FIGHTING FOR YOUR RITES:

A STUDY OF

RITUAL DYNAMICS IN JUDO

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis is original and has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made.

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Signed

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Date
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ABSTRACT

Although rituals have been analysed across several perspectives, existing discussions offer limited interpretations of ritual behaviour. Rituals are commonly framed as conservative, static and homogenous processes that reinforce social order. This definition is inadequate as it ignores the dynamic nature of rituals and a perspective that acknowledges this aspect of ritual remains undeveloped. To address this theoretical gap, this ethnographic study uses participant observation and interviews to explore how university, judo athletes use ritual. As dynamic social processes that adapt to context and human agency, I argue judo athletes use and interpret rituals in diverse, contested ways and that this process has embodied effects their personal and social states. Reflecting this point, rituals are used to express hegemonic and marginalised discourses and to shape identities within ritual constituencies. While these findings unsettle previous ritual conceptualisations, the complete extent to which social and individual factors affect rituals remains unclear and further research is required.
GLOSSARY

*budo*: A martial art that disciplines the mind and body of the practitioner through training, for example, aikido.

*do*: A way or path of life undertaken by an individual to achieve enlightenment.

*dojo*: Used in this thesis to refer to the judo club this research was undertaken at.

*jita kyoie*: A philosophical principle that underpins judo. Refers to the mutual benefit gained by society through the practise of judo.

*judogi*: The training uniform worn by *judoka*.

*judoka*: Practitioners of judo.

*jutsu*: Practical fighting systems designed specifically for combat, for example, jujutsu.

*kata*: Formal, choreographed patterns of technical movements practised in judo and other Japanese martial arts.

*kami*: Divine spirits said to inhabit things in this world, for example, the home. Related to the religion of Shinto.

*kodokan judo*: The name of the first school of judo established by Jigoro Kano. Used to refer to judo in its traditional or unmodified technical form.
kyu grades: Used in this thesis to refer to graded judoka who wear coloured belts (see Appendix 1 for information on the order of the belt hierarchy used in judo).

learners: Used in this thesis to refer to novice, ungraded judoka who wear white belts.

randori: A realistic form of free sparring used in judo in which judoka of either sex play each other in mock competition.

densei: The instructor of a judo class.

zen: A state of calm or enlightenment usually achieved through meditation.
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INTRODUCTION

Mitchell: Judo kata is so precise in terms of the way you move. The fact that when you kneel you have to cross your right foot over your left foot. Or the fact that you can only advance with your right foot. You have to have an idea of what every single muscle and joint in your body is doing. Like, would it be any different if you were doing judo or if you were, you know, taking part in a tea ceremony or something?

Interview – 7/6/10

Whether it be the intricate practise of kata in judo, the reverence that baseball inspires in its fans, the compulsive game day rituals that affect players and teams, or the extreme conditions athletes routinely subject their bodies to in preparation for competition in wrestling, the ritualised nature of sport and the important role that ritual plays in sport is evident. Rituals are not habitual, meaningless gestures (Merton, 1938). They are practically and symbolically significant for those that perform them. (Geertz 1957, Geertz 1972, Birrell 1981, Goodger 1986, Eitzen & Frey 1991, Stevenson & Alaug 1997, Light 2000, Grau 2001 & Venbrux, Peelen & Altena 2009).

Previous studies link ritual performance to the perpetuation of social order and community values in groups and societies (Maloney 2000 & Stark 2001). Functionalists (Durkheim 1912 & Turner 1969) describe rituals as processes that maintain social structure and cohesion. They argue similar examples of these rituals permeate the lives of individuals in most societies and it is this mutual performance and understanding that gives rituals their power (Birrell 1981, Goodger 1986 & Alexander 2004). Applying this argument to sport, Birrell (1981, p. 373) describes athletes in all sports as social actors who perform rituals to reaffirm important societal values such as courage and gameness.
Similarly, conflict theorists define rituals as processes that sustain the existing “hegemony of societal arrangements” (Eitzen & Frey, 1991, p. 505) and hence various forms of inequality (Hogan, 2003, p. 100). Reflecting this capacity of ritual, sporting rituals such as the use of ethnic mascots and Olympic opening ceremonies are described as instruments that perpetuate ethnic inequalities and the natural hegemony of “whiteness” (Hogan, 2003, p. 101 & Springwood & King, 2000, p. 281). Ritual then is understood primarily as a rigid, “conservative force reproducing enduring structures of social authority” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 58), for better or for worse.

Therefore although ritual is understood along various contexts and theoretical perspectives, existing definitions of ritual continue to share common assumptions (Grau, 2001, p. 74). These include: (1) that rituals are processes performed homogenously and exclusively by ritual constituencies, (2) that rituals are conservative, uniform and static forces, (3) and that rituals reaffirm the dominant values of ritual constituencies. I argue such an understanding of ritual is limited as it devalues the role human agency plays in the ritual process and ignores the capacity for rituals to have different forms and meanings for different ritual performers (Baumann, 1992). As argued by Stark, the “functionalist law” (2001, p. 619) that ritual works principally to sustain existing moral orders is flawed.

Seeking to address this theoretical oversight, through this thesis I aim to provide a more nuanced, personal perspective of ritual. This thesis is based on an ethnographic study I conducted on nineteen judo athletes (judoka) who train at a university judo club (dojo) located in Sydney, Australia. As a judoka who has trained regularly in the dojo for the past three years, my identity as a researcher and judoka significantly affected my research experience and that of my informants. While it presented several methodological and ethical obstacles, my position in the field ultimately enabled a more efficient and involved research experience.
This research experience was mainly characterised by intense periods of participant observation. Over fourteen weeks between April to July 2010, I regularly spent time with these judoka inside and outside the dojo, joining them at weekly judo classes, judo competitions and nights out at the pub after training. It was during these times that I explored how judoka experienced ritual and the effects this process had on their personal and social states. Semi-structured interviews supplemented data from field notes. Based on the ritual behaviour of these judoka, I argue rituals are not static, uniform processes that share similar meanings and purposes across different ritual constituencies. Rather, the relationship between ritual and ritual performers is contextual, contested and dynamic.

It is with this understanding that I analyse the ways judo rituals are performed and understood amongst judoka in the dojo. I begin this analysis in Chapter 2 by defining ritual as it is understood in this thesis and then by situating this definition in relation to the existing literature. Following this, in Chapter 3 I explain and justify what methodological approaches were utilised in this thesis to study this definition of ritual. Shifting my analysis towards the performance of judo rituals in Chapter 4, I demonstrate rituals are adaptable processes that respond to individual and social forces. Then in Chapter 5, I examine how judoka use rituals to express marginalised and hegemonic gender discourses, illustrating the dynamic and contested nature of ritual and the embodied effects ritual has on the social and personal states of ritual performers. Continuing this analysis of ritual as embodied in Chapter 6, I examine how judoka perform rituals to achieve social transition within the dojo.
2 THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

There is a prevailing view in the literature that rituals are uniform processes that function primarily to sustain the existing moral and social arrangements of societies (Stark, 2001, p. 619). This conceptualisation of ritual has its foundations in Durkheim’s (1912) social theory of religion which posited that rituals are communal procedures through which societies reaffirm social values and their collective existence (Durkheim, 1912, p. 52).

Since Durkheim, this conceptualisation of ritual has been revisited and reinforced by scholars (Marshall 2002, Alexander 2004 & Collins 2004). Green (2007, p. 112) states rituals are related to the process in which social behaviours and values become normative. Similarly, Marshall (2002, p. 360) argues social integration and identification are achieved through the “effervescence” (Durkheim, 1912, p. 407) of mutual ritual performance. Accordingly, rituals are understood as widely practised, mutually supported and rigid processes that reinforce solidarity and established social structures.

This view has been critiqued by scholars (Geertz 1957, Baumann 1992, Stark 2001, Grau 2001 & Mitchell 2004) who have highlighted the limitations of such a conceptualisation of ritual in explaining the full breadth of ritual performance (Geertz, 1957, p. 32). They suggest rituals should be recognised as adaptive, fluid processes performed and understood in different ways and purposes by different ritual performers.

It is this dynamic definition of ritual that I use to explain how judoka navigate judo rituals in the dojo. Broadly divided into two parts, the following chapter provides a discussion of this approach to ritual and how it has informed my analysis in this thesis. Firstly, I define ritual as it is understood in this thesis whilst comparing this definition to existing perspectives of ritual. Then, I will contextualise this definition by explaining its significance within the contexts of space, gender and identity.
2.1 Redefining ritual

In this thesis, ritual is understood to possess three significant characteristics:

1. Rituals are symbolic procedures involving social communication which enable performers to change their personal or social conditions.

2. Rituals are dyadic and derive their meaning and function equally from how participants approach ritual practice as to what is intrinsic to the ritual itself. Rituals are built and performed through social interaction by social actors.

3. Rituals are dynamic processes with diverse forms, functions and meanings performed by different and potentially antagonistic groups.

Rituals are defined as processes “of a symbolic kind, involving social communication” that enables ritual performers to alter their personal and social states (Firth, 1996, p. 125). This definition recognises individuals have “ritual agency” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 58) and therefore they both affect and are affected by rituals. Rituals are not one dimensional mechanisms that imprint themselves upon individuals. While certain rituals such as hazing behaviours (Pershing, 2006, p. 471) do bind the behaviour of ritual performers to existing moral and social structures, the performance of ritual is ultimately underpinned by human performance (Firth, 1996, p. 125). Accordingly, rituals are social processes which derive their significance equally from “what participants bring to such practice as to what is inherent within it” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 58).

As rituals are dyadic in nature, ritual performers are active participants (Eitzen & Frey, 1991, p. 506) whose agency, individuality and self-knowledge influence the ritual process. Studying Japanese, high school rugby players and their use of pre-game rituals, Light (2000, p. 176) argues rituals are influenced by an individual’s culture. Therefore rather than shaking hands with their opposition, a prominent western ritual, Japanese players bow to
their opponents who are labelled as enemies (Light, 2000, p. 176). Not only is bowing an integral Japanese custom, historically, Japanese martial artists and samurai would bow to acknowledge the battlefield and their enemies (Young, 2009, p. 188). Accordingly, the rituals studied by Light resonate deeply with the cultural identity and history of his participants.

Rather than presuming rituals are unchanging processes performed homogenously by ritual constituencies, it is acknowledged rituals are performed in different ways for different purposes (Baumann, 1992, p. 99). In this sense rituals cannot be understood as static and uniform. Just as the characteristics of individuals and societies change, the meanings rituals represent, the forms they take and the reasons they are or are not performed also change. A telling demonstration of this argument is found in Venbrux, Peelen and Altena’s (2009) study of Dutch mortuary rituals. Traditionally, these rituals identify with either Protestantism or Catholicism (Venbrux, Peelen & Altena, 2009, p. 97). Against a “multireligious and multicultural backdrop” (Venbrux, Peelen & Altena, 2009, p. 98), Dutch society has become increasingly secular. The changing nature of Dutch society has caused traditional funerary rites to fall into disuse, leading to the creation of new funerary rites such as “consumer-orientated undertaking services” (Venbrux, Peelen & Altena, 2009, p. 97) which better reflect the contemporary values of Dutch citizens. Therefore, rituals adapt to changing contexts and to the changing needs of ritual performers.

As dynamic social projects that respond to different variables, rituals are performed by varied and possibly “competing constituencies” (Baumann, 1992, p. 99) for purposes other than reinforcing solidarity and existing social structures. Studying the Maltese festa, Mitchell (2004, p. 74) found rituals were practised by competing groups including the clergy, the laity, “young and old participants of higher and lower status” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 74) and festa administrative committees. In this context, ritual becomes a contested project where diverse
and potentially antagonistic groups with ritual agency seek to control the ritual process (Mitchell, 2004, p. 74).

Once again challenging the assumption that rituals are uniform processes internal to homogenous ritual constituencies, Grau (2001, p. 73) argues Tiwi ritual dances are practised by insider groups such as the Tiwi and outsider groups such as tourists for differing purposes. While tourists practise ritual for its novelty, the Tiwi use ritual dances as religious death rites that put the spirits of the recently deceased to rest (Grau, 2001, p. 79). Therefore rituals are dyadic, dynamic and contested social processes with multiple meanings and forms in different contexts for different ritual performers. Applying this conceptualisation of ritual to my research context, I argue the judo practices performed by judoka such as randori, grading, kata, bowing and the practice of judo itself can be considered rituals as they exhibit these characteristics of ritual behaviour.

By exploring this understanding of ritual, I pose the following questions: what rituals are practised by judoka and why? What effects do rituals have on judoka? Do multiple forms of ritual exist? If so, what causes this variation in ritual behaviour? I argue judo rituals are influenced by the context they are performed in and by the personal characteristics of ritual performers, echoing the proposal that rituals are adaptable and variable processes (Baumann, 1992). Second, I argue the dojo and the rituals practised there constitute a heterotopia where judoka enact marginalised identities and resist hegemonic discourses (Foucault, 1986). As contested social processes; I argue judoka use judo rituals for potentially opposing purposes, for example, in perpetuating hegemonic gender discourses. As such, rituals have embodied effects on ritual performers (Firth, 1996) and this is reflected by the way judoka use rituals to transform their identities in the dojo. Ritual then is significant for judoka in terms of space, gender and identity.
2.2 Heterotopias and sport

Heterotopias are defined as “counter-sites” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24) that “challenge and contest the space we live in” (Johnson, 2006, p. 19). Existing inside and outside social time and place, heterotopias are not restricted by natural spatial and temporal boundaries and hence occupy a contradictory space of “otherness” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24) where normative values and expectations are challenged (John, 2001, p. 51). However, as heterotopias are physical places, they exist in reality and can be accessed by individuals (Foucault, 1986, p. 23).

Two classes of heterotopias exist. Firstly, there are “heterotopias of crisis” which occupy “sacred or forbidden sites” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24) reserved for individuals such as adolescents who are either in or are about to face a state of transition. Heterotopias of crisis are distinguished and segregated from other spaces to perform rites of passage (Johnson, 2006, p. 19). Foucault (1986, p. 24) uses the honeymoon trip as a contemporary example of crisis heterotopias, stating that consummation had to take place in a space of otherness – the honeymoon hotel. Married couples take periods of leave and travel to exotic locations for their honeymoon, satisfying the requirement that these spaces exist outside natural time and space. However, as the destination of the honeymoon exists physically, it is simultaneously located in reality.

The second class of heterotopias are “heterotopias of deviation” (Foucault, 1986, p. 25). These are spaces where individuals can behave in a way that is deviant in relation to societal norms (Foucault, 1986, p. 25). Heterotopias of deviation are contrasted to “generic cultural spaces” (Dressman, 1998, p. 280) such as the workplace which have rigid social, cultural and political functions. While these spaces promote stability and belonging, they override individuality (Dressman, 1998, p. 280). Conversely, heterotopias of deviation are
sanctuaries where individuals can forge alternate identities by reflecting on and reshaping their existing selves (Johnson, 2006, p. 78).

Adding to their liminal nature, heterotopias are penetrable yet isolated spaces. While anyone can enter a heterotopia, access is not unrestricted. Before individuals are allowed such access, they may undergo specific “rites and purifications” (Foucault, 1986, p. 26). These rituals cleanse individuals so that they are fit to enter heterotopic sites (Samuels, 2010, p. 66). Heterotopias are therefore “sacred spaces” (Shackley, 2002, p. 345) where ritual occupies an important place.

Applying Foucault’s framework to this thesis’ research context, I argue the *dojo* is a heterotopia. While the *dojo* is a public space, full access and membership requires the performance of rituals including adopting in-group signifiers centred on dress and social interaction such as wearing a training uniform (*judogi*) and bowing. As a heterotopia, the *dojo* exists inside and outside normative time and space. Occupying the outskirts of the university, the *dojo* is located in reality. However, the *dojo* is also a space of otherness where *judoka* reorganise their values and identities. As argued by Segrave (2000, p. 61), sport allows us to “escape ourselves”, to “enter into an alternate universe” where “grown men pat each other on the butts... where mortals can act like immortals”.

While the *dojo* is a refuge, I argue heterotopias are not entirely disconnected from hegemonic discourses. Rather, the influences of such discourses are always present in heterotopias. Identities are embedded in discourses and there is a subconscious need to reproduce these discourses whilst “resisting alternatives” (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 128). Consequently, even in the *dojo*, *judoka* may be unable to resist hegemonic discourses, particularly “foundational discourses” which are vital to their identities (Mean & Kassing,
Therefore, the identities of judoka are contradictory social projects that display “resistance to and acceptance of hegemonic forms” (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 129).

Although Foucault’s theory of heterotopia remains “briefly sketched” (Johnson, 2006, p. 75), heterotopian frameworks have been applied to several contexts including cathedrals (Shackley, 2002), the pilgrimage sites of New Age travellers (Hetherington, 1996) and 1930s cinemas (Kuhn, 2004). Significantly, few studies have investigated the heterotopic nature of sport. Though Walseth (2006) and Eng (2006) have identified heterotopic elements in sport, the consideration of sport in this context is brief and further exploration is necessary.

2.3 Rituals of gender – masculinities and femininities

Sport is commonly conceptualised as a space that reproduces hegemonic gender discourses (Davis & Duncan, 2006). While this is true to an extent of the dojo, as a heterotopia of deviation, I argue judoka use judo rituals to ritualistically embody marginalised masculinities and femininities whilst resisting hegemonic gender discourses.

Gender is defined as the socially constructed ideal of what it means to be a man or a woman (Cheng, 2008, p. 295). As masculinity and femininity are influenced by social forces such as culture (Connell, 1995, p. 74), to understand gender it must be examined within a broader social context (Connell, 1995, p. 76). Acknowledging this connection between gender and the social, masculinity is not seen as something innately possessed (Connell, 1995, p. 73). Rather, masculinity is defined as “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experiences (Connell, 1995, p. 71). Therefore, masculinity is a set of characteristics understood as masculine that men and women can embody (Schippers, 2007, p. 86). As gender is sensitive to social processes such as culture, given the variability of
these processes, it would be difficult to assume a single form of masculinity exists. Rather, I recognise there are multiple masculinities (Connell, 1995, p. 71).

For example, Japanese masculinity is different to western masculinity. Further adding to this layering of gender, several Japanese masculinities also exist. Using Japanese celebrities such as Gackt and Kimura Takuya as examples, social forces such as the Japanese media are instrumental in creating alternate Japanese masculinities (Darling-Wolf, 2003, p. 73). Compared to past Japanese masculinities such as the soberly stoic samurai and the “emotionless, distant... unimaginative, sexist salariman” (Darling-Wolf, 2003, p. 78), the 21st century Japanese man can be androgynous, sensitive, emotive, fashionable and image-conscious. Accordingly, the masculinities embodied by contemporary media idols and their fans represent alternate Japanese masculinities.

While there are many ways of doing gender, not all masculinities are equal. Some are seen as more valuable and natural than others. These masculinities are described as hegemonic. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the gender practice “taken to guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Depending on factors such as race and class, several hegemonic masculinities may exist – they are not fixed gender types (Messner, 1990, p. 205). Rather, hegemonic masculinities hold dominant yet contested statuses in particular gender networks (Messner, 1990, p. 205). Despite their diversity, several traits are universally identified as hegemonically masculine, including heterosexuality, whiteness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, athleticism and control (Cheng, 2008, p. 296).

Hegemonic masculinity is inherently relational and perpetuates itself in contrast to femininity (Connell, 1995, p. 68) and marginalised masculinities (Schippers, 2007, p. 87). If hegemonic masculinity occupies the leading male gender standard, marginalised
masculinities are the less valued “other” that are inconsistent with these standards (Schippers, 2007, p. 87). Gay men, (Anderson, 2002), men in “feminine” roles (Grindstaff & West, 2006) and masculinities embodied by cultural minorities (Hirose & Pih, 2009) are situated as marginalised masculinities. These masculinities are considered inferior as their non-conformity to the masculine ideal threatens the normative dominance of hegemonic masculinity (Cheng, 2008, p. 297).

The recent popularity of Brazilian jiu jitsu highlights this contestation of gender. Men who use striking martial arts such as boxing and karate are seen as hegemonically masculine by the West (Hirose & Pih, p. 3, 2009). Looking at past films, actors such as Bruce Lee and Sylvester Stallone are placed at the forefront of hegemonic masculinity as they are considered aggressive strikers who spend less time in close, physical contact with other men in combat (Hirose & Pih, p. 3, 2009).

Following the first Ultimate Fighting Championship, the hegemonic position of this masculinity was destabilised when Royce Gracie, a Brazilian jiu jitsu practitioner emerged victorious. In comparison to Gracie, the other competitors were larger, more muscular strikers and therefore hegemonically masculine. It made no sense then that these fighters lost to a physically smaller, weaker man who fought in “intimate” physical proximity with other men (Hirose & Pih, 2009, p. 11). As reflected by the popularity of Brazilian jiu jitsu today, the natural dominance of hegemonic masculinity enjoyed by strikers was dispelled by the success of a marginalised masculinity.

If hegemonic masculinity guarantees the power of men and the subordination of women, femininity is defined as a socially constructed standard for women’s appearance, demeanour and values that accommodates hegemonically masculine interests (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar & Kauer, 2004, p. 316). Due to its subordination to masculinity, scholars are
reluctant to speak of hegemonic femininity (Schippers, 2007, p. 87). However, like masculinity, multiple femininities exist and some are more privileged than others. The most accepted femininity is known as ideal femininity (Connell, 1995). Ideal femininity is associated with passivity, ornamentality, chasteness and possessing an aesthetic, slim body (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar & Kauer, 2004, p. 317). Accordingly, ideal femininity accommodates hegemonic masculinity by assuring its dominance whilst preventing alternate femininities from gaining “cultural recognition” (Cheng, 2008, p. 296).

Some alternate femininities resist ideal femininity and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, p. 185). Female athletes for example embody traditionally masculine characteristics such as athleticism to claim membership in a male space (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 130). This resistance is not unchallenged and female athletes are often marginalised and stereotyped as butch and lesbian (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 130). The same can be said of marginalised masculinities. Even with its popularity, male Brazilian jiu jitsu practitioners still attract homophobic comments for “rolling around” with other men. Clearly, hegemonic masculinity actively suppresses the threats presented by alternate masculinities and femininities (Cheng, 2008, p. 297). Distinct to generic cultural spaces where these hegemonic discourses are dominant, I argue the dojo is a heterotopia of deviation where judoka can safely embody marginalised masculinities and femininities through ritual. However, as hegemonic forces are always present in heterotopias, individuals may experience identity dissonance (Mean & Kassing, 2008) in these spaces by being caught between marginalised and hegemonic discourses. As argued by Firth (1996), rituals have considerable effects on the personal and social states of ritual performers.
2.4 Rites of passage and liminality

Further reflecting the capacity of rituals in influencing the social and physical conditions of ritual performers, I argue judoka transform their social states and identities by performing judo rituals. Utilising Turner’s (1969) theory of liminality, this process involves three phases: separation, liminality and incorporation (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 270).

Separation removes individuals from the ritual constituency and their previous social environment. This detachment moves individuals from a stable identity to an ambiguous liminal identity (Turner, 1969, p. 95). Liminality then is characterised by the blurring of definitions and boundaries as individuals find themselves “betwixt and between” social states, neither “who they had been nor who they are to become” (Merten, 2005, p. 139). Stripped of existing rights and status, temporarily undefined, existing outside normative social structures (Turner, 1982, p. 27) and reduced to a “uniform condition” (Turner, 1969, p. 95), liminal individuals are anonymous, passive entities that submit themselves obediently to the authority of the ritual constituency.

While being in a liminal state is potentially distressing, it also produces positive effects such as the state of “communitas” (Turner, 1969, p. 96), a communal spirit created out of the mutual experience of liminality which fosters intense solidarity and egalitarianism amongst liminal entities (Mitchell, 2004, p. 60). Indeed, some individuals enjoy being liminal, revelling in the freedom offered by an ambiguous, ritual space (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 273).

The adolescent girls studied by Merten (2005, p. 139) are typical examples of liminal entities as they are caught between two states and thus embody an ambiguous identity. Having graduated from grade school to junior high, these girls are separated from their pre-liminal identities and have begun their transition from childhood to adolescence.
Problematically, these girls no longer see themselves as children but are not old enough to be considered teenagers by their peers and thus experience an immense ambiguity in their life-course (Merten, 2005, p. 139).

To transcend the dissonance that results from liminality, liminal entities perform rituals to negate their ambiguous identities (Merten, 2005, p. 139). For Merten’s (2005, p. 143) adolescent girls, this involves participating in adult activities such as smoking. Once liminal identities are negated through ritual, individuals undergo a process of incorporation. Incorporation represents the final stage of liminality where individuals rejoin the ritual constituency after they are successfully integrated into their new identities (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 270). Similarly, I argue judoka use judo rituals to negate their liminal identities and integrate themselves within the dojo.
3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodologies utilised in this thesis. Firstly, I describe my research context and explain the significance of my position as a judoka within it. Then, I outline the methodologies used in this thesis and justify why they were appropriate for my research. Concluding this chapter with a discussion of reflexivity, I discuss the effects my position as judoka had on my research. In doing so, I outline the advantages and disadvantages of having existing experience and social relations in the field.

3.1 The research context

This is an ethnographic study that utilises data collected through interviews and participant observations from a sample of nineteen judoka (twelve male, seven female). Over fourteen weeks in 2010, participant observation was undertaken five times a week at a university judo club located in the Sydney metropolitan area. Developed by Jigoro Kano in 1882, judo is a Japanese martial art specialising in grappling techniques. While judo does not represent a radical technical departure from jujutsu, Kano distinguished judo by underpinning its practise with values of utilitarianism, efficiency and modernity. For example, Kano removed any hazardous or inefficient techniques from the judo syllabus and encouraged a realistic form of free sparring known as randori. The rationale for these changes was that if judoka practised in an unrestricted yet safe manner, they would gain the maximum benefit from their training (Fromm & Soames, 1982, p. 4).

Despite being influenced by modernity, Kano also valued tradition and his greatest intention was for judo to be more than a system of combat, but a budo. Compared to jutsu or pragmatic combat forms designed for war, budo are martial ways that aim to morally and mentally socialise its practitioners (Saeki, 1994, p. 301). Therefore Kano imbued his art with...
a “rigorous moral culture” (Carr, 1993, p. 178) and stressed judo training should result in *jita kyoie* or the mutual prosperity of humanity (Saeki, 1994, p. 301). Idealistically, Kano hoped *judoka* would work together during training, bettering themselves and others through judo. This mutual benefit would lead to a more cooperative and stable society since it would contain more well-adjusted citizens due to judo (Saeki, 1994, p. 301). Therefore like the nature of modern Japanese society, judo represents an amalgamation of modern and traditional values, and therefore, of the East and the West.

Despite its esoteric beginnings, judo flourished in Japan and by the first quarter of the 20th century most jujutsu schools were absorbed into judo (Fromm & Soames, 1982, p. 4). Ironically, while the Second World War led to the prohibition of the practise of Japanese martial arts including judo, the Allied occupation of Japan ultimately spread judo to other countries and this was a pivotal factor in its establishment in Australia. Like service men from other nations, Cecil Elliot was exposed to jujutsu and judo whilst in Japan and brought these practices back to Australia after his tour of duty had ended. Teaching jujutsu in his backyard, Elliot effectively laid the foundation for Australian judo. In 1952, the Judo Federation of Australia was established and two years later the *dojo* was open to the public for the first time (Judo Federation of Australia, 2010). Occupied by individuals of various ages and backgrounds, the practise of judo within the *dojo* continues today and it is this space and the *judoka* who train there that inform my research.

While one might question the relevance of studying the rituals and social relations of judo, this context was chosen for several reasons. As my research concerns masculinities and femininities, by offering co-ed classes, the *dojo* provides an optimal space to observe the interplay between men and women (Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 502). Most qualitative studies on gender focus on masculinity (Messner 1990, Carrington 1998, Light 2000, Anderson 2002 & Davis & Duncan 2006) or femininity (Goldstein-Gidon 1999, Krane,
Choi, Baird, Aimar & Kauer 2004, Merten 2005, Schippers 2007 & Mean & Kassing 2008). Few studies consider the relationship between masculinity and femininity. The *dojo* provides a unique context to observe mixed gender processes that are thus far overlooked. Furthermore, as a global sport with millions of practitioners, the study of judo rituals and their importance for *judoka* is significant.

### 3.2 The effects of being a researcher and a *judoka* in the *dojo*

While the issues inherent in such a position are clear (Macphail, 2004), the context of this thesis was also chosen as I hold a position as a *judoka* in the *dojo*. Beginning judo in 2007, I have since attained the rank of brown belt, the equivalent of being a senior club member. Being a senior *judoka* that trains regularly, I have a visible presence in the *dojo* as a competitor, an assistant coach in the beginner and women’s only classes and as a regular member of the *dojo*’s student executive. In particular, I was vice president of the executive and assistant coach of the Australian University Games team in 2009. As such, my position in the *dojo* is one of social and administrative significance. Considering the immersive nature of ethnographies, my experience as a *judoka* undoubtedly affected my research.

Ethnography involves studying people in their daily social interactions (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 1). This requires extensive involvement in the worlds of others to comprehend the meaning of their experiences (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 1). Therefore ethnographers must become acquainted with their informants and become a member of their world (Brunt, 1999, p. 502). This is not a simple or brief task as a researcher who is new to the field is an outsider, distrusted and unaware of the culture of the group they are studying. As researchers spend more time in the field however, they establish rapport with that group, gradually gaining the trust of its members and access to more privileged aspects of their cultural life. Therefore, fieldwork depends on the quality of the relationships an
ethnographer forges with their informants (Coffey, 1999, p. 39). When good relations exist between researchers and researched, fieldwork is arguably more successful (Coffey, 1999, p. 46).

Given the limited resources available at my disposal, I was initially concerned whether it would be practical to undertake ethnographic research in a foreign field. Would I have sufficient time to become socialised in the group I was studying? If not, how could I study completely alien social processes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 2)? If shallow field relations do negatively affect the quality of data (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 2), would it be wise to perform ethnographic research in a limited period? These questions cast doubts on the feasibility of the research I wished to undertake. My position as a senior judoka resolved these issues. Being already aware of the dojo’s culture and having already established rapport with other judoka considerably reduced the time required for data collection and allowed for more candid and involved field interactions. However, it would be naïve to assume my relationship with the dojo was wholly beneficial. As I will later discuss, my position as a judoka presented several issues for my research. These included having to juggle my roles as a judoka and as a researcher, the possibility of coercion with my informants and a lack of critical distance whilst undertaking research in the dojo.

3.3 Participant observation

Four classes were observed in the dojo: the beginner classes which operated twice a week, the advanced classes, the women’s only classes and the randori class, though at times, observation extended to social events after training, such as weekly excursions to the local pub. Participant observation was undertaken in these settings to gain an understanding of masculinities and femininities as well as insider (experienced judoka) and outsider (beginner) experiences. Utilising naturalistic inquiry, participant observation enabled the identification
of emergent themes and key informants, thereby facilitating more focused analyses within the field (Davies, 1999, p. 71). The majority of judoka I observed were Caucasian or Asian, middle class, university students with mixed experience in judo, ranging from beginners, to intermediate judoka and competition level judoka. Purposive sampling was used to select participants on the requirement that they were eighteen to sixty five years old and trained regularly. Actual recruitment, however, took place through a sign-up sheet posted within the dojo. Participants therefore had to opt into the research rather than opt out. To maintain their privacy, I use pseudonyms for all judoka who participated.

Participant observation took place in two phases. From April to July 2010, I undertook participant observation at all four classes. From July 2010, I shifted the focus of observation towards the context of competition. Two state judo competitions were observed. Given the immersion required for ethnographies, participant observation was an obvious and logical methodology for my research (Brunt, 1999, p. 508). This is especially so given the embodied nature of ritual.

3.4 Rituals as embodied experiences

Bodily experience is crucial for ritual behaviour. All rituals require some bodily participation and at the minimum, the ritual performer “must be physically present” (Zheng, 2007, p. 436). As the body is the medium through which ritual is performed, rituals have significant embodied effects on ritual performers (Firth, 1996, p. 125). Studying Dalian-Chinese men living under Japanese colonial occupation, Zheng (2007, p. 449) argues performing military calisthenics forced Dalian-Chinese men to internalise feelings of inferiority and effeminacy. Conversely, playing street soccer against Japanese and English teams allowed Dalian-Chinese men to embody an aggressive, nationalistic masculinity and escape internalisations of Japanese superiority (Zheng, 2007, p. 450). Therefore when
subjected to rituals, bodies can be agents of “cultural reproduction” (Coffey, 1999, p. 59), resistance and representation.

My use of participant observation is justified due to this embodied nature of ritual. Rituals have real, yet subtle and potentially hidden effects on ritual performers that may not be identified through observation and questioning alone (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 1). Royce, a black belt judoka, illustrates this embodiment of ritual. Speaking of the “way” or do of judo and what it means to be a judoka performing ritual, he commented that:

**Royce:** The do for me is in the training. The do is in the sweat. The do is in the
I train for five hours a day, six days a week. That discipline makes me a better person, that’s where the do is.

Interview – 2/6/10

For Royce, ritual and the body are inseparable as it involves the body’s capacities and operations (Gusfield, 2000, p. 66). Therefore to study ritual and to do effective ethnography requires researchers to subject their bodies and identities to the contexts and conditions that affect their informants (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 1). To understand judo rituals one must bow, train and sweat like a judoka. One must perform ritual, experience it and become immersed in the ritual process. Participant observation then is an effective methodology for studying ritual as it allows researchers to directly experience ritual and the embodied effects that result from its performance.

### 3.5 Interviews

To supplement participant observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted on eight judoka. Three male and three female judoka of varying experience were interviewed to collect data on masculinities and femininities and insider versus outsider experiences of
These judoka were beginners, intermediate judoka or competition level judoka. The remaining two interviews were conducted on a judoka from another club and a founding member of the dojo to collect comparative data on rituals. Semi-structured interviews were approximately sixty to ninety minutes in length and were recorded with the interviewee’s consent. All interviews were transcribed for later analysis.

The variation in interview length is attributed to the flexibility of semi-structured interviews. This flexibility allows researchers to digress from the interview schedule by reordering or rewording questions, introducing supplementary questions and omitting redundant or inappropriate questions (Davies, 1999, p. 95). When combined with participant observation, semi-structured interviews enabled a greater sensitivity to field observations and topics of interest identified during interviews. This was useful given the opportunistic nature of ethnographies and the ongoing, dynamic relationships I had with judoka. For example, the judoka I observed constantly reshaped their social statuses and identities in the dojo through rituals such as grading (see Appendix 1). Rather than obtaining a limited, “snap shot” (Macphail, 2004, p. 228) perspective of the ritual behaviour, the combined use of participant observation and semi-structured interviews resulted in the collection of a more comprehensive breadth and depth of data (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002, p. 92).

3.6 The pains of being anthropologically strange

As ethnography is a “person-based project” (Macphail, 2004, p. 227), a researcher’s identity matters to their informants. This is because the “self is intimately connected with the completion of fieldwork” (Gill & Maclean, 2002, at 1.4) and an individual’s characteristics such as age and gender engage with the “personalities, histories and subjectivities” (Coffey, 1999, p. 57) of their informants. Depending on the strength of these connections, one must consider the extent to which data collected is influenced by the ethnographer’s presence in
the field (Davies, 1999, p. 3). Thus researchers must exercise reflexivity by detaching
themselves from their research context and acknowledge the effects their presence will have
on their research experience and that of their participants (Davies, 1999, p. 7).

This is arguably why ethnographers prefer to be unfamiliar with their research context
(Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 2) as it forces them to begin as conceptual strangers to “the
events, the sites, the people, the stories, the things represented” (Smith, 2005, p. 27) in the
field. This detachment enables ethnographers to critically analyse their experiences with fresh
eyes (Smith, 2005, p. 28). My research follows the opposite trajectory. As a senior judoka, I
began as a “native” who was intimately acquainted with the culture of the dojo. Instead of
integrating myself within the dojo, I distanced myself from this context by looking
reflexively at my roles as a researcher and a judoka. By turning a reflexive gaze upon myself,
I attempted to render what I originally saw as natural as unnatural and “anthropologically
strange” (Macphail, 2004, p. 241). This process was essential as my initial involvement in the
dojo jeopardised my ability to identify the cultural behaviours I sought to observe (Davies,
1999, p. 71). I had mixed success in this respect:

*I can’t help but feel I’m not seeing something obvious. I seem to be seeing the
same things again and again. I am only two weeks into my research... there is
no way that I’ve reached saturation.*

Field notes – 22/5/10

Even though I distanced myself from my identity as a judoka, occasionally my familiarity
with the dojo made making novel observations difficult. Suspending my preconceptions was
not easy (Macphail, 2004, p. 228) and I may have overlooked certain observations. Due to
my previous experiences as a judoka, the anthropological strangeness I sought had escaped
me.
3.7 Power differentials in the *dojo*

Further complicating my research experience, my relationship to the *dojo* made it difficult to balance my roles and responsibilities as a researcher and *judoka*. As a senior *judoka*, I was expected to train diligently. Problematically, training conflicted with my interests as a researcher and I had to divide my time between the two roles. I mostly experienced this tension personally as I felt obligated to train and there were days when I abandoned my role as a researcher completely. Occasionally my need to conduct research led to public confrontations. While my behaviour in the *dojo* had not radically changed, as “sport culture relies heavily on established patterns” (Macphail, 2004, p. 235), I should have realised my newfound capacity as a researcher would disrupt the existing dynamics of the *dojo*. Undertaking observation potentially meant not training, and some *judoka* did not appreciate this:

*Tonight I sat out a few rounds of randori for observation. As I watched the other judoka spar, the sensei approached me and asked whether I was injured. I replied that I was not. He then asked me why I wasn’t training. Before I could answer, the sensei sternly told me that I could rest after class and pushed me back on the mat. So much for observation.*

Field notes – 3/6/10

Not only does this illustrate the difficulties an ethnographer may encounter when attempting to balance the roles and responsibilities they have in the field, it also reveals the issues involved in navigating complex power relationships during research. As my *sensei* (instructor) possessed more ritual power than I did, I had little choice but to submit to his authority. This power inequality between student and *sensei* was detrimental for my research on several occasions. As a senior *judoka* I have a respected and visible position in the *dojo*. 
Therefore, I also held ritual power. In certain circumstances this power was greater than that held by others. Problematically, these *judoka* were both my training partners and my research participants. Power differentials between researchers and researched are well documented and sources have warned against the dangers of exploiting vulnerable groups (Bucqueroux & Carter, 1999, p. 19 & Saguy, 2002, p. 549). It quickly became apparent that if I was not reflexive about my role in the *dojo*, I could subject these *judoka* to the same coercion my *sensei* exercised over me.

These power differentials were most salient in the semi-structured interviews I conducted. It is assumed that interviewers adopt neutral positions to suppress their effects on the responses of interviewees (Davies, 1999, p. 94). This is not the reality of interviewing as the personal characteristics of both interviewers and interviewees affect the interview process (Davies, 1999, p. 108). For example, *Safiah*, a *judoka* whom I had coached in the past, appeared visibly nervous during our interview. Sensing that my authoritative position as a senior *judoka* was making *Safiah* uncomfortable, I adopted a less formal tone and asked more conversational questions. This was useful. Inquiring as to how old an interviewee was and about their occupation settled their nerves and shifted interviews to a more relaxed context. *Safiah* also became more confident in her responses when I questioned her about the women’s classes. As a female *judoka*, *Safiah* had privileged knowledge that male *judoka* did not ordinarily possess. Therefore, *Safiah* asserted this knowledge and empowered herself, demonstrating that power dynamics in research place interviewers in dominant or subordinate positions (Tang, 2002, p. 707).

Looking reflexively at my research, I undertook other strategies to minimise power imbalances during interviews. As the location of interviews affect how interactions proceed (Davies, 1999, p. 110), interviews were conducted away from the *dojo* in a neutral space. This was done to deactivate social boundaries (Tilly, 2004) embedded within the *dojo* such as
those predicated on rank, thereby suppressing my status as a senior judoka and its associated ritual power. Further negating these signifiers of power, I approached judoka for the purpose of conducting interviews whilst dressed in plain clothes or over impersonal mediums such as e-mail. These strategies lessened the potentially coercive and hierarchical nature of the interviews I undertook (Davis, 1999, p. 108). Despite these measures, power differentials remained somewhat active during interviews.

When interviewing Royce, my senior in judo, Royce’s position in the dojo as an instructor notably affected the dynamics of our interview. Not only was the atmosphere of the interview unusually awkward, at times, Royce sought to control the interview process by reframing or rejecting entire lines of questioning. Reviewing the post-interview transcript, I concluded I internalised this power imbalance and subconsciously adopted a deferential role:

**David:** How is randori different to competition?

**Royce:** The intensity, there’s no time for thought. You just completely commit yourself to it. It’s real. You don’t get a second chance. The power, the strength that you use and feel isn’t comparable to randori.

**David:** Right.

**Royce:** People feel so much stronger in competition than they do in randori.

**David:** Sure.

Interview – 2/6/10

Instead of expanding upon and qualifying Royce’s responses, I accepted them without seeking further clarification. Due to our unequal positions, Royce was able to conduct the interview on his terms (Thomas, 1993). Undoubtedly, my inexperience in interviewing compounded this control. Therefore my identity as a judoka was a double-edged sword. While it presented several methodological, ethical and moral issues for my research, my
relationship with the *dojo* did provide unique advantages, the greatest of which was that it enabled me to conduct my research. Now that my methodological approach has been established, let us examine the rituals of the *dojo* and how they affect the *judoka* who perform them.
4 THE STRUCTURAL SENSITIVITY OF RITUAL

Rituals are typically understood as routine, predictable and precisely performed behaviours with rigid forms and functions (Durkheim 1912 & Goodger 1986). Conversely, I argue rituals are not unchanging processes performed and supported uniformly. Rather, rituals are dynamic, adaptable processes that can be modified in several ways.

Venbrux, Peelen and Altena (2009) suggest rituals become more or less important depending on the extent they reflect the normative values of ritual constituencies. Therefore rituals are sensitive to social forces. Human agency is also important for ritual behaviour. Light (2000) argues rituals respond to the personal characteristics of ritual performers. Similarly, Hogan (2003, p. 106) argues while aspects of ritual performance are compulsory, as noted in the way host nations “domesticate” (Hogan, 2003, p. 106) Olympic rituals such as the torch relay to reflect particular cultural climates, ritual performers have the agency to change rituals to suit specific purposes. Rather than being static and rigid, rituals respond to changing contexts and the changing characteristics and needs of ritual performers.

It is this flexible interpretation of ritual that I use in this chapter to examine how social and individual forces shape the way judoka use and experience judo rituals. As adaptive, contextual social processes, judo rituals become more or less salient depending on the context they are performed in. Furthermore as individuals have ritual agency, the personal characteristics and needs of judoka affect ritual behaviour and different ritual performers have differing degrees of ritual involvement. However, before considering these effects on ritual, it is first necessary to examine the context these judo rituals are practised in.
4.1 All that glitters is gold – judo as a competitive sport

From duels with rival jujutsu schools to its current status as an Olympic sport, competition has always been pervasive in judo. However, for its founder, Jigoro Kano, competition is only one aspect of judo. As a *budo*, judo also involves the mental and moral cultivation of *judoka* (Saeki, 1994, p. 301). While Kano acknowledged the value of competition, he stressed it should never eclipse these philosophical elements of judo:

Students should practice judo not for the purpose of competition but rather to become able to use it to attain a greater purpose in life. (Jigoro Kano cited in Watson, 2008, p. 132)

Despite Kano’s intentions, judo continues to become increasingly competitive. Undoubtedly, this process was accelerated by judo’s inclusion in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. Observing judo’s trajectory during the early 20\(^{th}\) century, Kano lamented that:

The judo practitioners of today do not make enough effort to achieve the goals of judo and have overemphasised… competition. (Jigoro Kano cited in Watson, 2008, p. 100)

One can only imagine Kano’s disappointment if he witnessed judo today. Modern judo and competition are inextricably linked (Saeki, 1994, p. 301). Rather than promoting mutual benefit and moral development, arguably the main goal for contemporary *judoka* is achieving success in competition. While the *judoka* I observed acknowledged judo’s identity as a *budo*, they too stressed the significance of competition:

*David:* What are your attitudes to competition in judo?

*Royce:* That’s the point. For me.

Interview – 2/6/10
Natasha: Ah, I love competition. I always say this but I can’t do sports just for fun, I need to compete.

Interview – 29/6/10

Clearly competition is centrally important for these judoka. Comparatively, the spiritual components of judo as a budo come second. The competitive nature of judo is reinforced by the way judoka refer to judo as a sport rather than a budo:

Safiah: It’s just a sport to me. I mean if someone asked me what sport I do I’d say I do judo. It’s just as normal as me saying I do tennis or I do soccer.

Interview – 14/6/10

Mitchell: It definitely feels like a sport. There are winners, rules and tournaments and there’s a competitive aspect to the whole thing.

Interview – 7/6/10

As a context with winners and losers and where athletes pit their skill and athleticism against each other, sport is inherently competitive (Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 506). By describing judo as a sport, these judoka acknowledge that judo is firmly embedded within a sporting and competitive framework. As a reflection of this, almost every class I observed involved developing specialised competition techniques, competition strategies and competition physical conditioning:

Kendall: The bigger point here is a differing style of judo entirely. Essentially, the instructor teaches judo in a very objective manner. To take guys down, to score a point, to win a match. This implies techniques that are modified for
competition. He also endorses specialisation; you master one or two throws then modify them.

Interview – 3/8/10

Not only is judo embedded within a competitive context, the actual experience of judo for these judoka is moulded to the demands of competition in which practicality and effectiveness are stressed while tradition is disregarded:

Kendall: He [the sensei] was teaching a leg sweep which requires a kick or hook rather than the conventional sweep. I couldn’t switch to this style and he told me “this is not kodokan judo, this is for competition”.

Interview – 3/8/10

Evidently, the sensei does not aim to reproduce traditional judo. His classes transform judoka into modern competitors. Therefore, contemporary judo is recognised as a hyper-competitive sport. It is this competitive context judo is embedded in that influences how judoka interpret judo rituals such as kata.

4.2 Kata – a relic of the past?

Kata is a choreographed, performative ritual used to develop and demonstrate the fundamental, technical principles of judo (Watson, 2008, p. 78). Kano believed kata to be vital for judoka as one must master kata to excel in randori and competition (Watson, 2008, p. 77). Given the traditional importance of kata in judo and other martial arts such as karate, it is surprising that many judoka had negative opinions of kata:
**David:** What do you think of kata?

**Royce:** Rubbish. It’s a historical artefact necessary I suppose to preserve the traditional spirit of judo but I have no desire to do it.

Interview – 2/6/10

When I asked Royce whether he believed kata was beneficial for a judoka’s competition performance, he rejected this proposition entirely:

**David:** What do you think about a certain kata instructor who says that if you practise kata your competition performance will increase?

**Royce:** That’s rubbish. I think if you use kata to practise the techniques that’s fine, but that’s just rubbish.

Interview – 2/6/10

*Jin,* an orange belt, competition judoka expressed similar sentiments:

*Jin thought kata was impractical and therefore useless for competition. He said it was all about “showboating” and he ridiculed the meticulous attention to detail that kata demanded.*

Field notes – 31/5/10

Clearly, Jin and Royce do not see kata as a relevant ritual for contemporary judo. Highlighting the contested nature of ritual however, not all judoka viewed kata negatively:

**Safiah:** Well I like kata. It’s another side of the sport and it’s good to know. I think it really emphasises the martial arts identity.

Interview – 14/6/10
*Ada*: Doing *kata*, it’s very spiritual moment for me. It’s so beautiful when you look at someone who is really good at *kata*… it includes spiritual side of judo. But yeah I think *kata* is important and we have to keep practising it, and we have to keep this *kata* thing to the next generation, you know?

*David*: We have to pass it on?

*Ada*: Yes! Recently people start to think *kata* is not important but we shouldn’t stop practicing *kata* actually.

*David*: Why do we have to pass *kata* on?

*Ada*: Ah... the techniques are getting more advanced and less traditional. They start to become different, more modified. Yeah so, we still have to, you know, keep the original one as basis of judo.

Interview – 22/6/10

These *judoka* interpret *kata* as an important ritual that preserves judo’s identity as a *budo*. *Ada*, a female black belt, felt *kata* was important as it provides a holistic experience of judo as both a sport and *budo*. Significantly, three of the four *judoka* who value *kata* are women. As *kata* is considered aesthetically beautiful, graceful and performative, perhaps *kata* resonates with ideal femininity, a gender standard which values these characteristics. Despite their fondness for *kata*, these *judoka* still recognise its irrelevance in modern judo:

*Ada*: I think worldwide basis *kata* is getting less important. It’s sad. Yeah, so I think that means judo is getting more like sports so less like spiritual or martial arts.

Interview – 22/6/10
These comments demonstrate the contextual sensitivity of ritual. *Kata* is influenced by the competitive context it is embedded in. Venbrux, Peelen & Altena (2009) argue rituals fall in or out of favour depending on the context they are performed in. Accordingly, the acceptance of rituals and the frequency they are performed depend on the extent rituals reflect socially normative values (Oswald, 2002, p. 429). As a ritual linked with judo’s identity as a *budo*, *kata* is reflective of the values of tradition, performance and personal development. *Kata* then has been deactivated as a judo ritual as it is incompatible with the values of modern judo – success, practicality and effectiveness in competition.

I argue rituals are activated or deactivated depending on the nature of the social contexts rituals are practised in. As judo is a competitive, professional sport in Australia, “not much weight” is given to *kata*. At its worst, *kata* is seen as a glorified form of “showboating” with little relevance for contemporary judo as it does not enhance one’s chances of winning a gold medal. For these *judoka*, *kata* is a relic of the past that should be forgotten:

*Royce*: It [*kata*] has no effect on the sport, at all. The whole twelve months of the year was focused solely on winning one championship and *kata* had no part in that goal. I have practised *kata* in Australia. *Kata* used to be in the class, and that frustrated me. It was like I had a non-class.

*Interview – 2/6/10*

While some *judoka* recognise that *kata* provides a holistic experience of judo, they too admit *kata* lacks ritual importance. Therefore not only do rituals have varied and contested meanings for different ritual performers, as contexts change, the rituals performed within these contexts adapt to these changes. Similarly, depending on the social conditions they find themselves in, ritual performers can choose to activate or deactivate rituals to deal with these circumstances. It is this ritual agency that I now discuss.
4.3 Ritual agency

Highlighting the active role individuals play in the ritual process, Royce suggests ritual performers can shift rituals from one context and appropriate them to new contexts:

*Royce:* I think in Australia, cutting weight comes from boxing and wrestling.

So the methods were already there, so it was just adopted yeah.

Interview – 2/6/10

According to Royce, weight cutting was “adopted” from sports such as boxing and then applied to judo. This illustrates that rituals are not rigidly fixed within specific contexts. As flexible processes, they can be lifted from one context and reworked to fit others. Such ritual behaviour was demonstrated by judoka at one state tournament in July 2010:

*The judoka moved onto the mat and began to warm up as a unit. The warm up routine they used was identical to the usual warm up routine we do in class, down to the number of lines the players organised themselves into to the types of exercises they performed.*

Field notes – 11/7/10

These judoka chose to lift the warm up from its usual context within the dojo and applied it to a foreign space – the competition arena. Despite my initial impressions, the ritual performed by judoka in this context was not identical to the warm up routine practised in the dojo. Normally, warm ups reinforce social boundaries active in the dojo such as those between graded and ungraded judoka and those between sensei and student:

*There was a clear social segregation between the kyu grades and the learners during the warm ups. Kyu grades would always lead the warm ups whilst the*
learners followed. At one point, Geoffrey, a learner, deferred to Choi, a kyu grade, allowing him to go first, even though he was ahead of Choi in the line.

Field notes – 24/6/10

*Warm ups emphasise the incredible control the sensei possesses over bodies of judoka. Judoka speak, rest and drink only when the instructor allows it. Individuality is stamped out and a strict adherence to authority is enforced.*

Field notes – 8/7/10

Demonstrating their ritual agency, these *judoka* reworked the purpose and meaning of the warm up to suit their current context and needs. For many of these *judoka*, this was their first competition and they experienced feelings of pressure, uncertainty and nervousness:

*While Natasha and Jin were weighing in, I asked them how they were feeling. Jin was “really nervous” and didn’t know what to expect and this uncertainty made him feel even worse. Natasha expressed a similar sentiment as she fidgeted around on the mat, trying to settle her nerves by keeping busy.*

Field notes – 11/7/10

Rather than reactivating social boundaries, in the context of competition the warm up ritual deactivated them. By training together equally as a unit with no predications based on rank or experience, warming up became an important way for these *judoka* to express feelings of belonging and solidarity by making their collective identity more visible. This allowed *judoka* to create a safe space in a potentially hostile, contested environment. Therefore, rituals are not fixed in function, form or meaning. They are dynamic social processes that respond to differing contexts. However, as reflected in the ritual of bowing, the personal characteristics of *judoka* also influence ritual behaviour.
4.4 Returning home and representing the nation

Bowing is an important judo ritual and judo classes are structured around its performance. Every class begins and ends with a formal bow to the sensei and judoka are instructed to bow to each other during class. Despite its centrality in the dojo, the way bowing is practised and understood differs greatly between judoka. Australian judoka understand bowing as an important way to ritualistically show respect in the dojo:

Mitchell: I think it’s important to show mutual respect. Even the instructor who’s a ten times national champion would still bow to us. It’s good that everyone shows respect, it makes me feel a lot more comfortable.

Interview – 7/6/10

Japanese judoka also recognise bowing as an expression of respect. However, for them, bowing is linked to Japanese cultural values and beliefs:

Ada: In judo training some people don’t bow but I always do. Like even in Japan, when we go into dojo we bow. Everyone have to do, but here not all.

David: How does it make you feel when you bow?

Ada: Well I understand it’s sort of cultural difference, but in Japan we believe there is god of dojo. So that’s why. Like even sometimes we put sort of like small shrine in dojo, laughter.

David: A god of the dojo… can you tell me more?

Ada: Ah, we just believe there is a god that protects us from injury and bad things and that keeps us training not too aggressively.

Interview – 22/6/10
Significantly, Ada bows in judo as it resonates with her belief in Shinto, a Japanese religion whose followers believe things in this world ranging from natural forces to martial arts and the dojo are inhabited by kami or divine spirits (Picken, 1994, p. xxii). In comparison to Australian judoka, Ada has a deeper relationship to bowing. For Ada bowing is not just about respect; it also allows her to ritualistically connect with her cultural and religious values. Therefore personal characteristics such as culture influence the way ritual performers interpret rituals. Like Light’s Japanese rugby players (2000), judoka perform and interpret rituals in culturally specific ways for culturally specific purposes:

David: So it [bowing] is a way for you to connect with your culture?

Ada: Yes I think so… it feels familiar, yeah.

Interview – 22/6/10

By performing culturally familiar practices, judo rituals allow Japanese judoka to return home. Natasha also recognises this capacity of bowing, but distinct to Ada, Natasha also bows to represent the Japanese nation in the dojo:

Natasha: For me, when I do judo or when I bow, I’m representing Japan cos I’m Japanese. So I’m setting the example.

Interview – 29/6/10

Natasha bows to embody the nation and express her nationalistic pride by representing Japanese values. Growing up in a society where the good of the community takes precedence over individual interests, Natasha understands the importance of maintaining honour for one’s self and their society. Therefore, Natasha interprets the bow as a ritual of utmost importance. Compared to how Australian judoka bow, Natasha bows with
the correct technique as she believes she is representing the people of Japan by bowing.

Undoubtedly, rituals have different meanings and purposes for different judoka:

**Natasha:** For me the bow is very respectful. I’m sure they [Australian judoka] don’t have the same connection to the bow that I do. It doesn’t represent the same thing.

Interview – 29/6/10

**Royce:** In Japan that stuff is really important. Like we don’t bow properly in Australia... the meaning isn’t there.

Interview – 2/6/10

The suggestion made here is that bowing is more significant for Japanese judoka as it is a defining aspect of their culture and society. Australian judoka do not have the same level of ritual involvement and this is reflected in the ambivalent way they bow to each other during randori. At the start and end of each bout, Australian judoka bow only when instructed and with little regard to form. Unlike Natasha, Australian judoka do not recognise the intricacies involved in bowing such as the correct placement of one’s hands (Perez, 1998, p. 4). Indeed, Australian judoka commonly bow with their hands in front of them – an emasculating gesture in Japan. After bowing, Australian judoka then shook hands, a ritual that was more genuine than the bow itself. When I first observed this behaviour, I was deeply puzzled. In my mind, bowing and shaking one’s hand had a similar purpose, to show respect. Why did these judoka perform such a ritually redundant action? The answer is due to culture:

**David:** What do you think about the whole hand slapping thing?

**Safiah:** Well, it’s redundant but I think it’s our little appropriation. I mean bowing means a lot to Japanese and it’s really straight forward for them. But
bowing may not mean so much to us in the west. So people just kinda reaffirm themselves by shaking or slapping their hands. It’s their way of translating the gesture.

Interview – 14/6/10

Bowing is a culturally alien ritual for Australian judoka that does not have the same connection or significance that it has for Japanese judoka. After all, Australia is not a bowing country. In modifying the bow, Australian judoka are exercising ritual agency in “domesticating” (Hogan, 2003) bowing so it is more culturally relevant and communicable as a ritual.

Accordingly, as reflected in the way kata and bowing are shaped by competition and the religion and culture of ritual performers, rituals are influenced by both the contexts they are practised in as well as the personal characteristics of the individuals who perform them. Due to this adaptability, rituals have several forms, meanings and functions for different judoka. As a further demonstration of this functional flexibility of rituals, I argue judoka also utilise judo rituals to resist and reaffirm hegemonic discourses.
5 OF OTHER SPACES – HETEROPTIAS AND JUDO

Heterotopias are shrines that shield individuals who live outside normative social standards from hegemonic discourses (Hetherington, 1996, p. 3 & John, 2001, p. 41). In these “other” spaces, individuals are free to adopt alternate identities (Hetherington, 1996, p. 4). Highlighting this link between space and identity, Mcnamee (2000, p. 490) argues the virtual worlds of video games allow children to escape childhood boundaries and enact unrestricted, imaginative identities. Similarly, Dressman (1998, p. 283) argues school libraries are refuges where students can adopt “alternate curriculums”.

Therefore the social centrality of heterotopias in offering individuals symbolic sanctuaries is recognised in several contexts (Dressman 1998, Shackley 2002 & Kuhn 2004). Despite this existing literature, a discussion of sport as a heterotopia is underdeveloped. However, certain heterotopic elements have been identified in sport. Carrington (1998, p. 276) states black athletes use cricket to contest racism. Similarly, Gill (2007, p. 417) argues women use rugby to resist gender norms by redefining their femininity. Like heterotopias, sports are sites of resistance (Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003).

It is this capacity of sport in resisting identity and gender that I consider. In this chapter, I argue the dojo constitutes a heterotopia of deviation, a space outside of normative social structures. Here, judoka use judo rituals to embody marginalised gender discourses whilst subverting hegemonic gender discourses. However, recognising that rituals are performed in diverse, contested ways, I argue although heterotopias provide a site to resist hegemonic gender discourses, the dojo is also a context where judoka simultaneously reaffirm these discourses through ritual. As a liminal space, hegemonic and marginalised discourses are in constant conflict with one another when embodied by judoka and it is due to this conflict that some judoka experience identity dissonance whilst in heterotopic spaces.
5.1 The sanctuary of sport

Sports including judo offer an escape from the normative responsibilities that underpin our daily lives (Segrave, 2000, p. 61). In a surprisingly consistent response, all the judoka I interviewed likened the dojo to a sanctuary where they could distance themselves temporarily from the drudgery of their daily routines:

Natasha: When I do judo I just wipe out my mind any other things that are bothering me and I feel much better. It’s like zen, because at least for two hours or something I can just forget about everything.

Interview – 29/6/10

Mitchell: If you have any difficult things going on in your life, judo allows you to forget about it for a couple of hours. I’ve been unemployed for the last little while and judo’s been really good in this. It’s this constant thing you can always come back to. It’s like the outside world is suspended when you’re there and the only thing that matters is going on within those four walls.

Interview – 10/6/10

What emerges in these statements is that the dojo exists outside normative spatial and temporal boundaries. The dojo is a heterotopic space where the norms, values and identities of individuals are temporarily challenged and suspended (John, 2001, p. 51). Whether it is Mitchell’s concerns over his unemployment or the personal troubles that burden Natasha, the dojo offers a brief respite where judoka can escape the baggage associated with their lives.

Ritualistically occupying heterotopias has positive effects. For Natasha, judo is meditative and therapeutic and Mitchell finds the certainty of judo rewarding and reassuring.
As a symbolic refuge where the confines of society become less salient, the *dojo* can be conceptualised as a heterotopia of deviation, a free space where individuals can behave in a way that is incongruent to societal norms (Foucault, 1986, p. 25).

### 5.2 Embodied resistance and the expression of marginalised femininities

As a reflection of this heterotopian nature of the *dojo*, I argue female *judoka* use judo rituals to embody marginalised femininities and hence resist hegemonic gender standards. To determine the nature of these gender standards, I asked female *judoka* to describe how they thought women should act. In response, female *judoka* had definite descriptions of femininity:

*Safiah:* Despite the feminist movement and all that, femininity is still a submissive kind of thing compared to masculinity.

*David:* How is it submissive?

*Safiah:* Say for example, it’s only accepted that men hold the door for ladies and things like that. Like, that’s decency as well. But, you know, it’s expected behaviour for men to kind of take care of women.

*David:* Okay, what about in terms of appearance?

*Safiah:* Well, women are generally expected to be more kempt, I mean you can see that around campus. Guys wear t-shirts, shorts and thongs and I dunno. Although there are girls who just wear singlets, shorts and thongs as well, um, they still look more kempt? Like I don’t think girls can get away with wearing, you know, shorts with a hole in them but guys can. So they are definitely made to look um, more prepped up and kempt and refined I think.

Interview – 4/6/10
Ada: I think people think women should be feminine. Like really girlish. Women should behave a bit passively I think, or accept man’s... how to say... suggestion. We have to support men. Cos like recently of course, women go to higher education and really good companies. But once they get married, like half of women, they may just quit their job to follow their husband. They sort of sacrifice their life for men and they don’t mind actually because they kind of think that’s their role.

Interview – 29/6/10

By describing women as “passive”, “submissive” and “kempt”, these judokas’ understanding of femininity resonate with ideal femininity. They recognise being feminine means embodying characteristics such as submissiveness, ornamentality and being accommodating to masculinity (Cheng, 2008, p. 296). While notions of ideal femininity are common in the dojo, female judoka choose not to adhere to these gender standards and actively resist it. For many female judoka, judo training is a liberating experience that allows them to resist ideal femininity through the embodiment of marginalised femininities.

Physically, judo allows female judoka to transcend embodied notions of ornamentality associated with ideal femininity:

Ying: You don’t need to care about what you look like in judo, no one judges and no one cares. You could be a freaking supermodel and you’d probably still be treated the same way as a high school geek.

Interview – 10/5/10

This statement suggests judo provides female judoka with a context where gender boundaries are less salient. In the dojo, women are not expected to be “kempt” and one’s appearance is
of little importance to how they are treated. Consequently, most female judoka are not overly concerned with how they are perceived at training and this is reflected by way they present themselves:

*Generally, women don’t worry about their appearance in the dojo. They are not wearing jewellery or makeup and have their hair tied back in a simple and neat fashion. Safiah commented that in judo, women don’t need to worry about their physical appearance. It was perfectly acceptable to look plain and be sweaty and dishevelled in the dojo.*

Field notes – 19/5/10

This behaviour is a far cry from the image-consciousness that female judoka identified in their original descriptions of femininity. Safiah stressed women were expected to devote more time and effort to their self-presentation and that women “couldn’t get away with” not caring about their appearance. This implies women are judged more than men on appearances (Saguy, 2002, p. 551) and that women who do not put effort into their self-image are stigmatised. By not worrying about their appearance, female judoka embody an alternate femininity in which it is acceptable not to emphasise one’s gender through acts of physical adornment. By interacting with ritual, female judoka express embodied resistance against ideal femininity which frames women as passive, ornamental beings.

In fact, female bodies are largely de-objectified in the dojo. In what is a novel ritual behaviour, women now routinely change together with male judoka. Traditionally, men change upstairs freely in the dojo in full view of the entire class whilst women change downstairs in the bathroom, behind closed doors and out of sight. This demarcation between sexes ritually reinforces hegemonic gender discourses, suggesting that the male body is free, natural and visible whilst the female body is hidden from the public gaze:
David: What about the fact that the men can change upstairs?

Natasha: It’s just society. On the beach for example, guys just wear shorts and it’s naked on the top. In fact, in the judogi, women have to wear a t-shirt and guys don’t. I’m sure even if it’s not on the rulebook, most girls would wear a t-shirt anyway. That’s the way we were raised. That women shouldn’t show too much of their bodies as much as the boys.

Interview – 29/6/10

Natasha’s statement echoes Najmabadi’s (1993, p. 487) argument that the female body is a veiled entity absent from the public sphere. By changing upstairs, female judoka ritualistically redefine the meaning and status of their bodies. In Safiah’s words, women are “starting a revolution” in the dojo and challenging traditional gender boundaries by demonstrating that the female body is as embodied, free and natural as the male body.

As noted above, ideal femininity equates womanliness with disembodiment, passivity and ornamentality (Gill, 2007, p. 421). This is especially true in the context of female sports participation. Though female athletes are increasingly visible, sport is still a masculine space designed largely by and for male participation and gratification (Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 500). This gendering of sport marginalises female athletes, barring them from mainstream success and acceptance (Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 501). Unsurprisingly, where women have found such success and acceptance are in sports such as figure skating which are seen to embody ideally feminine qualities such as grace, suppleness, and the sexual aestheticism of the female body (Grindstaff & West, 2006, p. 501). Therefore sports are dominated by men and masculine discourses (Hartmann, 2003, p. 16).

When women play judo, they defy the gendered limitations of their bodies (Joseph, 2005, p. 32) and the marginalisation of female athletes. Compared to women in “feminine”
sports, female *judoka* are not valued for their aesthetic, performative bodies nor are they expected to soften their physical signifiers of strength and athleticism. Instead, female *judoka* are celebrated chiefly for their embodied, active bodies and their skill, aggression, strength and athleticism – qualities usually associated with masculinity (Lilleaas, 2007):

*Tonight, June, a female brown belt, played against Leo in randori. As the match went on, a small group gathered to watch their bout. At one point, Leo turned in for a hip throw. Anticipating the attack, June countered Leo, depositing him firmly on his back. Immediately after, there was a thunderous applause for June.*

Field notes – 17/5/10

While it may serve to denigrate the defeated men, such behaviour is still significant considering the aggressive and violent nature of judo. “Women who behave in a violent or physically aggressive manner are among the most stigmatised groups of society” (Gill, 2007, p. 16). However, it is by ritualistically embodying these mannerisms through judo rituals such as *randori* that women gain recognition as *judoka*:

*Grylls:* It’s [judo] much more egalitarian. We used to have matches in the old days between men and women and the women used to do very well. But about five years ago, one of the women beat one of the guys and a guy stood up and said it was wrong because a guy would be embarrassed, it shouldn’t happen. But he was cut down very strongly for having that opinion by the other men.

Interview – 4/8/10

By describing the success of female athletes as “wrong”, the male *judoka* described by Grylls is activating ideologies of hegemonic masculinity and ideal femininity. For this
judoka, inter-gender sports competition is unnatural, particularly if a woman prevails over a man. By being reprimanded by the wider ritual constituency, this illustrates the heterotopic nature of the dojo. The potentially dominant position of female judoka is not seen as a threat in the dojo; it is recognised and looked upon positively. This is in contrast to mainstream sports where successful female athletes in traditionally masculine sports such as rugby are labelled as abnormal, social deviants (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar & Kauer, 2004, p. 316). Clearly the gender values of the dojo are incompatible with hegemonic gender values.

As ideal femininity accommodates the needs of hegemonically masculine men, judo rituals such as randori where judoka of either sex play each other empowers women by liberating them from the discursive forces of hegemonic masculinity and ideal femininity:

**Grylls:** Sometimes we got women who were feeling inadequate, who didn’t have that strength but wanted to gain some self confidence. So we often had a full class of women who felt really inadequate physically and other things, who after ten to fifteen weeks of judo came out the other end as different people. We had a couple of girls who had been raped and couldn’t look at anybody and after a few months of judo would be fighting the guys.

**David:** What is it about judo that does that?

**Grylls:** Oh, it empowers them. It enables them to do something that they’ve never been able to do before. It’s the first time they’ve ever been allowed to do something like that. Maybe they’ve had fights like this with other people but they’ve probably been told to like act like a lady. But now they have the chance to do it. It really releases them. They love the opportunity to do that.

Interview – 4/8/10
In particular, Safiah, a self professed tomboy, finds judo immensely enabling as it allows her to freely enact an alternate femininity:

*Safiah:* Well, I don’t think I fit [in with ideal femininity] and that’s alright by me. Um, yeah I was brought up with boys and I’ve always had more guy friends than, um, girlfriends. So, that’s fine by me.

*David:* Is that one of the reasons you chose to do judo?

*Safiah:* I think so, because I didn’t like dance. I think, you know, just cos I’m a girl doesn’t mean I have to do dance and just because I’m a girl doesn’t mean I can’t kick ass.

*David:* Does judo enable your personality in a way?

*Safiah:* Yeah, like it’s the whole idea that I didn’t have to look pretty when I do it, you know? It sits very well with me.

Interview – 4/6/10

Through judo, women ritualistically activate, unsilence and de-objectify their bodies. Therefore the *dojo* is a heterotopia of deviation where women redefine their relationship to violence, sport and their own bodies by embodying a mode of physicality they are normally denied. In doing so, female *judoka* are challenging hegemonic gender discourses by embodying alternate femininities. This embodied resistance however is not unrestricted.

5.3 “Act like a lady” – identity dissonance in the *dojo*

Whilst heterotopias provide safe spaces where marginalised gender identities may be embodied, they are not entirely detached from hegemonic discourses and their influences are always present to an extent. This is because our identities are embedded in these discourses and there is an “impetus to re/produce particular discourses while resisting alternatives”
(Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 128). Even in the *dojo, judoka* find it difficult to resist hegemonic discourses as they are vital to their identities. As such, *judoka* simultaneously subvert and reproduce hegemonic discourses (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 129). Natasha has noticed such conflicted behaviour in several female *judoka*:

> **Natasha**: Some girls feel like they have to be feminine. If they talk to you they will be like “hey” *pats me on shoulder coyly,* you know, always playing. I approach boys with judo topics. But few girls talk about judo; they talk about more social stuff. For me, that’s the behaviour that they’re not neutral. I’m not saying be masculine, but come on this is sports.

*Interview – 29/6/10*

By not being “neutral” or unfeminine, female *judoka* cling to their femininity. Based on my observations, some female *judoka* ritualistically emphasise their femininity in the *dojo*:

> **Ying’s pre-judo ritual is extensive.** Before class, Ying applies perfume and facial cosmetics. She also tailored her judogi so it would fit and look better. Furthermore, in contrast to girls such as Safiah who have their hair tied neatly back, Ying wears her hair in more elaborate, if impractical styles.

*Field notes – 2/6/10*

While Ying states the *dojo* is a space where appearances do not matter; she goes to considerable efforts to make her femininity visible. By adorning herself before training, Ying reinforces ideologies of ideal femininity which frame women as ornamental beings. Accordingly, while women recognise the *dojo* as a heterotopia, some choose not use its space in this capacity.

Amongst female *judoka*, judo is considered to masculinise the female body. Whereas female *judoka* such as Natasha enjoy embodying a marginalised femininity, such behaviour
does render their femininity ambiguous. In particular, several female judoka commented they felt more muscular, masculine and therefore less feminine due to judo. Rituals have profound effects on the physical and social states of judoka:

**David:** Does practicing judo make you feel more masculine?

**Natasha:** Physically, I’m getting bigger, laughter, so yes. Actually, I had a few situations that I was mistaken in the toilet. I was very upset because you know, come on, I’m in the toilet! They would come in, open the door and stop, go and outside check the sign and come in again. A few times the ladies said, “this is the lady’s” and I was like “I know!”

Interview – 29/6/10

This gender ambiguity is problematic, particularly in western societies where determining one’s gender through visual cues is critical (Brace-Govan, 2002, p. 405). Read correctly or not, the body is the target of “social interpretation and often judgment” (Brace-Govan, 2002, p. 405) and the differences between male and female bodies are imbued with social meanings. As such, similar characteristics have different implications when embodied by different sexes (Brace-Govan, 2004, p. 518). While men with muscular frames are seen to embody ideal representations of masculinity, women with similar characteristics are ostracised. In response to the masculinising effect of judo, some female judoka present exaggerated feminine identities to counteract their gender ambiguity:

**Natasha:** Some girls come with their clothes upstairs and then go downstairs to get changed. My question is why? Maybe she wanted to show that the usual her is the feminine her and then get changed to into the judogi.

Interview – 29/6/10
By displaying their feminine identities to the *dojo*, some female *judoka* find it important to make their femininity known. While the *dojo* is a heterotopic space, an individual’s identity is embedded within hegemonic discourses. As these discourses are vital to our identities, individuals feel dissonance when they depart from them. Such behaviour was displayed by *Zara*, a female yellow belt:

*When asked about her opinions on randori, Zara stated that she “loved it” and that she liked how she could be aggressive and physically engaged.*

Field notes – 5/5/10

However:

*Whenever Zara threw me she would apologise, seem uneasy and help me up. She often asked me if I was okay, despite the fact I repeatedly insisted I was fine and was used to being thrown.*

Field notes – 5/5/10

These field notes present an inconsistent account. *Zara* states she enjoys *randori* and being physically embodied. However, her behaviour suggests she is also uncomfortable with such a position. This illustrates the dissonance *judoka* experience whilst occupying heterotopic spaces. While *Zara* enjoys embodying a marginalised femininity, as someone who describes herself as having a “conservative upbringing”, she finds it difficult to resist the foundational discourses that she has known her entire life – that of ideal femininity which characterises women as passive, disembodied and nurturing (Hartmann, 2003, p. 16). In this specific situation; *Zara* was no longer disembodied or passive and had physical control over my body.
Accordingly, this inversion of ideal femininity could have caused Zara to experience identity dissonance.

Similar dissonant behaviour was observed when male and female judoka change together. Women perform this ritual to resist gender discourses that characterise the female body as ornamental and private. However, though female judoka are deactivating these discourses, they still experience dissonance by doing so:

*After class, the men were changing upstairs as usual. Safiah started to get changed upstairs as well. She then asked Natasha whether she was planning on getting changed upstairs. Natasha looked surprised and asked Safiah, “are you sure?” Eventually, after asking the men if they minded, Natasha relented, saying she “just wanted to be fair to the guys”.*

Field notes – 24/6/10

While female judoka contest hegemonic gender discourses by changing upstairs, they still ask male judoka permission to do so. Therefore not only are female judoka implying what they are doing is deviant, they are also reframing the dojo as a space that privileges men and male bodies. This behaviour reactivates hegemonic gender ideologies that characterise the female body as an intrinsically private entity. Indeed, some women have an even harsher reaction to this ritual:

*After training, I told Zara the girls now changed upstairs with the men. Zara was genuinely shocked, stating that “you’ll never see me change upstairs”.*

Field notes – 24/6/10

Some female judoka cannot depart from the discursive forces that underpin their identities. This is the case for Zara who refuses to change upstairs even though most of her
female peers have begun to do so. This dissonance is compounded by the stereotype attached to female judoka:

David: How did your peers react when they found out you do judo?

Safiah: It surprises them. I mean, I have a friend and she so was surprised because I was quote “such a nice girl”.

David: What do you think she meant when she said “you’re such a nice girl”.

Safiah: I think people assume we’re [female judoka] really tough, rough people who like to chuck people around.

David: Have you ever tried to get your peers to join judo?

Safiah: Yeah… but they are usually not so, um welcoming of the idea, laughter. I tried to recruit a lot of girls and most of the time they’re really squeamish about it. They say something like “I’d rather just take up a sport like Badminton”… they don’t want to get right into it you know, down and dirty, like a sport with high body contact.

Interview – 2/6/10

Female judoka are constantly reminded of their abnormality within the context of femininity (Saguy, 2002, p. 551). “Nice girls” do not get “down and dirty”. They are not violent, rough or tough and they do not participate in confrontational, physical combat sports such as judo. While judo allows women to embody marginalised femininities in a relatively safe context, the naturalness of this gender identity is repeatedly undermined by hegemonic discourses. As subjects gazed upon by a “phallocentric culture” (Brace-Govan, 2002, p. 414), though female judoka attempt to defy social norms, they are ultimately bound by ideal femininity and thus reproduce hegemonically gendered ideologies. This reproduction of ideal
femininity is problematic for female judoka who aspire to be serious players as they feel this femininity prevents them from being acknowledged as legitimate judoka:

_Natasha_: For someone that don’t know me, they think “okay she’s a girl, she’s a white belt”. They don’t take me seriously. It really makes me frustrated.

Interview – 29/6/10

For Natasha, femininity is a stigma, powerful, “deeply discrediting” (Goffman, p. 3, 1963) social labels with negative implications for the individuals to whom they are applied. Stigmatised individuals are “subject to a range of penalizing behaviours, from shunning and avoidance to restraint and physical abuse” (Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips, Benoit & Walby, 2008, p. 120) or for female judoka, marginalisation. For Natasha and Ada, female judoka perpetuate this stigma through their behaviour in the dojo during the women’s only classes:

_Natasha_: In the girl’s judo there is too much chat, too much waste of time, and um, and the girls have no respect to the sensei… a lack of discipline.

Interview – 29/6/10

_Ada_: Mmm, the women’s class... a bit less serious. Like, it’s not self discipline thing. In the advanced class, I’m doing this for my self-discipline. But for women’s class I’m just doing this just for fun.

Interview – 22/6/10

Female judoka are seen as undisciplined and uncommitted. There is an idea amongst judoka that the women’s classes are social events rather than training sessions and as such, women who attend these classes are more interested in the social and affective benefits of training rather than training itself (Hartmann, 2003, p. 17). Furthermore, some female judoka
adopt traditionally feminine roles in the *dojo*. On two occasions, *Ying* and *Amy* took it upon themselves to bring food to *judoka* after training and at competitions some female *judoka* regularly appoint themselves as the *dojo’s* “mascots”. This behaviour reinforces the supportive qualities seen intrinsic in femininity. Accordingly, male *judoka* treat female *judoka* in kind:

*Female judoka are treated first and foremost as women. Rather than being slapped on the back and having their hands shaken, women are hugged, patted on the head and treated with care.*

Field notes – 17/6/10

Distinct to Gill’s (Gill & Maclean, 2002, at 2.8) field experiences in Bordertown in which she was treated not as a woman but as “one of the boys” due to her participation in rugby, as a result of their feminine behaviour, the feminine identities of women are emphasised in the *dojo* despite their participation in a violent, contact sport. According to *Natasha*, such behaviour prevents one from being recognised as serious *judoka*:

*Natasha*: The reason I stopped going to the girl’s judo is because the girls were not playing one hundred percent. So it’s like a waste of time. So I don’t go because I don’t want the boys to think, you know, “oh she’s just a girl”. I hate to be treated that way.

Interview – 29/6/10

Though *Ada* and *Natasha* appreciate the importance of the women’s class in providing a welcoming space for women, both have stopped their attendance. Therefore the *dojo* is a contested territory where different ritual performers utilise rituals to compete for different interests. By boycotting the women’s class, *Natasha* and *Ada* ritualistically distance
themselves from the stigma attached to female judoka. Femininity then is seen by some female judoka as a persistent burden in need of disguising. Natasha stresses this, stating that for women to succeed as judoka, it necessary that they deemphasise their femininity:

Natasha: If they [other female judoka] put their femininity aside they would be much better judoka. You can’t do judo you know, keeping this femininity.

Interview – 29/6/10

As they feel femininity is precisely what puts their legitimacy at risk, Ada and Natasha ritualistically mask their gender before every class in the hopes they will be treated not as women, but as judoka.

Ada: Personally, I really don’t like putting the makeup or nails stuff at judo training. The guys may think “oh that’s why I don’t like women judo players”. I don’t want to make that sort of reputation for judo women. Yeah, so I try to be equal in physical appearance.

Interview – 22/6/10

Unlike other female judoka who may simply feel less obligated to care about their appearances, Natasha and Ada perform ritual specifically to contest their femininity and the stigma attached to it. Thus Natasha and Ada also experience identity dissonance as while they seek to fully embody their marginalised femininities, they cannot escape the labels of ideal femininity.

Two significant points emerge from the ritual behaviour of female judoka. As reflected in the different ways female judoka approach and understand the representation and status of their femininity in the dojo through ritual, rituals have multiple and potentially antagonistic meanings and purposes. Secondly, as demonstrated by the dissonance female
judoka experience by embodying marginalised and hegemonic discourses in judo, rituals have significant affects on the social and personal conditions of ritual performers.

5.4 Judo and marginalised masculinities

Male judoka also utilise the dojo as a heterotopia to embody marginalised masculinities. A key trait of hegemonically masculine men is the potency of the male body (Gough, 2007, p. 327). As hegemonic masculinity positions men as being physically embodied, compared to female bodies which are disembodied, male bodies are seen to take up more space and are predicated on physical power and presence (Gill, 2007, p. 418). Unsurprisingly, society demands male bodies be muscular, powerful and athletic and male judoka are aware of these standards (Lilleaas, 2007, p. 42):

**Mitchell:** Yeah well masculinity... the first thing you think of is some guy who’s come out of the beach, probably in Speedos, with rippling muscles and he’s in all perfectly proportion and all that.

Interview – 10/6/10

Comparatively, although more men are taking care in what and how much they eat, dieting is still considered a feminine act as it causes men to become disembodied and therefore more feminine as such practices reduce the physical mass and presence of the male body. As such, there is a presumption that “real men don’t diet” (Gough, 2007, p. 334). It is interesting then that weight cutting is a prominent ritual amongst male judoka:

*We are at the pub tonight, a few days away from the first major competition of the year. The atmosphere is strangely sullen, probably because everyone is hungry. Many competition players are watching their weight. In place of the standard order of chips, steak and beer, everyone is eating salad and drinking*
It is a bit depressing. Tomasco is taking things to a new extreme. All he’s having for dinner is some water in the hopes that if he starves himself, he’ll make weight for Sunday.

Field notes – 8/7/10

Weight cutting involves the restriction of one’s caloric intake and self-dehydration to lose weight for competition. A willingness to cut weight is a source of pride amongst male judoka and many treat the weight they have lost as symbols of their dedication:

During weigh-ins, the male judoka shared their weight cutting stories with each other. Bearing a large grin, Geoffrey boasted he had “dropped four kilos yesterday”. In an attempt to outdo Geoffrey, Tomasco stated he had not “drunken or eaten in over two days”.

Field notes – 11/7/10

Therefore weight cutting is not seen by male judoka as a feminine act detrimental to one’s masculinity. Rather, it affirms one’s masculinity and commitment as a judoka:

After class, I asked Choi how he felt about weight cutting. He said the disciplining and policing of the body was a very masculine act and he was proud of the effort he took to maintain his weight for judo.

Field notes – 5/6/10

By cutting weight, male judoka embody an alternate masculinity that integrates values normatively associated with femininity. Like women, men redefine their bodies through judo by challenging common ideas of what male bodies should or should not do (Chow, 2008, p. 341). Significantly, male judoka imbue weight cutting with alternate values. All male judoka
stated they cut weight for competition, not for any health or cosmetic reasons. Rather, in sports with weight divisions, weight cutting to compete in a division below an athlete’s natural weight class is seen by judoka as a competitive advantage.

By associating weight cutting with competition, an integral facet of hegemonic masculinity (Caldwell, 1972, p. 180), male judoka are masculinising their ritual behaviour. This masculinisation is illustrated by the way male judoka lose weight days before competition through temporary dehydration and starvation, rather than over prolonged periods of time. Weight lost this way is temporary and no visible effect is made on the body. This allows male judoka to diet whilst preserving the physical presence of their bodies and their masculinity. Even though they practise a “feminine” ritual, male judoka reframe their behaviour so it appears hegemonically masculine. Thus these judoka could be enacting complicit masculinities as while they are not hegemonically masculine, they still support hegemonically masculine ideals (Gough, 2007, p. 335)

5.5 Hegemonic masculinity and identity dissonance in male judoka

This behaviour suggests male judoka also experience an embodied dissonance between marginalised and hegemonic discourses. But as judo and the dojo are considered masculine spaces, they experience this dissonance to a lesser extent:

Royce: I think in Australia it’s [judo] like a rough, masculine, wrestling sport.

Interview – 2/6/10

Due to this gendering of judo, male judoka do not feel they are undermining their masculinity through judo. In fact, practicing judo rituals such as randori appears to have the opposite effect. Royce feels his identity as a judoka makes him appear more hegemonically masculine
to his male peers as such an identity is connected to the qualities of competiveness, violence and athletic superiority (Hartmann, 2003, p. 16):

*Royce:* They think it [judo] as fighting and they think “aw you’re a tough guy, you can win fights”. When men hear you’re a *judoka*, they’re threatened. Cos they know you have athletic superiority over them and they don’t like that.

Interview – 2/6/10

Conversely, *Mitchell* feels he has never met the physical standards of hegemonic masculinity:

*David:* So you don’t really conform to this idea of masculinity?

*Mitchell:* Um, well not really. Like, people remind me every so often that I’m pretty thin for a guy.

Interview – 10/6/10

Commenting on his smaller build, *Mitchell* recognises he embodies a physique considered inferior by hegemonic masculinity (Chow, 2008, p. 340). Importantly, *Mitchell* feels judo allows him to embody hegemonically masculine characteristics:

*Mitchell:* It makes me feel more masculine. It’s funny to say, but when I was grading with my partner, for some reason I was doing really good arm locks that day and his eyes were bulging out of his head and he was tapping really hard. I feel guilty for saying this but that’s the most masculine I’ve ever felt.

Interview – 10/6/10

Control is a defining feature of hegemonically masculine men (Duncan & Davis, 2006, p. 252). The control afforded to *Mitchell* through judo gave him the opportunity exercise complete dominance over his partner (Duncan & Davis, 2006, p. 254). By
physically imposing his will on a submissive “other”, the practise of judo ritualistically fortified Mitchell’s sense of hegemonic masculinity (Gill, 2007, p. 418). Therefore, judo rituals do not only promote marginalised values and identities. As dynamic processes with multiple meanings and functions, Mitchell’s experience illustrates judo rituals are used to reaffirm and internalise hegemonic discourses.

But despite the masculinising nature of judo, male judoka experience identity dissonance when facing female judoka in randori. Much to the frustration of female judoka who yearn to be treated equally, male judoka “go easy” on female judoka in training:

Tonight, Ying and Geoffrey were practicing throws. Geoffrey was going easy on Ying and he stopped her fall after each throw. Indignant at the way she was being treated, Ying yelled “stop letting me down so gently!”

Field notes – 1/7/10

When I asked men why they treated women lightly, they spoke of experiencing a conflict between what they felt they should do as judoka and what was the right thing to do as men:

Tomasco finds it necessary to go easy on female judoka as he has always been taught that men should look after women. Therefore even though Tomasco would like to, he has never been able to “go all out on girls in randori”.

Field notes – 7/6/10

As men are embedded within the foundational discourses of hegemonic masculinity, they are socialised to believe they have a duty to look after and protect women. By treating their female partners lightly in randori, male judoka are ritualistically activating gendered stereotypes which situate men as the guardians of subordinate and fragile women.
**David:** Do men go easier on women?

**Ada:** I think so. Cos they think we are sort of fragile.

Interview – 22/6/10

**Royce:** Yes, I think it’s a fear of hurting them. My personal experience is that I want to train properly with girls, but if I hurt them then that’s bad.

Interview – 2/6/10

The behaviour exhibited by male *judoka* toward female *judoka* is indicative of identity dissonance. *Judoka* such as Tomasco recognise women should be treated as equals in judo. As a heterotopic space where men and women train together, the *dojo* is an ideal context where gender boundaries can be broken down. Regardless, like female *judoka*, male *judoka* such as Tomasco cannot resist the effects of their socialisation and the hegemonic, foundational scripts that underpin their identities.

Therefore the behaviour of *judoka* in resisting and supporting marginalised and hegemonic discourses through judo indicates the dynamic, multifaceted and contested nature of ritual. Echoing the argument made by Mean and Kassing (2008, p. 128), as they are caught between two antagonistic discursive forces, the identities of *judoka* are simultaneously empowered and contained through judo rituals. Therefore, rituals have significant embodied effects on the personal and social states of ritual performers. This is indicated in the way *judoka* experience dissonance as a result of their embodied ritual participation. To escape this dissonance, some *judoka* use judo rituals to strengthen their identities as *judoka* and therefore their status within the *dojo*.
In this chapter I analyse the ritual behaviour of judoka using Turner’s (1969) theory of liminality. Liminality is an ambiguous state of identity in which individuals find themselves “betwixt and between” social states (Garsten, 1999, p. 603). Numerous groups have been identified as being liminal, including the erratic lives of temporary employees (Garsten, 1999. p. 602), the powerless status of young victims of domestic violence (Purkayastha, 2000, p. 201) and the indefinite life-courses embodied by adolescents (Merten, 2005, p. 133).

As liminality is often a distressing experience, liminal entities use rituals to transcend their liminal states and embody integrated identities within ritual constituencies. Identities are malleable, creative social projects that can be changed through ritual (Benzecry 2009 & Preves & Stephenson 2009). In an illustrative example, the adolescent girls studied by Merten (2005, p. 143) nullified their liminality by adopting behaviours associated with adulthood to negate their identities as children and to reaffirm their identities as adults.

In this chapter I argue judoka are also liminal beings. Judo incorporates a belt system to symbolise a judoka’s rank. Compared to experienced judoka who wear coloured belts, individuals who wear white belts are novices in judo who have just begun their training. Thrust into an alien social context and stripped of existing status and rights, novice judoka occupy undefined and illegitimate identities within the dojo.

Like Merten’s adolescent girls, judoka use judo rituals to negate their liminal identities whilst legitimating their identities as judoka within the dojo. Therefore, rituals are important processes that judoka use to mould their identities. I argue such behaviour further indicates rituals have significant embodied effects on the personal and social states of judoka (Firth, 1996). Let us now turn to the social states present in the dojo: the learners and the kyu grades.
6.1 “I’m just a white belt” – the learners as liminal entities

Disparagingly likened to learner drivers by a senior judoka as both require vigilant supervision, the learners are a social group in the dojo identified by the white belts they wear. When they first join the dojo, individuals undergo a process of social transition from their pre-liminal identities outside the dojo, to their new identities as learners in the dojo. This process socially and physically separates these individuals from the ritual constituency (Turner, 1969, p. 95). This separation was subjected to the learners in almost every class:

* A profound level of separation exists between the learners and the other judoka. Entering the dojo, the learners place their belongings in a pile near the exit of the dojo whilst the more experienced players are free to use the tables and cubby holes. Furthermore, when the class begins, the learners are removed from the rest of the judoka and taught separately.

Field notes – 2/6/10

By organising their belongings in this way, the learners are symbolically communicating their status as liminal beings who occupy the outskirts of the dojo's social hierarchy. Furthermore, as learners are removed from the other judoka to receive special instruction, this suggests they exist outside normative social structures. The instruction learners receive in this liminal space reprograms their bodies, teaching learners to embody new modes of physicality in which they must move themselves and others in novel, counter-intuitive ways:

*Safiah:* Judo is really counter-intuitive in the first few weeks. I mean the break falling is completely foreign.

Interview – 14/6/10
Therefore learners are tabula rasa; blank slates on which old preconceptions are eroded and new physical ways of being are inscribed:

**David:** Do you think you have to be a blank state in training?

**Safiah:** I think so. Someone who started Taekwondo did judo and his stance was all wrong. So I think it helps to keep a really open mind when you come.

_Interview – 14/6/10_

_Receiveing separate instruction, the learners went over bare basics: how to move, grip, and stand correctly. The learners had some difficulty picking these movements up. Perhaps this is why instructor was teaching them in such a paternalistic manner and speaking to them as if they were children. One judoka commented he was glad he didn’t have to do” all of that baby stuff”._

_Field notes – 10/6/10_

As reflected by this field note, the learners are treated paternalistically. While it may seem patronising, by knowing almost nothing about judo or the social norms of the dojo, the learners are like dependent children who require constant guidance and supervision. Therefore this process of separation not only removes liminal entities from the wider ritual constituency, it also subjects them to a sharp inversion in their life-course.

I argue learners are liminal beings during this phase of separation. Compared to their pre-liminal identities, the liminal identities of learners are undefined and vague. Much of this ambiguity is subjected to the learners by judoka who are already integrated within the dojo:

**Safiah:** I think that, you know, we just see white belts as a group.

_Interview – 14/6/10_
David: Are new judoka invisible to an extent?

Mitchell: Yeah, when you first start people aren’t sure whether you’re going to stick around or not or how serious your commitment to judo is. I imagine some people think you’re coming along to class because there’s nothing on TV or something so they might not take the trouble to get to know them.

Interview – 10/6/10

The learners are rendered invisible by other judoka as their commitment to the dojo is undetermined. After all, why become attached to a learner when it is uncertain whether they will return for a second class? This is the rationale adopted by some judoka. As they are seen as an amorphous mass, learners experience intense ambiguity over their identities in the dojo. By practicing judo, the learners no longer occupy their pre-liminal identities. Technically, they are now judoka. Simultaneously, the learners are not considered legitimate judoka. “Betwixt and between” (Merten, 2005, p. 135) two different social states, the learners are truly liminal beings, – neither who they once were nor the judoka they aspire to become.

Feelings of ambiguity associated with liminality also arise in the learners on an embodied level. As new judoka, the learners are thrust into a discontinuous physical and social environment where they are bombarded with novel social norms. Adding to this uncertainty, the learners are expected to embody alien modes of physicality. For this reason the learners are physically and socially alienated:

Mitchell: When I first started I was wondering if I was in the right place, laughter, because everybody seemed so fit and able to do all this cool stuff and I had no idea how to do any of it. To be honest I was terrified.

Interview – 10/6/10
As reflected by Mitchell’s time as a learner, liminality can be a distressing experience marked by violent social inversion and the blurring of definitions and boundaries. However, some learners actually enjoy being liminal:

At training, a senior judoka asked Ying when she was grading. Ying said she didn’t wish to grade as she enjoyed “being the baby of the club” and liked her “white belt better than her yellow belt”.

Field notes – 2/6/10

Describing herself as “content” with “being the baby of the club”, Ying illustrates that liminality is not a completely negative experience (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 272). Judoka may find being liminal more enjoyable than being integrated in the dojo. After all, while being integrated does negate the ambiguity associated with liminality, such a deeply embedded position also attracts greater responsibility. Reflecting this, several judoka stated that compared to when they were learners, they felt more pressure and were visible as kyu grades or graded players:

**David:** Do you think you’re expected to act differently as a kyu grade?

**Royce:** Yeah, I think you gain some responsibility.

**David:** Responsibility?

**Royce:** Well, you’re a higher grade… so some more respectful behaviour would be expected from a blue belt than from a white belt. People expect you to know everything. They’ll ask you questions about techniques so you have some responsibility to know what you’re saying or be honest that you don’t.

**David:** Does it make you more visible?

**Royce:** Completely, yeah. Everybody is watching.
**David:** Is there more pressure?

**Royce:** Well yeah, people watch and copy you. You can’t act like a clown.

Interview – 2/6/10

As *kyu grades* have a teaching responsibility, they are expected to possess a certain knowledge of and proficiency in judo. Furthermore, compared to *learners* who are invisible, as role models, the *kyu grades* are at the forefront of the *dojo*. Unsurprisingly, *learners* such as *Ying* may find such a position of responsibility to be stifling. Comparatively, liminality is potentially liberating for *judoka* as it offers a freer, less stringent existence in the *dojo*.

In addition to having greater freedom within the *dojo*, *judoka* also spoke fondly of the camaraderie they forged with other *learners* when they first started judo:

**Mitchell:** You bond strongly with the people you start with. Higher grades know this magical stuff whereas people your own grade know what you know. We’re all in the same boat, trying to get to the next belt or mastering the same techniques. We prepared for grading together so we bonded over that too. It’s funny, while some people feel more stronger or athletic, they don’t really treat you differently. They’re just as willing to talk to you as anybody else.

Interview – 10/6/10

By undergoing a mutual liminal experience, the *learners* are in a state of *communitas* characterised by an intense solidarity amongst liminal entities where personal and social distinctions dissolve (Mitchell, 2004, p. 60). Accordingly, liminality does produce positive effects (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 271), though most *learners* are eager to shed their liminal identities and integrate themselves further into the *dojo*. This brings us the next social state – the *kyu grades*. 

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6.2 Becoming a kyu grade – ritual identity negation

To transcend their liminality, learners perform rituals to negate their liminal identities and further integrate themselves within the dojo as kyu grades. The kyu grades represent individuals who have integrated their identities as judoka within the dojo. While kyu grades are similar to learners in that both have limited experience as judoka, two fundamental differences distinguish these groups. Firstly, kyu grades have completed a grading examination and wear coloured belts rather than white belts. When asked about the kyu grades, judoka stressed the kyu grades were considered “real” judoka. Accordingly, grading is an important ritual that allows learners to negate their liminality:

*Mitchell:* Like I said, when I first started people weren’t sure how serious you were about judo. So I guess when you’ve gone to the hard work of getting a belt, people know you’re really serious as a judoka.

*David:* Did you feel different after your yellow belt?

*Safiah:* Yeah I feel like I’m committed, you know, like I’m part of the kyu grades. It definitely is a distinguishing line. It’s a rite of passage. I think once you’ve gotten your grade and you are committed then you kind of embrace the sport as your own. It’s not just something you visit once in awhile. You’re more than a visitor, um, you’re a contributor.

*Interview – 4/6/10*

The learners are not considered legitimate judoka as their dedication to judo remains unproven. Grading then is an important ritual that learners use to legitimate their identities. Grading communicates to the rest of the dojo that learners are committed judoka who will
“stick around” by ritualistically transforming their identities from those who merely visit the *dojo* and thus are illegitimate, into those who contribute to the *dojo* and thus have proven their legitimacy.

Secondly, in contrast to *learners* who are stripped of existing rights and rank due to their liminality, *kyu grades* who have obtained their orange belts have earned the right to compete in judo tournaments. Like grading, competing is used by *judoka* to ritualistically integrate their identities in the *dojo*. For many *judoka*, competing for the first time marked a turning point in their judo experience:

*The turning point for Tomasco was when he competed for the first time. Instantly, he felt more visible and recognised in the dojo. He even said I approached him for the first time, shook his hand and said good job!*  

Field notes – 7/6/10

Competition ritualistically proves one’s worth to the *dojo* and legitimates their status as *judoka*. Distinct to grading which legitimises the status of *learners* within the *dojo*, competition allows *judoka* to achieve this legitimacy publically:

*Mitchell:* You feel like there’s this part of judo you haven’t seen yet that seems very important because we often hear about competitions and where people placed. It’s where you get your public identity in judo.

Interview – 10/6/10

*Safiah:* Yeah, competition is where you get your reputation I guess.

Interview – 4/6/10
By competing, a judoka attains their public identity. Prior to their first competition, a judoka’s identity is embedded within the context of the dojo. As such, their status as judoka is private. Through competition, judoka communicate their status as judoka to the wider ritual constituency. As said by Safiah, they are creating a reputation for themselves in the world of judo. However, grading and competition are not the only ways judoka ritually negate their liminal identities. In the dojo, illegitimate judoka also actively shape their identities through ritual in an attempt to be perceived as legitimate judoka.

6.3 Playing the part

As legitimate judoka are seen to possess specific characteristics, illegitimate judoka become less liminal by acting out and embodying these qualities. The judoka I interviewed had consistent ideas about what these qualities were:

David: So judoka need to reach a balance between morality, skill and strength?

Ada: Ideally, yeah. Show respect, not injure others, come to training a lot.

Interview – 22/6/10

Kendall: Basically, in the dojo, technical proficiency and skill come second to one’s attitude and spirit. It doesn’t matter how good you are. If you’re a dick, none of that even matters.

Interview – 3/8/10

There is a consensus that legitimate judoka are those who have developed morally due to judo. They are judoka who have good attitudes towards themselves, training and especially others in the dojo. This is unsurprising considering the common, if unproven relationship between sport and socialisation. Playing sport is believed to foster qualities found in well-
adjusted individuals such as confidence, self-esteem and discipline (Kremer-Sadlik & Kim, 2007, p. 36). This is a belief shared by Jigoro Kano who created judo to be an agent of socialisation. As gentility and civility are essential facets of *budo* (Young, 2009, p. 207), character development is crucial in determining whether one is seen as a legitimate *judoka*:

*David:* Do you think building discipline and moral character is an important part of being a judo player?

*Natasha:* Definitely, not just judo, but anything, everything that you do.

Interview – 29/6/10

*Learners* who aspire to be recognised as legitimate *judoka* act out and embody these qualities through judo. By doing so, they are suggesting that they have undergone moral and personal development. Therefore *judoka* are social actors undertaking impression management strategies (Goffman, 1959) designed to present and maintain a favourable self image to a particular audience (Preves & Stephenson, 2009, p. 246). In this case, one’s legitimacy as a *judoka* is gained through the projection of a respectful, considerate and perseverant self image in the *dojo* (Dryburgh, 1999, p. 666).

*David:* Did you change your personality when you first started training?

*Mitchell:* Yeah, when I first started; I would yelp a lot and complain about things. I was maybe a bit whiney and I would avoid doing things that were difficult. I wasn’t taken seriously.

*David:* So it was looked down upon?

*Mitchell:* Yeah, I mean no one says anything, but you realise that no one’s doing that and maybe they’re making a comment by not making a comment.

Interview – 10/6/10
As Mitchell was afraid he was not being taken seriously as a judoka, he changed his personality and his approach to judo. Demonstrating a clear need to project and maintain a desired self-image, Mitchell trained with a new-found enthusiasm and commitment. The dojo is therefore a front stage region as it is the venue where Mitchell’s role performance was fully enacted (Preves & Stephenson, 2009, p. 246). Mitchell’s performance was looked upon favourably in the dojo:

After training, the sensei called the judoka together and reminded them of the importance of judo spirit and hard work. To demonstrate these values, he used Mitchell as example. The instructor said when Mitchell first started judo he was “scared” and avoided from the difficult aspects of training. But now, the sensei had recognised that Mark had changed his attitude.

Field notes – 23/6/10

By embracing all aspects of training, Mitchell disassociated himself from his liminal identity. In being commended for his efforts and by being presented as a favourable example in a communal setting, Mitchell gained the respect and recognition he sought from his peers, thereby legitimating his judo identity. In other words, the audience had accepted the “evidentness” (Goffman, 1963, p. 48) of Mitchell’s impression management. Therefore, liminal judoka integrate their identities in the dojo by ritualistically embodying qualities identified in legitimate judoka through judo. As such, the liminal experiences of judoka in ritualistically navigating different identities in the dojo suggest rituals have profound effects on ritual performers. Accordingly, rituals are personal, embodied processes that both affect and are affected by human performance.
7 CONCLUSION

The diverse and disputed ways judoka perform rituals unsettle existing assumptions on the nature of ritual behaviour. Rituals are more than static, uniform and uncontested social processes that straightforwardly reproduce social cohesion. Rather, these results indicate rituals are performed by different groups and individuals in different ways and purposes. Clearly, the ritual involvement of judoka varied widely in the dojo.

This variability is emphasised in three ways. First, the purpose and meaning of judo rituals change according to different contexts. Judo rituals such as kata became deactivated and less salient for judoka in the context of contemporary judo. Judo in Australia is a professional sport that values competitiveness, effectiveness and practicality. As kata does not resonate with these values, most judoka had negative opinions of kata and had no desire to practise it. This echoes Venbrux, Peelen & Altena’s (2009) argument that rituals fall in or out of use depending on the extent they reflect the normative values of ritual constituencies.

As well as responding to contextual cues, judo rituals were found to be responsive to the personal characteristics, needs and human agency of judoka. Judoka of different cultures interpreted and practised rituals such as bowing differently. Australian judoka recognise bowing as ritualistic expressions of mutual respect. Nonetheless, as members of a society where bowing is not customary, they experienced bowing as a culturally alien ritual. To make bowing more culturally relevant, Australian judoka incorporated a handshake after the bow. Conversely, as bowing is an integral part of Japanese society, Japanese judoka demonstrated a more complex and distinctly cultural connection to bowing. Interpreting bowing through the lenses of culture and religion, Ada stated bowing was important to her as it resonated with her belief in Shinto. Similarly, Natasha bowed to ritualistically embody and represent the
values of the Japanese nation. Such findings suggest rituals are adaptive, contextual social processes, and that more importantly, individuals have ritual agency.

Thirdly, it was found that rituals have diverse and potentially antagonistic meanings and functions for different judoka and that the performance of these rituals has significant embodied effects on their personal and social states. Demonstrating the heterotopic quality of the dojo, judoka used judo rituals to embody marginalised masculinities and femininities. Judo helped ritualistically liberate female judoka from the constraints of ideal femininity. By empowering, unveiling and de-objectifying their bodies through judo, female judoka enacted alternate femininities by being athletic, aggressive and physically embodied. Male judoka also used judo rituals to this effect. By practicing weight cutting, male judoka reinterpreted their relationship to their bodies by transgressing hegemonically masculine ideologies concerning what male bodies can and cannot do.

Highlighting the contested nature of rituals, judoka also utilised judo rituals to reinforce hegemonic discourses. Judo is seen as a masculine space and a by-product of judo training is an increase in muscul arity, athleticism and control. Practicing judo allows men to embody and bolster their hegemonic masculinity. By giving judoka violent identities and the opportunity to exercise dominance over other bodies, judo provides male judoka with social and physical power over other men. Conversely, women feel judo masculinises the female form. In response, some female judoka use rituals to reaffirm their feminine identities whilst negating the gender ambiguity and identity dissonance they experience during judo.

This may explain the low number of female judoka in Australia as the gendered framing of judo may dissuade female participation and retention. Women feel they are embodying the antithesis of femininity during judo and they experience significant dissonance as a result. Therefore an important implication of this thesis is that “traditionally
masculine” sports such as judo should create welcoming, safe spaces for female athletes. Whether it takes the form of a women’s only class as is the case in the dojo or a support group for female athletes, the onus is on sports clubs to increase female sports participation and retention in Australia.

In addition to expressing marginalised and hegemonic gender discourses, judo rituals are used to achieve social transition within the dojo. The rituals of grading, competing and impression management allow judoka to negate their liminal identities as learners and legitimate their identities as kyu grades. Therefore as well as being tools of resistance, judo rituals are used by judoka to transform their identities and social states. This demonstrates two significant elements of ritual behaviour – that ritual has varied meanings and forms and that ritual has embodied effects on the bodies of ritual performers.

Accordingly, I argue this thesis provides an impetus for more nuanced discussions of ritual. While it might seem obvious rituals are dynamic, personal processes with various meanings, forms and uses, some studies have overlooked this aspect of ritual behaviour. Despite the findings made in this thesis, further research is required. As rituals are influenced by multiple factors and have varied embodied effects on different ritual performers, more qualitative investigations are required to explore how different individuals in different contexts experience ritual. While this thesis illustrates how religion, gender and culture affect rituals, future research could investigate the influence of other factors. Do people of different ages, statuses, races, classes and relations experience ritual differently? Answers to such questions would contribute to existing discussions of ritual and improve sociological theory so that it is better prepared to explain the dynamic, multifaceted nature of modern ritual performance.
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APPENDIX 1: List of participants and their rank in judo in order of seniority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Rank at start of research</th>
<th>Rank at end of research</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>Zara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<td>Ying</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<td>Yellow</td>
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<td>Orange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colin</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Orange</td>
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<td>Juan</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin</td>
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<td>Orange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natasha</td>
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<td>Orange</td>
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<td>Leo</td>
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<td>Safiah</td>
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<td>Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Choi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grylls</td>
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