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# Masculine and racial identities of black rugby players: a study of a University rugby team

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## ABSTRACT

Historically, rugby was regarded as a white sport, but things changed post 1994. This study explores how black male university rugby players negotiate their masculine and racial identities in playing a sport that is historically white.

Seven rugby players were recruited within the university rugby team for individual interviews which lasted for an hour and more. The individual interviews, with the permission of the interviewees, were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a way of discovering and making meaning from the key themes that emerged in the data.

The themes that emerged included: The pain associated with playing rugby; access to privilege in playing a sport historically associated with white people; navigating the identity of being black and man; references to soccer; aggression and expression of emotion associated with rugby; and transformation (racial integration). Social identity theory was employed in interpreting the themes that emerged in the study.

In conclusion, it appears that rugby has had an influence on both the racial and masculine aspects of these black players' sense of identity. It could be concluded that rugby does subscribe to the social gender roles of men, as the participants seemed to characterize some of the significant characteristics of masculinity. Based on the use of social identity theory, the participants had a desire to show the in-group (rugby players) in a positive light; this could be interpreted as their being protective of the group they belong to.