Gaelic Sports, Home and Away: Building Community and Identity through Sport

by

Adam Nagy

Anthropology Degree, from the University of Victoria, 2021

An Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the

HONOURS PROGRAM

in the Department of Anthropology

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge with respect that my research was conducted on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ people.

I would like to thank Dr. Erin McGuire, Dr. Ann Stahl, and Dr. Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier for their guidance on this project, as well as my fellow UVic anthropology honours colleagues for their camaraderie and support.

And a special thank you to my friends and club mates from the Van Isle Rovers for making this project possible. Tiernan, Heather, Hannah, Byrnesy, Chris, Caoimhe, John, Emily, John Sr., Laura, Nikala, Kathleen, Ruth, Rob, and Dan, my heartfelt thanks.

ABSTRACT: This research is concerned with Gaelic sports participation in Victoria BC. Through interviews with members of the local Gaelic sports club, the Van Isle Rovers, this research examines the motivations for playing these sports and the club as a community of practice and site of situated learning where, through mutual participation and practice, members learn and share knowledge of these sports and construct team identities. The materiality of these sports is also examined, focusing on the way in which participation and engagement with the uniquely Irish materials of these sports lead to person-thing entanglement and connect people not only to the team and these sports but also to the sporting history, traditions, and land of Ireland. Lastly, this paper focuses on dynamic performances of identity through the playing of these sports and engaging with Irish language and culture within the club, as well as the formation and celebration of hybrid Canadian Irish and other identities. In the end, it is determined that Gaelic sports can serve as a vehicle through which Irish culture can be mobilized to build community, form social bonds, celebrate, teach, and preserve Irish culture.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

What can a sport, its players, and materials teach us about the culture and identities of those who play it? From the Irish countryside to the capital city of British Columbia, Gaelic sports are becoming more and more common around the world. Although they remain relatively niche pursuits outside of Ireland, and primarily played by Irish nationals, a growing number of non-Irish nationals in various locales are taking up Gaelic sports. The Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) is the governing body of Gaelic sports and was founded in large part as an organization with the goal of promoting and reviving indigenous Irish/Gaelic culture. The organization codified the games in the late 1800s and has become synonymous with the sports (Billings, 2017). Originally operating solely in the Republic of Ireland, the GAA now has satellite organizations in many countries around the world, such as the Canadian Gaelic Athletics Association (CGAA) in Canada. Throughout this paper, the terms Gaelic sports and GAA will be used interchangeably, referring more specifically to Gaelic football, hurling, and camogie, which are the flagship sports of the GAA.

Gaelic football is a ball game, played by both men and women, with similarities to soccer, rugby, and Aussie rules football. Hurling is a stick and ball game played exclusively by men, with some similarities to field hockey and lacrosse, and is closely related to the Scottish game of shinty. Camogie is the women's version of hurling, essentially the same sport but with some changes to rules and gameplay. These are the most widely played, watched, and celebrated sports in the Republic of Ireland and parts of Northern Ireland, and are the de facto national sports of the Republic. These sports are closely tied to indigenous Irish Gaelic identities, with hurling in particular having strong ties to Irish history, myth, and legend. According to the legendary cycles of Irish mythology, hurling was played in Ireland for thousands of years, before being outlawed at various times under English colonial rule, along with other aspects of Gaelic culture, such as the

Irish language. As a result, these sports, and other facets of Indigenous Irish culture, fell into decline until being revived as part of a resurgence of Gaelic culture from the late 1800s (Billings, 2017; Reilly & Collins, 2008).

This period of revival coincided with mass emigration that established the Irish diaspora around the world, most predominantly in the UK, North America, and Australia. Over time, Gaelic sports have served to unite and galvanize Irish communities abroad through performance of distinctly Irish identities via participation in indigenous Irish sports (Darby, 2003). As a result of continued emigration and the formation of Irish communities abroad, today Gaelic sports clubs can be found in countries as far afield as Australia, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Canada, among other countries. For the purposes of this essay, I focus on, and offer a case study of, members of the Van Isle Rovers Gaelic Athletics club in Victoria, BC, of which I am a member. In a sport where the player base remains predominantly Irish even outside of Ireland, the Van Isle Rovers, Victoria's (and Vancouver Island's) first and only Gaelic sports club, is exceptionally diverse. Its Irish and non-Irish membership is roughly equal, offering the opportunity to explore interactions among people of various backgrounds participating in a community of practice, centred around playing and celebrating Irish sports, and to examine how culture and identity are engaged with and performed within this group.

SPORTS AND CULTURE

Sports can serve as a means of forming interpersonal and group bonds, collective identities, a sense of belonging, as well as to connect with homeland and heritage (Harkin 2014; 2018). Dr. Frances Harkin, herself a former university GAA player, born in Ireland but raised in England, has studied the experiences of GAA players of Irish origin in London, England. Harkin has studied the experiences of both recent immigrants and second and subsequent-generation Irish Londoners. She

used ethnographic methods to explore players' motivations and experiences associating with London's GAA scene, their connections to Irish identities, as well as the formation and cultivation of unique London Irish identities and communities (Harkin 2014; 2018). A major topic of Harkin's research relates to notions of diaspora and how diasporic identities and communities experience and express their cultures and identities, while also forming connections and hybrid identities unique to their new homes (Harkin 2014; 2018). Some expressions of Irish culture noted by Harkin (2018) include the flying of the Irish flag and singing of the Irish national anthem at London GAA matches, while expressions of local London GAA cultures and identities may include the wearing of London GAA jerseys by supporters.

The concepts of diaspora and the formation of new local identities and communities among Irish GAA players in Britain have also been examined by McAnallen and colleagues (2007). They describe GAA as becoming a primary vehicle for Irish expression among Irish students in British Universities. Their study investigates the British University GAA experience, including cultures and identities, which have unique features in comparison to the cultures and communities of University GAA clubs in Ireland and non-university GAA clubs in Britain and Ireland. This suggests that GAA clubs and communities take on different characteristics and identities, based on location and membership. Their study underscores the differences between temporary diasporas, as experienced by Irish individuals staying in Britain only for the duration of their studies and then returning to Ireland, and more settled diasporas, as experienced by those who settle in Britain and remain there long-term, laying down roots in their new homes. McAnallen and colleagues additionally examined experiences with GAA by non-Irish players, who become involved in the sports through university clubs, despite having no previous connections to Ireland or Gaelic sports. They note several instances in which uniquely British GAA cultures, identities,

and symbols have mingled with Irish ones. For example, the inclusion of the Union Flag and British symbols being tolerated and, in some cases, applauded rather than criticized, indicates a more "laid-back and inclusive attitude to insignia" among the BUGAA, compared to other sectors of GAA (McAnallen et al., 2007, p. 420). In this way, GAA participation by a mixed group of Irish and non-Irish individuals, can lead to the formation of unique club identities, enmeshed and mixed with performances of both Irish and non-Irish identity.

Both Harkin's and McAnallen et al.'s works explore the motivations for players in Britain to play GAA. In both cases, expressing their Irish heritage is a common factor, although there are many other reasons as well. Simply playing familiar sports that one enjoys is a common motivator, as is making friends and social connections (Harkin 2018; McAnallen et al. 2007). As some players, particularly those in British Universities, have no Irish background or connection to Ireland at all, it is clear that Irish connections are not always a factor in one's decision to play GAA (McAnallen et al. 2007).

In many ways, identity is a performance, engaged with dynamically rather than a static, essential object. It is not something one has, but rather something one does (Hall, 1990). Participation in sports can be a performance of identity, especially in culturally situated sports, such as GAA (Brady, 2009; Santino, 2009). Sara Brady (2009) has looked directly at GAA participation as a performance of Irish identity. Like Harkin (2014; 2018) and McAnallen et al. (2007), Brady observed GAA participation as a way to perform and foster Irish identity. Brady, however, looks mainly at GAA participation within Ireland as an expression of indigenous Irish culture, its revival in the late 1800s used to displace rival English sports such as tennis, cricket, soccer, and rugby, and replace them with the ancient Gaelic games, thereby strengthening national

identity. Brady suggests that this rhetoric of national pastimes implies an understanding of nations as "performative entities … only as healthy as their imaginings" (2009, p.35).

Brady (2009) has studied participation in GAA among immigrants to Ireland as a way for them to engage with and perform Irishness and "make their own Irishness" (p.38). In this way, Gaelic games act as "sites of identity" (Brady 2009, p.38). According to Brady, for decades Gaelic sport fields have been sites where young players have "learned how to 'be' Irish by performing hurling/camogie and Gaelic football" (2009, p.39). Now they are used as a point of contact between new immigrants to Ireland and long-established locals, where they can "negotiate – through the performance of sport – cultural expression, and the forge 'new' ideas of what it means to be 'Irish'" (Brady 2009, p.39). Ulster GAA, itself well acquainted with the link between sports and identity politics, being situated within both Northern Ireland and The Republic of Ireland, has been the most successful provincial board at making GAA accessible to adult immigrants to Ireland. Other provinces, in contrast, often have youth programs but lack in adult immigrant participation opportunities (Brady 2009). There are clear parallels here between the formation of cultural identities for local Irish and immigrants in Ireland as there are for the Irish Londoners and non-Irish GAA players studied by McAnnallen et al. (2007) and Harkin (2018), which performative studies hold potential to illuminate.

Performance studies, itself an interdisciplinary field drawing from "history, anthropology, sociology, ethnography, psychoanalysis, gender, sexuality, and critical race theory," deals with topics such as "live performance, photography, ritual, play, spectacle, politics, geography, landscape, and architecture" (Walsh & Brady 2009, pp. 2-3). This purview provides an interesting lens through which to explore expressions of sports and GAA culture in Ireland and abroad. Jack Santino (2009) has studied numerous examples of how individuals consciously perform their

identity in Ireland, such as a pub band in unionist Belfast, "consciously creating an ethnic identity that they perceive as underappreciated and unrecognized" and suggests that traditional/folk musicians performing in Dublin and throughout Ireland always include a similar sense of constructing and performing identity (Santino 2009, p. 14). When viewed through the lens of performative studies, expressions of culture and identity —such as the flying of the Irish tricolour and singing of the Irish national anthem at GAA matches outside of Ireland, the wearing of symbolically significant clothing such as GAA jerseys, or just participating in GAA— can be interpreted as acts of performing culture or identity.

Throughout history, Gaelic sports have been an important site for performing heritage among Irish diaspora groups. Paul Darby examined GAA participation in late 19th-century Boston as a means for Irish immigrants to perform their cultural identities, engage with their heritage, and form communities through which to support each other. While many in the Irish community of Boston chose to engage with American sports such as baseball and basketball to integrate into American sporting culture, many also wished to express their Irishness through the playing of their native sports. Many of the activities in which the Boston Irish community engaged, including hurling and Gaelic football demonstrations and cultural celebrations, could be viewed as performances of culture and examples of community building. In this way, the playing of Gaelic sports acts to unite and galvanize Irish diaspora communities by performing distinctly Irish identities through Irish sports.

One of the main analytical frameworks I have drawn on in my research centres on the concepts of "situated learning" and "communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Roddick & Stahl, 2016; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). To quote Etienne Wenger, who together with Jean Lave introduced these concepts, "communities of practice are

groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly;" in doing so, they participate in a form of "collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1). This framework is applicable to sports clubs, and particularly so to a club such as Victoria's Van Isle Rovers, which consists of a relatively even mix of experienced Gaelic players and newcomers to the sports. Recently, Lave and Wenger's work on situated learning and communities of practice has garnered increasing interest from researchers who are investigating the depth and range of learning in sport (Light, 2006). However, this research has mainly focused on youth and elite-level sports rather than recreational adult clubs, which is the focus in my research (Light, 2006; Light & Evans, 2017).

Concepts from these frameworks are flexible and can apply to many different situations in which individuals learn through interaction and participation, including amateur adult sports. These concepts have previously been applied to numerous other settings, ranging from archaeological to business contexts (Blair, 2016; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). As "old-timers" (those experienced with a practice) engage with "newcomers" (those who are new to a practice), they engage in what is known as "legitimate peripheral participation." (Blair, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991). As newcomers learn through participation, they become more and more involved with a community of practice, eventually becoming full members, and ultimately old-timers themselves. As well, larger "constellations of practice" can be formed between groups engaging in similar practices, though they may not interact directly (Roddick & Stahl, 2016; Wenger, 1998). This concept clearly has parallels within a sports club, wherein members learn, improve and become more enmeshed with the group, and at the same time construct identities related to the sport and club (Light, 2006).

Lastly, just as archaeologists investigate the material culture of past communities to better understand them, so too can we examine the materials of living communities and practices to discover insights into them. Most sports cannot be played without distinct materials, including equipment, such as sticks and balls, playing fields, and uniforms, among other items. All these materials become enmeshed within the fabric of their sport. Person-thing entanglement (Hodder, 2016) can contribute to our understanding of these relationships between people, objects, and landscapes. An object is always dependent on and connected to other things, people, and places, and in using an object, the user becomes connected and entangled with those things (Hodder, 2016). Concepts of materiality, as explored by Fowler (2010), are heavily tied to concepts of personhood and identity. Material culture reflects cultural identity, and objects are made according to what Fowler describes as "cultural blueprints." The way one interacts with an object and the relationship formed with it can contribute to the construction and performance of identities (Fowler, 2010).

Research Questions

Sports are more than games played for enjoyment and entertainment (although they certainly achieve that). Sport is a site through which individuals form communities and, as they do so, develop, perform, and engage with identities on both individual and group levels. This is especially true in the case of Gaelic sports, which have strong ties to a particular national identity, history, and diasporic communities. Of interest in this research is how communities, cultures, and identities are formed and cultivated through communities of sports practice; how knowledge and skills are diffused; how people, places, and things become entangled and mutually influence one another; and how all these things are enmeshed within wider constellations of sports practice. Sport can also be a vehicle through which cultural heritage and identification can be mobilized and

performed to build, preserve, revive, celebrate, and teach about what has been an oppressed culture (Billings, 2017). Through in-depth interviews, augmented by my own experiences and participation as a player new to Gaelic sports, I seek to explore questions of community, materiality, and identity among Gaelic sports players in Victoria. Building on and working with the notions of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Roddick & Stahl, 2016; Wenger; 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), materiality (Fowler, 2010; Hodder, 2016), and performance of identity (Brady, 2009; Santino, 2009; Hall, 1990), I seek to answer the following questions:

- How do individuals of various ethnic and national backgrounds become engaged with and form communities of practice centred around Gaelic sports, a niche group of sports which is entangled with Irish heritage and identity, and what are their motivations for doing so?
- How is knowledge generated, shared, and diffused within and between Gaelic sports communities?
- How do the materials, landscapes, and people involved with these sports become entangled and mutually influence one another?
- And how and to what degree do members of the community, and the club itself, engage with Irish national identities?

METHODOLOGY

My main method for assessing these questions was through semi-structured interviews with community members, hearing firsthand about their experiences in Gaelic sports. I conducted interviews with 14 Gaelic sports participants in Victoria BC, all of whom have granted permission for their names to be used in this paper. My participants are all members of the Van Isle Rovers Gaelic athletics club, of varying ages, genders, nationalities, and levels of experience playing

Gaelic sports. About half of my participants were Irish (that is, born and raised in Ireland) and half were not Irish (though some have Irish ancestry). About half of my participants were men and half were women. Participants were selected because of their availability and willingness to be interviewed; because they are among the most active members of the club (regularly participating in club practices meetings, and social events [though restricted at the time of study due to COVID-19]); and for their diverse range of experiences and viewpoints. Many have played Gaelic sports elsewhere, which has allowed for comparison between different groups with which they have experience. As a member of the club, all study participants are also friends and teammates of mine. In a casual and relaxed setting, guided by open-ended questions and a process approved by University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board, my participants and I discussed our experiences with Gaelic sports. Because I know all my participants, to varying degrees, I was able to tailor my question sets somewhat to each participant. Although I included several mainline questions and topics in every interview, others were more specific to individuals. The varied experiences of individuals shaped the content of the interviews. Whenever possible, I allowed my participants to take the lead on discussing experiences and topics that they felt were relevant.

Collaboration with my participants has been a very important part of my research. As I am the one making the interpretations and reporting on them, it is my responsibility to ensure that I am not misrepresenting anything that my participants shared with me. Because of this, not only was collecting information through the interview process important, but so too was continual consultation with my participants during the writing process to make sure I was presenting the information that they shared with me appropriately, in the correct context and tone, and that I have not misinterpreted what they said. In short, collaboration with my participants has been an

important and ongoing process throughout my research. I feel very grateful to be able to tell these stories and have done my best to do right by my participants.

Another factor to consider was the fact that I am also a member of this community and participant in this research. As a member of the community which I am studying, my own experiences and opinions figured into my assessment. While that made things easier in some ways, it also came with its own set of challenges. As both a subject and researcher in this study, it was imperative that I applied the same standards of assessment to myself as everyone else, and that my own opinions and experiences did not outweigh those of my collaborators.

Figure 1. – The author, Adam Nagy, wearing a Van Isle Rovers jersey. Photo by the author.

Although hampered heavily by the current situation regarding COVID-19 and restrictions on sports and in-person meetings, I was also able to augment my study with some virtual participant observation with the community. By attending online club meetings and social functions, I have been able to observe participants in a more casual and unstructured environment than that afforded by the semi-structured interview setting. Although limited in number, in these

instances I have been able to observe interactions between participants, jokes, comments, and ways they express themselves, which have helped inform this research. Furthermore, I have been able to draw on my own experiences of participation pre-COVID, to paint a more holistic picture of this community.

Although most of my research is based on methods from cultural anthropology, my work is informed by considerations of materiality to analyse the objects and material things associated with these sports and community. Most, if not all sports are, to varying degrees, dependent upon their distinct materials; equipment, fields, and uniforms, to name a few. Engaging with materiality and entanglement, to explore the relationships between person and object, has helped to reveal the dynamic relationships formed between people, objects, and places (Fowler, 2010; Hodder, 2016). Through these approaches, objects are not simply lifeless things to be manipulated by the user and cast aside when not in use. Instead, they are considered as relational agents, the user and object both mutually influencing the other. The materials of Gaelic sports, and indeed any sports, have their own histories, influences, and lives, the intimate connection between a hurler and their hurl, for example (as I discuss below). Concepts of materiality and entanglement have been applied to contemporary sports sparingly in past research, which have instead mainly focused on sports history (Borish & Phillips, 2012; Osmond, 2008; Osmond, 2010). Although limited by a lack of prior studies, this has also allowed me to engage with these concepts in relatively new ways.

My final area of investigation is identity, as it is dynamically shaped and performed within a sporting community. Community building, situated learning, and communities of practice are all linked to a group or community, and engaging with a shared practice and participation is bound with the process of identification (Roddick & Stahl 2016). Likewise, entanglement with materials and place are also bound to identity and the process of identification. Fowler, in particular, heavily

associates identity and personhood with materiality (Fowler, 2010). Beyond this, I have likewise been informed by the concept of identity as performance, as discussed by Hall (1990), Santino (2009), and Brady (2009). In this way, all of my investigations have built on and led to identity as a central theme throughout this study.

My methodology, drawn from ethnographic and social-cultural anthropological practices, has allowed for intimate firsthand knowledge to be shared between myself and my participants (although, regrettably, my participant observation was heavily limited by COVID). While the social-cultural "communities of practice" model fit well with my methodology, my approach also paired well with the archaeological framework of materiality. Essentially, I applied archaeological frameworks and material culture studies to an extant community, examining materials that are still living and breathing, if you will, within the lives and activities of the group. These methods and lenses for interpretation, working together, helped me and my collaborators answer my questions and tell a comprehensive story about our topic.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Motivation

One question I was particularly interested in exploring was what motivated players, both Irish and not, to play Gaelic sports in Victoria. Or, as was the case for founding members of the club, what drove them to put all the time and effort into forming a GAA club here in Victoria the first place?

Founders

Many of my Irish participants grew up playing Gaelic sports and were passionate about them. However, after moving to Victoria, a city previously without Gaelic sports clubs, they had no

opportunity to pursue this passion. Some played other sports that were available in the city, like soccer or rugby, while some occasionally played with clubs in Vancouver. Tiernan Mahady's desire to play GAA was so strong that he regularly commuted to Vancouver to play with a hurling club there, clearly illustrating just how much someone who grew up with these sports can miss them (T. Mahady & H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). As Tiernan shared with me:

> **Tiernan Mahady:** It makes me extremely proud to get other people into something I love. Extremely proud. Um, you see the Canadians, I love meeting the Irish, I'd say its 50/50. I love meeting the Irish but at the same time I love expanding the sport…it makes me very proud to be able to expand the sport. GAA has been my life…and expanding the sport somewhere else, that means the world to me. (T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021)

Tiernan's wife Heather, though not Irish, nor a GAA player previously, clearly understood how important hurling was to her husband, and she was the one who had the initial idea to form a club in Victoria (Mahady & Mahady 2021). In Heather's words:

> **Heather Mahady:** One of the biggest things that [Tiernan] said he missed moving out here was playing Gaelic sports… so what that evolved into was us commuting to Vancouver for [Tiernan] to play…and then, I had the bright idea of 'oh, Vancouver, that's a lot of work. How much more work could it be to have our own GAA club'—which was definitely wrong, it's a lot more work to have your own GAA club. But at the time it seemed like a brilliant plan. (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021).

Seeing an opportunity to both play the sports they love, as well as support the Irish community in Victoria, Heather, Tiernan, John Fee, Emily Rudderham, John Flanagan, and a handful of other passionate individuals took the initiative to come together to form a club in

Victoria. For Tiernan and others, being able to introduce non-Irish folks to Gaelic sports and teach them about Irish culture and heritage, also came with a great sense of pride.

Irish Players

When asked about their motivations for playing GAA in Victoria many of my Irish participants cited a connection to home as one of their main reasons for wanting to play GAA here. Playing the games with which they grew up, connecting with other Irish folks who are in the same situation as themselves, and being able to connect with their Irish heritage in their new homes were all driving factors. For Irish players with Canadian-born children, like David Byrnes and Kathleen Stewart, these sports offer an opportunity to help teach and connect their children with their Irish roots, share them with the younger generation, and to preserve that cultural identity and heritage in their new homes, as they noted in our interviews.

> **David Byrnes**: [After moving to Canada], I didn't play [Gaelic sports] for a long period until like this past year basically. And kind of the idea was like to kind of connect with Irish people on the Island and just kind of get back into sport. And especially having a kid, I'm like, you want her to grow up and like know her roots, and to kind of connect with people, similar-minded people as well. (D. Byrnes, 23 Feb 2021)

> **Kathleen Stewart**: I guess the social aspect but also I have children here who are Irish-Canadian, that I want them to experience the sports that I grew up playing and culture in that sense, so I'm really hoping we'll eventually have a kids team. (K. Stewart, 1 March 2021)

Connecting with Irish folks and Irish heritage was at least one motivating factor for all my Irish participants, though not the only factor. Making friends, socializing, and simply playing

sports for fun and fitness were also factors. For instance, Caoimhe, Ruth and Rob, three Irish members of the club, told me:

> **Caoimhe Friel**: [After resisting GAA growing up but playing in Canada], It's kind of, being more proud of my culture, instead of like, pushing against it. And also it's just fun. I feel like I kind of miss home sometimes, and reconnecting with Irish people, and being able to play it in that environment, where there is beginners…I recognize I'm establishing my home here and I want to, I'd love to have like a family here and I'd love for them to know my roots here and I'd love for them to be able to be around the sports that I grew up with, and even the language, and like the stories and all the things I grew up with (C. Friel, 4 March 2021)

> **Ruth Caden**: I think we just wanted to connect with other Irish people… and also to just kind of get a run around as well, which is always nice. (R. Caden, 3 March 2021)

> **Rob Foley**: I think it is important to find a group of people from the same country who've had the same experiences. Just so you feel grounded a little bit. And it's a good way to break the ice where you can just kick the ball around and it's a bit of fun too. (R. Foley, 3 March 2021)

Clearly there are a number of motivations for playing these sports among Irish folks in Victoria, and while no two players have exactly the same feeling and motivations, there are recurring themes. As Caoimhe noted, the fact that adult beginners are common in this group is notable and allows for greater accessibility for folks of all backgrounds and experience levels to participate. In Ireland, contrastingly, there are very few opportunities to get into these sports as an

adult (C. Friel, 4 March 2021). These motivations are consistent with what I expected to find based on previous work on Gaelic sports and Irish diaspora groups (Harkin, 2014; 2018).

Non-Irish Players

Among Non-Irish participants, somewhat predictably, motivations differed. Although some had Irish partners who they wanted to support, such as Heather, others had no significant connection to Ireland before getting involved in Gaelic sports. Although most of my non-Irish participants were introduced to GAA by Irish friends, for many it was not any connection to Ireland that drew them in, but rather a desire to try a new sport, or make new friends and social connections. For some, Gaelic sports act mainly as a social outlet. For example, Laura and Nikala, a couple who are English and American respectively, played GAA previously while living in New Zealand. Gaelic sports became a central force in their life, around which much of their social life in New Zealand revolved, and they hope to make similar connections through Gaelic sports here in Victoria. In our interviews, Nikala and Laura told me about their motivations for getting into GAA, and the friendships they made through the sports:

> **Nikala Earlywine**: [A Kiwi friend in New Zealand] was like 'I joined this Gaelic team, like, come play'. And so I YouTubed it and was like, it seems a bit strange but y'know I'll give it a go. And then yeah, I, I was like hooked… I was in New Zealand for just over two years, and like, all my good friends I met through Gaelic and camogie. [After moving to Victoria] right away one of the first things I did was find the Rovers. I absolutely loved [playing] it, and to meet people as well. (N. Earlywine, 24 Feb 2021)
>
> **Laura Isherwood**: I met Nikala, and then Nikala ended up playing Gaelic football and I went along to watch, and I wasn't gonna play to start with, kinda watched it; thought it's

> her thing, I'll let her kinda do it, but it just looked such good fun. And then I went on one of the social night outs with them, and typical Irish they were kinda very much like, 'come and join in, you have to play' and so yeah, I got drafted in and played since. (L. Isherwood, 26 Feb 2021)

For some, getting into GAA was about making social connections and just having fun with a good group of people. As Chris Meacham, himself a Canadian of half Irish descent, and whose partner, Caoimhe, is Irish, told me:

> **Chris Meacham:** I wanted to join a sport. You know, I'm at that age where, you know, being in a sport in your late late 20s and early 30s is just good socialization, that's uh, y'know enough degrees away from your professional life that you can kinda be a bit more free and just let loose. And also the Irish bunch I find to be just a great bunch of lads. (C. Meacham, 4 March 2021)

For me, getting into GAA was somewhat serendipitous. Although I have some Irish ancestry many generations back, it is a non-factor in my life and had no bearing on my interest in GAA. I became interested in Gaelic sports entirely by chance when I happened upon a televised Gaelic football match five or six years ago. Being a hockey player and lover of sports in general, I was immediately taken by the skill and physicality of Gaelic football. Ever since, I would occasionally look up GAA clips online, and one day not long after the Rovers were founded, I happened upon the club online, advertising a learn-to-play social event. I attended the event and immediately fell in love with playing the games and have been a member of the club ever since. My motivation was simply an interest in trying a new and exciting sport.

In sum, GAA serves as a way of bringing members of the Irish diaspora together in Victoria, connecting them with their heritage and to each other, and forming community in their new home. Introducing and sharing these sports with non-Irish folks affords the opportunity to teach, share, and celebrate this aspect of Irish culture, while building a larger community of both Irish and non-Irish folks centred around these sports in Victoria. For folks of all backgrounds, GAA can serve as a way to make friends and social connections, be part of a community, as well as simply being fun to play.

Situated Learning in a Community of Practice

Sport groups are inherently communities of practice and sites of situated learning. Whether playing, training, practicing, or socializing, and whether the stated goal of a sports club is competitive or recreational, learning and improving are always key aspects of participation. Games and practices are always sites of situated learning in which the group learns and improves together. The practice field is, of course, an obvious site of learning for the Rovers, where more experienced, mainly Irish players act as "old-timers" in situated learning terms, interacting with and imparting their knowledge and experience with Gaelic sports to teach others, especially those of us who are "newcomers" to these sports (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Among the newcomers there are varying levels of sporting experience; although we all have some background in sports, some are new to team sports. Emily Rudderham, a Canadian newcomer, whose Irish partner is an experienced player, shared with me:

> **Emily Rudderham:** It's definitely been a really novel experience for me, because I've never played a team sport, so I've like found the community aspect and the camaraderie really awesome. Like I wasn't really expecting that…and I think its cool to be playing something so different and like, doing something Irish. (E. Rudderham, 25 Feb 2021)

By running us through drills and training routines that the experienced players learned while growing up playing the sports in Ireland, they are sharing culturally situated knowledge within the group. And not only are we learning and improving as players of these sports, so too are the coaches and administrators of the club, constantly learning and improving in their ability to teach these sports through practice, as well as navigating the challenges of running an amateur sports club. In interacting and networking with other GAA clubs in Canada, the club forms part of a larger constellation of practice (Roddick & Stahl, 2016; Wenger, 1998). All these actions, in which we participate and learn through interaction and socialization, are forms of "legitimate peripheral participation," as newcomers learn and become more and more enmeshed in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). But the field is not the only site of learning. Social gatherings and events invite conversation about the sports and otherwise, foster the sharing of knowledge and culture, and allow us to bond with our club mates. These off-field experiences help us learn to become the type of people who play GAA, and through mutual participation and experience, create a shared sense of team and community identity.

MATERIALITY OF SPORT

As in all sports, GAA players engage with distinct material objects and landscapes, such as equipment and playing fields, and form relationships with them. As players interact with the materials of their sport, they become enmeshed and entangled with them as they mutually influence each other, contributing to the construction and performance of identities (Fowler, 2010). As well, objects, individuals, and places form webs of connections and relations. Through interaction with materials, individuals become connected not only with the objects of their sport, but all the other people, places, and things to which those materials are connected (Hodder, 2016). In such culturally situated and significant sports as GAA, these processes can be especially pronounced.

Equipment

In Canada and elsewhere, most GAA equipment (i.e., Gaelic footballs, hurls, sliotars, and hurling helmets) is imported from Ireland, inherently connecting them with that country. Hurling and camogie, which use the most specialized equipment, most strongly exemplify the entanglement between person and thing that occurs in GAA. Hurls— the sticks used in the sports of hurling and camogie— especially carry a great deal of cultural and historical significance. Most hurls are still hand-made the traditional way from a particular part of Irish ash trees and no two are exactly alike (T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). A hurl is a very personal thing for a hurling/camogie player, with players often becoming so attached to their hurl that they would rather take the time and effort to repair them by hand, using epoxy and metal bands, when they crack or break, rather than get a new one. To a hurler, their hurl becomes an extension of their arm, a part of their body. On the attachment formed between hurler and hurl, Tiernan and Heather had this to say:

> **Tiernan Mahady**: When you're growing up used to a hurl, if you change the hurl, it's like, it's a big difference. Um, it's what you're used to, like, you can't change from what you're used to. (T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021)

> **Heather Mahady**: You get that kind of like emotional connection, and physical connection, [a hurl is] almost like an extension of your arm for hurlers, right. Like you can't just go out to the store and buy a new arm, and if someone said that to you, you'd look at them like you had two heads. (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021)

There is a nuance to what a worn out and repaired hurl communicates, however. As Heather described:

> **Heather Mahady:** People definitely get attached to their hurls. But its also a sign of "toughness" to have your hurl broken in an irreparable way during play. I would say if you are going to play with new people, having a brand new hurl is akin to a carpenter not wanting to walk onto a new job site with a brand new pouch. Everyone looks at you suspiciously wondering if you are inexperienced, maybe unwilling to get your hands dirty, maybe don't have "what it takes." People would definitely take pride in having a worn hurl…but breaking hurls goes hand in hand with being tough and putting yourself in the action. So, if you had a hurl for 20 years that might be as suspicious as a brand-new hurl. (H. Mahady, 17 April 2021)

Hurls carry great significance culturally within Ireland as well. Different counties and makers all have their own unique hurl designs: "the Cork one is more square, the Tipperary one is more, I would say it looks more natural" (T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). As the Rovers are a group made up of Irish and non-Irish folks, many of the players, especially those who are not Irish, do not have the experience or cultural and personal connections with hurls. To help players take up hurling, the club has a large collection of hurls which newcomers can borrow and use to learn the game and familiarize themselves with the equipment.

> **Heather Mahady**: People that were born and raised in Canada who are getting into the sport, of course don't, y'know, have that experience of these like, the cultural significance of different shapes of hurls…so its kind of nice to be able to provide hurls for them and

kind of take that stress away. (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021)

Figure 2. A pair of hurls: a Kilkenny style (top) and a Wexford style (bottom). Photo courtesy of Heather Mahady.

Not only is a hurler entangled with their hurl, but the maker as well, the Irish tradition of hurl making, and even the tree from which it came. A hurler playing in Canada, with an Irish hurl is, in a way, playing with a piece of Ireland, and becoming enmeshed with the culture, history, and the land itself.

Uniforms & Symbolism

The symbolism of team iconography, uniforms, and crests carries great significance within Gaelic sports. GAA iconography is often strongly tied to a sense of place, using symbolism to convey a sense of locality and identity (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). The designer of the club crest and uniforms, Heather Mahady, gave me some background on her inspiration and ideas behind the symbolism of the club crest (Figure 3):

> **Heather Madahy:** Clubs generally have two colours…the red and green we mostly picked because it was unique to the area. Its kind of nice because green is a prominent colour for the Republic and red is a colour that you'd often associate with Canada, and like, y'know, the maple leaf, like the flags kinda coming together, you've got the red and the green…the

> general shape of the crest itself is modelled after arrowheads that have been found locally, from local First Nations groups…the actual shape of the crest was meant to be like a nod to the lands that we are playing on and like respect and reverence for those people. And then we have some classic Vancouver Island scenery. (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021)

Figure 3. Van Isle Rovers team crest. Image courtesy of Heather Mahady.

It was important for Heather that this crest use symbols associated with both Ireland and Canada, as well as Vancouver Island more specifically, to represent the coming together of cultures present and celebrated within the club, as well as pay respect to the land and Indigenous people of Vancouver Island. “It was sort of meant to like bring in all the cultural components of the places were living in now, combined with the Irish heritage” (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). This type of symbolism is reportedly common among Irish clubs and crests as well: “Almost all the crests in Ireland are related to things to do with the land and the environment and the history of the place” (H. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). Wearing a GAA uniform, then, not only expresses association with a club, but also a sense of being tied to a place and locality. Within GAA, pride of place and loyalty to one’s club and community are common and strong influences (J. Fee, 25 Feb 2021; T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021)

Landscape & Location

The landscapes and locations which are so often celebrated and expressed in club crests and iconography, are mutually entangled and influential in relation to clubs, people, and identities as well. As noted above, a club crest often draws inspiration from and conveys elements of a place, its landscape and history. But this is not the only way which landscapes influence GAA clubs and players. The sporting landscape of a place, its fields and public art, can be both influential and revealing. Sports participate in the local identity of a place, especially in a country where cultural identities are often at odds with each other, as in Northern Ireland. Caoimhe Friel, who grew up in County Donegal near the Northern Irish border, spoke about the cultural differences evident in the sporting landscapes in Northern Ireland:

> **Caoimhe Friel:** Each town in Northern Ireland is either usually Catholic or Protestant and you can tell pretty quickly whenever you drive into a town if you can see Gaelic goalposts you're like, OK, I'm in a Catholic place…each side they're really into their murals…[murals in Catholic towns] often have things like Gaelic football and the sports and Irish wolfhounds and scenes from Irish mythology. (C. Friel 4 March 2021)

The fact that one can tell the cultural or religious makeup of a town based on what type of sports field they have suggest a substantive link between sports and cultural identity. Similarly, Gaelic sports appearing on murals alongside such national symbols as Irish wolfhounds and Irish mythology suggests that they are strongly symbolic of Gaelic Irish identity.

While not for political or religious reasons, Gaelic goalposts, which are unique to Gaelic sports and facilitate their playing, are not something we have in Victoria. As such, we have had to adapt to our own sporting landscapes and make do with what we have. Typically, we have used

rugby goals, which are similar in some way to Gaelic goals, or built our own upright goalposts onto soccer goals in order to play and practice. Additionally, Gaelic sports fields in Ireland are much larger than the soccer or rugby fields to which we have access in Victoria. As a result, rather than the traditional 15-a-side games played in Ireland, GAA games in Canada are typically played 13-a-side, 11-a-side, or even 7-a-side. Our Canadian sporting landscapes influence how we play these Irish games as we adapt them to our environment.

IDENTITY & IRISHNESS

The clothes people wear, the songs they sing, and the games they play are all performances of identity. A person or group can have Irish heritage but, especially in a diaspora context, that identity can only be realized when it is performed and dynamically engaged with in contexts that are relational and political.

Identity Politics

In the Republic of Ireland, as well as abroad, in places such as Canada or New Zealand, performing Irishness and Gaelic identity is unlikely to be considered problematic. In Northern Ireland, however, that is not always the case. In Protestant areas of Northern Ireland, the playing of GAA, seen as strongly associated with Irish Nationalism and a performance of Gaelic culture, can be not only divisive but dangerous, as Hannah McKevitt, herself from Northern Ireland, described:

> **Hannah McKevitt:** You wouldn't go into certain communities like dressed in your GAA stuff, like you just — its just a no no. Like I used to live on a street that, like, if I was going to practice I would have to go dressed in something else, get changed at practice, get changed after practice and go home, like I couldn't be — and like I had to wash my jersey

> at my sister's house because like it couldn't be on the washing line out the back…even if there was anything in my car I like would have to hide it, or yeah, it just wouldn't have gone good for me. (H. McKevitt, 22 Feb 2021)

In a strong contrast from Northern Ireland, Hannah does not have to worry about this sort of thing playing GAA in Victoria. She can freely play these sports and perform Irish identity without risk of offending, or worse. Playing GAA in Victoria then, in a way offers an escape from the identity politics present in her home country, while allowing her to perform her identity as a GAA player freely.

> **Hannah McKevitt:** In [Northern Ireland] there's the added dimension of GAA, meaning you identify with one side of the community whereas that doesn't happen here. So GAA here is my identity in that I am from Ireland, whereas in Northern Ireland is part of my identity in that I'm from a nationalist background in Ireland. (H. McKevitt, 16 April 2021)

Language & Culture

Within the GAA, preservation and celebration of the Irish language and culture is an important goal. Clubs officially associated with the GAA are expected to have an Irish Language and Culture Officer on the board, whose role is to support and promote the Irish language and culture within the club (GAA, 2019). On the Rovers, our Irish Language and Culture Officer is Kathleen Stewart. In our interview, Kathleen told me a great deal about her Irish background, growing up as she did speaking the Irish language at home, and her desire to share and promote that culture here in Victoria with the club:

> **Kathleen Stewart:** You miss that culture, the Irish social culture, um, the storytelling, the music, there's a lot that I miss about it. So this is very important because I think it is part

> of the Irish society and culture and sports, it's a big deal…I really like the idea, and starting small, once we get back into training… I'd love to do a warmup in Irish, that would be one step…I like the idea of having bilingual signs…perhaps we make some posts in Irish…for people to recognize that Ireland has— that we're bilingual…On the cultural side, some events like, they call them pop-up Gaeltacht, so you can have a day and some fun activities, like Irish dancing and perhaps lessons in Irish, those kind of things. (K. Stewart, 1 March 2021)

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has put sports practices or pop-up Gaeltacht events on hold for the time being, the club finds ways to incorporate Irish language and culture when it can. Email correspondences often open with "*A Cháirde,"* ("Friends,") and close with "*Van Isle Rovers Abú!"* (Van Isle Rovers forever!). Likewise, club Instagram posts nearly always close with "*Van Isle Rovers Abú!"* And while these are small steps for now, moving forward, Kathleen and the club hope to involve greater integration of Irish culture and language to team events (K. Stewart, 1 March 2021).

Figure 4. A Van Isle Rovers Instagram post, featuring a club-branded Gaelic football and the sign off "Van Isle Rovers Abú" in the post (Van Isle Rovers, 2020).

Social events also present an opportunity to engage with and teach about both Irish and Canadian culture. During my research, on St. Patrick's Day, the Rovers hosted a quiz night on Zoom, with questions centred on various aspects of Irish and Canadian history, culture, and geography. The event was a casual affair, with jokes abounding about members' knowledge, or lack thereof, about Irish and Canadian culture; however, it was also a learning experience for many of us. Events such as this celebrate both Irishness and Canadiana, and are not only a fun way to socialize, but also an opportunity to teach members about the cultural identities of the club. As many members of the club are not Irish nor of Irish heritage, and some are neither Irish nor Canadian, even something as seemingly trivial (pardon the pun) as a virtual pub trivia night serves as an opportunity to teach and learn about these cultures.

Beyond playing the sports themselves, many members of the club, Irish and non-Irish alike have a keen interest in celebrating and learning about Irish culture. Laura and Nikala, two members of the club who are neither Irish nor Canadian, told me that their experience with GAA has inspired an interest in learning about other aspects of Irish culture:

> **Laura Isherwood**: I found like, I really enjoyed the kind of Irish community and yeah definitely wanna go visit Ireland and stuff. And yeah, I found even like learning about the history and stuff very interesting. (L. Isherwood, 26 Feb 2021)

> **Nikala Earlywine**: Most of my really good friends in New Zealand are Irish and just kind of being around Irish like, I definitely learned a lot and y'know would be keen to continue learning and attend Irish events and stuff like that. (N. Earlywine, 24 Feb 2021)

Song

Music and song have long been a key component of Irish culture and identity, and this is no exception in the GAA. The name of the Van Isle Rovers itself is a nod to Irish folk music, and the cultural background of the club, as Heather shared:

> **Heather Mahady:** *The Irish Rover* and *The Wild Rover* are both popular tunes about Irish who have had interesting experiences and misadventures on their travels. We thought "Rovers" would be fitting for our tiny club on an island on the opposite side of the world, because many of the Irish people who have travelled here would certainly have a song's worth of their own adventures and experiences. (H. Mahady, 17 April 2021)

As well, rebel songs, which celebrate rebellion and resistance against the British in Ireland, have long been associated with GAA, and are often heard sung in GAA locker rooms after games, or at parties and other social events (T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021). At one online social quiz event, losing players had to sing a rebel song for the rest of the group. While all in good fun, the history and significance behind rebel songs was explained to those who were unfamiliar with them. Less politically charged Trad (Irish traditional) music and folk songs are common in GAA circles as well. At the time of this writing, Rovers Club Development Officer John Flanagan, a local to Victoria with Irish heritage and a keen interest in Irish history and culture, was in the process of writing a club anthem with an Irish Trad singer he befriended on a trip to Ireland. The lyrics of the song will celebrate the diverse makeup of the club, its Vancouver Island locality, as well as its Irish heritage and Irish Canadian identity (J. Flanagan, 1 March 2021).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In a diverse club such as the Van Isle Rovers, exploring the motivations for playing Gaelic sports contributes to an understanding of how a community comes together and engages with community and cultural identities. The motivations for players coming into this community and taking up Gaelic sports in Victoria are varied. Among the Irish players I spoke with, a connection to home, helping with homesickness, and connecting with other Irish were commonly cited as motivations for playing, among others. As my interviews revealed, there are also many players with no strong personal connection to Ireland. Many were first introduced to GAA by Irish friends but hold no significant connection to Ireland, and play mainly because they love sports, fell in love with these games by chance, and/or wanted to make new friends and become part of a community, among other reasons. While motivations are varied, passion for sports and a desire to form social connections, as well as connect with Irish heritage and preserve Irish roots in Canada, stand out as significant factors.

Within this club, player identities are varied, and although Irish culture and identity is performed beyond the scope of sport by many players, it is not universally so. While some players I spoke with do not identify with Ireland or Irish heritage, many have stated that they have become more interested in Irish culture and history through their engagement with the sports. For some, Irish identity is extremely important, some seeing these sports as a vehicle through which Irish culture can be preserved, celebrated, and taught, in a way akin to resurgence, after having been oppressed for centuries by British colonial rule in Ireland, and these members are extremely proud to see Canadians and non-Irish take up the sport and show an interest in Irish culture (T. Mahady, 21 Feb 2021).

Looking at the Victoria GAA scene through the situated learning/communities of practice analytical framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) reveals that it bears many of the hallmarks of a community of practice; members with a shared passion, Gaelic sports, work together in a mutual, participatory manner with the goal of becoming better at their shared passion, and in doing so form social bonds, community, and a shared sense of identity. Additionally, this community is a site of cultural diffusion and sharing of knowledge through interaction between players (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Within this group, individuals of diverse backgrounds come together to play a culturally significant Irish sport. In doing so, they learn and improve as players of these sports, form social bonds, and create greater connections which may be considered constellations of practice (Wenger, 1998). Through mutual participation and practice, members of this community construct and perform team identities, while also performing and becoming enmeshed with Irish and Canadian identities and culture.

Through the playing of these sports and the handling of the materials of these sports, especially such culturally charged object as hurls, players become entangled (Hodder, 2016), consciously or not, with the traditions and history of the games in Ireland. Within this community, materials, people, and sports are enmeshed, entangled, and inseparable.

Through interaction with the club, many players are made more aware of Irish culture and history, and in playing these sports are performing a connection to that culture. To play GAA is to perform Irishness; however, the many facets of culture and identity at play among a culturally diverse club such as the Rovers, the coming together of a diverse group, playing an Irish sport on Canadian soil, constructs hybrid identities and a unique team culture.

Suggestions for Further Research

My research led me down many interesting avenues, not all of which could be explored in this paper. I would suggest that future research on GAA should examine the religious factors and influences on GAA, particularly the Catholic-Protestant divide in Ireland and Northern Ireland; the roles of sex and gender in GAA and the differences between the men's and women's versions of the sports; GAA communities in other locations; as well as sport being used as a vehicle for the resurgence, revitalization, and decolonization of oppressed cultures.

WORKS CITED

Billings, C. (2017). Speaking Irish with hurley sticks: Gaelic sports, the Irish language and national identity in revival Ireland, *Sport in History*, 37:1, 25-50, DOI: 10.1080/17460263.2016.1244702

Blair, E. H. (2016) Glass Beads and Constellations of Practice, in A. P. Roddick & A. B. Stahl, (eds.) *Knowledge in Motion: Constellations of Learning across Time and Place* (pp. 97-125). Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

Borish, L. J., & Phillips, M. G. (2012). Sport history as modes of expression: material culture and cultural spaces in sport and history. *Rethinking History*, 16:4, 465-477, DOI: 10.1080/13642529.2012.728382

Brady, S. (2009). Sporting 'Irish' Identities: Performance and the Gaelic Games. In S. Brady & F. Walsh (Eds.), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (pp. 34-44). London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Darby, P. (2003). Gaelic Sport and the Irish Diaspora in Boston, 1879-90. *Irish Historical Studies, 33*(132), 387-403.

Fowler, C. (2010). From identity and material culture to personhood and materiality. In D. Hicks & M. C. Beaudry (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199218714.013.0015

GAA. (2019). *Role profile - Oifigeach Cultúir agus Teanga* [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://airtable.com/embed/shrIHKIPpeoZIgIp6/tbljy5rWxsrmVicwk/viw4OKwAHedWXaOnQ/recyPet21uKVzW5j8

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (ed.) *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). London, Lawrence & Wishart.

Harkin, F. (2014). The Gaelic Athletics Association and London's 'Irish' diaspora. In K. Dashper, T. Fletcher, & N. Mccullough (Eds.), *Sports Events, Society and Culture* (pp. 131-144). London, Routledge.

Harkin, F. (2018). "Where would we be without the GAA?": Gaelic games and Irishness in London, *Irish Studies Review*, 26:1, 55-66, DOI: 10.1080/09670882.2017.1408180

Hodder, Ian. (2016). Introduction. In *Studies in human-thing entanglement*. (pp. 1-13). Self published online. ©Ian Hodder. Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Light, R. (2006). Situated learning in an Australian surf club. *Sport, Education and Society*, 11:2, 155-172, DOI: 10.1080/13573320600640686

Light, R. & Evans, J. (2017). Socialisation, culture and the foundations of expertise in elite level Indigenous Australian sportsmen, *Sport, Education and Society*, 22:7, 852-863, DOI: 10.1080/13573322.2015.1105208

McAnallen, D., Mossey, P., & Moore, S. (2007). The "Temporary Diaspora" at play: The development of Gaelic games in British universities, *Sport in Society*, 10:3, 402-424, DOI: 10.1080/17430430701397872

Nauright, J. (2014) 'Sing a Powerful Song': The Saw Doctors, sports and singing Irish identities. *Sport in Society*, 17:3, 388-401, DOI: 10.1080/17430437.2013.810425

Osmond, G. (2008) Reflecting materiality: reading sport history through the lens. *Rethinking History*, 12:3, 339-360, DOI: 10.1080/13642520802193205

Osmond, G. (2010). Photographs, materiality and sport history: Peter Norman and the 1968 Mexico City Black power salute. *Journal of Sport History* 37(1), 119-137.

Reilly, T., & Collins, K. (2008). Science and the Gaelic sports: Gaelic football and hurling. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 8:5, 231-240, DOI: 10.1080/17461390802251851

Roddick, A. P., & Stahl, A. B. (2016). Introduction. In A. P. Roddick & A. B. Stahl (Eds), *Knowledge in Motion* (pp. 3-35). Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

Santino, J. (2009). Performing Ireland: A Performative Approach to the Study of Irish Culture. In S. Brady & F. Walsh (Eds.), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (pp.13-20). London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Isle Rovers [@vanisle.gaa] *Brilliant weather* 🏵 *and a great day on the pitch for our last training session of September* 🏐*!* [photograph]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CFqKx7Wp7gH/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Walsh, F., & Brady, S. (2009). Introduction: Performance Studies and Irish Culture. In S. Brady & F. Walsh (Eds.), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (pp. 1–10). London, Palgrave Macmillan. DOI:/10.1057/9780230244788_1

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction* [PDF file]. Retrieved from http://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/07-Brief-introduction-to-communities-of-practice.pdf