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Manners Maketh Man:

Male Honor in the Eighteenth-Century Popular Duel in Staats-Brabant:

A Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

The popular duel can be considered a lens into interpersonal violence in early modern Europe. This thesis employed a comparative perspective to understand the shift in the role of honor and the associated masculine aspects in eighteenth-century Staats-Brabant. By analyzing court documents found in the archives of the Raad van Brabant and including previous work that focused on the duel in metropolitan Amsterdam during the same period, this thesis aimed to differentiate the role of honor between Staats-Brabant and Amsterdam. This comparison revealed interesting differences - and similarities - between rural and urban regions within the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. It was concluded that reputation played a bigger role in Amsterdam and the ritualization of the popular duel was not evident in Staats-Brabant. However, the role of masculinity in relation to honor was prevalent in both regions – suggesting that, indeed, *manners maketh man*.

Introduction

One-on-one fights, known as duels, were a common means of settling arguments, and righting wrongs throughout history. Although such altercations are no longer an accepted form of problem-solving in social interactions nowadays, this sort of event is still seen in contemporary sports such as ice hockey.¹ For example, when players feel like they or a teammate have been wronged, they will challenge an opposing player to a fight. If the opposing player accepts, the “duel” will take place and the two players will fight each other. Afterward, the sporting event will resume normally, with the disagreement left “on the ice,” and the belligerents serving a penalty. Although fighting in sports has been declining due to concussion concerns,² these fights serve as one of the last examples of what remains of a society based on honor which has slowly faded over the course of history.

Similar attacks on one’s or somebody else’s honor could be righted in early modern Europe by means of the popular duel. A duel is formally defined as “a prearranged combat between two persons, fought with deadly weapons according to an accepted code of procedure, especially to settle a private quarrel”.³ The involvement of weapons such as knives meant that such disagreements tended to result in death or serious injury. While female duels have been recognized, the act of dueling was mainly carried out among men.⁴ This is not surprising as the very idea of being a man was (and for some people still is nowadays) closely tied to being able to physically defend oneself and one’s family. Robert Shoemaker describes the duel as a “delayed, semi-ritualized manner of settling disputes on equal terms,” adding that “the degree of delay and

¹ Kenneth Colburn Jr., “Honor, Ritual and Violence in Ice Hockey”, *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 10:2 (1985), 153-170.

² Jason Izraelski, “Concussions in the NHL: A Narrative Review of the Literature”, *The Journal of the Canadian Chiropractic Association* 58:4 (2014), 346-352.

³ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/duel> (consulted 20 December, 2022).

⁴ Mika LaVaque-Manty, “Masculine Honor and the Modern Politics of Dignity”, *Political Theory* 34:6 (2006), 715-740.

the formality of combat varied enormously.”⁵ Based on this description, it appears that duels took on many forms. In the present paper, knife fighting as a form of duel was chosen as a focus, and the two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

A duel might break out at a pub when someone spills your drink without apologizing, insults your family, or in extreme cases, does physical harm to you or someone else. In such cases, it was common to exchange words, usually more insults, and proceed outside where weapons would be pulled, and a duel would commence. Both parties could back out at any time conceding defeat, however, the natural conclusion of the duel usually was that one participant was too injured to continue - or dead.

To contemporaries, such a method of settling disagreements might seem futile, perhaps even barbaric. However, in a societal setting where honor was the measuring stick of a man’s worth, this was considered normal, perhaps even a necessity. The question of why honor was so important in these cultures has interested sociologists and historians alike for decades. Sociological studies have established some common elements which are present in *high honor* cultures (also termed *cultures of honor*). These cultures are commonly identifiable by poor social mobility, poverty, and a lack of legal protection and/or a police force to rely on.⁶ In these cultures, it is thus likely that a man would feel the need to protect himself and others by responding to all threats and insults – usually in a violent way. Although studies of the culture of honor mainly focus on the American South and urban areas, these guidelines can also be applied to much of early modern Europe to examine the role that honor played in society.

⁵ Robert Shoemaker, “Male Honor and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth Century London”, *Social History* 26:2 (2001), 195.

⁶ Ayse Uskul and Susan Cross, “Socio-Ecological Roots of Cultures of Honor”, *Current Opinion in Psychology* 32 (2020), 177-180.

The early modern period (late 15th to late 18th century) in Europe was marked by significant changes in many aspects of society. Characterized by revolution, reformation, and economic growth, this period also encompassed developments in how interpersonal disputes were settled. The historians Robert Shoemaker and Pieter Spierenburg both note a drastic decline in homicidal knife violence as the eighteenth century progresses in the major European metropolises of London⁷ and Amsterdam⁸. According to their works, there was a decline in the ritualized duel starting in 1720. They account this, in part, to a decline in the need to prove one's masculinity and honor. Belgian historian Dries Raeymaekers, however, describes duels that happened well into the nineteenth century in the southern Netherlands (nowadays Belgium), so it is difficult to establish a cutoff point for such a decline.⁹ I propose that rural areas in the southern regions of the Dutch Republic would have lagged behind these developments in urban areas, both in honor and decreasing knife violence over the course of the eighteenth century. This is an important niche in Dutch and European history, covering the intersection of violence and masculinity, as rural areas receive little to no attention when it comes to dueling. Additionally, there are not many historians who focus on the development of dueling from a comparative perspective, likely because dueling and knife fighting appear to be localized, conceptual, and difficult-to-study phenomena.

The aim of the present paper is to understand what role honor played in the popular duel during the eighteenth century in the rural Dutch province of Staats-Brabant. To achieve this, we

⁷ Robert Shoemaker, "Male Honor and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth Century London", *Social History* 26:2 (2001), 190-208.; Robert Shoemaker, "Taming the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800", *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002), 525-545.

⁸ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

⁹ Dries Raeymaekers, "Pour Fuyr le Nom de Vilayn et Meschant" *Het Duel in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden: Aspecten van Eer en Oneer in de Nieuwe Tijd*. (PhD Thesis for History, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2004).

must split the research into three parts, each discussed in its own chapter. The first part aims to establish an understanding of the legal and socio-economic context of dueling in Staats- Brabant. Then, crucially, the second part focuses on understanding how honor within the popular duel developed and changed over the course of the eighteenth century in Staats-Brabant. Finally, the last part of this research focuses on the similarities and differences between the development of honor related to the popular duel in the rural setting of Staats-Brabant and the more metropolitan setting of Amsterdam. This is an interesting comparison as it can indicate regional differences between rural and urban areas of the Dutch Republic. Given the differences in living situations, I expect to find differences in the relation of honor in duels as well as differences in the makeup of duels themselves. In the conclusion, a combination of all three points will serve to answer the research question of this paper: What role did honor play in cases of interpersonal violence and knife fighting in Staats-Brabant during the eighteenth century?

To understand the broader application of this research question and its importance, it is crucial to understand the key developments of popular duels and the role of violence, given the violent nature of settling disputes with weapons. Most of the modern historiography on violence originates from the German sociologist Norbert Elias' *civilizing process* theory¹⁰. This theory attributes a decline in violence to the increase of Western institutions, particularly the centralization of government power, which resulted in an increased feeling of "civilization" compared to earlier generations. Yet, the rise of interpersonal institutions such as dueling is also bound to have played a role, given they divert and control violence. Although integral to the history of violence, there are flaws in this theory which cause it to lose its relevance in more recent studies of violence, especially those based on qualitative research.

¹⁰ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners* (New York 1969).

Quantitative studies in the mid-twentieth century focused on proving this phenomenon through all-encompassing quantitative studies. A cornerstone study is Ted Robert Gurr's 1981 paper.¹¹ Gurr illustrates a decline in violence but recognizes that this was far from a constant trend. Gurr crucially distinguishes between different types of crime, for example differentiating violent and petty crimes. Although Gurr's final conclusions are "speculative and imprecise"¹² his data-driven work has set the foundation for future historians to build on.

Pieter Spierenburg mentions and emphasizes Norbert Elias's theory very frequently in his studies. Having trained academically in Amsterdam on the eve of the cultural turn, a lot of his work approaches crime from a cultural perspective. Spierenburg's view on Elias's theory of violence posits that the decline in violence can be explained by an intersection of culture and politics, ultimately resulting in the formation of the state and its *monopoly on violence*.¹³ In his work, Spierenburg also emphasizes the intersection between violence and culture.¹⁴ Spierenburg is a major contributor to the historiography of violence and crime in the Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, as well as contributing to debates of the civilization theory with authors of the likes of Gerd Scherhoff and Randolph Roth.

Gerd Schwerhoff contends that there are many issues with the civilization process theory due to the sources and data used, as they are primarily based on homicide rates.¹⁵ He claims that

¹¹ Ted Robert Gurr, "Trends in Violent Crime: A Critical Review of the Evidence", *Crime and Justice* 3:1 (1981), 295-353.

¹² *Ibidem*, 346.

¹³ Pieter Spierenburg, "Violence and the Civilizing Process: Does it Work?", *Crime History and Societies* 5:2 (2001), 87-105).

¹⁴ Pieter Spierenburg, "Faces of Violence: Homicide Trends and Cultural Meanings: Amsterdam, 1431-1816", *Journal of Social History* 27:4 (1994), 701-716.

¹⁵ Gerd Schwerhoff, "Criminalized Violence and the Process of Civilization: A Reprisal", *Crime, History, and Societies* 6:2 (2002), 103-126.; For Spierenburg's counterpoint and defence of Elias's theory see: Pieter Spierenburg, "Theorizing in Jurassic Park: A Reply to Gerd Schwerhoff", *Crime, History, and Societies* 6:2 (2002), 127-128; and Pieter Spierenburg, "Questions that Remain: Pieter Spierenburg's Reply to Randolph Roth", *Crime History, and Societies* 15:2 (2011), 147-150.

the use of such data merely describes a trend and thus that the civilizing process, though by his own admission a pivotal theory, does not allow for a nuanced, localized understanding of violence.¹⁶ Schwerhoff believes that one must zoom in to understand the critical elements that establish violence, instead of relying on statistics that over the long term show a decline in violence as it relates to a rapidly growing and industrializing population. Similarly, Randolph Roth has argued that “the historical forces [that are considered] deterrents to violence are in fact, like most historical forces... as capable of fomenting violence as of suppressing it.”¹⁷ Roth further claims that there are other factors that can impact violence such as the environment and human biology.¹⁸ These biological predispositions to violence can thus explain the importance of masculinity and honor in early modern Europe, and its relationship to violence.

The scholar who manages to find the middle ground is Manuel Eisner, and much of the theoretical framework of the present paper should be credited to him. Eisner offers a theoretical perspective surrounding the decline in violence that encompasses previous methods by Gurr and theories by Elias, whilst conceding that some areas will “not hold up to closer scrutiny,” in a way that Schwerhoff argues.¹⁹ Eisner also revisited Gurr’s initial study in a similar fashion, reinventing the theoretical methodology in such a way that explicitly describes the impact of culture, state power, and social control, whilst also approaching the prototypical civilizing process theory to draw larger conclusions.²⁰ Eisner’s work has proven that an intersectional approach to the history of violence is possible and a beneficial path to take.

¹⁶ Gerd Schwerhoff, “Criminalized Violence and the Process of Civilization: A Reprisal”, *Crime, History, and Societies* 6:2 (2002), 103-126.

¹⁷ Randolph Roth, “Does Better Angels of Our Nature Hold Up as History”, *Historical Reflections* 44:1 (2018), 93.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Manuel Eisner, “Modernization, Self-Control, and Lethal Violence: The Long-term Dynamics of European Homicide Rates in Theoretical Perspective”, *British Journal of Criminology* 41:1 (2001), 618-638.

²⁰ Manuel Eisner, “Long Term Historical Trends in Violent Crime”, *Crime and Justice* 30:1 (2003), 83-142.

The institution of dueling finds itself nestled among this early modern violence as well, yet, studying it has proven difficult. For one, source material is incredibly scarce. Secondly, much of the source material surrounding dueling relies on eyewitness testimonies, and given that fights were often spontaneous, the cause of the duel is often unknown. This means that sources will not always directly mention dueling, and an accurate idea of the prevalence of duels throughout history is difficult to establish. It remains a well worked out historiography, with research based particularly on England during the early modern period. A crucial study of dueling was authored by Mika La-Vaque Manty, who aimed to establish an understanding of contemporary views of dueling and how it fits into society.²¹ La-Vaque Manty provides a socio-cultural and socio-political background, and develops an argument surrounding the civilization process, arguing that the development of smaller honor-bound institutions did have an, albeit small, impact on the decline of violence.

Further studies of dueling in England include works by Robert Shoemaker and Markku Peltonen.²² Shoemaker focuses primarily on how the duel evolved as a ritual in England, also continuing along the line of honor that La-Vaque Manty embarks. Peltonen takes a similar approach but to different ends, aiming to contextualize the duel and its surrounding rituals rather than analyzing any changes. Economic historians have also attempted to understand the rise, and fall, of the duel in early modern Europe. Christopher Kingston and Robert Wright, for example, have attempted to explain the occurrence of dueling as a tool of credit in credit-based societies

²¹ Mika LaVaquer-Manty, "Dueling for Equality: Masculine Honor and the Modern Politics of Dignity", *Political Theory* 34:6 (2006), 715-740.; For counterpoints and further debate see also: Alex Livingston, and Leah Soroko, "From Honor to Dignity and Back Again: Remarks on LaVaquer-Manty's 'Dueling for Equality'", *Political Theory* 35:4 (2007), 494-501.

²² Robert Shoemaker, "Male Honor and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth Century London", *Social History* 26:2 (2001), 190-208.; Robert Shoemaker, "Taming the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800", *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002), 525-545.; Murkku Peltonen., *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness, and Honor* (Cambridge 2003).

like early modern Europe and the American South. Studies such as this shape a different perspective of dueling and incentivized violence while still harkening back to the idea of honor in violence.²³

A vast body of literature establishes a strong relationship between honor and interpersonal violence during the early modern period. Historians Spierenburg and Robert Shoemaker explored this concept in early modern Amsterdam and England, respectively. Spierenburg established that in Amsterdam, ritualized violence such as dueling was not merely practiced by the aristocracy but also by lower classes in society,²⁴ similar conclusions have been reached in London²⁵ and Belgium²⁶. This indicates that honor served a role in ritualized violence in early modern Europe. While Spierenburg's conclusions shine a light on the art of dueling in Amsterdam, he himself has stated that further research on other regions in the Dutch Republic is essential to establish the bigger historical picture of honor culture in the Dutch Republic, as it will be done in the present study on the example of the rural Dutch province Staats-Brabant.

The primary historic method applied in this paper is a close reading of court documents surrounding homicides. By using Spierenburg's study of knife fighting in Amsterdam as a compass, and supplementing with Robert Shoemakers' study of honor in London duels, I looked for specific elements which might indicate the popular duel was about to take place – location

²³ Christopher Kingston and Robert Wright., "The Deadliest of Games: The Institution of dueling", *Southern Economic Journal* 76:4 (2010), 1094-1106.

²⁴ Pieter Spierenburg, "Faces of Violence: Homicide Trends and Cultural Meanings: Amsterdam, 1431-1816", *Journal of Social History* 27:4 (1994), 701-716.

²⁵ Robert Shoemaker, "Taming the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800", *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002), 525-545.

²⁶ Dries Raeymaekers, "*Pour Fuyr le Nom de Vilayn et Meschant*" *Het Duel in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden: Aspecten van Eer en Oneer in de Nieuwe Tijd*. (PhD Thesis Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2004).

and weapon choice as well as evidence of a disagreement or insult are all indications.²⁷ By using this method, deciding whether an incident was an example of a popular duel could be streamlined, limiting the chance for errors. Additionally, using ideal types established in other papers opens the possibility of a comparative discourse. Nonetheless, selection bias is still likely to be present in some cases using this approach. I attempted to mitigate any biases by using a collection multi-layered selection process.

The main sources consulted in this study are court documents housed on the *Brabant's Historisch Informatie Centrum* (hereafter BHIC) website which holds documents from the *Raad van Brabant*, the highest court of appeals for the region. The main problem encountered is that there are naturally many missing documents in these archives, with many cases that might not have made it to the *Raad van Brabant*, and the fact that not all have been digitalized. The search method employed results in a sample of twenty-eight court documents dealing with homicide and dueling, covering a majority of the eighteenth century.

The collected sources in this study primarily draw from reports of homicide cases (BHIC inventory prefix 466). As the BHIC has more than eight-hundred cases, it was not practical to go through every entry on a case-by-case basis. Thankfully, *Erfgoed S'hertogdenbosch* provides a database by *Dataschurk* which took the form of a 1276-page document that presented data such as date, location of crime, name, method of crime, and even the sentence.²⁸ Using this document, I searched for causes of death potentially related to knife fighting, as the number of homicide and manslaughter cases are far too many to analyze one by one. In this case, death by stabbing

²⁷ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

²⁸ Erfgoed S'Hertogdenbosch, "Dataschurk", <https://www.erfgoedshertogdenbosch.nl/onderzoek/hulp-bij-onderzoek/dataschurk> (consulted 24 December, 2022).

("doden – steken") was used as a search term which landed 252 hits. It is important to note that some hits can be returned on the same case with a different suspect – so the amount of hits is over-representative. The next step was to search the names and places on the BHIC website, if the source was digitalized, the case was added to the list. With this process, selection biases were mitigated where possible. An additional level of scrutiny and source criticism was applied when reading the actual sources.

Legal and Socio-Economic Status of the Duel in Staats-Brabant

The eighteenth century was a turning point in the history of many societies. The intellectual scene was quickly growing with the rise of philosophes and for the first time, more emphasis was placed on the individual rather than the collective. With more sustainable farming practices and more focus on trade, cities and towns were growing, along with their population. This meant that areas were becoming increasingly congested and locations for a leisurely evening were also becoming busy.

As a state, Staats-Brabant went through many geographical and political changes during the early modern period of the Dutch Republic. Geographically, Staats-Brabant encompassed a majority of the southern border of the modern-day Netherlands, but it was slightly smaller than the current state of Noord Brabant. Based on its geographical location, Staats-Brabant was used as a military buffer zone for the Dutch Republic. This meant that it was often prone to plundering by the invading and acted as a transit zone for allied armies traveling to or from the battlefield. This also meant that Staats-Brabant became the home of many Dutch troop movements, quarters, and camps. Even after the treaty of 1713, in which the Belgian states were added to the Dutch

Republic, meaning that Staats-Brabant was no longer a buffer zone, there were still major safety concerns caused by roaming bandits and soldiers²⁹.

However, this location also meant that Staats-Brabant was an important entry point for trade and goods from the south, particularly from Antwerp. This was emphasized by a major textile industry that developed in the region³⁰. However, as the trade became focused in major cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the economy of the area took a hit. As compensation, the states' general lifted many import and export fees for smaller cities and towns. This resulted in the textile industry of Staats-Brabant flourishing. As a result, the population loss due to emigration was not as pronounced as one might otherwise expect in a similar situation, causing the population to remain relatively unchanged. This also led to an uptick in homelessness and beggars, both considered criminals at the time.³¹

With such trends, it can be expected that the local government would have difficulties keeping order in the area. Generally, standard national laws applied in the areas, including regulations of general crimes such as theft, assault, murder, manslaughter, and forgery. However, laws sometimes also had to be amended, added on to, or removed entirely. In the early modern period, this was a common occurrence. The population learned about these new laws through *plakkaten*, or pamphlets, which described the law and, in some cases, why it was instituted, keeping the population up to date on legal developments and restrictions. Usually, these encompassed minor changes such as import bans, begging, or taxation, but also handled issues such as violence on a normal basis.³² Additionally, new local and international developments

²⁹ Guido De Bruijn, "Den Haag Versus Staats-Brabant: IJzeren Vuist of Fluwelen Handschoen?", *Low Country Historical Review* 111 (1996), 449-463.

³⁰ Gerart Van Gurp "Gemerts Linnen en de Proto-Industrie in de Meierij van 's- Hertogenbosch Tijdens de Zeventiende en Achttiende Eeuw", *Textielhistorie Bijdragen* 48 (2008), 46-77.

³¹ Erik-Jan Broers, "Criminele Vagebonden Voor de Rechter in Staats-Brabant en Zijn Grensgebieden", *Jaarboek de Achttiende Eeuw* 1 (2020), 71-83.

³² *Ibidem*.

could be presented to the public in the form of *plakkaten*, for example, wars with other nations, the rise of contagious diseases, or local financial reports for the area. In this way, the public was kept up-to-date on contemporary issues and changes. Interestingly, for the period studied, no *plakkaten* could be found in the archives of Noord Brabant related to dueling in Staats-Brabant. This would suggest that dueling and knife fighting were not deemed significant or frequent occurrences by the government. It appears that the legal status of dueling was static during this period, meaning it does not change over the course of the time period studied – this offers a constant legal backdrop to use as a springboard for further analysis of honor.

The legal status of dueling is difficult to describe as it is situational and can change on a case-by-case basis based on the judge's opinion and the information presented. When fatal, dueling could be considered murder – or in other cases manslaughter, based on how the fight unfolded. The determining factor is often whether one of the parties died at the scene and whether there was a chance for one or both fighters to end the fight prematurely due to a break in the action, for example, a dropped weapon.

Based on the analyzed sources included in this study, the public's stance towards the popular duel appears to be one of acceptance, or perhaps indifference. This is supported by the fact that in all but one of the analyzed cases, no one immediately went to grab a guard or soldier to detain the suspects. Additionally, based on witness descriptions, the public tended to watch the spectacle as opposed to actively trying to stop it. This is further supported by the fact that interrogational transcripts and summaries never ask if anyone actively stepped in, suggesting that this was not expected of witnesses at the time, perhaps also hinting towards an understanding of dueling culture and by extension honor by the local legal authorities.

The general line of questioning in these case files often followed the same pattern, aiming to establish: (1) who the witnesses were, their age, and what relation they had to the situation or the parties; (2) where the argument began, and why – usually this part is accompanied by the witnesses claiming not to know; (3) whether they saw one party threaten or attack the other – usually this part has mixed results; (4) where the fight took place; (5) whether the witnesses saw the men draw their weapons – usually mixed results; (6) whether the witnesses saw that one fighter was down, injured, or otherwise incapacitated – witnesses always attested without fail to not having seen the killing blow; (7) whether the victim said anything more; (8) what further actions were taken after the fight; (9) what further information each witness had to offer – usually none; and (10) a testimony or oath that the witnesses said all they knew and did not withhold information from the courts. This line of questioning would follow a question-and-answer format in the documents, with each witness's answer being taken up in order (“witness 1 says... witness 2 says... witness 3 says...”). The number of witnesses differs on a case-by-case basis, ranging anywhere from one to twelve in the consulted sources. Often each main question was broken up into sub-questions, which at times hindered the flow of questioning, and made the order of events difficult to establish.

The first few questions in each witness interrogation or testimony serve to establish the context of the situation. Groups of witnesses usually consisted of friends of the parties, maids, helping hands, establishment owners, and other strangers. In the sources, the relationship of the witness to the guilty parties, however, appears to have no noticeable impact on the testimonies given, insofar as they do not differ from testimonies offered by strangers; it appears that witnesses would not change their stories based on the relationship to the suspects. Spierenburg

reports similar observations in Amsterdam.³³ Further questioning such as asking whether the victim said anything, or mentioned who attacked, stabbed, and ultimately killed him, can be seen as an attempt to extract a confession. In many cases, the witness reported that the victim remained silent, perhaps to protect the opponent whom he might have befriended, or perhaps this conversation did not happen due to its redundant nature. This could be interpreted as an honorable gesture as it was a disagreement between two men, that had a terrible ending, and both men knew the potential consequences.

The fact that witnesses often claim to have never seen the lethal blows was also interesting, along with the mixed responses upon further questioning such as whether witnesses saw another fighter gain an undue advantage. This suggests that the popular duel was often a swift and chaotic affair, dominated by close combat, and could perhaps, in some cases, be over before witnesses registered that they happened. In other cases, it is possible that witnesses were standing too far away from the fight to offer a definitive testimony, or it could have also been too dark, or adrenaline-packed, to register anything. That is if they even watched the fight – perhaps this was a more common occurrence than us historians can speculate based on the available sources, perhaps deaths were just unfortunate accidents in an everyday affair. Given that the nature of these sources is based on homicide cases, this is a possibility. An additional concern with eyewitness testimony that has been a focus of modern-day forensic psychologists is its unreliability. Human memory is incredibly fallible and with cases often being discussed in court months after the duel's occurrence, it is likely that details have become victim of faulty

³³ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

memory.³⁴ Despite this limitation, eyewitness testimony provides a key insight into the situation back then and is thus an important tool for historians.

It can also be speculated that witnesses were following an honor code of their own not answering these questions truthfully, understanding that a duel was an agreement between two consenting individuals. Yet, this appears increasingly unlikely since, in many cases, none of the individuals mentioned seeing anything, rather than one individual telling what he saw and the others withholding information. In an honor-based society, it would appear plausible that a man's word was also his honor – by lying he would stake his own reputation if caught. This speculation as to whether or not witnesses and suspects embellished their stories is also present in Spierenburg's text, suggesting that he too was aware of the respect for a code of honor within violence, even from the witnesses.³⁵ Robert Shoemaker also describes witnesses watching or even actively participating in duels as *seconds*, which were witnesses affiliated with the duelists, helping to arrange the duel or communicate with the other party in an official capacity.³⁶ A fine line develops at this point, balancing a reading of sources as “just sources,” and overanalyzing and applying extra meaning where perhaps there is none. As historians, we must be aware of this, especially when studying concepts such as honor in relation to certain periods of history. We cannot avoid this entirely, but we can be aware of it during our source criticism and analysis.

This section shows that contextually, popular duels were complicated affairs, reflected in court documents and witness testimonies. It also demonstrates that the public was aware of the events occurring around them. Nonetheless, the nature of witness testimonies can make it quite

³⁴ Robert Buckhout, “Eyewitness Testimony”, *Scientific American* 231:6 (1974), 23-31.

³⁵ Pieter Spierenburg, “Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam”, in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

³⁶ 190-208.; Robert Shoemaker, “Taming the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800”, *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002), 525-545.

difficult to form an accurate picture of honor during the eighteenth century. It is clear that the general adult public, represented by the sample of witnesses in this case, did have some understanding of the notion of honor. Yet, it is difficult to establish how much of a role this might have played in their testimony. Ultimately, it suggests that there are indications of a culture of honor that can be studied amongst duelists in Staats-Brabant.

Development of Honor in the Popular Duel in Staats-Brabant during the 18th Century

Although the sources used are not representative of the number of duels, given their descriptive nature, there is a noticeable lack of knife-related violence and murders within the sources for the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is an interesting finding, or lack thereof, perhaps justifying Elias's civilization theory. Previous research in the field also confirms a major decline in homicides during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The majority of sources analyzed span from the early to mid-eighteenth century. From these sources, the development of the role of honor in the popular duel during this time period can be scrutinized.

To study honor in this setting, it is important to contextualize a working definition of honor. Honor in dueling appears to be primarily based on the fact that one does not back down when challenged. This conforms with an ideal type developed by Robert Shoemaker and creates the cornerstone of male masculinity.³⁷ Another facet of honor, as Spierenburg points out, is found in the ability to respect the location in which a fight took place, and the owners of said establishment, noticeable by an act of pausing to go outside.³⁸ The final facet of honor established by Spierenburg can be found in the fight itself, which is to limit unfair advantages in

³⁷ Robert Shoemaker, "Taming the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800", *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002), 525-545.

³⁸ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam" in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

fight³⁹. This can either take the form of allowing the other party to find or borrow a weapon, allowing an opponent to regain their position, and ending a duel at the proper time when an opponent is too weak to continue. Spierenburg, however, does not emphasize the *motives* to fight as an indicator of honor. This comes as no major surprise as many of the cases studied in his paper are based on eyewitness testimony. In many cases, unless there is a major dispute, the eyewitnesses will not have registered that there was an argument, instead pleading that they were unaware of this development. This is one of the major drawbacks of consulting court reports related to homicide.

Generally, each criminal process file will consist of a medical report, a summary of the case, and eyewitness testimonies, even interrogations if the suspect has been captured. Each part has its uses, for example, medical reports can indicate how savage the fighting was, and whether combatants held back or aimed at certain points. Likewise, eyewitness testimony is useful for understanding the facts, how a duel would have played out, and its aftermath. Yet, the build-up to the duel is often omitted as witnesses would not have paid much attention to the conversations of others. Still, in some cases, enough information can be gathered to establish a general timeline and give an impression of how these events would have unfolded.

When considering honor in duels, it is important to also consider what or who's honor is at stake before a duel begins. This is what I would include when considering *motive* in the sense of dueling – essentially the “why” when considering what caused duels to take place. In many of the studied cases, such motives might appear chivalric in nature. Essentially, the element of

³⁹ Pieter Spierenburg, “Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam” in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

honor, in this case, stems from the need to defend the honor of others. A great example of this is the case of Daniel Danen in Vught.⁴⁰

Daniel Danen was a young man traveling from Breda to Maastricht in 1726 with his wife. The pair met another pair along the way who were also heading toward Maastricht. On their path, they came across a *Herberg* or inn, where they spent the night drinking, dancing, and having a pleasant time. According to Danen's testimony, at some point during this night, his wife was struck by his male travel companion. His name is not mentioned in Danen's testimony, likely because he was a stranger. It can be assumed that Danen's wife did not tell him immediately as there was no further altercation at the inn. The next day, the two pairs continued their way toward Maastricht. Along the way, Danen asked his wife what had transpired, as she was showing noticeable signs of having been assaulted.

When the story came to light, Danen took his male travel companion behind the church where he asked him why he had struck his wife. The reply was less than kind, as the companion stated that it was none of Danen's business, to which Danen responded with an insult in kind. At this point, likely feeling challenged, the male travel companion pulled his knife, and lunged at Danen, landing a blow on the right side of Danen's head. Danen claims to have blocked the blow with his left hand, at this point countering with an attack he claimed was intended to disarm the male companion. This failed however and Danen landed a blow between the attackers' ribs above the liver, which the medical reports deemed to have caused fatal bleeding by destroying blood vessels and arteries in the area.

To analyze this situation, serious consideration must be given to whether Danen's attempt to disarm his opponent was honorable as he believed the duel to be an over-escalation, or

⁴⁰ BHIC 466.0147 "Daniel Danen in Vught" (1726).

whether this was merely a story told during interrogation to shift the charge away from murder towards manslaughter. It is likely to be the former given that this was what he claimed to be a surprise attack. Still, there is reasonable evidence to have assumed that there was no clear attempt to kill the companion, especially given that the wives were looking on. Danen claims that close combat followed with more blows landing on each side, with the fight ending after the male companion had fallen. The companion's wife, having seen the incident, told Danen to run, hoping authorities would not find him. This was not the case as Danen sought refuge with a farmer who deemed his wounds too severe and took him to a hospital, which is where he was detained.

A similar incident in 1721 involved one party insulting Jan Willem Jonker's wife.⁴¹ Jan Willem Jonkers did not appreciate the insult and challenged the stranger to a fight. Unfortunately for Jonkers, while he did prove his honor by standing up for his wife, his opponent proved his honor by not backing down from the challenge. The ensuing duel was quick, with a plethora of stab wounds near major arteries. When the duel was over, the stranger escaped, leaving Jan Willem Jonkers to bleed out. Jonker's body was found on the street a few hours later, it can be deduced that he was trying to make his way home at the time. The fact that no one was around to help, and there is relatively limited situation surrounding the duel, might indicate that the duel was a quiet affair between two men and away from the eye of the public. If they did indeed quietly slip away, then it can be assumed that the role of honor in the duel as it would be seen in the public's eye played a secondary role in proving personal honor and masculinity, which would have been a bigger motivator in this fight.

⁴¹ BHIC 466.0107 "Jan Willem Jonkers in Oisterwijk" (1721).

The honor in these situations can be found primarily in the buildup to the duel, within both the motive, of protecting their wives honor and the fight itself. Interestingly, we can also consider female honor since both women watched, but allowed the fight to continue, a common occurrence seen in other sources as well.⁴² Additionally, the understanding of the wife towards Danen at the end might indicate that women were aware and supportive of the male honor code. Conversely, it also potentially indicates a similar honor system among women. Yet, it is also possible that such a conversation is once again an attempt to offset a murder charge and avoid a heavier punishment, given that reconciliation between the family of the victim and the suspect was often enough to offset the death penalty in exchange for a fine in much of early modern Europe.⁴³ Without further witness testimony, this is difficult to reliably conclude.

Granted that much of these duels took place outside of pubs and inns, it is perhaps no surprise that alcohol is very often cited in reports of duels. Within this setting, most cases cite drunken insults as the primary instigator of a duel. This is a trend that appears to hold as the century progresses, with cases from all decades, even very late into the eighteenth century, beginning with insults or gambling disagreements.

The extent of the insult itself ranges quite a bit, sometimes bordering on petty. In 1726, Eduard Speek⁴⁴, a Nijmegenaar, was said to have been drinking at an inn near s'-Hertogenbosch when his company, including one Pieter Hardie, got rowdy, loud, and obnoxious. At this point, Eduard Speek decided to leave the inn, reportedly saying that he would rather not spend any more time with that “bad company,”⁴⁵ instead opting to leave. Hardie took Speek’s exit as an

⁴² BHIC 466.0115 “Peter Huyberts van Otterdijk en Jan Verbernen in Someren” (1722); BHIC 466.0219 “Adriaan Bevers en Jan Christiaan van der Velten in Schijndel” (1737).

⁴³ Pieter Spierenburg, “Protestant Attitudes to Violence: The Early Dutch Republic”, *Crime, History, and Society* 10:2 (2006), 5-31.

⁴⁴ BHIC 466.0143 “Pieter Hardie en Eduard Speek in s'-Hertogenbosch” (1726).

⁴⁵ BHIC 466.0143 “Pieter Hardie en Eduard Speek in s'-Hertogenbosch” (1726).

insult and followed him outside after downing his ale, there must have been some commotion as witnesses quickly rushed outside to view the incident. Words were exchanged including what appears to be a duel related-reference to a scar on one's face. Such a scar could be, according to Spierenburg, an indicator of past duels, and an aim in the present duel at hand.⁴⁶ It is likely that during this exchange of words, further threats were said, perhaps a threat that Speek would cut the other party's face open, prompting the reply that Speek must be referring to him as he had a damaged face already, and likely that he would do said damage to Speek in turn, at which point knives were pulled.⁴⁷ This shows just how quickly a light insult can turn a situation sour. This conforms to the findings of Robert Shoemaker as well as the fact that the man responded in this way to such a small insult would indicate a need to prove one's masculinity through violence and standing up for oneself and serves as an example of how a small insult can instantly turn into a threat and ultimately, a fight.⁴⁸

Light assault such as a punch to the face was also a common occurrence in Staats-Brabant court records, however, they were not as common as verbal insults and usually compounded verbal insults. It appears that such incidents happened primarily during gambling disputes. In 1742, two men were playing cards together when a disagreement broke out, one man struck the other, and then a duel ensued outdoors.⁴⁹ The duel resulted in the serious wounding, and later death of both combatants. After the fight, further insults exchanged, with one of the

⁴⁶ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

⁴⁷ BHIC 466.0143 "Pieter Hardie en Eduard Speek in s'-Hertogenbosch" (1726); The exact quote in this instance is "ik zie dat gij mij meent, ik zal uw ook menen, want ik heb al een sneede in mijn aangesicht," roughly translated this would mean something along the lines of "I see that you mean me, I also mean you, because I already have a cut in my face."

⁴⁸ Robert Shoemaker, "Taming the Duel: Masculinity, Honour, and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800", *The Historical Journal* 45:3 (2002), 525-545.

⁴⁹ BHIC 466.0248 "Jacobus van Gerwen en Hendrik Gerrits van Thiel in Aarle-Rixtel" (1742).

parties reputed to have screamed and yelled that “the rogue stabbed me!”⁵⁰ Van Gerwen was later taken away to his house, Van Thiel was said to have sat by the fire later that night, remarking that he could see that the wounds were mutual and that he stabbed his opponent as badly as he stabbed him. The wounds were consistent with a short brawl, with a stab wound in the side of Van Gerwen and a similar wound in Van Thiel’s stomach. After the fight, it appears the disagreement was settled, additionally, the fact that Van Thiel could sit by the fire after the fact would indicate that the act of dueling itself was seen as a necessity and that since no one had died as of then, there was no need for further hostilities.

In most cases, the duelists would have been sitting either at the bar or in the front room of the inn. In other cases, they would have been sitting near, or in, the kitchen. They would have been participating in all sorts of activities such as dancing, cards, drinking, joking around, and perhaps even enjoying the company of a few ladies of the night. This means that when the same duels took place outside, an extra step would have had to have been consciously taken.

In his article, Spierenburg insinuated that the act of moving any violence outside was an act of respect towards the owner of the establishment where the initial feud took place.⁵¹ In fact, Spierenburg points out that it was dishonorable and frowned upon to commence any act of violence indoors, including pulling one’s weapon.⁵² The reasons for going outside are not explicitly stated in the sources from Staats-Brabant, however, it is stated that combatants went outside before a fight truly commenced. In this case, it can be assumed that the motivations for doing so conform with what Spierenburg has concluded in Amsterdam, and thus the action can possibly be considered honorable. Additionally, the act of going outside provided a timeout and

⁵⁰ BHIC 466.0248 “Jacobus van Gerwen en Hendrik Gerrits van Thiel in Aarle-Rixtel” (1742).

⁵¹ Pieter Spierenburg, “Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam”, in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

offered the combatants a chance to make good or change their minds on the way out. If both parties were still in it, a fight would commence as normal, if not the parties might end up buying each other drinks and relieving the tensions that way.

There are also other cases which illustrate dishonor in duels. A common example of dishonor in a knife fight or duel is pulling a knife on someone unexpectedly or early, gaining an unfair advantage in a fighting situation. Such cases align with previously mentioned dishonorable actions. For example, in the discussed case of Daniel Danen, a knife was prematurely pulled in a duel after the second fighter struck Danen's wife in a separate incident. A disagreement at a party in Berghem in 1735⁵³ offers a similar insight into dishonor in knife fights, with a knife being drawn prematurely inside of the establishment. Such an action would have likely been interpreted less as a direct threat though, given there was likely still respect for the establishment, and rather a non-verbal commitment to a fight, as the fight itself still took place outside. This is a trend that appears to have continued throughout the century, as there is also mention of this in the fight between Franciscus Willem van de Mark and Luyp van de Sanden in Uden in 1791.⁵⁴ In this case, both men pulled their knives inside, and then went outside. Throughout all cases, this appears to be the only consistent example of dishonor in duels throughout the century, along with premature attacks.

The act of brotherhood and honor through restraint is explicitly present in at least four of the examined cases.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, even in cases where drinks were had after a disagreement started, a fight later commenced anyway. This would mean that the *afbakenen* or drinking away

⁵³ BHIC 466.0198 "Peter Ermers en Cornelis Jan Cornelissen in Berghem" (1735).

⁵⁴ BHIC 466.0750 "Franciscus Willem van de Mark ten Luyp van de Sande in Uden" (1792).

⁵⁵ BHIC 466.0192 "Jan Goorts en Johannes Jan Peters in Berghem" (1737); BHIC .0219 "Adriaan Bevers en Jan Christiaan van der Velten in Schijndel" (1737); BHIC 466.0298 "Johannes Mercus en Pieter Dirk Piek in Oss" (1752); BHIC 466.0299 "Pieter van de Graaf en Adriaan van Oierschot in Vught" (1749).

of the disagreement, was not always the solution to a conflict that Spierenburg described it as.⁵⁶

Granted the nature of these sources, they do not describe any non-fatal cases of dueling or conflict in Staats-Brabant, so it is possible that many more disputes were pre-maturely handled in this way. This might account for the significant decrease in fatal cases between the first and second half of the century, with thirteen in the first half compared to seven in the second.

This leads to the question of what caused this decrease in knife fighting between the first and second half of the century in Staats-Brabant. From the cases that we do have, we only know of because one of the participants died in the process, thus it would be logical to conclude that while knife fights and duels might not have decreased, the number of fatalities did. Such a conclusion aligns with Elias's theory about the decline of violence in Europe after the Middle Ages. Yet, I would contest that there is merely a perceived decrease in knife fighting and dueling due to the decrease in fatal cases reflected in court archives. Unless a brawl was a major public disturbance, it is likely that authorities would not have been called and both parties would have retreated to have their wound tended to, as was often the case in the sources from the first half of the century. Advancements in medical knowledge surely would have assisted with tending to wounds properly, decreasing the mortality rates of duels.

Spierenburg has attributed a similar perceived decrease in knife fighting during the latter half of the century in Amsterdam to a moral reawakening spearheaded by church leaders throughout the land.⁵⁷ This would be logical in the context of small villages where preachers had a lot of sway. Additional focuses by the church such as decreased drinking would also make a difference in results. Such a theory works well when deciding why *locals* might not have

⁵⁶ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

participated much in knife fights together, however, there are also other groups major groups that appear in the sources namely *travelers*, and *soldiers*. This is almost certainly due to the socio-economic and geographic position of Staats-Brabant in the south of the Dutch Republic. These groups would not be influenced by such preaching and are also highly likely to not be aware of such teachings.

These groups are also interesting as non-locals, their public reputation and honor would not have been as important in that setting. While there are cases of soldiers dueling with locals, the primary brunt of the cases involving soldiers were misdemeanors.⁵⁸ It is possible that the locals did not feel the need to engage with these groups as they might have once done, but it is also possible that an increase in troop activity in the area, and the wars with France, meant that many more soldiers were deployed and did not visit inns or taverns as frequently. Additionally, it can be assumed that the locals have become indifferent to travelers and soldiers, instead opting to just ignore them and go about their own business. A lack of actual contact appears to be a good mitigator of violence – it is very difficult to disagree with someone you are not actively discussing with.

In summary, based on the sources consulted, the role of honors in dueling has shifted minimally. That said, certain concessions were made to handle a duel in the most honorable way possible, for example going outside, and allowing the other fighter to be on relatively equal footing by ensuring that they had a weapon. Additionally, it was shown that motives for dueling shifted during this period and that duels could start for any plethora of reasons including drunken

⁵⁸ These cases can be found in the BHIC archives under the heading “beschrijvingen (inclusief personen en plaatsen) en index van personen en plaatsen op criminele procesdossiers 1598-1795 (inv.nr. 447).” The headings of the cases mention the suspects involved, date, and place, as well as the crime committed. A significant sample of these cases includes soldiers, identifiable by phrases such as “soldier in [company]” or “soldier under [general]”, per my estimation, I would put it at roughly one in ten cases.

insults and threats. This said, based on the sources provided there is a clear decrease in fatal knife fights in the latter half of the century, likely due to a combination of scientific and moral developments. All in all, the role of honor in dueling during the eighteenth century appears to have been unchanged for the most part in Staats-Brabant, but the circumstances surrounding duels do appear to have shifted, for example, in motive. It appears that the importance of honor was understood by everyone involved, making it a common courtesy. Nonetheless, research suggests that there was still honor to be lost in the way of coward-like actions, such as pulling a knife indoors, or looking to gain an unfair advantage using unexpected attacks before a fight formally commenced.

Honor and the Popular Duel in Rural Staats-Brabant Compared to Amsterdam

Pieter Spierenburg laid the foundation for this study with his study of knife fighting and dueling in Amsterdam between 1660 and 1810. While not all present findings align with his, there are a few interesting similarities and differences that present themselves. A comparison to Amsterdam offers valuable insight into the differences in the culture of honor between Amsterdam and Staats-Brabant, and ultimately bears suggestions as to the differences between highly metropolitan and rural areas in the Dutch Republic during the early modern period.

Interestingly, Spierenburg's primary finding stated that violence declined sharply after 1720.⁵⁹ As the first source consulted in this study is from 1721, it proved difficult to find a larger sample of cases that describe an actual duel with all of the elements described by Spierenburg, who claims that he only found evidence of one instance of a proper ritualized duel after this

⁵⁹ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 120.

year.⁶⁰ A similar decline in violence would explain the sparsity of cases found in the latter half of the century in Staats-Brabant. This suggests that the decline in knife fighting and violence in Staats-Brabant and Amsterdam follows roughly the same pattern. However, it is not entirely clear exactly how sharp Spierenburg's "sharp decline" in violence was. Additionally, I proposed that the decline in violence and honor would have lagged behind that of urban areas like Amsterdam. In this study, eight of the twenty-eight included sources are from the latter half of the century,⁶¹ and only five sources date later than 1752.⁶² That is roughly one-quarter, and one-sixth of the cases, respectively. This could indicate a decline in violence in the latter half of the century compared to the first, setting the decline in Staats-Brabant around 1752, a lag of thirty years when compared to 1720 proposed by Spierenburg. Compared to Raeymaekers' conclusions regarding Belgium, dueling declined significantly sooner, putting the decline of dueling and knife violence in Staats-Brabant somewhere between these two areas. It is possible that there are indeed geographical implications for these findings. Nonetheless, given the scope of this study, it is unclear where on the curve of a decline of violence the studied period is situated for the region of Staats-Brabant, as our first source is from 1720. Further quantitative research in the second half of the seventeenth century, and continuing into the studied period, would be needed to establish whether there actually was a curve and ultimately a decline in Staats-Brabant. The

⁶⁰ Pieter Spierenburg, "Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam", in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127

⁶¹ BHIC 466.0297 "N.N. Tournehouver en Leendert Verhoeven in Oss" (1750); BHIC 466.0316 "Jacobus Hak en Cornelis Vogels in Maren" (1750); BHIC 466.0298 "Johannes Mercus en Pieter Dirk Piek in Oss" (1752); BHIC 466.0488 "Dirk Croes / Franciscus van Liverlo / Gerit van Liverlo / Gomarus van Liverlo / Adriaan Peters van Uden / Gijsbert Perter / Gerardus van Vught in Lithoijen" (1777); BHIC 466.0497 "Hendrik van Bakel / Jan Antonie / Hendrik Peter Thijssen in Heesch" (1778); BHIC 466.0640 "J. van den Hurk en A.H. Clerqs in Veghel" (1785); BHIC 466.0656 "Franciscus de Bon ten Gerrit van Gestel in Helvoirt" (1786); BHIC 466.0750 "Franciscus Willem van de Mark ten Luyp van de Sande in Uden" (1792).

⁶² BHIC 466.0488 "Dirk Croes / Franciscus van Liverlo / Gerit van Liverlo / Gomarus van Liverlo / Adriaan Peters van Uden / Gijsbert Perter / Gerardus van Vught in Lithoijen" (1777); BHIC 466.0497 "Hendrik van Bakel / Jan Antonie / Hendrik Peter Thijssen in Heesch" (1778); BHIC 466.0640 "J. van den Hurk en A.H. Clerqs in Veghel" (1785); BHIC 466.0656 "Franciscus de Bon ten Gerrit van Gestel in Helvoirt" (1786); BHIC 466.0750 "Franciscus Willem van de Mark ten Luyp van de Sande in Uden" (1792).

inclusion of non-lethal incidents would a valuable addition. Such a decline will, however, always remain speculative due to the nature of the sources selected. Still, there is a similarity in the *trend* of the decline of violence between these two areas.

There are also similarities and crucial differences between the character of violence in these two regions. For one, the way that duels commenced is similar in both regions. An example of this would be in the form of the location fights took place – outside. In both Amsterdam and Staats-Brabant, it appears to have been taboo to partake in any violent acts, or pull a weapon, indoors. This is not to say that it never happened as both the sources for this paper and Spierenburg’s findings corroborate the fact that it was common for a knife to be pulled in the heat of the moment or even for one party to punch another. However, it quickly becomes clear that once violence or a fight is a possibility, the entire party goes outside. This is consistent in both regions suggesting that this was widely agreed on as the honorable and respectful, course of action.

Furthermore, the nature of the fight itself is similar in both regions with two consenting adults. Facets of honor are also present here in both regions as assurances were made that both fighters were well-equipped and prepared. However, it is at this point that there is some divergence because Spierenburg fails to mention surprise and premature attacks as elements of fights. This might suggest that Amsterdam’s dueling scene was more well-established than Staats-Brabant’s and followed a stricter set of rules. Nonetheless, when the duel commences, the character of violence and honor of the two regions appears to realign again.

Spierenburg mentions that the duel in Amsterdam commences with verbal cues such as “sta vast,” a direct challenge that roughly translates to “stay right there,” and that there is

noticeable praise for men who follow the code of honor such as being called an “honest man.”⁶³ Additionally, the presence of renowned and respected fighters is completely absent in the cases studied for Staats-Brabant with most cases involving common town folk, soldiers, or, in other cases, travelers. Perhaps the anonymity prescribed by these circumstances in Brabant is a factor in the cases where there was a divergence in the code of honor. Most cases in Staats-Brabant also took place at inns and parties as opposed to pubs in Amsterdam, due to its more rural setting. The centrality of pubs in Amsterdam could have been a factor in the establishment of a dueling culture that was not as fleshed out in Staats-Brabant. Additionally, the presence of well-known and respected knife fighters in Amsterdam would have likely contributed to the development of said dueling culture and the development of honor. A repetition in close proximity, or perhaps even the same pub, would mean that examples of such honor were not uncommon, allowing the people of Amsterdam to form their own concepts of honor, and act along those lines. A similar development might have taken place in Staats-Brabant with the large amounts of soldiers, but it is likely that a true dueling culture akin to Amsterdam would have only developed in major cities due to repetition and exposure, although further research is required to substantiate this.

A better-developed dueling culture in Amsterdam could be the reason that, compared to the cases described by Spierenburg, duels in Staats-Brabant have a more chaotic feeling to them, as if they were merely brawls when compared to duels in Amsterdam. Whether or not a dueling culture is inextricably associated with male honor can be debated. However, there is no doubt that honor was present in popular duels in both regions. It is also possible that a dueling culture in Staats-Brabant never had the opportunity to develop given its lack of centrality when compared to a major city such as Amsterdam. Said centrality would also play a role in the

⁶³ Pieter Spierenburg, “Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam”, in Spierenburg, *Men and Violence* (Ohio 1998), 103-127.

importance of one's reputation, perhaps dictating the probability of engaging in a duel or looking for other approaches to solving an issue, but more than likely making cowardice and actively backing down from a fight an impossibility.

The presence of *afbakenen*, or drinking away a quarrel, is an example of an attempt at saving face when confronted with a duel. The increasing popularity of this practice in Amsterdam could go hand in hand with a decline in violence and dueling. A few of the cases analyzed in Staats-Brabant also indicate a growing attempt at this custom, however, there is no evidence in the sources that this was a go-to solution, and instead an offer. Crucially, a lack of court records for the latter half of the century could indicate a growing popularity of this alternative to dueling in Staats-Brabant.

There is evidence in the sources that suggests that honor played a role in the popular duel during the eighteenth century in Staats-Brabant. Further evidence indicates that the general public was aware of the honor code that was associated with dueling, based on witness statements and interrogations. These findings conform with those found in Amsterdam by Spierenburg, however, dueling culture in Amsterdam appears to have been much more developed and ritualized during this time, as opposed to Staats-Brabant where the popular duel appears to have been a chaotic sequence of events resulting in a knife fight. Nonetheless, there were noticeable situations where honor, and dishonor, were present in the cases consulted. For example, the beginning and end of the duel – what happens between these points is different on a case-by-case basis meaning that it becomes very difficult to establish any reliable conclusions about honor during the fight itself. The role of honor in duels during the eighteenth century in Staats-Brabant seems to have remained relatively static as there was no noticeable change as the century progressed. This was also true for the witness testimonies. The decreasing frequency of

duels is indicative of a decrease in violence in both regions, and it is plausible that the institution of dueling and the associated honor code played a role in the general decrease in violence during that period.

Conclusion

The present thesis set out to investigate the role of honor in the popular duel during the eighteenth century in Staats-Brabant. Here, the legal and socio-economic context in Staats-Brabant was described, changes and developments of the duels in the selected period were discussed and the role of honor in duels in Staats-Brabant was compared to the metropolis of Amsterdam. It was established that the public was more than likely aware of the honor codes surrounding fighting, and witness testimonies reflected the areas of attention that were interesting to the authorities. It was also established that the role of honor and masculinity in duels and knife fights developed minimally, mostly stemming from a need to defend one's own personal honor, as opposed to one's reputation. Knife fights and a dueling culture did not develop as quickly nor as much in Staats-Brabant as they did in Amsterdam. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that there is indeed a lag, even if it is a slight one, in the decline in knife fighting between these two areas, however, the decline of dueling in Staats-Brabant did happen ahead of most areas in Belgium.

It was concluded that there were significant elements of honor present both in the ritual itself and the response to the ritual, as well as an understanding of honor as a driving force of violent disputes such as in a duel among witnesses. On the other hand, there were also dishonorable cases and fights where knives were drawn inside and early, with the intent of gaining an advantage. The practice of the dueling ritual appears to correct itself when it moves

outside of the establishment, briefly pausing for a time allowing the other party to prepare and perhaps procure a weapon to defend himself.

It appears that there was still an emphasis on masculinity and honor in Staats-Brabant during the eighteenth century. Although there is no explicit mention of it, the importance of honor is noticeable. In general, honor and masculinity consist of standing one's ground and accepting a challenge as opposed to avoiding conflict. The only true element of honor that appears to have noticeably changed during this period is the motives to begin a duel. These motives appear to have shifted away from protecting the honor of others, perhaps based on chivalry, and instead protecting one's own honor and responding to insult and personal injury. This could, however, also be impacted by both selection and reporting biases. Further research could focus on the relationship that motive had on duels during earlier and especially later periods – looking to find if romanticism during the nineteenth century led to an increase in duels, especially when motives based on chivalric values are considered.

When compared to the urban areas of Amsterdam, and to a lesser extent London, it appears that there is less of a dueling culture in Staats-Brabant. This is likely to be due to the spread-out nature of the rural areas as opposed to urban areas, where often people would be meeting traveling strangers at inns rather than seeing renowned knife fighting and dueling legends at pubs, along with familiar faces that would go to the same pub on a normal basis. It appears that in the major cities, compared to rural Staats-Brabant, familiarity with surroundings and locals is conducive to a more honorable, ritualized, atmosphere for dueling and settling disputes. This is not to say that honor and ritual were completely absent in Staats-Brabant, but it is more difficult to pinpoint these elements in cases due in part to the chaotic nature of the duel in this area.

Thus, it becomes apparent that much of the honor to be lost and gained in duels in Staats-Brabant can be derived from the need to prove one's masculinity and worth in the face of danger, and not so much based on one's reputation. In many cases, most of these parties would have otherwise passed each other like two ships in the night – there wasn't much to prove to others. In urban areas such as Amsterdam, however, these men could be neighbors, and onlookers could be associates. Thus, honor derived from reputation is a major element of honor that is present in major cities but appears to lack in the rural region of Staats-Brabant.

It can still be established that honor in duels in Staats-Brabant played a major role. The location, motive, and progression of duels and knife fights were all highly influenced by a code of honor. There is still a major gap in this paper surrounding non-lethal occasions of dueling, and honor found in alternative solutions, such as *afbakenen* – particularly in the latter half of the eighteenth century. This would be a logical next step for further research in this region, additionally, using sources from more localized courts, such as Breda, Bergen op Zoom, and Cuijk would give a more established impression of honor and the popular duel in Staats-Brabant, offering an even more nuanced view of the differences in honor between rural and urban areas of the Dutch Republic. Further research using these additional sources can also focus on *female* honor in Staats-Brabant, an element largely omitted in this paper. Taken together, the above-reported findings demonstrate that honor and masculinity were ever present in the early modern society of Staats-Brabant which is reflected in how conflicts were addressed – suggesting indeed that *manners maketh man*.

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