level about the risk-factors associated with alcohol, increased social marketing health campaigns, as well as the excessive number of drink driving incidences have all contributed in some way to raising a level of public awareness (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2010a). Whether or not such initiatives influence rugby players attitudes and behaviours towards drinking has yet to be fully determined.

At present, those who are more likely to drink drive and to cause a fatal crash are males aged between fifteen and twenty-four years old who live in rural areas of New Zealand (NZ Transport Agency, 2010). Given that there is certainly a significant percentage of New Zealand's rugby clubs located in the rural sector it is of interest whether or not rugby players actually contribute to this statistic (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2010). To date, research on the crash rates of rural or even urban rugby players whilst intoxicated has yet to be conducted. The perceptions associated with alcohol consumption as it directly relates to careless behaviour may lead to a greater understanding as to why drink driving by rugby players is prevalent.

Field, Caetano, and Nelson (2004) declare the over-consumption of alcohol as being a principle factor in violence and crime. When examining domestic violence, Field et al., (2004), found that individuals who have over-consumed alcohol, are by far, more likely to become physically abusive than those who have not. Domestic violence as reported can have tragic and long-lasting effects on the family members' physically, mentally, and emotionally (Balodis, Potenza, & Olmstead, 2010; Dube, Anda, Felitti, Croft, Edwards, & Giles, 2001; Field, et al., 2004; Warburton, & Shepard, 2006). Similarly, O'Brien, Blackie, and Hunter (2005) showed in their research that there is a connection between the culture of rugby players over-drinking and domestic violence although, the number of incidences reported suggest that more research is required to develop a more comprehensive view of the issue.

Socially, the misuse of alcohol has led to a popular considered belief that alcohol should be considered a highly restricted item (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2010b; Connor, You, & Casswell, 2009; Ministry of Health, 2007). There is of course the risk that some individual adverse adaptations to alcohol are not only socially constructed but also likely to be physiologically problematic due to long term exposure to excessive drinking behaviour.

When alcohol has been consumed at any level by an individual organs within the human body are affected and harm can occur (Weir, 1999). Increased occurrences of brain infarctions which lead to strokes are higher in those who consume alcohol on a regular basis. The cardiovascular system can weaken due to the dilation of the heart muscle. Impairment of the senses occurs where movement is likely to be less controlled by an individual. The liver, which is vital for the body's metabolism, when over powered by alcohol, becomes fragile and more susceptible to a range of adverse liver diseases. Further adverse effects also include cirrhosis of the liver, endocrine disorders, high blood pressure, cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, and the illness experienced following mass consumption

(El-Sayed, Ali, & El-Sayed Ali, 2005; Hatton, Burton, Nash, Munn, Burgoyne, & Sheron, 2009; Ministry of Health, 2007; Weir, 1999). These illnesses are more common in alcoholics who have become dependent on the use of alcohol and in individuals who have had overdoses in quick succession. Alcohol herein has been recorded as a debilitating drug to the body. With good performance in sport dependent on peak physiological condition, the question remains whether rugby players themselves actually perceive the consumption of alcohol as being a hindrance to achieving peak performance (El-Sayed, Ali, & El-Sayed Ali, 2005).

Psychologically the prolonged use of alcohol has been considered as one of the leading factors towards an individual developing dementia, increased anxiety, mood disorders, and alcohol dependence (El-Sayed et al., 2005). Hatton et al., (2009) suggested that sports athletes are often aware of the negative physiological and mental consequences that occur as a result of drinking too much alcohol. However, there exists a level of naivety towards the adaptation of illness and disease where athletes believe it will not happen to them. In reality, a high percentage of older athletes diagnosed with mental disorders are a result of engaging in regular on-going consumption of alcohol throughout their livelihood (Hatton et al., 2009). The naivety stems from the younger generations failing to see the direct effects over consumption will have on their physical and mental health in the immediate future. Therefore the importance of increasing awareness among younger generations most prone to the effects of drinking alcohol irresponsibly is still needed, especially within and across a wide range of different sporting contexts. There is little conclusive evidence to suggest why certain rugby players continue drinking heavily and others do not without pre-emptively perceiving the consequences of their actions. Therefore, researching rugby players' perceptions of alcohol as well as the short or long term effects of alcohol in certain situations and contexts is considered worthwhile and very necessary.

2.4: Traditions of rugby:

During the nineteenth century rugby was considered a wealthy sport due to its popularity within the private schools of the United Kingdom. During a soccer match at one such school, a young man by the name of William Webb Ellis picked up the ball and ran with it (Collins, 2009). It has been thought that Webb Ellis did this because of his affection for the game called football, not to be confused with soccer, where opposing villages would meet on the village boarder and try to carry a ball back to a goal located within their own village. Means for getting the ball back to the goal were not strict however kicking, carrying, mauling with, and hitting the ball with sticks were common (Collins, 2009).

The evolution of rugby in English private schools is juxtapositioned against a culture that condoned a precise 'proper' behaviour (Collins, 2009). The adoption of rugby, a sport that comprises of violent behaviours as fundamental skills, in schools where students were nurtured and produced as articulate, well behaved, and responsible citizens suggests that perhaps rugby had a certain role to play (Collins, 2009). The proper behaviour which had been built over a number of different generations where violence of any type was omitted and glared upon had changed in order to promote rugby as a pinnacle sport. Interestingly, it had become appropriate and necessary for boys to act in an aggressive manner whilst at school but only when playing rugby (Collins, 2009).

Upon Webb Ellis's exploits theory presents rugby's further development as a sport propagated towards preparing young men for war (Collins, 2009). Tuck (2003) has agreed that rugby does require an urgent cohesiveness much like war, where individuals within teams must bind together immediately or risk becoming exposed to being injured. The importance of rugby players then to buy into a team culture and display behaviours of cohesiveness are therefore important, not only for the sole purpose of winning, but in order to keep oneself injury free (Tuck, 2003). With alcohol being frequently used within the rugby

fraternity, there may well be a number of perceptions rugby players hold about alcohol consumption as it relates to the culture of a team or indeed, team cohesion. The following section will now explore what some researchers say about the prevalence of alcohol in sport.

2.5: Alcohol consumption in sport:

The choice by athletes to use alcohol has remained widely popular within sport well into the millennium (El-Sayed, Ali, & El-Sayed Ali, 2005). It should be no surprise therefore, that problems emerging as a result of alcohol consumption by athletes is increasing. In this regard, authors agree that alcohol has become an overwhelming component in social aspects of sport such as after matches, post trainings, and at various team celebrations. (Holt, 2006; Kirby, & Wintrup, 2002; Munro, 2000; Poortinga, 2007; Stainback, 1997).

Stainback's (1997) study of social drinking in the sporting environment claims that alcohol is 'good' for continuing relationships and should in many ways be viewed positively. Stainback (1997) goes on to mention that it is only when members of sport cross the line from social drinking to binge drinking where problematic issues arise. Furthermore, Stainback (1997) suggests that there is a significant shortfall of research in this area and that studies or organisations (e.g. World Health Organisation, Centre for Disease Control, etc.) that lend itself to giving particular 'standards' of what constitutes categories of binge drinking do not examine at times the complex social issues that surround why people drink more or less in certain social contexts.

It is therefore very important that future studies seek to find the relevant social 'triggers' where athletes are at risk or are likely to begin to cause problems when engaging in the consumption of alcohol. Perhaps understanding the boundaries of alcohol engagement may increase levels of awareness about the limits individuals should abide by when consuming alcohol which in turn may help in decreasing athlete's tendencies to engage in at-

risk social behaviours. The need to investigate, how rugby players perceive their 'limits' and indeed what happens when they feel they have crossed the line when drinking are important factors to consider.

Akin to these often complex social issues are the advertising and monetary sponsorship by alcohol breweries which helps to maintain alcohol's prevalence and over-consumption in sport (Maher, Wilson, Signal & Thomson, 2006; O'Brien, & Kypri, 2008). Certainly the increased appearance of large alcohol advertising at sports events does not aid in decreasing levels of alcohol consumption by athletes and their supporters (Maher, et al., 2006). However, breweries sponsorship is difficult to determine as the exact reason for alcohol in sport because funding from breweries of sport teams is a relatively recent development. It is also difficult to place the sole blame on breweries because these companies do not tend to endorse over consumption but rather promote individual consumption of their product. In the end, it appears to be the consumers themselves who are making active choices about their own levels of alcohol consumption, or even alcohol abuse (Maher, et al., 2006).

Other researchers believe that alcohol is too readily available to everyone which has lead to communities becoming desensitized to the serious effects alcohol can cause (McCreanor, Barnes, Gregory, Kaiwai, & Borell, 2005; McGee, Ketchel, & Reeder, 2007; Parker, 2005; Walters, Bennett, & Miller, 2000). McGee, et al's., (2007) study on the impact of alcohol advertising on television suggested that over a one week period, New Zealanders were being exposed to over 200 alcohol images. In terms of children exposure to alcohol, this is particularly worrying because many New Zealand children are active television watchers. Research on the direct effects television advertising has specifically on rugby players has not yet been conducted and is not a feature of this study per say, however, it is important to note that the level of social marketing of alcohol occurring in New Zealand is substantial.

I will now shift my attention towards the role alcohol plays in rugby for both professional and amateur athletes.

2.6: Alcohol consumption in rugby:

The evolution of rugby into professional status has meant that players must act as role models while in the public eye. In accordance with their contracts players have an obligation to maintain their own integrity and the integrity of the franchise they are contracted to play for (Williams, 2008). Players are now faced with the decision when opting to consume alcohol in the public arena to keep within their limits or else risk having their player contract revoked (Williams, 2008). In France, this has meant that the culture of drinking by professional rugby players has gone underground. Previously, professional players would have gone to drink freely at local pubs but are now deciding to overlook these establishments in an effort to distance themselves from potential trouble (Fleuriel, 2007).

Thomas (2003) believes that in New Zealand professional players are also deliberately segregating themselves away from the public when drinking alcohol. In an effort to allow the players some freedom outside of the public domain some teams are hiring local bars for various after-match functions whereby patron access is by invitation only. In such environments, players are given far greater freedom to be themselves helping to relieve many players from the pressure of feeling they have to behave in a particularly formal manner (Thomas, 2003). Insight into these functions has not yet been viewed by researchers however players are drinking behind closed doors. The need to see whether the drinking behaviour changes behind closed doors is required because it is perhaps in these closed environments that some players have been caught in uncompromising situations. Or thereafter ventured into the public arena and caused themselves embarrassment (Thomas, 2003).

Recently a French rugby player on tour in New Zealand had falsified claims that he was assaulted whilst in town to cover up his falling over and injuring his face after having consumed alcohol (Pace, 2009). In another incident involving alcohol an All Black was charged with assaulting a patron at a public bar. It later emerged that the player had stolen a drink from a patron and when the patron tried to get his drink back, the All Black assaulted the man. The All Black in question pleaded guilty and in the final summary prior to being convicted, the judge stated that the player clearly could not control his actions whilst intoxicated by alcohol (Ihaka, 2010). Such responses are frequently heard by defendants of alcohol induced crime right throughout New Zealand. But such incidences are further indication that top rugby players are equally affected by alcohol and are part of New Zealand's growing alcohol problem.

One now needs to question that if players at the elite level act irrationally and the behaviour is well documented by media, that it may be plausible to suggest that similar problems may well exist or are occurring at the amateur rugby level. Amateur rugby may also have a more frequent problem due to a proportionally higher number of players participating in rugby compared with the number of professionals. Studies looking at the number of amateur rugby players committing acts of illegal behaviour in New Zealand as a result of alcohol abuse and more importantly, why, are limited. As a result this research investigation will focus on club level athletes in an attempt to uncover the alcohol problems that may be present in amateur rugby. A view of the economic premise of which New Zealand rugby is supported and how alcohol infiltrates the culture of rugby will now be explored.

2.7: Rugby as a business in New Zealand:

The New Zealand Rugby Football Union (NZRFU) as a business entity provides funding at all competition levels of rugby within New Zealand (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2008).

Throughout the world there exists a relative 'scramble' to attract revenue from businesses, national unions, and various tournament organisers. Players are often surrounded by commercialisation whereby corporate companies seek to sponsor elite individuals to promote their product (Frederick, & Patil, 2010).

It was only in 1995 that rugby became a professional game and in many ways the sport's governing body are very much still in a phase of aligning current structures to meet the growing demands. Prior to 1995, all amateur competitions throughout the world exchanged players' services for minimal money (Baskerville, 1995). Given the level of media coverage and the number of spectators sports are able to attract, top level players are now in a much stronger position to negotiate individual contracts throughout the world, with some contracts being worth millions.

For professional rugby players and clubs the gathering of revenue is critical in sustaining the future of the game's image (Eaves, Hughes, & Lamb, 2005). Although the minimal profit generated from food, clothing, and gate takings around stadiums helps to keep overheads in check, it is through sponsorship and endorsement that clubs are able to maximise their potential to be sustainable (Baskerville, 1995; Maher et al., 2006). The selling of alcohol is a critical way of generating profit and, the adoption of alcohol brands as a primary sponsor and provider of funds has become common practice (O'Brien, & Kypri, 2008).

McCreanor et al., (2005) argue that the normalising of alcohol products through their association with rugby is problematic. Conversely, rugby officials view alcohol as having a central social prominence to help bring spectators and players into closer proximity of each other. Together with the bulk funding alcohol companies' offer, it is highly likely that such trends will continue to influence the nature of the rugby economy until more socially responsible sponsorship can be found (O'Brien, & Kypri, 2008).

The central problem the likes of McCreanor et al., (2005) view of alcohol companies is that the sponsorship of sport by alcohol companies is continuing to enhance the problems wider society is currently experiencing. Although maintaining rugby as a sustainable commodity continues to be a challenge, the priority given to rugby is very much aligned to what people chose to do in their leisure time. Therefore decisions are being made that are inclined to risk social order while at the same time are considered good for the sustainability of the game (O'Brien, & Kypri, 2008).

McCreanor et al., (2005) highlight a significant point, that it is possible rugby corporations are negligent and are not being required to promote, within their level of sponsorship, the risk factors associated with alcohol or the effect alcohol has on individual health. It must be noted that sponsorship is a chance to promote an alcohol brand as well as increase sales. It is also designed to target the general public, where certain rugby players or teams are sponsored because their club supports their brand (McCreanor et al., 2005). Consequently, it is perceived that the general public are the ones who incur the negative issues surrounding sponsorship and not the sport franchises who promote the products.

Club rugby in New Zealand is very much a provincial game with an amateur status. Although some players are offered incentives to play for specific clubs these are very much on a low scale in the form of gym memberships, various work opportunities, petrol money, or vouchers. New Zealand club rugby does not provide an adequate salary for individuals to rely on club rugby as their main source of income (Laidlaw, 2010). In this regard, people mainly play rugby as a leisure activity in their spare time (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2008).

All rugby clubs throughout New Zealand support themselves and therefore require the need to get funding in order to keep running. In 2005, together with Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC), the NZRFU combined to produce a document known as the club best practice manual. The best practice manual is used to help clubs organise and structure

the running of their club from day to day as well as allowing the club to be viable in the future (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2006). In the New Zealand urban areas many clubs find themselves doing well financially due largely to increased opportunities in sponsorship and player numbers that city clubs are able to register.

Many of the smaller rural rugby clubs are used as a community hub where people gather to catch up with one another after the game has concluded (Laidlaw, 2010). Many of these unique clubs often struggle to make any money and rely extensively on community raffles, bar takings, gaming opportunities, and sponsorship from local companies. Again breweries feature quite noticeably in the level of sponsorship of these clubs. There is also strong support for patrons to frequently visit the club whereby sales over the bar help significantly to ensure the clubs finances remain economically viable (Hawes, 2008). In this regard, the constant presence of alcohol is inculcated as a common practice or norm within the culture of rugby.

It is now important to glance at the state of New Zealand rugby to clarify just how many people actively participate in rugby and more importantly how many engage in drinking alcohol in the rugby context.

2.8: A current view of rugby in New Zealand:

In 2007 there were 136,059 registered rugby players throughout New Zealand, with a further thirty thousand individuals involved with the managing, refereeing, and coaching of teams (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2010). Approximately thirty thousand of the players registered were above the age of eighteen showing that in the junior levels there appears to be a wealth of players coming through. Becoming a registered player means that the NZRFU is able to source funding and to strategically place funding in areas where it is most required. More importantly a registered individual will be covered in the event of a rugby injury through a

policy known as New Zealand rugby personal accident insurance (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2010). However, this does not include any injuries suffered as a result of engaging in alcohol after a rugby match has concluded.

The thirty thousand adult players come from over two hundred clubs nationwide and play at varying age groups and experience levels from under nineteen's through to senior club rugby, president's grades, and professional rugby players. It is important to note that the NZRFU also believes that as many as five thousand more individuals play senior rugby but are unregistered (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2010). It is thought that the bulk of these players are not available for an entire season preferring to turn up periodically when they have no other commitments on a Saturday (New Zealand Rugby Union, 2010).

On any given Saturday thousands of individuals are either playing rugby or on the side-lines actively supporting their friends and family who do play rugby. The number of individuals playing rugby is held in a positive regard by SPARC whom as a crown entity aim at improving the health of New Zealand's citizens through positive means such as sport (Sport and Recreation New Zealand, 2010). At the senior level the game is predominantly played by males although rugby competitions for women are becoming more popular throughout New Zealand.

Quarrie, Feehan, Waller, Cooke, Williams, & McGee, (1996) have identified rugby as one of the sports where individuals in New Zealand society are most likely to consume alcohol hazardously. It is highly distressing to read that over one hundred thousand junior players are likely to come through the grades and to be influenced in some way by the existing culture of alcohol in rugby. These facts perhaps justify the hastened need to understand why rugby players are considered at risk and have a tendency to consume alcohol in large amounts. Finding answers to such questions may well help to change the negative

impact the next generations of New Zealand adults may experience as a result of alcohol consumption.

In contrast, as a leisure activity played by many people within New Zealand, perhaps there is a necessity to consider what the bond of drinking alcohol within rugby is based on and for whose benefit. There may well be a perception by some individuals that the consumption of alcohol has a direct relationship to the reasons why individuals participate in rugby. The need to understand this phenomenon more in depth is certainly required. My intention is to now focus upon the male perspective of alcohol consumption, which appears consistently higher than female's level of participation (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2010b).

2.9: Who plays rugby; a male perspective:

The environment within male rugby teams requires a need for strong allegiance to masculine behaviours (Curry, 1993). The leading characteristics of masculine behaviour include emotional toughness, risk taking, heterosexuality, being a bread winner, and being competitive (De Visser, & Smith, 2006; McPherson, Casswell, & Pledger, 2004; Nauright, & Chandler, 1995; Schacht, 1996). These aspects of masculine behaviour have been formed to conflict with any alternative, so that any behaviour or action other than the hegemonic behaviour is considered non-masculine (De Visser, & Smith, 2006; McPherson et al., 2004). In particular, research of rugby has been popular when presenting male athletes as needing to tolerate pain and injury in order to be regarded as being masculine. Sparkes and Smith (2002) found that males who failed to show hegemonic characteristics were deemed to be less masculine and subjected to alienation from the group.

Pringle's (2001) presentation on competing discourses highlights that some rugby players are forced to display forged masculine behaviours when pain they endure is severe, or

the individual is homosexual. Examples of such forged displays include a player showing no emotion of hurt and the covering up of an individual's homosexuality from the rest of the rugby team. Although this article by Pringle (2001) does not engage directly with the impact that alcohol consumption in groups by rugby players has, it does provoke the thought that perhaps not all rugby players like to drink alcohol but do so in order to maintain their masculine status within the group.

To add support to this thought, the article by De Visser and Smith (2006) proclaims that young males see drinking alcohol as a form of being masculine. Some of the participants studied believed that by drinking alcohol in large quantities and being able to hold your drink reflects on the individual's manliness. The individuals who did not consume alcohol from the study were more likely to become outsiders (De Visser, & Smith, 2006). If players are excluded from rugby teams because they choose not to consume alcohol in large amounts this would mean that players can only engage in New Zealand rugby if they drink alcohol. Essentially the problematic issue of alcohol in New Zealand may affect far more of the rugby population than what is currently thought.

De Visser and Smith (2006) were also able to establish that males who did show weakness in their ability to consume alcohol could by other means display their masculinity. One example is Johnny Wilkinson, a player critical to England's rugby world cup feat in 2003. Wilkinson abstains from drinking alcohol but is still considered masculine. When questioned, participants revealed that Wilkinson's perceived masculinity is because of his sporting achievements and the attractiveness of his partner (De Visser, & Smith, 2006). The point is made that Wilkinson's self-discipline against consuming alcohol is a quality perceived by many males as being un-masculine. The lack of masculinity in not consuming alcohol is excused however because of his ability to show masculinity through way of an attractive partner (De Visser, & Smith, 2006).

With regards to New Zealand club rugby it has not been recognised that the masculinity of an individual is decreased as a non-consumer of alcohol, or if, there are other means by which a male rugby player can be accredited masculinity. Attention will now turn towards team environments and the factors that influence the dynamics of a teams' environment.

2.10: Team environments, influencing factors:

Carron, Bray, and Eys, (2002) claim that the creation of cohesion for any team is important. This is because cohesion improves co-operation between individuals and the efficiency at which the group is able to get key tasks done. Team cohesion is built upon internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are a combination of the beliefs, experiences, and values each individual brings to the group. Alternatively, external factors result from the physical environment and social settings the group has been established within (Carron, et al., 2002).

When all internal and external factors come together, a level of cohesion for the group can be established (Carron, et al., 2002). This study is not directly targeted at considering the cohesion levels of rugby teams. Nonetheless, one of the numerous factors to affect the cohesion a team experiences, alcohol, will be under investigation.

Alcohol regularly exists as an external factor which influences the team environment in sports (Black, et al., 1999). Teams will consume with one another and the opposition while discussing the important features of the match. Consumption after the commencement of team sport has been known to continue until early the next morning or until everyone has departed (Muir, & Seitz, 2004). With regards to New Zealand rugby team culture, the lack of research into whether alcohol is deemed as positive or negative for team cohesion by players has not been identified.

2.11: Summary of literature review:

Throughout the literature review it is evident to see that there is certainly a problem world-wide where sports players approve the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol. In New Zealand a key problem has been the rate at which individuals consume alcohol during one sitting (Ministry of Health, 2007). Excessive alcohol consumption has placed undue pressure on many health care systems whereby incidences of family violence, car accidents, or other harmful behaviours involving alcohol have increased remarkably over the past 10 years (Field, et al., 2004). There is no doubting that rugby has had a long association with alcohol. Yet, rugby players in New Zealand have received little research as to why they continue to consume alcohol in such large dosages (Quarrie et al., 1996). In an effort to identify and understand the seriousness or indeed the factors contributing to the level of alcohol consumption in rugby, this investigation will draw findings through a sample of New Zealand adult club rugby players.

With a high proportion of amateur athletes in New Zealand consuming alcohol after competing or engaging in sport it is important to consider what in this case rugby players say are the key reasons for consuming alcohol and to gain a better insight about the influence alcohol has on the rugby team culture.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

3.1: The research realm:

Each and every researcher has a theoretical perspective which helps to create their own research paradigm (Greene, 1997). A paradigm is made of epistemological and ontological constituents. Epistemology refers to the philosophy of knowledge and identifying the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known (Maykut, & Morehouse, 2003).

According to Holloway (1997) ontology consists of how things really are; the nature of social reality and assumptions about human existence. Ontology is broken into two divisions. A view that is held by another individual of which the researcher has not impinged their own values or biases upon can be considered objective. Alternatively, when the researcher becomes involved in their study and shares the same values or beliefs of their participants and/or records data knowing they are an influence, the ontological position is known as subjective (Holloway, 1997). Essentially the researcher positions themselves as either independent from the research or within it (Maykut, & Morehouse, 2003). These concepts have helped to create the three main research paradigms known as the positivist, interpretive, and critical paradigms.

The positivist paradigm centres upon traditional scientific techniques and is fundamentally reliant that only one universal truth exists and is to be found (Sparkes, 1992). Positivists believe the greatest method of gathering data is through quantifiable measures and have an ontological stance of objectivism. Essential to the production of positivist research claims is the belief that all research done in this way is free of bias (Sparkes, 1992). This indeed seems to be true when research is conducted of the physical world. However in Denzin and Lincoln (2003) there is strong questioning and criticism of the positivist paradigm when researching the social world. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) go on to argue that:

The quantitative approach has been used for purposes of isolating causes and effects, operationalizing theoretical relations, measuring, quantifying phenomena and allowing the generalisation of findings. But today doubt is cast on such projects, because rapid social change and the resulting diversification of life worlds are increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives...traditional deductive methodologies are failing...thus research is increasingly forced to make use of inductive strategies instead of starting from theories and testing them (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003, p.14-15).

The contrasting paradigm to positivism held by others originates within transcendental science and is known as the interpretive paradigm (Moustakas, 1994). Interpretive researchers consider that the best method for gathering data is through qualitative measures and therefore take upon the subjective ontological stance. The interpretive paradigm has long been used as a method to explore the perceptions of the social world. Belief is held by those who assume the interpretive paradigm that multiple realities exist (Giampietro, 2008). With a focus that incorporates multiple realities existing, interpretive researchers attempt to create knowledge through,

Stressing the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of inquiry and seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003, p 13).

To add further to the contrast between the interpretive paradigm and the positivist paradigm Giampietro (2008) states that social reality is constructed in the mind and therefore universal interpretation of the subject from one researcher to another becomes near impossible achieve (p. 19). In order to reach universal interpretation all researchers would need to interpret and give meaning to what has been experienced exactly the same. Due to the different perceptions and experiences each individual researcher has had the probabilities of exact interpretation are next to nothing which therefore insists that interpretive researchers reach multiple realities (Giampietro, 2008).

The critical paradigm, another within transcendental science is used by those wanting freedom and a need to enable access to knowledge so that others may control their own lives (Moustakas, 1994; Sparkes, 1992). As seen in Usher (1996) those who adopt the critical paradigm cast aside objective epistemologies promoting that truth can be shaped through multiple interpretations and is therefore subjective. Where the critical paradigm differs from the interpretive paradigm is that systems of power relationships are typically studied in an effort to understand the authoritarian structure existent (Usher, 1996). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) are quick to point out that the critical researcher,

Sees the positivist criteria of research as irrelevant to their work and contend that such criteria reproduce only a certain kind of science, a science that silences too many voices. These researchers seek alternative methods for evaluating their work, including verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, and political praxis when producing knowledge (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003, p 15).

Critical researchers therefore surpass normal approaches aligned to interpretive research in order to expose discriminations and perceptions which view that independence is being restricted (Usher, 1996). Having explained the intricacies of the three main research paradigms it is considered necessary by Markova (1982) that researchers state their assumptions of the world in order for others to understand where the investigation is positioned.

3.2: Researchers Position:

Each researcher has their own research paradigm created from their own experiences and assumptions. Therefore in some way the researcher becomes connected to their own research investigation (Sparkes, 1992). Like Schram (2006) it is this researcher's belief that improvements in knowledge are continual. At this stage however with the paradigmatic knowledge already received it is of note that like Sparkes (1992) this researcher considers knowledge can not be recorded from a totally objective realm. It is this researcher's belief

that in some way all of those who investigate subjects have preconceptions that either influences the participant being studied or the results which are there after presented. Consequently this investigation will now become part of and follow the traditions of the interpretive paradigm. In the future the researchers' perceptions may change but for the purpose of positioning and helping the reader to understand the fundamental beliefs backing the creation of this thesis the interpretive paradigm will be used.

In a different way to position a research investigation Marshall and Rossman (1995) promote that individuals can select whether qualitative or quantitative research will best be suited to answering the research question. As noted previously qualitative research data is difficult to replicate because of the differing interpretations and explanations researchers understand. Tools such as a control, generalisations, and prediction, that the positivist paradigm is in favour of using is un-pragmatic for qualitative studies (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2003). In actual fact Maykut and Morehouse (2003) suggest that from a qualitative perspective, presenting results which are objective and quantifiable is to shred the importance of the phenomena from those participants who have experienced it. Instead tools that allow the researcher to interpret or find meaning from data are considered better suited to the qualitative realm.

This investigation seeks to explore rugby player's perspectives about alcohol and the effect alcohol has on the team environment. Answers that need to be gathered will not be beneficial if gathered through quantifiable data that produces statistics. This is because perspectives involve the participant not only giving quantifiable measures to answer the question but in-depth reasoning for their answer also (Maykut, and Morehouse, 2003; Patton, 2002). Therefore this investigation through its own need to understand perspectives has ruled out the quantitative method. Furthermore this investigation is not seeking to give control to an oppressed people. Rather it is an investigation which explores the alcohol perceptions and

culture of New Zealand club rugby players. Through a process of elimination the researcher finds that the interpretive realm is best suited for this study once again.

With this stated there may be conjecture towards the use of transcendental science for this investigation as until recently qualitative inquiry was frowned upon. Traditionally, scientific measures aligned to the positivist paradigm have long been adopted by researchers believing that there was only one way to study however many are now beginning to view transcendental science with enhancing enthusiasm (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1994; Marshall, & Rossman, 1995; Maykut, & Morehouse, 2003; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Sparkes, 1992). As Moustakas argues:

Transcendental science emerged out of a growing discontent with a philosophy of science based exclusively on studies of material things, a science that failed to take into account the experiencing person and the connections between human consciousness and the objects that exist in the material world (p.43).

Moustakas' (1994) quote conceives that grounds for creating knowledge have evolved from heavily dominated scientific means to where the creation of knowledge through human experience is now appropriate and beneficial for study. It is only recently that focus on the wholeness of experiences one individual has, that researchers have begun to study in different ways (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1994). When taking into account scientific ways for understanding the world, absolute certainty of the focus is sometimes not achieved. This is because positivist methods fail to produce detailed meaning as to why the numbers and statistics have transpired. The development of subjective openness has helped the research world to expand and include the extra meaning that is often sought after (Maykut, & Morehouse, 2003; Patton, 2002). Under the banner of transcendental science many research methods are existent. It is this researcher's belief that the current investigation is best situated somewhere within ethnographic methods.

3.3: Ethnography:

Ethnography is a technique that researchers will use to describe and interpret the experiences of their participants. Ethnographic results help to present the culture and existence of a certain group of people by a particular researcher. Ethnography is a methodology which ascended in the Western world because of a need for understanding distant cultures that were normally non Western (Giampietro, 2008). Typically, early ethnographers were seeking to understand why other cultures would act in their terms as ‘uncivilised’ (Giampietro, 2008). As a result the conclusion to any ethnographic study can only be reached through a lengthy period of examination of all those who belong to the culture. This allows the researcher to gather comprehensive analysis so that the true meanings of the culture can be understood (Moustakas, 1994).

There are questions raised by Moustakas (1994) and Giampietro (2008) as to the bias in description an ethnographic writer employs during the writing up of their final conclusions. Moustakas (1994) and Giampietro’s (2008) belief centres upon the notion that the researcher can only comment and evaluate what the researcher has seen and that the possibility to overlook critical evidence relating to the culture may occur. In this way ethnographic studies result in variances each time they are presented because of the dissimilarities of interpretation and the different experiences held between researchers (Moustakas, 1994; Giampietro, 2008).

Ultimately through the ethnographic method an exploration of the perceptions held by rugby players towards alcohol would in no doubt be achieved. However the difficulty of being able to study over thirty thousand adult club rugby players through interpretive methods would see the researcher continuing into his last days to get this research completed. By such time it would be expected that the results may no longer apply. Therefore another method needs to be considered and applied whereby a smaller group of participants which represents a whole can be studied. The phenomenology approach is one such method.

3.4: Phenomenology:

The phenomenology method, a branch of ethnographic methodology looks to fulfil extra meaning to the statistics and numbers already known. First and foremost phenomenology is promoted as being a method which produces new findings from where researchers can pursue leads in order to understand the phenomenon as fully as possible (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) follows on to suggest that within phenomenology it may be necessary that only a small group of participants are selected. It is seen that small groups will offer enough pursuing leads for the researcher to follow on with and produce a thorough written set of results. Too many pursuing leads may cause the author to become overwhelmed and therefore produce a final article that fails to engage deeply with the subject as phenomenology should (Patton, 2002). Phenomenology therefore unlike ethnography does not require an entire culture in order to produce results. Instead delegates which represent the culture are selected as experienced participants of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

The phenomenology method was first promoted by Edmund Husserl (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1999). Husserl simplified his world of thought by believing and considering only those experiences he completed himself as being part of his real physical and social worlds. Husserl believes that concepts like stories and shared experiences of others can only be understood as creating how that other individual sees the world and not how Husserl sees it. In order to believe and consider such stories or shared experiences fully, Husserl would need to experience the activity for himself (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1999).

Initially Husserl was criticised for his revolutionary view. Husserl then went on to proclaim that his theory was of no value to individuals with closed minds. A key moment for the acceptance of phenomenology's official recognition was resultant from Hegel's well constructed meaning seen in Moustakas (1994),

“Phenomenology refers to knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience. The process leads to an unfolding of phenomenal consciousness through science and philosophy toward the absolute knowledge of the absolute” (p.26).

Through this theoretical way of thinking, phenomenology allows the disclosure of information and is comprehensive of those experiences research participants have practiced. This is the first and most critical aspect phenomenology offers to this investigation in order to produce perceptions of individuals that are relevant. However further evidence for the adoption of phenomenology is required. In order to do so the three processes central to phenomenology known as epoche, transcendental phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation will be discussed (Moustakas, 1994). Each process needs to be conducted by the researcher in order to produce results which are reliable and valid from a phenomenology perspective.

‘Epoche’ is being able to view an experience for the first time without any prior judgement. All previous understandings are forgotten and the phenomenon is therefore examined with a clean slate (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002) ‘epoche’ is a basic step that positions the researcher as unbiased during their inspection.

Transcendental phenomenological reduction follows epoche. Transcendental refers to the simplification of viewing a phenomenon for the first time without previous bias or judgement. Phenomenological refers to every aspect of the world being viewed as its own separate phenomenon. Whilst reduction refers to,

The leading back of the individual to the source of the meaning and existence in the experienced world (Moustakas, 1994, p.34).

Through transcendental phenomenological reduction, an individual obtains a comprehensive account of the fundamental parts that make up the phenomenon. This can not be complete without thoughts feelings, sounds, colours, and shapes (Patton, 2002).

Transcendental reduction separates a phenomenon from others and allows a researcher to gather information which is only relevant to what they are intending to investigate. In this investigation the phenomena is the consumption of alcohol by club rugby players.

Third, imaginative variation is promoted by phenomenologists. Imaginative variation is the ability to accurately fuse what is sought after with what has already been established. The result of the fusing between these two means that the gap in literature that once was is then filled. This is where the creation of new knowledge through phenomenological methods becomes clear (Moustakas, 1994). As aforementioned there is paucity of research towards club rugby players' drinking perspectives. Therefore imaginative variation and the bridging of knowledge gaps are certain to occur through this study.

My own epistemological position for this study acknowledges that only those who have experienced amateur club level rugby and have been involved in alcohol consumption as a part of a rugby team culture are able to be interviewed for data collection. These players after all, in accordance with Husserl are the individuals who can give complete experiences of rugby player's perceptions when alcohol consumption is taking place (Groenwald, 2004; Hycner, 1999). Through epoche this long established phenomenon will be explored with openness and without prior judgement. Participants included in this study will supply transcendental phenomenological research data in the way of their perceptions and experiences accomplished when consuming alcohol as a part of rugby. It is at this point that the researcher will then apply imaginative variation in order to create the praxis where information is currently non-existent.

3.5: Interviews:

A primary method for phenomenology data collection is through interviewing. As seen in Marshall and Rossman (1995) interviewing of social phenomena is not simply gathering

spoken information from the participant. Information documented should also include non-verbal cues and body language also. Gaining extra information aside from verbal communication is critical for the qualitative researcher to be able to arrive at definitive conclusions as well as providing their own interpretation. Interviewing allows the researcher to enter into the participant's world with a goal to make meaning and therefore create knowledge (Marshall, & Rossman, 1995). Holloway (1997) reports that when studying social phenomena different styles of interviewing are necessary. This is because differing researchers will be variable towards the information and types of understanding they desire. There are three particular interviewing styles commonly used, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured.

There are many differences between each of the styles of interviewing however it is only necessary to distinguish each of these styles by the type of questioning that each style engages. Structured questioning is formal and very straight forward. There is little movement offered from pre-determined questions and the ability to investigate other references made within interviewing is non-existent (Holloway, 1997). On the other hand unstructured questioning pays little attention to format and takes upon an informal layout whereby conversation is central to gathering data. The researcher and participant interact with one another without any specific set of questions in particular (Holloway, 1997). Semi-structured interviewing is a combination of both previous methods. A researcher using a semi-structure format is directed by pre-determined questions however the ability to query participants who make statements which are of importance to the researcher is available. To add further to the ideas of Holloway (1997), Kvale (1996) mentions that through semi-structured interviewing the researcher is able to guide the participant towards answers that are more specific for their investigation.

For this investigation the semi-structured method will be employed. This is to allow the researcher the ability to be flexible in the approach to each participant and gather information which can be compared between individuals and conveyed during the discussion section. The researcher will follow a specific question format only choosing to stray if the participant offers an answer that is worthy of further investigation. Each of the questions asked of participants are given in their own table throughout the results section. Alternatively the reader can find a question page located in the appendices.

3.6: Player sampling:

Players will be selected using purposive sampling. Gray (2004) asserts that purposive sampling is a non probability sampling approach targeting participants who are considered distinctive individuals of the greater population. In this case all participants are rugby players from a New Zealand central north island club competition. In total five participants will be used from five separate clubs. To be a participant each player will be required to be an amateur status level player. Players will be required to take part in a semi structured interview lasting no longer than one hour. Each interview will be tape recorded by dictaphone to be then later transcribed for further analysis. Notes will also be taken of facial expressions, non-verbal cues, and body language, which will also be added to transcriptions. In order to gain selection in this study, club presidents from within the local rugby provincial union have been asked to inform players of the study. Willing participants will then contact the researcher from where the research ethics process and eventual interviewing will begin.

3.7: Ethics:

In accordance with university ethical guidelines each club that has a player take the opportunity to participate in this research will need to sign an agreement form acknowledging

that their player will be a participant in the research. Players too will need to sign consent forms before participating in this research. Each player will be given a detailed explanation of what is required of themselves and will be informed that at any time they may choose to withdraw from this investigation. Finally any individual used for transcription will be required to sign consent forms to acknowledge that any information the individual possesses from this research will remain confidential.

Chapter Four: Results

Each participant in this research is aged in their twenties. Ethnicities of the participants selected include, New Zealand European, Maori, and Samoan. All participants have been given a pseudonym and will hereafter be named and referred to as Eddie, Jeremiah, Joe, Kevin, and Stephen. The participants responded to twenty-one questions surrounding their consumption of alcohol and the effect alcohol has on their teams' culture. All participants had experienced regular consumption of alcohol as part of the rugby culture. However, this investigation does not give a measure on the amount and/or frequency of alcohol consumption players engage in. Instead the focus of the questions asked was to gain the experiences and perceptions of the participants about alcohol.

To help validate the results presented here each participant was returned a copy of their transcript to allow for editing of any answers that were not exact or needed expanding. This process was also done to ensure that transcripts used for analysis were of the correct interpretation. Throughout analysis themes were derived from the transcripts after which the participants were then called and notified of. During this conversation the participants each had the opportunity to confirm themes were indeed present and to offer any extra themes which the researcher had not yet identified.

Questioning began at an introductory level where reasoning for the participant's taking on of rugby was gained. Following this, the participants were questioned on their own individual experiences with alcohol consumption. Finally participants' perceptions of the influence alcohol has on the rugby team culture is investigated.

4.1: Introductory Questions:

Table 4.1.1: Initial participation.

Question: What encouraged you to play rugby?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Father	x	x	x		
Uncle	x	x	x		
Teacher					x
Friends				x	x
School					x
All Blacks	x		x		

Each of the participants revealed that role models within their upbringing were chiefly responsible for the participants playing rugby. Eddie, Joe, and Jeremiah, cited that watching their fathers and uncles play rugby had made them want to play rugby as well. In contrast both Stephen and Kevin had initially played other sports before adopting rugby. Stephen explained that together his teachers and his school enticed him to play rugby. Stephen's high school is a well known rugby school within New Zealand. Kevin explained that his participation in rugby began as he got physically too big for soccer and that he had a large amount of friends play rugby too. Jeremiah and Eddie also stated that their involvement in rugby had been helped by wanting to play for the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team as children.

Table 4.1.2: Playing career.

Question: How long have you been playing rugby? How long have you played senior club rugby? And how many club sides have you represented?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Years playing rugby	19	12	15	10	8
Years playing senior club	5	3	4	4	5
Club sides played for	1	2	2	3	5

Each participants played rugby whilst they were at high school and have continued to play rugby to the present season. All participants have played senior club rugby for at least three years. Apart from Eddie, the participants have all played for more than one club at senior level. Stephen, Joe, Kevin, and Jeremiah have changed clubs in an effort to further their playing experience and help move their careers towards the next level.

Table 4.1.3: Popularity of alcohol consumption in rugby career.

Question: Has alcohol been a prevalent part of your rugby career? And in particular within the teams you have played for?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
A big part of rugby	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teams exist that drink more heavily	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Apart from Joe, the participants acknowledged that teams they had been involved with whilst at tertiary institutes were the teams where alcohol consumption was most prevalent. Joe has not played for a tertiary team or been involved in an age grade side. Joe explained that by having not played age grade rugby he missed out on the binge drinking that occurs. However Joe was well aware that a heavy binge drinking culture takes place in age grade rugby where traditionally a large proportion of tertiary students play rugby.

Table 4.1.4: Frequency of drinking with the rugby team by the individual.

Question: On average each week, how often would you engage in consuming alcohol with the team and its members?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Number of times (Per Week)	2	2	2	2	2-4

Each player suggested that Thursdays after training and Saturdays after the game were the nights most associated as binge drinking nights. Stephen stated too, that

Definitely on Thursday and Saturday nights we would be on it hard and sometimes even Wednesdays or Fridays depending on occasions (Stephen, 2011).

The participants viewed alcohol as a big part of the social aspects of rugby and at each senior club they had played for alcohol consumption was prevalent.

4.2: Individual perceptions of alcohol:

Table 4.2.1: Experiencing alcohol as part of rugby.

Question: Can you describe your first experiences where alcohol was consumed by yourself or other individuals you were with, in a rugby environment?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Age of 1 st consumption in rugby	18	19	19	16	16
Bus Trip	x	x			x
Initiation		x			
School rugby				x	x
Sum of tertiary players in team	x		x	x	x

Initially the participants were asked for their age when they first consumed alcohol as part of a rugby team. Kevin and Steven were both still at school when they first consumed alcohol. Eddie, Joe, and Jeremiah all began consuming alcohol having left school and becoming involved with senior club sides. Eddie, Joe, and Stephen described their first experiences of the drinking culture in rugby as occurring on bus trips. Eddie said that older guys within his team would begin drinking,

They didn't really pressure me to drink but I really wanted to join them and have fun with them they way they were having fun (Eddie, 2011).

Joe cited that as part of his initiation to his senior club side:

We had to just down a few beers as first timers being in the team (Joe, 2011).

When questioned further Joe explained that by drinking alcohol he was more readily able to associate as a member of the team. Stephen described how his initiation to alcohol as a part of rugby had been on a bus trip whilst he was at school. Stephen then went on to clarify that drinking alcohol when he was a teenager,

Was the same as anything, back in school we would just go to a mates house and we would just get pissed...the only difference is that you're on the piss with the rugby boys and not your other friends who didn't play rugby (Stephen, 2011).

Similarly Kevin's first experiences with alcohol were whilst he was playing schoolboy rugby. Kevin explained how it was normal for older family members or team mates that were of legal age, to buy alcohol for them to consume:

We would have parties after our first XV games...I was only 17 at the time, but the older guys would buy me alcohol to drink with them, or I could just get my older brothers to buy it for me (Kevin, 2011).

In contrast Jeremiah's first experiences of alcohol in rugby were when he had left school and began playing under 19 rugby. Jeremiah was quick to note that,

I didn't really drink in 1st XV rugby like a lot of other guys (Jeremiah, 2011).

In further discussion reasoning for Jeremiah's first experiences of alcohol consumption in the rugby culture pointed out that,

Meeting new people and having involvement in the university environment made it natural to drink alcohol...when I turned 18 I knew I was legal to drink and that was the cool thing to do (Jeremiah, 2011).

Table 4.2.2: Alcohol consumption during rugby season compared with off season.

Question: Would you say rugby players drink more alcohol during the rugby season than throughout non-rugby season during the year? Why do you think this way?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
During season	x		x	x	x
Off season		x			

Apart from Joe, the participants all viewed their alcohol consumption as being more frequent during the rugby season. From interviews, the participants provided a variety of answers as to why drinking occurred more frequently during the season. Eddie’s reasoning for increased frequency of consumption explained that,

The boys like to reminisce on how each other played that day, and they like to discuss the funny things that happened during the game (Eddie, 2011).

Jeremiah and Kevin alleged that players drink more because of the stronger team bonds that rugby team’s possess in comparison with other sports played during the summer.

Jeremiah provided,

There’s just something about the team bonding in rugby which brings everyone together and makes you want to drink (Jeremiah, 2011).

Kevin agreed with this concept saying,

During the summer players will associate themselves with other sports which I don’t think drink alcohol as often (Kevin, 2011).

In further discussion surrounding this question, Kevin went on to provide another idea which positioned the importance the rugby club bar has towards influencing alcohol consumption,

Most rugby clubs you will find have a bar associated...which are huge financial gainers. The club I play for now has a majority of funding come from across the bar and the club actively encourages players to stay behind and socialise (Kevin, 2011).

Stephen and Kevin both agreed that the routine of doing trainings and playing rugby together made it easier for their team members to drink and socialise more often during the rugby season. Stephen and Kevin used the following examples to explain how rugby players

are more likely to drink alcohol because of the regularity in which they meet with one another.

You see each other and you meet up after games and trainings, your all there so naturally you will drink more...I would say generally the rugby boys drink more together as a collective than my other friends (Stephen, 2011).

With Kevin conveying,

Obviously, we play rugby together so it is easier to get on the piss with the rugby team during the rugby season (Kevin, 2011).

Joe found that he drinks more during the summer season and referred to the Christmas and New Year holiday as being a large consumption period for himself. However, Joe did acknowledge that,

During the rugby season we still drink a lot but consumption is more regular during the summer for me...I think that maybe when we drink during rugby season we do drink a bit more during a night though (Joe, 2011).

Table 4.2.3: Experiencing alcohol consumption affirmatively.

Question: Can you describe some positive experiences you have had with regards to players consuming alcohol as part of a rugby team?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Celebrate winning	x	x	x	x	x
Meeting people	x	x	x	x	
Socialising		x	x		
Maintain/continue relationships	x	x		x	
Shy players open up	x		x	x	x
Team bonding	x		x	x	x
Relaxation				x	x
Introduce significant others				x	
Court sessions				x	

All participants perceived that alcohol can be viewed in a positive way with the entire group agreeing that alcohol is a suitable drink for celebrating winning games. Each of the players

except for Stephen began by highlighting alcohol as a drink which is good for allowing players to converse more regularly with each other. Eddie was particularly enthused by the way alcohol consumption was used as a means to get to know shy players within his team,

The quieter guys that don't usually talk at trainings or on game days usually start to show their true colours and from there it can produce good and exciting times (Eddie, 2011).

Likewise Jeremiah, Kevin, and Joe all spoke about the willingness of shy males having consumed alcohol, getting out, and speaking with others. These three participants all perceived that alcohol's ability to create confidence in shy players helped to strengthen the team. The importance of maintaining or continuing friendships was mentioned by Eddie, Joe, and Kevin during interviewing. Eddie and Joe explained that because players spoke together over a drink the ability to continue being familiar with other player's lives was therefore possible. Joe explained how he felt alcohol helped to establish and maintain relationships with fellow rugby players,

You get to know a few more other players that you have not met before or don't know so well...alcohol is good for socialising, meeting other people, and getting to know how the boys are going (Joe, 2011).

Meanwhile Kevin felt that because players consumed alcohol it also allowed the opportunity to get to know other players family members. Kevin went on to say,

I've made some really good friendships with alcohol around...everybody gets a bit cheerful, and has fun...which helps to make quite a good atmosphere. Players will often introduce partners or kids to me when were having a beer so that's good too. And in that way you can meet new people too, which is good cause they are often the people you're talking about with your mates anyway (Kevin, 2011).

Moving on, all of the participants except for Joe claimed that through regular conversation with team mates, alcohol is therefore productive for team bonding. In a statement delivered by Eddie the effect alcohol consumption has on team bonding is spoken about,

I think that just bonding with the boys and other team members allows you the opportunity to find out things that you wouldn't usually find out whilst your perhaps sober. Really at the end of the day that helps the team bonding heaps too (Eddie, 2011).

Stephen's positive views of alcohol related to seeing the group consumption of alcohol as being beneficial for building unity within the team. Overall, Stephen was very constructive towards alcohol consumption in rugby,

Alcohol is a good way for everyone to let their hair down, and relax...and have a really good time together (Stephen, 2011).

Table 4.2.4: Experiencing alcohol consumption adversely.

Question: Can you describe some negative experiences you have had with regards to players consuming alcohol as part of a rugby team?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Fighting others	x	x	x	x	x
Fighting management		x		x	
Fighting family			x		
Fighting teammates		x		x	x
Drink driving	x	x	x	x	
Regretful comments				x	x
Arrested			x	x	
Poor performance	x	x			x
Missing commitments	x	x			

All participants concurred that fighting by rugby players can occur as a result of consuming too much alcohol. Most frequently fighting with others happens in town after a heavy consumption period. Kevin and Joe have both had previous experiences where they have seen other players within their teams fighting with the management and coaches of their team,

Sometimes players fight with each other but I have also seen some management fighting with players (Kevin, 2011).

Joe felt that who players fight with was random but that fights occurred when players are too drunk,

It varies who players fight with...they can have disagreements with each other or sometimes they join together and have disagreements with other players from different clubs...or there's fights with management...players have fights with everyone it just depends on where they are I guess. But mostly the fights are over silly stuff, and people are just too drunk (Joe, 2011).

Jeremiah provided a vivid example of players over consuming alcohol:

I have a mate who was drinking quite a lot one night and went home and started a big brawl with his parents. He ended up in a bad way with the police which isn't good at all (Jeremiah, 2011).

In this instance Jeremiah pointed out that being arrested and having police involvement was not a positive of drinking. Kevin agreed also with this view that players were arrested as they were caught being violent.

Each participant except for Stephen considered that drink driving is prominent by rugby players and that it is an adverse outcome of alcohol consumption. Eddie and Kevin made very similar statements whereby drink driving was considered to occur as a direct result of rugby gatherings. Their ideas are summed up by Kevin's quote,

Players in our club have been done for drink driving after trainings and games. I definitely don't think that this would have happened if the player wasn't involved with rugby. I mean they probably wouldn't have been drinking on a Thursday if they hadn't had rugby training (Kevin, 2011).

Joe showed that he understands alcohol consumption and driving is not a good idea stating that,

Players like to drink but want to drive home. Drink driving is no good (Joe, 2011).

Jeremiah, the final player to agree that drink driving is prominent in rugby believes that because his club is a country club, players are more susceptible to drink driving as well as being caught,

Coming from a country rugby team some of the boys live thirty plus minutes away and definitely after a few too many they have got in their car and driven home. Some of the boys have suffered the consequences of that by getting caught drink driving on their way back into town by the police. I know a lot of people that have lost their license and I know of someone that has even been to jail (Jeremiah, 2011).

Two players, Kevin and Stephen stated that often regretful comments were made by players who were intoxicated. Comments made were directed at females, partners, other players, and management. Both players had experienced feeling regret at comments they had made during a binge drinking session.

Eddie, Joe, and Stephen believe that huge drinking sessions are a negative experience and that these types of sessions effect player performance. Eddie went on to clarify about players, who had been drinking the night before a game,

That it can affect our performance because guys aren't quite switched on and then obviously might drop the ball during trainings or the game. It also effects our pre-match build up where guys go onto the field with not as much concentration as they should have (Eddie, 2011).

Joe made reference to the negative effect that alcohol has on the body and therefore performance. However, Stephen's account of the negatives that alcohol causes for performance, particularly for dehydration of the body was spoken about in both an educative and enthused manner. Stephen gave an example of how one of his friends had been playing exceptionally well all season, but had been on a heavy binge drinking session on a Thursday night. On the Saturday, Stephen explained how his friend underperformed during the game due to the heavy binge drinking that had taken place. Stephen went on to notify the researcher,

I just think he got himself wrecked so much that he was resting on his previous performances and it just showed that if you're not preparing properly then alcohol is going to effect you, and you play like crap (Stephen, 2011).

Eddie and Joe both identified that players missing trainings or games altogether was a negative that can be experienced when alcohol has been consumed. Eddie also made reference to players missing commitments such as work or family duties.

Table 4.2.5: What influences an individual’s decision to continue drinking.

Question: At what stage do you think that having a couple of beers turns into an all-nighter drinking with the team by an individual?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Number of drinks	6/7	4/5	4/5	6-12	6
Mass consumption	x	x	x	x	x
Company	x	x	x	x	x
Having fun	x	x		x	x
Yarning		x			
Feeling stress free	x				
12am going to town		x		x	x
Knowing its unsafe to drive			x		
Peer pressure				x	
A few hours				x	
Youth					x

When prompted for an amount of alcoholic drinks it would take for the participants to have an all-nighter; Eddie, Kevin, and Stephen believed at least six drinks would need to be consumed. On the other hand Joe and Jeremiah believed that as little as four alcoholic drinks could result in themselves thinking about enduring a binge drinking session. Each of the participants felt that prerequisites for an all night binge drinking session are the company of others and the mass consumption of alcohol. The participants have each experienced being surrounded by their peers in an atmosphere where the participants themselves were reluctant to leave, and thereby partook in a binge drinking session.

I think the stage where you’ve got a lot of mates there that wanna have fun and you don’t want to be left out so you start drinking more and you end up by staying longer (Eddie, 2011).

When questioned further, Eddie gave a particular view that it is acceptable to work hard all week and drink alcohol as a reward,

Drinking alcohol and wanting to have fun is usually done by the boys who have been working hard or studying all week and just want to have a release on the Saturday. Drinking makes me feel good and get rid of all the stress from working all week (Eddie, 2011).

In follow up questioning all participants except Jeremiah mentioned that having fun was required to have an all-nighter drinking with their team mates. Eddie and Kevin mentioned that games would often be played which are good fun even though the games incurred punishments of drinking for losers. Stephen suggested that fun is,

Always part of drinking, because players are happy to be in an environment which doesn't involve as much pressure as when you're playing rugby on the field (Stephen, 2011).

This leads to a point made by Joe that 'yarning' was a key part to ensuring that he would be having an extended period drinking alcohol. In his explanation Joe also details that going to town is an important part of experiencing an all-nighter having fun with the boys.

Usually there's just a couple boys talking and having fun. That would usually involve some quiet beers and a good yarn, and then it ends up that we have a couple more beers, enjoying the time with the boys...then suddenly were making decisions to go to town (Joe, 2011).

During interviewing, Kevin referred to attendance in town as being part of an all-nighter. Kevin made sure to include that peer pressure plays an integral part in prolonging alcohol consumption at a social event. In addition to this idea Kevin believes that a player who drinks over a three or four hour period will more than likely decide to continue drinking.

There are things like peer pressure which become evident when your drinking with the rugby team. Players will encourage you to drink more or to go to town with them...I think after a couple of hours drinking, you have usually had a decent amount of alcohol and it usually leads on to longer (Kevin, 2011).

Stephen was another participant that included going to town as part of an all-nighter. Stephen claimed that when he was younger his irresponsibility around alcohol meant that typically Stephen would binge drink more frequently. A point made by Stephen indicated that rugby players in particular have a tendency to be irresponsible drinkers,

You always say that you're going to have one or two drinks with the rugby boys and it always turns into an all-nighter on the piss, that's just what happens...when I was younger I would always have one or two and it would always turn into an all-nighter (Stephen, 2011).

Carrying on Jeremiah was less expansive in his answering of this question offering only that when players had consumed too much alcohol and knew it was unsafe to drive that players carry on drinking all night. It is Jeremiah's belief that players will continue drinking heavily if they have no ride home or feel they are over the limit to drive. Jeremiah concluded by saying,

If I have too much to drive home then I'll usually just carry on drinking. There's no point risking driving home, so you're better off to have a good night out drinking with the boys and find another way home later when you need to (Jeremiah, 2011).

4.3: Experiences and perceptions of consuming alcohol in the rugby environment:

Table 4.3.1: Individual perceptions of alcohol consumption.

Question: What are your perceptions surrounding the consumption of alcohol and in particular, how it impacts on the team (e.g., performance, friendships, unity, etc.)?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Overall perception	50/50	50/50	50/50	50/50	50/50
Perceptions of alcohol on performance	Negative	Negative	Negative	Negative	50/50
Perceptions of alcohol on friendships	Positive	50/50	50/50	Positive	50/50
Perceptions of alcohol on unity	Positive	Positive	Positive	50/50	50/50
Key ideas towards producing positive perceptions of alcohol consumption					
Inclusion	x			x	x
Team unity	x	x	x	x	x
Adequate recovery					x
Fun	x	x		x	x
Making friends	x	x	x	x	x
Social aspects	x		x	x	
Key ideas towards producing negative perceptions of alcohol consumption					
Segregates people				x	x
Dehydration			x	x	x
Fighting/aggressiveness	x	x		x	x
Regretful acts		x	x		x
Drink driving	x	x	x	x	
Over consumption by players		x	x		x

None of the participants were entirely for or entirely against the use of alcohol in rugby. All of the participants confirmed that alcohol should play a part in rugby but that over consumption does have negative side effects. Each participant identified both positive and negative perceptions they hold when alcohol is being consumed. During questioning, participants described their use of alcohol in an upbeat manner and seemed to enjoy talking about their positive experiences having consumed alcohol. However, all of the participants did note that there is a stage where alcohol can become destructive and can thereby be considered unsafe for those who continue drinking. Each of the participants described

differing key perceptions they hold which have resulted from experiences in alcohol consumption each individual has completed.

All of the participants except for Stephen found that alcohol was a negative factor for performance. Stephen's rationale was that a recovery session and adequate rehydration immediately after a drinking session were key factors in continuing good performance. It must be said though that Stephen's opinion did not include binge drinking,

I definitely think alcohol has its place, I don't think its all bad, but there are definitely side effects. I think as long as it's managed properly and its done in the right environment...where you do a recovery session the next day and look after your body as well as hydrating properly before you go to bed then that's fine (Stephen, 2011).

In terms of participant perceptions on the effects of alcohol on friendships, all agreed that alcohol is a positive addition for both maintaining and creating new friendships. Joe, Jeremiah, and Stephen however stopped short of declaring that alcohol is entirely positive for friendships believing that there can be some detrimental effects also.

Starting with positive perceptions for friendships, Stephen and Jeremiah's views were alike where both saw that having a good time with the boys and having a laugh were beneficial for friendships. In particular, Kevin and Joe referred to how alcohol helped them to make conversation with others they did not know so well, or to talk more generally with their closer friends.

I think alcohol helps friendships; it provides a common ground where guys can have a few beers together and talk to other guys they wouldn't normally talk to (Kevin, 2011).

Whilst Joe stated that,

I think you make a lot of friends by drinking alcohol, you just come out of your shell, you talk and open up to other people you don't usually talk to (Joe, 2011).

Eddie's positive perceptions stemmed from his belief that by doing stupid things in each others company, friendships were able to be made stronger,

Alcohol unites a lot of people and keeps the brotherhood feeling. You're able to do stupid things around your rugby friends and it allows your friendship to get stronger I reckon (Eddie, 2011).

In terms of negative perceptions held by the participants Joe, Jeremiah, and Stephen, all believed that over-consumption can lead to arguments, fighting between players, and players saying regretful comments.

You can get the other side effect of when you drink too much and you begin to cause fights (Stephen, 2011).

When your drinking it can sometimes lead your friends to turn on you and loose control which is definitely a negative thing...you can say things you don't really mean or that you end up regretting (Jeremiah, 2011).

Joe also pointed out that over-consumption by players in his experience has lead to mates of his trying to pursue other players partners into sexual activities. Joe added in a summary that,

When the boys get a bit too drunk, the boys sometimes go hit on other boys girlfriends. That definitely ruins friendships through trust being destroyed, and there's been a lot of other friendships ruined by the same thing that I know of (Joe, 2011).

When asking the players about alcohols effect on unity all players except for Kevin and Stephen believed that alcohol is absolutely beneficial for unity in rugby teams. Eddie, Joe, and Jeremiah all referred to alcohol being able to help team cohesion,

I think it is a big thing for unity; alcohol brings the team together and really helps the team environment (Jeremiah, 2011).

Kevin and Stephen both expressed concern that alcohol could segregate some individuals within the team especially those who refrain from drinking alcohol because of religious reasons or family commitments. Whilst Kevin used the phrase, catch twenty two, Stephen used the term double edged sword. When asked for further clarification on these terms, both players replied in similar words that,

If alcohol is used responsibly and all players are included then alcohol is good for team unity. If everyone is not included then team unity will probably be jeopardised (Stephen, 2011).

Table 4.3.2: How is the rugby drinking culture different to a family drinking culture?

Question: In what ways do you think drinking as a rugby player with fellow rugby players' differs in comparison to drinking with family and friends outside of the rugby environment?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Rugby Environment					
Alcohol consumption	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass	Mass
Louder		x			
Players are rowdy		x	x		
Mischievous			x		
Story telling	x		x		x
Bar associated				x	
Have more fun					x
Talking inappropriately					x
More energy	x				
Drink faster than with family		x			
Play games		x			
Make a fool of yourself	x	x	x		
Family Environment					
Alcohol consumption	Lite	Lite	Lite	Lite	Lite
Mellow		x	x		x
No fooling around	x	x	x		x
More respectful	x		x		
Meal involved				x	

The participants were unanimous that drinking alcohol with fellow rugby players was done on a much larger scale than within the family and friends environment. According to Eddie the rugby environment has more energy and is an environment where he was far more likely to make a fool of himself. Eddie described the family environment as being more respectful and responsible when drinking alcohol. Joe and Jeremiah have the exact same perception as Eddie stating within their interviews that making a fool in front of the rugby boys was acceptable and that fooling around in front of the family was not.

From Joe's interview statements, he believed that the rugby environment is much louder because of players talking and rowdiness between one another. Joe also found that drinking games take place within rugby drinking sessions which does lead to hastened consumption by some individuals. When comparing the family environment with the rugby

environment Joe spoke of his family environment being much more mellow and relaxed when drinking. Joe explained that fooling around was not something he would do in front of his family because they would be

On your back all the time (Joe, 2011).

Joe went on to explain that when drinking alcohol with his family,

It's really chilled out and you tend to talk a lot more than drink (Joe, 2011).

Jeremiah had much the same perceptions as Joe, however he did add that rugby players are more likely to be mischievous as opposed to family members. When speaking of his family environment, Jeremiah announced that a mellow environment existed where no fooling around occurred. Jeremiah referred to respect as being a primary reason as to why he believed the family environment was this way.

I think it's more of a respect thing, family are the people who are always there for you, so you give them respect when your drinking around them, especially the elders (Jeremiah, 2011).

Similarly Stephen had the same type of answer as the three previous players. Stephen's answer to this question began with an explanation of how rugby players have more fun and talk inappropriately of women. He then compared that in the family environment the atmosphere is very tame and there is certainly no inappropriate talk of women. Stephen in his summation of the rugby environment quoted that,

With the rugby boys we always know how to have a good time, we always drink hard and have lots of fun (Stephen, 2011).

When speaking to Kevin, he explained the differences between drinking in the rugby and family environments by focusing on the physical settings with which drinking took place. Kevin in his perception of the typical rugby environment described a location which includes a bar where everybody consumes alcohol whilst watching television or chatting. When asked further about the amounts of alcohol being consumed, Kevin believed that there are large

quantities of alcohol located at a bar so there was sometimes a lack of awareness of how much players were actually drinking in a session. Kevin believed that players would just drink because there was still alcohol available to drink. In comparison, Kevin explained that consumption of alcohol with the family usually involved an event in which a meal was provided. Kevin went on to include that alcohol consumption was not a priority at family occasions and accordingly little amounts of alcohol were available. Kevin concluded by saying how a decent meal for him helped him not to feel so intoxicated.

Table 4.3.3: Alcohol consumption and rugby player behaviour.

Question: Can you describe the typical drinking behaviour (s) of fellow rugby players when alcohol is being consumed?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Incoherently intoxicated	x			x	
Limited consumption			x	x	
Fast consumption					x
Responsible			x	x	
Lots of hype and energy	x	x			
Conversational	x	x			x
Talks about sport/rugby	x	x			
Company dependant			x		
Yelling		x	x		x
Having fun/laughing		x	x		x
Singing		x	x		
Joking around					x

Eddie and Kevin share a similar view of two types of rugby player behaviour likely to be present at a rugby gathering. These two types of characteristics were based purely on the amount of alcohol consumed by an individual. A player that controls their alcohol intake according to Eddie likes to make conversations about any topic but in particular will like to talk about rugby and sport. Overall Eddie perceives this consumer as a happy guy. Kevin's view sees players who are in control as being organised and responsible. Kevin viewed that typically the older guys within the teams he has played for were more likely to be organised

and responsible when consuming alcohol because of the family commitments they have with children and mortgages.

On the other hand, both players described a heavily intoxicated rugby player who was likely to go overboard to the point where the player loses control. Eddie perceived that these players often need looking after and are more likely to cause trouble. Kevin's account described how players when consuming too much alcohol will end up spewing or making bad decisions to drive home. Kevin explained that these were usually the younger guys who are single and do not have any responsibilities. When questioned further about the ratio of incoherent players versus responsible drinkers at a rugby gathering both players were quick to point out that there are only a few players who become incoherent and that these players form a small minority of individuals at rugby gatherings.

Eddie also pointed out a further behaviour that may be present which he described as a ringleader. According to Eddie the ringleader holds control over the gathering by determining the flow and energy at the assembly as well as the music that is played. Eddie went on to say that the ringleader can also influence players to drink in what was described as a communal consumption.

Jeremiah was another participant to declare that multiple behaviours are displayed by rugby players. He began by describing a behaviour he believed was frequent within the rugby environment and referred to a characterisation that liked to have a good time and as part of enjoying himself, consumption of alcohol would take place. Jeremiah went on to explain that depending on the company the individual was with, different behaviours are displayed.

With younger players, some of the behaviours involved would involve the boys yelling and singing and having a real good old time. Another thing would be the older bunch who have a young player talking to them, they might be having a good laugh but more on a mellow scale. There are different types of behaviours and it really does depend on the company the person is with (Jeremiah, 2011).

Joe and Stephen were straight forward with their descriptions of the typical rugby player. Joe believed that players become conversational as well as appearing to have a lot more hype. Players tend to sing and laugh with one another in Joe’s opinion and will not shy away from others at the gathering including females. Stephen perceived that a typical rugby player’s behaviour whilst drinking alcohol was to consume quickly and as much as possible. Stephen also described how players tend to scream, shout, laugh, and joke with one another whilst at rugby gatherings. Stephen concluded by highlighted that the telling of dirty stories about females is done frequently by rugby players having consumed alcohol.

Table 4.3.4: Expectations of elite players when consuming alcohol.

Question: Do you think there is an expectation that to be a ‘good’ rugby player you need to be able to handle your drink?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Elite level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Club level	No	No	No	No	Yes

Each of the participants replied with a comparison between the elite or representative players in their club sides and the players who were considered club level footballers. In their reply to this question participants stated that elite level rugby players, whilst they consume alcohol, are expected to have a grip on their alcoholic consumption and that usually this was done by drinking far less than others at a gathering.

In particular, Stephen spoke of handling your drink as being a way to show that you have sacrificed a lot in order to play at the top level of rugby. Kevin viewed that expectations from representative coaches has probably forced top players to limit their alcohol consumption. Jeremiah viewed that the best players simply did not drink as often in order to keep up good performance. While Joe and Eddie both believed that players who were at the elite level and who were caught heavily intoxicated would lose their opportunity.

When looking at the comparison of club rugby players, the perceptions of what is expected whilst consuming alcohol reversed. All participants except for Stephen said that it was ok to binge drink frequently as a club level player. Stephen still maintained that the club he played for was not interested in consuming large amounts of alcohol in any one session. Kevin, Jeremiah, and Joe all believed that players who solely play club rugby were not expected to drink responsibly all of the time like professional players. There was also consensus amongst these three players that alcohol consumption by club level players is where binge drinking in rugby reaches its peak.

Eddie believed that the expectation within his team was to drink alcohol regularly and in large quantities. Eddie stated that even elite level athletes were expected to participate in binge drinking sessions but admitted that these had to be very special occasions. In Eddie's experience when elite players do drink it is done so at a very hazardous binge drinking level. Eddie felt that hazardous binge drinking occurs because elite level players do not get the opportunity to drink alcohol as often and therefore should make a decent effort to consume as much as they can in a safe environment away from the general public.

Some of the really good rugby players that I know can't handle their drink and don't try to stick up with the boys when it comes to drinking...but when we have courties the elite players are expected to be the most pissed. That's mainly because of their high profile and the boys expect that they should be more shit faced (Eddie, 2011).

Table 4.3.5: Feelings towards other intoxicated players.

Question: How do you feel when others in your team become intoxicated (i.e., drunk)?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Feels good	x	x	x	x	x
Uncomfortable		x	x	x	x

The participants found that other players intoxicated made them feel good. The players all endorsed that other players who were responsibly drunk were fun to be around. Of the participants only Eddie spoke entirely with a positive view of fellow players drunk. The other

players did declare that others who had lost control because of heavy intoxication were not good to be around and that it made players feel uncomfortable.

Each of the participants noted that having fun, being in a high spirit, laughing and fellow players appearing to have a good time were acceptable behaviours. Eddie was particularly enthused by the morning after a drinking session as it is a good time to joke about the previous night's events. He also verified that when the boys had played well during a game that players are worthy of enjoying their night and getting drunk.

I feel quite happy inside cause I can't wait to see them the next day and joke about what they did when they were drunk. Hopefully they couldn't remember so I could make up an extra bit of the story and add more flavour to the pot...and hey if they won a good hard game by playing well then they deserve to get out, get drunk and enjoy the night (Eddie, 2011).

When explaining disliked behaviours that bring upon feelings of unease for the participants, various answers were given. Jeremiah explained that he felt uncomfortable at times when he had made the decision to be a sober driver.

Definitely when I'm a sober driver I feel real uncomfortable. I feel like I'm missing out on having a good time. But if the boys are having a good night then it makes me happy for them. It's just dumb though when I see them having a good time and I can't really join in (Jeremiah, 2011).

Joe explained how he felt annoyed when players were not in control of themselves as it made them look stupid. Joe went on to say that intoxication at that extreme level was something most people regret the next morning. Joe has witnessed some of his rugby friends being arrested by police because they have not been compliant with police requests or made bad decisions such as drink driving or assault.

When speaking to Kevin he disliked that his team mates would sometimes go looking for fights. Kevin believed that alcohol can make players become easily aggressive and felt uneasy about this. Stephen too had uneasy views of intoxication where he perceives that

violence and foul language were direct products of rugby players having drunken too much.

Stephen went on to reveal his feelings towards intoxication by saying,

If you can't handle your drink and you're going to be a cock, just don't drink cause no one wants to know about it, no one wants to be with someone like that or have it happen in their team (Stephen, 2011).

Table 4.3.6: Drinking events held in the rugby environment.

Question: Can you remember any team drinking competitions or events that encouraged the consumption of large amounts of alcohol? What happened? What was the outcome?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Court session	x	x	x	x	x
House parties	x				
The shed	x				
Supporters day			x		
Winning the championship		x			

When asked about why alcohol needed to be involved with rugby events Stephen and Eddie's views were fixed that alcohol brings people together and allows conversation to occur more easily. Players who are new to a club are able to be incorporated a lot easier and get along with other players in the team who have been there for a long time. Whilst Kevin spoke of alcohol's tradition within rugby stating that,

I think alcohol is part of tradition really...Alcohol has always been there and it seems to be part of the rugby culture (Kevin, 2011).

All participants noted that a team gathering known as a courty, short for court session was the biggest event that encouraged alcohol consumption. During a courty players are forced to consume heavily for breaking social norms or team rules during the season. First-hand information from the participants claims that players can be forced to drink multiple drinks at a time, mix drinks together, and consume multiple shots or even glasses full of spirits. Food items can also be added to alcohol in order to make the drink more difficult to drink,

At one court session we had funnels full with eggs, vodka and beers and you would have to scull back the funnel (Stephen, 2011).

Methods for drinking their punishment drinks included unorthodox and vulgar techniques such as drinking through a large funnel, drinking out of a used gumboot or rugby boot, and consuming the contents of a glass which has passed over the rectum or genitals of another player. Drinking out of a glass or cup occurs at an extremely fast pace throughout the entire court session. During a court session there are various games played where consumption of alcohol is usually allocated to losing players or teams. There is however other punishments that players may be required to perform as Stephen suggested,

The other thing that can happen is where guys are walking around naked. I've been part of court sessions where the whole team is naked with full vessels and doing a team sculling race (Stephen, 2011).

Court sessions are run by a nominated leader, group of senior players, or by the coaching staff. Eddie explained how being in charge of a court session is held in high regard because those who are in charge can force any individual to consume alcohol. Despite such extremely distasteful punishments all of the participants seemed excited when describing their experiences of a court. Often smiling and providing very graphic and detailed accounts of the events held throughout. The participants did note that a small minority of players at some court sessions did not drink alcohol but would need to drink some other liquid such as milk or water rather quickly instead.

When detailing the point of a court session the players referred to team bonding and that the creation of team unity occurs,

Once a year we have a court session. Usually we all get really pissed, have games and heaps of fun. It really helps the team bonding to get a lot tighter (Eddie, 2011).

I think the main point of the court session is team bonding between the team members...it creates better unity between all the guys and allows us all to have a good laugh with one another (Kevin, 2011).

Eddie continued to explain that players are required to dress up in theme or costume. Those who had not showed up in theme were punished right away by consuming mass amounts of alcohol. One of the positives Eddie see's in players requiring to dress up in theme is that players' true characters are able to be seen. Eddie believes that dressing up in funny costumes can be quite difficult for males but by dressing up there is a recognition that another player has attempted to make an effort and is there for a good time. Eddie then described the games and rituals that occur at the court session describing the whole event as havoc. In Eddie's interpretation,

Players are forced to be slaves and will need to open bottles for other players as vessels are consumed. And it can be really tiresome because of the quickness of players finishing their drinks. Games we play include boat races where players who have done wrong during the season or the courty are made to sit down on tackling bags. Once both tackling bags are filled up with players, a sculling race of alcohol occurs. The winner's get to leave their tackling bag and the losing team has to stay on the boat waiting for the other tackling bag to be full again before again attempting to get off the boat by out-sculling their new opposition (Eddie, 2011).

The next event Eddie referred to as the fines ceremony was confirmed as also occurring in the other participant's accounts of a court session. The fine ceremony is a chance for players to accuse others of wrongdoings and to have a laugh at others misfortune. Examples of wrongdoings suggested by the participants included, gaining a yellow or red card during the game, players try scoring records throughout the season, sexual escapades, turning up late to trainings or games, and performing poorly during a game. The following explanation from Eddie was similar to what all the participants had explained as proceeding during the fine ceremony.

During the fine ceremony you need to defend yourself from something silly you may have done throughout the season. You are allowed to choose one person to act as your lawyer and basically they are the only ones who are allowed to speak for you and get you off the fine. If they are unsuccessful then both you and the lawyer end up sculling lots. However if they are successful you might get away with drinking small bit (Eddie, 2011).

Moving on from the court session Eddie referred to a place known as the shed where alcohol is consumed extensively by many rugby players and not just from his club side. According to Eddie the shed is located in one of his team-mates garages and it is guaranteed that people will be drinking there every Saturday night. In Eddie's description the shed is unique because it is literally an old shed and looks unflattering from the outside. However in further explanation by Eddie, inside the shed there is a bar complete with a fridge and the whole shed has been extensively fitted with a music system and lighting. In summary of the shed Eddie stated that,

The main point of the shed is to drink alcohol and socialise. The majority of people drinking there are mostly rugby players, but the good thing about it is that you can have players from other clubs turn up to the shed and you just get on the piss hard with them. Everybody's welcome at the shed (Eddie, 2011).

The final place Eddie described as a place of heavy consumption was at a fellow rugby players' house party.

When house parties are held you know it's going to be a huge piss up. So you usually take a box and often once you've finished that you'll carry on drinking in town. House parties are pretty heavy on the drinking of alcohol (Eddie, 2011).

During interviewing with Jeremiah he explained that apart from court sessions the other major drinking event for his team was the club sponsors and supporters day. During his explanation of this event, Jeremiah gave details of how boat races occur between the retired and present players. Jeremiah went on to say,

I think the point of the supporters' boat race from an ex-players perspective would be that it is a thing we've all done which doesn't really require any physical-ness. Obviously us current players will be a lot fitter and stronger but with drinking alcohol the previous players are just as accustomed to drinking alcohol. So I guess a boat race is the sort of thing where the older guys can get us back. It sort of offers a level playing field (Jeremiah, 2011).

In Joes account his major drinking event was the Sunday following winning the championship. Joe explained that his team got together and drank approximately two thousand dollars worth of alcohol between them. During the binge drinking session the

coaches of the team congratulated everyone on their accomplishment and the team was given the alcohol as a reward for their hard effort throughout the season. When asked why alcohol was given as a reward Joe replied,

Alcohol is just one of those things you have when you celebrate winning. You just turn to alcohol that's all. All the boys were really happy and cheery, it was a good time (Joe, 2011).

Kevin and Stephen referred only to court sessions as heavy consumption events held in their rugby teams. At the end of Stephen's account of a court session he made the statement which criticised court sessions and questioned their worth for rugby,

Personally I'm not a huge fan of court sessions. I just think it usually ends in arguments and fights. I would far rather see drinking in a bar occur where it is a controlled drinking time, where management shout piss at the bar, where everybody was not drinking so quickly and having a good time. That would be far more beneficial for building team unity (Stephen, 2011).

Table 4.3.7: The impact of team drinking on team culture.

Question: When the team regularly drinks together (e.g. say every weekend), how do you think it affects the team as a whole?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Develops strong bonding	x	x	x	x	x
Everyone gets to know each other better		x	x	x	x
Stay happy whilst drinking	x				

All of the participants felt that drinking together with other team mates was a good thing and that it develops strong bonds between players. All participants except for Eddie mentioned that getting to know other players and making conversation with other team mates occurred whilst drinking alcohol. Joe viewed that getting to know others is a good thing because,

It helps to make you stronger as a team on the field. It makes you believe in your brothers out there when times get tough and you want to strive to do everything you can so you don't let the boys down. I'd say that the biggest thing from getting to know players better is that your performance on the field increases and everyone goes a little bit harder (Joe, 2011).

Jeremiah, Kevin, and Stephen all viewed chatting to others as a big part of developing a stronger bond within the team. Jeremiah believes that bonding between players has been very important for establishing a good team. According to Jeremiah drinking after the game whilst chatting to other players and supporters is a good way to relax with his team mates and get to know what they have been up to outside the pressures of the playing environment. Kevin is similar in his perceptions in that he appreciates the social opportunities that drinking alcohol has to offer. Kevin felt that by drinking alcohol after games, players were able to speak about things that are not necessarily rugby related. Kevin went on to notify the researcher that during trainings and games players rarely get opportunities to find out how their team mates are and how things outside of rugby for their team mates are going. Stephen agreed with both Jeremiah and Kevin saying,

“I think it is really good when you’re all drinking together rather than just a few of you drinking. When everyone is drinking you don’t need to get pissed as, everyone’s just chatting and getting to know each other, which is really good. That’s really the basis and foundation of what I think a good team is made from” (Stephen, 2011).

Eddie, unlike the other players did not speak about the conversation he had with other players directly. Instead Eddie spoke about the happy vibe that he and his team mates experience as a result of drinking alcohol together. Eddie has found that drinking with his team mates produces an environment where,

There are no problems. No-one fights and everyone has good times, it’s all really positive. It brings us together heaps, and really all I can say is positive things about drinking alcohol together (Eddie, 2011).

Table 4.3.8: Drinking alone versus drinking with the rugby team.

Question: Do you think rugby players consume more alcohol when they are together as opposed to being on their own? Why or why not?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
With rugby team	x	x	x	x	x
Alone					

The participants agreed that they consume more alcohol in a sitting with fellow rugby players than if they were at home by themselves. Eddie and Joe found that when they are alone they both tend to drink much smaller amounts of alcohol. When asked to explain why they thought alcohol is consumed in larger amounts with the rugby team both replied that there was a competitive aspect to drinking in the rugby environment. Joe has noticed that during conversations he often finds himself consciously aware of how much alcohol his team mate is drinking. Joe went on to speak of how he will take a sip of his drink when his team mate does just so he can feel like he is keeping up. Eddie’s view of the competitiveness whilst drinking together made him well aware of how much more he drinks with the rugby team than when he is by himself.

A lot of the boys when they are drinking tend to get quite competitive, and see who can drink the most. I think it’s just in our nature to compete with other mates especially if they are really good mates you’ve got to show them that you can drink more than them. Are you going to prove me wrong type of thing. We all like to win and drinking alcohol is a thing that anyone can do you don’t need to be the strongest, or fastest, or biggest you have just got to be able to scull (Eddie, 2011).

Jeremiah claimed that drinking more with the rugby team was a natural thing to do.

After each game Jeremiah explained how players who are keen to continue drinking will establish plans to move to another venue after their clubrooms. This is usually a team member’s house.

Overall I think it’s a natural thing to do. You can enter the routine that when your with the rugby boys, you all want to drink. Where as being by myself I don’t go as hard and don’t feel like doing anything, I get more tired not doing anything like dancing or singing and yarning with others. Overall I’d rather drink lots more in the team environment (Jeremiah, 2011).

Kevin found that because he was drinking with other rugby players he would always find himself drinking more alcohol overall. Kevin's reasoning described how players will establish rounds for buying drinks and that players feel obligated to drink at the same pace as others in order to keep up with the round. In further explanation Kevin felt that it was necessary to drink the vessels he was given and keep up with the pace of drinking by the group so he could feel worthy as a member of the round. In a final statement Kevin said,

Whereas at home you can just sip on a couple of beers over a long period of time and not really be worried about having to force the issue of keeping up with the others (Kevin,2011).

Stephen's perception noted that players would not drink too much at a sitting by themselves. If players in his team did consume large amounts of alcohol by themselves Stephen felt concerned for their overall well being by suggesting the player as being an alcoholic. At home Stephen tends to have a sip of a drink every advertisement break on the rare occasion that he is drinking. Stephen said that the main reason he drank more with the rugby team was because of socialising aspects. Stephen felt it was normal to drink during pauses in conversation whilst in the company of others. Stephen made a point that conversation pauses tend to occur a lot more frequently than advertisement breaks and that because of this players' might sometimes not realise that they are drinking so quickly.

Table 4.3.9: What individuals are involved in a rugby drinking environment

Question: Is drinking within your team limited to the players only, or are there others who are not part of the team frequently involved? Do you think that others who are not normally involved in the team influence the drinking behaviour of players more or less?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Coaches	x	x	x	x	x
Partners	x	x	x		x
Retired Players	x		x	x	
Family	x	x			
Non rugby playing mates		x			

Each of the participants pointed out that within the rugby environment consumption of alcohol is not limited to players only. All participants confirmed that coaches and the management team are individuals who help make up the individuals in the rugby drinking culture. Also, more often than not partners of the participants will join the team during after match functions and events. Eddie, Jeremiah, and Kevin all noted that past players were involved in the drinking culture particularly after a game of rugby in local clubrooms. Eddie and Joe both said that other family members, aside from partners, may come to drink with them although this is done infrequently. Finally, Joe regularly had non rugby playing mates join him within the rugby environment to drink alcohol. How the participants perceive each of these groups of individuals effect the way the participants consume alcohol will now be discussed.

The participants all felt that consumption of alcohol was encouraged by coaches and management. When asked for further clarification each of the participants had differing answers as to why coaching management encouraged consumption of alcohol. Eddie believed that coaches would come along to their social gatherings and drink with the team as a way of strengthening the player coach relationship. Eddie continued to say that because the coach made an effort to come to the party and was often actively drinking himself it made the players feel comfortable drinking around him.

Jeremiah explained how his coaching staff tended to have lots of money and would often buy alcohol for his team. Jeremiah went on to say that,

Especially if you have a good game, you know they're going to shout you. I think that's because they think their jobs been done by you winning the game for them (Jeremiah, 2011).

Joe stated how his coaches would come and drink with the players after the game. Joe felt that this was done because it was part of team unity by everyone doing the same thing together. Joe went on to speak about how he thought coaches encouraged players to drink as a way of getting the team to socialise better with one another.

Kevin found that his coaching management would often put bar tabs on for the team when they had played well. The coaches of Kevin's team would then thank all the players for the outstanding game and during the teams drinking session move from player to player and discuss the significant events of the game that has been played. Kevin went on to say how it was during these conversations with players that coaches would find out whether set moves and patterns were working on the field and also what the players thought needed changing.

All players except for Kevin commented on how having partners around changed the way the players consumed alcohol. Each of the participants mentioned that their drinking was scaled back when their partners were around because they did not want to risk appearing to look stupid. Answers given by the participants are best summed up by the following from Jeremiah,

Sometimes your partner may not drink but if she is there you seem to behave differently. You sort of don't want to drink too much and you wouldn't behave like you normally would around the boys like yelling and making a fool of yourself. Basically because I think their presence is around, you wouldn't want them judging you because you were behaving stupidly (Jeremiah, 2011).

Eddie, Jeremiah, and Kevin all spoke about how retired players can have an effect on the way the present players consume alcohol. Eddie and Jeremiah's perception was similar in

that story telling by retired players was often exchanged whilst consuming beer. Both players explained how consuming alcohol with retired players is done on a lower scale and that conversation took place in a quieter space of the room. As Jeremiah explained, the topics of conversation are not much different with retired players. Jeremiah went on to say how conversations will involve the telling of glory days, winning rugby, sexual encounters and stories of heavy drinking. Eddie concurred with what Jeremiah said announcing,

A lot of the old boys tell us the old stories and how they used to drink and play rugby. Some of those stories are quite legendary, so in a way the boys aspire to create the same types of legendary stories whilst we're drinking (Eddie, 2011).

Kevin's view slightly differed towards the way retired players influenced his drinking.

Kevin stated how retired players would often offer to buy the present players alcohol as a way of keeping the club tight.

I think the older guys probably encourage us by offering to buy us beers. That's probably because they see it as a major part of keeping the club close and tight knit. By having the players socialising and drinking together with the extended families of the club they probably see it as a positive for the club in general (Kevin, 2011).

Both Eddie and Joe stated how the players significantly lessen their drinking around family members. Both participants said that when family members drink with them it would usually occur during after match functions. The participants went on to say that instead of usually drinking with their team mates they would often segregate themselves to the outer reaching's of the team and socialise with family. When questioned as to why drinking took place in the outer circles, only Eddie offered an answer stating that he did not want his family over hearing the inappropriate conversations rugby players often engage in. When speaking about the amount of alcohol consumed by family members at the rugby club Joe said that players' families would only have one or two drinks at most before leaving, Eddie stated that his father and brothers might stay for around five or six drinks. In a final statement both

participants agreed that as soon as family members left the rugby club the level of alcohol consumption by themselves increased when they re-joined their team circle.

Joe was the only participant to comment that non rugby playing mates affect the way and amounts of alcohol he consumed in the rugby environment. Overall Joe felt that when such friends came to drink in the rugby environment they would immediately join the action and mimic or embrace the rugby team’s culture. These friends according to Joe were not much different from the rugby boys in wanting to drink lots of alcohol.

4.4: The connection between rugby and alcohol:

Table 4.4.1: What has created the New Zealand rugby drinking culture.

Question: What do you think is responsible for the drinking culture in New Zealand rugby?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Watching father/uncles	x	x			x
Relaxing	x				
Overall binge culture		x		x	x
Escaping family pressure					x
Tradition		x	x	x	
Socialising aspect	x			x	x
Alcohol sponsorship in sport			x		

Eddie, Joe, and Stephen all found that as they were growing up their fathers, uncles and other male role models would often be found consuming alcohol after rugby. The three players all felt that by commonly witnessing these role models drinking alcohol after rugby that alcohol consumption was therefore a normal thing to do. Eddie’s perception towards the creation of New Zealand’s rugby drinking culture is centred around the relaxing feelings alcohol has on himself. He compared alcohol’s consumption by rugby players to the consumption of alcohol by weekday workers concluding that the creation of rugby players drinking alcohol is a reward for hard work.

Just like if I finish a hard day's work, I feel like a beer to wind down and relax and kick my feet up. Beers give you a sense of satisfaction knowing that you've accomplished what you set out to do for the week. You can sit there kick your feet up and relax with a beer. After playing a game of rugby it's the same thing. You feel satisfied that you've finished a hard game and just want to relax, so you have a beer (Eddie, 2011).

Joe in an effort to explain how he views the creation of New Zealand's rugby drinking culture spoke of how he saw his father drinking with his friends after rugby games. Joe remembers thinking of one day being like his father and socialising with his friends whilst consuming alcohol. Joe also believes that the culture of drinking in New Zealand rugby is nationwide and that the creation of the rugby drinking culture stems from the acceptance the country has towards rugby players consuming alcohol.

When you grow up in New Zealand you're always seeing it. With rugby in New Zealand it's just the thing you do, you go to the after match and everyone has a beer and a talk. That's just the way it's always been done, it's something that I feel comfortable doing and it feels normal (Joe, 2011).

Having not been involved with rugby at an early age, Stephen still remembered going to rugby clubs and viewing the large amount of adult men drinking alcohol. He remembered seeing family friends, older cousins and some of his uncles all engage in the drinking culture having just finished a game of rugby. In further questioning Stephen viewed that the creation of rugby players' association with drinking alcohol was due to the endorsing and positive regard shown towards alcohol from older players. He believed a cycle was present in rugby where,

One of the main factors is that drinking has been going on so long which has been encouraged by all of the older guys, which they had encouraged by their older guys. So it's sort of like a culture which has been passed down from generation to generation (Stephen, 2011).

Joe, Kevin, and Stephen all felt that the culture of drinking in New Zealand rugby is a result of the overall binge drinking culture in New Zealand. All players were similar in their view perceiving that in New Zealand there is a problem with large amounts of alcohol being

consumed harmfully and that it is acceptable by some groups of people, like rugby players to do so.

I guess Kiwi's have always been binge drinkers. And rugby is just as much of a part of the binge drinking culture. Everybody has been doing it for years, drinking as much as they can. And drinking as much as you can still happens everywhere in New Zealand today, especially in rugby (Stephen, 2011).

Stephen has also heard of occasions where players had used drinking alcohol as a means of enjoying time away from their family in the comfort of their mates. Stephen went on to say,

A lot of guys who are married and have kids, they use drinking alcohol as a chance to get out and enjoy time away from their family. So it might be possible that the connection rugby has with alcohol has something to do with players reliving the stress and pressure of home, or just enjoying doing something different than being with their family all the time. And I mean just chilling with the boys having a beer is all good (Stephen, 2011).

Joe, Jeremiah, and Kevin all perceived that rugby has a connection with alcohol because of the long tradition that the two have had. All three spoke about what has been traditional whereby consuming alcohol with the rugby team has always been a part of New Zealand rugby culture. Jeremiah noted that watching professional teams in New Zealand also helps the problem to exist citing that,

In any club or even watching the All Blacks as far back as I can remember they have always been sponsored by alcohol. And by having the alcohol brands there with the best teams obviously it's going to make you want to drink. But you also see the best players drinking alcohol so that's another factor as well (Jeremiah, 2011).

Kevin agreed with Jeremiah where he believed the tradition of drinking with fellow players at after match functions helps to reinforce the impression that it is ok to drink alcohol as a part of rugby. Kevin continued to say that within rugby clubs the bar plays a critical role in drawing players to socialise. Kevin believes that because the players are drawn to the bar it makes drinking alcohol much easier because of its accessibility. Kevin concluded by saying

that because everybody else is at the bar drinking it creates a fun atmosphere where he did not want to leave or miss out on anything notable that might occur.

Table 4.4.2: The connection between rugby and alcohol.

Question: Why do you think alcohol has a connection with rugby?					
Participants	Eddie	Joe	Jeremiah	Kevin	Stephen
Sponsorship	x			x	x
Unity that is produced	x	x	x	x	
Traditions created around consumption of alcohol	x			x	x
Men like to drink alcohol		x			
Money made across the bar				x	

Eddie, Kevin, and Stephen, felt that alcohol’s connection to rugby was helped by the large sponsorship and advertisements alcohol brands receive during rugby events. Eddie and Stephen found that when they watched rugby more often than not alcohol was being consumed by patrons at the game or advertised during commercial breaks. Kevin’s views showed that he believed the advertising of alcohol has always been around,

I think that ever since I grew up and have been watching rugby that there’s always been sponsorship of rugby by alcohol breweries. And alcohol sponsorship isn’t even solely based on rugby it’s in other sports too. It’s everywhere, but really overall it helps to keep the connection between rugby and alcohol (Kevin, 2011).

All the players except for Stephen felt that alcohols connection with rugby was evident because of the unity it produces amongst the players. Kevin stated that,

Socially, a lot of teams rely on alcohol as a factor towards building unity within the team (Kevin, 2011).

Eddie explained how at each match, the senior B side would come and support the premier team whilst drinking alcohol. Eddie went on to say how this not only produced better unity within the Senior B side but that also the club as a whole became more unified.

Joe and Jeremiah had a similar view that because there are so many individuals involved in a rugby side that it was difficult to find something cost effective which everyone could participate in doing. Jeremiah continued,

I think the reason why rugby to me has a good connection with alcohol is pretty much because of the large number of players playing it in any one side. In a rugby team there is twenty odd players compared to other teams such as touch where there's only six. With rugby having more players it means there is more chance to influence others so the team bonding needs to be tighter. Alcohol is really cheap and it's a good way to get everyone feeling tighter with everyone else (Jeremiah, 2011).

Moving forward Eddie, Kevin, and Stephen all felt traditions such as court sessions and binge drinking sessions helped to keep alcohol well established in rugby. Eddie pointed out that consuming alcohol was an integral part of club rugby in New Zealand and related to how his father and uncles had always consumed alcohol and therefore it led him towards doing the same. Kevin explained how court sessions were always done as tradition and therefore helped to reinforce the alcohol and rugby connection. Stephen described how alcohol is perceived as a normal aspect of rugby whereby players are given vouchers for alcohol and encouraged to drink heavily when drinking with fellow rugby players,

You're always given vouchers for free beers and it's just normal to be given that. With court sessions a compulsory part of club rugby which is absolute binge drinking, the connection with rugby is reinforced. Other get together's with rugby players will almost definitely include alcohol and drinking lots of it (Stephen, 2011).

Apart from the unity alcohol produces Joe felt that the connection between rugby and alcohol stemmed from men behaving naturally. Joe's perceptions centred on the idea that it is acceptable for males playing rugby to consume alcohol whilst socialising.

It's just a man's thing. You just come together and drink and talk, you play rugby together so there's just that really good connection there. It really is something men do in New Zealand and if you're a man playing rugby in New Zealand you'll definitely drink alcohol, its just what we do (Joe, 2011).

The final view held by Kevin of rugby's connection with alcohol is that bars are reliant on money made across the bar and therefore help to encourage players to the bar and drink.

One of the major social parts of rugby is to be drinking at the club and the bar. By drinking alcohol at the bar I guess it helps to keep the connection that drinking as a rugby player is ok. And I guess that would be a significant reason why alcohol is connected to rugby (Kevin, 2011).

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1: Reflecting on the present research:

The results show that one-to-one interviews are an effective way of obtaining relevant knowledge from participants about their perceptions of alcohol consumption as rugby players. There is no doubt that participants were able to discern the impact alcohol consumption has on the team culture of rugby. The interviews allowed for the participants to explain why they initially took up playing rugby and how they began regularly engaging in alcohol consumption. Drinking alcohol within the rugby environment was highlighted as well as the behaviours that are likely to occur. The participants were able to discuss their perceptions of alcohol consumption of both elite and club level rugby players whilst also explaining the expectations held towards drinking by both sets of athletes.

The results found that rugby players do hold specific perceptions about alcohol. There has also been evidence found in this investigation that suggests that rugby team culture is affected through the consumption of alcohol.

5.2: The structure:

This discussion is presented through several parts: (1) The participants explain how their involvement in rugby originated and how alcohol consumption became part of their own rugby career; (2) The behaviours that are displayed by rugby players; (3) Alcohol effects on performance, friendship, and unity is deciphered; (4) Features of the rugby drinking environment are discussed; (5) Alcohol and the expectations of elite level and club level rugby players respectively; (6) How consumption of alcohol directly impacts team bonding; (7) The people who comprise the rugby drinking environment; (8) The connection between rugby and alcohol.

5.3: The adoption of rugby and alcohol:

The participants all commented that the adoption of rugby was done in an effort to copy or imitate other males, who played a significant part of their childhood lives. Such role models included fathers, uncles, and male teachers. According to Brockman, Jago, Fox, Thompson, Cartwright, & Page (2009) influence and encouragement particularly from older family members of the same sex can heavily persuade a child to participate in organised physical activity (Brockman et al., 2009). What this means for rugby players is that more than likely sons of adult rugby playing males are likely to take up rugby. The likelihood therefore that these boys follow other actions their dad's display, such as consumption of alcohol, means that issues like alcohol in rugby appear to be a recurring behaviour and not likely to subside soon.

Alcohol has been acknowledged by the participants within this study as being well established within the culture of New Zealand rugby. The participants found that on frequent occasions most likely Thursdays after training and Saturdays' after games that alcohol is consumed by a majority of their team members. This further supports other claims held by Thomas (2003) that in New Zealand, the culture among rugby union players is that alcohol is perceived to be a normal part of one's life and rugby is a common event where drinking normally takes place. Thomas (2003) sees that the normalisation of alcohol in rugby is a dominant and accepted behaviour whereby rugby players' binge drinking or consuming more than just a few casual drinks is condoned. The reality that heavy consumption takes place on two or more nights per week during the rugby season means that there is a serious issue in New Zealand club rugby. Players through their participation in rugby are essentially opening themselves up to becoming addicted to alcohol as well as becoming susceptible to other hazardous physiological adaptations that commonly occur.

The participants identified that alcohol became part of their rugby careers between the ages of sixteen and nineteen years-old. Two of the participants identified that their drinking began at school. However, these two participants did acknowledge that alcohol consumption in school boy rugby was not as widespread as they believed it is in senior club rugby. Nevertheless, Quarrie, Feehan, Waller, Cooke, Williams, and McGee, (1996) maintain that rugby is the sport where individuals in New Zealand society are most likely to consume alcohol hazardously. Therefore potentially, rugby players as young as sixteen are learning how to hazardously consume alcohol through their involvement with rugby. The crisis is further escalated as high school rugby players leave school and join clubs where the rugby drinking culture appears even greater. The link between club rugby and alcohol is so intertwined that adoption of rugby as a child is effectively adding to the next generation of alcohol drinkers in rugby. There is evidence given from the participants however, that if a child makes it to an elite level, alcohol may not be such a large factor in their lives. When taking into account that less than five percent of individuals reach a professional level and can be considered elite rugby players in New Zealand, it is almost definite that the rugby drinking culture will continue to remain with the adoption of rugby by new generations of youth.

Some participants also referred to introduction events where players are made members of the rugby team through initiation ceremonies. In particular Joe and Eddie both spoke of their desire to complete initiation drinking activities in order to feel accepted and a part of the group. These types of ceremonies included mass consumption of alcohol which according to Penwarden (2010) is a display of performing ones ability to hold their drink. Holding ones drink is also considered a coming of age (maturity) and a measure of manliness (Penwarden, 2010). The actual initiation event itself can be described by the term 'hazing' spoken in Turman (2003). Hazing events are essentially activities whereby individuals will

complete gross, indecent, or difficult acts in an attempt to gain approval as a member of the group.

Because it is common that alcohol will be used as part of hazing into a rugby environment the normalisation of alcohol in rugby is continued. It is evident from the responses of Joe and Eddie that drinking alcohol is a way to be accepted into the group. In this light this research has discovered primary examples relating to the culture of acceptance alcohol has in male rugby circles (Penwarden, 2010). It is possible therefore to announce that at some stage a rugby player will need to drink alcohol in order to be accepted into the rugby team culture. Those who do not drink alcohol will be subject to scrutiny and questioning from the rest of the group. Failure to deliver a valid reason will result in segregation from the group and the individual's possible resignation from of rugby (Penwarden, 2010).

5.4: The behaviours of intoxicated rugby players:

The majority of participants believe that rugby players drink more during the rugby season than throughout the off season. This differs from the research presented in Martens, Dams-O'Connor, and Duffy-Paiement (2006) where athletes of numerous other sports are more inclined to drink during off-season periods. This result continues to show the intricate connection that alcohol has with the club rugby drinking culture. This connection is not as simple as Carron, Bray, and Eys's (2002) explanation regarding external factors that influence player performance. Instead it is a typical part of the sport which players are continuously surrounded by and engage in doing as participants of rugby.

A perception held by the participants, viewed alcohol as a substance that is helpful for making players more sociable and conversational with each other. Participants overall viewed these products as beneficial to the rugby experience and were particularly enthused by the way players who were assumed as being shy or less confident were able to open up.

In the article by Mulvhill, Skilling, and Vogel-Sprott (1997) an unpacking of the term ‘disinhibition’ is considered and refers to the uncommon acts of behaviour that alcohol causes. Acts such as increased sociability, joking around, embarrassing performances, and impulsive acts, are possible because the individual has a reduced ability to suppress these acts after having consumed alcohol. In essence, the normal behaviours that are displayed by an individual whilst sober are suppressed, whilst actions of ‘disinhibition’ or those not normally displayed by an individual are allowed to succeed (Mulvhill et al., 1997). In many cases individuals, like those who are considered as being relatively shy will usually experience and receive the more positive benefits of ‘disinhibition’ such as being more forthcoming. Although an individual experiencing ‘disinhibition’ will appear as jovial and in control of their actions, ‘disinhibition’ is considered the phase prior to intoxication where an individual has no control over their actions and performs as well as behaves irrationally (Mulvhill et al., 1997). It would appear that for rugby players a key to changing the problematic binge drinking culture would be to understand when the ‘disinhibition’ phase has been reached. This would allow rugby players to minimise their own drinking in order not to reach an intoxicated level and therefore loss of control.

It is uncertain if rugby players consume alcohol in order to reach a stage of ‘disinhibition’ and this area surely requires further attention. Certainly if ‘disinhibition’ provides an individual with captivated emotions then a potential answer will have been found as to why club rugby players are fascinated with alcohol. It may well be that club rugby players consume alcohol regularly in order to feel emotions that are not usually displayed when sober or in the act of performing to one’s best. If this is true, researchers would be left to investigate interventions which extend or limit the ‘disinhibition’ period and halt an individual’s advance towards a loss of control. With ‘disinhibition’s’ key indicators campaigned and promoted it is certain that individuals could realise their perilous state and

limit alcohol intake. Overall promotion of ‘disinhibition’s’ key indicators could possibly lead to limiting the current alcohol problem, not just in rugby, but in New Zealand as a whole.

Continuing on, alcohol was described by participants as being regularly used to celebrate winning matches. All the participants felt that it is normal to enjoy or celebrate victory with alcohol and that it is not uncommon for alcohol consumption to begin whilst having showers or during the after match ceremony. When put into perspective, this means that near to half of the club sides throughout New Zealand who have wins will have a majority of their players engage in alcohol consumption each weekend. When taking into account that some losing teams may also wish to consume alcohol, the scale of alcohol being consumed significantly increases and becomes even more problematic.

The inclusion and consumption of alcohol by any individual (s) seeking to celebrate is a long established tradition (Hutchins, 2009). However it has been proven by O’Brien, Ali, Cotter, O’Shea, and Stannard (2007) that club rugby players often advance from having celebratory drinks into binge drinking sessions. It is at these sessions that players gain ‘disinhibition’; which can often lead to losing control, becoming aggressive, and causing unnecessary harm to the player themselves, friends, family members, and even the wider society. The celebration of victory at an after match session is harmless, although it does provide an ideal platform from which club rugby players will consider binge drinking over the night. In this light the weekly celebration sessions by rugby teams across New Zealand are serving as triggers of binge drinking sessions which as has been proven causes violence and unlawful offending (Mulvihill et al., 1997; O’Brien et al., 2007).

The participants of this research expressed concern and accepted that rugby players cause violence or fight when they have had too much alcohol. The principle findings by Swahn, Simon, Hammig, and Guerrero (2004) established that individuals will become agitated having heavily consumed alcohol. With rugby players regular willingness to engage

in binge drinking there is the potential each time to become agitated and cause distress. It is certain that when sober and coherent, rugby players do not intentionally set out to heavily consume alcohol and cause distress. However as Swahn et al., (2004) state, alcohols effect on the body causes all reasonable awareness to disappear.

Rational for Swahn et al's., (2004) idea can be supported by the claims of McDaniel, Kinney, and Chalip (2001). McDaniel et al., (2001) believe that the attitudes' and behaviour of an individual who has consumed alcohol is directly influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of others present in the environment. As a priority it is vital that rugby players throughout their drinking episodes involve themselves in a cheerful sociological setting so that the attitudes and behaviours displayed by the individual will be of a positive and responsible nature (McDaniel et al., 2001). Where McDaniel et al., (2001) are frighteningly correct with their beliefs is that rugby players will drink alcohol excessively creating a knock-on effect where others joining the group will drink excessively also. Therefore any individual entering into a rugby drinking environment will be influenced to drink hazardously.

McDaniel et al., (2001) promote that the rugby drinking culture needs individuals to be in control of their drinking and display an attitude that is positive and not offensive. This will in turn promote the behaviours displayed at a rugby drinking event towards those behaviours that are considered favourable. With the research conclusions of McDaniel et al., (2001) it is highly likely that the fighting behaviours the participants of this research directly experienced would have involved a collective of intoxicated individuals. This is said because many of the individuals would need to have displayed offensive attitudes through fighting, which are behaviours not normally displayed whilst sober (McDaniel et al., 2001).

Moving forward the participants of this research considered that prerequisites for binge drinking are the company of others, individuals having fun, and the mass consumption of alcohol. Without these factors the participants were adamant that binge drinking could not

continue in the rugby environment. This is the first real glimpse into how rugby players perceive binge drinking and what constitutes its existence.

As seen in Penwarden (2010) having a drink with mates whilst socialising is characteristic of the typical kiwi male. Penwarden (2010) makes the point that New Zealand males will cover up their mass drinking of alcohol as they know this to be problematic. In this investigation the cover up occurs when the participants associate that having fun experiences with others is a resulting outcome of rugby players drinking alcohol together. This is an example similar to that seen in Penwarden's (2010) work where problematic behaviour is disguised as being enjoyable and therefore satisfactory. This shows that club rugby players may well be aware that their binge drinking is unacceptable but that they are unwilling to endorse binge drinking publically as a negative occurrence. This area certainly needs more attention as breaking through the common perception that binge drinking is okay and getting players to acknowledge that binge drinking is harmful is a way to curb excessive drinking. Penwarden (2010) notices the importance and encourages that safer drinking in rugby clubs should be campaigned in order to limit the current problematic associations in the sport.

In summation of this theme the participation in rugby by individuals will lead to the consumption of alcohol on a regular basis. It appears rugby players drink alcohol in an attempt to enjoy conversation and interaction with others. Alcohol is regularly used to celebrate winning, however this feature of rugby does appear to trigger binge drinking sessions. It seems the determining factors as to how alcohol affects an individual, either negatively or positively, is dependant on the amount of alcohol the individual has consumed and the environmental setting the consumption is taking place in. According to the participants as the amount of alcohol increases a player's behaviour will follow continuum of categories leading from happiness through to 'disinhibition' and towards loss of control. So

far rugby players can be considered guilty of disguising their excessive drinking and are yet to come forward and openly admit there is a problem in the club rugby drinking culture.

5.5: Performance, friendship, and interaction in the rugby environment:

All participants agreed that alcohol is a substance which impacts adversely on a players ability to perform at a top level. This aligns with the numerous research articles that are available detailing the negative effect of alcohol on sporting performance (El-Sayed, Ali, & El-Sayed Ali, 2005; Hatton, Burton, Nash, Munn, Burgoyne, & Sheron, 2009; Ministry of Health, 2007; Weir, 1999). With players knowingly aware of alcohol's detrimental effect there is reason to believe that rugby players participating at the club level carry the opinion that the benefits from the consumption of alcohol outweigh the benefits of abstinence.

Already aspects such as increased confidence and enjoyment have been described as benefits of alcohol consumption. Through this research it is also been determined that creating and maintaining friendships as well as team bonding opportunities are fashioned through team drinking sessions.

The participants all felt that through drinking together players are able to have connecting experiences where in-depth interactions take place. Topics that are discussed will usually involve sport although players who are more personal with one another will converse over wellbeing of family, employment, and previous past time experiences. Such experiences are described by Carron and Chelladurai (1981) as being a feature of the term group integration. In Carron and Chelladurai (1981) explanation is given that as individuals become part of a team the level of cohesion perceived overall is determined by the relationships the individual has with others in the group. Aspects which are taken into account within the group integration section of cohesion include how an individual perceives the closeness the

group has with one another, the similarities the group have with one another, and the overall bonding the group has with each other (Carron, & Chelladurai, 1981).

When applying the thoughts of Carron and Chelladurai (1981) to the club rugby drinking culture in New Zealand, players share a common similarity in frequently drinking alcohol and playing rugby. Through the regular drinking experiences that club rugby players engage in doing the level of cohesion is able to be considered as increased because players interact with one another at regular intervals creating friendship. With the creation of these friendships and the constant interface and bonding opportunities between players throughout the season it is possible to see why players feel more unified with one another.

In reinforcing the views of Carron and Chelladurai (1981) at very much a foundational level the participants felt that new players to the club were able to integrate easier into the clubs environment through drinking. Drinking with team mates would mean that new players are offered bonding opportunities therefore leading to the creation of new friendships. For returning players the opportunity to drink with one another is a chance to catch up with those who do not see each other regularly throughout the off season. In a final comment by one participant it was said that because players often lack opportunities to have quality interaction during trainings and games, the interaction whilst drinking is fulfilling for the players relationships. The participants see these conversations as bonding experiences which overall are perceived as creating better team cohesion.

There was some concern shown by the participants with regards to those who do not drink alcohol becoming potentially segregated from the group. As can be seen in Carron, Bray, and Eys (2002) absolute team cohesion is reliant on all individuals buying into the collective set of beliefs and concepts of the group. If an individual is unwilling to adopt a belief then the teams' overall cohesion will decrease. This means that coaches do need to be

weary of players who do not drink alcohol and involve these players in other ways to keep team cohesion high.

Limited research has been conducted which explores the effect of minimal drinking on sport team cohesion and even less on the effect of rugby team cohesion. Instead researchers tend to conduct investigations of extreme drinking and the direct effects on stress, addiction, and physiological effects. It has been found through the results in this section that rugby players do acknowledge alcohol has a detrimental effect on performance. However it would seem that players forego the detrimental effects on performance in favour of drinking so that bonding experiences and the maintaining or creating of friendships can occur. Alcohol also has an ability to help those players who are new to a team integrate.

5.6: Features of the rugby drinking environment:

Upon asking the participants to describe the rugby drinking environment their responses concluded that there is loud talking and shouting, story telling, players becoming more rowdy as the night continues, heavy consumption of alcohol, and players making fools of themselves. These features are similar to Campbell's (2000) article where in rural New Zealand pub culture the two common characteristics are 'conversational cockfighting' (story telling where patrons try to exceed each others stories) and 'disciplines of drinking' (being able to hold your own drink). Campbell (2000) continues to explain that together 'conversational cockfighting' and 'disciplines of drinking' create what he terms as an invisible 'pub masculinity'. 'Pub masculinity' is invisible because the participants studied within the research did not mention that their behaviour was masculine in anyway and that as a result the pub masculinity had become so normalised it occurred unspoken. Campbell (2000) is a firm believer that the 'pub masculinity' has been able to reproduce itself throughout rural New Zealand and has therefore helped to create a hegemonic masculinity.

Like Campbell's (2000) 'pub masculinity' it is possible that an invisible 'club rugby masculinity' is present in New Zealand. Currently the behaviour that exists in most club rugby teams is common where players behave with an acute similarity. The club rugby behaviour also includes heavy consumption and because players do not willingly talk about their problem drinking it could be assumed that the rugby behaviour like Campbell's (2000) 'pub masculinity' is therefore invisible also. The notion of 'invisible club rugby masculinity' would help researchers to identify and compare results against a set of behaviours which occur specifically in the rugby environment. Such a notion could be adopted in the work of O'Brien, Blackie, and Hunter, (2005) and Pringle, (2001) which support that rugby culture is hazardous and harmful.

In comparison to the rugby drinking environment the family drinking environment is described by participants as being much quieter, with a mellow atmosphere and no signs of foolish behaviour. The participants found that being respectful around their families was of importance to them as they did not want to embarrass themselves in front of family members in any way. This finding is similar to Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrise (2008) who found that families are likely to promote responsible drinking in their teenagers and thereby provide an example of conservative drinking. As the teenager grows into an adult and separation from the family occurs new behaviours are formed which are representative of the new environment that the individual has become apart of. This is where irresponsible drinking might take place; however upon return to the family the individual will reproduce the responsible behaviour in order to continue the norms that were established when the individual was younger (Spoth et al., 2008).

For club rugby players in New Zealand there is an attitude difference towards drinking alcohol when it comes to family as opposed to the rugby environment. The rugby drinking environment is accepting of heavy drinking and foolish behaviour whereas the

family environment promotes the opposite. As a difference in attitude is capable by players this finding advises that the key to understanding why rugby players binge drink is centred around either the social dynamics or physical environment, or both, with which rugby players engage in consuming alcohol. It does appear that rugby players binge drinking is not a result of an individual's decision to drink alone.

5.7: Elite versus amateur drinking:

The participant's expectations of elite players are that there is no pressure towards drinking alcohol excessively. The participants were of the belief that elite players are high performance athletes and understood that frequent alcohol consumption is detrimental to an elite player's on field performance. If however an occasion arose where an elite player was consuming alcohol the participants expected that the elite player would usually end up as one of the most intoxicated individuals at the event. Recent research by O'Brien et al., (2005) has found that there is a significant higher level of hazardous drinking in both elite-provincial and international rugby players when compared to amateur rugby players. It was found that elite players do not drink alcohol as occasionally as club players however when an opportunity to consume alcohol does appear elite players tend to binge drink heavily instead of responsibly drinking (O'Brien et al., 2005).

With such a hazardous attitude towards drinking it is certain that elite stars who engage in heavy consumption only add to the problematic drinking culture existent in New Zealand. Amateur athletes do perceive that professional players are mellowed drinkers and that their individual on-field performance is valid reasoning for their responsible actions. However all favourable perceptions of responsible behaviour are undone when an elite player showcases a hazardous exhibition of drinking alcohol. Research that identifies why elite

individuals drink hazardously when given a chance would be considered worthwhile in the future.

When participants gave answers for the expectations around alcohol of amateur athletes there was a perception that binge drinking and becoming totally intoxicated is acceptable. Participants acknowledged that binge drinking occurs frequently by members of club side teams but that there was not one specific reason for doing so. Participants did feel that by having a licensed club in which to drink does allow an opportunity to begin drinking after training sessions and games. It was during club drinking sessions that players often organised parties in which the team could go to consume more alcohol. According to Black et al., (1999) there is a definitive link between sports where hazardous consumption of alcohol occurs and the association with licensed bars. The bars are said to encourage excessive consumption by returning profits back to the sports teams which their patrons belong to. Certainly licenced bars play a role in keeping rugby clubs alive through revenue. Although their appearance and revenue seems warming towards club rugby, licenced bars are set up to make profit for themselves by selling alcohol. In a well put sentence by Stockwell and Chikritzhs, 2009)

Pubs have an obligation to sell alcohol to non intoxicated patrons, although without adequate supervision who is to say pubs will not sell alcohol to the intoxicated patron who is willing to provide money for the pub in return (pp. 154).

5.8: Events for drinking:

The participants were all asked about their own drinking whilst at home in comparison to when the players drink with their rugby friends. While at home the players felt that their drinking was much more irregular and that the actual amounts of consumption were much less frequent. A common view was held describing there to be not as much pressure to consume alcohol in the home setting. Participants also found that by deciding to drink at

home their own attitude towards drinking heavily was non-existent. In comparison the players all felt that being around others and in particular rugby players that there were more opportunities and pressure to drink alcohol. Players explained that there were well-known rules associated with drinking in the rugby environment which included never having two drinks at once, being disciplined in behaviour whilst drinking, and keeping up with the groups drinking round.

Courtney and Polich (2009) highlight how drinking in groups leads to an experience which provides an individual with greater euphoria. It is believed that the euphoria in a social setting facilitates more consumption than drinking alone because the euphoria makes people overlook how much they are actually drinking. Courtney and Polich's (2009) idea would explain why rugby players are susceptible toward hazardous drinking. The euphoria that is existent in rugby drinking circles would appear to be continuous for long periods which therefore would have players consuming much more alcohol without realisation. Unspoken rules of drinking the participants have referred to would only help increase intoxication and add to the hazardous drinking culture.

In addition to a normal drinking evening an event known as the court session or court as referred to by the participants is an event which happens every year. The court session can act as a hazing event where participants can be initiated into the team. Overall however participants are all well aware of the court session and its central focus to consume much greater amounts of alcohol compared to a usual evening. The participants described court session activities which endorsed foul behaviour and extreme acts as being standard and acceptable. Examples included drinking alcohol which has passed over another person's anus, the consumption of alcohol which has passed over another's genitals, and mass consumption of alcohol through a funnel mixed with everyday food items such as eggs and mixed vegetables. These types of acts are designed to push players' boundaries of normal

behaviour and beliefs which suggests that 'disinhibition' is involved. By completing such acts the individual is given a higher form of masculine status for doing the extraordinary (Turman, 2003).

The large acceptance by rugby players to assume such actions as being normal does evoke concern. It is almost certain that the same individuals would not repeat these examples in a sober state but this is a prime example of alcohols ability to cause individuals to lose control and partake in these types of behaviours (McPherson, Casswell, & Pledger, 2004). In Simons-Morton, Haynie, and Noelcke (2009) reference is made to the term homophily which applies to people who associate with one another in a common location and share a collective set of beliefs and standards. To the outsider looking in, court session drinking homophily can only be described as acts of indecent behaviour. However rugby players will describe these homophilial actions in the court session as normal and acceptable practice.

Such activities though are not the integral focus of a court session. As explained by the participants the court session is a specific event for drinking with the rugby team. Because the drinking is of specific focus the players do attend with the full intention to drink as heavily as they can. The specific details of court sessions and their events are not spoken about when outsiders of the team in particular females are around. The participants were all admirable of the court session and when asked to support why the court session should happen players were of the notion that court sessions improve team cohesion.

5.9: Alcohol consumption at rugby, the people involved:

According to the participants the rugby drinking culture is not limited to players only but can incorporate one or a number of different groups of people. The participants explained that coaches and management staff, retired players, partners or wives, and other family members

could all be involved. Each of these groups of people as said by the participants have different influences on the way the participants drink alcohol.

Participants were of the belief that coaching staff encourage drinking in an effort to relate with players, to get players bonding better with one another, and as a reason to keep the players around to discuss team tactics. If the reader is to take on board the thoughts of Carron and Chelladurai (1981) then the consumption of alcohol acts as a stimulus that people share in common. Thus alcohol consumption provides a foundation with which interactions between people can occur. In this scenario coaches are correct in their methods of encouraging alcoholic consumption to establish bonding opportunities. With this said there is a moral and fundamental requirement of coaches to be responsible team members and accordingly coaches should promote safe drinking also (Young, 2009).

In New Zealand club rugby it would appear that a majority of coaches emphasise players consuming alcohol without also providing the same emphasis upon safe drinking. Therefore, questions should be asked of those coaching staff members that actively encourage alcohol consumption by their team players and whether their coaching philosophies are correct. It is certain coaches that endorse heavy consumption of alcohol are helping to create the alcohol in club rugby problem. Although adult rugby players are responsible for their own actions the point should be made that coaches inciting heavy consumption is not helpful for change towards responsible drinking (Young, 2009). Currently there is not an initiative from New Zealand government agencies to provide strategies on how best rugby coaches can interact with their players without the use of alcohol. Such strategies or interventions could provide a platform for coaching staff members to play a role in limiting the negative alcohol issue in rugby.

The next set of individuals identified as participants in the rugby drinking culture are retired players. The participants described older club members as drinkers who position

themselves away from the loud noise of the current generation of players. Interactions between the two sets of characters were likely to occur with the main topic of conversation being rugby. The participants noted that current players would often appear subdued and would not be as rowdy around retired players as opposed to drinking with other players. This result highlights again the differing attitudes that rugby players have towards drinking alcohol around different types of groups. Drinking alcohol around retired players could be compared to drinking in the family environment where the participants have already noted that subdued drinking occurs.

It was revealed by the participants that partners and wives on most occasions associate with players when they are drinking. For players having their partners in the rugby drinking environment meant that drinking is done in a controlled fashion in an effort to limit any embarrassing behaviours. This again proves the work of Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrisi (2008) is correct where responsible behaviours are displayed around family members in an effort to repeat the behaviours that the individual would normally display whilst also appearing as being a responsible drinker.

On most occasions partners of the players were perceived as being in a controlled state when drinking alcohol in the rugby environment. Through reading Kahler, Read, Wood, and Palfai (2003) it is understood that men drink more predominantly than females when each group is situated within a network of individuals with the same sex. It was concluded that females drink less because of a commonly held belief that it is inappropriate for females to become heavily intoxicated and lose control. The influence that partners have on players' levels of consumption is extensive. It has been proven in this research that players together drinking will behave inappropriately in an uncontrolled manner. However having partners of players in the drinking environment seems to have a stabilising effect on levels of alcohol consumed which results in actions that are controlled and responsible.

The final group of members likely to join players in the rugby drinking environment are family. The participants acknowledged that on regular occasions family would join the players in having a few drinks usually after the game during the after match function. The participants explained that family members would only stay for a short period before leaving. During the short period players clarified that interaction with family would usually take place in the outer circle away from their team mates. When questioned why interaction took place away from the other players one participant suggested that this was done to help lessen the chance of family members over hearing inappropriate conversations. Again referring to Penwarden (2010) this example of separation from the main group shows that rugby players are aware of the inappropriate behaviours that occur. In this case a participant can be considered guilty of hiding aspects of the rugby drinking culture in an attempt to deceive family members into believing that the culture with which the participant is involved in is both an appropriate and responsible one.

5.10: The bond between rugby and alcohol:

When asking the participants for specific reasons why rugby has a connection with alcohol there was no one answer discovered. Participants were first asked where they personally believed the connection with alcohol and rugby began. According to one participant today's rugby generation is simply copying previous displays presented by male role models. If this is the case then the new generation of school aged children will become part of the alcohol in rugby problem in their time. Another participant offered that New Zealand's overall drinking culture is to blame believing that individuals drink in rugby because drinking alcohol is naturally what is done in New Zealand anyway. It is true that New Zealand's drinking culture is prevalent and causes destruction weekly. However the rugby and alcohol connection has

been a long one and individuals have long maintained that rugby is a sport where hazardous drinking of alcohol is most likely to occur (O'Brien et al., 2005; Quarrie et al., 1996).

A third submission related back to the positive interactions players have with one another when consuming alcohol. It has been seen in this research that there are many benefits players receive from drinking with one another. This answer does not reveal where the alcohol in rugby connection first began. With no well documented evidence to provide where alcohol first became involved in rugby in this country, the opinions and well educated guesses will centre upon the early colonising period. During this period alcohol was consumed in pubs by males as a reward to a hard working week. The idea that rugby may have been included in social circles as being equivalent to the hard work that males during the colonising period experienced may have been where alcohol's origins in rugby first began (Hutchins, 2009).

The participants were then asked to give responses as to why the connection of alcohol in rugby continues to remain. One answer perceived that the sponsorship and marketing campaigns which alcohol breweries establish is reason. There is a wealth of advertising by alcohol breweries in rugby which helps to normalise the effect alcohol has on the rugby players in New Zealand. Repeatedly emblems and branding of alcohol appear on television screens and at games. Club rugby too is prone to the blatant advertising process where alcohol is branded on team clothing, inside clubrooms and on banners around the ground. Ultimately the scale of advertising at the club level has become normalised. If rugby is to change the normalised notions that alcohol currently holds and therefore receive the behaviours perceived as more responsible then a crack down on alcohol sponsorship does need to occur. Already McCreanor et al., (2005) has shown that alcohol breweries are not being held responsible. Small banners around grounds may appear harmless but in fact they are helping to normalise alcohol in rugby.

The thoughts of McCreanor et al., (2005) together with the results gathered in this research surely warrant a review of sponsorship and advertising regulations in club rugby. Limiting the scale of advertising at grounds is possible however it is certain that companies will not have a large desire to continue providing revenue to clubs in return for smaller signage (McCreanor et al., 2005). Future research may wish to investigate other marketing strategies clubs could offer to breweries without the use of signage.

The second finding the participants prompted was that the traditions of drinking alcohol in the rugby environment as they continue help to maintain the status quo. Experiences discovered in this research such as after match functions, team gatherings and celebrations, as well as the court session all require the use of alcohol. The rugby culture has become so considerably reliant on alcohol as part of its social make up that events can not take place without alcohol being involved. It is now time those coaches and club delegates particularly within the amateur level of rugby identify ways of which non-alcoholic events can take place. If there has been the creation of such events then awareness and promotion needs to occur so that other clubs might follow. When such promotions exist then perhaps there should be an effort by club rugby to acknowledge that the event is non-alcoholic. If clubs are able to acknowledge and embrace such events as non-alcoholic then a way forward of breaking down the current normalisation of alcohol in New Zealand club rugby will have been found.

Where the above intervention may go unstuck is that it will limit associated bars takings and therefore limit finance that is to be returned to the club. As established by Hawes (2008) club rugby is reliant on sponsorship in order to remain sustainable. Unfortunately an easy option for club rugby is to negotiate with alcohol companies whereby advertising products of alcohol in return for funding is consigned. Anderson, Chisholm, and Fuhr (2009) promote the conclusion to alcohol advertisement in sport as a way to limiting the serious

impacts alcohol has in rugby. It is feared by some clubs that the failure to advertise alcohol will mean an end to their clubs existence. Although this may be the case the impact that limiting alcohol advertisement will have in not inculcating youth, young rugby players and current rugby players towards the normalisation of alcohol in rugby will be more advantageous.

Finally, the participants believed that alcohol continues to be involved in rugby because it establishes a sense of team unity. Already the participants have described how interaction takes place and players are therefore able to feel more strongly connected. Again the question needs to be asked why interaction can not occur without the use of alcohol. It is certain that players feel a connection and that alcohol is a common ground for which players can gather to associate with one another. However the amounts of alcohol that is currently being consumed often reaches beyond player's limits to where harmful behaviours are displayed. The alcohol problem is evident in all rugby clubs meaning that a large proportion of New Zealanders are harming themselves regularly.

Patton-Simpson's (2001) suggestion that individuals need to be aware of their boundaries when drinking alcohol and to take greater responsibility for their level of alcohol consumption is credible. ALAC's recent advertising campaigns have begun to address an awareness of individual's consumption levels. It is uncertain whether or not these campaigns have produced a change in thought by individuals when drinking (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2010a). Nevertheless, the notion of individuals of taking greater responsibility for their drinking in sporting situations and drinking sensibly as expressed by Patton-Simpson (2001) is a step in the right direction.

5.11: Limitations to the current research:

Before moving forward it is important to detail the limitations of this research. First it is openly recognised that the researcher in this study became the sole interpreter of information gathered from participants. This means that potentially there is the ability for the researcher to omit key evidence delivered by participants in favour of producing a document that is diminutive of excessive information. To help counter this limitation some objectivity has been established through the writing of the results section based exclusively on the qualitative data gained throughout interviewing. The results section incorporates a large majority of the research data collected and the researcher has tried to incorporate all ideas delivered. However, throughout the discussion section in an effort to produce dialogue that is precise and succinct some information has been neglected.

5.11a: Participant's time:

The present study was instigated by the researcher who viewed the participant's time and energy as invaluable. Participants were generally busy individuals managing day jobs and family commitments throughout the research process. Interviewing was conducted through a one off face-to-face method. This meant that interviews were reliant on the participants having spare time to commit. With such busy lifestyles it is possible that each participant may not have had the right mind-set to provide an entirely accurate description of the rugby drinking culture. To achieve a level of validity the transcripts were returned to all the participants for their approval. During this process participants were offered the opportunity to edit, delete, elaborate and add to the transcriptions with further information if the participant felt the need. To add further validity additional calls were conducted with participants to inform each individual of the key themes that had emerged and were being developed. The participants had the opportunity to negotiate what was considered the

appropriate themes and to also advise whether other themes were present which had not yet been identified.

5.11b: Conflicting emotions:

Another limitation to the present research arose as participants were required to offer explanations that involved conflicting emotions. As can be viewed in Marshall and Rossman (1995) some participants when discussing controversial issues may view the conflict in the negative form and will therefore become reluctant in exposing certain issues with researchers. Indeed having to speak about experiences with alcohol that were not always positive may have caused some of the participants in this research to have conflicting emotions. To help cater for such emotions participants were frequently told that their participation within this study would result in their anonymity. To add further to anonymity the participants received information of how to contact a counselling service in the event unhappy emotions resulted from being a participant in this research.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

It has been found that alcohol indeed has had a long and established presence within club rugby in New Zealand. For many adult rugby players, the Saturday routine of playing rugby and drinking alcohol is a tradition that is well ingrained historically, socially, and culturally. This particular pastime, however, has become increasingly surrounded by negative actions and behaviours that adversely affect rugby players, their peers, the team, and their respective families. It has reached a point where many are campaigning for change. This research has explored the perspectives of rugby players towards alcohol consumption and the sociological impact the consumption of alcohol has on the team environment.

6.1: Positively experiencing alcohol as a rugby player:

Players are continually exposed to alcohol within the culture of rugby. From celebrating winning victories, to initiation ceremonies and through to specific drinking events such as team court sessions, players are provided with ample opportunities to engage in consuming alcohol. This study has highlighted that such drinking engagements occur weekly especially throughout the rugby season. A key finding to emerge is that it is highly likely that an individual's participation in the sport of rugby will at some stage lead to consuming alcohol to either fit into the team culture or to appease levels of peer pressure to drink.

The participants of this research have relayed that regular alcohol consumption is due to the bonding experiences with other players that transpire whilst drinking alcohol.

Participants noted that the consumption of alcohol between players promotes bonding whereby players are able to interact more freely with one another, and have what has been described by players as, 'meaningful conversations'. Moreover, such conversations help to maintain and establish friendships between players (Carron & Chelladurai, 1981). It has also

been discovered that such interactions help promote team unity and results in better camaraderie within the team.

Another, key feature to emerge is that the participants acknowledge alcohol as a detrimental factor towards performance; yet their continued consumption of alcohol at varying levels remains. The obvious enjoyment rugby players experience from engaging in alcohol remains to some degree dependent upon the need to feel connected and to belong. A key question remains: Why in today's spoilt for choice culture do so many men feel the need to belong and more importantly, how does rugby appear to foster such a sense of maleness, manliness, and masculinity?

Like Campbell's (2000) 'pub masculinity' it is relevant to promote a rugby drinking culture where similar features are present. The rugby drinking culture includes the two key dynamics of 'conversational cockfighting' and 'disciplines of drinking' that pub masculinity perpetuates (Campbell, 2000). Campbell also explains how the 'pub masculinity' is invisible whereby patrons involved assume the actions of pub masculinity naturally when in the drinking environment. The actions of the individuals are unspoken and occur instantaneously and so are therefore invisible (Campbell, 2000). The same invisible feature also occurs when investigating the rugby drinking culture. The rugby drinking culture appears to be homogenous throughout the differing club rugby teams of New Zealand and therefore could be considered a fundamental element in the alcohol consumption cycle currently experienced in New Zealand rugby.

An interesting concept known as 'disinhibition' promoted by Mulvihill, Skilling, and Vogel-Sprott (1997) has been discovered to occur within the rugby environment. All individuals who participate in a binge drinking session pass through the 'disinhibition' phase where actions and behaviours not normally displayed are able to succeed. Shy individuals appear more sociable and the culture where rugby players are able to joke about and perform

embarrassing yet humorous acts are able to transpire. Research that investigates how rugby players feel, in terms of their own control when experiencing ‘disinhibition’, would be valuable as it could then provide a platform for campaigns detailing the fundamental indicators of ‘disinhibition’. If individuals are able to realise their own experiencing of ‘disinhibition’ then those individuals could immediately limit drinking alcohol in order to cease advancement into the intoxication phase. Currently research of this area has not yet been completed, but would certainly add to the findings presented in this study.

From the player’s perspective, the study highlights that the rugby drinking culture is not as harmful as perhaps many may be lead to believe. However, this study is consistent in that rugby players frequently continue through the passive stage of ‘disinhibition’ and become more susceptible to the culture of binge drinking. It is in these binge drinking sessions that that a host of negative social behaviours have become evident and where the culture of drinking in rugby needs to be curbed. Many of the participants in this research have experienced or witnessed first-hand the negative social impacts alcohol can illicit. The participants spoke of drink driving, violent brawls, and incoherent intoxication that happen when rugby players have become inebriated or have consumed alcohol too quickly. It is undoubtedly these sorts of issues emanating from New Zealand’s national game that society in general is advocating for change and greater public awareness. Indeed, promoting safer drinking behaviour and increasing personal responsibility for drinking sensibly needs greater support, especially within rugby clubs.

6.2: The impacts of alcohol in rugby:

All participants in this study agreed that it is totally acceptable for club rugby players to become heavily intoxicated at one time or another and that it is part of the team culture to do so. A key strategy addressing this problem needs to occur whereby rugby club senior

officials, coaches, managers, trainers, and the players themselves begin a self-monitoring process of players who are or have become more susceptible to the culture of binge drinking. In the future, researchers interested in this area will need to discover specific social points of reference where players are actively monitoring their levels of intoxication and are able to cease drinking prior. Promoting a zero alcohol policy in club rugby would not be appropriate because of the large historical association rugby and alcohol have enjoyed for many years, however, personal responsibility and social influences to regulate over drinking needs greater visibility.

Most disturbing is the way in which professional players are viewed as alcohol drinkers by club rugby players. These players are viewed as infrequent drinkers due to their requirement to maintain peak physical condition and club rugby players have an unspoken respect for their refrainment. However, the participants explained how professional players when given the opportunity to drink heavily will take full advantage and consume alcohol at hazardous levels. Detailed descriptions as to why professional players feel inclined towards drinking in this manner when given a chance is yet to be done but would provide stirring reading if completed.

Of major concern to the sport of rugby are the directives of rugby coaching staff towards promoting alcohol. Many participants in this study explained how coaching staff actively encourage players to drink alcohol and will routinely buy players alcohol as a reward for playing well. The participants also suggested that coaches tended to believe that by providing alcohol for players, the establishment of better team cohesion results. As responsible individuals for the overseeing of the team coaches do need to be aware that their actions of buying and providing alcohol for players is actively contributing to the problem players face with over drinking. Coaches may well find it difficult to outlaw alcohol in their teams but their role as responsible individuals does need to also extend to promoting safe

drinking. Initiatives and strategies for ensuring coaches and indeed club officials are providing a culture of care for their players needs greater detail and has yet to be fully implemented into New Zealand club rugby.

Moving forward, there should also be a review of sponsorship and advertising regulations. As laws currently stand alcohol companies are able to advertise their product relatively freely at provincial games, stadiums, and club grounds. From an alcohol company perspective such campaigns and advertising are having the desired effect. On the other hand the problem of intoxicated individuals causing trouble continues to rise. Limiting the areas that alcohol companies are able to promote or advertise their product within will surely see change. Forthcoming research may wish to also look at the intricate dealings alcohol companies have with providing revenue for rugby clubs. It is almost definite that certain alcohol companies will not wish to provide as much funding towards rugby clubs if faced with limiting their signage around grounds. Studies that provide new ways for alcohol companies to reach their intended audience more responsibly would unquestionably be useful.

Finally, the rugby drinking environment is a traditional aspect that adult New Zealand rugby players have long known has existed. It has become part of the rugby culture to drink alcohol and in particular, to have a beer after a game. Players see their time drinking as a key to continuing and building friendships both on and off the field. As this study has highlighted, the nature of binge drinking sessions have developed all too frequent and has become problematic to the sport, individuals, and their performance. It is not, however, practical to place complete bans on alcohol in rugby because alcohol is not only responsible for uniting players in conversation, but it also provides significant revenue to small and often struggling rugby clubs. A way forward is to continue to investigate ways for both alcohol companies and club rugby in New Zealand to come to a mutual understanding about their responsibility

towards reducing the culture of binge drinking in rugby. There is also a need to provide detailed studies which conclude with interventions that promote healthier drinking behaviours, attitudes, and values and the role that alcohol companies and New Zealand rugby clubs can play in establishing such interventions.

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Appendix A: Player participant information letter.

Date:

Kia Ora, My name is Phillip Kahu-Kauika.

I am a Sports and Leisure Studies Master's student based at the University of Waikato and would like to investigate rugby players' perceptions surrounding the consumption of alcohol and the possible implications it has on the culture of the team. At this time, I would like to formally invite you to be a participant in the research.

If interested in participating you will be required to participate in one formal interview lasting no longer than an hour. The interview will be recorded using a dictaphone and will be transcribed for future analysis. Throughout this interview you will be asked a number of questions related to your views, understandings and experiences pertaining to the consumption of alcohol in the rugby culture and the impact you perceive this has had on your rugby team's culture. With the information you and other selected participants provide, I hope to complete a thesis that explains the effects of alcohol on rugby players and in particular, their team environment. Once completed, my thesis will become widely available in electronic form within the Australasian Digital Thesis database.

As a participant of this research you can withdraw from the investigation at any time and without question. After your interview a copy of your transcript will be returned to you for your approval as well as to check that what I have recorded is correct. Please feel free to edit, add or elaborate on the transcript provided. All interview data collected will be kept safe and secure in Waikato University's data storage facility for a period of five years. This is so that accuracy of the information I have collected or discrepancies in my final research thesis can be looked at and critiqued if needed. I do require you to sign the attached consent form acknowledging that all information of the goings on during this process will remain confidential with you and not be abused in any way or form. All effort will be made to keep participant confidentiality and anonymity via the use pseudonyms. However despite every effort being made, identification of participants may still occur.

I do intend to use transcribers who will have access to the interview data. However, any transcribers used will be required to sign a confidentiality statement agreeing that any information they have access to must remain confidential to the individual.

In the near future it is possible that the results of my thesis will be used in further publications, presentations or research.

Please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisors if you have any further questions. By signing the accompanying consent form you agree with and understand the research purpose and its requirements.

If you feel at any time prior to or after the interviewing process that you require additional support, guidance or counselling you can contact Assist Counselling who offers confidential access to experienced professional counsellors. Assist Counselling have offices located in Auckland and Hamilton and can be contacted on 0800 277478.

Thanks very much for your interest thus far and I look forward to working with you.

Phillip Kahu-Kauika

Appendix B: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS

Title of the project: Exploring Players Perceptions about Alcohol: The Impact of Alcohol on Rugby Team Culture.

Researcher: Phillip Kahu-Kauika

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Whitinui, *Sport and Leisure Studies Department, FoE, UoW.*

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Bob Rinehart, *Associate Professor, Sport and Leisure Studies Department, FoE, UoW.*

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project and its privacy and confidentiality requirements. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered.

I agree to uphold participant privacy and the confidentiality of all information, data, and audio recording pertaining to this research project that I make contact with.

I understand that all information given and collected within the interviewing process may in future be used for further publications, presentations and research.

I..... give consent to be involved in this research
(please print name clearly)

Signed.....

Date.....

Appendix C: Club participant information letter.

Date:

To whom it may concern,

My name is Phillip Kahu-Kauika.

I am a Sports and Leisure Studies Master's student based at the University of Waikato and would like to investigate rugby players' perceptions surrounding the consumption of alcohol and the possible implications it has on the culture of the team. At this time, I am hoping that your club will be interested in assisting me with this research by inviting players from within your senior premier team, to participate in my study. As a general guideline when selecting a player it would be preferable to have a player who is a member of the senior premier team and who as a rule involved in drinking alcohol at least once week.

Providing a member of your club means that the player and your club will remain anonymous throughout my research. The player will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement and will also be given a letter that outlines the research process and the participant's rights if they choose to participate in the research.

It is also necessary to protect this research from being abused, should your club be willing to accept one of your players being interviewed, in that, I have access to a high ranking official (i.e., chairperson) within your club to sign the attached consent form. Signing the form acknowledges that your club has been made aware of the use of one of your players and that those officials within your club who are made aware of this research will remain confidential about it.

Interviewing is scheduled to take place during August meaning the player will likely have finished his club rugby commitments and this process will not interrupt your team during the critical stage of your season.

If your club is happy for one of your players to be involved in this research could you please contact me either by email or phone using the details provided above. During this conversation you will have a chance to ask any further questions your club has. If your club is satisfied with allowing one of your players to partake in my research, effort will be made by myself during this conversation process to gain interested player contact details and get in touch with the player. Alternatively the player can contact me directly again using the details above.

I look forward to working with members of your club and would like to thank you very much for your consideration.

Phillip Kahu-Kauika

Appendix D: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR CLUBS

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS

Title of the project: Exploring Players Perceptions about Alcohol: The Impact of Alcohol on Rugby Team Culture.

Researcher: Phillip Kahu-Kauika

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Whitinui, *Sport and Leisure Studies Department, FoE, UoW.*

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Bob Rinehart, *Associate Professor, Sport and Leisure Studies Department, FoE, UoW.*

Our club has been given and understands the nature of this research project and its privacy and confidentiality requirements. Our club has had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered.

Our club agrees to uphold participant privacy and the confidentiality of all information, data, and audio recordings pertaining to this research project that our club has contact with.

Our club understands that all information given and collected within the interviewing process may in future be used for further publications, presentations and research.

I give consent on behalf
(Please print name clearly)

Ofto have club members involved in this research
(Please print club name clearly)

Signed.....

Date.....

Appendix E: Interview Questions:

Introductory:

- 1) Can you tell me about what encouraged you to play rugby?
- 2) How long have you been playing rugby? How long have you played senior club rugby? and how many club sides have you represented?
- 3) Has alcohol consumption been a prevalent part of your rugby career and in particular within the teams you have played for?
- 4) On average each week, how often would you engage in consuming alcohol with the team and its members?

Individual:

- 5) Can you describe your first experiences where alcohol was consumed by yourself or other individuals you were with, in a rugby environment?
- 6) Would you say rugby players drink more alcohol during the rugby season than throughout non rugby season during the year? Why do you think this way?
- 7) Can you describe some positive experiences you have had with regards to players consuming alcohol as part of a rugby team?
- 8) Can you describe some negative experiences you have had with regards to players consuming alcohol as part of a rugby team?
- 9) At what stage do you think having a couple of beers turns into an all-nighter drinking with the team by an individual?

Individual/Alcohol/Team:

- 10) What are your perceptions surrounding the consumption of alcohol and in particular, how it impacts on the team (e.g., performance, friendships, unity, etc.)?
- 11) In what ways do you think drinking as a rugby player with fellow rugby players' differs in comparison to drinking with family or friends outside of the rugby environment?
- 12) Can you describe the typical drinking behaviour(s) of fellow rugby players when alcohol is being consumed?
- 13) Do you think there is an expectation that to be a 'good' rugby player you need to be able to handle your drink?
- 14) How do you feel when others in your team become intoxicated (i.e., drunk)?

- 15) Can you remember any team drinking competitions or events that encouraged the consumption of large amounts of alcohol? What happened? What was the outcome?
- 16) When the team regularly drinks together (e.g. say every weekend), how do you think it affects the team as a whole?
- 17) Do you think rugby players consume more alcohol when they are together as opposed to being on their own? Why or why not?
- 18) Is drinking within your team limited to the players only, or are there others who are not part of the team, frequently involved? Do you think that others who are not normally involved in the team influence the drinking behaviour of players- more or less?

The Rugby/Alcohol Connection:

- 19) What do you think is responsible for the drinking culture in New Zealand rugby?
- 20) Why do you think alcohol has a connection with rugby?