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MMAsculinities:
SPECTACULAR NARRATIVES OF MASCULINITY IN MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

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by

Stephen L. Swain

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
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CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

Supervisor

_____
Dr. Kevin B. Wamsley

Supervisory Committee

_____
Dr. Michael Heine

_____
Dr. Nick Dyer-Witherford

Examiners

_____
Dr. Michael Heine

_____
Dr. Laura Misener

_____
Dr. Michael Kehler

_____
Dr. Philip White

The thesis by

Stephen Loring Swain

entitled:

MMAsculinities:
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Date_____ _____
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

Abstract

This dissertation uses the work of Guy Debord to examine the Ultimate Fighting Championship, or UFC. More specifically, it examines spectacular narratives surrounding the main event of UFC 114, which featured Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson facing 'Suga' Rashad Evans. Drawing upon not only the event itself, but also the season of The Ultimate Fighter during which the two combatants coached opposing teams, this study looks at how masculinity is performed and presented, and how those spectacular presentations of masculinity are then used as a means of selling commodities.

Drawing upon the work of Guy Debord, this dissertation examines Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), and the UFC specifically, examining how theories of spectacle and the spectacular can be used to understand MMA, the UFC, and their place within contemporary mediasport.

More specifically, this dissertation examines how dominant concepts of masculinity, particularly those dealing with the use of violence and domination to assert and prove masculinity, are expressed not only during a UFC Pay-Per-View event, but within the larger UFC 'integrated sport spectacle,' including the UFC's *The Ultimate Fighter* reality series, as well as the *UFC Primetime* specials used to promote PPV events.

These concepts of masculinity are then discussed in relation to the sponsors and advertisers who promote their products and brands through the UFC. This dissertation argues that by presenting these dominant concepts of masculinity as being signified by the UFC fighters, these commodities are then associated with not only the fighters, but with the concepts of masculinity which the fighters represent.

Keywords: Masculinity; Mixed Martial Arts; Ultimate Fighting Championship; Spectacle; Spectacular Narratives

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Serena, Bridget, Autumn, Chloe and Olivia. You inspire me, and make me believe that the pursuit of knowledge is a worthwhile endeavour.

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Chapter 1: Pre-Fight Warmup

Introduction

On May 29, 2010, Quentin 'Rampage' Jackson and 'Sugar' Rashad Evans fought in the main event of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) 114 Pay Per View (PPV). The UFC is a fighting organization within the larger umbrella of what is commonly referred to as Mixed Martial Arts. While the UFC is not the only MMA organization operating either in the United States or internationally, it is probably the most recognizable. The UFC has existed since 1993 and is currently operated by Zuffa Entertainment. While Zuffa is owned primarily by Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, two Las Vegas-based casino owners, their most recognizable public face is Dana White, the UFC President, and a minority stock holder in Zuffa.

Mixed Martial Arts is a catchall term used to denote a fighting style/form of entertainment that incorporates the hybridization of a number of different fighting/combat styles. While the early UFC events were used as a showcase of the Gracie form of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ), the events also featured Greco-Roman wrestlers, karate experts, boxers, and sumo wrestlers, amongst other disciplines. Since then, the term MMA has come to refer to fighters who incorporate various aspects of different fighting disciplines into their own particular fighting styles. So a fighter may practice Muay Thai kickboxing, but also work on BJJ, as well as developing wrestling skills. MMA is not only popular in North America but also across the world. In Japan, the Pride Fighting Championship group was one of the more popular MMA organizations, until business scandal led to their assets being purchased by Zuffa. Other groups still operate in Japan, including Dream and World Victory Road. Within North America, World Extreme

Cagefighting (WEC) was another MMA organization under the Zuffa banner, was operated for a time as a separate promotion focusing on smaller fighters; it was eventually absorbed into the UFC. Zuffa also recently purchased the California-based Strikeforce organization, and it remains to be seen whether the UFC and Strikeforce will remain separate or whether the UFC will absorb Strikeforce, although most signs seem to indicate the latter. North America also has Maximum Fighting Championship, Bellator Fighting Championship and other, smaller groups. But the fact remains that the UFC is the predominant MMA organization, not only in North America, but around the world. The existence of these other organizations helps to demonstrate the popularity of MMA, as well as the fact that many people have recognized this popularity, and have attempted to capitalize on it.

Mixed Martial Arts is a sport that is growing in popularity, due in part to the work of the UFC in promoting its particular brand. The UFC has been helped significantly by its reality television series, *The Ultimate Fighter*, which features mixed martial artists competing to earn a contract with the UFC. The show, currently in its 13th season, airs on Spike TV[1] in the United States, and has helped launch the careers of a number of MMA fighters, including Evans, who won the heavyweight competition of the show's second season. Evans then moved down to light heavyweight, where he eventually won the Light Heavyweight title by defeating Forrest Griffin, the winner of the first season of *The Ultimate Fighter*, who, in turn, had defeated Rampage Jackson. Evans lost the title to Lyoto 'The Dragon' Machida, who lost the title to Mauricio 'Shogun' Rua three weeks prior to the Rampage/Rashad fight. The winner of the Evans/Jackson fight is scheduled to face Rua for the Light Heavyweight title at some point in the near future.

Another factor in the UFC's growing popularity has been its ability to create not only spectacular viewing, but also compelling narratives for its events. While *The Ultimate Fighter* is one example of the creation of narrative in order to drive and perpetuate the spectacular, the UFC also makes use of a number of different narrative techniques in order to create interest in its events, be they broadcast on PPV or cable television. A combined analysis of the spectacular and narrative is warranted as opposed to two distinct approaches, typically employed in areas of research such as film studies. Spectacle and narrative are understood through their symbiotic relationship, particularly in the realm of sport, and more specifically, the realm of mediasport, where we watch not an event, but a mediated representation of an event, with producers and broadcast executives playing a role in how the event is seen, and as a result, how the event is consumed.

This study examines the UFC 114 fight card, and its accompanying events to explore how the PPV, and more specifically, the spectacle, is constructed. I discuss such issues as race (both Evans and Jackson are African-American), commercialization, gender and violence, as well as the role of the media in the construction of spectacle.

Literature Review

To date, there has been very little in the academic literature written about either the UFC or Mixed Martial Arts in general. There have been many popular books and magazines dedicated to the sport, including fighter biographies, instructional books and insider exposés, but this is typical whenever a once fringe activity works its way closer to the mainstream. But MMA is not a sport which sprang fully-formed from a social vacuum; rather, it has been reliant on historical predecessors for its structure,

representation, and popular and academic understanding. Much of the work that has been done on other combat sports such as boxing and wrestling, therefore will be of particular value. Before assessing either of those sports, it is first necessary to examine one of the earliest combat sports, and one to which MMA is often compared, that of the Ancient Greek sport of Pankration.[2] The sport is discussed in a number of scholarly articles, and in various books about the Ancient Greek Olympiad. A 1906 article, "The Pankration and Wrestling"[3] by E. Norman Gardiner, published in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* is one of the first to discuss the sport, and its place within the pantheon of Greek athletics. Gardiner discusses how the Pankration was fought, and differentiates the Pankration from the sport of wrestling. One of the interesting notes from Gardiner's article is that "the essential difference between wrestling and the pankration is that in the former the object is to throw an opponent, in the latter the struggle goes on until one of the two pankratiasts acknowledges his defeat."[4] This is of interest when discussing MMA, because of the emphasis that is often placed on making an opponent submit, particularly when considering Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu submission joint locks and choke holds. Also interesting is Gardiner's argument against the perceived brutality of the Pankration. He contends that the sport was one that required both strength and skill, rather than just sheer force. Again, this criticism has arisen as it pertains to MMA and the UFC, and much of what has been done by Dana White and Zuffa has been done to counter perceptions of brutality and de-sportization. A more recent article on MMA by van Bottenburg and Hellbron, "De-Sportization of Fighting Contests: The Origins and Dynamics of No Holds Barred Events and the Theory of Sportization"[5] is an example of these perceptions of MMA, as

they address what the authors perceive as a diminishment, or even loss, of some essential quality of sport when it comes to MMA and the UFC.

In his 2001 article on Pankration in *The International Journal for the History of Sport,* "Pankration and Greek Coins," A. Milavic addresses the depictions of pankratiasts on Greek coins, and the debate that surrounds the discovery and analysis of such artifacts. While much of what Milavic has to say about the pankration can also be found in Gardiner, Milavic's article is important because it helps to demonstrate the popularity of the Pankration in Ancient Greece, as well as the current debate that can surround the reading and writing about sport in antiquity.

In addition to the Pankration, articles about boxing and wrestling help to form the foundation for this dissertation. Kath Woodward's "Rumbles in the Jungle,"[6] published in 2004 in the *Journal of Leisure Studies* examines issues of race and masculinity in the sport of boxing. While Woodward approaches the study from a British perspective, (her paper is an ethnography of a particular boxing gym in Sheffield, England) the work is still important to examining issues of masculinity and race in combat sports. Additionally, the British context is important because of the growing popularity of MMA in Britain and Europe, as well as the fact that Quentin 'Rampage' Jackson trains predominantly at the Wolfslair gym in England. Woodward found masculine and racial identities to be multivalent in their construction within and through boxing. As Woodward writes, "[w]hilst boxing is concerned with the display of the perfectly honed, fit, beautiful body it also involves the grotesque body of defeat and serious injury. Boxing illustrates some of the contradictions in the formation and presentation of embodied identity."[7] What is important for this dissertation are the elements of the spectacular that

Woodward finds: "Boxing does appear to be about dramatic presentation through the enactment of the spectacle of machismo in a drama that includes the personal management of fears and anxiety, about the self-respect of having a job, being able to defend yourself or of presenting a secure identity of masculinity."[8] The notion of the spectacularization of masculinity is one that will be addressed throughout this dissertation.

In addition to Woodward's, there have been a number of other pieces written about the display and spectacularization of masculinity in the realm of boxing. Delgado's "Golden But Not Brown: Oscar De La Hoya and the Complications of Culture, Manhood, and Boxing"[9] examines the case of famed pugilist, and now boxing promoter, Oscar De La Hoya, and how he is constructed as an Hispanic man, through both ethnic and gender lines, and how there are offered different definitions of masculinity that vary according to ethnic and cultural differences. These connections are relevant throughout this dissertation, as discussions of race and masculinity are often intertwined, particularly in combat sports when both combatants are men of colour.

One of the most important examinations of sports and masculinity is Messner, Dunbar and Hunt's 2000 article "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula."[10] The authors identify10 themes which define conceptions of masculinity based on televised sports programming, be they events or newscasts. While this dissertation will not rely solely on the themes laid out by Messner, Dunbar and Hunt, their analysis will prove to be a valuable guideline for my discussion of MMA. Also of value is Messner's 1990 article "When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in sport,"[11] which examines issues of violence and aggression and their relations to concepts of masculinity within the

sporting field. Given the discussions in the media regarding the violent nature of Mixed Martial Arts, this article will also help to inform my analysis. As Messner writes: "[v]iolent sports as spectacle provide linkages among men in the project of the domination of women, while at the same time helping to construct and clarify differences between various masculinities."[12] The presentation of violence in sport provides a sense of identity not only for the participants, but also for the spectators.

Also important when considering combat sports, and MMA in general, is the world of professional wrestling. Professional wrestling occupies a unique position, as the sport is heavily spectacularized, and highly reliant on narrative. Regardless of this emphasis on narrative, professional wrestling is also a sport that relies heavily on the body, and requires a special set of skills to be performed both safely and successfully. Because of this, professional wrestling has been given attention within the body of academic literature.

Mike Atkinson's 2002 article "Fifty-Million Viewers Can't Be Wrong: Professional Wrestling, Sports-Entertainment and Mimesis"[13] focuses on how professional wrestling is presented as an athletic contest, despite the debates as to its legitimacy as a sport. Professional wrestling acknowledges its scripted nature, while at the same time making the attempt to present the matches not only as legitimate contests but, more importantly, as high-level athletic performance. Many of the same techniques used by professional wrestling to present itself as a sport can also be found in the world of MMA to distance it from the 'human cock-fighting' identity with which it was associated in the early days of the sport. The issue of violence and its presentation is also an important theme in Atkinson's article, and this is where the comparisons to MMA

diverge. As Atkinson writes, "it appears that the violence in professional wrestling is largely acceptable because wrestling enthusiasts are generally cognisant of the fact that it occurs within the 'false' context"[14] The opposite argument can be made of MMA, where the violence is accepted because of its reality. This was how the sport was originally sold, and is what resulted in the legal problems the sport encountered. Today, one of the appeals of MMA is the violence it presents, a violence that is seen as not just real, but legitimate, in the sense that the sport is a contest that is a test of skill and ability, rather than just the ability to absorb and deliver physical punishment.

Another excellent resource for any academic examination of professional wrestling is *Steel Chair to the Head:The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling*, edited by Nicholas Sammond.[15] Sammond's essential book collects a number of different articles, including "The World of Wrestling" by Roland Barthes. But the book goes further, including "'Never Trust a Snake': WWF Wrestling as Masculine Melodrama"[16] by Henry Jenkins III, and Laurence de Garis' "The 'Logic' of Professional Wrestling."[17] These two articles provide an interesting examination of professional wrestling, taking the position that storytelling and narrative are crucial to an understanding of the sport. Jenkins' makes the argument that the stories told in professional wrestling are similar to those in other melodramatic forms, most notably the soap opera. De Garis, drawing upon his own experiences as a professional wrestler, argues that the actions inside the ring must also tell a story, and that there is a particular logic that is required to properly construct the narrative of a professional wrestling match. When looked at comparatively, these two articles help to demonstrate the prominence of narrative, before, during and after a professional wrestling match. While, in the world of professional wrestling, the

narrative is pre-determined before the match, this does not mean that the same logic is not at play in other sport. Professional wrestling represents a triumph of narrative in sport, where the producers are able to control the narrative, thereby controlling the message. Within other sports, the narrative elements can be partially determined by the producers, but are still subject to the indeterminacy of real life.

In regards to MMA, a similar theme was explored in a 2004 Master's thesis entitled "The Evolution of Dramatic Storylines in the Packaging, Selling and Legitimizing of Ultimate Fighting Championship,"[18] by Brian Scott O'Hara at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. O'Hara makes some interesting points about the use of conventional storylines in the promotion of UFC events both when the company was emerging, as well as in contemporary PPV presentations, and compares these storylines to those used in the telenovelas popular in Latin America. O'Hara's thesis examines the storylines presented in Mixed Martial Arts, but does not go beyond the dramatic elements to explore how spectacular elements are also prevalent in MMA.

Since then, there has been some academic research into the realm of Mixed Martial Arts, but the work done has still barely begun to scratch the surface. One valuable article is "Producing Pain: Techniques and Technologies in No-Holds-Barred Fighting,"[19] written in 2007 by Greg Downey and published in *Social Studies of Science*. While Downey's article is primarily concerned with "[examining] the bodily techniques in no-holds-barred fighting to illustrate the depth to which human skills are subject to technical refinement, innovation and cumulative learning across a community,"[20] the paper also provides an excellent history of the sport, particularly its early days. Also important is Downey's discussion of multiple aspects of MMA, albeit with a focus on

UFC competitions, as well as providing an historical examination of the development of other fighting styles and traditions.

Additionally, van Bottenburg and Hellbron's "De-Sportization of Fighting Contests: The Origins and Dynamics of No Holds Barred Events and the Theory of Sportization"[21] from *The International Review for the Sociology of Sport* addresses issues of sportization as they apply to the realm of MMA. As described by the authors, the term sportization

> denotes a process that began in the 18th century, in which organizations arose which acquired the power to formulate the rules of sport-like recreations more precisely, strictly and explicitly, oriented around an ethos of 'fair play' and eliminating, reducing and/or more strictly controlling opportunities for violent physical contact.[22]

Again, while broader issues of MMA are addressed by von Bottenburg and Hellbron, little is made of issues of the spectacular. Rather, the analytic importance for von Bottenburg and Hellbron, is the desportization and re-sportization of No Holds Barred fighting and Mixed Martial Arts, particularly as they relate to the ways in which sportization and de-sportization are used to increase the appeal of the sport to spectators and mass audiences. They do mention spectacularization near the end of the paper when they discuss how the Zuffa-owned UFC has attempted to make the sport not only more appealing to viewers, but also to athletic commissions and cable broadcasters. As they note, this has been done through the use of both consistent and enforceable rules, but also through the use of personalities and pageantry in the promotion and presentation of the PPV product. While it is important that they make note of this presentation style, their analysis does not address the function of the spectacle in contemporary society, nor the

ways in which the logic of spectacle is used to promote and propagate particular ideologies and values.

The issue of the appeal of MMA to certain audiences is explored in a paper from the *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, entitled, "An analysis of spectator motives and media consumption behaviour in an individual combat sport: cross-national differences between American and South Korean Mixed Martial Arts fans" by Kim, Andrew and Greenwell.[23] As the title suggests, the paper examines the differences in spectator motivations between American and South Korean MMA fans, using the rise in popularity worldwide of MMA events as a starting point for their study. The authors use a quantitative data analysis method, based on surveys distributed at an MMA event in the United States and one in South Korea. Of particular interest from this study are the different motivations identified by the authors, in line with the issues of the spectacular that I will address in this dissertation. The authors list 12 different motivations, namely, Drama, Escape, Aesthetic Qualities, Vicarious Achievement, Socialising, National Pride, Economic Factor, Adoration, Violence, Sport Interest, Fighter Interest, and Organizational Interest,[24] as the factors either anticipated or encountered in their research. These factors can be used not only to refer to the narrative elements used to structure an MMA event, but also linked to issues of the spectacular that are at work in the world of MMA. Of particular note are the factors of Violence, National Pride, and Escape. The issue of violence is one that pervades any discussion of MMA, particularly when reflecting on the early days of the UFC, during the de-sportization days described by von Bottenburg and Hellbron. The visceral appeal of the violence of early UFC events is important to note, although contemporary MMA events, including those offered by the

UFC, still carry with them a certain level of violence. The issue of 'Escape' is important because of the way in which the logic of spectacle makes spectacular events appear to be an escape, when they are simply a different way of offering the same ideologies and values which people are presented with in other aspects of their lives. Thus, the fact that 'Escape' is found to be one motivating factor for MMA audiences helps to strengthen the argument for a spectacular analysis of MMA and the UFC. Finally, the issue of 'National Pride' is also important because it helps to demonstrate the types of values and ideologies which can be, and often are, presented through the spectacular logic of MMA. This is not to say that nationalism is the only value promoted through the spectacle of MMA, but it certainly can be one of them, and the fact that a qualitative analysis such as this can identify such an ideology as motivating spectator involvement helps to demonstrate the need for a deeper examination of the ways in which the spectacle operates in the UFC and MMA in general.

One of the most recent articles on Mixed Martial Arts is Dale C. Spencer's 2009 article "Habit(us), Body Techniques and Body Callusing: An Ethnography of Mixed Martial Arts,"[25] published in *Body and Society*Spencer examines MMA from his own participatory perspective, examining how MMA training forces the body to adapt. Spencer uses the term "body callusing"[26] to refer to the process of making the body harder and more capable of resisting damage and pain.

What has not been addressed within the literature regarding MMA is an examination of the sport as a spectacular event, one which is performed and consumed according to specific criteria designed to promote and naturalize a particular ideology or set of ideologies. MMA, like other mediasports, is a constructed event. What has not

been addressed in the literature regarding MMA is how that construction takes place, what is the motivation behind that construction, and how that construction works to present these particular ideologies as right and natural. This dissertation examines MMA from this perspective, making use of theories of spectacle for its methodological framework.

Methodology

Most of the writing on Mixed Martial Arts has focused on the individual, whether it be the embodied fighting practices, or motivations in attending MMA events. This dissertation takes a broader perspective, examining issues of the spectacular and of narrative to discover the ideologies and messages being encoded in MMA, and how those messages are being disseminated. This dissertation examines the sport of MMA, and the UFC in particular, using the perspective of the spectacle, and how the logic of spectacle is employed to send a particular message. This perspective makes use of theories of the spectacular and how they have been applied to the realm of contemporary mediasport, and combines them with concepts of narrative in sport, to explore how messages about masculinity, race, commercialization and commodification are embedded in MMA spectacle.

A 1988 article by Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon, "Methods and Media: Studying the Sports/Television Discourse," discusses how media re-presentations of live sporting events are structured according to the logic of spectacle, and with an eye to specific ideologies.[27] There are two important assertions from the article that are instructive. The first is that

> there are no 'natural' representations. What we see on television is always a re-presentation of 'live' events, a representation which is always constructed

> according to codes which highlight, and eventually naturalize, some themes and interpretations; meanwhile other possible readings (and questions) are made less available to the viewer.[28]

This assertion works with my examination of the spectacular as well as narrative, to examine not just what codes are highlighted within the buildup to, and broadcast of, UFC 114, but also how those codes are highlighted, and hopefully, what messages are "made less available."

The second assertion, that "visual images, and their accompanying narratives, always imply or construct a position or positions from which they are viewed"[29] is also important to understand the other side of the spectacular coin, that of the consumers, or spectators. Just as the spectacle constructs what is being re-presented to the audience, so too is the audience being constructed in such a way as to properly receive that re-presentation. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of the audience, although it is not of primary concern within this dissertation. Of particular importance for this dissertation is the issue of how, should these spectacular narratives be consumed uncritically, the ideologies and dominant concepts encoded into those narratives can be consumed equally as uncritically. This is not to deny the spectator or the viewer agency but, rather, to keep in mind that, as discussed in the next chapter, one of the primary functions of Debord's Spectacle is to present the conditions of the dominant system as being not only acceptable, but logical and right. To that end, uncritical readings and viewings are not only encouraged, but presented as being appropriate. I do not, nor, would I argue, do Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon, dismiss the possibility for an informed spectatorship. Rather, this study endeavours to explore what messages, themes, concepts, and ideologies

are being presented to the viewer, in the *expectation* that they will be consumed uncritically.

Because the article by Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon does not focus on any one particular set of values or concepts and instead emphasizes the need to take an holistic approach to analyzing televised sporting events, I argue that this makes it an ideal framework within which to situate this study. Their emphasis on exploring the presentation as a whole, and as an event within which particular, often dominant values, are inscribed and celebrated, provides the opportunity to approach this study with an eye towards understanding and exploring the values presented in and through the UFC. This allows for the use of other theoretical approaches that focus specifically on certain issues. For the purposes of this study, issues of spectacle will be of key importance for understanding how these values are presented.

This need to understand both the production and the reception of the spectacular narrative, is also discussed by MacAloon in his "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies," published in 1984.[30] One of the defining features of spectacle for MacAloon is that "Spectacles institutionalize the bicameral roles of actors and audiences, performers and spectators. Both roles are normative, organically linked, and necessary to the performance."[31] MacAloon uses this bicameral role to help make the distinction between ritual and spectacle, particularly to assert that "[r]itual is a duty, spectacle a choice."[32] This distinction between ritual and spectacle is particularly important when considering sport as spectacle, as the modern sport spectacle is often times discussed in regards to religion, and it is important to make the distinction between the ritual and the spectacle, while keeping in mind the relationship between the two.

MacAloon's work is also important because it was one of the first detailed examinations of the modern sport spectacle, with emphasis on one of the most notorious and popular forms of the modern sport spectacle, the modern Olympics. As MacAloon writes of the modern Olympics, "they are spectacle par excellence, a type case against which all others may be compared. The Games are irreducibly visual. Quite literally, they must be seen, and seen in person, to be believed."[33] While MMA is not an Olympic sport, Olympic studies, particularly those that focus on the spectacular will be important to this project. Of particular importance will be issues of legitimacy and validation, as they relate to the use of history as a tool for gaining legitimacy for spectacle. Olympic studies will also be valuable because of the highly mediated nature of the Olympics, both from a political economic point of view, and from a spectacular point of view.

In addition to MacAloon, Gruneau's important insights into the use of media to construct spectacle has proven valuable to this project. His "Making Spectacle: A Case Study in Television Sports Production"[34] from the 1989 collection *Media, Sports, & Society* discusses not only how mediasport is produced both on the field and in the production truck, but also how such productions are the result, and enablers, of particular ideologies. Gruneau's work focuses primarily on the behind-the-scenes aspects of television production, as he was given the opportunity to look behind the curtain, as it were, and to observe the spectacle being produced behind the scenes. While access and financial limitations are limiting factors in this research,[35] Gruneau's work remains useful. The role of production, and of reception, in the creation of the spectacle of the UFC is fundamental to this study.

In addition to the Gruneau chapter, the rest of *Media, Sports, & Society* offers up some additional useful chapters which will help to inform my research and analysis. In particular, Robert Bellamy's "Professional Sports Organizations: Media Strategies,"[36] and Lawrence Wenner's "The Super Bowl Pregame Show: Cultural Fantasies and Political Subtext"[37] are both valuable. Bellamy is important because of the economic perspective of his article, which underlines and emphasizes the financial aspects of the spectacle, particularly when it comes to the monies involved in buying and selling broadcast mediasport. While Bellamy focuses solely on the NBA, NFL and MLB, his work provides a perspective on the symbiotic relationship between the television industry and sports leagues. While not discussing spectacle per se, I believe that Bellamy's article provides a financial rationale and explanation for the importance and power of mediasport spectacle to the broadcasting industry. Wenner's contribution to the collection is important because Wenner discusses many of the same concepts and perspectives I address in this dissertation, but from a different theoretical framework. Wenner's article examines the pre-game show for the 1986 Super Bowl, and provides critiques and commentary on the fantasy themes presented within that broadcast. I challenge Wenner's categorization of these themes as fantasy, and instead argue that what he has examined is the logic of spectacle at work, presenting particular, specific ideologies as narratives designed to enhance the spectacle of the football game, while at the same time presenting these ideological narratives as a natural and logical extension of the game. This again is a reflection of the methodological approach I employ throughout this dissertation, as I examine the various ideological narratives which become constructed and presented through the logic of spectacle.

Chapter Two examines more thoroughly the concept of the spectacle, particularly as it relates to the realm of contemporary mediasport. In addition to the above mentioned texts, there are a number of others which discuss the spectacle. These include Guy DeBord's oft-cited *The Society of the Spectacle* as well as Alan Tomlinson's "Theorising Spectacle: Beyond Debord,"[38] which appeared in *Power Games: A Critical Sociology of Sport*. Tomlinson argues that theories of the spectacular need to look beyond DeBord's emphasis on the commodity in order to better understand the role of spectacle in the world of sport. While I challenge some of Tomlinson's points, his discussion and critique of DeBord will be important to better examine the current status of spectacle and sport.

Where I agree with Tomlinson is in his desire to move beyond DeBord,not in rejecting DeBord, but in embracing other theories and concepts of the spectacular to better understand how the logic of spectacle operates in modern mediasport, making sport part of larger ideological systems. To that end, my second chapter also includes an examination of some postmodern theory, particularly the work of David Harvey, whose *The Condition of Postmodernity*[39] addresses the role of spectacle in postmodern society. I also make use of Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*[40] to better understand the role of spectacle. While neither of these texts directly addresses the role of sport in spectacle, or the role of spectacle in sport, they are important texts to understand the underlying concepts of the spectacular. It was my task to apply these authors' concepts to the realm of modern mediasport, particularly through the use of some of the sporting theorists already discussed, as well as others.

In particular, David L. Andrews' "Sport, Culture and Late Capitalism,"[41] from *Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport* is important for its discussion of what Andrews calls the "integrated sport spectacle,"[42] which refers not only to the event itself, but the accompanying fanfare and events surrounding a particular sporting spectacle. In the case of UFC 114, this would include the Fan Expo taking place the same weekend,[43] as well as the *UFC Primetime* three episode series dedicated to providing backstories to the event, the Bud Light sponsored videos on Facebook, and others. Andrews' discussion of how the sport spectacle is more than just the event is integral to this dissertation, and to my methodology regarding the concepts of sport and spectacle. Contemporary mediasport is more than just the 60 minutes of playing time in a football game, or the three rounds of fighting in an MMA match. Instead, the spectacle, as demonstrated both by Wenner's examination of the Super Bowl Pregame Show, and Andrews' "integrated sport spectacle," is the sum of all the parts of the event. In this way, it allows the spectacle to achieve a more totalizing power, to become DeBord's "omnipresent celebration of a choice *already made* in the sphere of production"[44] allowing for the greatest possible dissemination of its message.

The components of Andrews' "integrated sport spectacle" also help to construct the narrative of the event, another facet of the power of the spectacle. I argue that the role of the narrative within the spectacle is not only to enhance the visual imagery, the economy of signs, of the spectacle, but also to further draw people into the spectacle, creating greater identification with the spectacle, and thus, greater identification with the ideology of the spectacle. In the case of UFC 114, the components of the "integrated sport spectacle" such as the *UFC Primetime* three-part series which aired on SpikeTV in

the weeks leading up to the PPV, worked to create greater interest in the viewing public in the event. The show presented an in-depth look at both Rashad Evans and Quentin Jackson as they prepared for the upcoming fight. In this way, it told a story about the fight, a story designed to create an emotional connection with the audience, thereby encouraging them to order the event. This same story and its emotional connection also help to create a connection between the audience and the message of the spectacle, and by identifying with the story, the audience becomes more deeply connected to the spectacle.

This concept of narrative is of particular importance to modern mediasport, as narrative elements produced by commentators and play-by-play announcers are integral to an understanding of the game. More specifically, these broadcasters are important to a specific understanding of the game, as the broadcasters always construct the narrative with a particular goal in mind. Sometimes this goal is relatively vague, such as ensuring that viewers are aware of the players' names. More often there are particular goals in mind. Often, a commentator is in the employ of a particular team, and is therefore more apt to show bias towards the team. For example, the late Ernie Harwell was the Detroit Tigers' play-by-play announcer. His commentary was constructed to highlight the successes of the Tigers, and to minimalize or justify their failings. Alan D. Hansen discusses this in his 1999 article, "Narrating the Game: Achieving and Coordinating Partisanship in Real Time"[45] from *Research on Language and Social Interaction*. In this article, Hansen discusses how partisanship operates in two different broadcasts of the same game. Hansen's article is important not just for its emphasis on the partisan nature

of broadcasting, but also for its emphasis on the real-time immediacy of broadcasting narratives, which separates sports broadcasting from other narrative genres.

This emphasis on 'real-time' is also found in Marie-Laure Ryan's 1993 article, "Narrative in Real Time: Chronicle, Mimesis and Plot in the Baseball Broadcast"[46] from *Narrative*. Ryan's article discusses how a baseball broadcast operates as a real-time narrative, while at the same time being influenced by past events and future possibilities. While Ryan's emphasis is on the relationship between time and narrative, her work is useful more simply because of her examination of how the broadcasters use narrative to not only describe the action, but to make it dramatic and relevant, thereby drawing the viewer into the event. It is this drawing the viewer in and immersing them in the event which links the narrative to the spectacle, as the narrative appeals to the non-visual senses, thereby encouraging deeper association with the spectacle, thereby enhancing the power of the spectacle on the audience.

This emphasis on narrative is also found in the aforementioned articles by Gruneau, despite their emphasis on spectacle. Here, Gruneau discusses how the broadcast event is discussed by the announcers in such a way as to enhance the dramatic quality of the event, allowing the spectacle greater appeal. It is this combination of spectacle and narrative that will be examined in greater detail in this dissertation. This analysis will attempt to synthesize theories of the spectacular and narrative, with the goal of discussing not only how the two concepts are interdependent, particularly within modern (and possibly postmodern) mediasport, but also what the narratives are saying and what is being spectacularized.

The texts I have discussed here, and the concepts they address, form the basis of my methodological framework. My primary focus is on theories of the spectacular, and how they relate to contemporary mediasport. But linked to these theories of the spectacular are concepts of narrative, which I believe are intrinsically linked within the realm of broadcast sport. Taking my inspiration from the work of Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon, my methodological framework examines UFC 114 as a spectacular narrative, wherein theories of both narrative and spectacle can, and need be, applied. The imagery of sport, and the accompanying storylines created within Andrews' "integrated sport spectacle" are all designed not only to create interest and attachment between the viewer and the event, but more importantly, between the viewer and the messages and ideologies of the spectacle.

Method

The primary sources for this dissertation are the UFC 114 PPV, with the main event of Quentin 'Rampage' Jackson vs 'Suga' Rashad Evans, and the accompanying promotional materials. These include the *UFC Primetime* series which aired over three weeks on Spike TV, and the *UFC Countdown* show which also aired on Spike TV. The PPV was taped live the night of the broadcast, and recorded to DVD to ensure availability. The Spike TV broadcasts were also recorded to DVD. Other elements of the "integrated sport spectacle"[47] which were considered included the Pre-fight Press Conference, the Weigh-Ins held the day before the fight, and the Post-Fight Press Conference, all of which were broadcast live over the Internet, and later streamed, on the UFC.com website. The UFC also posted a number of videos on its Facebook page which were used to promote the fight. All videos used were recorded to DVD to ensure that

they were available whenever needed, thus eliminating any potential problems in case the videos were removed from the site.

Traditional media such as radio and print, do not feature prominently in this dissertation. This is by design, as the capturing and collecting of web-based data is in many ways simpler than trying to find articles in print or on the radio. But it is also a reflection of the current state of media, particularly as it applies to sports such as MMA. The global nature of the sport means that traditional media are ill-equipped to handle the demands of both the fanbase and the fight organizations which are seeking to reach that global market. As a result, while the UFC may be getting into the magazine publishing business, much more of their marketing and promotional efforts are web-based.

Additionally, I draw upon past UFC events to better understand UFC 114. As an example, the Jackson/Evans fight was originally promoted by having both fighters act as coaches on the tenth season of *The Ultimate Fighter* television show. Because of this, I also refer to the series, and the DVD release of that season, as a resource for this study.

The method of analysis and discussion used is what I refer to as the 'read and think' method. In more technical terms, I will be using an approach similar to that employed by Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon in "Methods and Media: Studying the Sports Television Discourse."[48] In that paper they argue against a quantitative analysis method, because of the ways in which such an approach can decontextualize the text being studied, and rob it of its narrative power. As they write,

> An appropriate analogy might be the study of a Shakesperian play where the sentence is used as a unit of analysis. Counting instances of literary devices, or even thematic elements (would it really matter how many metaphors there are in Othello?) runs the risk of losing all sense of the meanings and associations created through the use of specific literary forms, and conjunctures and disjunctures in the text.[49]

This analogy points to the importance of taking a more holistic, qualitative approach to this type of study, examining segments individually, while maintaining a perspective on the broadcast as a whole. The observations from Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon serve to provide a framework for the method I use to perform my analysis throughout this dissertation. Their discussion of how a televised sports broadcast is constructed with a specific intention in mind, and with a specific ideology or set of ideologies ties into the power of the spectacle, while they also emphasize that, "[e]ach program segment is composed through shot and sound sequences constituted according to codes of narrative, entertainment value, education and actuality coverage."[50]

This approach frames the constructed nature of the sporting broadcast, and applies it more holistically to Andrews' "integrated sports spectacle."[51] Rather than focusing on just the broadcast itself, I will be examining how all of the elements discussed are all working towards the same spectacular goals. Whether it is the fight between Jackson and Evans, the magazine cover designed to build interest in the fight, or the *UFC Primetime* series used to promote the fight, these are all elements of the same sporting spectacle. This dissertation will examine these elements, and attempt to discover not just what they are saying, but why they are saying them.

Using this method, I examine the various texts mentioned above with an eye to discovering and exploring how dominant concepts of masculinity are performed and represented. Because the texts were so dense with instances of displays of masculinity, I chose particular examples that I felt best exemplified, and at times challenged, these concepts of masculinity. The selection of which elements to discuss and explore was

motivated by a desire to highlight those moments that provided the best demonstration of the concepts being addressed, and by a concern for the length of this dissertation.

It is possible that , in my desire to select those examples I felt best represented the performances of dominant concepts of masculinity being explored, I omitted examples which another scholar may have chosen to include. This is not, I believe, an indication of any error on my part, but rather an indication of the potential for a plurality of reading any given text. My personal biases and research interests played a factor in what I chose to include in this study. This does not invalidate the potential choices of other scholars, and does not suggest that there are not other potential readings of the texts beyond what I have presented here. Instead, I would argue that, as with any text, there is always the possibility for different readings, and in the performing, comparing, and discussing the merits of these readings, lies the true value of academic research of this type.

Delimitations & Limitations

This dissertation focuses on the contemporary era of Mixed Martial Arts in North America. The contemporary era begins with the first Ultimate Fighting Championship on November 12, 1993, when the company was operated by Semaphore Entertainment Group. I also focus on North America, rather than examining MMA around the world. This does not mean that I do not make reference to historical discussions of MMA, or to discussions of MMA in Japan,[52] but my analysis focuses on MMA in North America during this timeframe. These delimitations are the result of the fact that, while MMA and the UFC may be global in their perspective, there are still cultural and social differences that cannot be properly addressed. Rather than attempting to cover the whole of representations of masculinity and race from across the globe, I am instead choosing to

focus on North America, as this is the epicentre from which the UFC emanates. Additionally, as Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon write,

> It is important, therefore, to remember that men and women of different class and regional backgrounds, and therefore different individual and collective relationships to different sports as 'texts', are unlikely to respond in quite the same ways to the clearly individualist, consumer-oriented, and often nationalist discourses which are articulated in television sport. This point must always be balanced, however, by recognizing the 'work' that cultural producers do in order to achieve plausibility and legitimacy for 'preferred' meanings, in any sports/television discourse.[53]

Therefore, while I acknowledge the fact that this dissertation must be delimited in such a way as to acknowledge the fact that social, cultural, and class backgrounds may result in a different reading from that which I perform, it also acknowledges that any such readings are also dependent upon the texts which are offered and analysed.

One of the greatest limitations this dissertation faces is one of language. Any articles written in languages other than English, such as French, Japanese or Portuguese, were inaccessible to me.

Additionally, Zuffa and the UFC are not publicly traded companies, and as such, have no obligations to release financial information such as salaries, bonuses paid, contract information and buyrates. While they may choose to make such announcements, and have demonstrated a tendency to do so through the MMA media which I use throughout this dissertation, there can be no guarantees that they will choose to do so again. As such, obtaining such information, and the sources through which I am able to gather that information, may not be of a primary nature.

Chapter Organization

Chapter Two of this dissertation is a more detailed and in-depth examination of the subject of the logic of spectacle, and its application to the world of sport. The third

chapter will examine how the UFC creates and uses history as a spectacular element, designed to create legitimacy and to combat image problems. The fourth chapter will deal with the narrative buildup to the fight between Jackson and Evans, drawing upon data from the television series *The Ultimate Fighter*, as well as the *UFC Primetime* series, both of which aired on SpikeTV. The fifth chapter examines the issue of spectacle within the UFC, using UFC 114 as the discussion point. This will not only discuss how the UFC operates as a spectacle, but how processes of naturalization and commoditization are part of this spectacular presentation.

Motivating Factors

The growing popularity of Mixed Martial Arts is one of the reasons the sport is a prime site for research and analysis.[54] The most recent UFC event on Spike TV earned a 1.2 rating,[55]which according to a Spike TV press release sent to MMAJunkie.com, translates to approximately 1.8 million viewers.[56] Perhaps more important is the fact that, according to the article, "[t]he Nov. 5 broadcast was the No. 1 rated program on cable in its timeslot among men 18-34 and men 18-49."[57]Clearly, MMA is a sport that appeals to a particular demographic, in this case men aged 18-49. The UFC is doing an excellent job of reaching out to that demographic.

Popularity notwithstanding, the elements of the sport itself make its study so important. In studying MMA, I also explore issues of hybridity and globalization, while also exploring the issues of masculinity, violence, race and gender which have been discussed in previous examinations of combat sports. In many ways, MMA represents a post-modern sport, one built upon references to, and adaptations of, a number of different sports. The very name, Mixed Martial Arts, denotes the sport's hybrid nature. The

nature of the first UFC event, promoted as a means of determining the superiority of particular fighting styles, has given way to a sport in which different fighting styles are combined and synthesized in an attempt to make use of each style's strengths, while exploiting the weaknesses of others. In much the same way that a film such as Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* is seen as a post-modern classic because of its pastiche of different film styles and genres, and Alan Moore's *Watchmen* is heralded as a classic of graphic literature because of its examination of the tropes and conventions of the superhero genre, so too is MMA both a pastiche of different fighting styles from across the globe, but also an attempt to examine and juxtapose those fighting styles. This leads to the next chapter of this dissertation, where I examine theories of spectacle and narrative more closely, and create a fusion of theoretical perspectives which guides this dissertation.

1 SpikeTV is an American cable network that began its existence as The Nashville Network, and has since evolved into SpikeTV, a network that presents itself as a network for 'guys.' In addition to UFC, the network is also home to shows such as *The Deadliest Warrior*, *1000 Ways to Die*, and *Blue Mountain State*, a raunchy sitcom about a fictional college football program. If one were to imagine a television network designed to remedy a perceived 'crisis of masculinity,' such imaginings would still fall short of what SpikeTV presents.

2 The most notable example of this comparison is the Japanese fighting organization "Pancrase," the name of which was chosen to draw a connection between MMA and the Ancient Greek sport.

3 E. Norman Gardiner, "Pankration and Wrestling," *The Journal for Hellenic Studies* 26 (1906), 4-22.

4 Ibid., 4.

5 Maarten van Bottenburg and Johan Heilbron, "De-Sportization of Fighting Contests: The Origins and Dynamics of No Holds Barred Events and the Theory of Sportization," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 41 (2006), 259-282.

6 Kath Woodward. "Rumbles in the jungle: Boxing, racialization and the performance of masculinity," *Journal of Leisure Studies*, 23: 1 (2006), 5–17.

7 Ibid., 20.

8 Ibid., 21.

9 Fernando Delgado. "Golden But Not Brown: Oscar De La Hoya and the Complications of Culture, Manhood, and Boxing," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22: 2 (2005), 196-211.

10 Michael A. Messner, Michele Dunbar & Darnell Hunt "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula," J*ournal of Sport and Social Issues* 24 (2000), 380-394.

11 Michael A. Messner, "When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in Sport," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 25 (2003), 203-218.

12 Ibid., 213.

13 Michael Atkinson, "Fifty Million Viewers Can't Be Wrong: Professional Wrestling, Sports-Entertainment and Mimesis," *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19 (2002), 47-66.

14 Ibid., 62.

15 Nicholas Sammond, ed. *Steel Chair to the Head: The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling*, (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2005.)

16 Henry Jenkins III, "'Never Trust a Snake': WWF Wrestling as Masculine Melodrama," in *Steel Chair to the Head: The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling*, ed. Nicholas Sammond (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2005.), 33-66.

17 Laurence de Garis, "The 'Logic' of Professional Wrestling," in *Steel Chair to the Head: The Pleasure and Pain of Professional Wrestling*, ed. Nicholas Sammond, (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2005.), 192-212.

18 Brian Scott O'Hara, "The Evolution of Dramatic Storylines in the Packaging, Selling, and Legitimizing of Ultimate Fighting Championship" (MA Thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2008)

19 Greg Downey, "Producing Pain: Techniques and Technologies in No-Holds-Barred Fighting," Social Studies of Science 37 (2007), 201-226.

20 Ibid., 202.

21 von Bottenburg & Hellbron, "De-Sportization of Fighting Contests."

22 Ibid., 262.

23 Seungmo Kim, Damon P.S. Andrew & T. Christopher Greenwell, "An analysis of spectator motives and media consumption behaviour in an individual combat sport: cross-national differences between American and South Korean Mixed Martial Arts fans," *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 10: 2 (2009), 157-170.

24 Ibid.

25 Dale C. Spencer, "Habit(us), Body Techniques and Body Callusing: An Ethnography of Mixed Martial Arts," *Body & Society*, 15: 4 (2009), 119–143.

26 Ibid.

27 Richard Gruneau, David Whitson & Hart Cantelon, "Methods and Media: Studying the Sports/Television Discourse," *Society & Leisure*, 11: 2 (1988), 265-281.

28 Ibid., 276.
29 Ibid., 276.
30 John J. MacAloon, “Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies”, in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. John J. MacAloon,(Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues , 1984), 241-280.
31 Ibid., 243.
32 Ibid., 243.
33 Ibid., 245.
34 Richard Gruneau, “Making Spectacle: A Case Study in Television Sports Production,” in *Media, Sports & Society*, ed. Lawrence Wenner (Newbury Park, California, Sage Publications, 1989), 134-156.
35 I have neither the resources, nor the access, to be able to observe the production of a UFC event from inside the production truck and make note of what actually goes on behind the scenes during a UFC PPV.
36 Robert Bellamy, “Professional Sports Organizations: Media Strategies,” in *Media, Sports & Society*, ed. Lawrence Wenner (Newbury Park, California, Sage Publications, 1989), 120-133.
37 Lawrence Wenner, “The Super Bowl Pregame Show: Cultural Fantasies and Political Subtext,” in *Media, Sports & Society*, ed. Lawrence Wenner (Newbury Park, California, Sage Publications, 1989), 157-179.
38 Alan Tomlinson, “Theorising Spectacle: Beyond DeBord,” in *Power Games: A Critical Sociology of Sport,”* eds. John Sudgen & Alan Tomlinson, (New York, Routledge, 2002), 44-61.
39 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing, 1990).
40 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1991).
41 David L. Andrews, “Sport, culture and late capitalism,” in *Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport*, eds. Ben Carrington and Ian MacDonald (New York, Routledge, 2009).
42 Ibid., 223.
43 I had considered going to Las Vegas to attend the Fan Expo and the UFC 114 event live, but decided not to. Primarily because of the financial investment that would be required, but also because doing so would prevent me from being able to watch the event in its purely mediated form, and would make the collection of data more difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, I was concerned about the etchical implications of attending the event, and decided that observing the event on PPV would be appropriate without ethics review.
44 DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 13.
45 Alan D. Hansen, “Narrating the Game: Achieving and Coordinating Partisanship in Real Time,” *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 32: 3 (1999), 269-302.
46 Marie-Laure Ryan, “Narrative in Real Time: Chronicle, Mimesis and Plot in the Baseball Broadcast,” *Narrative*, 1: 2 (1993), 138-155.
47 Ibid., 223.
48 Gruneau, Whitson & Cantelon, “Methods and Media.”
49 Ibid., 272.
50 Ibid., 273.
51 Andrews, “Sport, culture and late capitalism,” 223.
52 Quentin 'Rampage' Jackson established himself as an MMA star in the Japanese Pride promotion before coming to the UFC. As a result, much of Jackson's personality and presentation was established during his time in Japan.
53 Gruneau, Whitson & Cantelon, “Methods and Media,” 276.
54 Perhaps the best example I can make for the popularity of MMA, and the UFC, is from my own experience. I typically watch UFC PPVs at a local sports bar, rather than order the event at home, forcing me to cook my own chicken wings. For an event that starts at 9 pm, my roommate and I will typically arrive by 7 pm, in order to ensure that we have a seat for the evening. By the time the gladiator montage begins, the bar is almost always full, oftentimes with people being turned away at the door.
55 "Rating for UFC on Saturday night was a." *Wrestling Observer/Figure Four Weekly*. http://www.f4wonline.com/more/more-top-stories/96-wwe/22896-rating-for-ufc-on-saturday-night-was-

a Accessed 10 Nov, 2011.

56 John Morgan. "UFC 138 ratings: Event draws 1.8 million viewers on Spike TV, wins key demos." MMAJunkie.com 8 Nov. 2011. http://mmajunkie.com/news/26002/ufc-138-ratings-event-draws-1-8-million-viewers-on-spike-tv-wins-key-demos.mma Accesssed 10 Nov. 2011.

57 Ibid.

Chapter 2: The Rules of the Octagon, a Theoretical Framework for Understanding Mixed Martial Arts and the UFC

Any discussion of spectacle in sport requires an examination of previous writings on the subject. Within the field of sport studies, two of the most important are John MacAloon's 1984 paper "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies,"[1] and Alan Tomlinson's 2002 piece, "Theorising Spectacle: Beyond Debord."[2] MacAloon's paper examines the concept of spectacle with a particular eye towards the Olympic Games, and draws a distinction between spectacle, festival, ritual, and drama. While MacAloon's arguments regarding how the spectacle operates and its function within modern society may not be in line with the methodological approach I will be taking in this paper, he does make some important observations and assertions regarding the spectacle which will prove significant.

One of MacAloon's first points regarding spectacle is that "[s]pectacle is a dynamic form, demanding movement, action, change, and exchange on the part of the actors who are center stage, and the spectators must be excited in turn."[3] This is important to note for two reasons, the first being that it highlights the importance of dynamism to the concept of spectacle. While MacAloon refers to the actions within the spectacle as dynamic and "demanding movement, action, change, and exchange,"[4] it is important to note the dynamic nature of modern spectacle, more broadly. That is to say, the spectacle of contemporary society is not one that is static or easily captured. Rather, contemporary spectacle is constantly shifting, seeking out new approaches, new means of appropriation and dissemination, and does not simply rely on tried and true practices. As a result, contemporary spectacle is a dynamic form, although not necessarily in the sense that MacAloon suggests.

Another noteworthy point to take from MacAloon's assertion is the importance of both "the actors who are center stage, and the spectators."[5] This point is significant because it highlights both the "actors" and the spectators within contemporary spectacle. Again, it is important to make note of this observation, although not necessarily for the reasons stressed by MacAloon. Rather, this emphasis on both observer and observed is significant because of the ways in which these two roles are not mutually exclusive, and the ways in which the messages and ideologies of the spectacle are acted out, not only by those who are performing the spectacle, but also by those who are consuming the spectacle. That is to say, the spectacle is most effective when the values of the spectacle become embodied and acted out by those who began by simply observing the spectacle. This runs counter to MacAloon's assertion that "In festival, the roles of actors and spectators are less distinguishable than in spectacle, where the increased emphasis on sight, often at the expense of other modes of participation, seems to increase the threat of oversight."[6] I argue that contemporary spectacle, sporting or otherwise, encourages a deeper association with the values and ideologies of the spectacle than past festivals, through the production of a system that emphasizes normalization and hegemony, rather than a festival system which reinforces social values on a scheduled basis. This is not to say that spectacles such as UFC events do not occur on a scheduled basis but, rather, they promote values and ideologies in a way that is part of a constantly functioning larger spectacular system, of which these monthly UFC events (or other sporting events) are merely one part.

MacAloon does make a similar observation later, although it seems to diminish the importance and power of the spectacle, rather than accept the importance of spectacle

in contemporary society. As MacAloon writes, "[s]pectacles are, for the most part, disconnected from calendrical and social rhythms, and participation in them is voluntary, not obligatory."[7] Here, MacAloon seems to make the argument that because spectators have a choice as to which spectacles they choose to consume, there is no obligation. I believe this is the crux of the problem with MacAloon's analysis, as it mistakes the illusion of choice for real choice. MacAloon seems to assert that because people can choose whether or not they will watch the Olympics (or a UFC PPV), they are therefore free to choose whether or not they will participate in the spectacle. I believe it is important to note that, while the spectacle does offer choice, all the choices made available are offered by the spectacle. Therefore, any consumption choices made are made in respect of the spectacle. This ties in with Debord's theses from *The Society of the Spectacle*, which will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

MacAloon makes some noteworthy observations regarding spectacle which will inform the analysis in this dissertation. One is that, "Those who have come simply to watch and to be watched, to enjoy the spectacle or to profit from it, may find themselves suddenly caught up in actions of a different sort at levels of intensity and involvement they could not have foreseeen and from which they would have retreated had such participation been directly required or requested of them."[8] This is an important point to make regarding spectacle, as the spectacle works discreetly, providing an avenue for ideologies and values to be presented under the guise of mere entertainment or sporting events. As will be argued throughout this paper, events like the UFC, or other MMA events, use the sporting contest within the Octagon as a means of presenting particular messages regarding race, masculinity, and consumerism. These messages are

disseminated not only through the spectacle, but through the ways in which the spectacle is constructed and presented to the spectators, including factors such as lighting, music, camera angles, but also includes factors such as the commentary, or narrative of the event. MacAloon makes a similar point when he observes that, "[t]he spectacle produces and consists of images, and the triangular relationship between the spectacle, its contents, and its contextual cultures is 'about' the relationship between image and reality, appearing and being."[9]

Here again, MacAloon's analysis of the spectacle draws us to Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, a point which MacAloon makes clear when he synthesizes the work of Debord with that of Daniel Boorstin, and argues that "[m]oderns are victimized by manufactured imagery, addicted to pseudo-events (Boorstin) and pseudo-enjoyment (Debord), and deprived of standards of reality to guide them through the hall of mirrors that is modern life."[10] This point is valuable because it brings Debord into MacAloon's discussion of the spectacle, and acknowledges both the constructed nature of spectacle, and the emphasis on the image that will be so crucial for any examination of the spectacle.

Debord's work on spectacle is examined and critiqued in Alan Tomlinson's "Theorising Spectacle: Beyond Debord"[11] from the 2002 collection, *Power Games: A Critical Sociology of Sport*. In this article, Tomlinson argues for a deeper discussion and analysis of the concept of spectacle, particularly as it applies to contemporary major sporting events, that goes beyond Debord. Much like MacAloon, Tomlinson's arguments will not provide the crux of the theoretical concepts applied as this paper moves forward, but his discussion of spectacle and contemporary sport is useful to consider.

Additionally, Tomlinson's analysis and critique of Debord provides a valuable resource for moving into a deeper discussion of Debord and his writings on spectacle.

Tomlinson begins by acknowledging the ways in which contemporary sport can be viewed and discussed as spectacle, but also critiquing the ways in which the concept of spectacle is too often used without proper discussion or definition. As Tomlinson writes, in reference to the work of Michael Real, but with a statement that I believe summarizes Tomlinson's attitude toward the use of spectacle in sport research, "[s]pectacle is left floating, a sort of bold-face version of the global event, but also acknowledged as a dynamic."[12] Tomlinson's argument is that works which make reference to spectacle do so in a way that do not acknowledge the limitations of the concept, and instead use the concept as a catch-all term for ideology in action.

Tomlinson also draws upon his previously published work to make a point about the spectacle as a means of diverting the citizenry, as sleight of hand. Tomlinson makes an excellent statement which, when removed from his argument and applied more broadly to the concept of spectacle, is of particular significance when discussing spectacle. As Tomlinson writes, "[i]t was a tragic reminder that behind every spectacle lies another set of narratives, that the spectacle diverts, and that the meaning of the spectacle cannot be read from just the text of the spectacle itself."[13] This statement captures a number of critical aspects of the spectacular, particularly as the concept will be explored in this paper. The association between spectacle and narrative is important to note, particularly when considering broadcast sport, and the role that commentators and producers play in constructing the spectacle. Also of note is the concept of spectacle as diversion, although the example of a human trafficking ring used by Tomlinson is not

particularly effective in demonstrating how spectacle diverts, and from what it diverts attention. Finally, and to reinforce the value of narrative to examining spectacle, Tomlinson's classification of the spectacle as a text, and acknowledgement of the deficiency of the spectacle as a text, demonstrates the importance both of considering broader social context when examining mediasport as spectacle, and of looking beyond the visual when considering how spectacle operates.

Tomlinson also makes use of MacAloon's work, summarizing MacAloon's analysis of the spectacle into four elements:

> First, it must be visual, comprising sensory symbolic codes. Second, it must be large-scale, characterised by size and grandeur. Third, the spectacle institutionalises the bicameral roles of actors/audience, performers/spectators. And, fourth, the spectacle is a dynamic form – movement, action and change are central to it, and such a dynamic excites spectators.[14]

Tomlinson argues that a definition such as MacAloon's is discarded in favour of using the concept of spectacle as "a shorthand for ways of talking about the constructedness of the popular cultural, and, in the case of sport, the transformation of sport from a more engaged form of practice to a modern global commodity."[15] As will be argued in this paper, MacAloon's definition is a valuable component in defining spectacle, but one that needs to work in conjunction with concepts of the commodity form as discussed in Debord's work.

Tomlinson then goes on to synopsize and critique Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, with four primary criticisms. Firstly, Tomlinson argues that "Debord at best trivializes human agency, at worst denies it."[16] However, Tomlinson argues this by pointing to the volunteers who helped in the staging of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. He argues that, "[t]he identity-forming inoffensive patriotism of such human

choices should not be dismissed as the inconsequential delusions of the dupe."[17] While there is something to be said for Tomlinson's belief that the volunteers "were knowing participants aware of their contribution to a collective project,"[18] there still remains a dimension of the illusory nature of the spectacle to this example. Just because the volunteers believe they are participating in something important does nothing to diminish the fact that the perceived greatness of the Olympics is itself a spectacular construction. The very fact that Tomlinson attempts to portray the Olympic Games as a "collective project" that employs "inoffensive patriotism" ignores criticisms of the Olympic Games themselves which are beyond the purview of this paper.

Tomlinson's second criticism of Debord is that "[t]he ways in which the spectacle is staged, constructed and changes under the influence of economic, political and cultural forces, cannot be accommodated in Debord's account."[19] Tomlinson points to the 1936 Nazi Olympics and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics as examples of the spectacle being employed in the service of a particular political agenda. However, the very fact that both of these Olympics can be seen as examples of the spectacle being used to promote a particular ideology would seem to coincide with Debord's arguments regarding commodities and the power of image. While the 1936 and 1984 Olympics were employed in the service of much different ideologies and power structures, the fact remains that both serve as excellent examples of how spectacle can be used to promote a particular dominant ideology.

Tomlinson's third criticism is that, "as a cultural critique *TSS* is sociologically incomplete. It conflates the spectacle into the central dynamic of capitalist social relations, eliding it with the commodity form."[20] Tomlinson also argues that,

"[s]pectacles serve the state as well as the global market."[21] Here, I argue that Tomlinson is being too literal in his definition of the commodity. Rather than seeing the commodity as a physical good which is bought, sold, or traded, it is more useful to consider the commodity form as anything which is bought or sold. This could be a physical good, such as a running shoe or a bag of wheat, but could also be a point of view, a political message, or even an audience member's leisure time. Tomlinson is correct in pointing out how the state can make use of spectacle, but this point can be used in harmony with Debord's theses, rather than in opposition to them.

Tomlinson's final critique of Debord is that "*TSS* puts forward a culturally pessimistic worldview with the only antidote being a specific form of revolutionary practice. It fails to recognize any affirmative dimension of pleasure or fun in consumer culture."[22] Perhaps any pleasure to be found is the result of the illusory nature of the spectacle. Or perhaps it is the task of those who follow Debord and his works to find both the possibility for pleasure, and the possibility for resistance to the power of the spectacle. I will not argue that Debord is not pessimistic. But I will argue that pessimism in the face of a totalizing force such as spectacle is not a valid response.

Tomlinson's critiques of Debord are certainly valuable to consider. This is not to say that Debord's work should be rejected, as Tomlinson seems eager to do, but it is important to note the ways in which Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* can be critiqued. But just as Debord should not be considered without criticism or analysis, neither should Tomlinson. Rather, it is important to take from Tomlinson both the critiques he offers, but also the flaws in his arguments. Using Tomlinson as a starting

point, Debord, as well as the work of other theorists, provides the theoretical foundation to the discussion of spectacle in Mixed Martial Arts that is to follow.

Any discussion of Debord requires the observation that he does not write in a linear manner. Instead, Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* is a collection of theses, built around the titular concept, and further subdivided into chapters which focus on a particular theme. As a result, it is difficult to provide a traditional synopsis of Debord's arguments. Instead, I will attempt to provide an overview of some of Debord's theses, as well as explaining how those theses will prove important to my analysis.

To begin with, it is helpful to note Tomlinson's observation that Debord "conflates the spectacle into the central dynamic of capitalist social relations, eliding it with the commodity form."[23] As mentioned above, this is a valid observation, but not perhaps as scathing as Tomlinson suggests. Debord focuses on the economic and the commodity form throughout *The Society of the Spectacle*. But this does not mean that Debord's theses cannot be extended to other modes of analysis and interpretations. In Thesis 7, Debord writes, "[t]he language of the spectacle is composed of signs of the dominant organization of production."[24] Using the concept of 'signs' as a starting point, it is then possible to connect Debord to the work of Barthes, particularly Barthes' work in *Mythologies*.[25] The connection to be made here is between the thought of signs as both signifier and signified, and the relationship between the two as consisting of what Barthes considered to be a form of myth. It is interesting to note that in *Mythologies*, Barthes uses the different texts he examines to describe a possible reading of the images as a linear text, creating a sense of narrative for the image. This connection will prove significant later in this chapter when I draw connections between the spectacle and

narrative, particularly within the realm of contemporary mediasport. I believe it is important to make this connection early, in order to demonstrate how Debord's theories of the spectacular will inform the theoretical concepts used in this study. The theoretical connection is that the spectacle functions as a narrative form which imposes itself onto the lives of the spectators, while making it seem as if the narrative it describes is one that is universal and accepted.

Debord, like MacAloon and Tomlinson, notes the primacy of the visual to concepts of spectacle. As he writes in Thesis 18, "sight is naturally the most readily adaptable to present-day society's generalized abstraction."[26] Where Debord differs from MacAloon and Tomlinson is that he does not believe that we consciously choose the spectacle, rather that "The spectacle is by definition immune from human activity, inaccessible to any projected review or correction. It is the opposite of dialogue. Wherever representation takes on an independent existence, the spectacle reestablishes its rule."[27] This is important for a few reasons. Firstly, it helps to draw a distinction between the spectacle as defined by MacAloon and Tomlinson, and that discussed by Debord. Perhaps more importantly is that this statement again draws a connection between spectacle and narrative. Just as the spectacle described by Debord is "the opposite of dialogue," so too are the narratives of mediasport. The narratives of mediasport are not a dialogue, but are, rather, a one-way communication model, just as is spectacle.

Another critical facet of Debord's concept of spectacle is that spectacle works in the service of power. In Thesis 24, Debord writes that "[b]y means of the spectacle, the ruling order discourses endlessly upon itself in an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise.

The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power's totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence."[28] He goes on in a similar vein in Thesis 25, writing that "[t]he modern spectacle...depicts what society *can deliver*, but within this depiction what is permitted is rigidly distinguished from what is possible."[29] Here, Debord makes note of the fact that modern spectacle can be differentiated from spectacular exhibitions of power from the past, such as religion, by the fact that religion focused on "what society *could not deliver*,[30] while the modern spectacle offers a representation of what can be achieved, but one that also makes clear there are things that are not allowed within this system. This spectacular system works to ensure the maintenance of its own power, a "hierarchical power evolving on its own, in its separateness, thanks to an increasing productivity based on an ever more refined division of labor, an ever greater comminution of machine-governed gestures, and an ever-widening market.[31] Again, Debord makes reference to the economic system, showing how the spectacle works to maintain and expand the power of that economic system, not just within the workplace and the marketplace, but within all facets of modern life, and particularly within the lives of those who exist within that spectacular system.

Debord further addresses this expanding power in Thesis 27, writing that "what is referred to as 'liberation from work,' that is, increased leisure time, is a liberation neither within labor itself nor from the world labor has brought into being."[32] Here, Debord makes reference to the fact that even time spent away from one's paid labour is still time spent within the larger economic system. Whether that means time spent driving to and from work, or time spent at the gym, or at home with one's family, or on vacation, there are no times when a person is not subject to the spectacle, and is participating within the

larger system of labour. A small part of this is the time one spends watching a UFC PPV. Ostensibly a time of relaxation away from work, that time is nonetheless spent within the larger economic system. A UFC spectator is presented with images (and narratives) created according to the logic of spectacle, and designed with a particular goal or ideology in mind.

This is important because of Debord's Thesis 34, one of the most significant in *The Society of the Spectacle*. As Debord writes "[t]he SPECTACLE is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image."[33] Thesis 34 is crucial to Debord's concept of spectacle, as well to understanding and applying that concept. According to Debord, spectacle is the extension of the alienation of labour as described by Marx. The evolving dominant system (economic) not only separates us from our labour, and the products thereof, but also from other lived experiences. Instead, all we have is the spectacle, which purports to represent the world to us, but really provides a representation of the conditions of the dominant system. As a result, all we do, whether work or leisure, is part of the spectacle of the dominant system. This includes the sports we watch, particularly when we are watching them as part of a larger spectacular event such as a UFC PPV.

With this being the case, it then becomes important to consider the values of the dominant system that are being encoded within these spectacular narratives. This is where Tomlinson's criticism of Debord as being focused on the economic systems plays a role, and also where Tomlinson's criticism falls short. When considering the values of the dominant system to be considered, it is not enough to examine just the economic conditions of domination, as Tomlinson rightly points out. However, this does not mean

that issues such as gender, race, and sexuality cannot also be examined when examining these spectacular narratives, nor that they cannot be connected to economic conditions.

In "Advertising: The Magic System,"[34] Raymond Williams argues that "it is impossible to look at modern advertising without realising that the material object being sold is never enough: this indeed is the crucial cultural quality of its modern forms...it is clear that we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly available."[35] Williams' argument is that modern advertising does not sell a product, but rather sells associations with the values of the dominant system of production. This can be linked to Debord's previously quoted assertion that "SPECTACLE is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image,"[36] in that the images of the spectacle are not neutral, but are instead used to create associations between the image and the values of the dominant system. This could be done, as Williams points out, to sell beer or washing machines, but the same concept can be applied to spectacular mediasport, where the images of the spectacle are used not only to promote commodities, but also to promote the feelings and values that are associated with those particular commodities.

It is also important to note that Williams' assertions are based on many of the same concerns noted by Debord, namely those of a sense of isolation from one's labour, as well as from other people. For both Williams and Debord, this is a result of the dominant system of production, namely modern industrial capitalism. While Williams may focus on the advertising of products and Debord may focus on the larger issue of the

spectacle as an omnipresent condition of society, their concerns and their observations are complementary.

Debord's view of spectacle is much more totalizing than Williams' discussion of advertising. As Debord writes in Thesis 37 "The world the spectacle holds up to view is at once *here* and *elsewhere*; it is the world of the commodity ruling over all lived experiences."[37] He makes a similar assertion in Thesis 42, writing, "commodities are now *all* that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity,"[38] and that "alienated consumption is added to alienated production as an inescapable duty of the masses."[39] This reveals not only the totalizing scope of the spectacle for Debord, but also the effect that this totality has on the people who live within the society of the spectacle. Not only are workers alienated from their labour, as described by Marx, but they are also alienated from their consumption, in the sense that all that they consume is done through the consumption of commodity images, or spectacular narratives, rather than the consumption of real, lived experiences. Here again, the connections to Williams' work are evident, although on a grander scale than that discussed by Williams.

The reason this connection between Williams and Debord is so important is that the ways in which the various commodities presented within a spectacular mediasport event such as a UFC PPV are linked to other facets of the event which are not, on the surface, primarily concerned with commoditization in the narrow sense. If we consider these events more broadly, limiting neither the definition of commodity to that seemingly preferred by Tomlinson, and not limiting the spectacle just to the images on the television screen, then this allows for a much more thorough analysis of the ways in which the

values of the dominant system of production are disseminated and naturalized through these spectacular narratives.

This broader conception of spectacle is discussed by David L. Andrews in "Sport, culture and late capitalism."[40] Andrews' article makes use of the work of Fredric Jameson and Ernest Mandel to explore the place and use of sport within late capitalism. One of Andrews' most important points has to do with what he refers to as "the integrated sport spectacle."[41] Relying heavily on the work of Jameson, and adding elements from Debord, Andrews writes,

> the integrated spectacle that is corporate sport contributes to the covert governance of the consumer market place, through the advancement of an interdependent economy of commodity signs (i.e., licenced apparel and merchandise, videos/DVDs, computer games and even themed restaurants), designed to stimulate positive sensory experiences with the core brands (the league and its franchises) and their constitutive embodied sub-brands (players). Spectacularized sports can thus be considered to be emotive autocracies, since, in addition to generating capital, their ancillary products (the vernacular spectacle) seek to control and direct consumer emotions in a manner that enhances the aura of the sport event (the monumental Spectacle), and thereby further stimulates desires for its myriad commodified forms.[42]

This emphasis on the "interdependent economy of commodity signs"[43] is of particular importance. The spectacular narratives to be examined do not exist solely within the broadcast of the UFC PPV. Rather, what is broadcast on the PPV is merely an extension of a larger spectacular narrative. In the case of the UFC, this includes the UFC magazine, simply titled *UFC*, as well as the reality show *The Ultimate Fighter*, the media coverage the UFC gets in the weeks leading up to a major PPV, as well as the press conferences, conference calls and weigh-ins. While some of these are commodities in and of themselves (one has to purchase *UFC* magazine at the newsstand, and *The Ultimate Fighter* is on Spike TV, a cable television channel), others like the press conferences and

weigh-ins, are free to view, either streaming over the Internet, or, if one is lucky enough, open to the public. What is important to note is that all of these events are part of the larger "integrated sport spectacle" discussed by Andrews. As such, just as the definition of 'commodity' needs to be opened up beyond that of the actual product for purchase, so too does the definition of 'spectacle' need to move beyond examining just the event itself.

Debord himself discusses the concept of the "integrated spectacle" in his 1988 *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. In that book, Debord addresses some of the criticisms of his original text, as well as providing some further insight into the concept of the "society of the spectacle," 25 years after the original's publication. As Debord writes, "[t]he society whose modernisation has reached the stage of the integrated spectacle is characterised by the combined effect of five principal features: incessant technological renewal; integration of state and economy; generalised society; unanswerable lies; an eternal present."[44] For Debord, the "integrated spectacle" is one that combines features of two different modes of spectacle laid out in *Society of the Spectacle*, the "concentrated and diffuse."[45] In his original theses, concentrated spectacle was of the type exhibited in totalitarian regimes, while diffuse was the type to be found in capitalist regimes, "driving wage-earners to apply their freedom of choice to the vast range of commodities now on offer."[46] For Debord, the two modes of spectacle have combined to give rise to the integrated spectacle, which

> integrated itself into reality to the same extent as it was describing it, and that it was reconstructing it as it was describing it. As a result, this reality no longer confronts the integrated spectacle as something alien. When the spectacle was concentrated, the greater part of surrounding society escaped it; when diffuse, a small part; today, no part.[47]

Here, Debord's concept of the 'integrated spectacle' is more broad than Andrews', but the use of the same term to describe the phenomenon works to strengthen the importance of the concept.

Given the extent to which Andrews makes use of the work of Fredric Jameson, it is also important to examine Jameson's work for a better understanding of how spectacle works in modern society. Jameson's *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, examines what he refers to as, "late capitalism, aka multinational capitalism, spectacle or image society, media capitalism, the world system."[48] Right from the beginning, Jameson makes clear the linkages he sees between 'late capitalism' and the spectacular. Jameson's primary concern within *Postmodernism*, is the titular concept, that of postmodernism, and its rise in the time period following WWII. That being said, it is important to note that Jameson is not simply concerned with postmodernism as a cultural form, or artistic movement, but he is rather concerned with examining how these cultural and artistic practices are part of a larger economic system of production. As Jameson writes, it is "essential to grasp postmodernism not as a style, but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features."[49] Jameson focuses much of his examination on the economic aspects of 'late capitalism,' but this allows for a greater understanding of how the spectacle works to reinforce and represent the dominant mode of production.

Just as Debord sees the spectacle as encompassing all aspects of the individual's life, so too does Jameson regard postmodernism within late capitalism to be all-pervasive. When discussing how postmodern culture is represented within cultural texts, Jameson writes, "I want to suggest that our faulty representations of some immense

communicational and computer network are themselves but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the world system of present-day multinational capitalism."[50] He goes on to write of "the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects."[51] Later in the book, Jameson also writes, "we know that we are caught within these more complex global networks, because we palpably suffer the prolongations of corporate space everywhere in our daily lives. Yet we have no way of thinking about them, of modeling them, however abstractly, in our mind's eye."[52] These statements bring to mind Debord's concept of the spectacle as representing the dominant system of production. Here, as with Debord, Jameson sees the cultural products of late capitalism as providing a representation of the larger political and economic systems of power. Where they differ is that Jameson sees these cultural products as being an attempt on the part of the producer to come to terms with, or to grasp the complexities of, those dominant systems, whereas Debord sees them as representations created by the system in order to achieve consensus. Jameson's description allows for a greater sense of agency on the part of the individual, while still acknowledging the possibility, and the likelihood, that any such agency may still be considered to be a part of the larger system.

Jameson's work is also important because of its examination of the role of the mass media within postmodernism. As he writes, "the identity of [the most likely candidate for cultural hegemony today] is certainly no secret: it is clearly video, in its twin manifestations as commercial television and experimental video, or 'video art'."[53] Of greater concern is the concept of commercial television, particularly given the rise of

cable/satellite television broadcasting, and services such as PPV since *Postmodernism* was first published in 1991. This emphasis on video, and the image, is of particular importance given Debord's discussion of the image and of signs. Also of interest are the ways in which Jameson links issues regarding video with issues of narrative. Jameson discusses a shifting hierarchy of signs, writing that "[t]he microscopic atomic or isotopic exchange under study here can therefore be nothing less than the capture of one narrative signal by another: the rewriting of one form of narrativization in terms of a different, momentarily more powerful one, the ceaseless renarrativization of already existent narrative elements by each other."[54] Again, this is similar in concept to Barthes' discussion of second-level signifiers, and processes of resignification. For Barthes, resignification occurs when a sign is used not in its denotative sense to make direct reference to what is signified, but is instead used connotatively to suggest association with that original signifier.[55] By emphasizing narrative, it takes the discussion out of the realm of the image, and into the domain of larger events and broadcasts. By thinking in terms of 'narrative' and 'renarrativization,' we can consider the ways in which texts such as sports broadcasts, using UFC events as an example, are part of this process. This makes it possible to consider the ways in which the images contained within the spectacle are influenced by the narrative elements and vice versa. As a result, the concept of the spectacular narrative gains credence, through our consideration of the two elements as interrelated and co-dependent for their meaning-making and transmission.

Jameson also discusses increased commoditization when he writes,

> leisure is as commodified as work, free time and vacations as organized and planified as the day in the office, the object of whole new industries of mass diversions of various kinds, outfitted with their own distinct high-tech equipment

> and commodities and saddled with thoroughgoing themselves fully organized processes of ideological indoctrination.[56]

This concept of "ideological indoctrination" is particularly telling for what will follow in this paper, as it speaks to the ways in which the 'integrated sport spectacle' offers more than just commodities, but offers representations and images which are ideologically laden. Jameson discusses the role of the market within late capitalism, and offers insight into the connections between the market and the mass media, all of which comes to bear on conceptions of the integrated sport spectacle. As Jameson writes, "[t]he media offers free programs in whose content and assortment the consumer has no choice whatsoever but whose selection is then repackaged 'free choice'."[57] This concept of 'free' programming needs to be reevaluated when considering the rise of cable and satellite television and PPV programming like UFC events, and particularly in Canada where little television programming is available unless one subscribes to a cable or satellite provider. This does not mean that Jameson's point is without merit, as programming choices are made at a corporate, or market, level before anything is carried over the airwaves. If anything, the current broadcasting model is even more insidious, as it requires people to pay for the privilege of watching what is made available to them, rather than providing the programming for free, as described by Jameson.

Jameson is not the only person to attempt to describe or outline perceptions of the postmodern condition. David Harvey's 1990 *The Condition of Postmodernity*,[58] while not taking the same approach as Jameson, also provides some valuable insights which correlate well both with Jameson, and Debord. As Harvey writes, "[t]he image, the appearance, the spectacle can all be experienced with an intensity (joy or terror) made possible only by their appreciation as pure and unrelated presents in time...The

immediacy of events, the sensationalism of the spectacle (political, scientific, military, as well as those of entertainment), become the stuff of which consciousness is formed."[59] Harvey makes the point that spectacle is not confined to the realm of entertainment, but also used in the service of larger institutions and power structures, and that the spectacle works to provide our 'consciousness.' This is important because it affirms the position that spectacle provides definition within postmodernity, or late capitalism. As such, we need to understand how spectacle creates these definitions and of what these definitions consist.

As to the first question, Harvey writes "The collapse of time horizons and the preoccupation with instantaneity have in part arisen through the contemporary emphasis in cultural production on events, spectacles, happenings, and media images. Cultural producers have learned to explore and use new technologies, the media, and ultimately multi-media possibilities."[60] Like Jameson, Harvey acknowledges the pivotal role that the media plays in creating spectaclearguing that "television is itself a product of late capitalism and, as such, has to be seen in the context of the promotion of a culture of consumerism."[61] Harvey not only acknowledges the role of one particular medium, television, within late capitalism, but also points out how that medium needs to be contextualized, emphasizing television's role within "a culture of consumption."[62] This is important not only because of the role that television plays within a society of the spectacle, but also because it provides context for understanding how MMA and the UFC operate within this 'culture of consumption,' allowing an investigation of what is being consumed, and how it is being presented.

Harvey draws on the work of Pierre Bourdieu to discuss the concept of "symbolic capital,"[63] defined as "the collection of luxury goods attesting the taste and distinction of the owner."[64] This concept is noteworthy because Harvey discusses the transitory nature of symbolic capital,' writing, "Symbolic capital remains capital only to the degree that the whims of fashion sustain it."[65] This concept of symbolic capital is important because it is relatable to the earlier discussion of Raymond Williams, and Debord's Thesis 34, that "[t]he SPECTACLE is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image."[66] And just as Williams and Debord can be synthesized to demonstrate how these images work by being associated with values, rather than material, or 'use value,' symbolic capital can be viewed in the same way. So instead of considering 'symbolic capital' as a luxury good, it is more valuable to consider it as something that is symbolically valuable to a particular group, demonstrating not only an affinity or allegiance to that particular group, but also possession of the financial capital necessary to obtain the symbolic capital. In this way, symbolic capital becomes not the domain solely of the wealthy, but rather of any group with its own particular definitions of what is valuable.

This notion is important because, as Harvey suggests, "the production of symbolic capital serves ideological functions because the mechanisms through which it contributes 'to the reproduction of the established order and the perpetuation of domination remain hidden.'"[67] Again, as with Debord and Jameson, Harvey acknowledges not only the fact that systems of representation work to reproduce naturalized power structures, but also that this is done covertly. Harvey returns to this theme throughout *The Condition of Postmodernity*, writing that "[p]roducers consequently have a permanent interest in cultivating 'excess and intemperance' in others, in feeding 'imaginary appetites' to the

point where ideas of what constitutes social need are replaced by 'fantasy, caprice, and whim."[68] This, again, hearkens back to the work of Williams, and on the ways in which advertising works not by selling the material good, but by selling the associations with positive images and values.

Linked to this concept of 'symbolic capital' and the ways in which the market is perpetuated through the creation of "fantasy, caprice, and whim"[69] is Harvey's discussion of the rise of flexible accumulation within postmodernism. By 'flexible accumulation,' Harvey refers to the shift within the capitalist mode of production "characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation."[70] This rapidly changing, and much less stable system differs from a system built on the mass production of a select number of goods, and is more concerned with the fragmentation of the consumer base into categorizable and organizable market groups, and appealing to each group with specific products, sold and marketed through the use of specific campaigns and appeals. As Harvey writes, "the need to accelerate turnover time in consumption has led to a shift of emphasis from production of goods (most of which, like knives and forks, have a substantial lifetime) to the production of events (such as spectacles that have an almost instantaneous turnover time)."[71]

Within the realm of mediasport, and the UFC and MMA in particular, this sort of approach is easy to see in action. A UFC PPV is built up over a period of time, advertised and marketed through the various elements of the integrated sport spectacle, purchased by the consumer, and then is over. The viewer may purchase the DVD for the

event a few months later but, by then, the promoters will have already moved on to the next event. During one UFC PPV, they will begin the promotion of the next event, or next few events, constantly keeping the attention of the viewer focused on the next event. Additionally, during the event, the various sponsors of the UFC, and the fighters, will promote their products, working to ensure that the same sense of identity created by the viewer's decision to purchase the PPV becomes positively associated with the products and services being touted.

While this emphasis on fragmentation and alienation may give the impression that the spectacle loses efficacy because of the reiteration of values and ideologies being promoted and sold to these fragmented audiences, Harvey observes that, "as Simmel long ago suggested, it is also at such times of fragmentation and economic insecurity that the desire for stable values leads to a heightened emphasis upon the authority of basic institutions – the family, religion, the state."[72] As a result, while identities may be fractured and consumers may be fragmented into more specific demographic groupings, the ideologies used to provide their sense of identity are still rooted in 'tradition' and hegemonic values. Or, to refer back to Barthes, these identities are formed using mythologies. As Harvey writes, "mythology is presented in mild enough forms (the evocation of tradition, of collective memory, of locality and place, of cultural identity) to make of it a more subtle affair than the raucous claims of Nazism."[73] The creation of identity through spectacle, and the attendant reinforcement of the dominant system of production, works through the use of this sense of mythology. This is why events such as the UFC, MMA events, and mediasport more broadly, are powerful tools within contemporary spectacle. They present an event, which contains its own appeal, such as

drama, action, excitement, and become ideologically laden with other mythological, or ideological, values and traditions.

This is why the concept of 'spectacular narratives' is integral to the broader study of sport as spectacle. The images associated with the event are only part of the equation, as it were. Instead, the image needs to be considered as part of a larger text, which includes the stories that are told through these events. These stories are told by the participants in the Octagon (in the case of the UFC), but also by the commentators and broadcasters, by the camerapersons and producers, and by the reporters and sports journalists covering the events.

In regards to the work of the commentators and announcers in the broadcast booth, the work of Comisky, Bryant, and Zillmann provides some insight into this field. Two articles by these three, "Commentary as a Substitute for Action"[74] and "Drama in Sports Commentary,"[75] demonstrate the importance of commentators and announcers to mediasport broadcasts. In the first article, they discuss a study done to determine how television viewers gauged the level of violence in a hockey game, depending on how the game was described by the commentators. The study determined that viewers were influenced by the description of the game provided by the commentators, seeing rough play where others who did not hear the commentary did not. As Comisky et al. write, "The viewers seem to get 'caught up' in the way the sportscaster interprets the game, and they allow themselves to be greatly influenced by the commentator's suggestion of 'drama' in the event. The viewers, in the end, may 'see' fierce competition where it really does not exist."[76] In this study, the power of the commentator to influence the viewer was examined, and although the study may only have attempted to examine perceptions

of violence, it justifies the inclusion of commentary into any examination of how mediasport spectacles work to create associations between the sport being broadcast, and particular ideologies and values. While the commentators may not explicitly endorse a particular ideology or value (which is not to say that they do not, just that they *may* not), the descriptions and analysis offered by these commentators tend to promote a particular set of values which works to reinforce the values being promoted in the broadcast.

This is done in part by the creation of drama in the broadcast, the subject of analysis of Comisky et al.'s second article, "Drama in Sports Commentary,"[77] a quantitative content analysis which examines the commentary portion of different football broadcasts to determine the amount of time spent describing the sports action, and the amount of time spent providing "dramatic embellishments"[78] for the game. As Comisky et al write, "it may be that dramatic embellishments from professional television commentators may more than substitute for the "human drama of athletic competition" that the television spectator misses by not being in the sports arena. Indeed, initial investigations suggest that dramatic commentary can have a substantial effect on the perception and appreciation of a broadcast game."[79] Of particular note from the article are the categories used to define "dramatic motifs" into which the commentary was categorized. The fifteen different motifs were: "competition, glory, gamesmanship, human interest, physical competence, history, performance competence, personnel, spirit, pity, old-college-try, comparison, urgency, miracle, and external forces."[80] What is interesting about these categories, are the ways in which they can also be seen as concepts valued within discussions of masculinity, race, and nationalism. In this way, these 'dramatic embellishments' also serve to help reinforce and naturalize these motifs

as not only being a natural part of sport, but the values and ideologies being promoted and commodified within those sports. Here again, as with the discussion of the role of commentary, is justification for the combination of both the visual and the narrative elements of mediasport broadcasts to examine what I refer to as 'spectacular narratives.'

With this theoretical concept of spectacular narratives in hand, the remainder of this dissertationexplores the issue using Mixed Martial Arts, the Ultimate Fighting Championship in particular, with the Pay-Per-View event UFC 114 as a focal point for analysis and discussion. Providing a framework for the rest of this paper is a 1988 paper by Richard Gruneau, David Whitson and Hart Cantelon. Published in *Society and Leisure*, "Methods and Media: Studying the Sports/Television Discourse"[81] provides a framework for examining broadcast mediasport as a text, and attempting to make sense not just of the broadcast event, but of the ways in which that event is produced in the service of a particular set of meanings, and of the ways in which those meanings are encoded, disseminated, and decoded, as part of a larger production process.

Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon make the distinction from the quantitative approach analyses such as those offered by Comisky et al, and instead argue in favour of "a semiologically-based 'literary-linguistic' approach to the analysis of dominant forms and preferred meanings."[82] This is not to say that they dismiss the value of quantitative analyses, merely that they felt that quantitative analysis suffered from an "inability to deal with the connotative aspects of visual signs, or the meaning of predominant discursive forms in the text."[83] As a result, Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon describe a process in which the numerous visual and narrative features of a broadcast sportsmedia

event are considered holistically, rather than attempting to quantify what is presented and chart results from there.

Gruneau, Whitson, and Cantelon argue for an analytical approach which takes into account "the compositional elements, representational techniques and codes evident in sports programming,"[84] not simply as a way to move away from quantitative-based analyses, but because of the insights this approach can offer.

The goal of this dissertation is to examine the spectacular narratives of Mixed Martial Arts, to gain an understanding of the messages which are being encoded within those mediasport events. And while this study will not be able to address the issue of how events like UFC 114 are decoded, it will hopefully offer some insight into what is offered to mediasport consumers.

1 John J. MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies", in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, ed. John J. MacAloon,(Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues , 1984), 241-280.
2 Alan Tomlinson, "Theorising Spectacle: Beyond DeBord," in *Power Games: A Critical Sociology of Sport,"* eds. John Sudgen & Alan Tomlinson, (New York, Routledge, 2002), 44-61.
3 MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies", 244
4 Ibid., 244.
5 Ibid., 244.
6 Ibid., 246.
7 Ibid., 266.
8 Ibid., 268.
9 Ibid., 270.
10 Ibid., 272.
11 Tomlinson, "Theorising Spectacle: Beyond Debord."
12 Ibid., 47.
13 Ibid., 50.
14 Ibid., 51.
15 Ibid., 51-52.
16 Ibid., 55.
17 Ibid., 55.
18 Ibid., 55.
19 Ibid., 55.
20 Ibid., 56.
21 Ibid., 57.
22 Ibid., 56.
23 Ibid., 20.
24 Guy DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (1994), (New York, Zone Books, 2002),13.
25 Barthes, *Mythologies.*
26 DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 17.
27 Ibid., 17.
28 Ibid., 19.
29 Ibid., 20.
30 Ibid., 20.
31 Ibid., 20-21.
32 Ibid., 21-22.
33 Ibid., 24.
34 Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System." *Advertising & Society Review,* 1: 1 (2000).
35 Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System." 335.
36 DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 24.
37 Ibid., 26.
38 Ibid., 29.
39 Ibid., 29.
40 David L. Andrews, "Sport, culture and late capitalism," in *Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport*, 213-231.
41 Andrews, "Sport, culture and late capitalism," 223.
42 Ibid., 227.
43 Idib., 227.
44 Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (1990). (New York, Verso, 1990), 11-12.
45 Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* , 9.
46 Ibid., 8.

47 Ibid., 9.
48 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2003), xviii.
49 Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* , 4.
50 Ibid., 37.
51 Ibid., 44.
52 ibid., 127.
53 Ibid., 69.
54 Ibid., 88.
55 As an example, the City of London Ontario uses a tree as its symbol. This is due to the city's identification as 'The Forest City.' By using an image of a tree, the city is creating a connotation for its status as a city with a large number of trees. The image of a tree *denotes* the leafy, bark covered fauna that grows in forests, but the image of a tree in the city's logo *connotes* that city's respect for those same plants.
56 Ibid., 147.
57 Ibid., 275.
58 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing,1990).
59 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 54.
60 Ibid., 59.
61 Ibid., 61.
62 Ibid., 61.
63 Ibid., 77.
64 Ibid., 77.
65 Ibid., 82.
66 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 24.
67 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 19.
68 Ibid., 102.
69 ibid., 102.
70 Ibid., 147.
71 Ibid., 157.
72 Ibid., 171.
73 Ibid., 217.
74 Paul Comisky, Jennings Bryant, & Dolf Zillmann, "Commentary as substitute for action." in *Journal of Communication*, 27 (1997), 150–153.
75 Paul Comisky, Jennings Bryant, & Dolf Zillmann, "Drama in sports commentary." in *Journal of Communication*, 27 (1977), 140-149.
76 Comisky et al., "Commentary as a substitute for action," 153.
77 Comisky et al., "Drama in sports commentary".
78 Ibid., 140.
79 Ibid., 140-141.
80 Ibid., 143-144.
81 Richard Gruneau, David Whitson & Hart Cantelon, "Methods and Media: Studying the Sports/Television Discourse," *Society & Leisure*, 11: 2 (1988), 265-281.
82 Gruneau, Whitson & Cantelon, "Methods and Media", 270.
83 Ibid., 271.
84 Ibid., 273.

Chapter 3: *Optimus Bellum Domitor*, The UFC and the Roman Gladiator

Every Ultimate Fighting Championship Pay-Per-View broadcast has the same opening. A gladiator in an ancient locker room, the entrance to which features the UFC logo, dons shining armour ritualistically. Simultaneously, choral music plays in the background.[1] The gladiatorial imagery is interspersed with clips of that evening's fighters, talking about their upcoming bout. As the gladiator continues the ritual of donning his armour, sheathing his weapon, and running the sand of the arena through his finger, the 'modern-day gladiators' offer their opinion on their imminent fight, and why they will emerge victorious this evening. The gladiator, his ritual now complete, walks toward an open doorway ablaze with pure white light, presumably to enter the arena and compete. As he steps into the light, the choral music replaced with a hard rock guitar riff,[2] and a highlight reel of fight footage featuring that evening's fighters strings together hard hits, slams and submissions.This opening sequence draws a connection between the UFC, its fighters, and the gladiators of the Roman empire.

This chapter serves two purposes, one of whichis to examine why Dana White and the UFC make use of this gladiatorial imagery at the beginning of their broadcasts. The second is to examine the concept of the spectacle as it functioned in the time of the gladiators. If, as the UFC's opening suggests, there is a connection between the Roman gladiators and UFC Mixed Martial Artists, then it is necessary to examine this connection, to consider the historic role of the gladiator within Roman society, and more importantly, the role of spectacle within Roman society. More specifically, it is important to consider the myths of ancient Rome, and how Dana White has chosen to create that connection to the modern UFC spectacle. The men who compete in the UFC

Octagon are presented in this particular to associate the UFC with a particular brand of masculinity, and to encourage advertisers and sponsors to use that association to appeal to consumers. Part of the influence and appeal of this presentation of violent masculinity draws upon an association with Roman gladiators and an invocation of Roman spectacle. What is presented is an image of Roman gladiators that is decontextualized and mythologized.

It is the decontexualization and creation of myth surrounding the Roman gladiators that forms the basis for this chapter. The purpose of this chapter is not to compare Roman gladiators to UFC fighters, historically, nor to seek to expose the 'truths' hidden by the illusion and image of the spectacle. Instead, this chapter examines how spectacle makes use of history to construct its representations. In this way, history becomes not only decontexualized, but is stripped of its power, neutered to create another image in the service of spectacle. This chapter explores how history can be transformed into representation, and then employed as a spectacular narrative.

Superficially, the UFC PPV opening sequence draws a connection between the modern conception of the Roman gladiator and the current crop of UFC fighters. I use the phrase 'modern-day gladiators' intentionally, as it emerges quite often in contemporary sporting discussions, not just in relation to the UFC or Mixed Martial Arts in general, but also in relation to other sports such as hockey, American football, and boxing. The common link between these sports is violence, but a controlled violence within the confines of organized sport, surrounded by spectators, rather than random acts of violence in the streets, or even the violence of warfare, conducted on the battlefield. The violence of sports is a spectacular violence, exhibited for the entertainment of others.

Thie emphasis on gladiatorial imagery is predicated on the image of the gladiator as cultivated within popular culture. Films such as Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus*, based on the slave gladiator who rebelled and led a group of fellow rebel slaves against the Romans, Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*, and the recent Starz television series *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* and *Spartacus: Ghosts of the Arena* glorify the gladiator, presenting him (and gladiators were primarily men) as an object of worship and adulation for the crowds who thronged to the arenas to consume their spectacular violence. Additionally, television shows such as *American Gladiators*, originally airing in the 1990s, then making a comeback in 2009, continue to add to the mystique of the gladiator, and the desire to associate the Roman gladiators with the modern athlete. Today, there is even a Mixed Martial Arts organization called "Gladiator Challenge" operating in the United States. These connections between modern sports such as Mixed Martial Arts and the representations of gladiators of Ancient Rome are commonplace within modern sporting culture, and are designed to not only provide a clever name, but also to link the sport, and its participants, to what are perceived as the glories of an ancient civilization, renowned for its achievements, its decadence, and its power.

This is about creating a larger narrative about combat sports as an honourable pursuit, with the combatants motivated not by money, but by honour. Focusing the attention on honour, rather than on the base desire for material gain, not only disguises the nature of the spectacle, it reinforces honour-bound violence as a significant component of masculinity. Creating and presenting a mythical image of the Roman gladiator as a man who fought for honour and the glory of Rome, rather than as men who fought for food shelter and their lives, creates a status for the Roman gladiator as signifier

for an ideal beyond the level of the commodity. Connecting the UFC to this imagepresents UFC fighters as men who fight, not for money, but for an ideal. In this way, the UFC is able to present itself as an organization that organizes fights not as a means of making money, but because such fights are necessary, if not inevitable. Within the metaphor of UFC fighter as modern-day gladiator, Dana White has crowned himself the Emperor, presenting the fights to entertain the masses, and give them what they desire. In this narrative, White portrayed as having an altruistic desire to ensure that the spectators are given what they desire to see.

The UFC spectacle relies on both the belief in the Roman gladiator as hero, and on creating a connection between that image and UFC fighters. Actually, much can, and does, go awry in the creation of these connections. Not the least of these is the issue of the consequences of the violence being spectacularized. While most scholars agree that Roman gladiatorial contests were not always, or even frequently, 'death matches' where one competitor was guaranteed to die as the result of his wounds and injuries, the possibility of death was always present. Additionally, as they evolved, the Roman gladiatorial contests, or *munera*, were often part of a larger spectacular show that featured venatio, or beast games, and the executions of slaves and criminals. While scholars in the field of Classics argue that we cannot judge the Romans by contemporary moral standards, this does not mean that the actions and associations of the Roman *munera* should be ignored. Any attempts to connect a contemporary sport such as football or Mixed Martial Arts to the Roman gladiatorial arena should not ignore the significant role that death played within the arena. While injury and pain are not beyond the realm of

possibility within modern mediasport, death is typically not considered to be a consequence of sport today.[3]

The other, larger issue that needs to be addressed when it comes to the glorification and idolization of the Roman gladiator within modern sport is the perception that Roman gladiators were the object of admiration and glory within Roman society. While this perception helps to explain the desire to create a connection between MMA and the UFC and Roman *munera*,[4] it creates a false history of the status of gladiators within Roman society. Two articles from *Sports Illustrated*, published almost fifty years apart, help to demonstrate the image that has been constructed for Roman gladiators in contemporary society.

The first, entitled "Rome's Games of Death"[5] was first published in 1955, and is now available via the *SI Vault*, a repository for older issues of *Sports Illustrated*. Written by Morton M. Hunt, the article offers an historical account of the life of a Roman gladiator. While the article acknowledges the fact that most gladiators were slaves or prisoners of war, it presents an image of a gladiator as an admired figure. As Hunt writes, "[d]espite their lowly estate as prisoners, gladiators were great public heroes."[6] Hunt creates the impression that, while the life of a gladiator was hard, and the possibility of death was omnipresent, their skill in the arena earned them the love and admiration of their Roman peers.

This perspective is also found in the second article, "Sudden Death," by Franz Lidz, published in 2001 in *Sports Illustrated*. The tag line for the article makes the author's approach more explicit: "[g]ladiators were sport's first superstars, providing thrills, chills and occasional kills."[7] Like Hunt, Lidz acknowledges the lack of choice

that often accompanied the beginning of a gladiator's career, noting that "[m]ost of the schools were run by "stable masters" who either bought and maintained gladiators for rent, or trained them for other owners."[8] Here, Lidz acknowledges the fact that people who were gladiators were slaves, the property of Roman citizens. This distinction is important, as it helps to position gladiators within the Roman social hierarchy, but it still does not completely address the social status of Roman gladiators.

These two articles are important when considering how Roman gladiators are viewed today, particularly within sport culture. Both Lidz and Hunt, writing nearly fifty years apart, create the image of the gladiator as a precursor to the modern sports hero, glorified by the spectators, held up as an icon of Roman glory. While both authors point out the fact that gladiators were slaves or prisoners of war, they disguise that fact with talk of glory and heroics. As a result, these two articles are excellent examples of the type of image with which Dana White and the UFC would wish to associate themselves. These articles, and the UFC's association with this image of history take history, rob it of its significance, and create a new image, free from the context within which that history existed. Of history, Debord writes, "[a]s for the *subject* of history, it can only be the self-production of the living: the living become master and possessor of its world – that is, of history – and coming to exist as *consciousness of its own activity*."[9] This is also the case with the use of gladiator imagery in the UFC. The history of the gladiators has become a fiction, constructed in popular culture, and endorsed by the UFC, where Roman gladiators are presented as heroes, idolized by the people of Rome, and fighting for honour and glory. Through the construction of this image, and its association with the UFC, the men who compete in the Octagon, the modern-day gladiators, are presented as

being heirs to this glorious tradition. What this association does then, is ignore the realities of the Roman gladiators and, perhaps more importantly, disguise how these gladiators were not only slaves, but images, used by the spectacle, in much the same way as Dana White makes use of UFC fighters today.

Roman gladiators were stigmatized with the concept of *infamia*,[10] a legal term that was not only assigned to gladiators, but also to prostitutes and actors. *Infamia* went beyond simply the stigma of being a slave, a status which meant that the person was not only not a citizen, but was also just another piece of property, to be dealt with as the owner/master saw fit. *Infamia* had greater meaning than just referring to a slave. As discussed by Thomas Wiedemann in *Emperors and Gladiators*, "literary texts associate the Latin word for the gladiator's trainer (*lanista*) with that for a pimp (*leno*). Like pimps and prostitutes, public performers such as actors and gladiators sold their bodies for the delectation of others, if only visually."[11] Wiedemann also discusses how, as a result of the stigma and shame of *infamia*, " to call someone either a *lanista* or a gladiator is a standard term of abuse in classical invective."[12]

In *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, Roger Dunkle also discusses the concept of *infamia*, and how it applied to the status of the Roman gladiator. As Dunkle writes, "[t]he prevailing feeling among Romans was that gladiators, given their background of slavery, crime, or opposition to the Roman state as enemy soldiers, deserved whatever fate they suffered. This was also the Roman attitude towards freemen who volunteered their services as gladiators, willingly accepting a condition equal to slavery in what was considered a disgraced profession."[13] As a result, the position of the Roman gladiator within Roman society is not a simple one to examine. It involves not

only the Roman view of slaves as "disposable people,"[14] but also the position of those who willingly enter the arena to fight. While the two social conditions are clearly closely related, they are also independent conditions which intersect at the nexus point of the gladiator. As such, the Roman gladiator needs to be understood as a social figure of complex positioning within Roman society. This concept of the gladiator, as an insult, and a low person who sells his body for entertainment is markedly different from that portrayed in the two *Sports Illustrated* articles, and is certainly not the type of association that the UFC had in mind when crafting their gladiator themed opening sequence.

There is a paradox involving *infamia* and the gladiators. As Wiedemann points out,

> the contrast between the fame of individual gladiators and the *infamia* with which gladiators as a group were stigmatised is striking. Infamia as a concept in Roman law was not so much an impediment imposed by the law, as a recognition by judicial officials (and increasingly by legislators and jurists) of the fact that certain individuals were not thought trustworthy by society at large.[15]

This distinction, and the paradox that emerges is important to keep in mind when considering the concepts of gladiators, *infamia*, and celebrity. The *Sports Illustrated* articles discussed above can be said to be somewhat accurate, in that gladiators did achieve a certain degree of fame for their exploits in the arena. But it would be inaccurate to draw a parallel between the level of fame achieved by these gladiators and their status as heroes within Roman society. This concept of *infamia* is important to keep in mind when considering the perception of the Roman gladiator, both in today's society, and during the time of Rome itself. Then, it was important because of its presence within social conventions. Today, it is important because the concept receives no such attention. Instead, gladiators are framed within popular culture as heroic figures. The notion of

infamia is ignored in the representations of gladiators in popular culture, which allows for the creation of the myth of the gladiator as an idolized hero.

The disconnect between the notions of the Roman gladiator as hero or *infamia* raises important issues surrounding history and spectacle. Jameson writes of "nostalgia" films, within which particular versions of the past are constructed: "the nostalgia film was never a matter of some old-fashioned 'representation' of historical content, but instead approached the 'past' through stylistic connotation."[16] The creation of the myth of the gladiator as an ancient hero operates in much the same manner. History becomes deprived and drained of its original meaning, and simply becomes a referent within a larger system of popular representation. The actual historical context is not only lost, but is unimportant. What is more important is the image of history that is being represented. As Jameson writes, "the past as 'referent' finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts."[17] The history of the Roman gladiator has become just another text, deprived of its historic context and just another image within the spectacle of contemporary society. For Jameson, this is a condition of late capitalism: "a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach."[18]

This is what the use of the image of the Roman gladiator is in the UFC's opening sequence., It is a representation of history that separates people from the real history of the arena, and instead offers a simulacrum of that history. The Roman gladiator from history is now, in a way, freed from the *infamia* that made him a social pariah during the reality of his existence, and is nowinvoked as an image in the service of a new purpose,

that of the UFC's creation of a linkage between their own particular brand of MMA combat sports, and the constructed images of the *munera* as ancient combat sport. As a result, the UFC is able to position its fighters, as being part of a similar brand of honourable fighter. The issue of money, and of the fighter as commodity, is disguised, in favour of an image of the fighter as a man competing because of an essential quality. Just as the image of the Roman gladiator is deprived of its historical context as *infamia*, so too are the 'modern-day gladiators' of the UFC stripped of their context. UFC fighters are presented as men who fight because of an instinctual desire to fight, not because of money. As Debord writes, "The world the spectacle holds up to view is at once *here* and *elsewhere*; it is the world of the commodity ruling over all lived experience."[19] And the world the spectacle is holding up through the UFC is one in which the true nature of the fighters is masked by an illusion of honour and glory, as represented by the gladiators of Ancient Rome.

That being said, the UFC's use of the image of the Roman gladiator can be read as an appropriate one, though likely not for the reasons intended by the UFC. Instead, both the gladiatorial contests, and the UFC are excellent examples of spectacle and power in action, a concept that will be explored below.

In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord writes that "[t]he individual who in the service of the spectacle is placed in stardom's spotlight is in fact the opposite of an individual ... In entering the spectacle as a model to be identified with, he renounces all autonomy in order himself to identify with the general law of obedience to the course of things."[20] While Debord is writing of the celebrities of his time, this description also works quite suitably to describe the Roman gladiators. When Debord writes that

"[m]edia stars are spectacular representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the spectacle's banality into images of possible roles,"[21] he could be writing of the gladiators themselves. One of the first levels on which this comparison works is that the gladiators were, typically, slaves or prisoners of war. While scholars agree that there were cases when citizens and free men would choose to become gladiators themselves, [22] those who chose to do so were legally and socially reduced to the level of the men alongside whom they trained. Wiedemann writes that, "[w]hat was curious about the gladiatorial ludi was that the social status of every trainee was assimilated to the absolute dependence of a slave. A free man who became a gladiator formally abjured any rights he had as a citizen."[23] Similarly, Dunkle writes in *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, that

> All gladiators by virtue of their profession were the property of their *lanista* (owner/trainer of a gladiator troupe) and thus in effect his slaves. Even a free man who voluntarily agreed to serve as a gladiator became a temporary slave of the *lanista* for an agreed period. According to Roman civil law, 'slaves are considered to be nothings' with absolutely no rights. A slave was legally the property of the master and could be sold by the master, even if it meant that the slave was separated from his or her family.[24]

Because the Roman gladiators were only slaves, whether by birth or by contract with a *lanista*, they were not seen as real people. Instead, they were property, to be used as seen fit by their masters. As Dunkle writes "As far as the Romans were concerned, slaves were not capable of moral behaviour, except under compulsion. Slaves were not part of the Roman community; they were disposable people."[25] Because of this, and within Debord's conception of the society of the spectacle, slaves are the perfect tool for the exhibition of social values and ideologies. They are blank slates, empty signifiers, non-entities upon whom particular ideologies and expressions of power can be projected.

Then those projections can be exhibited in front of the masses, with particular political and social goals in mind. Because the people being used for those displays are not considered people in a legal or even moral sense, there is no regret or concern for their fate or well-being. Instead, they are avatars in the flesh, made to perform and enact ideologies, as part of a spectacular narrative of Empire.

Scholars disagree on what particular ideologies were being enacted and spectacularized in the arena. According to Wiedemann, the *munera*, due in large part to their origins as funereal exhibitions, represented a way of looking at death. At the most obvious level, because the *munera* were originally hosted as part of a larger funereal memorial, the gladiatorial contests were "a spectacular way of attracting the attention of the Roman public to the importance of the deceased man and his family."[26] Much like the buying of naming rights for a university building, or organizing a corporate sponsored benefit event, the *munera* were, for the wealthy, an opportunity to use their wealth in a manner that had the appearance of charity, while at the same time acting as promotional opportunities. As Wiedemann writes, "the amphitheatre both gave emperors (and other *editores*) an opportunity to display their munificence, and gave the audience an opportunity to evaluate that munificence in terms of praise or blame."[27] The munera were an opportunity for the Roman elite to win the favour of the masses, while at the same time providing a spectacular event designed to ensure the maintenance of the political system which allowed the elite to attain their social and political status.

This can be contrasted with the issues of sponsorship and advertising that will be discussed in later chapters. Whereas for the Roman *munera*, the sponsors were emperors and *editores*, people of wealth who wished to display their wealth in a way that allowed

them to win the favour of the masses, modern mediasport sees corporations and advertisers using the same techniques. By advertising during a UFC event, the sponsors are able to associate themselves with the product, and with the particular values associated, through spectacular representation, with that product.

Ideologies of the Arena: Death

For Wiedemann, the concept that formed the *munera's* significance was death. As he writes, "Each pair of gladiators brought the Roman audience face-to-face with death; through their skill in fighting, they might escape that death, just as the deceased in whose honour the *munus* was being given would overcome death because, while alive, he had demonstrated the qualities which for Romans constituted *virtus*."[28] For Wiedemann, the importance of the *munera* lay in their demonstration of the power of death within Roman society. As Wiedemann points out, Rome was a militaristic society, one in which the possibility of death was always a possibility for those who sought to bring the world under Rome's dominion. As a result, it was important to demonstrate to the citizens of Rome, that death, while always possible, and most assuredly necessary, was never inevitable. Instead, death could be conquered, as demonstrated by the gladiators who could defeat death in the arena both through victory, and in defeat, through the actions of the *editore*, who, after taking into consideration the will of the crowd, would determine whether the fallen gladiator would live or die.

Two important points of consideration emerge from Wiedemann's discussion of the centrality of death to the spectacular power of the *munera*. The first deals with the possibility of the fallen, or losing, gladiator, to be granted mercy, or life, by the editor of the games. The second has to do with the concept of *virtus*, and its role within the arena.

As to the first point, that of the losing gladiator being granted mercy at the end of a battle, there are a number of factors to consider. The first is that the losing gladiator was required to ask for *missio,* an act of submission, acknowledging that they had lost the battle, and were asking to be granted their life. As described by Dunkle,

> If [a gladiator] had not been able to continue after initially being seriously wounded by his opponent, he would have had two choices: to fight on in his weakened condition until he was killed by his opponent (or by some miracle won the match), or to ask the *editor* for release (missio), which, if granted, would have allowed him to walk (or be helped) out of the arena....If he chose [to request *missio*], he would have given a clear signal to the *summarudis* and to the editor by lifting his left arm and raising the index finger of his left hand.[29]

The act of requesting *missio*, required the gladiator to publicly acknowledge his own defeat, and put his life in the hands of the crowd and the *editor*.

This issue of *missio* can also be seen at work in contemporary MMA. While a UFC competitor does not need to request *missio* in order for a match to end, a fighter can submit, either via verbal submission, or via 'tapout,' tapping one's hand on the mat or one's opponent to signify submission. What is interesting are the attitudes towards submission, particularly when considered in conjunction with the issues of masculinity that will be explored in subsequent chapters. Both acts require a public display of submission, but this display could, in the case of the *munera*, save a gladiator's life, and can, in the case of MMA, save a fighter's career. Yet, even today, there are those who view submission as a display of weakness, rather than a logical act of self-preservation.

Once a gladiator had requested *missio*, the question became whether this would be granted by the *editor*. For Wiedemann, the decision whether to grant *missio*, was decided by the audience, who told the *editor* whether they felt the losing gladiator had proven himself worthy of the gift of continued life. Dunkle points out that the opinion of the

audience was only part of the equation. According to Dunkle, "[t]he *editor* had the final word on the matter of life or death of a gladiator, no matter how vociferous the crowd was in support of or against, a gladiator."[30] This is not to say that the opinion of the audience had no bearing on the decision, as an *editor* who ignored the opinion of the audience risked earning their ire. As a result, while the audience did not directly control the decision of the *editor*, the political importance of the audience's opinion would play a role in the *editor's* decision.

However, there were other factors that could influence the *editor's* decision. One of the most important was the economic context. Just as the *editor* had to pay a *lanista* for the services of the gladiators, so too would he have to pay for a gladiator's life. Because the gladiators represented a significant investment for a *lanista*, not just in the cost of buying them, but also paying for their training, their food, and their equipment, any *lanista* would be upset at the loss of a valuable piece of property.[31] As a result, an *editor* who refused *missio*, and called for the death of a gladiator would be required to pay an extra fee to the lanista, a fee that Dunkle places at "fifty times the rental price of the gladiator."[32] In this way, the decision of whether or not to grant *missio*, became a political-economic one for the *editor*. Under ideal circumstances, an audience would be so impressed by the performance of both gladiators that they demanded they both be permitted to survive, allowing the *editor* to satisfy the audience, while at the same time saving themselves the expense of reimbursing the *lanista*. When they cried for death it then fell to the *editor* to decide whether the political benefits of acceding to the desires of the crowd outweighed the financial imposition of reimbursing the *lanista* for their lost investment and property.

Ideologies of the Arena: Virtus

Linked to this question over whether or not to grant *missio* to a fallen gladiator is the issue of *virtus*. As Wiedemann writes, "[a] gladiator who demonstrated sufficient *virtus* as he fought in the arena – even if he was defeated by his opponent – might impress the assembled onlookers enough for them to give him his life back, by demanding that the giver of the games grant him *missio*."[33] Dunkle also notes the importance of *virtus* within the arena, writing that "Stoicism, a philosophy followed by Seneca, promoted the doctrine that *virtus* was more important than life itself, an attitude which characterized the best gladiators."[34] For both Dunkle and Wiedemann, the gladiators, or at least, the best gladiators, provided a spectacular representation of this concept of *virtus*. As defined by Dunkle, *virtus* is "a word whose basic meaning is 'manhood,' which came to mean 'courage in war."[35] Wiedemann is more vague on the meaning of the word, but points out that "*virtus* was so important in defining who was a Roman that its public display might lead to the gladiator's being accepted back into the community of Romans."[36] The definition or delimitation of what constituted *virtus* is less important than the acknowledgment that the gladiators were expected to embody *virtus*, a defining characteristic of the Roman citizenry, despite the fact that the gladiators were not even considered people, let alone citizens. Instead, the gladiators were supposed to provide a spectacular performance of *virtus* in action for the citizens in the crowd. Those gladiators who succeeded in convincing the audience of their ability to demonstrate *virtus* were hailed as great gladiators, and more likely to be granted life at the end of their battle, regardless of the outcome of their actual performance.

When the issue of *virtus* is considered alongside that of the modern concept of masculinity, the equation of the Roman *munera* with the UFC becomes more clear. Just as the Roman gladiators were a spectacular representation of Roman *virtus*, so too are UFC competitors spectacular representations of dominant concepts of masculinity. The next chapter examines how these spectacular representations are framed, but it is important to consider the parallels between the spectacular power of the Roman *munera*, and the UFC, and how these parallels are highlighted by the UFC's use of the gladiator montage to open their PPV events.

The other important aspect of this spectacular performance of *virtus* deals with the fact that those performing were, as discussed earlier, not even considered worthy of being Roman citizens. This is important to note because it both highlights the paradox of the gladiator within Roman society, and also serves as a demonstration of the power of spectacle in Ancient Rome. The paradox of the Roman gladiator, that of the measure of celebrity achieved by these slaves who, at the same time were considered *infamia*, is heightened when one considers that their contests within the arena were a spectacular performance of an integral aspect of the Roman identity, *virtus*. Wiedemann points out that the gladiators were really only displaying one aspect of *virtus* in their performances, that of fighting skill.[37] This had the effect both of isolating combat skill as a significant aspect of Roman *virtus*, while at the same time isolating the Roman gladiators from other aspects of *virtus*, thereby making it easier to maintain the perception that the Roman gladiators were a distinct class of beings from Roman citizens. Again, this provides an opportunity to consider Debord's writings on celebrity, particularly that "[m]edia stars are spectacular representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the

spectacle's banality into image of possible roles."[38] Here, the gladiators are spectacular distillations of the fighting element of Roman *virtus*. The power of this representation is to demonstrate to Roman citizens not only how the fighting spirit of a true Roman should appear, but to inspire those citizens to demonstrate a level of *virtus* that exceeded that of their inferiors. Wiedemann quotes Pliny, writing "[a] public entertainment, nothing lax or dissolute to weaken and destroy the manly spirit of his subjects, but one to inspire them to face honourable wounds and look scornfully upon death, by demonstrating a love and glory and a desire for victory even in the persons of criminals and slaves."[39] By having gladiators demonstrate fighting courage in the arena, it was hoped that Roman citizens would aspire to demonstrate *virtus* in their own lives. As a result, the *munera* became about more than just watching men fight, and possibly die. Instead, the gladiatorial contests were a spectacular narrative constructed around promoting a particular ideology of *virtus*, with the intention of encouraging the spectators to seek to prove themselves worthy of Roman citizenship by demonstrating greater qualities of *virtus* than those who fought in the arena. As Wiedemann writes, "[o]n each occasion when they fought, gladiators enacted a spectacle of death and rebirth; and they did that in the presence of the Roman people, enabling individuals to come to terms with their mortality by reflecting on the unprecedented power and continuity of Rome's universal rule."[40]

Ideologies of the Arena: Romanism

The "unprecedented power and continuity of Rome's universal rule" is another spectacular aspect of the gladiatorial games that needs to be addressed. While Wiedemann believes that that the "spectacle of death and rebirth" was the ideological

crux of the *munera*, other scholars have different opinions on the matter. What they do agree on is that the *munera* were a means of promoting and naturalizing a sense of Roman identity. Not just the *virtus* discussed by Wiedemann and Dunkle, but a larger sense of what it means to be Roman. As Alison Futrell writes in *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power*, "[t]he gladiatorial battles accomplished no strategic gain, led to no diplomatic arrangements. Their meaning and significance was as a means of communicating the message of Imperial authority; the medium of spectacular death was a persuasive piece of performative rhetoric."[41] Through this perspective, the power of the *munera* was greater than simply to encourage Roman citizens to aspire to display the elements of *virtus* that was expected of all good Romans. Instead, the *munera* were a way of showing what it meant to be Roman, particularly to those who had, whether willingly or unwillingly, come under the power of the Roman empire. And beyond simply providing a spectacular representation of what it meant to be Roman, the *munera* were a means of creating a new Roman identity for those who were, or became, Roman, encouraging all Roman citizens, whether in Rome proper or not, to consider themselves Roman, and to behave as such.

Because of the importance of the *munera* to Roman culture, the games were brought to those places which came under Roman control. By transporting the games to new territories, they served to encourage new Roman citizens to both identify with, and acknowledge the power of, the Roman empire. As Futrell writes, " The Romans had to show themselves as enemies to be reckoned with, for whom death and slaughter were a form of entertainment and an obligation owed the worthy dead. The *munera* were part of the Imperial package of propaganda, in which a local audience was indirectly threatened

by the might of Rome."[42] For Futrell, the games were a means to create "support of the establishment or the maintenance of the *status quo*."[43] By providing a spectacular demonstration of Rome's power in the arena, those outside of Rome's walls, but not outside its influence, were spectators to the embodied power of Rome. Futrell stresses the importance of the arena itself, of the building of Roman amphitheaters throughout the breadth of Rome's territories as a demonstration of how important the *munera* were for providing this spectacular representation of Rome's power, writing:

> the amphitheater was more than a striking Roman architectural type; it was a venue for the enactment of the ritual of power. The *munera* were a means of persuasion, through the use of symbols and actions from Rome's traditional repertory, of the validity and continuity of Roman order. The amphitheater was a sociopolitical arena for interaction between the institution and its participants, between the Imperial mind-set and the provincial lifestyle, between the center and the periphery, between Rome and Europe.[44]

The amphitheater, as the site of the *munera*, became an important tool for the creation of a Roman identity for all who lived along Rome's roads.

The *munera* were more than just a spectacular demonstration of Rome's willingness to use violence. They were also a means to demonstrate Rome's power through the very men in the arena itself. As discussed earlier, these men were slaves and prisoners of war, and, as such, not considered to be people. But they also acted as signifiers for Rome's fallen enemies. According to Dunkle, "[d]uring the Republic, there were five known gladiator types: *samnis* (Samnite), *gallus* (Gaul), *thraex* (Thracian), *provocator* ('challenger') and *eques* ('horseman'). The first three types are ethnic in origin, that is, their armour, weapons and style of fighting were derived from peoples who had engaged in war with the Romans: the Samnites, Gauls and Thracians."[45] While Dunkle points out that only the *thraex* remained popular throughout the years of the

Roman empire,[46] the fact that three of the five originally popular gladiator types were based on enemies who had been defeated by Rome is important. In this way, Rome was able to doubly showcase the fate of those who opposed Rome. Firstly, because those in the arena were slaves and/or prisoners of war, they had earned their fate in the arena through their own actions, providing one example of what happens to those individuals who opposed Rome. But by making these gladiators into signifiers for defeated enemies, they became symbols for what happened to those civilizations which opposed Rome. As a result, the *munera* were a way to foster not only a Roman identity within the individual Roman citizens, but to encourage a larger sense of community, as the spectators participated in a spectacular narrative about Rome's might, and the folly of opposing that might.

Wiedemann points out that the *munera* were not only important for providing a sense of Roman identity, but for providing a connection to Rome for those areas and cultures which came to be under Rome's rule. He discusses what he refers to as a "crisis of Roman values brought about by the creation of a new Italian society in the late republic"[47] and how the *munera* provided a sense of cohesion to "a society which contained many different ethnic and cultural components and whose only shared experience was that of being part of the Roman military machine."[48] And for Wiedemann, the gladiatorial games were not simply a spectacular way to intimidate or demonstrate the Roman willingness to use violence. Instead, just as the games provided an opportunity for Roman elites to demonstrate their commitment and munificence to the citizenry, they were used by the "priest of the imperial cult,"[49] who would offer *munera*

on a provincial level in areas outside Italy.[50] In this way, new Roman citizens were invited into the empire by agents of the empire itself.

Wiedemann, like Futtrell, also stresses the importance of the arena as the site of these spectacular demonstrations and embodiments of Roman identity. As Wiedemann writes,

> At the margins of the Roman empire, amphitheatres reassured Roman soldiers far from home that they were part of the Roman community. But the arena did not just serve to integrate into Roman society: it also symbolically divided off what was Roman from what was not. It was the limit of Roman civilisation in a number of senses. The arena was the place where civilisation confronted nature, in the shape of beasts which represented a danger to humanity; and where social justice confronted wrongdoing, in the shape of criminals who were executed there; and where the Roman empire confronted its enemies, in the persons of captured prisoners of war who were killed or forced to kill one another in the arena. Amphitheatres could represent the dividing line between culture and the wild more directly.[51]

Here, Wiedemann makes note of the fact that the arena was not simply a place where *munera* were held, but also *venatio*, or beast games, as well as public executions of criminals. What all of these share in common is their use as spectacular events to create, whether through intimidation or coercion, a sense of connection and identification with Rome.

Perhaps the most interesting reading of the arena is found in Erik Gunderson's 1996 paper, "Ideology of the Arena."[52] Gunderson reads the arena through the use of the work of Althusser and Foucault, describing it "as an Ideological State Apparatus in Rome, and hence a vehicle for the reproduction of the relations of production."[53] For Gunderson, the arena itself is of primary importance, and not the activities which took place on its sands. The arena worked to spectacularize Roman identity in two ways, both through the action being watched, but also through the spectators.[54] Gunderson's work is

useful, because it helps to demonstrate the ubiquity of the spectacle, its presence not simply as something that is watched, but as something that draws in its spectators. And for Gunderson, the centre of the arena is, through an act of inversion, a non-Roman space, surrounded by Romans. Just as the arena provided for Wiedemann a demarcation for what was Roman and what was not, for Gunderson this demarcation is even more precise, with the sands of the arena being a place occupied by the non-Roman, while the seats in the arena are occupied by Romans. In this way, the Romans were distanced from the fates of those on the sands, while at the same time having their identities confirmed through this delineation.

Gunderson's discussion of the arena is particularly useful because it creates parallels between the arenas of the Roman empire and the spectacular arenas of today. These parallels are what makes the UFC's use of gladiator imagery in its opening sequence so interesting, and will warranting further exploration. Of note are the ways in which the *munera* were used to promote and naturalize particular versions of masculinity and cultural identity. This same process can be found at work, not only in the UFC and MMA, but in most contemporary mediasport. The ways in which particular spectacular narratives of masculinity are promoted through the contest between Rashad Evans and Quentin 'Rampage' Jackson will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.

But the concept of the UFC and MMA promoting a particular concept of identity, beyond gender, is also important to consider. What is of particular note is that, while the *munera* promoted a particular concept of Roman identity, aimed not only at the Roman citizenry, but also at those who became part of the Roman empire, the process works in reverse in MMA. As discussed earlier, the spectacular demonstrations of Roman identity

involved the use of the imagery of a conquered civilization's warriors as gladiators in the arena, 'othering' these foreigners to prove the might and legitimacy of Rome. In MMA, the concept is one centred on the global nature of martial arts. To succeed in MMA, one does not master one particular fighting style. Instead, today's most successful competitors are those who incorporate different fighting styles into their repertoire. In this way, modern MMA seems to work opposite to the identity creation found in the *munera*, but towards the same goal: providing an identity through the use of spectacular presentations.

When the UFC chose to use gladiatorial imagery as the centrepiece for its opening sequence, they were likely making a connection between the perception of the gladiator as a warrior and ancient sports hero and the competitors in the UFC. And while that image may be a myth, that does not mean that the use of representations of gladiators is not apt. The Roman gladiators were part of a larger spectacular system that worked to promote and naturalize concepts of *virtus*, imperial identity, and to reinforce the social hierarchy. And, as will be argued through the following chapters, so too does today's Mixed Martial Arts and the Ultimate Fighting Championship. The use of the image of the gladiator is an apt choice for the UFC, though not necessarily for the reasons they believe. The use of the gladiator imagery provides a means of disguising consumer capitalism, in the case of the UFC, by promoting the fighters as being motivated by their desire to prove their masculinity, skill, and honour. The Roman empire, not a culture built on consumer capitalism, but on military might and conquest, promoted its values by putting on *munera* not only in Rome, but in lands that came under Rome's control. In

this way, all who lived under Rome's sway were exposed to the spectacle of death, *virtus*, and Romanism that the *munera* provided.

In the same way, the spectacle of the UFC exposes its spectators to particular values of masculinity. The use of gladiator imagery allows the UFC to make an appeal, not to history, but to a representation of history. The UFC's use of decontextualized history allows its spectacular narratives to provide the illusion of historical reference, while constructing the spectacular narrative according to its own designs. The next chapter examines how these concepts of masculinity are constructed and reinforced, not only within the confines of the UFC Octagon, but consistently throughout the UFC's 'integrated sport spectacle.'

1 The song, entitled "Optimus Bellum Domitor" is available on the UFC's "Ultimate Beatdowns Vol. 1" CD.
2 This song, by the band Stemm, is entitled "Face the Pain," and is also available on "Ultimate Beatdowns, Vol. 1."
3 By death, I refer to death immediately attributable to an injury suffered during a game or contest. The recent growing body of research into the field of concussions and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is shining new light on the lingering effects of contact sports, particularly as it pertains to issues of dementia, depression and other psychological problems.
4 Thomas Wiedemann. *Emperors and Gladiators.* (New York, Routledge, 1992).
5 Morton M. Hunt, "Rome's Games of Death,"in *SI.com*, http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1130576/index.htm.
6 Hunt, "Rome's Games of Death.".
7 Franz Lidz, "Sudden Death," in *SI.com*, http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1021622/index.htm.
8 Lidz, "Sudden Death."
9 Guy DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (1994) (New York, Zone Books, 2002), 48.
10 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*.
11 Ibid., 26.
12 Ibid., 28.
13 Roger Dunkle, *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome* (Harlow, United Kingdom, Pearson Longman, 2008), 18.
14 Ibid.,, 18.
15 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 28-29.
16 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2003), 19.
17 Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* ,18.
18 Ibid. 25.
19 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 26.
20 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* 39.
21 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* 38.
22 Although the frequency which with this happened is not something upon which the scholars seem to agree.
23 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 113.
24 Dunkle, *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, 17.
25 Ibid., 18.
26 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 6.
27 Ibid., 14.
28 Ibid., 35.
29 Dunkle, *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, 130.
30 Ibid., 133.
31 Ibid., 39, 135.
32 Ibid., 39.
33 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators,* 92.
34 Dunkle, *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, 21.
35 Ibid., 19.
36 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 165.
37 Ibid., 37.
38 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle,* 38.
39 Qtd. in Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 38.
40 Ibid., 180.
41 Alison Futrell. *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power.*(Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press, 1997), 2.

42 Futrell, *Blood in the Arena: The Spectacle of Roman Power,* 47.
43 Ibid., 46.
44 Ibid., 8.
45 Dunkle, *Gladiators: Violence and Spectacle in Ancient Rome*, 98.
46 Ibid., 98.
47 Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*, 40.
48 Ibid., 40.
49 Ibid., 44.
50 Ibid., 44.
51 Ibid. 46
52 Erik Gunderson, "The Ideology of the Arena" in Classical Antiquity, 15:1 (Apr., 1996), pp. 113-151.
53 Gunderson, "The Ideology of the Arena," 117.
54 Ibid., 119.

Chapter 4: 'You Know What I'm Saying?': Expressions of MMAsculinity

At the conclusion of the UFC's gladiator opening montage, with the connections established between the perceived virtues of gladiatorial combat, the fighter enters the arena through a brightly lit door. The viewer's vantage point also passes through this door, but rather than seeing the arena of antiquity, the viewer is confronted with images from past UFC events, accompanied by a hard rock guitar riffThe connection is made between the gladiators of Rome and the fighters within the UFC. This gladiatorial montage and passage to the modern UFC not only encourages the viewer to connect the UFC to the romanticized Roman gladiator, it also provides a measure of stability from event to event, a common thread that opens all UFC events. A sense of continuity is established from one event to another, creating narrative cohesion.

The narrative for UFC 114 began with the confrontation between Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson and 'Suga' Rashad Evans after Jackson had defeated Keith Jardine at UFC 96. After the fight, Evans, a friend and training partner of Jardine, then the UFC Light Heavyweight champion, entered the ring, and it was announced that Jackson would face Evans for the title at an upcoming Pay-Per-View event. When it was discovered that Jackson had suffered a jaw injury in his fight with Jardine, Lyoto 'The Dragon' Machida was offered the opportunity to fight Evans for the title instead. Machida emerged victorious via knockout. After Evans' loss, it was announced that Evans and Jackson would coach opposite one another on Spike TV's *The Ultimate Fighter* reality show, the tenth season of the show.[1] After coaching against one another, Jackson and Evans would then fight at UFC 107, in Jackson's hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, with the winner earning a title shot against Machida, or whoever held the belt at the time. The fight did

not take place until UFC 114 because Jackson pulled out of the fight in order to film a leading role in the film version of the 1980s television series *The A-Team*, in which he played the role of B.A. Baracus, a role originally made famous by Mr. T.

This chapter examines the various narrative elements surrounding the main event of UFC 114, utilizing data from *The Ultimate Fighter* season and the *UFC Primetime* series, both of which aired on Spike TV. Making use of the holistic approach described by Gruneau, Cantelon and Whitson,[2] the examination will focus primarily on representations of masculinity, and secondarily on issues of race, particularly when directly referenced by Jackson and Evans. Because the UFC makes use of spectacular narratives which rely heavily on representations of aggressive masculinities, both as a means of creating a connection with the audience, and as a means of appealing to advertisers who also wish to associate themselves with this particular form of masculinity, it is imperative to examine how these masculinities are framed and performed within the UFC, both through its *The Ultimate Fighter* reality series, and through UFC events such as the finale event for *The Ultimate Fighter*, or UFC 114.

As Debord writes, "[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship that is mediated by images."[3] This chapter discusses the images of masculinity that the various fighters present, and analyzes how those images mediate social relationships involving issues of masculinity and race. It is important to examine how social relationships are constructed according to dominant concepts of masculinity within the realm of contemporary mediasport. Each of the fighters involved in *The Ultimate Fighter* presents himself, whether consciously or not, as a signifier for a particular brand of masculinity, a performance that is both learned and naturalized via the

spectacle. It is therefore imperative to examine those presentations of self, to discover how they work as signifiers for this dominant definition of masculinity, and, in turn, mediate these social relationships.

In addition to the theories of spectacle and narrative discussed above, other theories and concepts need to be broached before an analysis of UFC 114 can begin. The first conceptual issue arises from an article not about sport, but about reality television. Given the importance that *The Ultimate Fighter* television series plays in constructing the narrative for UFC 114 and the interactions between Jackson and Evans, this piece is of significance. Alison Hearn[4] deals with the issue of the presentation of self on reality television, and the presentation of a particular character type designed to ensure not only that a person appears on the show, but that he/she receives maximum exposure through the show. Hearn describes the character types presented by the aspiring reality TV stars she interviewed: "pre-set, freeze-dried presentations of self, molded by prior knowledge of the dictates of the reality television genre and deployed strategically to garner attention, and potentially, profit."[5] Hearn contends that this is an extension of Sternberg's concept of the "phantasmagoric workplace"[6] in which "workers labour to produce persona consonant with the dictates of their particular jobs."[7]

Hearn's paper argues that what is presented on reality television works to naturalize the creation of particular character types within the 'phantasmagoric workplace,' regardless of whether one is on a reality television show. Instead, the presentation of a particular image is essential not only for those who wish to appear on *The Real World*, *The Biggest Loser,* or one of the many other reality shows currently on the air, but simply for one's own life. As Hearn writes, "[t]he constitution of the self is

now an outer-directed process, which involves our skill at self-production as saleable image tokens. The 'self' has become yet another commodity-sign, generated and deployed in a manner akin to other multi-level marketing campaigns."[8] Just as those who aspire to be on *The Apprentice* or *Big Brother* understand that they must present one of the particular character types that producers are looking for, so too do people within their particular fields understand that it is important to present themselves as a character type in the performance of their duties. As Hearn writes, "[w]e load ourselves up with meaningfulness; we work hard at issues of self-image in an effort to constitute ourselves as 'significant' iconic-workers. It is just as important to be seen as a good nurse, executive, flight attendant, as it is to actually do the tasks that make up the job; the 'capacity for calculated posing' has become a routine job requirement."[9]

Hearn's work is also reflective of Debord's discussions of celebrities: "Media stars are spectacular representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the spectacle's banality into images of possible roles."[10] The competitors on *The Ultimate Fighter*, and the UFC fighters, are these spectacular representations of a particular masculine role, built on the premise of toughness and violence. Debord argues further that "[t]he individual who in the service of the spectacle is placed in stardom's spotlight is in fact the opposite of an individual...In entering the spectacle as a model to be identified with, he renounces all autonomy in order himself to identify with the general law of obedience to the course of things."[11] In this way, the competitors on *The Ultimate Fighter*, and those who compete in the UFC, are not simply a spectacular representation of a particular brand of masculinity, but a particular brand of masculinity that is meant to be understood as natural,logical and celebrated. That is to say, the spectacular portrayals

of masculinity featured on both *The Ultimate Fighter* and within the UFC are spectacular representations of a dominant and accepted brand of masculinity.

In *The Ultimate Fighter*, it is easy to see how the participants on the show are motivated to present themselves in particular ways. Not only is *The Ultimate Fighter* a reality show based on the premise of securing employment within a particular field, much like *The Apprentice* or *American Idol*, but it is also sports programmingThe participants, who include both the contestants and the coaches, go in with the knowledge that it behooves them to present a particular 'self-image' for the cameras, to be consumed by the producers and, ultimately, the audience. And, while each participant may choose a particular character type to present and perform, there are underlying traits which can be found in every presentation. In the case of a show like *The Apprentice*, the participants aspire to present themselves as successful and qualified business people. In the case of a show like *America's Next Top Model*, the participants work to ensure that they are presenting themselves as a fashion model. And in the case of *The Ultimate Fighter*, the participants present themselves as Ultimate Fighters, athletes who compete within the confines of the UFC octagon, or at the very least, as combat athletes who aspire to compete within the confines of the UFC octagon. To that end, a significant part of the performances of the participants on *The Ultimate Fighter* can be seen as performances of masculinity. More specifically, their performances of masculinity adhere to a dominant brand of masculinity, in keeping with the 'general law of obedience to the course of things.'

The performance of masculinity and of gender in general, is one that has been examined extensively. For the purposes of this study, the work of Schrock and Schwalbe

in "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts"[12] is useful, not only for its emphasis on the performative nature of masculinity, but also its emphasis on the ways in which this performance is guided by a desire not only to prove oneself within a perceived framework of masculinity, but also for the emphasis that the authors put on the role of 'manhood acts' not only in creating and defining relationships between men, but between men and women. Schrock and Schwalbe's paper also ties in with Hearn's discussion of the performance of self on reality television, and the extension of that performative nature to the larger issue of the "spectacularization of the self."[13] As a result, while the performance of masculinity through 'manhood acts' is certainly one aspect of the performance of the self that takes place on a show such as *The Ultimate Fighter*, it is not the only aspect of the performance. This distinction is necessary to clarify that, while masculinity is certainly an important factor to consider when examining *The Ultimate Fighter*, or MMA more generally, it is also not the only factor. There are other aspects of presentation and representation of self at work within any context, although in the case of the UFC, masculinity is of significance.

For Schrock and Schwalbe, the concept of 'manhood acts' consists of "learning how to signify a masculine self in situationally appropriate ways."[14] This is learned behaviour, but the learning process is ongoing. Just as Hearn argues that one must learn to present the self-image of the ideal worker type, according to the situation one finds oneself in, so too do Schrock and Schwalbe argue that a similar process is at work with 'manhood acts.' Males learn to behave in particular ways, depending on the situation and, when confronted with a new situation, their learned behaviour provides them with the context and precedent through which to determine the appropriate presentation of the

masculine self. As Schrock and Schwalbe write, "Men entering new jobs must thus learn to signify masculine selves in ways that accord with the organization's culture and gender politics."[15]

Also of note from Schrock and Schwalbe is their assertion that "[m]edia imagery provides a repertoire of signifying practices that males can draw on to craft manhood acts."[16] This not only corresponds with Hearn's work on reality television, but also with the work of Gruneau, Whitson and Cantelon, and their examination of how television sports are produced with the intention of crafting a particular message for the viewing audience. For this paper, it is also important to note the circuitous nature of this concept. While the season of *The Ultimate Fighter* coached by Jackson and Evans can undoubtedly be seen as a 'repertoire of signifying practices that males can draw on to craft manhood acts,' the participants on the show were likely themselves influenced by previous seasons of *The Ultimate Fighter*, as well as by other media examples to help create the manhood acts demonstrated on the show. As a result, a circuit of production and perpetuation can be seen, as those who aspire to be on *The Ultimate Fighter* are inspired by those who have been on the show, and determine their 'manhood acts' as a result of those precedents. This is particularly important when considering the rewards available to those who win the show, as well as the fact that fighters who make a 'positive' impression on Dana White, the audience, or both, can also be granted the opportunity to compete in the UFC. Winning *The Ultimate Fighter* is not necessary to earn the chance to fight in the UFC octagon. As a result, the behaviour of TUF participants, including their 'manhood acts,' are a particular 'spectacularization of the self,' performed within the framework of the sport-media complex.

‘Manhood acts’ performed within the sport-media complex is discussed in the work of Michael Messner and colleagues. Messner et al. analyze ‘manhood acts’ in “Televised Sports Manhood Formula,”[17] from the 2000 paper of the same name. They identify what they argue are the components of a formula that they argue “provides a remarkably stable and concrete view of masculinity as grounded in bravery, risk taking, violence, bodily strength, and heterosexuality.”[18] They identify ten “dominant themes”[19] which comprise the “Televised Sports Manhood Formula,” and “present[s] boys with narrow and stereotypical messages about race, gender, and violence.”[20] Messner’s themes are important because they provide a framework for understanding the particular brand of masculinity being promoted and naturalized through the UFC’s spectacular representations. The ten themes, compiled through Messner et al.’s analysis of a number of hours of television sports programming, allow for a better understanding of the values and attitudes that are highlighted and promoted through televised sports programming. Because of their naturalization and ubiquity, they likewise not only provide a way for the viewer to understand the particular brand of masculinity being represented in the UFC, but also provide a way for the fighters and TUF participants to understand the particular brand of masculinity that is expected of them and their performance. It is also important to note that, while the formula was designed with televised sport in mind, and as the object of the research, these can also be considered narrative themes, thereby liberating them from the television screen, and considering them as part of the larger sport-media complex, allows for analysis of non-televised elements, including magazines, websites and the like.

In addition to Messner's "Televised Sports Manhood Formula," an earlier Messner article, (1990) "When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in sport"[21] also offers some valuable concepts with which to examine the UFC and MMA. In this article, Messner examines the ways in which violence and masculinity have come to be so closely interrelated. Of particular note is the assertion that "Sport, in its present (violent) forms, then, tends to support male dominance not simply through the exclusion or marginalization of females, but through the association of 'males and maleness with valued skills and the sanctioned use of aggression/force/violence'"[22] This is important because it helps to distinguish masculinity from the point of view of being NOT femininity, and instead positions masculinity as something that, while definitely acting in opposition to concepts of the feminine, is also composed of a particular set of distinct values, in this case the promotion and sanctioned use of violence.

Given the violent nature of Mixed Martial Arts, and the fact that the violence in MMA is seen as being a 'controlled violence,' a violence with a purpose, Messner's examination of the linkages between masculinity and violence is important. When those linkages are considered alongside the concept of spectacular narratives, those linkages take on greater meaning. As Messner writes, "[v]iolent behavior is learned behavior, and some men learn it better than others."[23] This, considered in conjunction with Schrock and Schwalbe's discussion of the role that "media imagery" plays in establishing contexts for 'manhood acts' demonstrates the importance of considering how violence, which can be considered a 'manhood act' is learned, and how that learning helps to provide the basis for the "spectacularization of the self."

Another interesting aspect of Messner's paper is his statement that

> These violent 'tough guys' of the culture industry – the Rambos, the Jack Tatums, the Ronnie Lotts-are at once the heroes who 'prove' that 'we men' are superior to women and they play the role of 'other' against whom privileged men define themselves as 'modern.' They are, in a very real sense, contemporary gladiators who are sacrificed in order that the elite may have a clear sense of where they stand in the pecking order of inter-male dominance. Their marginalization as men - signified by their engaging in the very violence that makes them such attractive spectacles - contributes to the construction of hegemonic masculinity.[24]

What is particularly interesting about this statement, apart from the way that it helps to understand how media heroes, be they fictional like Rambo, or sports starts like Jack Tatum and Ronnie Lott, provide a template upon which to base constructions of masculinity, is Messner's use of the term 'gladiator.' As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of the gladiator is one that can be easily traced to demonstrations of power, both in the masculine, and in the political sense. The UFC's attempts to link its brand of MMA to the Roman gladiators can be seen both as an attempt to construct a narrative about the men who compete in the UFC octagon as being motivated by essential qualities of honour and virtue, and as a way to understand the role of the MMA fighter as a spectacular representation of a dominant form of masculinity, and as a signifier with which spectators are encouraged to identify as a means of understanding their own masculinity.

One additional factor that needs to be taken into consideration when examining the spectacular narrative surrounding Rampage Jackson and Rashad Evans is the issue of race and, more specifically, that of black masculinity. The reason for this is not simply because both Jackson and Evans are men of colour, but because the issue is raised by both men, on numerous occasions throughout their interaction, both in the UFC octagon, and during their time as coaches on *The Ultimate Fighter*. As a result, the issue of race is made significant by the actions of the fighters themselves. For this reason, the issue of

masculinity needs to be considered alongside that of race. This is not to say that race is a significant factor in all aspects of MMA, but it is a factor nonetheless.

Majors and Billson's *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* explores the issue of black masculinity by discussing the "cool pose,"[25] which they define as:

> the presentation of self many black males use to establish their male identity. Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message: pride, strength, and control.[26]

Like Schrock and Schwalbe's "manhood acts" and Hearn's "spectacularization of the self," "cool pose" is a performed presentation of the self that is learned. As a result, 'cool pose' can simply be seen as another aspect of the presentation of self, much like masculinity, or one's presentation of self as ideal type.

The 'Cool pose,' described by Majors and Billson is a coping or defense mechanism. As they write, "[c]ool pose is constructed from attitudes and actions that become firmly entrenched in the black male's psyche as he adopts a facade to ward off the anxiety of second-class status. It provides a mask that suggests competence, high self-esteem, control, and inner strength. It also hides self-doubt, insecurity, and inner turmoil."[27] This differentiates it from 'manhood acts' which are performed in order to protect and strengthen a position of power. Instead, 'cool pose' developed in response to the oppressed status of African-Americans within North American culture. As described by Majors and Billson, "By acting calm, emotionless, fearless, aloof, and tough, the African-American male strives to offset an externally imposed 'zero' image. Being cool shows both the dominant culture and the black male himself that he is strong and proud. He is somebody."[28]

'Cool pose' is also not a static performance type. Instead, the performance of 'cool pose' depends upon the environment and situation for its exhibition. This is because "the performance must, of course, be credible. Theatricality must always be appropriate for the stage and props at hand. The meaning of the performance is negotiated with each new audience and with others in the interaction."[29] This is beneficial for considering the 'cool pose' in conjunction with the other types of performance of self being applied here. Just as reality television can be seen as encouraging and spectacularizing particular character performance types that depend on the type of show, and 'manhood acts' can be seen as being in the service of a particular type, especially when considering within the context of the "Televised Sports Manhood Formula," then so too can 'cool pose,' when considered in the context of a Mixed Martial Arts reality competition show. The type of 'cool pose' that is best used within a show such as *The Ultimate Fighter* would very likely be different from that best used on a show such as *American Idol* or *Survivor*. The performances are still being produced within the context of 'cool pose' as self-preservation, but the actual performances themselves differ from situation to situation. In the case of *The Ultimate Fighter*, and Quinton Jackson and Rashad Evans in particular, their 'cool pose' is part of their performances of masculinity. How each man chooses to present his own masculinity is informed by his background, and race plays a part in that. As a result, it is important to consider race when examining how Jackson and Evans choose to present and perform their masculinity.

Majors and Billson also take note of the fact that 'toughness' can play a significant role in the 'cool pose.'[30] The discussion of toughness is particularly useful to

an examination of MMA and *The Ultimate Fighter* because of the ways in which it is presented as having both physical and verbal components. On *The Ultimate Fighter*, participants are not allowed to physically engage with one another except in the Octagon, in a sanctioned exhibition match, or in a sanctioned professional contest, as on *The Ultimate Fighter Finale*. But there are moments involving the performance of toughness on *The Ultimate Fighter* that take place outside of the Octagon.

Messner's work, and that of Majors and Bilson, is important for this chapter because it provides a framework through which to understand the particular brand of masculinity which is being performed on *The Ultimate Fighter*, and how these performances of masculinity work to frame the fighters in the sense of Debord's "spectacular representations of living human beings, distilling the essence of the spectacle's banality into images of possible roles."[31] Both through the fighters' own performances on the show, and through the narrative written for the show in the production booth and the editing room, the UFC creates narratives that rely on specific spectacular representations. Using both Messner's and Majors and Bilson's work as a lens through which to examine *The Ultimate Fighter* and the UFC, this chapter highlights some of the ways that particular forms of masculinity are performed and highlighted. Because these performances of masculinity are integral to the UFC's power as a spectacular form, it is important to examine and understand not only how masculinity is performed and presented in the UFC, but also how those performances and presentations relate to other forms of masculinity within contemporary mediasport.

The same holds true for the issue of race. Race became an issue for the fight between Jackson and Evans the moment that Jackson exclaimed at UFC 97, in regards to

their upcoming match, that there would be "some black on black crime."[32] With that statement, Jackson made race a central factor in how fans and spectators understood the fight. Beyond simply being a fight between two men, that statement, and its subsequent usage in the promotion of the fight, made the fact that both fighters were African-American significant. As a result, for the purposes of this study, it is important to understand the relationship between masculinity and race, as embodied in the behaviour of Jackson and Evans specifically, but also in the other competitors on *The Ultimate Fighter*. Other fights involving different fighters may not feature the same relationship between race and masculinity. But the promotion of those fights may feature other racial or cultural emphases. For UFC 114, and the preceding season of *The Ultimate Fighter*, the omnipresent concept of masculinity is underscored by that of race, in this case, issues of black masculinity. These two concepts work in concert to create a spectacular narrative that provides dominant representation of masculinity to which advertisers and sponsors can then attach their brands in an attempt to market their products to the UFC audience.

This examination of the show begins with the first episode, and the initial confrontation between Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson and 'Suga' Rashad Evans. Because *The Ultimate Fighter* consisted of thirteen hour-long episodes, this chapter can obviously not touch on every moment from the show, or attempt to recap every episode. Instead, specific incidents, which I have been deemed of particular interest will be explored. These incidents will tend to focus on the interactions between Jackson and Evans, but will not be limited solely to those interactions The interactions between the contestants and the coaches, and just the contestants themselves, are also of interest for this study.

Episode 1: The Voice of Authority

The first episode of *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, as Season 10 of the series was classified, opened with *The Ultimate Fighter* theme song, entitled "The Ultimate Remix." The lyrics of the song provide an initial glimpse of the approach to be taken in the show, as well as setting the tone for the show:

> There is no substitute/for the ultimate is what's in store/bear witness to the fitness of the modern warrior
> BOOM another hit is landed/ BOOM another hit is landed
> The stealth of a sniper/the strength of a viper/the training, the challenge, the Ultimate Fighter
> You're gonna get hit/you're gonna get knocked out/you're gonna feel it/this is the ultimate[33]

From the outset, themes such as violence and dominance come to the forefront. While the theme song plays, fight footage is shown. At the 'Boom,' the image of a particularly hard hit, be it a punch, kick or slam is shown, punctuating the lyrics with visual demonstrations.

The episode then featured footage of a number of the fighters competing, at the time, in the UFC's heavyweight division, including Brock Lesnar, then the UFC Heavyweight champion, and, in many ways, the face of the UFC's Heavyweight division, including the cover of the UFC's 2010 iteration of their *Undisputed* video game. The show then cut to footage of UFC President Dana White, talking about the upcoming season. The voice-over for the show[34] discussed how the season will feature "four former NFL players, three fierce UFC vets, the last heavyweight champ of the IFL, and the biggest name ever in street fighting,"[35] over footage of that season's competitors shadow boxing. The emphasis on the presence of former NFL players provides a sense of legitimacy to MMA and the UFC, given the popularity of the NFL, and the associations

to be made between American football, toughness and masculinity. Similarly, the participation by "the biggest name ever in street fighting," that being Kimbo Slice, gives *The Ultimate Fighter* a connection to unsanctioned street fighting, as Kimbo Slice made his name on YouTube, posting videos of his street fights, and garnering attention for the UFC. After the first episode aired, Spike TV issued a Press Release stating that the episode not only garnered the highest ratings ever for an episode of *The Ultimate Fighter*, but was the highest rated original show ever on Spike TV up to that point, with 4.1 million viewers.[36] Slice was heavily featured in the promotion of the show, and his presence paid off, drawing in a record number of viewers.

During the episode, Dana White provided his thoughts on Slice in a number of cutaways to interview footage shot for the show. As White said of Slice,

> Kimbo Slice is a guy who basically got famous off of YouTube, fighting in people's backyards, and a guy whom I've talked a ton of shit about over the last few years. Basically saying, this guy is always going to be the toughest guy at the barbeque, but he's not a mixed martial artist....And I think there's gonna be millions of fans who are going to tune in to this show, to see me eat some crow, and want Kimbo to prove me wrong. So here we go, we're gonna find out.[37]

Slice also had his own take on his relationship with Dana White, and his background as a street fighter, rather than a trained Mixed Martial Artist. Slice spoke respectfully of the UFC and MMA, noting that,

> Being on the show itself, you know, it's an honour, know what I'm saying, especially considering all that shit Dana White was saying about me, its all good though, you feel me?...I'm already street certified, for doing what I do, so now its time to take it to the next level, and prove myself as the Ultimate Fighter.[38]

Slice's comments are worth noting, because they demonstrate the various performances of self discussed earlier. First, Slice is providing a 'spectacularization of the self' presenting himself as the ideal *Ultimate Fighter* contestant, demonstrating a desire to

"take it to the next level, and prove myself as the Ultimate Fighter." He backs that up by mentioning his being "street certified" while acknowledging the fact that whatever toughness or skill that he demonstrated on his YouTube fights is not sufficient to earn him the title of "Ultimate Fighter." Instead, Slice made note of his previous accomplishments in street fighting, thereby establishing his credentials as a man who has demonstrated a willingness to fight in the past, while at the same time demonstrating humility at the opportunity he has to fight on the show and earn accolades within the MMA community. Slice portrayed himself as the ideal *Ultimate Fighter* competitor, and by extension, the ideal UFC fighter, a fighter with a history of proven toughness, but with the desire to further prove himself, rather than resting on his laurels and past accomplishments.

In addition, Slice, an African-American, is portraying himself through the 'cool pose.' He is humble, while at the same time making note of the disrespect Dana White has shown him in the past, with "all that SHIT Dana White was saying about me." He then dismisses the prior disrespect, saying, "it's all good though, you feel me?"[39] In this way, Slice is able to present himself as a man who takes respect seriously, who doesn't ignore insults or disrespect, while at the same time being strong enough not to allow such insults to disturb him. Slice's 'cool pose' is such that he is able to absorb prior insults, and use them as motivation to accomplish greater things, rather than allowing them to stop him. Given the ways in which the 'cool pose' is meant to act as a means of protecting oneself emotionally from oppression, Slice's handling of how White had talked about him in the past is an excellent example of the 'cool pose' at work.

Finally, both Slice's and White's interviews can be read as 'manhood acts.' Dana White is the president of the UFC, and is the organization's public face. This ties in with the first category of Messner's "Televised Sports Manhood Formula," that "White Males are the Voice of Authority."[40] Messner points to the predominance of white males in broadcast positions,[41] but because *The Ultimate Fighter* doesn't feature any play-by-play or colour commentary, Dana White is the de facto commentator on the show. He does not often directly participate in the show, and instead tends to only appear as a host, offering his insight into the fights and the fighters in his interview segments. He is there for the fight announcements, and is often cage-side for the fights themselves, and will occasionally appear to settle disputes or mete out discipline. His role is almost that of *Survivor's* Jeff Probst, except that White has considerable authority within the UFC. This affirms the perception that white males represent the established voice of masculine authority within professional sports, as discussed by Messner.

White's comments on Kimbo Slice establish this authority, presenting White as the man who made the decision as to whether or not Kimbo Slice would be a competitor on *The Ultimate Fighter*. More importantly, White is presented as the man whose opinion of Slice is the most important. White acknowledges 'talking shit' about Slice in the past, while at the same time now giving Slice the opportunity to prove him wrong. This creates a hierarchy where the opinions of the "millions of fans" who support Kimbo Slice are not as important as those of one man, UFC President Dana White. White is performing his manhood as the white male who stands as the gatekeeper to Mixed Martial Arts acceptance. More importantly, because White is the voice of authority, it establishes that what he endorses and supports is good, and that which he disapproves of

is bad. They are not only considered bad by White, but by those who consume White's spectacular narratives as represented through the UFC. As a result, White is not only the white male voice of authority, but the representations disseminated through the UFC's spectacular narratives encourage association and agreement with White's beliefs and attitudes. More specifically, they encourage association and agreement with the dominant concepts of masculinity that White brands and markets through the UFC.

Kimbo Slice acts out his manhood by emphasizing his toughness as being "street certified," while at the same time acknowledging his need to prove himself to Dana White. But rather than presenting this as an act of servitude or weakness, he instead presents it as a challenge to be overcome. Schrock and Schwalbe discuss how "a capacity to exert control over one's self, the environment, and others," plays a significant role in 'manhood acts.'[42] In this instance, Slice will demonstrate control over himself by proving his ability to exert control over others in the UFC Octagon. Slice is protecting, and presenting his masculinity, in a way that acknowledges his position of weakness in his relationship with Dana White, while using that disadvantage as a means of motivation and opportunity.

Episode 1: First Impressions

In the introduction, the attention shifted from the competitors to the coaches. First, footage of Rampage Jackson[43] was shown, with a Voice-Over emphasizing his status as a "slam specialist."[44] Jackson is representated by who he is through the violence he administers. The same thing happened when the attention turned to Rashad Evans, who is described as being a "skilled striker,"[45] again using his fighting prowess as a signifier of his persona. Both men become signified through associations with their

particular fighting styles, conflating the human beings with the ways in which they do violence to other men in the Octagon.

The opening then established the driving narrative for the season, that being the conflict between Jackson and Evans, with the culmination of their coaching battle to be the contest between the two coaches on Pay-Per-View. In addition to showing clips from their post-fight stare-down at UFC 96, the opening montage then raised the issue of the UFC Light Heavyweight title, showing a clip of Jackson from UFC 96, staring at the camera and screaming, "I Want My Belt Back!"[46] An interview clip of Dana White was also shown, where White discusses how both men have been the UFC Light Heavyweight champion in the past. This makes the issue of the UFC title central, emphasizing the importance of the title to both fighters. In this way, the UFC LHW title can be seen as a signifier, not only for superiority within the weight division, but also as a second level signifier for proven masculinity. By proving to be the best fighter in one's weight class, a fighter can also make a claim for proving to be the dominant man in the division. If an important aspect of masculinity is to prove one's dominance, particularly through physical means, and violence specifically, then a title belt can be seen as a symbol of that proven masculinity, an image that carries great significance.

The opening montage then featured interview clips from both Jackson and Evans. According to Jackson, "Rashad is known to be a very cocky person, and I don't like cockiness."[47] And Evans says about Jackson, "I don't care for Rampage too much. Matter of fact, I don't like him at all."[48] These interviews with the two fighters take the confrontation between the two men out of the realm of the professional, and into the realm of the personal. Rather than a fight built on a desire for professional success, the

fight is presented as being one fought out of a desire to prove who is the better man. This, again, is an example of 'manhood acts' in action, with both men looking to prove their control over the other through the application of violence. Their time on *The Ultimate Fighter* is, by extension, another opportunity to prove their superiority over the other vicariously through the fighters they will coach and mentor on the show. While possession of the UFC Light Heavyweight title is certainly symbolic of one's dominance, the addition of a personal dimension to the conflict makes the physical that much more significant.

The opening montage ended with the Voice-Over declaring, "[b]oth fighters have put legitimate title shots on hold, so they can take each other on first. Which heavyweight will survive to become The Ultimate Fighter?" These two sentences bring together a number of the themes. The title belt is important, but that importance is diminished when compared to the personal animosity between the two fighters. In addition, the show's competitors will be looking to 'survive,' not win, and to be declared *The Ultimate Fighter* thus gaining distinction as the dominant man.

The episode began with an establishing shot of the exterior of the UFC training facility, identified as being in Las Vegas, Nevada by an on-screen graphic. The building features a garage door with the UFC logo and website[49] painted on the door. While not identifying exactly where in Las Vegas the facility is, the shot will be later contrasted with a shot of the house where the fighters live during their time participating on the show. From a generic standpoint, the facility is one of the two main locations where the show will take place. The training facility is where the physical aspects of the show --

coaching, training, fighting -- will take place, while the house is where the personal interactions between the fighters will take place.

From the establishing shot, we then move inside the facility where we hear the voices of Jackson and Evans, but see only posters of them on the walls. The fighters are represented as visual images, while the narrative, the conversation and interaction between the two men, is only heard. The two discuss the in-cage confrontation from UFC 96, again establishing that moment as the beginning of the narrative, and making the issue a personal, rather than a professional one. With that established, the shot then changes to a shot of the two men sitting next to one another on a bench in the training facility. After establishing UFC 96 as the starting point for the conflict between the two men, they begin making predictions for their upcoming PPV fight:

> Jackson: I'm gonna kick the shit outta you Rashad.
> Evans: You don't believe that. You don't believe that do you?
> Jackson: I know it. I'm gonna beat the brakes offa you.
> Evans: Let me tell you why that ain't gonna happen. You're too slow.
> Jackson: You think so? I'm glad you think that.
> Evans: You're too slow. You're too slow.
> Jackson: It don't matter.
> Evans: And your head too big, and its too easy to hit.
> Jackson: Good...I can take 'em though.
> Evans: You can't.
> Jackson: Can you take 'em though?
> Evans: I can take 'em.
> Jackson: Didn't look like you could take em in your last fight.
> Evans: [laughs][50]

The exchange between the two fighters is another example of the 'cool pose' at work. Here, each man vies for verbal dominance in the buildup to their actual physical confrontation. Most interesting in this exchange are the ways in which the fighters are attempting to describe why they will defeat the other man. But closer examination shows that it is Evans who is offering reasons as to why he will defeat Jackson, while Jackson is

simply dismissing Evans' claims. Evans claims that Jackson is "too slow"[51] and that his "head too big, and it's too easy to hit."[52] Jackson just laughs off the jibes, and asserts his toughness by claiming that, when it comes to punches, "I can take 'em though."[53]

Evans takes a more rationalapproach to the verbal sparring, offering reasons for his eventual victory. Jackson, on the other hand, takes a more comical approach to the engagement, laughing off Evans' points, and offering jokes as his defense. This demonstrates the different approaches which will mark each man's approach to their narrative. At the same time both approaches can be seen as each man's attempts to assert and embody their own definitions of masculinity and coolness. Evans chooses to use reason and logic, while Jackson makes use of humour. In both instances, each fighter is creating his own 'manhood acts' and presenting his own 'cool pose.' For Evans, his manhood is demonstrated in his ability to logically think through his skills and to present himself as being more intelligent than his opponent. This doesn't mean that Evans discounts the need for physical strength or skill, but instead indicates that Evans considers intelligence and reason to be an important factor in determining one's fighting ability, and by extension, the masculinity they demonstrate through their use of that fighting skill.

For Jackson, his manhood is about physical toughness and a refusal to take the intellectual aspect of Mixed Martial Arts too seriously. Again, this is not to say that Quinton Jackson is unintelligent, or that he doesn't think about what he does. Instead, Jackson's approach places a strong emphasis on the strategic use of emotion. While seemingly in contrast with Billson and Majors' assertions that the 'cool pose' is one in which emotions are suppressed, Jackson's presentation of self here does that, while likely

not in a way that Billson and Majors had anticipated. Jackson expresses emotion, but only specific emotions, and only those emotions which do not leave him vulnerable to attack, either intellectually or emotionally. Jackson uses humour, including self-deprecating humour, as his first, default, emotional state. When that is challenged, or is insufficient, Jackson changes to anger and defensiveness. In this way, both the emotional states Jackson expresses are ones designed to prevent damage.

Both Jackson and Evans demonstrate their own versions of the 'cool pose' according to their own definitions of what it means to be cool, and what it means to be a man. This is in keeping with Billson and Majors' emphasis on the 'cool pose' as learned behaviour,[54] which by extension, means that Jackson and Evans each learned their 'cool pose' differently, while at the same time learning how important the 'cool pose' was and is to their sense of self, and their self-image. This ties in with Schrock and Schwalbe's assertion that "[t]he lesson—for boys who are marginalized because of class or race—is that a masculine self can be signified, and deference elicited, by evoking fear in others."[55] Both Jackson and Evans are attempting to evoke fear, or some reaction, in the other through their verbal encounter, in the hope of gaining an advantage in the pending physical encounter.

In the episode, the verbal encounter changed as the Season 10 competitors enter the training facility. Jackson and Evans continue to talk to one another, but the addition of the aspiring UFC fighters adds another dimension to the situation:

> Jackson: "I always wanted to know, right before Machida knocked you out, what was you sayin', what was you talkin' about? for real, no no no, you talkin"
> Evans: "He's hitting me, and it felt like it was just pillows..."
> Jackson: "You was breathing like a fish out of water [laughs]"
> Evans: "How many times you been knocked out?"
> Jackson: "Once!"

Evans: "Who made you quit?"
Jackson: "Nobody made me quit, I never quit "
Evans: "Shogun"
Jackson: "I didn't quit, I didn't tap out."
Evans: "I seen it in your eyes, you quit."
Jackson: "Nah, I didn't quit, I never quit."
Evans: "You quit."
Jackson: "I never quit."
Evans: "You quit that fight."
Jackson: "You will see."
Evans: "You quit that fight."[56]

With this exchange, the two have moved from pointing out their own strengths, to discussing the other's weaknesses. This allows them to attack the other's skills and masculinity. In this instance, the argument began over Evans' being knocked out by Lyoto 'The Dragon' Machida when Evans lost the title, and then extends to Evans' perception of Jackson as having quit in his fight against Mauricio 'Shogun' Rua when both men were competing in the Pride Fighting Championship organization based in Japan.[57] With this, a distinction is drawn between the virtues of being knocked out in a fight over submitting in a fight. A similar distinction is drawn in Hirose and Pih's paper, "Men Who Strike and Men Who Submit: Hegemonic and Marginalized Masculinities in Mixed Martial Arts."[58] Although that paper looks at the issue of striking- and submission-based fighting styles in the context of the men who use those different fighting styles, rather than those who lose, the distinction is still there. Being knocked out is seen as being a more masculine method of defeat, as opposed to submission, or 'quitting,' as when discussed by Jackson and Evans. This mentality favours the 'Death Before Dishonour' perspective, as opposed to the belief that 'Discretion is the Better Part of Valour.'

It is also worth noting that Jackson lost his fight to Shogun as the result of a TKO, or technical knockout, not submission. For Evans, Jackson quit the fight in the sense that he stopped trying to fight Shogun, and instead just lay there waiting for the ref step in and stop the fight. Evans uses this belief to taunt Jackson, to question his masculinity, and to try to goad Jackson into anger. At this point, Dana White, in his role as the white male of authority, stepped in to prevent any escalation. "Guys we got five minutes, don't get in a fucking fight. All right, we got five minutes, relax you two, alright? Don't get in a fight."[59]

This level of interaction between Jackson and Evans is important because it introduces another dimension of the narrative between the two men, that being Evans' perception of Jackson as a man who quits. Evans will continue to use this motif as a tool to strike at Jackson, and to attempt to diminish Jackson in the eyes of the spectators.

Episode 1: Coaches and Teammates

Dana White proceeded to introduce the coaches to the fighters, and introduces Kimbo Slice as the final contestant on the show, in a ploy clearly designed to demonstrate both the significance of having Slice on the show, as well as allowing White to maintain his status as gatekeeper for MMA legitimacy. The fighters then worked out for both of the coaches, before the coaches picked teams in a manner highly reminiscent of schoolyard team selection. This segment furthers the distinction between the two coaches, as Evans has the competitors spar with pads and work on heavy bags and speed bags, while Jackson has the fighters spar with each other in the training Octagon.

In an interview segment, Evans states that "[w]hat was most important for us, and is always a part of Team Jackson's philosophy is, we wanted to make sure the guys we

picked for our team were mentally strong, and had a good ability to mould, and take direction well, and as well as a lot of skills."[60] This is contrasted with Jackson's approach, which he describes by saying "Bags don't hit back .... We decided to make the guys spar each other, and wrestle live, basically pretty much something that they're really going to be doing .... They get inside that cage, they're not going to be holding pads for each other and punching bags"[61] Both approaches can be read as extensions of the self-presentations of each man. Evans' approach is one of logic and reason, while Jackson's approach stresses toughness and demonstrations of physicality. Again, the distinctions between the two men is demonstrated, and the rivalry between the two is extended beyond their personal interaction, and into their professional coaching competition.

This extension of the conflict between Jackson and Evans also extends to the ways in which the coaches interact with the *Ultimate Fighter* contestants. Evans, for example, has no interest in having Kimbo Slice on his team, while Jackson makes clear his intent to pick the former street fighter. As soon as Dana White introduces Slice, Rampage points to him and says "He's on my team."[62] In an interview segment with Evans, he says "Rampage, as soon as he seen Kimbo, he like, 'Kimbo on my team.' And I'm thinking, 'cool.'"[63] Each coach has their own reaction to Kimbo Slice, which provides some insight into how they perceive the role of a fighter like Kimbo Slice within the world of MMA, and the UFC in particular.

The coaches also had interesting interactions with some of the other fighters. Roy 'Big Country' Nelson, a former IFL (International Fight League) champion,[64] is a man with an ample belly, and a similarly large ego. During his time working out for Team Rampage, Jackson makes note of Nelson's girth and, while not openly mocking him, the

way that Jackson jokes around with Nelson indicates that Jackson does not believe that masculinity and fighting skill can be signified by someone who is obese. One fighter who is openly mocked for his physical appearance is Darrill Schoonover, another overweight fighter. Jackson takes to calling Schoonover 'Titties,' in reference to Schoonover's 'man-boobs.' Here, Jackson *is* degrading the fighter, by using the association with femininity. As discussed by Schrock and Schwalbe, as well as Messner et al., femininity, and associations with the feminine, are construed within these constructions of masculinity as being weaknesses and signifiers of lower value. By referring to Schoonover as 'Titties,' Jackson is not only degrading Schoonover, but also expecting that Schoonover, and the viewers, share this view of women as being worth less than men, not simply different from men. This is an excellent example of Schrock and Schwalbe's 'manhood acts' in action, with Jackson using his behaviour towards Schoonover not only as a way to demonstrate his perceived dominance over Schoonover, but also by doing so in a way that makes clear that the status of women, and those who can be identified with women, either through their behaviour or their appearance, is lesser than that of men.

After the coaches observed the competitors in action, they debated who they wanted to select, and then gather in the training facility to choose, schoolyard style, the fighters for their teams. Jackson continues his taunting of Darrill Schoonover, referring to him as 'Titties' in front of the entire group, and pretending to select him for his team, before choosing Kimbo Slice. As with much of his taunting, Jackson does so in a joking manner, perpetuating the presentation of the 'cool pose' while also making clear to

Schoonover, and the rest of *The Ultimate Fighter* cast, that Schoonover is, by virtue of his appearance and physical condition, a lesser man than Jackson.

Because Team Rashad chose the first fighter, Team Rampage had the opportunity to select the first fight match-up This is a trend for this season of *The Ultimate Fighter*. A fight is selected, and then the majority of the time after that selection will concentrate on the two fighters who are going to fight. This allows the producers to build a narrative for the fight, and to encourage viewers to identify with at least one of the fighters. In this way, it helps to ensure that the viewers are, at least somewhat, emotionally invested in the fight. This is important because there are no commentators or announcers to accompany the fights when they take place. As a result, the best way to encourage viewers to engage with the fighters, and the fight, is to devote a good deal of that episode to those particular fighters.

For the first fight, Team Rampage chose to have Abe Wagner fight Team Rashad's Jon Madsen. After the announcement, the two fighters stood face-to-face and each assumed a fight pose. This is formulaic within combat sports, and is done at UFC weigh-ins, as well as in boxing. It would seem that the use of the tradition here is to lend an air of authenticity to the upcoming match, despite it not taking place in front of a live audience, and only being an exhibition match, which has no bearing on a fighter's official record. Each of the coaches also offered their perspective on the upcoming match, keeping the conflict between Jackson and Evans as a central part of the narrative.

In an interview segment, Evans says that "Rampage announced that my boy, Jon Madsen, to fight Abe Wagner. And I'm thinking, Rampage thank you. You're putting my number one wrestler against somebody who doesn't have any ground game at all.

Thank you! Smart coaching."[65] This demonstrates both Evans' logical approach to fighting and coaching, as well as his opinion on Jackson's coaching ability. Evans is able to both talk positively, and logically, about Madsen's chances in the fight, while at the same time mocking Jackson.

Madsen and Wagner are also shown in interview segments discussing the fight. Madsen says that, "Being, probably the littlest guy here, I think size doesn't mean anything you know, its uh, quickness, strength, power, uh, agility, I think that's more important than size."[66] Madsen's point is important because of the emphasis placed on a fighter's size in this season of *The Ultimate Fighter*. By focusing on heavyweight fighters, and by including men like Kimbo Slice and Roy Nelson, the message that size matters is constantly part of the narrative of the show. By extension then, a fighter's masculinity is signified through his size. Big men are better men, particularly when that size is muscular, rather than simply height. Madsen's size puts him at a disadvantage in this context, and he must compensate by describing his virtues as being "quickness, strength, power, uh, agility."[67] Madsen cannot make himself larger, but he can demonstrate his ability, and his masculinity, in an attempt to disprove the importance of size through his actions.

The episode then featured footage of Madsen and Wagner working out with their respective teams, with a focus on the interaction between the coaches and the fighters. One interesting note is the discussion that Wagner and Jackson have about Wagner's outside the cage life, which includes the fact that Wagner has a degree in mechanical engineering, and has a career as "Director of Finance and Operations at a fairly large

company."[68] This ties in well with Billson and Majors discussion of the 'cool pose,' arguing that

> cool pose is designed to render the black male visible and to empower him; it eases the worry and pain of blocked opportunities. Being cool is an ego booster for black males comparable to the kind white males more easily find through attending good schools, landing prestigious jobs, and bringing home decent wages.[69]

Wagner is the beneficiary of the social opportunities that allowed him to achieve an engineering degree, and, as he describes fighting, "It's something I want to do, not something I have to do."[70]

On the day of the fight, both men arrive at the training facility, and prepare for the fight in their 'locker rooms.'[71] This includes having their fists taped and signed by a representative of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, getting warmed up, and getting last minute pep talks from their coaches. The fighters then make their way from the locker room to the Octagon, while their teammates cheer them on. Cut into their trip to the Octagon are interview segments. Wagner claims that he's "not here to see who can talk the most trash, I'm just here to see who can fight. I don't really have any message to him."[72] Madsen says, "No intimidation, it's, it's just one man against another, we both bleed, who's gonna bleed the most."[73] Wagner's quote seems to indicate that he was asked if he had any final message for his opponent, but he dismisses the question, and the concept of talking about the fight, choosing instead to focus on what will take place in the fight. Wagner's presentation of self seems to run counter to the reality television convention of using solitary interview times to promote himself or his abilities, but it can also be read as a conscious decision on his part to present himself as a man who chooses to forgo words in favour of actions. Madsen, on the other hand, takes advantage of the

opportunity not only to make clear the fact that both competitors are men, but also to talk about the loss of blood as part of the game. This is an example of Messner et al.'s theme of "Give Up Your Body For The Team,"[74] where pain and injury are not only possibilities in sport, but are important aspects that must be embraced by men who wish to compete.

Before the fight, another fighting stereotype is invoked, that of the ring girl. In this case, a bikini clad woman carries an octagon shaped sign with the round number on it. This is a perfect example of Messner et al.'s theme that "Women are Sexy Props or Prizes for Men's Successful Sport Performances or Consumption Choices."[75] Here, the woman is clad in a UFC branded bikini, and walks around the outside of the Octagon, making clear that women have no place within the Octagon itself. Women are only things to be admired for their beauty, and perhaps to add a contrast to the brutal masculinity exhibited within the chain-link confines of the cage. Also interesting to note is the way the woman as object is viewed through the camera lens, and the producers' lens. The woman's entire body is never shown, typically framed from waist up. However, there are a number of compartmentalizing shots of just the woman's buttocks or breasts, both branded with the UFC logo on the tight bikini top or bottom. This segments the woman into a collection of parts, representing her as pieces to be used in the promotion of the UFC.

When both fighters are in the cage, Wagner holds up one of his gloved fists to Madsen and asks "You gonna touch or no?"[76] Wagner is asking Madsen if he wants to touch gloves before the fight begins. This is traditionally a show of respect between two fighters, done to indicate that, despite the fact that both men will be striking each other in

the face, or trying to cut off the supply of oxygen to their brain during the fight, this is all being done within a context of mutual respect, rather than animosity.

Madsen doesn't reply, and just stares at Wagner. Seeing this, Jackson tells Wagner, "Fuck him, don't care about touching or nothing, care about whipping his ass. Don't care about touching hands, care about touching his face with your fists."[77] Jackson's attitude dismisses the concept of respect within the fight, and instead focuses on the physical confrontation between the two fighters. Again, Jackson is presenting an angry, emotional 'cool pose' and is imposing that perspective on the fighters he coaches.

Also before the fight a "Tale of the Tape" graphic is shown where both fighters' stats are compared to one another. This includes their height, weight, age, and professional record. During the broadcast, these graphics are often sponsored, and the sponsor's logo is displayed on the screen. On the DVD release there is no mention of a sponsor, and no sponsor logo. This practice not only gives the viewer some additional information about the fighters, but also quantifies the latter, reducing them to numbers. After the 'Tale of the Tape,' Dana White is shown in the ring, once again acting as the voice of authority, announcing the fight, and wishing both competitors good luck.

The fight begins, and both competitors do touch gloves to start. In the ring, there are decals on the canvas floor for various sponsors, which this season are "Mickey's Fine Malt Liquor," "Sony PlayStation 3," "Burger King," and "Tapout," a clothing line with strong ties to MMA. At the centre of the Octagon is a decal for the "Dave & Buster's " chain of restaurants. No mention of the sponsors is made, but the presence of sponsor logos is ubiquitous with MMA, and UFC productions in particular. It is also important to note that the fighters are wearing *The Ultimate Fighter* branded shorts in their respective

team colours,[78] rather than shorts with various sponsor logos as is typically found in Mixed Martial Arts.

During the fightWagner is cut open by Madsen's punches. The blood flow is prodigious, causing Dana White to exclaim between rounds, "Wow! That's the bloodiest Ultimate Fighter fucking fight ever,"[79] while members of Team Rampage are shown cleaning the blood from Wagner's face. As the second round begins, Madsen ignores Wagner's offered glove touch, and instead shoots in to take Wagner to the mat. Jackson is angered, not by the seemingly underhanded tactic by Madsen, but at Wagner's offer of respect. After the fighters spend some time grappling on the ground, the referee stands them both up. Shortly thereafter, Madsen takes Wagner down to the mat again. And the two fighters are stood up by the referee a short time later. This process continues for the rest of the second round. Jackson can be heard from Wagner's corner, expressing his frustration both with Madsen's strategy, and with Wagner's inability to counter that strategy.

The fight ends, and Jackson walks away before the announcement that Madsen won by unanimous judges' decision. In an interview with Evans, he says, "You know, it wasn't really about Rampage, but it did feel good to beat him."[80] Here, the fight between Wagner and Madsen is just part a part of the conflict between Evans and Jackson, with Evans claiming victory over Jackson vicariously through Madsen.

After the fight, Jackson is shown in the Team Rampage locker room talking to his fighters. He tells them "Hey guys, I don't wanna see none of my guys touching hands with nobody. We don't touch gloves. After the fight you can be his friend, but right there before the fight..."[81] This is Jackson's reaction to the display of respect offered by

Wagner, and gives an indication again of Jackson's emotional approach to fighting and competing. In an interview with Jackson, he claims to have overestimated Wagner's wrestling ability, and that "Abe needs to go back to being a damn scientist, or whatever the hell he doing, because fighting not his thing."[82] Jackson dismisses Wagner as a fighter, and as a man, and suggest he goes back to his 'day job.' While not explicitly calling out Wagner's masculinity, the connections that can be drawn between fighting and masculinity suggest that Jackson's career advice for Wagner stem from a belief that Wagner's brand of masculinity is not up to the task of fighting in the UFC. Luckily for Wagner, he has his engineering degree as a fall back position.

As the first episode ends, the voice-over announces, "This season on *The Ultimate Fighter*," while clips from future episodes are shown. These include additional shots of UFC ring girls in bikinis holding ring cards, Jackson smashing a door in the training facility, and clips of Jackson and Evans having face-to-face confrontations. The promise made is that if people continue to tune in, they will see sex, violence, and drama.

This first episode establishes how masculinity is framed on *The Ultimate Fighter*. By emphasizing not only the use of controlled violence as a means of proving and demonstrating masculinity, but also the performance of masculinity outside of the UFC Octagon, Dana White and the UFC shape the narrative of what it means to be masculine. Masculinity is performed and proven, not only in the Octagon, but also outside of the ring: by mocking others, by questioning their masculinity, and by talking about one's own abilities. Masculinity is also embodied in specific ways. Roy Nelson and Darrill Schoonover, as men of ample girth, are considered to be lesser by nature of their physiques. This not only makes it permissible for them to be mocked, but also places the

onus on them to prove their masculinity in the Octagon. Because of this constant pressure to perform one's masculinity, these narratives provide the first step towards achieving the goals of the Society of the Spectacle. As Debord writes, "[i]n all of its specific manifestations – news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment – the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life."[83] In this instance, the prevailing model is that of masculinity, and how masculinity should be defined, and performed. Of course, this is only the first step towards creating the spectacular narrative. Tthe next chapter will examine how, by providing this customization of masculinity, the UFC takes the next step towards fulfilling the goals of the spectacle, providing "the omnipresent celebration of a choice *already made* in the sphere of production and the consummate result of that choice."[84] What each of the episodes of *The Ultimate Fighter*, and the various other elements of the UFC's 'integrated sport spectacle' do, is to provide the product which is sold to the UFC's spectators, a belief in a masculinity that is best exemplified by the men who compete in the UFC Octagon.

Episode 2: Men Are Made to Fight

The second episode featured Team Rashad's first selection James McSweeney defeating Team Rampage member Wes Shiver, a former NFL player for the Tennessee Titans, one of the four former NFL players to compete on *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*. In an interview, McSweeney, from London, England, offered insight into why he chose to compete in MMA, saying,

> I never come from a bad upbringing, or like you know broken parents or nothing like that you know, I think, I don't think real fighters choose to fight, I think fighting chooses them. And that's kind of been the thing, and, I'm at a point in my

> career now where, like I'm 28 and I've had fights, and I've come to terms with this is what I was built to do.[85]

McSweeney's interview reinforces the perception of masculinity, or at least its manifestation in the form of professional MMA fighting, as a trait with which a man is born, rather than one that is learned. Of note is McSweeney's assertion that he has "come to terms with this is what I was built to do."[86] This indicates that for McSweeney, men do not learn to behave as men, instead, they learn how to deal with their masculinity, and express it in the way they were designed to do. For McSweeney, one's masculinity is not learned, not environmental ("I never come from a bad upbringing, or like you know broken parents or nothing like that you know.") and is instead an inherent quality that must be mastered if one is to truly be considered a man. In McSweeney's view, one does not learn one's 'manhood acts'' as discussed by Schrock and Schwalbe, rather one learns to accept one's 'manhood acts'' as legitimate and natural.

Another interesting event during the second episode involved a confrontation between Jackson and Evans. This time, the confrontation was premised on Jackson's perception that Team Rashad was disrespecting Team Rampage by taking too long in the training facility, and more importantly, cutting into Team Rampage's training time by not finishing their training sessions in a timely manner. Upon seeing Team Rashad in the training facility, Jackson again demonstrates his combination of humour and aggression as cornerstones of his 'cool pose,' saying "I'm thinking about walking over there, pulling my pants down and just farting right on all their heads, just doing the Ghetto Blaster."[87] While Jackson doesn't follow through with his proposed solution to the problem, the fundamental aspects of his self-presentation can all be found in this statement. He makes a joke to cover his anger about the situation, but does so in a way that demonstrates his

desire to prove his dominance, not just to himself, and not just to Evans, but to Team Rampage, Team Rashad, and to the viewers.

In response, Evans demonstrates his own understanding, not just of Jackson, but of the ways that Jackson behaves and the motivations behind that behaviour. In an interview segment, Evans says,

> See, me and Rampage's relationship works like this. We joke around and joke around, and then next thing you know it's the underlying, like, I want to punch you in the face type of joking around. You know, he's smiling, then I say something to him, and then he says something to me, and then it's serious again, you know, so, it's only a fake smile.[88]

This seems underscores the role that performance plays in masculinityEvans understands Jackson's 'cool pose' and the ways he uses humour as a mask for his actual frustration and anger. Evans doesn't really acknowledge his own role, or performance, in the relationship between the two, but the fact that he understands that Jackson is using a smile and a joke as a performed behaviour is interesting to note.

The second episode ends with a fight announcement presaging the next episode. Having won the first two fights, Team Rashad has control over who will fight next. Evans gets up in front of the fighters and announces that Roy 'Big Country' Nelson will be representing Team Rashad. Evans then says that he "wants the big, black buck, with the greasy beard, Kimbo Slice."[89] The two fighters square off with the traditional pose, and it then cuts to an interview segment with Dana White saying "This is a true test for Kimbo Slice."[90]

The decision to put the fight announcement at the end of the episode was likely a production decision to capitalize on Slice's reputation. By announcing the fight a week ahead of time, it gave Spike TV a week to advertise the fight on its programming without

being accused of spreading 'spoilers.' More importantly, it allowed the producers to dedicate the subsequent episode to building up to the fight, focusing on Slice and Nelson, giving the greatest amount of time to build the narrative behind the fight. As the second episode ends, the hype for the fight swings into motion, proclaiming that the next episode will feature "the biggest fight in Ultimate Fighter history."[91]

Episode 3: Inner Masculinity

The opening segment of the third episode recaps the fight announcement from the end of the second episode, and the Voice-Over asks, "Will Kimbo show up to do what he does best?"[92] Then, after the theme song intro, the show cuts to the house, where Kimbo Slice is in his bedroom talking to Abe Wagner. This portion of the show is interesting because it shows an introspective side to Kimbo Slice that runs counter to the 'street fighter' image that had been the basis for much of his presentation up to that point, and was seemingly the focus of the Kimbo Slice 'character:'

> Kimbo Slice: You know, one thing I've learned, being here, in my spare time I really found myself doing a lot of, one on one connecting, like praying, you know putting everything in perspectives, with me and God, something I haven't done in a long time, I hope that don't make me all nice and mushy.
> Abe Wagner: A newer, gentler Kimbo Slice?
> Kimbo Slice: I don't know, that's like an oxymoron man, that can't go, like oil and water, it just can't mix. I guess whenever I decide to shave the beard, that's when I'll probably put Kimbo at rest. But would Kimbo ever be at rest?[93]

Slice's self-analysis, and his recognition that Kimbo Slice is a performed aspect of his personality that can be excised like shaving his beard is juxtaposed with his fear that his spiritual experimentation could make him "nice and mushy."[94] In an interview segment with Kimbo, which is cut with scenes of him kneeling by his bed and presumably praying, Slice says,

> I always felt like I'll fight anybody, cause everybody was the enemy, the enemy, the enemy, the enemy. You know, and now I'm here, where I'm nothing, away from everyone, and I really took the time to find out, you know, who the enemy was, and its not that it was the enemy, it was the inner me. The inner me, the inner me, the *inner*, [pointing at himself] the inner me. [laughs] Sometimes you realize the true you *is* the enemy.[95]

Slice is providing a different self-presentation than was likely anticipated by the producers when they cast Slice on the show. This version of Kimbo Slice is not only cognizant of the performative nature of the Kimbo Slice persona, but also questions the motivations behind the creation and perpetuation of the persona.

That being said, it is important to note that Slice's focus is on the inherent and individual motivations behind the Kimbo Slice persona, and no acknowledgment of how such a character can also be seen as a reaction to external motivations, and a learned behaviour like the 'cool pose.' Once more, like James McSweeney's discussion of how his choosing to be a fighter was a natural extension of himself, so too does Slice seem to reflect that same belief in the essential nature of his performed behaviour. Where the two perspectives differ is in the fact that McSweeney believes he has embraced the essential fighter within, while Slice seems to be resisting, or at least questioning, what he sees as the enemy within.

Later in the episode, Slice seems to back off from his introspection, saying to some of his housemates, "I'm an average guy. Some of these guys have got a chip...I don't have no chip on my shoulder, ain't nothing there. I'm a family man, I just like to fight, you know what I'm sayin'?"[96] Here, Slice seems much more accepting of the role that fighting plays in his life, and he claims to do it because he enjoys it. This doesn't mean that he has completely abandoned his awareness of the fact that Kimbo Slice is a persona, but rather that he is acknowledging that the Kimbo Slice persona was created as

a way for him to deal with the pleasure he derives from fighting, much more in line with James McSweeney's discussion of his "[coming] to terms with this is what I was built to do."[97]

The episode also featured another confrontation between Jackson and Evans. This time, the confrontation is instigated by a visit to the UFC training facility by the aforementioned Keith Jardine. This ends up with a discussion between Jackson and Evans over whom was ducking whom when previous attempts to get the two to fight fell through:

> Jackson: I was supposed to fight you, but you didn't take the fight, Dana said Rashad said 'I wanna keep my belt longer' I fought him but I was supposed to fight you, I was supposed to fight you, I was supposed to fight you, but your boy [Jardine] stepped up. Now you wanna talk shit, told Dana I wanna keep my belt longer, that's what Dana told, that's what Dana told me, and he [Jardine] stepped up like a man and fought me.
> Evans: You were supposed to fight me in May and you said what? You said what? You said no, you said no right?
> Jackson: I just fought two fights, I just fought two fights.
> Evans: So shut up.[98]

In this confrontation, Jackson states that Jardine "stepped up like a man and fought me."[99] The implication of this statement within the context of Evans choosing not to fight Jackson is that Evans isnot a man. For Jackson, an important part of being a man, or of properly displaying your masculinity, is to fight, and more importantly, to fight opponents who will challenge you, test your mettle.

It is also worth noting that after Evans tells Jackson to "shut up," Jackson makes a joke about Rashad's breath and ducks behind one of the Team Rampage trainers in an attempt to get away from Evans' halitosis. Once again, Jackson uses humour as a component of his 'cool pose' and, perhaps more importantly, uses humour to degrade and devalue his opponent.

The confrontation between Evans and Jackson also featured James McSweeney stepping in to support Evans. Later, in an interview segment, Jackson uses the perceived insult as an opportunity to mock McSweeney's accent, saying he couldn't understand McSweeney, and saying "Take Rashad's nuts out your mouth, then talk to me."[100] This insult uses both xenophobia and homophobia for its power, accusing McSweeney of homosexuality, and blaming that for Jackson's inability to understand what McSweeney says. As Schrock and Schwalbe point out about 'manhood acts,' "[c]laiming a heterosexual identity as part of a manhood act may also involve homophobic taunting, especially among boys and young men....Whereas this taunting mainly establishes a hierarchy among boys and men, it also reinforces sexist ideology, because the implicit insult is that a man who wants to have sex with men is like a woman—which is to say, less than a man."[101] Jackson, who perceived McSweeney's interference as unwarranted, lashes out at this new opponent by questioning his manhood, while at the same time insulting his accent with the same taunt.

The fight between Kimbo Slice and Roy Nelson took up much of the second half of the third episode. Nelson wins the fight by taking Slice to the mat, mounting him in a crucifix position,[102] and punching Slice in the head until the referee, seeing that Slice was unable to 'intelligently defend himself' stopped the fight. While Nelson didn't knock Slice out, or even cause him enough pain or damage to cause Slice to submit, he did defeat his opponent, advancing in the tournament style competition for the title of Ultimate Fighter. However, the win did not impress Dana White, who said that

> He had Kimbo down and he was hitting Kimbo, but it wasn't like he was hitting him with, you know, these punches that were like, you were just sitting there going, 'Oh my God, stop the fight!' Like, I let my daughter pin me down and hit me, alright, that's the kind of shots Roy Nelson's hitting him with.[103]

By comparing Nelson's method of victory to the tactics of a young girl, Dana White, the voice of authority not only questioned Nelson's fighting skills, but also questioned Nelson's masculinity. Nelson may be the victor, but he did not win in a way that White believes a fighter should win. As a result, the presentation of self that Nelson demonstrated does not fit with White's perception of what best befits not only a fighter, but an Ultimate Fighter. After the fight, Nelson asked White and Lorenzo Fertitta for a "Double Whopper with Cheese, no pickle"[104] White described the victory, and Nelson's post-fight antics by saying "This guys acting like, the whole world should be blown away by the performance that this guy just put on....Roy, did just enough to win, and not get hit, you know what I mean?"[105] For White, the victory is less important than the performance, and Nelson's performance does not fit White's opinion of how a man wins a fight, and certainly not how an Ultimate Fighter, a modern-day gladiator, wins a fight.

Episode 4: Dominant Men

This theme is continued at the beginning of the fourth episode. The fight is broken down by a number of the contestants, and footage from after the fight is shown. Jackson tells Nelson, "We all ready to see your skills, you ain't got shit. Ain't no need to be cocky."[106]Jackson then tells the Team Rampage trainers, "Can't stand that fat motherfucker now man."[107] Later, in the locker room, Jackson tells Slice, "The only thing that kept you on the ground was his weight, it wasn't his skills."[108]Much like Dana White, Jackson was not impressed with how Nelson defeated Slice, and uses his displeasure to question Nelson's skills, and degrade him.

This again establishes the framework for what it means to be considered masculine within the UFC. Men win fights, but they do so in a way that is a

demonstration of their abilities and their dominance, not by making use of a physical attribute which should be considered a source of shame and embarrassment. Having already established that fat is a signifier for a lack of masculinity, to then use that aspect as a means of defeating one's opponent is something for which Nelson should feel shame, not pride. This attitude is framed by White, in his role as voice of authority and non-combatant, in terms of excitement and entertainment, again keeping the emphasis on the spectacle, and the ability of the UFC to sell this perception of masculinity, both to the audience, and to the advertisers who wish to appeal to that audience. Jackson frames his criticism in a discussion of skills, keeping his focus on what a man does in the Octagon, and how a fighter wins a fight is of greater importance than the win itself. Just as with his arguments with Evans about fighting ability, Jackson's dismissal of Nelson furthers the belief that different fighting styles can be used as a means of assessing someone's masculinity. This, by extension, furthers Dana White's goals of using the UFC as a means of defining masculinity, and, in turn, of selling that brand of masculinity.

The rest of the fourth episode featured more antics, this time with much of the emphasis being placed on Team Rampage member Demico Rogers and Team Rashad competitor Brendan Schaub, who defeated Rogers in the episode's fight. Other highlights of the fourth episode included attacks on Team Rashad member Matt Mitrione's character when he reveals to a Team Rampage member what fights Team Rashad plans on making.[109] This aspect of the episode highlights the importance of camaraderie and honour within a team oriented setting, and does not explicitly discuss masculinity. In fact, in this instance, Mitrione is not compared to a woman, but rather to

an animal, specifically a rat. Mitrione's actions do not make him less of man, but they do make him less of a human, at least in the eyes of his teammates.

Also of note from the fourth episode are Jackson's discussions of violence. After another confrontation with Evans, Jackson discusses the violent thoughts he has when talking to Evans.

> I just wanna win so bad, so I can start to get back control, so I can shut Rashad mouth up, for real, save me a trip to prison, cause I'm having like, really bad thoughts....I'm actually ashamed of the thoughts I'm having, really ashamed of 'em....Have you ever thought about just punching somebody in they face, and just, your fist keeps going through the back of their brain, and pskloew,[110] you hear that noise and you pull out that brain, and throw it, and you spit on it, ptoo. You know what I'm saying, and then you kick 'em in the nuts.[111]

While Jackson is clearly using hyperbole and humour to get his point across, his emphasis on violence as a response to Evans' antagonism is yet another 'manhood act.'. This example acts as a midpoint between the two poles of Jackson's 'cool pose' with the anger tempered by the humour, but in such a way that allows for the anger to be expressed. What is most important is that Jackson continued to present himself both as a man, capable of violence, and as a 'cool' man, not succumbing to the violence, and instead using his confidence and sense of self as his means of coping with his frustration.

Episode 5: Pain and Penises: Embodied Masculinities

The fifth episode featured the emergence of an important theme addressing the role of masculinity in sports, that of the sports injury, and how best to deal with pain. The aforementioned 'rat' Matt Mitrione begins complaining of a sore shoulder, causing him to sit out Team Rashad training sessions. As Mitrione said in an interview, "I still have the old football mentality, where, if it hurts, well, suck it up, and hopefully I'll be able to get a cortisone shot to, uh, push out some inflammation in it, and I'll be able to

compete at my highest ability, pain-free."[112] This 'play through the pain' mentality is the subject of Messner et al.'s theme of "Give Up Your Body for the Team."[113] Messner at al. argue that those who don't let injury prevent them from playing are the subject of adulation and praise, while "those who removed themselves from games due to injuries had questions raised about their character, their manhood."[114] An example of this in Episode 5 is found in a discussion between Evans and Mitrione on the subject of using a cortisone shot to deal with the pain, where Evans asks Mitrione, "Is it sore or is it injured?"[115] For Evans, an injury is a justifiable reason for a fighter to use cortisone, while soreness is not. Soreness is, for Evans, just something that needs to be ignored and worked through, an annoyance rather than a legitimate cause for concern.

This questioning of Mitrione's manhood, as well as the legitimacy of his injury claims, continued through the episode. While Mitrione is seen wrestling with Roy Nelson, other Evans and the Team Rashad trainers discuss Mitrione. Trainer Mike Van Arsdale shows his oddly shaped collarbone to Evans, saying "When I hurt this one, six months. That's an injury right there."[116] He then points to Mitrione, saying "That's an owie over there. Owie, injury, owie, injury."[117] Van Arsdale's use of childish language to classify Mitrione's complaints is another example of how masculinity is challenged. Mitrione is, in Van Arsdale's eyes, acting like a child, and deserves to be treated as such.

Evans makes a similar point in an interview, saying "I just don't get it. If you're hurt, then really be hurt man. If you're not, then just stop playing and wasting people's time. Do you need attention, do you need a hug, what do you need?"[118] Again, Evans is reacting to Mitrione as one responds to a crying child, offering hugs and sympathy. Mitrione even acknowledges his 'childish' behaviour in an interview, saying "I guess I

was being a little bit of a baby."[119] Mitrione further acknowledges his failure as a man to deal with pain, saying

> If my shoulder doesn't want to cooperate, well then its just going to have to, otherwise I'll just cut it off and take somebody else's and put it on there for a little while. Kind of like the old He-Man figurines where you could just pull off an arm and put like, Ram-Man's arm on there for a while, I would probably do that...Or Cringer, Cringer had really strong arms, I could probably use his. Actually he was Battle-Cat when he was strong, so I'd probably use Battle-Cat's.[120]

Mitrione's use of references to the classic 80's "He-Man and the Masters of the Universe" action figures[121] is similar to Jackson's use of humour to compensate for frustration and anger. What is more important is the way that Mitrione characterizes his body as a thing made up of parts to be bent to the will of the user. Mitrione talks about his body the way that people talk about tools or cars, as things to be repaired if possible, with faulty parts replaced. This attitude is the same attitude that caused him to consider a cortisone shot immediately upon experiencing pain. What is more important is the presentation and performance of masculinity, rather than the care and maintenance of a healthy body. If he can win now, and prove his toughness now, any long-term effects are worth the price.

In the fifth episode,Jackson also raised the issue of sexuality and MMA. At the weigh-ins for the episode's fight between Team Rashad's Justin Wren and Team Rampage's Wes Sims, Wren strips down to a pair of colourful tight underwear for the weigh-in, to the laughter and applause of the other fighters. In an interview, Jackson commented that "Justin had on some, panties, that was, that was kinda scary for a big guy to be wearing, they barely covered him up."[122] By referring to Wren's undergarments as 'panties,' Jackson is again using humour, but also questioning Wren's masculinity by associating him with female undergarments.

Wren's opponent Wes Sims then moved to the scales and announced, while removing his shorts, "I promise you, I'm bigger."[123] Here, Sims is using his penis as a measuring stick for his masculinity. Sims reveals a set of underwear even skimpier than Wren's, to more laughter, catcalls and applause from the other men in the training facility. Jackson is again shown in an interview, saying

> Wes had on something a little bit bigger than a thong. And the guys, I don't know what goes on in the house, they haven't seen no girls, they were so excited to see two men in their panties. I never seen men so excited to see men in their panties before in my life. I was like, what kind of show have I gotten myself into?[124]

For Jackson, Sims' underwear, and the fighters' reactions to them, are decidedly unmasculine behaviours. Further, for Jackson, this unmasculine behaviour is caused by the dearth of females in the fighters' lives, causing them to react favourably to the appearance of "men in their panties." While Jackson is again using humour as a component of his 'cool pose,' the attitudes regarding proper male behaviour, and the importance of women as outlets for male sexuality, are important to note.

This example of the sexualization of women is important, particularly when considered alongside the larger issue of how women are marginalized within the world of MMA. As noted before, the scantily clad ring girls who sashay around the outside of the cage between rounds provide a clear demarcation as to where women are, and are not, allowed in the UFC. By classifying aspiring fighters as women, the suggestion is not just that these fighters are not real men, but also that they have no place within the Octagon, or the UFC in general. This is important not only for how it positions women as being lesser than men, but also because it provides a insights into how the creation of these masculine ideals works within the spectacle. Because the UFC brands and markets a specific masculinity, and that masculinity is in turn utilized by the sponsors and

advertisers to sell their products to the UFC audience, the more clearly masculinity is defined, the better it is for the UFC and for the sponsors who are seeking to associate themselves with that masculinity. If certain practices and behaviours can be identified as not masculine, then this only validates and venerates those behaviours which are unambiguously defined as masculine. By extension then, products which can be associated with the 'correct' displays of masculinity, are accorded the same veneration and validation.

After Justin Wren defeated Wes Sims, the fifth episode featured an exchange between Jackson and Evans over Jackson's refusal to get in the cage and help his fighter, who had been choked into submission by Wren. The two coaches discuss Team Rashad's fighters having won five fights to Team Rampage's none, but also what Evans sees as a lack of respect on the part of Jackson, as well as the other Team Rampage coaches, in not going into the cage. While Jackson asserts that he is a fighter, and not a coach, Evans argues that Jackson has a responsibility to the fighters he is teaching and mentoring.[125] This exchange, while again not directly related to issues of masculinity, highlights both the animosity and the differences between the two fighters, as well as the issue of respect, particularly within a sporting context.

Episode 6: Men Never Back Down

Episode six featured a number of exchanges between Jackson and Darriill Schoonover, who Jackson persists in calling 'Titties.' While Jackson has continued to use the nickname, Schoonover, while not happy , has tried to make a joke of it, joking with Jackson about the name. At one point, Schoonover tells Jackson that he'll "cut

weight and kick your ass at 205."[126] In keeping with his 'cool pose,' Jackson makes a joke of the situation, welcoming the opportunity to fight Schoonover at some point.

The hostility takes a turn at the fight announcement when Evans announces that Schoonover will fight Zak Jensen from Team Rampage. As with all fight announcements, this one takes place in the UFC training facility, with all the fighters present. When Evans announces Schoonover as the Team Rashad representative, Jackson calls out, "Titties!"[127] Schoonover responds by calling Jackson a "bitch."[128] As Schoonover and Jensen make their fighting pose, Jackson calls out, "Got milk?"[129] Getting no response, Jackson calls out again, "Got milk, bitch?"[130] This time, Schoonover responds, telling Jackson, "Fuck you, motherfucker."[131] This results in a long and heated exchange between the two:

> Jackson: Fuck you.
> Schoonover: Fuck you.
> Jackson: Fuck you, fuck you more....I'll titty fuck you [laughs]
> Schoonover: Man, I'll fuck you in your ass bitch.
> [At this point, Schoonover walks toward Jackson, but is blocked off by members of Team Rashad]
> Jackson: What, I'm supposed to be scared of you? I'm supposed to be scared of you titties? You really think I'm supposed to be scared of you?
> Schoonover: I think you think I'm supposed to be scared of you.
> Jackson: Nah, hey, I ain't trying to scare you homie, I ain't trying to scare you. I ain't trying to scare you.
> Justin Wren to Schoonover: You'll shut him up when you fight.
> Jackson: You walk up on me again though, your ass will be in motherfucking trouble, trust me. Walk up on me again, you gonna be in fucking trouble, trust me! Walk up on me again.
> [The show cuts to commercial at this point, and picks back up in the middle of the situation]
> Jackson: Walk up on me again, you gonna be in fucking trouble....Walk up on me again, that's all I gotta say. Get close enough, walk up on me. You man, you feel froggy, jump, that's all I gotta say.[132]

At this point, the show cut to an interview with Evans, providing his insight into the confrontation. "Schoonover was about to walk over there because, he was on the spot.

He was in the hot seat, he HAS to do something now."[133] The show then cut back to footage from the confrontation, showing Evans saying, "We gonna save it man, we gonna save it."[134] It then cuts back to the Evans interview, where he explains, "So I had to step up in between, to make sure he saves face, and at the same time, defend him."[135]

At this point, the confrontation shifts from Jackson vs Schoonover to Jackson vs Evans:

> Evans: Ain't no need for nobody else to get violent.
> Jackson: I ain't did nothing violent to him.
> Evans: Well he don't like how you teasing him, that's not his name.
> Jackson: I don't give a fuck
> Evans: That's not his name
> Rampage: I don't care...But I didn't get violent to him.
> Evans: What if I called you dickface everyday?
> Jackson: It'd be funny, it'd be funny.
> Evans: Nobody likes you calling them names Page.
> Jackson: I don't care, I don't care. I didn't get violent to him.
> Evans: But then again, you're the one making a violent threat then.
> Jackson: Hey, hey, I didn't make it as a promise.
> Evans: You're the one *promising* something, you're *promising* something.[136]

At this point, an interview with Jackson is cut into the discussion, where Jackson says, "Now he wanna take up for Titties, probably because he's jealous that Titties got titties, and he ain't got no titties. We know Rashad like playing with his nipples, he probably wish he had some titties to play with,"[137] making reference to Evan's practice of rubbing his nipples before a fight:

> Jackson: Does he think I'm scared of him, and his titties?
> Evans: Nobody thinks he's scared of you, but nobody likes to be disrespected.
> Jackson: It don't matter.
> Evans: Nobody likes to be disrespected.
> Jackson: It don't matter. I'm having a good time here, I got a smile on my face.
> Evans: Well good, smile...But don't get mad when he walk up on you though.
> Jackson: Its okay, this is my time to train, get out of my gym...get out of my gym. I don't wanna talk to you no more, get outta my gym.
> Evans: Its like I said...
> Jackson: Like I said, my time, get outta my gym, my time to train.[138]

With the showdown over, interviews with Evans and Schoonover are shown, before Dana White offered his take on the situation, where he commended Schoonover for "standing up for himself, but he might not want to pick a fight with Rampage...He might want to take the titties thing you know, and take it on the chin, because he doesn't want to take it on the chin from Rampage."[139]

During the prolonged confrontation a number of different themes converge, offering some insight into the nature of the presentation of self as man that runs through this season of *Ultimate Fighter*. The initial confrontation between Schoonover and Jackson entails both men threatening to 'fuck' the other, and both in ways that are intended to be seen as degrading. Jackson's offer to 'titty-fuck' Jackson places Schoonover in the role of the woman, not only because of his man-boobs, but for his being the recipient of the 'fucking' offered. Schoonover takes the threat a step further, threatening to "fuck [Jackson] in the ass," taking the threat into the realm of the homophobic.

Schrock and Schwalbe discuss this type of homophobic taunting, writing that,

> Claiming a heterosexual identity as part of a manhood act may also involve homophobic taunting, especially among boys and young men....Whereas this taunting mainly establishes a hierarchy among boys and men, it also reinforces sexist ideology, because the implicit insult is that a man who wants to have sex with men is like a woman—which is to say, less than a man. Homophobic taunting thus helps reproduce gender inequality by devaluing women.[140]

In the exchange between Schoonover and Jackson, both men are offering to prove their superiority over the other through the use of violent sex, promoting the belief that women, and homosexuals, are worth less than men.

What is also interesting is that Jackson maintains his 'cool pose' for much of the exchange with Schoonover. He switches from his joking self to his angry self only when Schoonover threatens to 'fuck [him] in the ass' and makes a move towards Jackson. It is unclear whether Jackson is angered by the threat, the motion, or both, although Jackson's exhortations for Schoonover to "walk up on me again" seem to indicate that it was the physical movement on Schoonover's part that inspired his anger. For Jackson then, the exchange, when limited to a verbal exchange of insults and threats of violent sexuality, was acceptable behaviour. But the act of walking towards him was a 'manhood act' that crossed a line, and needed to be met with anger and threats, rather than jokes and laughter. This indicates that, for Jackson, there are certain behaviours and actions which can be deemed acceptable, and others which cannot. Those who, like Schoonover, prove incapable of coping with the 'acceptable' behaviours and react in a way that is deemed unacceptable by Jackson, must therefore be dealt with more harshly.

When Evans decided to step in and confront Jackson, thereby deflecting attention away from Schoonover, it provides insight, not only into Evans' decision, but also his understanding of the situation being played out between Schoonover and Jackson. When Evans says that "Schoonover was about to walk over there because he was on the spot. He was in the hot seat, he HAS to do something now,"[141] Evans is revealing what seems to be an understanding on his part that Schoonover is behaving this way because, as a man, the situation requires it of him. In a sense, Evans is revealing knowledge about the performativity of Schoonover's behavior. Schoonover's confronting Jackson is required behaviour, despite the fact that physical conflicts between show participants is forbidden save for in the Octagon, during a sanctioned fight. There is no legal requirement for

Schoonover to "walk up on" Jackson, but the dictates of masculinity within the context of *The Ultimate Fighter*, the UFC, MMA, and sports in general require it of him. If Schoonover wishes to present himself as the image of the ideal UFC competitor, as a 'real man,' it is imperative he conftonts Jackson, and not back down.

This is reinforced by Evans' claim that he "had to step up in between, to make sure he saves face, and at the same time, defend him."[142] Evans, aware of the expectations being placed upon Schoonover, also understands that within the context of the situation it is permissible for another party, particularly an authority figure like Evans, to step in and deflect the attention. When this happens, Schoonover is able to maintain his claims to masculinity, particularly since he didn't ask for the help. Jackson also seems to welcome the distraction, choosing to direct his anger at that point towards Evans. In his interview, Jackson also makes note of Evans' strategic maneuver, noting that "Now he wanna take up for Titties, probably because he's jealous that Titties got titties, and he ain't got no titties."[143] Jackson knows that Evans has stepped in to act as Schoonover's proxy, but seizes the opportunity to make a joke at Evans' and Schoonover's expense. It is also important to note that, upon Evans' intervention, the tension seems to diminish, as Jackson reverts back to his seemingly default, joking 'cool pose.'

This does not mean that the confrontation is over, as Evans must now engage with Jackson until the situation is, if not resolved, then at least allowed to roll to a stop. Jackson, as noted, has reverted to his joking persona, but still takes advantage of the confrontation with Rashad to make clear his position on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, particularly within the context of 'manhood acts.' Jackson

professes to not be concerned with jokes made at his expense, suggesting again that Jackson considers verbal taunts and attacks, regardless of their content, to be acceptable behaviour. Evans, on the other hand, stresses the importance of respect as a central force in the presentation of self. What is made clear in the encounter between Jackson and Evans is that, while both seem to understand that their behaviour is being performed according to a certain, unwritten set of guidelines, what is construed as permitted and out of bounds is different for the performers.

Finally, Dana White's response once again provides the voice of the White Male Authority figure. In this case, White approves of Schoonover's willingness to stand up to Jackson, while at the same time suggesting that such bravado may be misguided. White's assertion that Schoonover "might want to take the titties thing you know, and take it on the chin, because he doesn't want to take it on the chin from Rampage"[144] is both a caution for Schoonover, and an endorsement of Jackson's behaviour. White's reaction suggests that Schoonover 'take it like a man' and accept the verbal abuse from Jackson, because the physical abuse to be suffered for standing up to Jackson would be a less appealing alternative. White is endorsing Jackson's behaviour, suggesting that bullying is an acceptable form of behaviour within the context of *The Ultimate Fighter* and the UFC. For White, Jackson's 'manhood acts'' and 'cool pose' are in keeping with the image of what constitutes a UFC competitor, and by extension, a man. Once again, White is validating a particular type of masculinity, not only reinforcing the perception that there are particular behaviours which can be considered masculine, but also that the UFC endorses and encourages these behaviours.

The final word on the 'Titties' situation comes near the end of the episode, just before Schoonover defeated Zak Jensen. In Jensen's pre-fight warmup, Jackson tells him "The guy has titties. This guy ain't too happy with himself. Think about it, if you had titties, would you be happy with yourself?...I couldn't fight no guy with titties, you know what I'm saying? You the man homie. Ain't no guy with titties beating me." For Jackson, Schoonover should be ashamed of his appearance, with that shame affecting his performance in the Octagon. More importantly for Jackson, to be defeated by a man with 'titties' would be a cause of shame, a loss of personal honour, for the loser. Again, because Schoonover has 'titties' he is like a woman, and to be defeated by a person who is so clearly identified with signifiers of femininity would represent a loss of masculinity. Therefore, the only acceptable 'manhood act' for someone facing a person with 'titties' is to defeat that person, lest you be known as the man who lost to a girl.

Episode 7: Quitters Never Win, Winners Never Quit

Episode seven of *The Ultimate Fighter* continued the questioning of masculinity during the fight announcement that takes place at the beginning of the episode. As the fighters and coaches are gathered for the announcement, Jackson and Evans begin taunting one another again:

> Jackson: Gayshad, Gayshad Evans
> Evans: Wahmpage, the whining bitch.
> Jackson: We'll see who's the whining bitch.
> Evans: You'll be the whining bitch.
> Jackson: Somebody going to be doing the stank leg again. [a reference to the awkward position of Rashad's leg when he got knocked out by Lyoto Machida]
> Evans: All your excuses, you been knocked out more than I've been knocked out.
> Jackson: [shakes head] 'Bout the same
> Evans: Right, right?
> Jackson: Nope.[145]

Once more, homophobic slurs and comparisons to children mark the verbal battle for masculinity between Jackson and Evans. This exchange is merely a precursor to the larger confrontation that takes place after the announcement that Team Rashad's Matt Mitrione will fight Team Rampage's Scott Junk. As the two teams are headed for their locker rooms, Jackson and Evans again get into a verbal tussle:

> Evans: You know you ain't got nothing, you know you ain't got nothing.
> Jackson: Gonna treat you like a girl
> Evans: Who's gonna treat me like a girl?
> Jackson: Who you think?
> Evans: You? You?
> Jackson: Who you think?
> Evans: How the fuck you gonna treat me like a girl?
> Jackson: Watch.
> Evans: We gonna see what's up.
> Scott Junk: [steps in between] Hey, we gotta train, we gotta train [tries to move Rampage away, pats Rashad on the shoulder]
> Jackson: He's right, he's right.[146]

An interview with Scott Junk is cut in at this point, where he explains that he "tried to break it up, but, they split up for half a second, then they went right back at each other, talking shit."[147]

> [Rampage and Rashad face to face again]
> Evans: I'm gonna make you quit
> Jackson: You gonna make me quit?
> Evans: I'm gonna make you quit
> Jackson: You gonna make me quit?
> Evans: I'm gonna make you quit.
> Jackson: I'm glad you thinking that way.
> Evans: Just like you quit in this competition, and you quit on your fighters
> Jackson: I ain't quittin' nothing
> Evans: That's exactly how you're gonna quit
> Jackson: I ain't quittin' nothing. My fighters the ones who's quitting in the cage, I ain't quittin' nothing. I'm still here. [footage of Kimbo Slice taking note of this statement]
> Evans: Nah, nah, nah, nah, you quit on them day one, and you gonna quit in the fight.
> Jackson: We'll see.
> Evans: Because that's what you do, you quit.[148]

At this point, an interview with Marcus Jones is included and he notes that, "I mean, its not a front, you could feel it man. They really want to fight each other, like really bad, like they don't like each other, you know what I'm saying? And uh, its starting to escalate, and you could feel the tension;"[149]

> Jackson: We gonna see!
> Evans: Gonna quit.
> Jackson: Cause all you do is talk
> [Rashad walking to locker room, turns around]
> Evans: I win, and you talk, that's the difference, that's the difference
> Jackson: You don't win nothing.
> Evans: You talk, I win.
> Jackson: I got more knockouts than you.
> Evans: All you do is talk
> Jackson: You knock out one or two people, and now you think you're the man
> Evans: All you do is talk.
> Jackson: All I do is talk?
> Evans: All you do is talk
> Jackson: You can't keep your mouth shut even when you get knocked out, think about it. Think about it Rashad, you're so full of your self.
> Evans: I'm full of my self?
> Jackson: You're so full of yourself, you gonna be sleepin'
> Evans: I'm full of my self? I'm here, for my team, I'm here doing the job I'm doing, and I'm full of myself?
> Jackson: You're so full of yourself, you're gonna be sleepin'.
> Evans: You so full of yourself, you can't even focus on the task at hand.
> Jackson: This ain't about me
> Evans: You're supposed to be coaching
> Jackson: But I'm not a coach!
> Evans: But you ain't coaching
> Jackson: I'm not a coach!
> Evans: You ain't coaching.
> Jackson: I'm not a coach!
> Evans: But you came here to coach!
> Jackson: Yeah, but I ain't come here to coach, I brought these guys to coach
> [Matt Mitrione, standing behind Rashad, leans forward slightly]
> Evans: Then you shouldn't have accepted the job
> [Another angle reveals Mitrione's finger tugging at the tail of Rashad's t-shirt, subtly holding him back]
> Jackson: I accepted the job, and I brought my coaches with me, and we doing a good job
> [Rampage puts his arms on shoulders of his coaches]

Evans: If you accepted the job, then do the job, do the job, you turned your back on your boys.
Jackson: We doing the job. Hey team, ain't we doing a good job? Thank you
[Shots of Team Rampage looking dejected, nobody responds in the affirmative]
Evans: Remember that, he turned his back on you, he turned his back on you. He said that y'all quit, he quit on y'all from day one, remember that![150]

The episode then cut to an interview with James McSweeney saying, "Well some things that get said are so personal, you can't take them back. It's not just for the cameras, it's not trying to make it, oh, we're trying to build a fight, I think it's gone past that, and I think they're on the edge where they could snap and they gonna go;"[151]

Jackson: Hey, why you got one shoe off and one shoe on?
Evans: Cause I was ready to break one in your motherfucking ass, that's why.
Jackson: Say what? You feel froggy, jump!
Evans: I was ready to beat your ass
Jackson: Please.
Evans: We'll get a chance
Jackson: Rashad, look at me, look at me. Don't make threats and then say we'll get a chance. Listen, listen, I'm right here right now, I'm here right now, I'm here right now in your motherfucking face. Please, touch me, please....Take both shoes off, please!
Matt Mitrione: [moving to get Rampage away from the door and trying to close it] We don't get paid.
Jackson: Rashad, you gonna put one in my ass, that's why you took your shoe off? That's why you took your shoe off, cause you were gonna put one in my ass, is that what you just told me?
Evans: That's right
Jackson: And then you get in my face and say that?
Evans: Why you getting tough, because there's people between us?
Jackson: No!
Evans: Why you acting like knives, because there's people in front of us, now you wanna say, oh come on, come on, come on, come on! Dude, you soft, dude.
Jackson: Ah, and I'm the one standing right here, and you all the way over there.
Evans: You soft dude, you soft.
Jackson: [making yak yak yak motion with hand] Hey, do what you're good at.
Evans: Hey, I back it up! I talk and I back it up!
[While this is going on, Mitrione and Team Rampage coaches are moving Jackson aside and closing the door]
Jackson: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
Evans: I said I was going to whup your ass in this competition [door closes, we are on the side with Rampage] and I did.
Jackson: I can't stand that boy for real man.[152]

With the confrontation over, the show cut to an interview with Jackson saying, "I came really close, to just trying to knock his teeth down his throat."[153]

The confrontation began with Jackson's threat to "treat [Evans] like a girl," once again establishing the hierarchy that women are lesser than men, and lesser men deserve to be treated like women at the hands of better men. The comment can also be read as a homophobic slur, with Jackson threatening, much like Schoonover, to sexually assault Evans, putting Evans in the docile, submissive role, with Jackson in the dominant position.

When the argument changed to a discussion of making the other fighter quit, the sexual dimension is abandoned in favour of an emphasis on character and personal displays of masculinity. In Messner's "Televised Sports Manhood Formula,"[154] "Show Some Guts!"[155] is listed as one of the dimensions. While that theme deals with the need for men to demonstrate 'intestinal fortitude' and courage in the face of danger, I would argue that the obverse of showing guts is to quit. By accusing Jackson of being a 'quitter,' Evans is questioning his character and his masculinity. Evans then takes the attack a step further and accuses Jackson of "quitting on [his] fighters," suggesting that not only failed himself as a man, but his inability to be a man has had an adverse effect on the fighters he was brought in to train and coach.

Jackson's assertion that "My fighters the ones who's quitting in the cage," is an attempt by Jackson to distance himself from the six defeats his team has suffered, and places the responsibility for those losses on the fighters and not on himself or the coaches. Because of Jackson's attempt to distance himself from Team Rampage's results, Evans then feels justified in telling the Team Rampage fighters that Jackson

"turned his back on you, he turned his back on you. He said that y'all quit, he quit on y'all from day one." For Evans, Jackson's attempts to place the blame for the losses on the fighters is yet another example of Jackson's deficiencies as a man, and as a fighter. Jackson's response that "I'm not a coach" is not enough to account for this deficiency, as Evans argues that Jackson should not have accepted the job, and the responsibility, of coaching if he wasn't prepared to fulfill that responsibility. Again, this is a questioning of Jackson's masculinity and character.

Once Evans tells Jackson that he was "ready to break one in your motherfucking ass," the exchange stops being about accusations and questioning Jackson's character, and turns to verbal 'manhood acts'' designed to prove each man's masculinity through their ability, and desire, to perform physical violence. Jackson's 'cool pose' changes at this point, shifting from joking to angry threatening, while Evans, although definitely escalating his performance to include the possibility of physical violence, still maintains his logical, reasoning side. Evans threatens violence, but also refuses to allow himself to be goaded into a physical confrontation while at the UFC training facility. This last part of the exchange allows them to keep the focus on the upcoming fight, while at the same time creating additional drama and tension for the pending fight.

The final point about this exchange are the ways that a number of the participants acknowledge the performative nature of what is taking place, or at least the acknowledgment that such situations can be construed as performances. First, Marcus Jones talked about how "it's not a front, you could feel it man."[156] While Jones is denying that this confrontation was a performance being put on for the cameras, his statement affirms, through its denial, the fact that such incidents can be performances.

Jones' use of the term 'front' is also interesting, that being a more slang or colloquial way of saying 'cool pose.'

Jones' sentiments are echoed in the interview with James McSweeney, when he states that the commotion was "not just for the cameras, it's not trying to make it, oh, we're trying to build a fight, I think its gone past that, and I think they're on the edge where they could snap and they gonna go."[157] McSweeney's statement is even more direct, suggesting that promoting the fight was a motivation for some of the interactions between Jackson and Evans were done as a means of creating dramatic tension for the fight, but then stating that this incident had moved such interactions beyond that level, to one where the antagonism being displayed is not only legitimate, but at a point where it could move beyond the verbal and become physical.

This notion of performed masculinity is even acknowledged by both Jackson and Evans, as each one accuses the other of talking about their masculinity, rather than proving it physically. Each man, aware of the possible repercussions were they to physically lash out at the other, encourages the other to make the first move. This represents an interesting convergence between the performance of their own masculinity, while at the same time calling the other person out for performing, rather than proving, their masculinity. Both Jackson and Evans are performing their own 'manhood act' of accusing the other of performing a 'manhood act.' This both acknowledges, and reinforces, the importance of demonstrating masculinity through one's behaviours. Neither man is willing to do anything physical at this point, but each is willing to point that fact out in the other's behaviour as a failing of their masculinity. What is most important is the fact that both men are acknowledging, at least on some level, a

performative aspect to the other person's behaviour, while at the same time attempting to maintain their own claims to legitimacy and authenticity.

Within the larger issue of the spectacle, this confrontation highlights the totality of the spectacle, while at the same time attempting to deny that totality. As Debord writes:

> The spectacle cannot be set in abstract opposition to concrete social activity, for the dichotomy between reality and image will survive on either side of any such distinction. Thus the spectacle, thought it turns reality on its head, is itself a product of real activity. Likewise, lived reality suffers the material assaults of the spectacle's mechanisms of contemplation, incorporating the spectacular order and lending that order positive support. And every concept, as it takes place on one side or the other, has no foundation apart from its transformation into its opposite: reality erupts within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real. This reciprocal alienation is the essence and underpinning of society as it exists.[158]

The emphasis that Jackson and Evans place on questioning not only the other's masculinity, but the veracity of that masculinity, highlights the paradoxical relationship between reality and the spectacle. The spectacle is constructed of images created through behaviour. In this instance, that behaviour is the learned behaviour of masculinity, which is performed and presented according to what has been presented through the spectacle. By accusing the other of only performing their masculinity without the ability or the willingness to back it up in the Octagon, both Jackson and Evans are accusing the other of faking their performances. But because the masculinity they are each exhorting the other to exhibit is, in and of itself, just another performance, they are also validating the larger spectacle of masculinity that is the UFC. For both Jackson and Evans, the displays of masculinity that their opponent exhibits within the context of *The Ultimate Fighter* is a performance, a show being put on for the cameras, and further proof that the other is pretending, because they are unable to deliver on their promises of masculinity. What this does is mask the performative nature of masculinity in general, and the constructed

nature of the spectacle. By positing one person's actions and behaviours as being false, or more specifically a facade, it suggests that the other's are real, and more importantly, natural and legitimate. Thus, this confrontation between Jackson and Evans not only highlights the importance of 'being real' to masculinity, but also naturalizes the presentations of masculinity upon which the UFC is building its marketability and viability. Neither Jackson nor Evans are necessarily diminished by the exchange, as each man is also asserting his own masculinity through attacks on the other. But the spectacular power of the UFC is enhanced by its being ignored. By focusing the debate as to what is real and what is fake on the individual fighters' presentations of masculinity, the issue of the performative constructed nature of masculinity in general is rendered invisible and, thus, more powerful.

The seventh episode fight between Matt Mitrione and Scott Junk is an example of demonstrating masculinity through the use of physical violence. Both men fight using strikes and punches, choosing not to engage their opponent on the ground. Mitrione knocks Junk down a number of times, but waits for his opponent to get back up, rather than try to finish the fight on the mat. As a result, both men spend a good deal of time and energy throwing punches, trying to knock the other man out. Whether this is an indication of their lack of confidence in their ground skills, their lack of ground skills, or their desire to use their fists to win the fight is irrelevant. What matters is Dana White's reaction at the end of the first round, when he gets to his feet clapping, saying, "Holy shit! Holy shit!"[159] as the show goes to commercial. When the show returns, White is shown exclaiming, "That's a fucking fight right there. That is fucking awesome."[160]

The second round features much of the same, with both men throwing heavy punches, seemingly going for a knockout punch every time. Junk manages to take Mitrione down to the mat about a minute and a half into the round, but the fighters are eventually stood up again with about two minutes left in the fight, when the ref decided that neither man was trying to either advance their position or secure a submission on the ground. The rest of the fight goes as much of the fight had gone previously, with both men trying to knock the other out, with neither able to accomplish their goal in the time remaining.

After the fight, the show cut to an interview with Dana White, saying that "Those two stood in front of each other, and threw bombs. I mean, big punches, right on the chin, and both stood and took some big shots."[161] Mitrione wins the decision, but what is more important is how White felt about the fight. As the arbiter of fight performances, White approves of the style used by both fighters. His reaction at the end of the first round, and his interview segment both demonstrate an appreciation for fighters who not only deliver punishment, but are able to take punishment as well. For White, this is the model for how a fighter should behave in the UFC Octagon. His approval for the fight is an endorsement of the physical display of masculinity. Both fighters have performed their 'manhood acts'' satisfactorily, gaining Dana White's blessing.

The episode ends with Jackson performing his own 'manhood act' while at the same time abandoning his 'cool pose' for a brief moment. Upset with having another one of his fighter's lose to a Team Rashad fighter, Jackson storms off, saying "These motherfuckers trying to piss me off, for real."[162] He throws his water bottle against the wall, and proceeds to tear apart the door leading to the locker rooms. Here, Jackson is

allowing his frustration to break through his 'cool pose,' but in such a way that proves his masculinity. He may lose his cool temporarily, but his exhibition of strength maintains his masculinity.

Episode 8: Men Show No Fear

The eighth episode begins with a recap of the Scott Junk/Matt Mitrione fight, as well as reactions from the fighters. It then moves on to a recap of Jackson's outburst, and its culmination in the door smashing. Dana White is shown surveying the wreckage saying, "You know what sucks about that? It shows everybody how cheap our fucking doors are. [laughs] Looks like egg crates."[163] Evans is dismissive of the outburst, saying "Doors? Doors don't hit back."[164] In an interview segment, Evans uses the opportunity to again attack Jackson's character, saying:

> Rampage is a clown, man. Why would you get mad and tear down a door when you haven't, you haven't shown that much interest in your team anyway, you haven't shown that much interest in being here? Why are you tearing down a door, you know what I'm saying? You get out what you put in, and if you put in nothing, you get out nothing. So don't be surprised, yeah it was a close fight, but you don't need to tear down a door fool.[165]

Evans sees Jackson's actions as a misguided direction of his energy and, more importantly, as an undeserved reaction. For Evans, Jackson hasn't earned the right to be angry when one of his fighters loses a close decision, since he hasn't, in Evans' opinion, shown any interest in making sure his fighters are prepared for their fights. Of note are the words that Evans uses to characterize Jackson. Words like 'clown' and 'fool,' are not only attacks on Jackson's intelligence, but also on his 'cool pose.' Evans is accusing Jackson of not being in control of his self-presentation but, more importantly, of not willing to put in the effort necessary to earn the right to lose control like that. This is a

continuation of the theme of 'quitting' that emerged in the previous episode, with Evans accusing Jackson of quitting on this team members.

Later in the episode, which featured Team Rampage member Marcus Jones facing Team Rashad member Mike Wessel, exhibiting 'feminine' traits, again, is not only not considered a demonstration of weakness, but also not an appropriate presentation of self for those aspiring to be UFC fighters. Jones and Justin Wren are sitting in one of the common areas of the TUF House, when Jones freaks out upon seeing a spider. In an interview with Jones, he says that "I think I might have screamed a little bit. I didn't mean to, but what my plan was, was if I screamed loud enough, it would deafen the creature and give somebody else a chance to sneak up on it."[166] Jones is presenting his own 'cool pose' here, laughing off his reaction to the spider. Wren talks about Jones in an interview, saying "Marcus is one of the biggest, probably most intimidating looking guys I've come across. But yet he's like a gentle giant. Its kinda funny hearing Marcus, such a big man, squealing like a girl."[167] Again, Wren uses comparisons to a woman, in this case a child, to describe Jones' behaviour. He also contrasts it with Jones' appearance, making the reaction that much more humourous for Wren.

In a subsequent interview segment with Jones, he reveals his desire to give a presentation of self more in line with what is typically considered masculine. He says,

> You know, I'm a hardcore cage fighter, I ain't scared of no little bug, but that thing was scary. [laughs] You know what, and I'm trying to change my image so I can look mean and stuff, but its really hard man. You know, you got spiders jumping up all over ya, people trying to scare you [footage of Marcus running up off the couch when someone throws a bug on him while other fighters laugh].[168]

Jones demonstrates an understanding that running away screaming when an insect appears is not considered proper behaviour for a "hardcore cage fighter." More

importantly, he admits to "trying to change my image so I can look mean and stuff," meaning that he also knows that how one looks, and how one behaves can have an impact on how a man is perceived. His interview reveals a knowledge about the need for a proper presentation of self, particularly within the UFC. As Wren's comments attest, a man can look intimidating, but if his behaviour doesn't coincide with his appearance, nor with his trade, then he will likely not be taken seriously within that role. Jones knows that there is no place for a man who is afraid of bugs within the UFC, and if he aspires to compete in the UFC, he will need to alter how he is perceived by others.

Episode eight also featured the final chapter in the 'Titties' saga. This time, Jackson, under the pretense of apologizing to Schoonover, offers a hug, with an added "No Homo"[169] to ensure that the hug is taken in the proper spirit in which it was intended. In an interview, Jackson claims, "If I didn't like Titties, I could have called him Bitch Tits."[170] After the hug, Jackson takes the opportunity for one last joke, grabbing one of Schoonover's breasts, causing Schoonover to react angrily, with the two going nose to nose, before the confrontation is broken up by members of Team Rashad. In an interview segment, Jackson explains that, "You should never grab nobody's titty if they don't like it."[171]

This scenario once again put Schoonover in the role of the woman. Not only does he have 'Titties,' but he has now been fondled against his will. While Jackson's advice against touching someone's breast when not given permission to do so is certainly good advice, his use of the statement positions Schoonover as a woman who has been sexually assaulted, once again portraying Schoonover as not only less than a man, but as weak. Jackson's use of 'No Homo' is another way of positioning homosexuality negatively. By

using it, Jackson not only affirms his own heterosexuality, but makes it clear that without the caveat, any possible inferences of homosexuality on the part of either participant would reflect negatively on both men.

This use of homosexual taunting continued after Jones defeated Wessel in the final fight of the first round of fights. Once again, Jackson and Evans got into a face-off, this time stemming from Evans' offer to Team Rampage members to train with Evans and Team Rashad. Evans makes the offer under the guise of giving Team Rashad members an opportunity to train with other partners, particularly since seven of the Team Rashad members would be moving on to the next round of fights. There does appear to be an ulterior motive to Evans' offer, that of undermining Team Rampage's faith in their coaching staff, and by extension, undermining Jackson's self-confidence. The offer, however legitimate, also has the appearance of being mind games on the part of Evans.

Jackson takes offense to the offer, and takes the opportunity offer his own evaluation of Team Rashad:

> Jackson: Your team runs like you run, like you ran from Machida.
> Evans: I promise I won't run from you.
> Jackson: You threw one kick, it got blocked, then you got knocked the hell out. Watch, when you fight me you gonna do the same, but it ain't gonna help.
> Evans: I ain't gonna run.
> Jackson: I ain't trying to scare you, I ain't trying to scare you, cause I want you running.
> Evans: You think just cause you talk that you got something?
> Jackson: I'm talking, you talking to me first, you come and diss my team like that.
> Evans: Hey, I'm trying to get the work in.
> Jackson: All I do is talk? Saying I give up on my team, I don't give up on my team homie.
> Evans: You said that, you said that.
> Jackson: I ain't never give up on them, I ain't never give up on them.
> Evans: That's a complete contradiction, you said 'my team gave up on me.'
> Jackson: I ain't never give up on them, I keep it real. Rashad, Rashad, I'm not fake, I'm real, you fake. You're fake, I'm real.
> Evans: Who gave up on your team?

> Jackson: BOO! [giving thumbs down] BOO, whenever we see Rashad. What do you do when you see Rashad, BOO!
> Evans: It is what it is, it is what it is, you're a sore loser. Why you break down a door? You just a sucker, you're a sucker.
> Jackson: Alright, if I'm a sucker, treat me like a sucker then.
> Evans: I'm gonna treat you like a sucker
> Jackson: Well, come lick on me then. [Jackson grabs his crotch and laughs]
> Evans: Rampage, you're a bitch straight up.[172]

The final part of this exchange, Jackson's invitation for Evans to "come lick on [his crotch]" is an obvious use of homosexuality as a slur, and, as with most such taunts, positions Jackson in the dominant role, and Evans in the submissive.

Also included in this encounter is the continuation of themes from earlier conflicts. The first is Evans' depiction of Jackson as a quitter, and more specifically, as someone who gave up on the people who were trusting him to help guide their progress into the UFC. The second is the emphasis on real versus fake. The concept of Jackson as a quitter is one that Evans makes great use of, seeming to use it primarily when Jackson is around other Team Rampage members, thus not only insulting Jackson, but also working to demoralize the members of Team Rampage. In this way, Evans is not only building the tension for his upcoming fight with Jackson, he is also continuing the drama between the two teams.

Once again, as discussed earlier, this exchange again involves Jackson accusing Evans of being fake. The emphasis on real versus fake this time is interesting because, while it was touched upon in one of their earlier confrontations, this time the accusation is much more explicit. It is also important to note that Jackson does not elaborate on what exactly he means when he claims that Evans is 'fake.' Instead, the accusation is simply made, and becomes part of the argument. This is significant for its lack of significance. Jackson doesn't feel the need to explain what it is about Evans that is fake.

It is simply enough for him to make the accusation. As Jackson states, he "keep[s] it real," while Evans is fake. This can be read as a reference to their presentations of self. Jackson believes that his presentation of self is not so much a crafted persona, and is instead simply what he claims to be, 'real.' Evans, on the other hand, is presenting himself in a way that Jackson feels is designed to portray Evans positively, particularly within the context of the 'reality television' nature of *The Ultimate Fighter*, and the UFC as a mediasport. Jackson's assertion that Evans is fake suggests that he regards the performance of self as an issue about which one has a choice, and Evans has chosen to present himself in a way that denies his true nature, in favour of a presentation designed to curry favour in others. Because of this, regardless of the win/loss records of Team Rampage and Team Rashad, Jackson sees himself as the winner, because he has maintained his authenticity, while Evans has abandoned his true self. More importantly, the accusation of 'fakeness' also keeps the issue of reality and unreality at the level of the individual, and continues to further the perception that there is such a thing as a 'real masculinity' to which fighters can aspire, and which the UFC can claim to offer.

Episode 9: Pain Is All In Your Head

The ninth episode featured more discussion of injuries for Matt Mitrione, this time focused on the issue of concussions and head trauma, an issue gaining more traction within the sports world, particularly with the formation of the Sports Legacy Institute, a group focused on the issue of concussions in the sports world. For the purposes of this study, the issue is important because of the treatment Mitrione receives from the other contestants when dealing with the possibility of having suffered a concussion in his fight with Scott Junk.

After returning to the house from a medical exam, Mitrione is greeted by Wes Sims, who asks "How was the gynecologist appointment?"[173] After Mitrione responds and walks away, Sims asks Abe Wagner, "Is he talking about his head...his brain, or his vag?"[174] Mitrione then runs into Kimbo Slice, who asks after Mitrione's condition. Mitrione responds that "He rattled my brain"[175] and walks away. In an interview segment, Kimbo Slice gives his opinion on Mitrione's future in the competition:

> Do I think Matt is going to pull out? Matt already got sand in his vagina, you know what I'm sayin'? He already has sand in his vagina, you know what I'm sayin'? He's already pulled out by going to the hospital, you know what I'm saying, staying overnight, you know what I'm saying, by doing what he did, he pulled out already.[176]

Both Slice's and Sims' reactions to Mitrione's condition indicate a lack of sympathy and compassion for head trauma. While some of the reaction may be due to perceptions of Mitrione as attempting to get out of work by feigning an injury, their reactions go beyond questioning the legitimacy of his condition, and instead focus on using comparisons to women to belittle Mitrione. Slice's statement that Mitrione, "has sand in his vagina" and Sims' reference to a gynecologist are both attempts to belittle Mitrione, and his possibility of a concussion. Once more, Messner's themes of "Give Up Your Body for the Team" and "Show Some Guts!" are reinforced by the fighters.

Dana White provides a different perspective on the issue, coming to the house and asking Mitrione if he feels he will be ready to fight. In their discussion, White makes it clear that the doctor's evaluation of Mitrione can prevent Mitrione from fighting, but wants to know, if the doctor clears him to fight, does Mitrione want to continue in the competition? Scott Junk, the man whom Mitrione defeated, walks into the room during the discussion and advises Dana that, should Mitrione not be able to continue, he will be

happy to take his place. This despite the fact that Junk's eye is still nearly completely swollen shut from his loss. White laughs and says, "I love it."[177] Then, in an interview segment, White says that "[h]ead trauma is nothing to play around with, you know? So anytime a guy says he has a headache, or this or that, we take it very seriously, and we make sure that these guys get the best medical attention they can possibly get, and we make sure the doctors keep a close eye on 'em."[178]

While seemingly in contrast with his desire for fighters who will "Give Up [Their] Body for the [UFC]" White's attitude towards head injuries is notable because of the emphasis it places on the word of a medical professional to determine if a fighter is allowed to fight or not. Because the fights on *The Ultimate Fighter* are sanctioned by the Nevada State Athletic Commission, the opinion of a doctor is needed to allow a fighter to participate. White's attitude suggests that, when a doctor refuses to give permission for a fighter to fight, that is one thing. But when a fighter chooses not to fight because of doubts about their physical condition, that is another matter entirely. White tempers his opinion on injuries in fighting, but still reflects the attitudes described by Messner.

Episode 10: 'Real Fighters, Inside Their Minds, They're Invincible'

The ninth episode ended with Roy Nelson defeating Justin Wren in a controversial decision, and the tenth episode opened with discussion of that fight, then moved on to further discussion of Matt Mitrione's head injury. Many of Sims' and Slice's opinions are reflected in the discussions in this episode, with Team Rashad trainer Trevor Wittman not buying Mitrione's claims about his injury. The discussion about Mitrione's injury, and about his willingness, and eagerness, to fight, continues throughout the episode, until it comes to a head when Dana White gathers all the fighters at the UFC

training facility for a lecture on fighting. The lecture is cut with interview segments with White and Mitrione offering their input on the speech:

> White: If fighting is what you wanna do. If winning this fucking contract is what you want, don't forget why you came here. 'Kay?
> White Interview: I haven't gotten the feeling that Mitrione, is pumped up to seize this opportunity.
> White: Some of you guys have played football and other sports, you're never a hundred percent. You're never ever ever a hundred percent when you go in and fucking play basketball, football, baseball, and especially fighting. It never fucking happens, it just doesn't.
> Mitrione Interview: If not completely towards me, it was probably ninety percent towards me, or at least I think it was.
> White: What we will never do, ever, is try to force somebody to fight, that's never gonna happen. I would never force somebody to fight injured, I would never ask somebody to go out and fight that didn't want to fight, it's not what this is all about, that's not who I am, and that's not what this fucking, company or show, is about. I'm not calling anybody out, on their fucking manhood. If you don't want to fucking fight, you came to the wrong fucking place. [laughs] 'kay? So you need to think about it. I don't care who it is.
> White Interview: Real fighters, inside their minds, to them, they're invincible. And they'll never stop. And I don't see that at Matt Mitrione.
> White: There's a slot possibly open right now. We won't know till tomorrow whether Mitrione's gonna be medically cleared. If he medically clears you, you need to decide if you want to fight. And don't take this speech as me fucking calling you a pussy, calling you out or saying whatever. Bro, it happens every fucking season, people find out that they don't want to fight.
> Mitrione Interview: I'm secure in my manhood and my toughness to know that I don't have to fight when I don't feel like I'm a hundred percent.
> White: But I'll tell you what, there's somebody in this fucking group that wants that opportunity. Somebody does. Whoever you are, I hope you get it, alright?
> White Interview: At the end of the day, this thing's gonna be up to Mitrione. He's gonna have to do a gut check, and see how bad he wants this.
> White: Have a good fucking day boys.[179]

His speech over, White leaves the gym.

White's speech touches on a number of the issues involving masculinity, fighting, the UFC and presentations of self discussed so far in this chapter. Dana White, the white male voice of authority for the UFC, offers his perspective on what defines a fighter, and how a true UFC fighter presents himself. For White, "Real fighters, inside their minds, to

them, they're invincible. And they'll never stop."[180] This is, for White, the image of what a 'real fighter' is, and the presentation of self that White expects from those who are, or aspire to be, fighters in the UFC. Because of Mitrione's concern about his potential concussion, White does not believe that Mitrione possesses the qualities he expects, or desires, to find in a fighter. When this is contrasted with his claims from the prior episode about the seriousness with which the UFC handles concerns about head injuries, it suggests that, for White, a real fighter does not acknowledge the possibility of a head injury, thereby not requiring the UFC to investigate the matter.

White uses a term like 'pussy' to describe someone who decides he doesn't want to fight, but the way he does so, by saying that he's *not* calling him a pussy, allows him to use the term, while not attributing it to anyone directly. By claiming that he is not attacking his masculinity, White is then able to attack the masculinity of those who choose not to fight, while not explicitly making the connection. White merely raises the spectres of being called a 'pussy' or having one's masculinity called into question, suggesting that, while he is not making such an accusation, it is possible that some may choose to infer a connection between choosing not to fight, and being considered not a real man, or a 'pussy.'

White's statements about masculinity acknowledge a pre-existing connection in the minds of those present, and those watching, between fighting and masculinity. As a result, he doesn't need to say 'If you choose not to fight, you're not a man.' Instead, he is able to give his speech, and impress upon the people listening that *The Ultimate Fighter*, and the UFC, are places for men who want to fight. As a result, if you choose not to fight, "you came to the wrong fucking place."[181] Dana White doesn't need to call anyone

a ‘pussy’ or call them out for their manhood, because the fighters’ knowledge of the connections between fighting, ignoring pain, and masculinity are already established.

The interview segments with both White and Mitrione help to indicate this connection. When White begins his speech, he does not specifically mention Matt Mitrione. Yet, in his interview, Mitrione acknowledges that the speech was “probably ninety percent towards me.”[182] Mitrione is aware that White’s speech was inspired by his recent health concerns, and does not need White to accuse him directly to make that connection. Mitrione’s later claim that he is “secure in [his] manhood and [his] toughness”[183] not only makes the connection between toughness and masculinity, but also makes the point that, despite White’s claims to *not* be calling guys out for their masculinity, that accusation was not only present, but was predominant in what White had to say to the group. Matt Mitrione knew that Dana’s speech was inspired by his actions, but was also part of a larger discussion regarding masculinity, the constitution of a fighter, and the role that masculinity plays in Dana White’s UFC.

White’s speech also operates as a masculinity checklist, providing both the fighters, and the audience, with a cheat sheet for understanding what it means to be a man in the UFC. A real fighterwants to fight. They want to fight regardless of their physical condition, because fighting is natural for them. They do not choose to fight, because there is no choice in the matter. They fight because they must, because it is a part of who they are. They do not consider the consequences of those actions, because they are invincible. Injury is not an option, because to be injured is to be unable to fight. A real fighter not only accepts the fights he is offered, but asks for fights he is not. A real fighter is not a pussy, and a real fighter wants to fight, and wants to win. With this

speech, White not only makes clear the image he has constructed for the constitution of a real fighter, but also the image of masculinity which can be sold to the UFC audience, and to the sponsors and advertisers.

Episode 11: 'Like a Bitch'

As the tenth episode ends with Brendan Schaub's defeat of Jon Madsen, the fighters are still waiting for word on whether the doctors will clear Mitrione to fight. At the start of the eleventh episode, they recap White's speech to the fighters, and then go to an interview with White, who discusses the fact that none of the fighters took the opportunity to come to him and ask to be put into Mitrione's spot in the tournament. This again reinforces White's perspective on what constitutes a fighter, and what his expectations are regarding the behaviour of a UFC fighter.

It is then revealed that the doctors had medically cleared Matt Mitrione to fight, and Mitrione tells his coaches on Team Rashad that, in addition to the doctors' opinion, he himself feels that he is in fighting condition. With the question of Mitrione's status resolved, the show then focuses on the upcoming fight between Mitrione and James McSweeney, as well as the final quarterfinals fight between Marcus Jones and Darrill Schoonover. The buildup for the first fight involves focusing on bad blood between Mitrione and McSweeney. The buildup makes the fight about the conflict of personalities between the two fighters, rather than the desire to win the competition. As a result, the interview segments with the two fighters emphasize their desire to cause physical harm to the other fighter, within the sanctioned confines of the UFC Octagon.

The fight itself ends when McSweeney, having survived an initial onslaught of punches by Mitrione, gets the larger fighter to the ground, and secures a guillotine choke.

After the fight, the brief narrative surrounding McSweeney and Mitrione reaches a conclusion when they hug in the middle of the ring, and assure one another that their issues are over.[184] In the post-fight interviews, Mitrione asserts that he is "mad at myself...And I tapped like a *bitch*."[185] Once again, the use of comparisons to women to suggest weakness and failure is used, this time by Mitrione in discussion of his own failings. Mitrione's statement reinforces the internal nature of 'manhood acts'' as he is upset with his own performance, and describes his actions as being like those of a woman, and therefore not up to standard of what is to be expected of a man who aspires to compete in the UFC.

The second fight of the episode, between Jones and Schoonover, doesn't receive much attention, and is almost anticlimactic when Jones defeats Schoonover in the first round, knocking the Team Rashad fighter out with punches while on the ground. With Jones' win, the attention turns to the final episode of the season, which will feature Jones facing Brendan Schaub, and Roy Nelson facing James McSweeney.

Episode 12: Real Men Don't Wear Pink

The twelfth episode, the final episode of the season, is the last opportunity for the show to continue the dramatic narrative between Jackson and Evans. The first incident of the episode occurs with a Team Rampage prank on Team Rashad. In this prank, the Team Rampage coaches empty the Team Rashad locker room, and paint the walls pink. As Jackson explains, "They have to get mad at this one, or if they don't [Rampage makes fey gestures at the camera]." Once again, Jackson is using accusations of homosexuality as a way to attack Evans. More importantly, he is using hyperbolic, hyper-effeminate stereotypes of male homosexuality as his means of attack. It is not enough to accuse

Evans, and his team, of being homosexuals. Instead, it is more important to play on absurd stereotypes, insulting not only anyone who is gay, but anyone with the slightest understanding of interior design.

When Team Rashad enters their locker room, it is revealed that, not only has the room been painted pink, but the furniture has been replaced with beanbag chairs and stuffed animals, and the light has been replaced with a disco ball. In an interview with Jackson, he states that his intent was to "[make] it look like his room probably does at his own house .... We wanted the room to be nice and sweet for him, cause he's kinda sweet .... He has the perfect nickname, Rashad *Sugar* Evans, perfect."[186] This allows Jackson not only to attack Evans' sexuality, and therefore his prowess as a fighter, based on the belief that a homosexual man cannot possibly be a UFC fighter, but also attacks Evans' nickname. This is important because Evans' nickname is a part of his presentation of self, part of the persona that Evans has constructed, in the same way that the nickname 'Rampage' is an important part of the character that Jackson presents to the world. By attacking Evans' nickname, Jackson is attacking the image of Evans' and by associating that nickname with homosexuality, Jackson undermines Evans' ability to present himself as a legitimate fighter to the UFC audience.

The second confrontation between Jackson and Evans comes after Roy Nelson defeats James McSweeney in the first semifinal fight of the episode. This second conflict begins as a confrontation between Evans and Team Rampage trainer Tiki Ghosn. After Ghosn and Evans share some verbal back and forth, Evans walks away, calling Ghosn and Jackson "Bitches, Straight Bitches."[187] This causes Jackson to ask Ghosn, "Did he

just say the b-word?"[188] and causing another verbal exchange, this time involving Jackson, Evans, and Ghosn:

> Jackson: I know he didn't walk away and call us bitches. [laughs] He walked away, he turn his back...
> Ghosn: Hey, hey, he was like [starts walking away and turns head to shoulder] 'bitches'
> Jackson: [turns head to shoulder] Y'all straight bitches
> Evans: [walks up to Jackson] You a bitch.
> Jackson: Treat me like a bitch then Rashad.
> Evans: You a bitch, and I'm gonna treat you like a bitch
> Jackson: Treat me like a bitch right now. You get in my face and call me a bitch, treat me like a bitch *right now*
> Evans: You a bitch straight up. You a bitch, you a bitch.
> Jackson: Treat me like a bitch right now.
> Evans: Like I said, you're a bitch...
> Jackson: Treat me like a bitch right now
> Evans: You know you're a bitch
> Jackson: You're a coward ass bitch
> Evans: You a bitch, [points at Ghosn], you a bitch.
> Jackson: You're a coward ass bitch
> Evans: [brings face closer to Rampage] Back up dude...back up dude
> Jackson: Dude, I know you didn't just do that.
> Evans: Yes I did.
> Jackson: I know you didn't just do that.
> Evans: Yes I did.
> Jackson: You came up in my motherfucking face.
> Evans: So what?
> [Uncomfortable silence as the two men stare at one another]
> Evans: Throw it baby...throw it.
> [pause]
> Evans: Let it happen, let it happen. See, you talkin' all that good shit, I walk up to you, you still talking that shit. What's up?
> Jackson: Am I? Am I?
> Evans: Now what's up?...I said you was a bitch back there, and I said it to your motherfucking face.
> Jackson: Treat me like a motherfucking bitch like I said.
> Evans: You soft. You soft.
> Jackson: Treat me like a motherfucking bitch, like I said.
> Evans: You soft dude. I got your whole game, I got your whole game figured out.
> Jackson: Treat me like a motherfucking bitch.
> Evans: One thing you need to know though. When we go in there and fight, its just gonna be me and you. You ain't gonna have Tiki, and I will treat you like a bitch, but right now? Ain't the time. And I can't wait to treat you like a bitch, cause you gonna be a real good bitch. You gonna be a real good bitch, you make

> a good bitch.
> Jackson: Okay, okay.
> Evans: I'll show you.
> Jackson: I'm glad you think that.
> Evans: I'm gonna show, I'm gonna show you.
> Jackson: I'm glad you think that.
> Evans: Tiki, why don't you go away so his balls can go away and he can act like he normally do.
> Jackson: I just saved your motherfucking life. I just saved your motherfucking life.[189]

Evans then walks away, and Team Rashad's Mike Van Arsdale comes up and asks, "You ready to go eat?"[190]

This exchange, and its extensive use of the word 'bitch' and, more importantly, Jackson's exhortations for Evans to 'treat [him] like a bitch' are more than just another example of the comparison of men to women as a means of insulting them. Rather, this exchange indicates a belief that men who can be compared to women, as a result of their lack of masculinity, or a different performance of masculinity, not only deserve to be insulted, but to be mistreated, particularly physically.

Jackson's calls for Evans to 'treat me like a bitch' are not an endorsement of domestic violence, or of violence against women. Instead, they target for abuse those men who present masculinities viewed as submissive to dominant forms. By classifying Jackson as a 'bitch,' Evans is making clear that he not only believes he will beat Jackson, but that Jackson will deserve the beating he receives at Evans' hands. What is particularly telling about the exchange is Evans' insistence that Jackson is "gonna be a real good bitch. You gonna be a real good bitch, you make a good bitch."[191] In addition to the promise of physical violence, there seems to be an undercurrent of sexual violence, akin to what one would expect to find in an episode of HBO's prison drama *OZ*, rather than a reality TV show about fighting. But again, this is about the performance of

masculinity and, within this context, when combined with both Jackson's and Evans' respective 'cool poses,' this confrontation between the two not only promises violence, but a violence based on a belief that the other person is not only inferior, but is deserving of the violence they suffer because of their inferiority.

The twelfth episode ended with Brendan Schaub defeating Marcus Jones via knockout, in a manner similar to Jones' defeat of Darrill Schoonover. As a result, the stage is set for the finale, with two fighters from Team Rashad advancing to the finals. As the show closes, it is also announced that the *Ultimate Fighter Finale*, set to take place live from Las Vegas, will feature Marcus Jones fighting Matt Mitrione, and Kimbo Slice will be fighting, although his opponent is not announced. Having spent 12 episodes not only building up the narrative for the upcoming Rashad Evans vs Quinton Jackson fight, but the narrative for the finale, the first payoff will take place at the finale, and the title of "Ultimate Fighter" will be awarded to one man.

The Ultimate Finale: A New Beginning

The *Ultimate Fighter Finale*, was broadcast live on Spike TV on December 5, 2009, from "The Pearl at The Palms" in Las Vegas, Nevada. The event took place a week before UFC 107, the PPV where Jackson and Evans were originally supposed to fight, and which their season of *The Ultimate Fighter* was designed to promote. It is worth noting that little mention is made of Jackson or Evans during the *Ultimate Fighter Finale*, likely due to the fact that, at that point, the fight had not been rescheduled, and there were still lingering questions as to whether Jackson would fight again in the UFC. As a result, rather than being the final promotional thrust for the PPV, as was likely the intent for the broadcast (in addition to concluding the tenth season of *The Ultimate*

Fighter), the show instead acted as more of a conclusion to the season, while at the same time working to promote the next PPV, which would feature a main event of Lightweight Champion BJ Penn facing Diego 'Nightmare' Sanchez. Because of this, the finale does not act as a part of the narrative for the fight between Jackson and Evans, although it should definitely still be read as part of the larger 'integrated sport spectacle.' Because of its lack of pertinence to the Jackson vs Evans fight, the finale will not be examined in great detail, but there are some notable points to make regarding the event.

The event opens like a traditional UFC PPV, with the gladiator opening discussed in the previous chapter. In this instance, the gladiator clips are cut with interviews from the different fighters appearing on the show, including Matt Mitrione, Marcus Jones, Matt Veach, Frank Edgar, Houston Alexander, Kimbo Slice, Jon Jones, Matt Hammill, Brendan Schaub, and Roy Nelson.[192] For this event, UFC commentators Mike Goldberg and Joe Rogan provide commentary for the fights, as well as narration and description. Their function is similar in concept to that of the commentators during an NFL football game, or NHL hockey game, not only calling the action, but keeping viewers informed of what is coming up, both on the broadcast and on the UFC schedule. Their roles are somewhat different during the finale, due to the fact that the show featured commercial breaks, which PPVs do not. Unfortunately for this study, I only have access to the version of the broadcast that was included as part of the DVD box-set for *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, and therefore do not have access to the commercials that were part of the live broadcast.

The ring features different sponsor logos from the season, this time featuring a "Dave & Buster's" restaurant logo in the centre of the Octagon, as well as logos for

"Mickey's" malt liquor, "Burger King," "TapOut" clothing company, the feature film *Avatar*, and *UFC Undisputed 2009*, the UFC's, most recent (at that point) foray into video games.

The DVD version of the finale also includes all the fights from the event, not just those that were featured on the broadcast. Typically for UFC PPVs, there are a number of fights which are not scheduled to be featured as part of the broadcast. The UFC has taken to broadcasting a couple of these on Spike TV in the hour before the broadcast is set to begin, as a way of getting one last promotional push for the PPV. Even more recently, the UFC has begun streaming fights on its Facebook page in the hour before the Spike TV broadcast is set to begin, making greater use of social media, likely with a desire to generate fan interest in ordering the PPVs from UFC.com, rather than from a cable or satellite provider. Oftentimes, these 'dark matches' as they have become known, will make it to air if the producers find themselves with some time to fill, and if the fights are considered particularly exciting or notable. In the case of the DVD version of the event, the fights are simply shown in the order in which they took place live. It is also worth noting that the role of women within the UFC is the same on this broadcast as it is during *The Ultimate Fighter*. UFC ring girls carry cards announcing the round of the fight, and are clad in the same UFC branded tops and shorts as they wore during the show.

There are a number of other consistencies from *The Ultimate Fighter* to the *Ultimate Fighter Finale*. Before each fight begins, there are interview clips with the different fighters, talking about their opponent, and what they plan to do to them. There is also a "Tale of the Tape" segment, providing statistics and measurements for the

fighters. One of the more notable differences, apart from the fact that the fights are taking place in a large arena, rather than an empty UFC training facility, are the fighter sponsors. On *The Ultimate Fighter*, competitors wore UFC branded fight shorts in their respective team colours. For this event, fighters wear their own fight gear, which oftentimes includes logos for each fighter's sponsors. In the second fight, as an example, fighter Dennis 'Superman' Hallman has a logo for GunsAmerica.com on his shorts, with the slogan "Buy Guns, Sell Guns" below. A quick visit to the website reveals that one can do just that, as GunsAmerica.com is an online marketplace where one can go to buy or sell guns and gun accessories. The site also features gun reviews, as well as information on how to improve one's shooting ability. While the next chapter will go into greater detail examining the sponsors' and advertisers' role within the UFC, it is important to note the presence of sponsors as a difference between the finale and the regular *Ultimate Fighter* episodes.

Sponsors and sponsor logos also make a couple of other appearances in the finale where they did not exist during the regular season. The first is in the presence of fighter banners. These are displayed behind the fighter after they first enter the cage, and during the fighter introductions from ring announcer Bruce Buffer. Every banner is the same along the top, featuring the URL Palms.com, flanked by the UFC logo. The inclusion of the Palms website is likely due to the fact that the top of the Octagon segments where the fighters stand during introductions has that URL printed on them, and the inclusion of the URL on the banner is a way to ensure that the venue maintains its advertising space. The inclusion of the UFC logo also ensures that the UFC is prominently featured, maintaining its branding of the fight, and of the fighter. The rest of the banner is then taken up with

logos for the fighter's various sponsors. For example, in the Houston Alexander versus Kimbo Slice fight, Alexander's banner features logos for "TapOut," the "Lugz" brand of footwear, "Zico Coconut Water," "Team Doyle," "Hayabusa" brand fightwear, and "Delicious Vinyl," an independent record label.[193] Slice, on the other hand, has no banner. Fighter banners are not required, but they are a way for a fighter to take advantage of their television appearance to make some money.

The other appearance of sponsor and sponsor logos is in the post-fight shirt and hat. When a fight is over, the referee takes the two fighters to the middle of the ring, where the ring announcer announces the winner, and the method of victory. In the case of a knockout, technical knockout or submission, the winner is known, and the announcement is merely a formality. In cases where the fight goes to the judges, there is a certain level of tension as the fighters await the announcement. Because both fighters are standing relatively still, and are the focus of the television cameras at this time, it provides an excellent opportunity for the fighters to don a sponsor's t-shirt, and sometimes hat, gaining additional exposure for their sponsors, and hopefully some additional funding for themselves.

The best example of this comes at the end of the Jon Jones vs Matt Hammill fight. After the referee stopped the fight after Jones' use of an illegal 12 to 6 elbow appeared to break Hammill's nose while the fighters were on the ground, Jones was celebrating his victory while awaiting the official announcement. Before the announcement, and while the ring doctors checked on Hammill's condition, Jones' corner can be clearly heard telling the fighter to "Get that shirt on, get that hat on."[194] In an interesting turn of events, Hammill was declared the winner as a result of Jones' illegal strikes, ending Jones'

celebrations, and forcing the announcers to re-evaluate the manner in which they had described the fight, particularly their proclaiming Jones the winner, before the official announcement.

The *Ultimate Fighter Finale* featured another example of the announcers altering their narrative during the Kimbo Slice versus Houston Alexander fight. Before the fight began, Rogan and Goldberg were talking about the fights in anticipation of a fast-paced 'slug-fest,' with a good chance of a knockout early in the fight. The interview clips of Slice and Alexander confirmed this perspective, with Slice proclaiming "first opportunity I get, definitely I'm gonna knock this joker out."[195] An interview with Dana White made clear what was expected of the fight, saying "they're gonna go out, in the middle of the octagon, and they're gonna throw punches until somebody goes down."[196] Before the fight began, the narrative that had been constructed framed the fight as one where both fighters would attempt to knock the other out as quickly, and likely as violently, as possible. This emphasis on the violence and the strength of the fighters is not only an attempt to build the excitement for the fight, but reinforces Messner's themes of "Sports is War," and "Aggressive Players Get The Prize; Nice Guys Finish Last." Violence and aggression are important to masculinity, and to sports masculinity in particular. The buildup for the Slice/Alexander fight was built on this paradigm, hyping the potential for violence, rather than a tactical match between two strategically thinking fighters. While MMA is, by its very nature, a violent sport, the announcers framed this fight in a way that highlighted the potential for violence and excitement. This is notable particularly for its contrast to the previous fight of the evening, which saw Frankie Edgar defeat Matt Veach via rear naked choke. During the fight recap, where they replayed the ending of the fight,

Joe Rogan described Edgar's victory as "very methodical."[197] This shows that violence does not need to be foregrounded in MMA, but for the Slice/Alexander fight, this is the approach that was decided upon to promote the fight.

After the fight began, it became clear that the anticipated display of punching prowess was not going to take place. Instead, both fighters seemed almost wary of one another, demonstrating a more strategic approach. As the fight progressed into the second and third rounds, Rogan and Goldberg's description of the fight changed. At the start of the second round, Rogan says that Slice is "becoming boring,"[198] expressing not only his surprise at Slice's strategy, but also a level of frustration. This frustration not only stems from the fact that the fight is not fitting into the narrative framework used to build up the fight, but because Slice's performance isn't in keeping with the image constructed for a proper MMA fighter, or at least, not with the type of image that had been constructed for Kimbo Slice, former YouTube street fighter.

Rogan and Goldberg then find a way to alter their commentary in a way that allows them to construct a different narrative for the fight and the fighters, particularly when Kimbo Slice attempts to take the fight to the ground, rather than keeping the fight standing. At this point, the commentary shifts from an emphasis on the power and violence of the fight, towards an approach that highlights Slice's desire to demonstrate new skills. Rogan says that "Kimbo is dominating Houston Alexander on the ground,"[199] while Goldberg notes that "The humbleness of Kimbo Slice to assess his own skills Joe, and know he had to learn this, the ground game, if he was to be a true MMA fighter, and we see some of the hard work coming to fruition here tonight."[200] Both of these comments highlight Slice's ground skills, with Goldberg's comments going the extra step

to also comment on Slice's personal character, by mentioning his humility. What is most interesting is the way that this new approach also allows the commentators to distance MMA from the brand of punching violence they had previously been extolling, noting that Slice's desire to improve other facets of his skill set is the mark of a "true MMA fighter."

When the fight ends, and Slice is declared the winner by unanimous decision, Rogan and Goldberg continue their alternative narrative approach to the fight, talking about Slice's improved ground skills, and his evolution away from a street fighter. The flexibility of the narrative is important to note, not only because of the fact that it is necessary when, as in this instance, fights do not follow the predicted narrative, but also because of the ways that the commentators are able to maintain dominant themes within those narratives, even when forced to adapt on-the-fly. The original approach for the Slice/Alexander fight was to highlight violence and strength. By the end of the fight, the narrative highlighted themes like self improvement, dedication and humility. While different from those originally touted, these new themes still portray the fighters, or at least Kimbo Slice, in a positive light, and promote his image as one to be admired and, more importantly, as one that is consistent with the image of an MMA, and UFC, fighter.

The final fight of the *Ultimate Fighter Finale* was the match featuring Roy 'Big Country' Nelson facing Brendan 'The Hybrid' Schaub. There was a video package for each fighter that showed their training upon finishing their time in the *Ultimate Fighter* house, as well as giving some insight into their personal lives. It was noted that both men are heterosexual, showing their partners, and it was revealed that both men drive large trucks. These packages were an opportunity for the UFC to construct an image for both

fighters as deserving of the title of "Ultimate Fighter" and worthy of competing in the UFC. Again, it is worth noting that little to no reference is made to either Rashad Evans or Quinton Jackson, with the narrative of the coaches seemingly forgotten for this fight.

The construction of Roy Nelson is particularly interesting, due both to Nelson's unconventional physique, and his breadth of experience within MMA. After the video packages, Rogan and Goldberg talk about Nelson's physique, with Rogan describing him as "two hundred and sixty pounds and not a lot of it is muscle."[201] However, despite this, Rogan and Goldberg discuss how Nelson "uses that to his advantage, that, that big midsection he uses to hold guys down, and we saw that over and over again on the show, where he stopped James McSweeney like that, and also he stopped Kimbo Slice in the same way. Gets 'em in crucifix, and pounds on 'em from that position."[202] In this way, the narrative for the finals match is able to address the fact that Nelson does not fit with the typical image of what one expects for an MMA fighter but, when examined more closely, his obesity is an asset which he uses to his advantage. With that image established then, it is important to note that Rogan asks, "Just imagine what the guy would look like, or how he'd move if he was in shape?"[203] It is established that, while Nelson may use his unorthodox body type to his advantage, he is still doing himself a disservice by not shaping his body to fit with what is commonly associated with a professional fighter. This both addresses Nelson's seeming refusal to conform to the expected image of a UFC fighter, while at the same time reinforcing that image as being ideal for those who wish to compete in the UFC.

After Nelson defeats Schaub by knockout in the first round, Nelson shows his understanding of his own image, jumping to the top of the cage and rubbing his belly.

While being interviewed, saying "I'm feeling pretty good. Little tired, I mean, I wanna go get Burger King now."[204] Nelson embraces the fact that he does not look like a fighter, and uses that as part of his presentation of the self. As he says to Rogan, "I was definitely the underdog coming in. But I'm just the fat guy, it's okay."[205] Nelson adopts a self-deprecating manner in regards to his physical appearance, and uses that to position himself as both an entertaining fighter, and an underdog, desirable qualities in a fighter. Rogan's response provides another important quality, saying that "You're more than just a fat guy, you're a fat guy who can fight his ass off."[206] With that, Nelson's credentials as an "Ultimate Fighter" are established, and his image as a fighter, although alternative to the norm, is not seen as in opposition to it.

UFC Primetime: The Saga Continues

With the tenth season of *The Ultimate Fighter* over, the original plan was for the coaches to face each other the next week at UFC 107. That fight ended up not taking place until May 29, 2010, at UFC 114. Despite the nearly six-month delay, the UFC made use of the animosity that had been displayed between the two fighters during the taping of the show, and promoted the fight accordingly. By the time the fight came around, the schedule for *The Ultimate Fighter* had resulted in another season coming around, this time featuring another longtime pair of rivals, Tito Ortiz and Chuck Liddell. But the new season made for a perfect lead-in show for the three episodes of *UFC Primetime* focusing on Jackson and Evans. While the UFC regularly prepares one-hour promotional *Countdown* shows for their PPV events, *UFC Primetime* runs are usually saved for high-profile fights. Rather than spending half an hour of one *Countdown* show promoting the main event, *UFC Primetime* dedicates three hour-long episodes to the

main event of the fight, following the fighters in the weeks leading up to the fight. Similar in concept to the HBO *24/7* programs designed to build up to major boxing HBO boxing events, *UFC Primetime* builds to the fight by creating an image for the fighters, focusing not only on the fight, but on the fighters themselves, constructing representations of the fighters that will, ideally, encourage fans and viewers to identify with one or the other, or at the very least, to build enough anticipation to make people want to spend money to see these two fighters go at it for three rounds.

It should be noted that, unlike *The Ultimate Fighter*, for which I had access to the uncensored versions on the DVD release of *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, the episodes of *UFC Primetime* were recorded from their original broadcasts, and thus feature profanities censored.

Primetime 1: Love and Happiness

The first episode of *UFC Primetime* opens with an Extreme Closeup of Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson's face in a blue hoodie, saying "You did a whole lot of talking for a long time. You talked a whole lot of big game, you talked all this stuff that you gonna do to me. And you know damn well that you can't do nothing of it....Better not run."[207] This then changes to footage of Jackson with his trademark chain in his hands, then footage of Jackson wrapping his fists for a fight or sparring session. The connection made here between Jackson's chain, and his taped fists suggests violence, and the body as a weapon. Messner's "When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in sport"[208] makes the connection between the use of violence and aggression, and the performance and demonstration of concepts of masculinity. This opening segment then draws a connection between Jackson's violent body and his plans for Evans, particularly as

retribution for Evans' words. Jackson is responding to Evans' claims with claims of his own, once more demonstrating the performative aspect of masculinity, and the need for both Jackson, and Evans, to construct both a narrative for their upcoming fight, featuring their constructed images of self as the central characters.

The episode then introduces the fighters, and their upcoming match, with the voice-over describing it as "the UFC's most heated rivalry."[209] One interesting note is that the voice-over is provided by Henry Rollins, the former lead singer for DC punk band Black Flag, as well as the lead singer of the Rollins Band and the Henry Rollins band. Rollins is also an actor and voice actor, and has recently hosted his own show on IFC, the Independent Film Channel. The use of Rollins for the voice-over of *UFC Primetime* is an interesting choice, because while Rollins is known for his tattooed, muscular physique, seemingly in keeping with standard definitions of masculinity, he is also known as something of a counterculture progressive, rather than a mainstream artist and performer. The use of Rollins may have simply been based on his voice, but it does raise interesting questions that I cannot answer.

In addition to introducing the fighters, and their animosity, the show makes use of footage from *The Ultimate Fighter* to further demonstrate the rivalry between Jackson and Evans. As part of this, the show portrays both fighters as potential winners of the match. At the beginning of the episode, footage from some of Jackson's PrideFC and UFC fights are shown, while the voice-over describes him as "an elite light heavyweight force, with a savage bark to match his ferocious bite."[210] This is then juxtaposed with footage of Evans fighting, while he is described as "a rock-solid fusion of polished technique, and explosive power."[211] Both fighters are described as being strong,

powerful and, perhaps most importantly, as men capable of violence. As a result, both fighters are presented as being spectacular images, not only worthy of being considered men, but also worthy of being considered to be the type of masculine signifiers of which the spectacle can make use.

This violence is then justified by focusing on the bad blood between the two, showing interview clips with both men talking about their rivalry. An interview clip with Evans is shown, cut with sparring footage and clips from *The Ultimate Fighter*. Evans is shown saying "[bleep] Rampage...I don't really like to say I hate people, hate's such a strong word, but I dislike that mother[bleep] man"[212] More footage from *The Ultimate Fighter* is shown, then Jackson is shown saying "I hope you remember the stuff you said, because I do. And I'm coming right at you,, I'm coming for you. And I'm coming to destroy you."[213] This opening segment introduces the fighters, establishes them as violent men, and shows not only how they feel about their opponent, but also why they feel justified in feeling that way. The segment establishes the framework for the narrative, while at the same time building the images of the fighters to propel that narrative.

The show opens by focusing on Evans, getting up in the morning and heading out to train, while Al Green's "Love and Happiness" plays. He is shown going to the "Grudge" training centre in Denver, where he is trained by Mike Van Arsdalde and Trevor Wittman, two of the Team Rashad coaches from *The Ultimate Fighter*, as well as Greg Jackson, described as "the man behind the curtain"[214] on the show. In addition to showing Evans training, interview clips with Evans, and with the trainers are also featured. Van Arsdale is shown saying that "We train for the best Rampage Jackson that

ever lived. So our fighter is going to come ready to do battle."[215] Van Arsdale's comments not only reinforce the concept of sports as war, but also stress the intensity and dedication of Evans' training. Wittman is shown saying "All that talk that you talked, all that talk that Rampage talked, it doesn't matter now. Once that door is closed, the talking ain't there no more, now you're speaking with your fists, you're speaking with your feet, your shins, anything you can do to hurt that opponent that's out in front of you."[216] Wittman's comments draw a connection between the trash talking that has gone on between Evans and Jackson. Wittman acknowledges the importance of the verbal sparring, while also dismissing it as inconsequential once the fight begins. What is important from Wittman's comments is the emphasis placed on "anything you can do to hurt that opponent that's out in front of you."[217] This not only emphasizes the violence, but also the desire to dominate one's opponent, thereby proving superiority and a greater demonstration of masculinity. The concept of the conversation as taking place through the violence is also interesting. Rather than dismissing the trash talking, it merely changes the medium. In this way, it can be said that just as the violence that occurs during the fight is designed to injure and harm, so too is the trash talking designed to cause injury, albeit psychological and emotional, rather than physical. This extension also works in the other direction. If the trash talking and verbal sparring between Jackson and Evans was part of a larger project of performing masculinity, and asserting one's dominance, then so too is the fight a part of that performance. The fight is part of a larger narrative of masculinity, as performed not only with the words, but with the actions of the fighters.

This concept of the larger narrative of masculinity, with both the verbal and the physical being a part of that narrative can then be connected to the concept of the spectacle, and the spectacular narrative. If, as Debord asserts, "the spectacle ... is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images,"[218] and those images are constructed through the narratives presented before, during, and after the sporting event, then this allows us to better understand how masculinity is constructed, not only by the producers of the event, but also by the participants. Just as Dana White is seeking to produce and market a specific brand of masculinity through the UFC, so too are the fighters seeking to present themselves as being models for that masculinity. And, by "entering the spectacle as a model to be identified with, he renounces all autonomy in order himself to identify with the general law of obedience to the course of things."[219] In this way, then, the narratives between the fighters, as parts of a larger sporting narrative about competition, dominance and masculinity, are also part of a larger spectacle, which not only draws upon previously spectacularized concepts of masculinity and competition, but also reproduces those concepts again. And all the while, this spectacularization is used as part of the larger system of dominance, that of marketing and branding these images, to sell them both to audiences as being right and natural. Sponsors and advertisers take advantage of these naturalized images to sell their products, by associating them with these concepts of masculinity, as commodities which can act as signifiers for this masculinity.

Wittman acknowledges the importance of the trash talking as part of the fight between Evans and Jackson. In so doing, he also illustrates the importance of how Dana White promotes the fights in the UFC. By creating a show like *The Ultimate Fighter*, and

by producing these *UFC Primetime* specials, White is able to not only promote the fight in order to pique fan interest, thereby generating better PPV buyrates, but he is also, and perhaps more importantly, able to promote this brand of masculinity in a way that allows the fighters to present themselves as "a model to be identified with," using the fighters' own actions as the basis for understanding this construction of masculinity. This approach then takes examples of how the fighters understand their own masculinity, how they make use of 'manhood acts' and 'cool pose' to present themselves as men. These learned behaviours, performances of masculinity, help to reproduce the underlying concepts of masculinity, when presented as part of a spectacular narrative such as that presented by the UFC. The fighters may think, as Wittman's conversation with Evans seems to indicate, that they are merely attempting to gain the upper hand as they prepare for a fight. They may believe that they are making their choices in how to present themselves as fighters. And it is this ignorance of the spectacle's ubiquity that is its greatest strength. The spectacle functions best when it is unacknowledged, and its machinations seen to be as autonomous choices.

The show then cuts to an interview with Evans talking about Jackson: "This dude, he likes to talk a lot, he works big off of intimidation, he just wants to intimidate somebody. He wants somebody to be afraid of him."[220] This is then cut with footage from *The Ultimate Fighter*, and the voice-over explains that "Constant trash talk defined season 10 of the Ultimate Fighter, where a Rampage Rashad face-off became a daily event."[221] The show then goes back to Evans, again talking about Jackson, with the interview cut with scenes and footage from *The Ultimate Fighter*:

> He try to act like he's something that he's not, and I see right through it. I see like a little boy, putting on for his friends around. I just see nothing but, an insecure

> little boy. His name is Quinton, I like to call him 'Quittin' as a constant state of giving up, 'Quittin' Yo Quittin, you said on Twitter that I'm gonna need a pillow, so I went out and got you something myself. Me being the kind of guy I am, I went and got you a Snuggie, so that way when you're knocked out, you can stay nice and warm.[222]

As he did during *The Ultimate Fighter*, Evans again asserts that Jackson's talk is a facade, as well as an attempt to inspire fear. For Evans, this attempt at intimidation is part of a larger performance that is being done for the benefit of those around Jackson, and is inspired by Jackson's juvenile nature. By reducing Jackson to a child, Evans is questioning his masculinity, as well as Jackson's 'cool pose.' Evans does not question Jackson's masculinity by comparing him to a woman, but instead uses a child as the point of reference. This is still an attack on Jackson's masculinity, but one that positions Evans as being not only more of a man, but also more intelligent and mature. This is then reinforced with Evans' purchase of a 'Snuggie' for Jackson, once again reducing Jackson to a child, although possibly also a woman. Evans gives Jackson an insulting nickname that questions his masculinity, as well as infantilizes his opponent by offering a cuddly blanket to keep him warm. Evans is definitely calling Jackson's masculinity into question, but is doing it in a way that draws upon Evans' own interactions with Jackson, rather than drawing on standard tropes of masculinity by comparing Jackson to a woman or a homosexual. The show then goes to commercial as Evans holds the Snuggie up to the camera.

Primetime 1: In the Wolfslair

When the show returns from commercial, the song "Rapture's Delight" by hip-hop artist KRS-One is playing, and footage shot of Britain is shown. Wolfslair training facility appears, described by the voice-over as hosting "an elite squad of MMA

specialists."[223] The segment discusses Jackson's decision to train in the U.K. rather than in the United States, and the environment and culture of the Wolfslair. Interviews with Jackson, as well as some of the Wolfslair trainers are shown. One interview with Jackson is cut with footage of him training. In that interview, Jackson also infantalizes his opponent, saying "Rashad is a boy. I'm a grown ass man. Rashad is all about talking. Little boy, you don't, you don't even know who you're messing with."[224] Much like Evans, Jackson is reducing his opponent to a child, as well as calling him out for his talk about the fight. The difference between Evans and Jackson, in this situation, is that Evans claims that victory is his because of a character flaw in Jackson, while Jackson believes that victory is his because he is superior to Evans.

The rest of the episode tracks Evans' and Jackson's training, with Evans spending time in Montreal and Denver, while Jackson spends his time in the U.K. The episode also provides some background on Jackson's childhood in Memphis, and his path to becoming a Mixed Martial Artist. The segment discusses Jackson's problems with his temper growing up, and how finding high school wrestling provided him with an outlet for his anger, allowing him not only to find something at which he excelled, but also allowed him to flourish in other aspects, including education. This segment endorses Messner's interpretation of the "Boys Will Be (Violent) Boys"[225] theme, in which violent behaviour, particularly in young men, is laughed off and dismissed as being just a natural part of growing up. While the segment does acknowledge that Jackson's temper was the cause of problems for him, it also creates an image of a young man who, given proper guidance and training, does not learn to resist violence, but instead learns to use that violence as a tool to help him. By describing Jackson as a young man who grew up to

accept and use violence as an adult, the segment further links violence and masculinity. As a child, violence can be dangerous, but, as a man, violence is a tool, and its use is acceptable, and right, so long as it is performed within a controlled environment.

The segment also makes an interesting distinction between 'Rampage' Jackson and Quinton Jackson. As Jackson says,

> I really don't know what the public view of Rampage is. It's where like, Rampage is the toughest guy on the planet, you know what I'm sayin'? Rampage has tunnel vision, he just has like, one objective, that's like, destroy his opponent, know what I'm saying. Quinton is the biggest wuss ever, Quinton is the one who gotta train every day, that's why, you know what I'm sayin', I hate training. Everything hurts Quinton.[226]

Jackson makes the distinction between Quinton and Rampage, with Rampage being the person who is the violent one, while Quinton is the one who tries to laugh things off. This distinction, while not a case of multiple personality disorder, is instead representative of the two 'cool poses' that Jackson exhibits, as discussed earlier. The first 'cool pose' is the one that makes jokes and laughs, typically at others' expense, but also at Jackson's own expense. The second 'cool pose' is the angry, potentially violent one. This is the 'cool pose' that emerges when confronted, or when the joking 'cool pose' fails to achieve the desired result.

Jackson's own acknowledgment of the distinction between Quinton and 'Rampage' is almost an admission of the performative nature of Jackson's presentation of self. At the very least, it is an acknowledgment of Jackson's public perception, with people primarily seeing 'Rampage,' while not seeing Quinton. Regardless of how aware Jackson is of 'Rampage's' performed nature, the fact that attention is drawn to the distinction between the two presentations of self is important because it highlights the ways that Jackson presents himself to the world. It also draws attention to the importance

of personality and 'character' when promoting a fight. This stresses the importance of considering a fight, or any sporting event, as a narrative, as a story that is told, making use of the personalities involved to further the narrative. While the ending for the narrative may be unknown as the story is told, this does not mean that the story cannot be built around the different potential endings. In this instance, the possibilities are, at their most basic level, either Jackson or Evans wins. By focusing on both fighters, by presenting particular images of both fighters, the UFC is able to promote the fight in such a way that does not require one particular resolution. The fight is the resolution, not the victory. 'Rampage' is the persona that people pay to see, while Quinton is the person who has to work so 'Rampage' can succeed.

The episode ends by juxtaposing Evans' and Jackson's training session, while Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile" plays. Footage of each man training is shown, interspersed with interview footage from both men. Evans is shown running the Colorado mountains, while Jackson is shown running through the streets.[227] In their interview clips, both men talk about what they want to do to the other. Once more, the animosity between the two fighters is highlighted, but this time, through the use of the training footage, the effort both fighters are putting in to achieving their desired goals is also demonstrated.

Primetime 2: Clothes Make The Man

The second episode continues the creation of particular images for both Evans and Jackson. After a brief recap of the previous episode, the show opens with Evans driving into Las Vegas, with Curtis Mayfield's "Superfly" playing while the voice-overr says that "This week's trip to Las Vegas is not about fighting, but about fashion. For Rashad

Evans, clothes *do* make the man. Especially if they're custom made at Tom Ford."[228] Evans is then shown trying on a number of suits. In an interview, Evans claims he's "Gotta look good man. Cause when I look good, I just feel like, I feel so good, and I perform well. Whenever I put on a suit, its a part of me, getting ready to go out there and fight, you know? Its like my whole process before I get ready to go into the cage. You know, once I put on a suit, I know its game time."[229] For Evans, the suit is part of his presentation of self, particularly before a fight. He needs to feel that he has created the proper image for himself, before he is able to perform at his best.

Evans' 'cool pose' is signified through his suit. For Evans, the persona that he works to represent is one that is stylish, looks good, feels good, and has an attitude to match. Majors and Billson discuss clothing as an important part of the 'cool pose,' particularly as it relates to presenting oneself as being stylish.[230] This concept of style is clearly important to Evans, as his explanation indicates that he not only wants to be seen as being stylish, but that he believes he performs better when he is presenting himself as being stylish.

After Evans' shopping trip, the show heads back to Colorado to showcase more of Evans' training. He is shown training with UFC Heavyweight Shane Carwin, with the belief being that if Evans is able to deal with someone of Carwin's size, he will be better prepared to face Jackson. An interesting note about Evans training, both from the previous episode, and this episode, is that it seems much more technical in comparison to Jackson's. Jackson's training seems to consist of running, sparring and weight training, while Evans' consists of a number of different exercises and training methods. The previous episode featured Evans doing wind sprints while wearing a parachute for

additional drag, as well as other activities designed to further his conditioning. This episode not only has him sparring with the much larger Carwin, but also doing " high intensity circuit workouts."[231] The contrast in training styles is yet another narrative technique designed to juxtapose the two fighters, while at the same time not passing judgment on either.

Primetime 2: Rampage Rising

When the show returns from commercial, the focus has shifted to Jackson at Wolfslair. Rather than focus on his training, the focus is now on Jackson's interactions with fans for a media event. Shot at the time that Jackson was preparing to return to the United States for the last week before the fight, the episode features a going away party for the people from Wolfslair. At the party, the issue of Quinton versus Rampage comes up. One trainer notes that, "The intensity picks up the last three days. Especially with Quinton, his mood, his personality totally change. I mean he's a, he's a funny dude, now, three days before the fight though, this man just fades away and Rampage starts to come out."[232] Jackson then discusses how "I don't like Rampage. Quinton do not like Rampage. I don't like him, because I'm always apologizing for him. You know what I'm saying? He loses his temper, and then I'm, you know, I gotta try to control him, and, he's gotten me in trouble so many times in my life."[233] Once again, the distinction between Jackson's two 'cool poses' is shown. This time, it is acknowledged by Jackson's friends and trainers, indicating that the difference between the two is noticeable to others. It is also interesting to note that, according to Jackson's trainer, 'Rampage' comes out in the days before a fight. Just as Evans wears a Tom Ford suit to feel ready for a fight, Jackson wears a 'Rampage' suit.

The show then spends more time at the Grudge Training Center, focusing first on Trevor Wittman, who runs the facility with his wife, and then discussing how the facility acts as a surrogate family for Evans during training. This transitions into footage of Evans having a video-chat with this wife and children back home. From a comedic standpoint, the segment is excellent, as it features Evans' son Rashad Jr telling his father that he thinks Rampage will win. But the segment also confirms Evans' heterosexuality, as well as presenting him as a man who fights because it is a way to provide a future for his family.

The episode concludes with Jackson moving into his Las Vegas training facility, Striking Unlimited, for the last week before the fight. After Jackson and his team settle in, the show ends with footage of Jackson sparring and shadowboxing, cut with an interview with Jackson:

> The desire for the ass whuppin' I wanna put on him gets stronger and stronger every day. That's all I can think about, is how Imma whup his ass. And for Rashad to be calling me Quittin', or Quitting, man, don't bother me, and I'm glad they think that. And I want to teach him to keep grown folks names, out his mouth. I don't got a whole lot of stuff to say to Rashad. I just want him to know, that I'm ready. Who are you to say that I can't last a whole fight with you? You beneath me. You ain't on my level. You could never get on my level. You ain't never fought nobody like me before bruh, you never fought nobody with no punching power like me before bruh, you never fought nobody like me before and you know dat. So all this talking that you doing, you got to back it up. But you a coward, and you know it. You know you ain't a fighter, yeah, you a athlete, but you ain't no fighter. You ain't did nothing but woke up a beast. I'm glad you did it. A motivated Rampage is a dangerous Rampage. And you gonna have the most dangerous Rampage that's ever been, in your face. And that's real.[234]

This interview draws upon a number of different themes regarding masculinity and the presentation of self discussed thus far. Jackson is belittling Evans for a number of different reasons, including Evans' maturity, with the assertion that Jackson "[wants] to teach him to keep grown folks names, out his mouth." This is then extended to Jackson's

assertion that not only is Evans a child in comparison to Jackson, but that Evans is beneath Jackson, and can never hope to be on the same level as Jackson. Jackson then makes a distinction between a fighter and an athlete, conceding Evans' status as the latter, but not the former. This suggests that Jackson believes there is an intangible quality that fighters possess. Just as Dana White provided a checklist of qualities which a fighter must possess, so too does Jackson have his own set of qualities in mind. Given the tone and themes that Jackson has used on both *The Ultimate Fighter* and on *UFC Primetime*, this intangible quality would seem to be a reflection of dominant concepts of masculinity. More specifically, it would seem to be related to the desire, the willingness, and the ability to do violence. These violent tendencies must be controlled and focused, but they must also be harnessed, in order to properly present oneself as a man. As the interview plays, the accompanying training footage of Jackson includes Jackson yelling, "He's dead!"[235] This reinforces the violent aspect of Jackson's fighter mentality, as well as providing a menacing note on which to end the episode, thus propelling the narrative with the promise of violence motivated by anger.

Primetime 3: Manstrel Shows

The third and final episode of *UFC Primetime* begins with a recap of the previous episodes, then opens with the James Brown's "Superbad" played over footage of Jackson driving through Las Vegas. The voice-over explains that "[a]s fight night inches closer, both Rampage Jackson and Rashad Evans face a critical week of camp. But obligations beckon, both in and out of the gym .... Today begins with a media call for both fighters, a prelude to the looming face-off."[236] Jackson is shown in Dana White's office at the UFC's Las Vegas headquarters, while Evans is shown taking the conference call at the

Grudge Training Center in Colorado. Evans and Jackson get into a few heated arguments during the conference call, mainly centred around their perception of the other's performance of self. The episode of the show only captures a small portion of the conference call, but listening to an mp3 of the full version reveals the extent of the arguments between the two men while talking to members of the press invited to participate in the call.

The most notable argument stems from Evans' assertion that Jackson pretends to be dumb for the entertainment of the reporters and the fans. At one point in the call, a reporter likens Evans' stance to an incident in boxing history when Muhammad Ali called Joe Frazier an "Uncle Tom." Evans responds,

> Well, he does his little Sambo thing, man. He does his little Sambo thing like he act like oh black-on-black crime, oh I'm stupid you can't use big words like that like he don't know what the fuck is going on, many, come on dude. I talked to this dude. This dude is pretty smart you know what I'm saying. He knows what's going on. But he just doing oh it's comedy well why perpetuate the stereotype that you're stupid. You ain't stupid you know what I'm saying. Why perpetuate the stereotype that you can't think you know what I'm saying? You can't – you don't understand big words, you can't read. All of that stupid stuff, man.[237]

This response brings racial issues to the forefront, with Evans drawing upon hurtful stereotypes of African-Americans to make his point about how Jackson presents himself, about the image Jackson creates for himself in the public eye. Evans is asserting that Jackson, despite being an intelligent man, plays down his intelligence for comedic entertainment, and because Jackson believes this is what the image of a black fighter should be. By using terms like 'Sambo,' and "minstrel show," which Evans uses at another point in the call, Evans is framing Jackson's behaviour as not only a performance, but a performance that is damaging to the public perception of African-Americans, not just to Jackson himself. This is an attack on Jackson's 'cool pose' and on

the effect his public persona can have on the African-American community. He is also calling Jackson fake, pretending to be something he's not. How this differs from previous attacks on authenticity is that this one not only attacks Evans' opponent, but also suggests that Jackson is, in his performance of self, also doing a disservice to other African-Americans.

Jackson responds by attacking Evans' masculinity, asking Evans,

> Why you act all cocky and act all fake and be playing with your nipples and look all gay so why do you that? Why you go that way? Why do you portray the stereotype of a black gay man if you don't want to go anywhere, play with your nipples and act all gay and want to look tight, ((inaudible)) shorts, what do you do that stuff?[238]

Here, Jackson is using attacks on Evans' masculinity, in the form of homophobic taunts, and framing them in a manner similar to Evans' questioning of his perpetuation of racial stereotypes. This allows Jackson to accuse Evans of being a homosexual, to accuse him of portraying himself as a homosexual, by perpetuating negative stereotypes of gay men. This is a combination of Jackson's humourous 'cool pose' and the fear of homosexuality present in dominant forms of masculinity. This allows Jackson to divert attention from the questions about his own performance, and instead cause people to question Evans' sexuality, and Evans' performance of 'manhood acts.'

Much like the showdown with Darrill Schoonover, this portion of the conference call then degrades into threats of unwanted sexual activity, with Evans threatening to "put my big balls right in your face"[239] and so on and so forth. With this, the argument about Jackson's performance of race is discarded for issues of masculinity, and the assertion of masculinity through threats of sexual violence. As a result, the debate about not only the legitimacy of Jackson's performance of self, and the effect such a performance can have

for perceptions of African-Americans is abandoned, deemed less significant than the proper establishment of masculinity.

After the conference call, the show follows Jackson jogging in Las Vegas, while an interview with Evans is played. Evans interview discusses his belief that Jackson is underestimating, even dismissing him, as an opponent. For Evans, this dismissal works to his benefit, because it will mean that Jackson will not train as hard, confident in his superiority. By juxtaposing this with the footage of Jackson training, the segment illustrates the intensity with which Jackson is training, while at the same time creating doubt as to whether that training will be sufficient to defeat Evans.

After showcasing Jackson's training, the show's attention returns to Evans, in his final week of training in Colorado. Once more, Evans' training is portrayed as much more clinical than Jackson's with Evans training with Muay Thai specialist Phil Nurse, as well as conditioning specialist Johnathon Chaimberg. An interview segment with Trevor Wittman makes clear the distinction between Evans' training and Jackson's. "I know we're doing it by a science. We understand how to give him push, how to give him pull, how to give him endurance, how to give him explosiveness. And when I see Rampage, when I see these little workouts on Primetime, I'm like is he just jogging, is he just swimming in a pool? I mean he's training like they were ten years ago."[240] Wittman's statement not only promotes the value of Evans' training regimen, but dismisses Jackson's training as being archaic and obsolete. Evans, and his training, is the future, while Jackson is the past.

Primetime 3: Family Men

The show then returns to Jackson, this time at a Las Vegas resort pool, spending time with his wife and two of his children. Much like the video-chat footage of Evans, this segment not only asserts Jackson's virile heterosexuality, but also establishes Jackson as a man who is fighting for the good of his children. This can also be seen as a display of masculinity, with Jackson saying:

> When I see my kids during training camp, it just reminds me of what I'm fighting for, that's the main reason why I fight, so they can have the best life they can possibly have. It means everything to me that I can come from my background and give my kids an easier life. Its the ultimate sense of pride, being able to provide for your kids.[241]

Jackson, like Evans, believes that by fighting, he is making a better life for his children. This is something in which Jackson takes great pride, his ability to prove his ability as a father, by not only providing for his children, but providing them with more than what he had. His fighting success translates to financial success, which then translates to masculine success. In this way, his masculinity is not only demonstrated through his actions in the ring, but in what those actions are able to provide for his family.

After a segment focusing on the end of Evans' training camp, marked by a team meal at Trevor Wittman's house, much like Jackson's team meal in the previous episode, *UFC Primetime* concludes with a montage of interview segments with both Jackson and Evans, as well as footage of the Octagon being constructed at the MGM Grand Arena. Both fighters assert their belief that they will emerge victorious, and discuss their reasons for not only wanting to fight the other, but what is motivating them to seek to defeat their opponent. One notable quote from the interviews is Jackson's statement to Evans that "Your mouth done wrote cheques that your ass can't cash. May 29th, you're done.

You're done."[242] Once again, Jackson is using Evans' words as motivation for his physical actions. Jackson is promising physical retribution for the verbal claims made by Jackson. This is an attempt to distinguish between the performed displays of masculinity and toughness, as represented in verbal claims, and the embodied demonstration of masculinity, physical violence. A similar theme is found in a notable Evans' quote that "We gonna find out, who's real and who's fake. I'm gonna find out if you can actually back up what you saying. And from my dealing with him, he can't."[243] Here, Evans is again distinguishing between the real and the fake, the demonstrated and the performed, between himself and Jackson. With these statements, both fighters are asserting their own ability, and willingness, to prove themselves through violence, thereby demonstrating their masculinity, as well as their superiority over the other fighter.

Reflections: What Men Don't Do

The entire spectacular narrative leading up to the fight between Jackson and Evans was built on the performance of masculinity. The narrative component of the conflict, the 'storyline' constructed about the various fighters, including but not limited to Jackson and Evans, as images of men who personified and performed various elements of what can be seen as dominant concepts of masculinity. In turn, the spectacular nature of those images furthered the narrative, creating conflict between the fighters. More importantly, this conflict acts not only as a justification for the fight, but provides enticement for the viewer to purchase the PPV. This is the spectacular narrative at work, constructing image from narrative and narrative from image, all with the goal of encouraging consumption, not only of the product offered by the UFC, but also through the UFC.

Of particular note for this chapter are the types of 'manhood acts' that are validated and naturalized through the spectacular narrative. Violence, of course, is central, particularly given the nature of MMA as a combat sport. However, it is also important that this be a controlled violence.. When, at the end of UFC 97, Jackson declared his desire to regain the UFC Light Heavyweight belt, he was declaring his intent to use violence as a tool to achieve that goal.

When the coaches began the season though, Evans was no longer the champion, and the pursuit of the UFC belt became less significant.[244] But there was still a motivation for the fight, that being the personality conflict between Jackson and Evans. Both men perceived the other as being personally offensive. Jackson makes reference to Evans' cockiness, while Evans expresses his distaste for Jackson as a person. Both fighter-coaches have a personal motivation to defeat the other, in pursuit of UFC glory.

What both of these motivations, the personal and the professional have in common is the importance of demonstrating dominance. The UFC belt is a symbol for professional dominance. But both men, in their discussion of the fight, express a desire to prove that dominance in the Octagon, to not only defeat their opponent, but to do so in a way that humiliates and embarrasses their opponent. This desire for dominance, or the image of dominance, is what drives much of the spectacular narrative, and the concepts of masculinity that are employed throughout.

What is interesting is that the truly dominant man in the UFC is Dana White, and it is his endorsement of behaviours and manhood acts that is most important. From White's interviews regarding Kimbo Slice, to his dismissal of Roy Nelson's fighting style, to his speech to the fighters regarding fighting through pain, Dana White's version

of masculinity is the one to which all other masculinities must be compared. If White endorses a particular 'manhood act,' then it is seen to be as good. But if White rejects or belittles something, then it is considered wrong.

This is important because it validates certain behaviours that, I would argue, are at best immature, and at worst, socially reprehensible; in particular this includes the supposition that violence is an essential quality in the biological nature of masculinity and, as such, legitimates a binary system of the masculine/feminine in which women are submissive and men are dominant. As situations escalate, 'manhood acts' move beyond taunting through veiled humour and reach a point where dominance through sexual assault is seen as an appropriate threat. At this point, the feminine is submissive to the masculine dominant and homophobia is expressed through threats of anal rape. Because of this, both women and gay men are not only presented as being not equal to men but, therefore, justifiably subject to the violence inherent in masculinity.

What is most disturbing about these spectacular narratives of masculinity are the ways in which they are reflective of larger social issues. In a day and age where suicide amongst gay teens is finally being acknowledged publicly, the degradation and vilification of homosexuality exhibited on *The Ultimate Fighter* helps to validate the types of behaviours that campaigns like 'It Gets Better'[245] are working to combat. This homophobia is not only found in the exchanges between Jackson and Schoonover, but also in Jackson's response to the fighter's cheering for men in their underwear, and in the final prank played on Team Rashad, with the redecoration of Evans' locker room. All of these incidents establish the perception that homosexuality is not only not masculine, but is a trait that, like femininity, is worthy only of scorn and contempt.

Another issue of masculine behaviour that receives a good deal of attention throughout the series is how men deal with injuries. The issue was first explored in Team Rashad's questioning of Matt Mitrione's shoulder injury, using terms that infantilized Mitrione as a way to express the belief that men don't acknowledge injuries, as that is the behavior of children. The issue reached greater importance when concerns regarding Mitrione's possible concussion were raised. It is at this point that Dana White, in his role as 'white male voice of authority' steps in and offers his perspective on how 'real' fighters, and by extension, men, deal with injury.

As with the previously discussed homophobia, concussions and head injuries are also the subject of much greater attention within popular culture. And, as with the expressions of homophobia, the attitudes regarding brain injuries expressed on *The Ultimate Fighter* are representative of the types of behaviours and beliefs that need to be addressed before progress can be made.

Degrading femininity and weakness to belittle and dismiss those who come forward about a possible concussion or brain injury encourages athletes, particularly male athletes, to ignore potential problems. Given the concerns that are being raised about the potential long-term effects that can result from brain injuries, including depression, dementia and death, more athletes need to be encouraged to express such concerns, not repress them over fears of being seen as unmasculine.

These concerns about masculinity, and how they can be seen as contributing to larger issues facing the world of sport and the larger social body, are not part of the discussion of masculinity presented in the spectacular narratives of the UFC. Instead, the masculinity endorsed through the 'manhood acts' glorified in the UFC is one that

highlights concepts of toughness, perseverance, loyalty, and teamwork. Dominant concepts of masculinity, such as those discussed in Messner's 'Televised Sports Manhood Formula,' are not only seen as being positive, but natural and right. In this way, when other behaviours are presented or referred to, the assumption can be made that those are unnatural and wrong. Thus, dominant concepts prevail and discussions about alternative expressions of masculinity are muted.

The final episode of *UFC Primetime* ends with a shot of an empty MGM Grand Arena, before the lights go out. The arena is empty, but on May 29th, it will be filled, and the spectacle will be performed. The next chapter will examine UFC 114 in greater detail, by applying the theories of the spectacular discussed earlier. This will provide a more robust understanding, not only of how the themes of masculinity, and the narratives that drove the promotion, work together to create the spectacle, but also what the spectacle is truly presenting to the audience, both in the now empty arena, but around the world on Pay Per View. *The Ultimate Fighter* and *UFC Primetime* built up a particular brand of masculinity, one that Dana White seeks to sell to audiences and, in turn, to sell those audiences to advertisers and sponsors. The next chapter will examine how this brand of masculinity is used by those sponsors and advertisers to sell their products, through the spectacularization of masculinity that is a UFC PPV.

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16 Schrock & Schwalbe, 283.
17 Michael A Messner,., Michele Dunbar and Darnell Hunt, 2000. "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 2000 24: 380 - 394.
18 Messner, "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula," 392
19 Ibid., 381.
20 Ibid., 381.
21 Messner, Michael A. 1990. "When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in Sport." International Review for the Sociology of Sport 1990 25: 203
22 Messner, "When bodies are weapons, 205.
23 Ibid. 205.
24 Ibid., 214-215.
25 Richard Majors, Janet Mancini Billson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America*. (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1992).
26 Majors & Billson, 4.
27 Ibid., 5.
28 Ibid., 5.
29 Ibid., 28.
30 Ibid., 29.
31 Debord, 38.
32 UFC 96, Zuffa Entertainment Group, March 7, 2009.
33 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, "Size Does Matter," first broadcast September 16, 2009 by Spike TV. "The Ultimate Remix" theme song.
34 Voice-over for *The Ultimate Fighter* is done by Mike Rowe, the host of the television reality show *Dirty Jobs*, in addition to narrating a number of other television shows, including *Deadliest Catch* and *American Chopper*.
35 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, "Size Does Matter," first broadcast September 16, 2009 by Spike TV.
36 Spike TV Press Release, "UFC HEAVYWEIGHTS ARE A RATINGS KNOCKOUT ON SPIKE TV!" September 18, 2009.
37 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, "Size Does Matter," first broadcast September 16, 2009 by Spike TV.
38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.
40 Messner, “The Televised Sports Manhood Formula,” 382.
41 And it should be noted that both the play-by-play and the colour commentator for the UFC are white males.
42 Schrock & Schwalbe, 286.
43 The use of nicknames is a part of the presentation of self not addressed in this paper. The reason for this is that nicknames, whether in MMA, pro wrestling, or other sports are deserving of a study of their own. They provide the athlete the opportunity to assume an identity that they feel will allow for a greater connection with spectators. Some, like Jackson, choose nicknames of aggression. Others, like Evans, choose nicknames of endearment. While this dissertation does not touch on nicknames, I do hope to address the issue in the future.
44 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
45 Ibid.
46 Qtd. In Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 www.ufc.com.
50 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Majors & Billson, 5.
55 Schrock & Schwalbe, 283.
56 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
57 Pride had since been bought out by Zuffa, with a number of fighter contracts being absorbed into the UFC, as well as giving Zuffa the Pride fight library, allowing them to include Pride fights on future DVD releases, along with making the fights available on their UFC on Demand video subscription service.
58 Hirose, Akihiko and Kay Kei-ho Pih, 2010. "Men Who Strike and Men Who Submit: Hegemonic and Marginalized Masculinities in Mixed Martial Arts." *Men and Masculinities*, 13(2) 190-209.
59 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 The IFL was another aspiring MMA organization that was eventually purchased by Zuffa and absorbed into the UFC.
65 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Bilson & Majors, 5.
70 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
71 I use the term ‘locker room’ loosely because the rooms are really more just lounge areas, with not a locker in sight, nor even a shower or other traditional locker room furnishing. Instead, the rooms have sofas and comfy chairs. But ‘locker rooms’ they are called, and so shall I call them.
72 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
73 Ibid.
74 Messner, “The Televised Sports Manhood Formula,” 387.
75 Ibid., 383.
76 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
77 Ibid.
78 Yellow for Team Rashad, Silver for Team Rampage
79 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 1, “Size Does Matter.”
80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Debord, 13.
84 Debord, 13.
85 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 2, "All About Survival," first broadcast September 23, 2009 by Spike TV.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 3, "The Enemy," first broadcast September 30, 2009 by Spike TV.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights,* Episode 2, "All About Survival."
98 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 3, "The Enemy."
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Schrock & Schwalbe, 288.
102 A position which sees the man on top lying across his opponent's chest, with one of the bottom opponents tied up between the other man's legs, and the other arm pinned to the mat by one of his opponent's arms.
103 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 3, "The Enemy."
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
106 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 4, "Snitch," first broadcast October 7, 2009 by Spike TV.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 The term 'pskloew' is the author's best interpretation at transcribing the onomatopoeia used by Jackson during his interview.
111 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 4, "Snitch."
112 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 5, "Rude Awakening" first broadcast October 14, 2009 by Spike TV.
113 Messner, "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula," 387.
114 Ibid.
115 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 5, "Rude Awakening."
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Not dolls.
122 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 5, "Rude Awakening."
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 6, "16 Sharks," first broadcast October 21, 2009 by Spike TV.
127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Schrock & Schwalbe, 288.
141 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 6, "16 Sharks."
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 7, "Voices in my Head," first broadcast October 28, 2009 by Spike TV.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Messner, "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula"
155 Ibid., 389.
156 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 7, "Voices in my Head."
157 Ibid.
158 Debord, 14.
159 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 7, "Voices in my Head."
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 8, "One Soldier Left," first broadcast November 4, 2009 by Spike TV.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
173 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 9, "Rattled," first broadcast November 11, 2009 by Spike TV.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
179 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 10, "Gut Check," first broadcast November 18, 2009

by Spike TV.
180 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
184 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 11, “Road to the Finale: Demise Me,” first broadcast December 2, 2009 by Spike TV.
185 Ibid.
186 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights*, Episode 12, “Road to the Finale: Battle-Tested,” first broadcast December 2, 2009 by Spike TV.
187 Ibid.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 *The Ultimate Fighter*, “The Ultimate Finale,” Spike TV, December 5, 2009.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
197 Ibid.
198 Ibid.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
207 *UFC Primetime,* “Episode 1,” first broadcast May 12, 2010 on Spike TV. Directed by Jason Hehir.
208 Messner, ”When Bodies are Weapons.”
209 *UFC Primetime*, “Episode 1.”
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
218 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 12.
219 Ibid., 38.
220 *UFC Primetime*, “Episode 1.”
221 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
224 Ibid.
225 Messner, ”The Televised Sports Manhood Formula.”
226 *UFC Primetime*, “Episode 1.”
227 Ibid.
228 *UFC Primetime,* “Episode 2,” first broadcast May 19, 2010 on Spike TV. Directed by Jason Hehir. Evidently Tom Ford is a high end haberdasher of renown. What do I know about fine men’s wear? I’m a grad student, not Paul F. Tompkins.
229 Ibid.

230 Majors & Bilson, 80
231 *UFC Primetime*, "Episode 2"
232 Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
236 *UFC Primetime,* "Episode 3," first broadcast May 26, 2010 on Spike TV. Directed by Jason Hehir.
237 "UFC 114 Conference Call," May 18 2010. http://www.ufc.com/index.cfm?fa=multiMedia.detail&gid=81898. Accessed on May 30, 2010.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
240 *UFC Primetime*, "Episode 3"
241 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
244 Although, since the winner of the fight was to receive a title shot, that motivation was still present.
245 'It Gets Better' is a campaign seeking to provide encouragement and support for gay youth, reassuring them that, despite whatever challenges and opposition they may face in regards to their homosexuality, that life does get better, despite what they may currently believe or experience.

Chapter 5: 'Throw Your Balls in a Wheelbarrow'

UFC 114: Rampage vs Evans took place on May 29, 2010, at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada, going live on Pay-Per-View at 10 PM EST. Those watching the show live in the arena saw some of the preliminary, or 'dark' matches, before the start of the PPV broadcast. For those watching on PPV, the show began, as all UFC PPVs do, with the gladiator montage discussed in Chapter 3, creating a connection between perceived concepts of masculinity and honour in the Roman gladiators, and contemporary UFC fighters. With the montage over, and the viewers now immersed in the PPV spectacle, it is now up to the fighters, as well as the UFC production crew, to maintain that connection, and to present a spectacle that not only properly aligns the UFC and its product, with dominant concepts of masculinity, but also of assuring the viewers that such connections are positive, natural and logical. Beyond that, it is also important for the UFC fighters and production crew to ensure that these connections made between the UFC product and these concepts of masculinity are not only enjoyed by the viewers, but will encourage the viewers to then extend these positive associations to the sponsors and products associated with the UFC. In this way, the spectacle not only sells the viewers a particular ideology, or set of ideologies, but also uses those ideologies to sell more products, not by selling the product, but by generating positive feelings in association with the UFC. This is the illusory nature of the spectacle at work, linking commodities to identities, in this case masculine identities. More importantly, the spectacle's illusory nature is revealed in the fact that this is offered as a choice as to which products one will choose, according to the associations they make with what products. In the end, the choice to consume has already been made for them.

This chapter discusses not only how the UFC operates as a spectacle, but also how the narratives and images of masculinity created and fostered through *The Ultimate Fighter* and the *UFC Primetime* series are used as a means of generating a connection between the UFC and its advertisers and sponsors. In this instance, that connection is made by associating the brand of masculinity crafted and promoted by Dana White and the UFC, and the products which are sold through the UFC spectacle. The masculinity that is being sold is one that is built on concepts of dominance, and a dominance that is, eventually, proven through violence. While much of the masculinity discussed in the previous chapter was performed through verbal interactions, the narrative which surrounded those performances was based on the promise of an eventual violent physical confrontation between the participants. This is the masculinity that is being sold through the spectacle of the UFC. Because spectators are, generally, unable to demonstrate their masculinity through the exhibition of violence, they are reliant upon the commodities being sold as a means of demonstrating their masculinity. Debord writes that

> The satisfaction that the commodity in its abundance can no longer supply by virtue of its use value is now sought in an acknowledgment of its value *qua commodity*. A use of the commodity arises that is sufficient unto itself; what this means for the consumer is an outpouring of religious zeal in honor of the commodity's sovereign freedom. Waves of enthusiasm for particular products, fueled and boosted by the communications media, are propagated with lightning speed.[1]

When this is considered in the context of the spectacular nature of the UFC, what becomes apparent is that the UFC is part of this process. The UFC encourages the consumption of commodities not because of their use value, but because of their connection to the UFC, and what the UFC represents. Products are not sold based on

their utility, or even their quality, but as signifiers for what the UFC markets, part of which is a particular definition of masculinity.

First, it is necessary to examine the concept of the UFC PPV through the lens of the theories of spectacle discussed in Chapter 2. Tomlinson's summary of MacAloon's definition of spectacle states that

> First, it must be visual, comprising sensory symbolic codes. Second, it must be large-scale, characterised by size and grandeur. Third, the spectacle institutionalises the bicameral roles of actors/audience, performers/spectators. And, fourth, the spectacle is a dynamic form – movement, action and change are central to it, and such a dynamic excites spectators.[2]

A UFC PPV fits this description. Clearly, a UFC Pay-Per-View event is visual. There are auditory aspects as well, and these are essential for the creation of the narrative, but a Pay-Per-View is, at its core, a visual experience. The word 'view' is right there in the name. A UFC PPV is also large-scale. They have grown larger in scale as the organization has built itself up over the years, but they have never been small events. This is not to say that there aren't small events, as there are smaller Mixed Martial Arts organizations popping up on a seemingly regular basis, all anxious to capitalize on the popularity of MMA, and the UFC in general. But even these small events can be considered large-scale. While the promoters and organizers may not be able to match the events put on by Dana White and the UFC, at the very least, they try to emulate those events. As a result, many of the generic conventions, established not only by the UFC, but by other combat sport spectacles such as boxing and professional wrestling, are adhered to. Ring girls, entrance music, centre of the ring staredowns before the fight, are all traditional and, thus, expected elements of an event. As a result, when smaller promoters attempt to emulate the practices of the UFC, they perpetuate and confirm the

validity of those conventions. Thus, even though an MMA event may only draw a few hundred people to a small Native casino, they can still be considered large-scale, part of the totalizing narrative of MMA, for their aspirations to the status of the UFC, and their attempts to emulate the practices of the UFC.

A UFC PPV event also "institutionalises the bicameral roles of actors/audience, performers/spectators,"[3] but does so in a way that makes both groups integral to the presentation. The audience may not be a part of the physical contest taking place within the UFC Octagon, but they are a part of the spectacle being presented on Pay-Per-View. Of course, despite all the interaction between the audience and the actors, there is still a marked delineation between the two. Perhaps the most notable is the Octagon itself. Composed of rubber-coated chain link fence, the walls of the Octagon are a physical demarcation of the boundary between the performers and the spectators, not only keeping the fighters in, but keeping the audience out. Those who are admitted into the Octagon, be they fighters, corner crews, referees, doctors, or UFC officials, including Dana White, are part of the performance. Everyone else is a spectator, and is thus expected to perform in a certain way. They are allowed, and even encouraged, to be vocal in their support, or disdain, of particular fighters, but they are kept at arm's length from the performances themselves.

One important manner of incorporating the arena audience into the presentation is through crowd noise. The sounds of the live audience are constantly broadcast during the event, with the commentators making note of the crowd noise, particularly when the fans are cheering for a fighter, or booing what they feel is a less than stellar performance. Crowd reactions are also notable at the end of a fight, when fans, upset with a particular

decision (typically what they view as a judging error, but can also include an early stoppage by the referee) will make their displeasure known. This reaction, in turn, can be acknowledged both by the commentators and by the fighters. Typically, when the commentators acknowledge an adverse crowd reaction, they will also add their own opinion on the controversial subject, either validating or rejecting the vocal opinion of the crowd. As for the fighters, they can acknowledge a booing crowd, and attempt to win it back by apologizing for a poor performance, saying positive things about the other fighter, or both. While the crowd reactions at a UFC event do not have the same immediate impact as those at a Roman gladiatorial contest could, the reaction of the audience can still influence how a fighter is perceived, thereby having an effect on the UFC's ability to market and commodify the fighter. Fighters who are perceived as being boring, or of regularly having boring fights, are much more likely to be released from their contracts, or not signed to new contracts, than those who are regularly cheered by the audience. Of course, there are also those fighters who are booed by the crowd *because* of the images they present. These fighters, comparable to the professional wrestling 'heel' or bad guy, are valuable because they are booed by the crowd, and because the audience wants to see them lose, and will pay for the privilege of doing so. This is another example of the importance of narrative, and how the creation of a narrative, even in sport, has need of both a protagonist and an antagonist.

The live audience is also made a part of the broadcast through the decisions made by UFC producers. UFC PPV broadcasts will regularly feature shots of the crowd. Some of these are shot at long distances, thereby establishing the size of the audience, and by extension, demonstrating the popularity of the sport. Others are shot at close range,

panning across a row of fans, most or all of whom are cheering and waving for the camera. Typically those fans who are singled out are attractive young women, sometimes, though not always, with male companions. Shots like this, while showing the audience, can also be considered a part of the performance. These audience members are presenting themselves as UFC fans, and perform accordingly.

The performance of the audience is, in many ways, determined by, or at least influenced by, the last of the four criteria Tomlinson borrows from MacAloon, vis a vis that "the spectacle is a dynamic form – movement, action and change are central to it, and such a dynamic excites spectators."[4] Mixed Martial Arts, and the UFC, are dynamic forms. Combining different fighting disciplines from around the world, the sport can be a fast-paced flurry of excitement, with two competitors using their physical abilities to attempt to defeat the other. Even when the action is less frenetic, such as when both fighters are grappling on the mat, working for an advantageous position and/or a submission, the two combatants are displaying both strategic thinking and physical skill. The aforementioned crowd response to the action in the Octagon is often dictated by what is going on in the ring. During standup battles, with fighters using striking skills to batter their opponents, the crowds can be loud and boisterous. During a grappling session, the crowd tends to become quieter, until it becomes apparent that one fighter or another is gaining a significant advantage, at which point the crowd noise increases like a Doppler effect, either cutting off abruptly when a fighter escapes, or exploding in exultation when a fighter wins by submission. Regardless of how the fight ends, the action in the ring excites the spectators, and draws them into the spectacle.

Beyond the chainlink confines of the Octagon, MMA as a spectacle is dynamic in another sense. The UFC, and MMA in general, is still evolving as a sport. Although linkages have been claimed to the ancient Olympic sport of pankration, MMA in its current form has really only existed for about twenty years. From its early roots as a Pay-Per-View designed to showcase the Gracie form of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, to the form of MMA dismissed by former presidential candidate and boxing fan John McCain as "human cockfighting" to the sport now being featured on SpikeTV, the UFC has evolved and grown. Whereas the original UFC events featured specialists in one particular fighting style attempting to demonstrate the superiority of their chosen discipline, today's Mixed Martial Artists combine different fighting styles, creating a pastiche of techniques. And whereas many of the current MMA competitors began their training by focusing on one discipline, such as wrestling or boxing, before expanding their repertoire, there is now a new generation of fighters who are beginning their training without a particular focus on any one particular style, and are simply training in Mixed Martial Arts. All of these help to demonstrate the dynamic nature of MMA.

Beyond the evolution of the sport, there are other ways that MMA and UFC are dynamic sports events that excite spectators. The use of title belts, for example, adds additional intrigue and gravitas to fights. Even when a title isn't on the line in a fight, the results of the fight can still have repercussions on a fighter's chances at earning a shot at the title. *The Ultimate Fighter* television reality show is another example of a way of exciting spectators. By building up the dramatic tension between two fighter/coaches, with the promise of a fight between the two at the end of the season, *The Ultimate Fighter* acts as a dynamic narrative form. This is what makes the concept of the

spectacular narrative so important for consideration. These narrative approaches, be they in the form of a title fight, a fight to determine who gets the next title shot, a contest between grizzled veteran and cocky upstart, a fight between opposing *Ultimate Fighter* coaches, or another storyline, are all part of the dynamic nature of the spectacle that is MMA, particularly in the UFC. They encourage identification with one, or both, of the combatants, and draw the spectators in to the spectacle. The combination of narratives, such as that presented on *The Ultimate Fighter*, detailing the conflict between Jackson and Evans, and the spectacular events that take place on PPV, creates events where the spectators are not only, ideally, emotionally invested in the participants, but then become drawn into the event because of its dynamic nature. As a result, the spectators are not only watching the event, but are engaging with it on an emotional level. Because of what is presented, the spectators are not only engaging with the combatants and the action, but with the other narrative elements that have been incorporated into the narrative spectacle. This includes the violent masculinity that is so integral to the UFC's presentation. This emotional connection extends to the other UFC participants, namely the sponsors, that are also making connections to this brand of masculinity. In the end, the spectators become engaged with all levels of the spectacular narrative, not simply the action in the Octagon, but the participants, their representations of masculinity, and the sponsors, which offer the spectators a means to demonstrate their own masculinity.

UFC 114 begins with the gladiator montage, then cuts to a large panning shot of the crowd at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, where the fans are cheering wildly. Play-by-play announcer Mike Goldberg welcomes the audience, and begins talking about that evening's card. First and foremost is talk about the main event fight between Quinton

‘Rampage’ Jackson and ‘Suga’ Rashad Evans. Regarding the animosity between the two men, that animosity being a focal point of their season of *The Ultimate Fighter*, Goldberg describes the fight as being between, “Two men who do not dislike each other, they *hate* each other. And you know what? The best thing to do is solve it. Solve it tonight, solve it right now. Solve it in the Octagon. They are Rampage and Rashad.”[5] Goldberg’s statement is noteworthy for the fact that it establishes the belief that when two men have a disagreement, the ‘right’ way to handle the problem is for them to solve it physically, and more specifically, through violence.

Not only does Goldberg’s introduction make a claim as to how ‘real men,’ of which Jackson and Evans are representations, settle issues, but also provides a demonstration of Debord’s assertion that “The spectacle...is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”[6] Here, the images are the constructions of masculinity that were produced by *The Ultimate Fighter* and *UFC Primetime*, which offer insight into what motivates both Jackson and Evans as they prepare for their fight. Both of those shows featured the two fighters’ performances of masculinity, be they in their confrontations with one another in the UFC training facility, or during the weeks leading up to their fights. This fight will not be the culmination of those performances, as either man will pit his embodied masculinity against the other in an attempt to prove, through physical violence, who is the better man. But this performance is not just about the two men. The pending physical conflict is also a spectacular demonstration of how those who consider themselves men, or who lay claim to the definitions of masculinity provided by Dana White and the UFC, settle their disputes.

Relationships between men become defined by these representations of masculinity. More importantly, perhaps, these images of masculinity provide a definition of masculinity that the spectators cannot emulate in their everyday lives. Just as the spectators at the Roman *munera* could not demonstrate their *virtus* in the same manner as the gladiators who provided a spectacular representation of what it meant to be Roman, so too can the average male UFC fan not solve his problems through violence. Debord writes that "[t]he modern spectacle...depicts what society *can deliver*, but within this depiction what is permitted is rigidly distinguished from what is possible."[7] In the case of the UFC, society *can deliver* the opportunity for men to solve their problems with violence. But it is not permitted, thus denying men the opportunity to prove themselves, and to present themselves properly as men. But what is permitted is consumption. And because the advertisers and the sponsors of the UFC connect themselves to the feelings and attitudes of the UFC, these fans are able to instead demonstrate their masculinity through their consumption of those commodities which, by virtue of their association with the UFC, have become signifiers for the brand of masculinity offered by Dana White and the UFC.

After introducing colour commentator Joe Rogan, who offers his thoughts on the upcoming fights, the broadcast moves to the first fight of the evening, between Diego 'Nightmare' Sanchez and John 'The Hitman' Hathaway. The announcers make sure to point out that Sanchez was the winner of the first *Ultimate Fighter* series, along with Forrest Griffin.[8] This not only highlights the importance of *The Ultimate Fighter* for the UFC, but also establishes the show as a source of legitimate contenders and competitors. Goldberg also announces that Sanchez is, "tonight's recipient of the Tequila Cazadores

Authentic Spirit award, for his honour and integrity, both in, and out of the Octagon."[9] After the announcement, the on-screen graphic displaying Sanchez's name changes to include a tequila bottle and the sponsor name.

This "Tequila Cazadores Authentic Spirit Award" is an ideal example of the spectacle at work. Sanchez is not only associated with a sponsor, but is described as being representative of the values associated with that brand or, at least, with the values the brand is seeking to associate with itself. At the UFC 114 Press Conference, held a few days before the event, UFC President Dana White announced Sanchez as the winner of the award, saying,

> Over the past year, Tequila Cazadores has awarded UFC fighters with the honour of the Authentic Spirit Award. These winners have embodied the core values of the brand, and its sponsorship with the UFC by demonstrating authenticity, and perfection in the expression of their art form, dedication to their community, and honour of their conduct. The recipient this month is Diego Sanchez, where are you Diego? [applause] Tequila Cazadores donates a thousand dollars to a charity of his choice, and then he's entered into the contest to win ten thousand dollars at the end of the year.[10]

White then introduced and congratulated Sanchez, who gave an acceptance speech to the assembled members of the media.

> All right, uh, it's an honour, just the name of the award, the Spirit award, you know I love to take my spirit in there, do my thing in the Octagon and give you guys good fights. This is just a real true honour, never really expected to get a tequila award after all the tequila I drank over these years, [laughter] You know, its a real true blessing, and I'm doing everything I can to help Autism Speaks, and help those little kids out there, and research development and how they can help these kids get better, and that's what it comes down to, and that's what I chose as my charity. For a long time I wanted to do charity work, and stuff like that, and now I found my niche, and hopefully we can raise more money for these kids, and thank you Tequila Cazadores, no more Patron.[11]

Both White's and Sanchez's speeches provide insight into what the award is meant to represent, and also how this is an example of the spectacle at work. As White says of

those who are given the "Tequila Cazadores Authentic Spirit Award," they, "have embodied the core values of the brand, and its sponsorship with the UFC by demonstrating authenticity, and perfection in their art form, dedication to their community, and honour of their conduct."[12] These are the values that the sponsor, Tequila Cazadores, is looking to associate their product with, and, by choosing fighters who are said to embody these values, the company is then able to hold up these fighters as representative of their brand. This relationship also benefits the UFC, and not simply because of the money that Tequila Cazadores surely pays to the UFC. Rather, the UFC is able to claim that their fighters are representative of these positive virtues, and not simply men who fight for money and pride.

This notion of the brand "Tequila Cazadores" as having "core values" is important to note, because a tequila, per se, has no values beyond calories and proof. Any values associated with the brand are purely the invention and effort of marketing and public relations. No mention is made of how the tequila tastes, its smoothness, or the quality of the ingredients. Instead, the effort here is to create a positive association for the brand with the perceived positive personality characteristics of the fighters who are given this award. This is enhanced by the fact that the company donates a thousand dollars to a charity of the fighter's choosing, which adds charity and philanthropy to the values being associated with the Tequila Cazadores brand.[13]

This creation of perceived "core values of the brand" is an example of Raymond William's observations regarding the role of advertising in capitalist society. As Williams writes,

> It is impossible to look at modern advertising without realising that the material object being sold is never enough: this indeed is the crucial cultural quality of its

> modern forms...it is clear that we have a cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be validated, if only in fantasy, by association with social and personal meanings which in a different cultural pattern might be more directly available.[14]

The awarding of the "Tequila Cazadores Authentic Spirit Award" is being done to provide this validation for the brand. To create an association between the brand and the values which are deemed desirable and beneficial to the promotion of the brand. In this way, the brand is sold not by extolling its virtues as a tequila, but by extolling its virtues as a means of providing personal fulfillment and allowing the consumer to associate themselves with the appropriated social values which the brand claims to represent.

Through this process, Tequila Cazadores seeks to create an image for its product that associates the product with perceived positive values. While its advertising and marketing can make claims regarding this association, the process is more effective, and the association seemingly more legitimate, if a connection can be made to other images for which these associations, or similar associations, can be claimed. This is why the sponsorship relationship with the UFC is so important. The UFC has, through its spectacular narratives, sought to create a similar set of associations between their product, MMA fights, and its representatives, MMA fighters, and a set of social values. In this case, one of the dominant values is that of masculinity, based not only on physical violence, but on a perceived sense of honour and integrity. This is found not only in shows like *The Ultimate Fighter* or *UFC Primetime*, but also in the gladiator montage that opens the PPV events. By awarding Diego Sanchez with the "Authentic Spirit Award," the UFC is claiming that Sanchez is representative of the values listed by White, those of "authenticity, and perfection in their art form, dedication to their community, and honour of their conduct."[15] Tequila Cazadores is then able to claim that its brand also

represents those traits, and the award recognizes Sanchez's demonstration of those values.

The relationship between this process of creation and association through spectacle resides in the way that this entire process is predicated on the construction, and reinforcement, of image. Tequila Cazadores is looking to create an image for its brand. Diego Sanchez has, similarly, created an image for himself. The Diego Sanchez image then becomes a second-level signifier for the values of the Tequila Cazadores brand. Sanchez is first established as a fighter who embodies not only the dominant values of masculinity, but also through his actions, the values that the Tequila Cazadores distillers wish to be associated with their product. By making use of Sanchez' status as a masculine fighter, Tequila Cazadores is signified by Sanchez. More importantly, the relationship between Sanchez, Tequila Cazadores and the positive values takes on deeper meaning when considered in regards to the spectator. Because Sanchez is representative of these positive social values, and Tequila Cazadores is also shown to be representative of these values, then the message to the spectator/consumer is one that encourages them to purchase Tequila Cazadores if they wish to also be seen as representative of those values. The average UFC fan cannot get into the Octagon and prove his/her "authenticity, and perfection in their art form, dedication to their community, and honour of their conduct" in that way, but he/she can do the next best thing and drink Tequila Cazadores, a brand of tequila that is also representative of those values. In this way, she/he can also claim to be associated with those values, through their choice of tequila.

Not only is this then an example of creating an image, but also of the illusion of choice, and also a demonstration of how the spectacle appears to offer choice, while

reinforcing the dominant system of production. By creating the belief that, if one wants to be seen as representing the same values and virtues as Diego Sanchez, one will choose to drink Tequila Cazadores, spectators seem to be offered a choice. But the choice being offered is not a matter of how one wishes to demonstrate those values. Instead, the choice is in regards to which commodities one will choose to demonstrate values. If one wishes to be seen demonstrating the values associated with the UFC, one will choose the brands associated with the UFC. This issue of illusion plays a significant role in Debord's work, writing, "The real consumer thus becomes a consumer of illusion. The commodity is this illusion, which is in fact real, and the spectacle is its most general form."[16]

With Diego Sanchez established as the embodiment of the values of Tequila Cazadores, the broadcast continues, with the affirmation and reaffirmation of the values of the UFC as a principal goal. As Sanchez enters the ring, Joe Rogan describes Sanchez's warrior spirit, saying "At the heart of what he is, is a warrior. He is a fierce competitor."[17] Here, the commentary is reinforcing the association of UFC fighters with a masculine, warrior mentality and image. During Sanchez's fight, which he lost by unanimous decision, the commentators, while praising Hathaway's skills as a fighter, also made sure to mention Sanchez's toughness and ability to absorb punishment. In this way, both fighters are protected within the narrative. This is not only important because of the unpredictable nature of sport, but also because both fighters, win or lose, are meant to be considered images representative of the values and virtues of a UFC fighter. As a result, by portraying both fighters as being strong competitors, it is possible to create positive associations with either fighter, regardless of the outcome of the fight.

A similar strategy is employed in the next two fights on the card, a light heavyweight fight between Jason 'Hitman' Brilz and Antonio Rogerio Nogueira, and a heavyweight fight with Todd Duffee facing Mike Russow. In the latter fight, the pre-fight discussions centred on Duffee's record-setting 7 second knockout of Tim Hague in Duffee's UFC debut. Additionally, much was made of Duffee's physique, with Rogan referring to Duffee as a "specimen,"[18] and saying "he looks like he was engineered in a lab."[19] Here, Duffee's impressive physique becomes a valuable image, signifying his ability in the ring and his physical power, which has, thus far, translated into success in the UFC Octagon. As the fight progresses, Duffee's physique also becomes a signifier for the evolution of the UFC heavyweight division, as Rogan declares that "this is the new breed of heavyweight, ladies and gentlemen, giant, powerful, athletic guys."[20] Once again, Duffee's physique is representative of what those who aspire to compete in the Octagon should seek to emulate, as their bodies represent not only power and strength, but also dedication and desire.

In the first round of the Duffee/Russow match-up, Duffee connects with a number of strong punches to Russow's head. When Russow is not knocked out quickly, and then continues to absorb punishment for the remainder of the round, the narrative surrounding Russow concerns his ability to take a punch. As Rogan says near the start of the second round, "I am amazed at the chin of Russow. He's a beast."[21] Having established Duffee's strength and knockout power as part of the story of this fight, the commentators then discuss the opposite side of that equation, the fighter who seemingly cannot be knocked out. This discussion then allows the commentators to praise both fighters, talking about the power of the punches being thrown by Duffee, and Russow's ability to

not be rendered unconscious by those punches. In this way, as with the Sanchez and Hathaway fight, both fighters are presented in a positive light.

The importance of this narrative approach is demonstrated in the third round when, after seemingly dominating the fight, and doing everything in his power to knock Russow out, Duffee is himself knocked out by Russow. The crowd erupts in excitement, and the commentators are shocked at the outcome. Rogan described the knockout as "the craziest thing I've seen in a thousand fights,"[22] adding that "if that was in a movie, you'd say shut up, that can't happen in real life."[23] The ending of the fight was completely unexpected, and certainly none of the pre-fight hype had addressed Russow's knockout ability. During the fight, both Rogan and Goldberg discussed how, if he was to have a chance to win the fight, Russow would need to find a way to take the fight to the ground and try to wrestle Duffee. But because Russow had not been dismissed as a loser, and had instead been built up as a fighter who demonstrated heart and fortitude, the narrative was not completely disrupted by the surprising knockout. Instead, it helped to reaffirm Russow as a fighter who will not give up. While there was not much discussion of Russow's skills per se, there was much discussion of his 'heart,' a quality referred to in Rogan's post-fight interview with Russow, where Rogan told Russow, "you've got tremendous heart, amazing, amazing performance."[24] Russow is now positioned as a signifier for humility and heart, and while not necessarily an image of strength and power, is still representative of the sort of 'warrior spirit' valued by the UFC, and its sponsors.

A similar situation occurs in the Jason 'Hitman' Brilz versus Antonio Rogerio Nogueira fight. The fight had been originally scheduled to feature Nogueira taking on

former light heavyweight champion Forrest Griffin. When Griffin was injured during training camp, Brilz was offered the chance to take the fight on four weeks notice. This decision by Brilz forms a significant portion of the narrative for this fight. The other part of the discussion centres around Nogueira's status as one of the elite fighters at light-heavyweight, and his twin brother Antonio Rodrigo Nogueira, who competes in the UFC's heavyweight division.

This type of discussion allows the commentators to focus on Brilz's courage and dedication in taking the fight, particularly against an opponent of the calibre of Nogueira. Brilz does not have to win the fight to prove himself, and the fight is an opportunity for Nogueira to demonstrate his fighting skill. As Rogan says of Brilz, "you've got to face a guy like [Nogueira] to find out where you stand, and Brilz is doing it right now, and he's doing fairly well."[25] Again, as with Sanchez versus Hathaway, and Duffee versus Russow, the commentators use their roles as the voice of the UFC as a way to promote both fighters in a way that, regardless of who wins the fight, both fighters are built up in a way that allows both to be seen as representative of the values of the UFC, of which masculinity is an important factor.

This becomes all the more obvious during the Brilz versus Nogueira fight, as Brilz not only puts on a good fight, but, in the eyes of many, including Joe Rogan, wins the fight. The judges disagree, and Nogueira wins the fight by split decision. In an interview after the fight, Rogan tells Brilz that "[y]ou lost nothing from this fight, you gained fans, you had a tremendous performance against one of the very best in the world, congratulations, we look forward to seeing you again."[26] The result of the fight is, in this instance, insignificant for Brilz.[27] Instead, what is important is how Brilz performed the

type of masculinity the UFC seeks to capture and market to its audience. As Rogan says near the end of the fight, when it seems that not only will the fight go to the judge's decision, but that Brilz will win that decision, "[t]his is what happens when you take a chance. This is what happens when you get an opportunity, and it's a dangerous one, and you man up, you throw your balls in a wheelbarrow and you take it."[28] Here, Rogan is using Brilz's decision to take the fight with a strong competitor like Nogueira not only as a demonstration of Brilz's desire to be a UFC competitor, but of Brilz's masculinity. In this case, that masculinity is signified by an unwieldy, oversized set of testicles.

What these first three fights demonstrate is how the commentary of the fights works not only to describe the action for the audience, and to provide some insight into the fights, but also help to affirm, and in some cases re-affirm, the status of the fighters as signifiers and representatives of the particular set of values that Dana White and the UFC seek to demonstrate. In so doing, the narratives of the fight, while not scripted beforehand, given the unpredictable nature of sports, tend to be constructed in a way that allows the commentators to focus on a few specific values or skills for the fighters, giving them the leeway to present both fighters in a positive light, and not find themselves in a situation where they have completely dismissed a fighter, only for that fighter to defeat their opponent. As an example, in the fight between Todd Duffee and Mike Russow, Duffee's performance early in the fight suggested that Russow was a likely candidate for a first round knockout. Had the commentators dismissed him, his victory over Duffee would have seemed more surprising, but would have also diminished Duffee's perception in the eyes of the audience, for losing to a man he should have easily defeated. This would then have diminished the quality of Russow's victory. In turn, neither man would

be perceived as being worthy signifiers for the brand of masculinity the UFC seeks to capitalize upon. This, then, would mean that the sponsors and advertisers of the UFC would be less enthusiastic about having their brands associated with a couple of losers like Russow and Duffee. Instead, by shaping the narrative in such a way that allows both fighters to be seen as masculine icons, the UFC and its sponsors are able to better promote their brands.

At this point, it is necessary to examine more closely the brands which are being promoted at UFC 114. Although mention has been made of the sponsors, and their desire to attach themselves to the associations with masculinity and toughness that are generated by the UFC, I believe that consideration needs to be made of what these brands are, and their attempts to promote their brands to the UFC audience. The primary sponsor for UFC 114, as announced by Mike Goldberg at the beginning of the broadcast, was *UFC Undisputed 2010*, at that point the most recent iteration of the UFC video game. The video game is also announced as the sponsor for the "UFC Rules of the Octagon" which are delivered by Goldberg near the start of every show. Goldberg announces a number of other sponsors throughout the show, such as when Diego Sanchez is announced as being the winner of the Tequila Cazadores Authentic Spirit award. But there are other sponsors whose brands are featured extensively throughout the program, regardless of any mention from Goldberg or Rogan. These are the sponsors whose logos are featured inside, and on, the Octagon.

There are a number of different logo locations within the UFC Octagon. The tops of the cage sections each feature a brand name and/or logo. So too do the padded sections covering each of the inside corners. Finally, the canvas mat of the Octagon

features a dominant central logo, and eight additional logos surrounding the centre logo. The tendency is, and was for this event, to feature two of each logo or sponsor name, likely due to camera positioning. While the entire Octagon is surrounded by cameras, there still tend to be angles which are used more, and this practice was likely a way to ensure that a sponsor's logo isn't ignored due to production decisions.

For UFC 114, the Octagon tops feature MGM Grand, Harley-Davidson, Edge Shave Gel, and the UFC 2010 Video Game. The MGM Grand sections are also those used by the fighters during the introductions, and therefore, as discussed in the last chapter, the fighters have the MGM Grand name on their sponsor posters, to make up for the fact that the name would otherwise be covered up during the fighter introductions. It is also interesting to note that, on the section of the Octagon that features the door, the name of Charles 'Mask' Lewis is featured on the padding above the door. Lewis, known primarily by his alter ego of 'Mask' was the president and founder of the TapOut clothing line. TapOut, founded in 1997, was not only one of the first clothing lines to capitalize on the MMA craze, but 'Mask' along with his partners 'PunkAss' and 'SkySkrape' were also proponents of the sport, who sponsored a number of fighters, both in the UFC, and in other organizations. The inclusion of Lewis' name within the Octagon is meant to be a memorial for Lewis, who was killed in 2009 in a car crash. TapOut continues to be a major supporter of MMA, and the logo appears extensively in *The Ultimate Fighter*, as well as during the UFC 114 broadcast.

The Octagon corner pads feature logos for Xyience.com, Bud Light, Tequila Cazadores, TapOut, and Syntha6.com. The reason there are more than four is that the Octagon door results in extra joints, which requires the addition of extra padding. Bud

Light and Tequila Cazadores are, obviously, both brands of alcohol, and TapOut is, as mentioned, an MMA-focused clothing brand. Xyience and Syntha6 are both training supplements, of the type used by bodybuilders and other athletes. Of the two, Xyience is the more relatively well-known of the two, with their Xenergy brand energy drink available in local convenience stores, in addition to the supplements and other energy products they offer.

Finally, on the Octagon mat, the centre logo at UFC 114 was for Bud Light, while the surrounding logos were for Edge Shave Gel, Harley-Davidson, Xyience, and BSN. BSN is the manufacturer of Syntha-6, as well as other training supplements. The mat logos are, in my experience, the ones which receive the most attention, due to their size and the camera angles. The least visible, I believe, are the logos which grace to Octagon tops, due again mainly to size. As an example, while I knew that there was an Octagon topping logo for the UFC, I was unsure which particular UFC product was being promoted until I had a proper camera angle to see the complete logo for *UFC Undisputed 2010*. Until that point, I thought perhaps it was promoting UFCPoker.com or UFCEspanol.com, both of which are legitimate UFC websites, and both of which were mentioned during the broadcast.

Examining the different sponsors present in this collection, there seems to emerge a few different general types of sponsors. Some are directly UFC products, like the video game, which, although it was produced by a separate video game developer, in this case THQ, is a product in which the UFC has a direct interest. Other products, like Xyience and BSN/Syntha-6, as well as TapOut, are products which have a direct appeal to those involved with MMA, or other combat sports. The supplements are likely used by those

who compete in MMA, as well as those who simply work out and perhaps train in MMA, although not necessarily competing. For these products, the message is that, if you want to compete in the UFC, the elite level of MMA in the world, then you will use these products. More broadly, the message is, if you want to be able to present yourself as a man, and more specifically, as a man on the level of those who compete in the UFC, you will use these products. These products link the embodied performance of masculinity, found in the cultivation and exhibition of the male body as a signifier for masculinity, to the UFC, and to the use of these products. The language used by Joe Rogan to describe Todd Duffee discussed earlier is an example of this type of connection making.

The TapOut brand, despite its direct connection to MMA, both in name and in practice, does not make the same direct sort of appeal here as Xyience or BSN. While TapOut uses MMA fighters in their commercials, and is a direct sponsor for a number of fighters, and continues to be today, it is also a clothing brand which markets products not directly related to MMA. Its website currently lists T-shirts, shorts, shoes, hats, watches, wallets, and gym bags. While they are an MMA brand, this does not mean that the products are intended for use by those who train, practice, or compete in Mixed Martial Arts. Instead, its products are meant to be a signifier. By wearing clothing or products featuring the TapOut logo, people are able to identify themselves as MMA fans, and as people who want to be identified as such. There is nothing subtle about a TapOut shirt. Their shirts do not feature small embroidered logos on the chest, where someone has to be close up to determine which designer you are endorsing with your choice of polo shirt. Instead, TapOut shirts, and other products, proudly announce to the world that the wearer is sporting an MMA branded company's product. TapOut's status as a signifier for

MMA and the UFC is even reflected in the logo, announced by Mike Goldberg during the broadcast, "TapOut: an expression of combat known worldwide."[29]

Beyond identification, TapOut shirts also provide one of the clearest examples of how these spectacular narratives are used to promote products and consumption. TapOut, by virtue of its omnipresence within the world of MMA, is closely identified with MMA. The UFC in particular has a particularly strong relationship with TapOut. On *The Ultimate Fighter*, the house where the fighters lived featured TapOut decorations and bedding. In one episode, Kimbo Slice and James McSweeney bet TapOut shirts on the outcome of a fight.[30] In this way, the concepts of masculinity and toughness that are promoted through the UFC are also signified by the TapOut brand, and throughout the tenth season of *The Ultimate Fighter*. Therefore, should MMA fans wish to not only identify themselves as such, but to associate themselves with those concepts of masculinity and toughness, they can purchase TapOut shirts. The average fan does not have the opportunity to demonstrate his toughness and masculinity by stepping into the Octagon. Even if he trains in MMA, or one of the disciplines such as Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, such practices are not public demonstrations of their masculinity. But by wearing a TapOut shirt in public, an MMA fan is able to make the connection between themselves and the concepts of masculinity and toughness that are signified through the association between TapOut and the UFC.

This process of associating a particular clothing brand with a media event is discussed by Debord. As he writes,

> [a] use of the commodity that is sufficient unto itself; what this means for the consumer is an outpouring of religious zeal in honor of the commodity's sovereign freedom. Waves of enthusiasm for particular products, fueled and boosted by the communications media, are propagated with lightning speed. A

> film sparks a fashion craze, or a magazine launches a chain of clubs that in turn spins off a line of products.[31]

This process can be seen in the popularity of clothing associated with MMA. TapOut shirts are not special for their use value. They don't possess any utilitarian features that make them better than other t-shirts. They are popular because of what they represent, which is a connection with MMA, and the UFC. The wearer of a TapOut shirt is not suddenly imbued with the fighting skill of a UFC competitor. The shirt is simply a way for a UFC fan to consume a product which they associate with the UFC, and more specifically, with what they perceive to be the positive values of the UFC. They are not able to represent themselves as masculine in the same way that the UFC fighters can, but they can take advantage of the choice offered to them by the UFC, and by the spectacle, and purchase commodities which can be their signifiers of masculinity, and allow them to represent themselves as representatives of the same brand of masculinity promoted by Dana White and the UFC.

This process is also seen, albeit less directly, in the sponsorships of companies like Bud Light, Tequila Cazadores and Harley-Davidson. These companies have no direct relationship with MMA and the UFC. Instead, these companies are seeking to capitalize on the popularity of MMA and the UFC, and expose their brands to the UFC's audience. This is not uncommon. It is for a fundamental goal of advertising: expose your brand to the greatest number of potential consumers. And while I have no demographic information, the crowd shots from UFC 114, and other UFC PPVs, suggests that the audience tends to be composed of young people in their 20s and 30s, a demographic typically valued by advertisers, particularly beer advertisers. As a result, it is understandable that brands such as Bud Light and Harley-Davidson would want to

appeal to UFC fans. What is more interesting are the ways that these advertisers seek to associate themselves with the UFC, beyond simply purchasing advertising space on a section of the UFC Octagon.

The "Tequila Cazadores Authentic Spirit Award" is simply one example of an advertiser creating an association between a brand, the UFC, and the UFC's depictions of dominant masculine values and concepts. Harley-Davidson takes a similar approach. When Mike Goldberg and Bruce Buffer announce the Milwaukee motorcycle company as a UFC sponsor, they do not simply say the company name. Instead, they give the tag line, "Harley-Davidson, the only motorcycle worthy of being in the Octagon."[32] This tag line suggests that Harley-Davidson is a brand that possesses particular values that make it worthy of being in the Octagon. No mention is made of what makes Harley-Davidson worthy of such a privilege. But by associating the Harley-Davidson brand with the UFC, and through the use of concept of being worthy of being in the Octagon, the message is that Harley-Davidson is a motorcycle that signifies toughness and masculinity.

As the "Heavyweights" season of *The Ultimate Fighter* demonstrated, those who aspire to be considered worthy of setting foot in the Octagon need to be men. The only place for a woman, when it comes to the UFC, is on the outside, dressed in skimpy clothing and blowing kisses to the camera. And those men who do aspire to step into the Octagon will need to prove their worth. This worth is proven not only by performing manhood acts, but by demonstrating physical toughness that can be harnessed through violence. The exchanges between Jackson and Darrill Schoonover, discussed in the previous chapter, are a way of Jackson questioning Schoonover's masculinity, and Schoonover seeking to assert his claim to masculinity. Jackson, believing that

Schoonover has failed as a man due to his weight and 'man-boobs,' takes it upon himself to taunt and ridicule Schoonover about his 'Titties' in ways that belittle Schoonover, by positioning him as being female. Schoonover, unable to rid himself of his physical failings, at least during the brief taping period of the show, then needs to demonstrate his masculinity by not only standing up to Jackson's taunts, but by threatening violence as a response to Jackson. The entire process is a way of both Jackson and Schoonover performing and demonstrating their masculinity, and their worthiness of being in the Octagon. Harley-Davidson then, by being proclaimed worthy of being in the Octagon, is positioned as being another signifier of masculinity, alongside toughness, aggression, and physical violence.

In this way then, masculinity is signified by Harley-Davidson, which is sold to consumers not as being a fuel-efficient means of transportation, or as being a fun and exciting way to travel. Instead, Harley-Davidson motorcycles are presented as being another way to prove one's masculinity. You, the MMA fan, will likely never have the opportunity to set foot in the Octagon. But while you personally may not be worthy of being in the Octagon, you can buy a motorcycle that is. Harley-Davidson is appealing to UFC fans by presenting the idea that only a Harley-Davidson motorcycle is a true signifier for masculinity. People can purchase other motorcycles if they only want to travel, but if they want to travel on something that will affirm their masculinity, they will buy a Harley-Davidson.

Bud Light uses a different approach to create its connections with the UFC. As opposed to a tag line that affirms its worthiness, Bud Light uses the tag line, "Here We Go."[33] The reason this tag line is useful for creating a connection with the UFC is that it

is also what Mike Goldberg says at the beginning of every fight, after the bell sounds. While the lines are delivered differently, the use of the same phrase is likely an attempt to make people think of Goldberg and the UFC when hearing it in a Bud Light promo, and thinking of Bud Light when hearing Goldberg say the phrase. It also creates a connection between the excitement people feel as the fight begins, and attempting to connect that same feeling of anticipation to Bud Light. As discussed earlier, the fight is the climax of the narrative, not the end of the fight. So by creating an association with the beginning of the fight, Bud Light is not connecting itself to concepts of victory or triumph, but rather to the same sort of concepts as Harley-Davidson, those of proving oneself, and of the opportunity to compete. Bud Light is not positioning itself as the beer consumed by winners, but the beer consumed by those who want to showcase their toughness and their fighting spirit.

Bud Light also used another approach to connect to UFC 114. They sponsored a number of videos showing Rashad Evans training, that were then posted on the Bud Light Facebook page. In addition to being part of the "integrated sport spectacle" surrounding UFC 114, these videos not only promoted UFC 114, but also, again, created a connection between the UFC, and Rashad Evans in particular, and Bud Light. Thankfully, the videos did not feature Evans drinking a beer to relax after training, but instead simply presented Evans training to UFC fans. This lack of direct product placement adds to the authenticity of the campaign, especially given the emphasis placed on nutrition and science shown by Evans' training camp on the UFC Primetime shows. But direct product placement isn't necessary either. Instead, what is more important is that Bud Light position themselves as being allowed access into Evans' training, and that Bud Light is

willing to share that access with its fans. The people who will seek out Evans' training videos are likely fans of Evans. Therefore, if Bud Light is going to give them something to which they would normally not have access, Bud Light is helping fans of Rashad Evans, and fans of the UFC. Once again, positive associations between brands are created, in this case the Rashad Evans brand and the Bud Light brand.

There are two other primary sponsors for UFC 114 that are mentioned a number of times during the broadcast. Again, as with Tequila Cazadores and Bud Light, these sponsors do not have any direct involvement with the UFC, beyond the commercial relationship. The first is the movie *The Expendables*, and the second is the United States Marine Corps. These two sponsors do not purchase advertising space on the Octagon, but they do have their logos featured, and their names mentioned on a number of occasions during the broadcast.

The Expendables is, upon reflection, a seemingly obvious choice for a sponsorship relationship with the UFC. Not only was it an action movie, drawing upon many of the same concepts of masculinity discussed by Messner in "When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in Sport," but the film also featured Randy Couture, former UFC heavyweight and light heavyweight champion, and a legend in American MMA. In addition to sponsoring the fight clock for the fights, which consists of having Mike Goldberg announce that "tonight's fight clock is sponsored by *The Expendables*," and featuring a graphic of the movie logo next to the countdown clock for the fight, UFC 114 also featured a 'sneak preview' of the film before the start of the main event. This was essentially an extended trailer, showing highlights from the film, after which Goldberg and Rogan talked about how much they were looking forward to the film. The

connection between *The Expendables* and the UFC is obvious, although it should be noted that UFC PPVs regularly feature a promotion for some upcoming film. At the most recent UFC PPV I watched, there was a preview for the new *Conan* film starring Jason Momoa. The films featured in UFC PPV promotions are typically films aimed at a young male audience, again an indication of the demographics of the UFC.

The other sponsorship, the United States Marine Corps, links the UFC to masculinity, but this time to a brand of masculinity that is tied up with militarism, nationalism and patriotism. For the Marines' sponsorships, which included mention before and after a number of fights, the announcer, either Goldberg or Buffer, mentions the Marines, and then directs the audience to go to UFC.com/Marines, where they can "see what happens when elite cage fighters meet elite war fighters."[34] The connection here is made between the Marines being the the elite fighting force in the world, just as the fighters in the UFC are the elite when it comes to MMA. What is most interesting about this is that, in addition to presenting the Marines, and the military in general, as a masculine pursuit, it also downplays the realities of war. By comparing the UFC, and MMA, to war, it suggests that war is a sport, something to be enjoyed, something to be played, rather than something that has a high probability of being fatal. The politics of war are also ignored. But this is again an example of the spectacle at work. The Marines, and American militarism in general, are presented as an image, in this instance an image of elite masculinity, to be pursued by those who wish to prove their masculinity. This image is presented as being logical and natural, an expression of masculinity pursued by those who wish to not only prove their masculinity, but want to prove their superiority. Just as the UFC, and the concepts of masculinity that it presents are not only not

problematized, but celebrated, the connection of the Marines to the UFC celebrates this brand of militaristic masculinity, without addressing the realities of war or the political dimensions of global military conflict.

This issue of the associations drawn between the UFC, and its fighters, and the Marines, and its soldiers, is yet another example of Debord's concept of the spectacle at work. As Debord writes, "By means of the spectacle the ruling order discourses endlessly upon itself in an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise. The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power's totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence."[35] With the Marines' sponsorship, the spectacle is praising not only the dominant concepts of masculinity which are promoted and highlighted by Dana White and the UFC, but also taking that connection a step further, praising the Marines, as a symbol of American masculinity, and as a legitimate source of praise for representing those values. While increased Marine enlistment is a likely goal of the sponsorship, this is not the only goal. Instead, by associating themselves positively with the UFC, the Marines can then garner that positive attachment. This, in turn, encourages positive perceptions of the Marines, and the American military in general. Conversely, the UFC, by association themselves with the US Marines, is able to present itself as a patriotic organization, one which believes in the values espoused by the US Marines Corps, and which supports the US military in general.[36] The connection between the two organizations then becomes symbiotic, with the Marines acting as a nationalistic representation of the UFC's values, and the UFC acting as a sporting version of the Marines.

In addition to presenting issues of militarism and masculinity as natural, the UFC also features other aspects of the spectacular. Before the Todd Duffee vs Mike Russow fight, Mike Goldberg reads a TapOut sponsored "What's Coming Up?" segment which features promotions for upcoming UFC events. These consist of UFC 115, the Finale for *The Ultimate Fighter*, Season 11, and UFC 116. The segment is designed to keep viewers looking forward to the next event, maintaining interest in what is coming up, creating what Debord refers to as an "eternal present."[37] While UFC 114 is a spectacle unto itself, it is also part of the larger UFC spectacle, which is concerned with keeping viewers and audiences constantly looking ahead to the next event, not satisfied through their consumption of the current event. Through this process, the UFC is able to continue to promote its products, be they television series such as *The Ultimate Fighter* or *UFC Primetime*, television events like *The Ultimate Fighter Finale*, PPV events such as UFC 115 and UFC 116, and also live events, be they live attendance at PPV events, or the UFC Fan Expos, which were also featured in a promotional segment during the UFC 114 broadcast. These Fan Expos, held prior to many UFC events, are not only opportunities for fans to interact with fighters and UFC personalities, but are also opportunities for UFC sponsors to reach out to UFC fans more directly. By creating this constant stream of UFC events, the UFC fan is encouraged to keep UFC events in mind when making scheduling decisions. In this way, the UFC is positioned as being a persistent spectacle, part of the everyday life of the UFC fan, and not simply an occasional event. As opposed to other major sports, such as football or hockey, the UFC has no 'season.' Instead, the UFC operates year-round, and must continually drive interest in its product.[38]

This process of always looking forward is also found in the main event between

Jackson and Evans. Not only was the promotion for the fight begun with a post-fight confrontation between Jackson and Evans at UFC 96, then continued throughout their season of *The Ultimate Fighter*, but during the conference call for the fight (featured on the second episode of *UFC Primetime*), it was announced that the winner of the fight would receive a title shot against then champion Mauricio 'Shogun' Rua, who had recently defeated Lyoto 'The Dragon' Machida for the UFC Light-heavyweight championship. Because of this, the fight became just another chapter in the spectacular narrative of the UFC. While providing a measure of closure for one particular storyline, it also opens up for other potential narratives, depending on the outcome of the fight. But regardless of the outcome, what remains consistent are the narrative constructions, the presentation of the UFC as the place where the fighters are "warriors,"[39] and the Octagon is the "world's ultimate proving ground for fighters."[40] What the main event does, besides provide this closure, is provide the strongest opportunity for the UFC to spectacularize these concepts of masculinity and toughness as being embodied within Jackson and Evans.

Before the main event begins, a recap of the bad blood between Jackson and Evans is shown, featuring footage of the fighters, as well as interviews with both the fighters and UFC personalities such as Joe Rogan and Dana White. After the recap, the fighters enter the arena, making a stop at the "Harley-Davidson Prep Point" to be checked out by an official before entering the Octagon. During Jackson's entrance, Goldberg says that "That man is a beast, a prideful man."[41] After the fighters' entrances, Goldberg provides the Tale of the Tape, "brought to you by the only motorcycle worthy of being in the Octagon, Harley-Davidson,"[42] breaking down the fighters into quantifiable entities.

Ring announcer Bruce Buffer then goes to work, starting by announcing that "Two UFC light- heavyweight warriors have now entered the world's ultimate proving ground for fighters, where they will go to war against each other in, the Octagon."[43] He then announces that the fight is "brought to [us] by UFC Undisputed 2010 video game, available now." He also introduces representatives of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, as well as the cageside judges, and the primary physician for the fight, and referee Herb Dean. With the bureaucratic niceties out of the way, Buffer announces the sponsors of the fight, in this case being Bud Light, UFC Undisputed 2010, and *The Expendables*. Not only does Buffer twice mention fight sponsors, by doing so during the portion of the announcement that also includes the seemingly official introductions of the NSAC members and fight judges, it makes the sponsorships not only seem more important, but also more official, as if their presence within the announcement is not only to be expected, but a logical part of the fight. This despite the fact that both the introduction of the NSAC officials and the sponsors, are both politically-motivated practices.

With those announcements out of the way, Buffer then introduces the fighters, who meet in the centre of the Octagon with referee Herb Dean, who gives them their final instructions, and more importantly, allows one last stare-down opportunity in front of the cameras, the promise of pending violence unspoken, yet assured. Again, this middle of the ring meeting is a narrative device, made to seem natural and logical, particularly with the inclusion of the fight referee as the mediator and voice of authority. This disguises its constructed nature, and instead presents it as an official act, mandated by authority, and performed not for the benefit of the audience or the UFC, but to ensure that the rules,

which distinguish the UFC from unsanctioned, and therefore inappropriate, violence.

Once the fight begins, Goldberg announces that "tonight's clock is brought to [us] by *The Expendables*, in theatres August 13th."[44] As the fight progresses, Goldberg and Rogan make sure to discuss each fighter's strengths and weaknesses, not denigrating either fighter, or showing a bias in favour of either fighter. Instead, they present both fighters as being equally capable of winning the fight, again so that, regardless of who wins the fight, the image of both fighters will remain as strong as possible. Once again, this gives Rogan and Goldberg the ability to maintain a level of control over the narrative, and over how the outcome of the fight is viewed. Because *The Ultimate Fighter* presented both Jackson and Evans as being representative of a particular form of masculinity, it is necessary, therefore, to ensure that, regardless of who wins, that form of masculinity is still presented as being dominant. More importantly, because of the emotional engagement that the spectators form with the fighters, it is important that neither fighter be presented as being weak or inferior, so that, regardless of who wins, the emotional engagement with the fighter, and with the masculinity that that fighter signifies, is not damaged. By ensuring that both fighters are presented positively, it not only maintains the fighters in the minds of the spectators, but the masculinity they represent, and the connections between that masculinity, and the commodities offered by the sponsors.

In comparison to some of the earlier fights on the card, the Duffee vs Russow and Brilz vs Nogueira fights in particular, the use of language promoting and reinforcing dominant concepts of masculinity and toughness is toned down. While they still comment on the strength and the toughness of both combatants, the language isn't as

blatant as it was earlier in the evening. That being said, a number of the elements regarding masculinity are still present in the fight. The bikini-clad ring girls still roam the outside cage ledge between rounds, holding cards to tell the world both what round is about to begin, and also that women are not allowed in the Octagon. Terms like 'power' are used to describe punches, and the crowd responds enthusiastically when the fighters engage.

What is interesting about the fight, and how the narrative evolves, is that, despite all the talk about knocking out the other fighter that took place during *The Ultimate Fighter* and on *UFC Primetime*, the fight went to a three round decision. There were points in the fight when the crowd booed the action in the ring, disappointed that the promises of violence weren't being fulfilled. This, despite the fact that both fighters were engaging with one another, oftentimes grappling against the cage. As a result of this 15 minutes of strategic fighting, with moments of power punching, needed to be talked about differently than an all-out slugfest. Rogan and Goldberg, as a result, spent a good deal of their time talking about the different strategies the fighters were employing, and the adaptations the fighters would need to make if they wanted to emerge the winner. However in the third round, when Jackson knocked Evans to the mat with a hard punch and moved in to capitalize and finish the fight, both the crowd and the announcers noticeably reacted, with the possibility of a knockout, a more definite indicator of victory, so close. This not only shows the hierarchy of strength over strategy, but also how the narrative, as constructed leading up to the fight, can influence how a fight is perceived, and responded to, by the audience.

When the horn sounded to end the fight, the crowd, despite their previous

expressions of displeasure, cheered and applauded, many of them on their feet. The expression of masculinity promised at UFC 96 had, for the most part, been delivered. And more importantly, both men had proven their toughness to the crowd, and to the viewing audience. Both men fought hard, and neither gave up. As the fight ended, both men remained signifiers for the particular brand of masculinity favoured by the UFC. As a result, the UFC, and the fighters, remained a viable means of producing and reproducing definitions of masculinity. And the audience, unable to prove its adherence to those definitions, still has the opportunity to associate itself with the UFC by purchasing the products that choose to sponsor UFC events. In this way, these definitions of masculinity can remain signifiers for these concepts of masculinity, and their consumption as a means of validating those concepts. And all the while, both these concepts of masculinity, and the use of consumption as a means of fulfillment remain not only logical, but seemingly natural behaviour.

The spectacle of UFC 114, built up and constructed on *The Ultimate Fighter* and *UFC Primetime*, and culminating on PPV, was built upon a foundation of dominant concepts of masculinity. And while the spectacle certainly seeks to inscribe and naturalize dominant concepts through its function as a "social relationship between people that is mediated by images,"[45] this is only part of the purpose of the spectacle. Instead, the spectacle works to not only naturalize concepts such as masculinity, but also to use those concepts as a means of expression "the total practice of one particular economic and social formation."[46] In the case of Dana White and the UFC, this economic order is one of consumer capitalism, which relies upon the consumption of goods and services for its viability. To that end, the UFC encourages the consumption of

its sponsors' commodities by associating them with the product offered by the UFC, which is a narrative spectacle of masculinity. UFC 114, and its associated 'integrated sports spectacle' featured an emphasis on a particular type of masculinity, that of black masculinity. But through the entire narrative buildup and denouement, the emphasis on masculinity, and the establishment of a particular type of masculinity, was paramount to the construction. With that construction established, UFC 114, the event proper, emphasized how spectators, unable to demonstrate their masculinity in the same way as Quinton 'Rampage' Jackson or 'Suga' Rashad Evans, are instead encouraged to demonstrate their masculinity through their consumption. This then, affirms the dominant economic system, showing how consumption is not only the dominant system, but is the system that best offers those under its sway with the power to choose for themselves. Of course, this choice is an illusion, as the choices have already been made by the dominant system, and consumers are merely choosing from options pre-determined. In this way, as Debord writes, "The real consumer thus becomes a consumer of illusion. The commodity is this illusion, which is in fact real, and the spectacle is its most general form."[47] The UFC is spectacle, promoting not only dominant concepts of masculinity, but of consumption in general. Dana White is able to make money, not only by creating narratives of masculinity, but using those narratives as part of a larger spectacle that promotes this masculinity as something to be captured through the consumption of commodities offered by UFC sponsors and advertisers.

1 Guy DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (1994), (New York, Zone Books, 2002),43-44.
2 Alan Tomlinson, "Theorising Spectacle: Beyond DeBord," in *Power Games: A Critical Sociology of Sport,"* eds. John Sudgen & Alan Tomlinson, (New York, Routledge, 2002), 44-61.51.
3 Ibid. 51.
4 Ibid., 51.
5 *UFC 114,* first broadcast May 29, 2010 on Pay-Per-View. Accessed via Rogers Cable, Canada. Directed by Anthony Giordano.
6 Debord, 12.
7 Debord, 20.
8 Sanchez won at 185 lbs, while Griffin won at 205 lbs.
9 *UFC 114*
10 *UFC 114 Press Conference*
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 It is unclear whether the fighter, or Tequila Cazadores, receives the tax receipt for the charitable donation.
14 Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System", 335.
15 *UFC 114 Press Conference*
16 Debord, 32.
17 *UFC 114*
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 I'm sure Brilz would disagree, as he would probably have liked the extra income that a win would have earned him.
28 *UFC 114*
29 Ibid.
30 *The Ultimate Fighter: Heavyweights, Episode 6, "16 Sharks," first broadcast October 21, 2009 by Spike TV.*
31 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*,, 43-44.
32 *UFC 114*
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Debord, 19.
36 It should be noted that the UFC has a number of other connections to the US military, and to the soldiers within the military. One of the most important of these is the UFC's support of the 'Wounded Warrior' project, a charity that raises funds to assist wounded soldiers get the medical assistance they require upon their return to the United States.
37 Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (New York, Verso, 1990).
38 One recent criticism is that the UFC is attempting to drive too much interest in their product. For instance, as I write this, the coming weekend will be the fourth weekend in a row featuring a UFC event, two of which have been PPV events. A complaint among some UFC fans is that Dana White is over-saturating the market, and putting on so many events that fans cannot afford to purchase them all. This, in turn, can lead to lower buyrates for some events, which, could be read by some as a decreased lack of interest in the UFC in general.

39 *UFC 114*.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Debord, 12.
46 Debord, 15.
47 Debord, 32.

Conclusion: 'What's Coming Up...Brought To You By TapOut, An Expression of Combat Known Worldwide'

The first Ultimate Fighting Championship event took place on November 12, 1993. The UFC is currently preparing for UFC 137, to be held on October 29, 2011, to be followed by UFC 138, one week later on November 5. In that time, the organization has undergone a number of changes and evolved into the dominant Mixed Martial Arts organization in the world. One of the most important developments was the purchase of the UFC by Zuffa, the company owned by Lorenzo and Frank Fertitta, and Dana White. Under their watch, the UFC has managed to secure a cable television deal with Spike TV, premiered its *Ultimate Fighter* reality series, and has held events in the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Brazil. This November, the UFC will be featured on Fox Television, marking the UFC's first appearance on broadcast television.[1]

Accompanying this rise in exposure and popularity has been financial growth. A 2008 *Forbes* article placed the value of the UFC at over $1 billion.[2] A more recent *Forbes* interview with White put the value around $1.7 billion.[3] In that interview, when asked about the UFC's potential revenues in the coming years, White said, "[t]his business, it transcends all culture barriers, all language barriers. Because I don't care what colour you are, what language you speak, or what country you come from, at the end of the day, we're all human beings. And fighting's in our DNA man. We get it, and we like it."[4] This statement reveals that White is promoting a commodified version of what he views as an essential component of human nature, one that is based on a belief in the genetic necessity for fighting.

The perspective on fighting as a natural, and pleasurable, part of the human condition is what drives the usage of the Roman gladiator imagery that opens UFC events. This imagery ties into a mythology of Roman gladiators that presents the gladiators as men who fought for honour and glory, both for themselves, and for the Roman empire. The use of the gladiator montage at the beginning of the events is designed to associate the UFC fighters with that mythology, presenting them as men who fight for honour, because fighting is part of their essential nature.

By presenting the fighters in this manner, it disguises the true nature of the UFC, that of a business motivated by profit. Just as the Roman gladiatorial games were a means of spectacularizing definitions of what it meant to be Roman, so too does the UFC provide a definition of identity. In the case of the UFC, the identity is that of masculinity, and the 'integrated sport spectacle' of the UFC provides understanding of what it means to be a man. More importantly, though, the UFC provides a definition for what it means to be a man within a capitalist consumer society. The UFC promotes not only a dominant conception of masculinity, but does so in a way that promotes a relationship between that masculinity and conspicuous consumption. But this relationship between consumption and masculinity is disguised beneath a veneer of essentialism and the naturalization of fighting and physical performances of masculinity.

It is interesting to note that White does not mention gender when he breaks down perceived differences that he believes MMA transcends.[5] This is because the UFC, and MMA more generally, rely upon these distinctions of gender for much of their appeal and their marketability. Women are permitted to watch the UFC, but issues of femininity are not part of the UFC spectacle. Instead, femininity is often treated as something to be

avoided, and associations with women are seen as weaknesses, and are a source of shame and derision.

This emphasis on dominant concepts of masculinity is part of the larger narrative structure of the UFC. Shows like *The Ultimate Fighter* not only create dramatic intrigue for upcoming fights, as in the case of the Rashad Evans vs Quinton Jackson match at UFC 114; they also provide 'reality' demonstrations of how Ultimate Fighters are supposed to behave, and the types of 'manhood acts' that are deemed acceptable, and even valuable, not only by their peers, but by Dana White, the man in charge, and the man who ultimately makes the decisions regarding the UFC, and those who are allowed inside the Octagon.

The conflict between Darrill Schoonover and Quinton Jackson discussed in Chapter 4 is an excellent example of this. Schoonover, being overweight, is deemed by Jackson to be an unfit example of masculinity. Giving Schoonover the nickname 'Titties' not only denotes Schoonover's lack of masculinity, but carries connotations of femininity, justifying the taunting and abuse that Jackson chooses to heap on Schoonover.

When Schoonover decides he has had enough of Jackson's taunts, he 'steps up' and confronts his bully, threatening both physical retribution and sexual violence. Jackson, having been challenged, turns from taunting to aggression, returning Schoonover's aggression in kind. Here, Schoonover, unable to take the abuse, and the questioning of his masculinity, finds it necessary to prove himself by being aggressive and threatening violence.

When the confrontation is over, Dana White offers his take on the situation, reinforcing both his position of authority within the UFC, and his role as arbiter of

masculinity. He credits Schoonover's courage for standing up to Jackson, but also advises that such action could result in physical harm for Schoonover, should the threats of physical violence ever be acted upon. In this way, White is offering the perspective of not only a man who enjoys MMA, but the man who plays a central role in how the UFC is presented to the world, and the images that are chosen as part of that presentation.

Debord writes that "[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."[6] This is what the UFC presents. Shows like *The Ultimate Fighter*, *UFC Primetime*, as well as the UFC's Pay-Per-View and broadcast events, are a collection of images. Beyond that, they are providing mediation for a social relationship, in this case, a social relationship between men. The UFC provides a means of defining what it means to be a man, and examples of the types of behaviour that men are supposed to exhibit. Dana White's UFC presents a template for 'manhood acts,' not only for fighters, but for those who watch and partake in the UFC's spectacle.

While some of these 'manhood acts,' such as avoiding associations with femininity, or exhibiting physical toughness, can be performed in men's daily lives, there are others, such as the use or threat of physical violence, which, while deemed masculine, are also not acceptable in mainstream society. This is where the second part of the social relationship mediated by the UFC comes into play. While men may be unable to perform all of the 'manhood acts' demonstrated through the UFC, they are offered other means of demonstrating their masculinity, this time through conspicuous consumption of commodities.

In the case of the UFC, these commodities are presented in a way that transforms them from simple goods to images of masculinity, thereby making their consumption another 'manhood act.' Men may be unable to perform their masculinity in the Octagon, but they can purchase and ride a Harley-Davidson, " the only motorcycle worthy of being in the Octagon."[7] The UFC creates these images of masculinity, and then associates those images with the commodities offered by their sponsors and advertisers, making the consumption of those commodities a 'manhood act.'

The case of Diego Sanchez, winner of the 'Tequila Cazadores Authentic Spirit Award,' provides a case study for understanding this. Dana White, acting in his capacity as both UFC president and arbiter of masculinity, announces at a press conference that Sanchez is the winner of the award, which is given to those fighters who "have embodied the core values of the brand, and its sponsorship with the UFC by demonstrating authenticity, and perfection in the expression of their art form, dedication to their community, and honour of their conduct."[8] Sanchez is thus made into a signifier for Tequila Cazadores, but in a way that makes such an association seem like an honour.

Describing Sanchez as an embodiment of "the core values of the brand," not only associates Sanchez with the commodity, but also associates Sanchez' masculinity with the brand, adding his role as a UFC fighter into those 'core values.' Those who then choose to consume Tequila Cazadores are then not only consuming tequila, but are also consuming the dominant concepts of masculinity that, through its acknowledgment of Sanchez and sponsorship of the UFC, Tequila Cazadores is endorsing.

Dana White and the UFC aspire, at every event, to present narratives that draw in spectators, both live and mediated,[9] to whom commodities can then be presented as being

audiences react to and interpret the ideologies spectacularized through the UFC. Also of interest would be how audiences react to moments of disruption, such as Rashad Evans' seeming acknowledgement of the performative nature of masculinity on *The Ultimate Fighter*, or Kimbo Slice's discussion of his seeming personality conflict between Kimbo Slice, the YouTube streetfighter, and Kevin Ferguson the family man. These moments of disruption are not common, but they do occur. Regardless of the approach to take, and while there has already been some work done regarding MMA audiences, research into the reception side of the UFC spectacle is certainly an area which merits further examination.

One other field of research that merits attention is the UFC and the growing role of social and new media. This is all the more important given the UFC's increased emphasis on the use of Twitter and Facebook. It was recently reported that Dana White, an avid Twitter user himself, will begin giving bonuses to fighters for their Twitter usage.[10] This will include bonuses for increases in followers, as well as bonuses for creative tweets. In addition to the UFC's use of Twitter, it would also be valuable to examine how UFC fans use Twitter, particularly during UFC events, when a search for #UFC114, for example, would reveal a large number of Tweets from fans around the world.

Beyond Twitter, it is also important to note the use of Facebook, which has been used recently to stream preliminary fights to UFC fans, and the use of Internet streaming PPV, rather than purchasing events through a cable or satellite provider. These media developments could yield some fascinating insight, not only into the UFC, but into the

changing world of media consumption, and the evolving relationship between sport and the media.

The sport of Mixed Martial Arts is one that has yet to be explored as deeply as more-established sports. But should the sport continue to develop and grow in popularity as it has in the past decade, then it will almost certainly garner greater attention, not only in the mainstream sports media, which has only in recent years been taking MMA seriously, but also in scholarly literature. As the UFC is the dominant MMA organization in the world, Dana White and Zuffa will also be subject to greater scrutiny. What is interesting, is that because Zuffa and the UFC are not publicly traded corporate entities, their financial records are not subject to public examination. As a result, financial information regarding the UFC is almost entirely anecdotal, dependent upon, and subject to, Dana White's disclosure. This means that any further political economic discussions of the UFC, and its relationships with its sponsors, its media partners, and its fighters can never be properly explored. While the recent NFL lockout made the finances of the National Football League a matter of public record, I doubt the same will happen with the UFC any time soon. The lack of a union representing UFC fighters' interests, combined with the UFC's desires for financial privacy create a scenario where Dana White, as the public face of the UFC, is able to dictate much of the UFC's narrative, not only as it pertains to the fights in the Octagon, but also for the UFC's reputation in the public eye.

This study examined only one particular UFC Pay-Per-View event, UFC 114, with a focus on issues of masculinity, while also touching on issues of race, all through a lens examining the spectacular narratives told by Dana White and the UFC, not only to garner viewers, but to then sell those viewers to advertisers and sponsors, who are paying

for the opportunity to associate their commodities with the narratives of masculinity being told through the UFC's MMA presentations. Contemporary mediasport constructs images designed not only to entertain, but to disguise, naturalize and reinforce the dominant system of production. To that end, the images presented through sport not only reinforce dominant values of masculinity in the case of this study, but in a way that associates those values with the commodity form, positioning the consumption of these commodities as a means of expressing association. An important part of this process is the construction of narrative through the use of spectacular images. Narratives are, in turn, used to create and further validate these images. This symbiotic and complementary relationship is what drives 'spectacular narratives.' What is presented to us is neither just a narrative nor a spectacle. Instead, it is a system in which spectacle creates narrative, and narrative creates spectacle, all part of the larger system engaged in the reproduction of dominant values.

It has never been the intention for this study to be the last word regarding the UFC, Mixed Martial Arts, or the role that masculinity plays in constructing contemporary mediasport spectacular narratives. Instead, it is hoped that this study will not only help to illuminate MMA as an important area for further study, but also generate debate and discussion about how concepts of spectacle can, and should, be applied to the study of sport.

1 It will not be MMA's first appearance on broadcast television, as the now-defunct EliteXC organization, and Strikeforce, recently purchased by Zuffa, both had events broadcast on CBS.

2 Matthew Miller. "Ultimate Cash Machine." Forbes. May 05, 2008. http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2008/0505/080_print.html. Accessed Oct 19, 2011.

3 Mike Ozanian. "Dana White Battles Politicians To Get UFC Into New York." *Forbes.com*. June 10, 2011. http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2011/06/10/dana-white-battles-politician-to-get-ufc-into-new-york/ Accessed Oct. 19, 2011.

4 Ibid.

5 Earlier in the interview, White explains his position on Women's MMA, arguing that he is not opposed to the sport, but does not believe there are sufficient quality competitors to guarantee competitive bouts on a regular basis.

6 Guy DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (1994), (New York, Zone Books, 2002),12.

7 *UFC 114*, first broadcast May 29, 2010 on Pay-Per-View. Accessed via Rogers Cable, Canada. Directed by Anthony Giordano.

8 *UFC 114 Press Conference*.

9 I would normally say 'on television,' but the UFC is also streamed over the Internet.

10 Ariel Helwani, "UFC to Offer Bonuses to Fighters for Tweeting." *MMAFighting.com*. May 11 2011 http://www.mmafighting.com/2011/05/11/ufc-to-offer-bonuses-to-fighters-for-tweeting/ Accessed Oct. 19, 2011.

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Curriculum Vita – Stephen Swain

Education:
PhD, School of Kinesiology, University of Western Ontario, 2012
Concentration: Socio-cultural Study of Sport, Sport and Media
Dissertation Topic: Spectacular Narratives of Masculinity in Mixed Martial Arts

M.A., Media Studies, University of Western Ontario, 2007
Concentrations: Masculinity, Sports, War
Thesis: Mediated Heroism: A Discourse Analysis of the Hero Image of Pat Tillman

B.A (Hons.) Media, Information & Technoculture; University of Western Ontario, 2004

Experience:
Professor, MIT 2403B
University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Information and Media Studies
To be taught in Winter 2012

Co-teaching KIN 4465 with Michael Heine
University of Western Ontario
Winter 2011

Co-teaching KIN 4472 with Michael Heine
University of Western Ontario
Winter 2010

Lead Teaching Assistant, 2007
University of Western Ontario
Course: MIT 203a/b The Matter of Technology, Prof. Carole Farber

Lead Teaching Assistant, 2006
University of Western Ontario
Course: MIT 025a Media in Society, Prof. Tim Blackmore

Teaching Assistant, 2005-2007
University of Western Ontario
Courses: MIT 025b Media in Society, Prof. Romayne Smith-Fullarton; MIT 203a The Matter of Technology, Prof. Jacquie Burkell

Publications:

Swain, Stephen (2010). "The Marginalization of Dissent & Criticism: Herman & Chomsky's Propaganda Model." *Rethinking Matters Olympic: Investigations into the Socio-Cultural Study of the Modern Olympic Movement*. Conference Proceedings, International Centre for Olympic Studies, London, ON. 460-468.

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Heine, Michael with Stephen Swain (2011). "'Clean Venues:' The Olympic Commodification of Civic Spaces." Presented at 2011 North American Society for the Sociology of Sport Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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University of Toronto, May 2008.

Swain, Stephen (2006). "Canada, the Soviets and the Polls: Representations of the 1972 Summit Series in Canadian Editorial Cartoons." Presented at Canadian Communications Associations Conference, York University, June 2006.

Awards and Honors:
Ontario Graduate Scholarship, University of Western Ontario, 2010-11
Dean's Entrance Scholarship, School of Kinesiology: 2007
UWO Graduate Thesis Research Award, Faculty of Information & Media Studies: 2007
Nominated for Graduate Teaching Assistant Award: 2006, 2007
Dean's Honor List, University of Western Ontario: 2002, 2003, 2004